

4.08.2011

To the Senate committee investigating two-tier Medicare rebates for psychology services:

I am a provisional psychologist and currently completing my Doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology. I am writing to express my concerns regarding the recent proposal to eliminate the two-tier Medicare rebate system for psychological services. **I am writing to urge for the retention of the two tier system, in which the specialisation of Clinical Psychology is clearly recognised.**

Clinical Psychology is one of nine equal specialisations within Psychology. These areas of specialisation are internationally recognised, enshrined within Australian legislation, and are the basis for all industrial awards. All specialisations require a minimum of eight years training including a further ACPAC accredited postgraduate training in the specialisation leading to an advanced body of psychological competency in that field. No specialisation should be referred to in a manner that creates the appearance of the same level of skill and knowledge as the basic APAC accredited four year training of a generalist psychologist.

Clinical Psychology is the only profession, apart from Psychiatry, whose entire accredited and integrated postgraduate training is specifically in the field of lifespan and advanced evidence-based and scientifically-informed psychopathology, assessment, diagnosis, case formulation, psychotherapy, psychopharmacology, clinical evaluation and research across the full range of severity and complexity.

The Better Access Initiative was developed to allow those suffering from moderate to severe mental illness to access psychological services. Clinical psychologists are the only group of psychologists who undertake specialised postgraduate training in the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of moderate to severe mental illness. In addition to the minimum six (Masters), seven (Doctorate) or eight (PhD) years of study, Clinical Psychologists complete a minimum of two years of supervised practice in multiple clinical settings under highly qualified supervisors. On the other hand, general psychologists complete a four-year undergraduate psychology degree and a two-year supervised practice program. Clinical Psychologists should be distinguished from general psychologists and recognized in the Medicare arrangements as Clinical Psychologists bring additional post graduate training and clinical expertise in the assessment and treatment of those suffering from moderate to severe mental illness.

The proposal to eradicate the two-tiered Medicare rebate system and reduce the rebates for Clinical Psychologists will have negative consequences on the profession both in the short and long-term. Most importantly, if this proposal is passed, it will have serious negative implications for the well-being of individuals with severe mental health concerns.

Respectfully submitted,