

I am concerned about the proposed changes to the “Better Access” to Mental Health Care system via medicare, and think the decision to reduce the sessions available from 18 to 10 per calendar year is not sensible, nor based on any available scientific evidence.

The “Better Access” system has been evaluated by Pirkis et al. (2011) and the results of this evaluation were considerably positive, including the significant uptake of the system by disadvantaged groups, and those with severe and debilitating conditions. It is noted that many who have taken advantage of this system are new to mental health treatment. Further, this report identified the consumer’s “value for money” with regard to treatment by Psychologists, and the positive outcomes in relation to depression, anxiety, and stress.

I can not see any benefits to reducing the availability of a program which in every way is working to improve the Mental Health of Australians and would ask the senate to consider this when assessing the proposed changes.