

**To:** Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee  
(Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services)

**Re:** Two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists

1. I obtained my undergraduate qualifications as a psychologist (BSc (Hons)) in 1974 from the University of New South Wales. I then worked as a psychologist with a government department for 6 years, had children and then returned to the same job for a further 6 years. I believed I was a very skilled psychologist. I went to work in private practice as a psychotherapist with a group of clinical psychologists and to my embarrassment, soon found I greatly lacked skills in psychotherapy. I decided to return to university and obtained a place at Macquarie University and two full time years later, obtained my clinical psychology qualifications (MPsych (Clin)) (1998). In 1998 I commenced working for Sydney West Area Health Service as a clinical psychologist. I would not have obtained this job if I had not completed my clinical training. I work in acute and community mental health as a psychotherapist working with complex presentations. This role involves working both at Cumberland Hospital, on the acute wards, and in the community, with the Merrylands Mental Health Team. I obtained two years of clinical supervision in order to become a member of the Australian Psychological Society Clinical College.
2. I have supervised psychologists for registration and many clinical psychology interns.
3. I am aware that some people who do not have clinical psychology qualifications, believe that they are as skilled as a clinical psychologist and hence should have the same medicare rebates. I would have said the same had I not had the exposure to other clinical psychologists, training, and experience that I now have had.
4. Clinical psychologists have a greater understanding of mental health issues. They are trained in the science-practitioner model. It is their responsibility to keep informed in the latest research as to best practice with the particular disorder with which they are working. They also have at least some knowledge of neuropsychology and its impact on functioning.
5. Clinical psychology is a specialist area. The skills of a clinical psychologist are ideally suited to those with mental health issues who would benefit from psychotherapy.

Sincerely,