

Submission to:

Inquiry: Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services

As a psychologist and on behalf of my clients I wish to register my concern about the reduction in services from the Better Access Program from 18 to 10 for the following reasons:

- **We cannot fit all people into one basket. Some people may only need 6 to 10 sessions but some people need more long term treatment and support to cope with their illness. The clients I am particularly referring to are those with serious mental illness such as chronic depression, Bi-polar Depression, PTSD to name but a few. Such people are not necessarily picked up by public services and it is left to the private sector to provide treatment.**

In my experience working in co-operation with their GP we have managed to keep such people from requiring more expensive, both financially and socially, hospital care. That is assuming they could get an admission in the first place. Some of these people have been able to hold down jobs with the help of the regular support both their GP and I are able to give them. We need to also be mindful that we are not just talking about the person with illness many have families who will be equally affected. These are the people I bulk-bill over 50% of my client load.

- **It takes time to develop a relationship with a person. They do not as a rule “spill the beans” on the first session and in many cases there are multiple issues that come to the surface over time. We are then asked to do “band-aid” work. In other words picking out the issues that can be most easily helped in the number of sessions available. We have to be very careful that we don’t “unearth” bigger issues, such as childhood trauma, because we would not be able to satisfactorily treat this in such a short time frame.**
- **We should not be sacrificing the needs of one group for another. Young people are deserving of good mental health care but so are other groups many mentally ill adults have children who often suffer as a result of their parent’s illness. These may well be the mentally ill of the future.**