

I submit there should be no difference in subsidy between the clinical and general psychologists Medicare Rebates.

My back ground is:-

- I am a member of Victoria Police.
- I have been so for over 36 years.
- I have had over 12 years working in a sexual offences and child abuse unit
- I currently work as a youth resource officer.
- I have witnessed the disaster of badly implemented and handled deinstitutionalisation.

Whilst I do not want to see people in institutions I do not want to see them cut adrift within our community without proper supports. **Poor mental health from my own personal observations is the most pressing problem faced by our community.** It impacts directly on those poor people who suffer from it (**especially those poor souls adversely affected by deinstitutionalisation**) and it impacts upon the rest of us indirectly because of their actions as a result of their inability to access appropriate psychological assistance.

Some people can afford to pay large amounts of money to access the psychological services they need but others including the many people who once would have been assisted by institutions need subsidised mental health in order to obtain the assistance they so desperately require.

The assistance is there in the form of the many psychologists now trained within our community but we do not need the imposition of an artificial limitation between clinical psychologists and general psychologists that are now in place because of the difference in the Medicare rebate between the two different categories.

This artificial limitation unnecessarily restricts the access of people who need psychological assistance for the following reasons:-

- There is no evidence to suggest that clinical psychologists produce better counselling outcomes than general psychologists.
- There is a need for the greater number of general psychologists to service the pressing needs of increased numbers requiring assistance.
- There is also the pressing need for a variety of providers. One sort of provider does not suit all. People need choice.

For these reasons it is my recommendation that **all psychologists whether they be clinical or generalist should receive the same level of rebate in order to allow for the greatest access of the population to the psychological help they so urgently require.**

Gavan Bennett