

I am a Psychologist in private practice in rural Qld. I Studied as a mature age student and completed my undergraduate degree in 1980. Since graduating I have worked for the Endeavour foundation with disability, Queensland Police Service as a Human Service Officer (staff counsellor) and the Education Department as an Employee Advisor. In 2000 I completed my post graduate studies and I have run a private practice now for approximately 8 years.

When I started private practice in 2003 I had a small practice with mainly referrals from agencies offering employees a counselling service.

In 2006 the Medicare Better Access opened up the opportunity for far more people to access therapy.

I live in a busy rural town and there is a large population of people with low incomes and disability. At the Practice I offer BULK BILLING so clients can access the service. In the past few years have engaged other psychologists on a sub contracting basis to enable this service to continue.

I believe that this service has made a huge difference to the lives of many people in this community.

In the time I have practiced here from memory I have reported to the GP and requested extenuating circumstances (18) sessions on about two occasions.

1

One was a gentleman who had an addiction to alcohol and had been admitted to hospital three Christmases in a row due to drinking. While seeing me he remained sober and the extra sessions enabled him to beat the Christmas cycle and – five years later he remains sober and a productive member of society. His alternative was death.

2

The second case was where a client with severe anxiety had progressed very well and was looking at moving forward when they were diagnosed with cancer. The few extra sessions enabled them to adjust to the news and accept treatment and recover.

It is my understanding that with the new system proposed these clients would not be able to be assisted in this way.

I have many clients who attend for two or three or five sessions and do not require further sessions. If treatment is complete and clients feel confident they do not return to the clinic.

I fear that reducing the number of sessions available in serious cases will cost lives.