

**Ms Catherine Soukoulis  
Registered Psychologist  
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South Australia**

July 23, 2011

The Parliament of Australia  
CANBERRA

Dear Senators,

I am writing to urge you not to change the Better Access system, which allows citizens access to psychological services under Medicare with referral from their General Practitioner. In particular I disagree with the idea of reducing the number of available sessions per patient from 18 to 11, as well as the idea of scrapping the two-tiered medicare rebate for psychologists.

I gained my registration as a psychologist for the first time in August 2010 after working in the field as a public servant for years. Gaining my registration has enabled me to pursue a career in private work, and it has not taken long to get a full-case load. This has made it clear to me that the services available under the Better Access initiative are sorely needed in our communities.

The continuity of care under this system is one of its strong points. In addition, it provides services to people who are not eligible for other forms of mental health services because their symptoms are not deemed "severe". I believe that this system helps many functioning people remain that way. It is possible that otherwise these individuals would not cope with unfortunate events in their lives and become unemployed and generally more complex cases which are then much more difficult to assist.

Secondly I disagree with the idea that the two-tiered rebate scheme should be scrapped. As a psychologist early in my career the two-tiered system provides important encouragement for me to continue to develop my knowledge and skills base, and to maintain this in the longer term. I am currently supported by two colleagues who are eligible for the higher rebate under Medicare and it is obvious to me that they are succeeding with many difficult cases due to their higher skills base. I fear that if the two-tiered system is scrapped there will be less high skilled psychologists in our society in future, which would obviously be to the disadvantage of all, particularly some of the more vulnerable mentally ill folk and those who care for them.

I hope that you make the right decision for the future of Australians struggling to cope with the demands of our lives today.

Sincerely,

**C Soukoulis**

**Catherine Soukoulis**