

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2011

The Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing committess on Community Affairs  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a Specialist Clinical Psychologist in private practice in Brisbane. I have been providing services to members of the public under the Medicare Better Access scheme since its inception in November 2006.

In my experience, this scheme has enabled a significant number of individuals to access specialised psychological support who would not otherwise have been able to do so (since they did not have private health cover insurance or their health fund rebates were so limited). It was always my understanding that this scheme was designed to provide short-term intervention for acute mental health issues. However, in my practice, I am rarely referred clients who only require a handful of sessions to achieve sustainable changes in their daily functioning. I believe the consideration of reducing the allocated sessions for individuals from 12 to 10 per year (and also reducing the option of a further 6 sessions in extenuating circumstances), whilst only a relatively small change, is likely to have a significant negative impact on both my clients and my capacity to provide effective psychological care.

I have also been troubled to read recent documents suggesting the consideration of abolishing the two-tier system of Medicare rebating for psychologists. I have been a member of the College of Clinical Psychologists since the early 1990s. To maintain my membership of the College, I have been required to undertake specialised professional development and attend double the number of hours of professional development training than Generalist psychologists. In my opinion, this ensures my clients have access to a high level of expertise and specialised training which far exceeds those of the bulk of Generalist psychologists. I believe that the abolition of the two-tier system will remove the incentive

for specialised psychologists to undertake advanced training and ultimately lead to a substantial decrease in the quality of service being provided to members of the general public. I have included links to several websites (listed below) which provide further evidence for the value of specialised training for psychologists.

Thankyou for your consideration of these matters and I wish you well in your deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

**Bradley M Johnston**  
**Clinical Psychologist**

Links for Clinical Psychology:

[www.isdscotland.org/wf\\_psychology/clinicalpsychologywfp.pdf](http://www.isdscotland.org/wf_psychology/clinicalpsychologywfp.pdf)

[www.apa.org/ed/graduate/specialise/clinical.aspx](http://www.apa.org/ed/graduate/specialise/clinical.aspx)