

To Whom It May Concern

I write regarding the proposed changes to the mental health care of Australians under the Medicare Better Access scheme. There are two main concerns to which I wish to refer. The first regards proposed cuts to the number of sessions available to patients, from 12 (or 18) to ten per year. This is a significant reduction in terms of achieving treatment outcomes, and will disadvantage many Australians who are unable to afford to supplement treatment sessions.

The second concern regards the proposal to cut rebates for clinical psychologists in particular. Clinical psychology is a specialty dealing with the assessment and treatment of significant and severe mental health issues. Clinical psychologists work from a background of extensive study and training in theory and practice. They undergo stringent requirements to enter the specialty and to continue to be members of this specialty, dealing with complex and severe mental health problems over the life cycle. The proposal to rebate clinical psychologists at the rate of other generic psychologists is comparable to rebating general practitioners as medical specialists. If followed through, this would have far reaching effects on the standard and quality of the discipline of clinical psychology in Australia, and ultimately on the treatment of people with complex and severe mental health problems.

These are important considerations with the potential to undermine and weaken the significant contribution of this scheme to mental health treatment in this country. I add my voice to those calling for an extension of services rather than a reduction, and to the recognition of the importance of clinical psychology as a specialty in the study and treatment of mental health disorders.

Yours sincerely  
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ClinicalPsychologist