

To Whom It May Concern

I have worked as a psychologist for 20 years and am a Medicare Registered Provider. When Julia Gillard said she was providing more funds to mental health services I was appreciative until it became apparent that this translated into reducing fund to the Better Access to Mental Health. The sessions are being reduced from 18 per year to 10 per year.

We are psychological beings as much as we are physical beings and to provide unlimited medicare services for physical conditions and not mental conditions is ludicrous, particularly when considering factors such as the main cause of death in young males being suicide, a condition that impacts on families and the wider community.

As a psychologist there are few people that consult me who can be managed successfully in 10 sessions. I treat severe eating disorders and obese people with comorbid psychological conditions. These are long term clients who require intensive and ongoing treatment. Reducing their access to only 10 sessions a year means that their therapy is incomplete and they do not have the ongoing support to manage their changes. Commencing, but not continuing treatment is a contributing factor to relapse. The time, money and effort invested in treatment is wasted.

Australia spent 58 billion dollars on obesity related conditions in 2008 and this figure is increasing. Nothing happens to the body without the mind's permission, and removing psychological support from people with psychological comorbidities of obesity only adds to our burgeoning health bill.

Another population I see that will be dramatically affected by this reduction in mental health services are people with limited social support. Australia has many single people, and single parent families who cannot afford psychological treatment on their single and often government funded incomes. Reducing their session impacts significantly on health outcomes.

I could go on, but wish to use this short submission to direct attention to just a few of the areas I work that will be seriously affected by Julia Gillard's so called increase in mental health funding. Quite frankly, it's a joke. If she had a depressed and suicidal young adult son, she would not have supported this legislative change. Mental health funding needs to increase across the board. The world is a complex and stressful place, especially now as we face increased numbers of bankruptcy, natural disasters and the likelihood of another GFC.