

To whom it may concern,

I am writing with regards to the senate enquiry regarding changes to medicare. I am a psychologist working in private practice and also for a non-government organisation. The proposed changes to medicare will impact in a significantly negative way on both my places of work (sustainability of business) and on clients needing psychological assistance. Specifically, by reducing the payment to GP's for mental health plans, there will be a decline in referrals through the Better Access Scheme. At this point in time 95% of my referrals are through the Better Access Scheme, hence if these referrals reduced significantly, there would be a large boby of psychologists fighting over other potential referral sources and not enough clients to go around. Also, it is likely that clients would have a reduced chance of being referred through Better Access, would have to pay full fees, which for most people are not affordable on an ongoing basis, meaning people would not be getting the assistance required to manage their mental health adequately.

The cuts to the number of sessions through the better access scheme is also very concerning, especially since those who require more than 10 sessions may not be eligible for services through the department of health. I believe many clients will fall through the cracks of the health system, or only receive part of their required treatment. The outcome of this is likely to be clients either not being able to access services, hence declining mental health and clients relapsing due to incomplete treatment.

It seems counter-productive to take-away funding which already exists for mental health. The high rate of clients taking up services through Better Access is an indication of the high need for these types of services, so let's not take it away.

Kind regards,

Annabelle Young
(Psychologist)