

The Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
Re: Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services
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Dear Senator

I would like to comment on the following Terms of Reference of the Senate Community Affairs Committee's Inquiry into the Government's funding and administration of mental health services in Australia, with particular reference to the two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists.

The training of clinical psychologists differs from generalist psychologists and other allied health professionals. There is a required minimum of six years of university level training with two additional years of mandatory professional supervision, with a focus on the diagnosis, assessment and treatment of severe mental health problems. This training includes a specific focus on meeting rigorous accountability and ethical requirements.

As a result of this extensive training, clinical psychologists are provided with knowledge regarding the diagnosis and treatment of a variety of complex psychological disorders, in particularly formulating specific evidence based treatment plans. Given the additional years of university level training (which is both costly and demanding), as well as the higher expectations in regards to ongoing professional development, it is reasonable that these differences are reflected in the rates of remuneration for clinical psychologists. In order to maintain their specialist registration, clinical psychologists also have higher overheads for membership fees and specialist professional development activities.

I would like to request that the review committee consider maintaining the current two-tier system of Medicare rebates, with the upper rebate representing clinical psychologists' extensive training, qualifications and specialist services that they provide to clients with complex mental health problems.

Yours sincerely