

Dear Sir/Madam

As a psychologist with 25 years clinical and forensic experience I am increasingly appalled at the state of mental health services in this first world country.

I, like Dr. Patrick McGorry, Australian of the year 2010, find the continuing government neglect of vulnerable and psychiatrically ill patients hard to take. I was a finalist in the Australian of the year 2010 for my clinical services and increasingly feel at a loss to care for my patients in the face of the decline in mental health services. I am, like thousands of my peers, highly trained, holding one of the 16 inaugural Masters Degrees in Forensic Psychology in this country; a member of the Australian Psychological Society (APS) College of Forensic Psychologist and a member of the APS College of Health Psychologist; Additionally, I am a member of number of other professional bodies associated with trauma, clinical and forensic psychology and like thousands of my peers I am deemed to be a "generalist" psychologist and by this definition compelled to subject my patients to a lower Medicare rebate and compelled to receive a sub standard fee for specialist services i.e. addiction psychology, trauma psychology, health psychology, forensic psychology and Autism should my patients be unable to afford the gap fee associated with a reasonable fee for service. To add insult to injury, I am referred to widely by other (deemed specialist) psychologists due to a lack of experience and expertise in the fields of psychology I practice in, who are endorsed to receive the higher Medicare rate.

If the Australian Government is serious about addressing the overwhelming increase in alcohol, drug and gambling abuse, the unacceptable statistics of suicides, the unacceptable increase in child abuse, abuse and violence to the aged, domestic abuse and family crisis, then the two tiered rebate system will be abolished.

If the Australian Government cares about continued psychological care of it's most vulnerable citizens then the two tiered rebate system must be abolished.

Many private practitioners of psychology will not continue in the face of financial hardship brought about entirely by the ramification of the two tiered system, a system which, in my view, will place further stress on a mental health structure that can barely survive as it is.

The betrayal of the Australian Government to 80% of Australian practicing psychologists, who are potentially at risk of losing their livelihood due to the two tiered rebate system is unconscionable. The APS who has supported this 'sub class' of psychologist practitioners and sanction a situation whereby so called "generalists" are remunerated at approximately 50% less of the so called "specialist" fee for service, diminish and devalue their own members and in my belief breach their own code of conduct to members and elicit and sanction conflict for the majority of it's members.

If the Australian Government takes any of these issues seriously then the two tiered rebate system will be abolished

Yours sincerely

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