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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

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Dear Senators

RE: Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services:
Mental health workforce issues,
1. including the two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists,
2. workforce qualifications and training of psychologists.

Why is the workforce of private psychologists divided into two populations? The two-tiered system means that the majority of full fee paying clients receive an inferior Medicare Rebate for exactly the same service.

The two-tiered system also means a substantial loss of income for those so call non "clinical" psychologists who choose to bulkbill. Because bulkbilling is necessary to compete for business, the two-tiered systems is surely an example of anti-competitive practices because it favours one group of psychologist in the market place over the other for the performance of exactly the same work, and where the expenses and overheads are exactly the same.

I speak from the position of over 10 years of continuous private practice. I have never felt so threatened in business before. I can see that when the crunch comes to register with an endorsed area of practice, I will be left without an endorsement and out of business.

If an upgrade to qualifications is necessary, then why wasn't proper grandfathering put in place to protect the livelihoods of those psychologists already established in private practice?

Where is the evidence that the so call "clinical" psychologists are more effective than a so called "registered" psychologist in clinical practice?

Does the APS actually represent the interests of psychologist in private practice? For what I understand the APS mainly represents academics and public servants. The APS certainly has no concern for the financial burden on clients who expect to benefit from Medicare rebates.

I hope that the Senators take note of the representations of those non-APS aligned organisations such as the Australian Association of Psychologists (AAP). The AAP is an association that actually represents psychologist in private practice. If private practice does not survive than the clients do not get the service.

As I see it, it is about our livelihoods and our survival. There are no psychologists in private practice raking in a fortune. We would be the lowest paid of all psychologists. But most importantly it is about our clients.

Sincerely yours

Brendan Lloyd

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