

SUBMISSION TO SENATE COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN AUSTRALIA

DATE OF SUBMISSION: July 20, 2011

SUBMITTED BY:

POSTAL ADDRESS: Victoria

I am a psychologist in private practice in Victoria. I have been registered since 1995. I became a member of the College of Counselling Psychologists of the Australian Psychological Society in 1996 and I served on the Victorian Branch of the APS College of Counselling Psychologists for 3 years. I resigned from that College and organisation in 2006, because I did not see it as a representative organisation of psychology practitioners working in the field.

I worked for 4 years in community health, 2 years in university student services, and for 7 years I operated a full-time private practice in medical rooms in Brighton, Victoria, where 7 GP's referred patients to me for psychological treatment. Since 2006 I have operated my own private practice, with referrals from GP's, Medical Specialists, and Psychiatrists.

I believe with 16 years experience I am well qualified to continue to treat patients with a range of mental disturbances and illnesses.

I find it disturbing that the body that has so much influence in mental health issues, the Psychology Board of Australia, are all members of the APS (8 in total) with 5 identifying themselves as 'Clinical' Psychologists, and 3 identifying themselves as academics.

This imbalance is precisely the reason I resigned from the APS. Only 66% of registered psychologists are APS members, and of these only 12% are endorsed as 'clinical' psychologists and only 7% of registered psychologists are full time academics. The PBA and the APS do not represent practitioners like me who spend most of their working time at the coal-face of mental health issues, providing treatment to mentally unwell people.

It has been my experience that academics, who may have considerable theoretical knowledge, have little or no experience at working on the front-line of mental health.

There has now been created by the PBA, in collaboration with the APS, a two- tiered payment system, by academics and 'Clinical' Psychologists, a circumstance that diminishes the academic qualifications and depth of experience of all other psychologists. This smacks of elitism and I implore you to redress the imbalance that has been brewing for some years and has now been introduced by the government endorsed organisation, the PBA.

Signed: