

Dear Senate Inquiry,

I would like to address the following terms of reference for the senate inquiry on the Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services

Term of Reference (b iv): The impact of changes to the number of allied mental health treatment services for patients with mild or moderate mental illness under the Medicare Benefits Schedule

Being a patient with a mental illness, while mild, means that I depend greatly on my clinical psychologist to find strategies to help me live a life that is least affected by my condition. Everyday I find myself in situations that I hold onto to until I am able to discuss them with my psychologist, and he helps me deal with them. He offers me hope and confidence in my future life and I cannot imagine the distress I would be in if my sessions with him were cut down. These are the thoughts of a patient who is only suffering from a mild mental illness, I cannot envisage how someone with a more severe condition would feel to have their sessions cut down; I'd imagine it would be quite frightening.

Term of Reference (e 1): The two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists

Cutting the rebate to see a clinical psychologist will mean that my out of pocket expense is greater. How is this fair when people from all classes suffer from mental illnesses? I am a student, and I pay for my own appointments, I cannot afford to be anymore out of pocket than I already am.

In addition, as you will be aware, Clinical psychologists are the only psychologists whose postgraduate training is in mental health care of problems such as anxiety and depression, they also have either a doctorate or masters degree to have obtained the title "clinical psychologist". Why should other psychologists without this specialist postgraduate education be entitled to the same rebate as a clinical psychologist? I don't want to be paying a psychologist the same money that I would be paying a clinical psychologist who is trained and qualified in my area of illness. Clinical Psychologists should be acknowledged for their level of expertise, otherwise there is no incentive for healthcare workers to continue their education in specialised fields, and it is me, the patient, who ends up disadvantaged.

Kind Regards