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15th July, 2011

The Committee Secretary,
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir or Madam

RE: CUTTING OF MEDICARE REBATES FOR CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

I was dismayed to hear recently that consideration is being given to significantly cutting the Medicare rebate for clinical psychologists.

As a paediatrician with a significant component of my practice caring for children and young people with emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties, I am well aware of the special role that clinical psychologists play.

As a rural based paediatrician visiting country towns in NSW, I am particularly aware of how important the clinical psychologist's role is in "the bush" where access to a child psychiatrist is very limited. Often a clinical psychologist and a consultant paediatrician will work together to try to fill the role normally filled by child psychiatrists.

As a paediatrician in private practice who visits country towns, I am well aware of the financial difficulties of providing this outreach service entails. Travelling and motel expenses can easily eat into any income one generates from running these outreach services. As rural based clinicians, we all have enough work to do at our "home base". I can easily see how significant cutting of the Medicare rebate could make these outreach clinics unviable for clinical psychologists. This is particularly so because the clientele needing these services in these areas are often unable to pay any form of "gap", so the clinician has to accept the rebate as full payment.

I would therefore strongly urge your committee to reconsider any concept of cutting clinical psychologists' Medicare rebate.

Yours sincerely

Dr Patrick Rahilly

