

4 August 2011-08-04

Dear Committee:

**RE: Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services**

I thank the Senate on initiating an enquiry into mental health funding, and, as a Counselling Psychologist, wish to respond to one of the issues, being the two-tiered Medicare rebate system for psychologists.

I endorse the APS College of Counselling Psychologists submission that the current two-tiered structure for psychologists represents an arbitrary, unfair, and highly discriminatory distinction between clinical psychologists and other endorsed psychologists, such as counselling psychologists. Endorsed Psychologists are equally trained, qualified and supervised. I am currently in my second year of full-time private practice, and previously, worked for 5 years in the community sector for Centcare, now known as CatholicCare. In my practice, I provide psychological assessment and psychotherapy for individuals, couples, and families. I treat a wide range of psychological problems and mental health disorders using a variety of evidence-based therapeutic strategies, and I have expertise in tailoring these to meet the specific and varying needs of clients. I have experience in, and am *currently working with*, clients with a range of mental health disorders including psychotic disorders, phobic disorders, generalised anxiety disorder, adjustment disorder, unexplained somatic complaints, depression, sexual disorders, eating disorders, panic disorders, alcohol use disorders, drug use disorders, mixed anxiety and depression, dissociative disorder, sleep problems, obsessive compulsive disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder. These mental disorders are those that are endorsed as mental health Medicare items, and I treat these disorders using approved Focused Psychological Strategies. I work with many General Practitioners who refer to me for both my assessment and treatment of clients' psychopathology.

I spend thousands of dollars per year, and engage in approximately 10 hours per week on average, totalling hundreds of hours per year, in ongoing professional development and training in regards to assessing and treating psychopathology for mild, moderate and severe mental health disorders, including training in the advancement of my skills with Focused Psychological Strategies. I attend regular monthly and/or fortnightly supervision with other professionals in the field to further advance my training and experience with assessing and treating mental health disorders.

Some of the training I have engaged in during 2010 and 2011 include a ten session monthly webinar series on the Working with the Neurobiological Legacy of Trauma run by Dr Janina Fisher, PhD, who is a clinical psychologist specializing in consultation and treatment of complex PTSD and dissociation. She is also an instructor & supervisor at the Trauma Center, past President of the New England Society for the Treatment of Trauma & Dissociation, a trainer for the Sensorimotor Psychotherapy Institute, and an international presenter on the neuroscience research and its implications for treatment. Some of the topics covered included integrating the neurobiological

research into trauma treatment, using mind-body techniques in traditional talking therapy, decoding baffling clinical presentations, working with treatment-resistant clients, treating trauma-related autonomic dysregulation, numbing and disconnection, working with shame and self-loathing, and dissociative symptoms and disorders. This training is particularly useful for preparing PTSD clients for exposure therapy. I have recently commenced the second year level in this training covering principles and challenges of trauma treatment, building on the core material of the first year program, focusing attention on the most common challenges to successful trauma resolution encountered. Training will include the principles of treatment emerging from the most recent research on attachment, neglect, and trauma which are used to inform the choice of intervention and direction, and participants are asked to contribute case material each month to enrich the discussion. A sample of topics to be covered include stuckness and resistance, chronic depressive states, conflict and crisis in the therapeutic relationship, characterological issues, vicarious traumatisation, dissociative compartmentalization as a complication of treatment, internal struggles and 'terminal ambivalence' and working with dissociative disorders.

Prior to this training, in May 2009, I attended a full-day workshop run by the Australian Childhood Foundation, with Pat Ogden on Trauma, Attachment and the Body. Pat Ogden, PhD, is the founder and director of the Sensorimotor Psychotherapy Institute, an internationally recognized school that specializes in training psychotherapists in somatic/cognitive approaches for the treatment of trauma, developmental and attachment issues. She is a co-founder of the Hakomi Institute, served on the faculty of The Naropa University in the Somatic Psychology and Contemplative Psychology departments from 1985 to 2005, and lectures internationally.

