

To
Senate Community Affairs Committee
Inquiry into Mental Health Services

I write to express my concerns with some proposed changes to the funding and administration of the mental health support services.

I am a consumer of the Better Access scheme and have for the past year seen a Counseling Psychologist who have supported me through this hard phase of my life. With the support of a counseling psychologist I have been able to continue in the workforce and have avoided to become a casualty of mental health institutions. My concerns are the following:

1. The reduction to the number of sessions one can access through the better access scheme is detrimental to progresses made by individuals using this scheme and it does not recognize the long term nature of the healing process. Moreover, it does not recognizes that responses to treatments varies enormously with each person responding at their own pace and the speed of this recovery process is also subject to their unique environmental context. I urge the committee to consider a solution that allows discretion to be applied in the number of sessions one can access through the scheme or at least revoke the decision to reduce it to 10 sessions. I have been able to continue to contribute to the Australian society by being in the workforce. However, my success has been totally reliant on the ability to access this subsidized support. I feel I am getting stronger, however I will still need the support of my counseling psychologist. I understand that resources are limited but I a!

Also know that the committee can pursue a path that allows more flexibility in the system.

2. The differentiation made between Counseling and Clinical Psychologists. I have seen a Counseling psychologist for the past year. I have benefited enormously from her support and would like to continue using her services. The Counseling Psychologists should not be disadvantaged in the funding scheme. As I understand, they are qualified psychologist and I will not be able to access this services if subsidies are not provided to Counseling Psychologists. Counseling psychologists receive advanced training in psychopathology and treatment for mild, moderate and severe mental health disorders. They also complete a minimum of 6 years of university training and 2 years of supervision, They should not be excluded from the top tier.

I thank the Committee for giving me the opportunity to participate in this inquiry and hope my concerns are considered in the inquiry.

Yours sincerely,