

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

27 July 2011

Dear Committee:

**Re: COMMONWEALTH FUNDING AND ADMINISTRATION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Mind Zone Psychology (ME) congratulates the Senate on initiating the inquiry into mental health funding and administration. ME has considered number of issues that may be of interest to the committee, as detailed below.

ME is a private psychological practice assisting those with mental illness overcome the disabling effect of their condition with the view on being able to lead full and meaningful life as contributing members of their community.

Concerns:

1. ME faces members of the community who struggle to access quality Mental Health support. Reducing availability of psychological support may make it more difficult for those with Mental Health concerns access appropriate treatment.
2. ME Clients who are finding it difficult to access adequate support are often the most disadvantaged members of our community, having complex comorbid (co-occurring) conditions. Limiting the resources available to our most vulnerable populations to address their Mental Health concerns may reduce their ability to overcome the disabling effect of their condition with the view on being able to lead full and meaningful life as contributing members of their community.
3. Those vulnerable populations, who struggle to access adequate psychological treatment may be pushed to either be criminalised, or hospitalised. Evidence shows that the strongest predicting factors for re-offending are contact with the criminal justice system and imprisonment. Hospitalisation may result in stigma and

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anecdotal evidence shows (our Clients' reports) that the treatment received at Adult Mental Health units is restricted to medication, possibly due to being under-resourced. Limiting the resources available to our most vulnerable populations to address their Mental Health concerns within the community may reduce their ability to overcome the disabling effect of their condition with the view on being able to lead full and meaningful life as contributing members of their community.

4. Psychological treatment has been shown to be effective at assisting those who struggle with Mental Health concerns overcome the disabling effect of their condition with the view on being able to lead full and meaningful life as contributing members of their community.

5. Research also shows that to achieve clinically significant outcome requires 15-20 sessions of treatment. Reducing the amount of sessions is likely to impact on the effectiveness of existing therapies.

6. The artificial distinction between the members of the APS College of Clinical Psychologists and other fully endorsed psychologists may be unfair and without any supporting evidence. As a result, fully qualified and well trained psychologists, who have excellent skills to provide psychotherapies, are restricted to providing only "focused psychological strategies". As a result, they may be prevented from using full range of evidence-based psychotherapies that they are trained to administer.

7. Furthermore, the artificial distinction between the APS College of Clinical Psychologists and other fully endorsed psychologists in the reimbursement for services provided leads to restricting the quality of potential services that Clients may be able to access. As a result, the quality of service provided by fully endorsed psychologists may be artificially reduced by reducing available resources.

#### Suggestions:

1. Prevent the restriction of session quantity.
2. Remove artificial separation of Clinical and other fully endorsed psychologists.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

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