

7th July 2011

To whom it may concern,

As a Clinical Psychologist I am disappointed and frustrated to find that after seven years of study, four of which were post graduate, the Senate is considering allowing rebates which are at the level of a four year only degree. This, to me, is flabbergasting! The three years spend undertaking my doctorate were the most useful in developing my capacity to provide a specialised and skilled service to my patients and I do not consider it possible for psychologists with a four year only degree to provide services at the same level.

In 1989, the Management Advisory Service to the NHS differentiated the health care professions according to skill levels. Skills in this sense referred to knowledge, attitudes and values, as well as discrete activities in performing tasks. The group defined three levels of skills as follows:

Level 1- "Basic" Psychology - activities such as establishing, maintaining and supporting relationships; use of simple techniques (relaxation, counselling, stress management).

Level 2 - undertaking circumscribed psychological activities (e.g. behavioural modification). These activities may be described by protocol.

Level 3 - Activities which require specialist psychological intervention, in circumstances where there are deep-rooted underlying influences, or which call for the discretionary capacity to draw on a multiple theoretical base, to devise an individually tailored strategy for a complex presenting problem. Flexibility to adapt and combine approaches is the key to competence at this level which comes from a broad, thorough and sophisticated understanding of the various psychological theories.

The group suggested that almost all health care professionals use level 1 and 2 skills and some have well developed specialist training in level 2 activities. The group went on to argue that clinical psychologists are the only professionals who operated at all three levels and "it is the skills required for level 3 activities, entailing flexible and generic knowledge and application of psychology, which distinguishes clinical psychologists..."

This is consistent with other reviews which suggest that what is unique about clinical psychologists is his or her ability to use theories and concepts from the discipline of psychology in a creative way to solve problems in clinical settings.

Further, Clinical Psychology is recognised as one of several specialisations within psychology within the United States and Britain. If this has been recognised internationally it does not make sense that the Australian Senate would consider it differently when two similar nations have identified Clinical Psychology as separate from four year only degree psychologists.

Considering the above I vehemently do not support the proposed changes to the professional and funding structure within psychology which has been proposed.

Yours sincerely,

A concerned Clinical Psychologist