

Senate enquiry

In regards to budget changes relating to mental health

As a practicing psychologist I am deeply concerned with the government's proposal to make cuts to better access initiative. In my experience the majority of patients do not use the allocated 12 sessions, however for those with more severe mental illness the extra 6 sessions have been invaluable. Therefore the rational to cut funding for this minority is not acting in the best interests patients and overall will not be saving a great deal of money as not everyone access these extra sessions. Also there is no theoretical basis for the provision of only 10 sessions research shows that in order to provide effective treatment at least 12 sessions are required (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy).

In regards to the proposal to abolish the two-tiered system of rebates will render the specialization of clinical psychology void. Those who have dedicated their lives to providing specialist care to those suffering from severe mental illness are more trained and qualified to provide these services. To take away this funding would lead to an invalidation of these skills, less people going into the profession and a loss of these important skills which help patients suffering from severe mental illness.

In regards to clinical preparation by GP's, I believe that GP's are already overburdened and to have to place more demands on them without specific interest will not be in the best interests of the patients. Psychologists are trained to conduct appropriate assessment and treatment plans, not GP's.

I therefore oppose these cuts for the above reasons and ask that those suffering from mental illness are not disadvantaged because of problems with the appropriate allocation of funds and aid.

Kind Regards,

Psychologist, BPsychSci, MClinPsych, MAPS.