

Peter Delany

Organisational & Counselling Psychologist

I wish to respectfully request that the Senate Committee review and recommend changes to the inequitable and unjustifiable “Better Access” two-tier system of Medicare rebates for psychologists.

The current system seems to have based the eligibility for the higher rebate tier on little more than an ill-informed contention that clinical psychologists are the only psychologists capable of specialist psychological treatment. Not surprisingly, sections within clinical psychology have worked and continue to work to maintain their economic high ground by well organized campaigns that discount the skills of any other psychology specialty but theirs.

In practice for diligent psychologists, university training has (quite rightly) only ever been a starting point in their professional development. And so it was for me:

After completing my basic university qualification in psychology, I chose to develop my knowledge and skills over the next 25 years through extensive professional development outside the tertiary education system, including workshops and seminars by psychologists who were world leaders in their field. My choice has been to learn more practically relevant skills from outstanding practicing specialists rather continue studying under what was the notoriously theoretical university umbrella.

Now after more than 20 years experience working in mental health care as a counselling psychologist, recognized by specialist endorsement by the PsyBA, both myself and my clients are financially disadvantaged because of the university courses I did or didn't choose to do in the 1980s.

It not only absurd and unfair, it's obviously absurd and unfair.

May I call on the Honorable Members of the Senate Committee to recommend an end to the current two-tiered Medicare rebate system in its current form? In its place, may I call for eligibility for the second higher rebate tier to be based on the range of skills, knowledge and experience in mental health care that a psychologists possesses, not just what university Masters degree they chose?