

Wyndham Psychological Solutions

3rd August 2011

Attention: Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs

Community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

To Whom It May Concern:

I hope you are well and thank you for taking the time to read and consider my view that the two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychological services should remain in place.

I am a Clinical Psychologist and as you are aware, I have undertaken considerably more specialized training that relates to the assessment, formulation and treatment for individuals/groups who experience both high-prevalence and more serious mental health issues compared to generalist psychologists. I genuinely believe that the additional training I have received through completing a Master of Clinical Psychology degree and the additional clinical supervision has allowed me to diagnose and treat complex cases that I would not be confident (or qualified) to do without the this additional and highly specialized training.

I believe that all psychologists can offer assistance for people with mild mental health issues. However, I believe that clinical training and endorsement is required to treat more serious and complex presentations. Clinical training achieved through programs such as Master and Doctor of Clinical Psychology are highly specialized programs and ensure graduates are able to offer informed and expert interventions to clients that experience mental health issues.

Completing my training has been a substantial investment in both time and money compared to other registered psychologists who have not been endorsed by the Clinical College. Only the hardest working and most talented undergraduate psychology students are accepted into a fourth year program and of those, only the hardest working and talented are accepted into a post-graduate clinical program. If you cut back our earning power you risk losing the brightest, hard working and most dedicated psychologists that will ultimately harm those individuals and their families that need out help most

Although Clinical Psychologists are entitled to a higher rebate than generalist psychologists, I believe it is money well spent. Through our advanced training, I have the confidence and more importantly the professional skills to treat complex individuals and assist them (or their full-time carers-usually family members who have previously stayed at home to provide care) re-engage in school and/or employment. Furthermore, I have been able to assist people overcome addiction which has reduced

(or completely ceased) the number of times they present to Emergency Departments, their GPs and/or community health centers. I have also worked with suicidal clients as well as other clients experiencing high levels of distress including Borderline Personality Disorder, Psychosis, Bi Polar Disorder and Major Depression resulting in them receiving treatment in my private practice rather than the far more costly public system. I believe that all of these things I have been able to achieve have not only been cost effective in the short term but in the long term as well. Moreover, I would not be in a position to achieve these things if I had not received specialized Clinical Training and Supervision.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that all psychologists can make improvements for people with mild mental health problems but only Clinically trained and endorsed Psychologist have the necessary skills to successfully treat complex and often chronic mental health issues. In order to retain the most hard working and gifted psychologists we need to be recognized and rewarded for the additional skills we bring to the job and the more complex presentations we are qualified to treat. The most important thing we need to consider is the mental health of all Australians from a humanistic as well as fiscal perspective. To best treat mental illness (which as you know continues to spiral in relation to burden of cost to society/government), we need the very best trainee psychologists. Abolishing the higher Medicare rebate system will significantly reduce the incentive for the brightest and most hardworking students complete further training and will discourage current Clinical Psychologists remaining in the profession, most notably private Practice

Thank you for considering my arguments and if you have any questions about what I have written, please feel free to contact me during business hours

Yours truly,

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Clinical Psychologist
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