

Community Affairs, Committee (SEN)

Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services

I understand the above inquiry was established to review the implications of the 2011 Budget changes to Better Access and other Primary Mental Health services. However, the inclusion of the two-tier system within the Terms of Reference (TOR) is a concern to Clinical psychologists because the government made absolutely no mention of changes to the two-tier system the 2011 Budget.

As a Counselling Psychologist by university training who came to Clinical Psychology via a bridging program I have an understanding of the frustration of psychologists without the clinical psychology university training with the two tier system. My clients also very much appreciate the higher rebate they are now afforded by my meeting requirements for endorsement as a clinical psychologist with AHPRA and Medicare.

The position I would put to the inquiry is that funding cuts might be best achieved by limiting the Medicare rebate to people with health care cards or to practices which bulk bill – effectively ensuring that psychologists fees are kept at a level where people who need it can afford it. This outcome would have a negative impact on my own income, but may achieve a greater good.

I strongly believe that the decision to cut the number of sessions covered by Medicare is a seriously backward step as the majority of complex clients will not recover with 6-10 sessions, although they may feel temporarily better for having talked about their problems.

Sincerely,
Claudia Ovenden
Clinical & Counselling Psychologist