

Dear Committee

I wish to thank the Committee on initiating an inquiry into mental health funding.

I am a private practicing counselling psychologist working in Wagga Wagga. I have a busy practice, seeing an average eight clients per day five days per week, unless I am on leave. I believe I provide a necessary and quality service for the people of this region.

The APS College of Counselling Psychologists requires members to be specialists in the provision of psychological therapy in order to treat a wide range of psychological problems and mental health disorders. We are trained in a number of evidence-based therapeutic methods in treating our clients. Furthermore our training incorporate psychological assessment, diagnosis, evidence based therapeutic methods and case planning to gain best outcome for our clients.

Researches both within Australia and internationally have shown that approximately 15 sessions of treatment are required to achieve positive psychological outcomes. This finding was supported by my practice experience. I therefore hope the committee consider this treatment time frame.

The two-tiered Medicare rebate system is unfair, discriminatory and groundless because:

* I believe this rebate system was made without sound decision making and lack supporting evidence. I am aware the current evidence did not demonstrate Clinical Psychologists produce better and more effective results. Specifically, there is an absent of proof that Clinical Psychologists are treating more severely mentally ill patients in the community. I work in a regional centre and my personal experience show that as a counselling psychologist, I have successfully treated patients with mild, moderate and severe mental disorders and from all sectors/cultural background within my community. In fact, the two-tiered Medicare rebate system disadvantaged some clients from accessing adequate mental health treatment.

* Due to geographic isolation, accessing professional training have always been a costly exercise. Hence it is important I, and other regional counselling psychologists, maintain a certain income level in order to be stay at a high level of therapeutic skill. The two-tiered Medicare rebate may inadvertently further increase the isolation and limiting regional counselling psychologists' right for continuous professional development and therapeutic skills update.

Thank you for your time in reading this.

Yours sincerely,
Josephine Cannon