

Submission to the Inquiry into Commonwealth Supported Mental Health Access.

I am writing as a psychologist in response to a proposal to:

- (i) reduce the number of Commonwealth supported sessions from a maximum of 18 to a maximum of 10 per calendar year and
- (ii) to withdraw specialist Medicare rebates for clinical psychology in favour of providing both generalist and clinical psychologists with equal levels of government rebate.

I am a psychologist and have been practicing as such for the last 10 years; five of those were in Sydney, Australia. During this time, I have worked mostly in private practice, as well as in the NSW Health System.

You just make no sense to reduce the number of sessions. I work in an disadvantaged area of Sydney and bulk bill nearly all of my patients. Nearly all of them need 18 sessions to get better. With a rebate lower than the Clinical Psychologist rebate how could I survive only giving 12 sessions. I need the extra six sessions just to break even – after tax, rent, professional fees it works out I'm lucky to be on \$40 per hour. I would love to work in a rich area and charge \$150 per hour but just can't do that. The poor people I work with can't afford it.

Also how can you justify paying Clinical Psychologists more than me. I do the same work!! Just because they go to university longer and have extra supervision does not mean they are better than me. I guarantee you that all the clients I see for 18 sessions are just as well off as those that see a Clin Psych for 12 sessions.  $18 \times \$80 = \$1440$  and  $12 \times \$120 = \$1440$ . It's the same price for the same outcome. If you paid me more the same as a Clin Psych then I could only see the client for 12 sessions and it would be better for the client. I could then fit in more clients and help more people.

Clin Psychs think they are better because of the extra education, which is stupid. With my vast experience, I am just as good. They walk around like they are superior to me and expect to be paid more. It is stupid.

Name Withheld