



9th August 2011

ite Inquiry:

RE: Committee Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services

I am writing to strongly object to the cuts to mental health funding and to desperately urge the Senate NOT to reduce the number of allocated Medicare psychology sessions from the current 6-12 to 10. As a private practitioner in a low socioeconomic area in Brisbane, I predict that these changes will have debilitating and wide-reaching negative effect on the wellbeing of citizens in my local area.

The current rebate provided by Medicare at \$81.60 is already well-below a reasonable rate for any proper psychology treatment session, and to consider further funding cuts is simply, in my view, offensive and negligent on the behalf of the government.

In terms of the number of sessions, from my own anecdotal evidence and also according to the research into the time it takes to change during a psychological treatment, I have witnessed that sustainable, effective change in moderately unwell patients only occurs at around the 20 session mark. That is not even considering severely unwell patients, who require much longer-term support and treatment! Reducing the sessions to 10, means that so many of my patients will simply be forced to terminate treatment prematurely, thereby possibly causing more harm than good. I also believe these changes will place further pressures on psychologists to achieve unrealistic change in their patients, which will potentially hamper the change process, and prevent patients from recovering at a pace that will facilitate long-lasting change.

I urge you to please reconsider, at the very least, the reduction in sessions per calendar year, as there is harm to the public that will eventuate as a result of these changes.

Yours sincerely

Belinda Barnes
Consulting Psychologist