

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

Re: Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services

Part of my private practice is in inner-city Melbourne with people who are on low incomes either as students, long term unemployed, disability pensioners and very low income earners. They present with a range of complex psychological conditions, many that have long histories. It is only because I am eligible for the clinical psychology rebate that I am able to run this practice which is mostly bulkbilled. Most would not be able to provide upfront payments if I were to charge a gap because it would not be financially viable for me to run this service on the generalist rate.

Approximately 75% of my clients have attended up to ten sessions in a calendar year. However, the remaining clients have benefitted from the opportunity to engage in 10 to 18 sessions in a year because of the complex and long-standing nature of their presenting issues. I am greatly concerned about how I will manage these clients when they have a maximum of only ten sessions available, given that one of the key parts of this work is developing a trusting relationship to gain leverage with people who are accustomed to being excluded or let down by the community, no sooner will we have started to work than the available sessions run out.

For me, this is a plea on behalf of my clients who are currently able to benefit from this service and become more functional in their lives.

Kathryn Allison