Subsequent to this workshop run by Pat Ogden, I attended a 2 day workshop in 2010 run by Dr Janina Fisher, PhD, entitled Healing Broken Bonds: Traumatic attachment and Affect Dysregulation. Subsequent to this I have read *The Body Remembers* by Babette Rothschild, and *Trauma and the Body: A Sensorimotor Approach to Psychotherapy* by Pat Ogden. This training places me in a qualified specialist position in the provision of assessment and treatment of a range of psychopathology including post-traumatic stress disorder, dissociative disorder, mixed anxiety and depression, generalised anxiety disorder, depression, bipolar disorder, drug and alcohol use disorders, sleep problems, unexplained somatic complaints, panic disorder, and eating disorder.

In 2009 and 2010 I completed the Diploma for Transpersonal Counselling which included, amongst other things, training in focused psychological strategies including cognitive behavioural therapy, interpersonal therapy, relaxation strategies, skills training and problem-solving skills training, and also training in assessing and treating chronic and acute psychotic disorders.

I have recently completed a 4 weekend, 2 day active professional development course in clinical hypnosis run by CPM, with large components covering Focused Psychological Strategies including both the cognitive behavioural approach to treating a range of disorders, including anxiety and depression, and large components covering relaxation strategies.

I have also recently engaged in the online training "Beyond babyblues: Detecting and managing perinatal mental health disorders in primary care", which is the beyondblue (2011) Clinical Practice Guidelines for Depression and related Disorders of Anxiety, Bipolar Disorder and Puerperal Psychosis in the Perinatal Period and provides an evidence based approach to treatment and management of women with mental health disorders in the perinatal period.

I have also recently completed the Online training as a Health Professional from Anxiety-online, an initiative of the National e-Therapy Centre, which provides up-to-date, evidence based treatment for generalised anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and panic disorder.

I am currently completing an online course run by the Pacific Centre for Motivation and Change on Motivational Interviewing. Motivational Interviewing is an evidence-based clinical method for helping people change. It combines interpersonal therapy with directive psychological methods to help clients increase motivation for change, resolve ambivalence, strengthen commitment, and carry through with behaviour change. It is particularly helpful for treating alcohol use disorder and drug use disorder, but is very effective in helping clients activate behaviour change.

I am registered to complete training in October and November 2011 over 5 days with Rob Gordon, PhD, in Treating Critical Incident Stress & Trauma Training in Skills & Techniques. Rob Gordon, PhD, is a clinical psychologist with 25 years experience supporting the recovery of individuals and families following events such as the 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires, the Bali bombings, the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, Cyclone Larry and most recently, the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

Every week, for several hours, I read current articles and books on best practice in assessing and treating psychopathology. Examples of these include, Unshrinking Psychosis: Healing and Understanding the Wounded soul, Hearing Voices, and Healing Schizophrenia: Using Medication Wisely by John Watkins. These books cover assessment and treatment of acute and chronic psychotic disorders, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. I am currently reading Treating depression with hypnosis: integrating cognitive-behavioural and strategic approaches, by Michael D Yapko. I am also currently reading Brief Dynamic Interpersonal Therapy: A clinician's guide, by Mary Target and Alessandra Lemma and Peter Fonagy.

My other psychological training includes:

27 – 28 November 2010: Introduction to sandplay with Judith Ayre and Roman Ilgauskas  
12 October 2010: Developing Presentation Skills with Denise Lacey, Centacare  
6 – 8 October: Child Inclusive Family Dispute Resolution Foundation Workshop with Dr Jennifer McIntosh, Family Transitions.  
13 September 2010: Speed Behaviour Change Program Facilitator Training with Vic Roads and Caraniche  
4 June 2010: CoMeT (Co-Mediation and Therapy) with Pat Boyhan and Alan Baker, Centacare  
3 May 2010: Working with Separation with Rosalie Pattenden, Centacare  
8 March 2010: Working with Trauma.  
2009 (10 sessions): Working with Men with Terry Melvin.  
20 May 2009: Crisis Counselling / Debriefing Training with Robyn Rose, ACCESS Programs  
March 2009: Helping couples find value in differences with Tom Paterson  
September 2009: Working with suicidal clients with Pat Boyhan, Centacare  
2008 (10 sessions): Play Therapy with Robert Takac, Centacare  
5 November 2008: Eckhart Tolle's teaching about the evolution of consciousness: Implications for our work as therapists with Leni Foster  
10 September 2008: Working with family violence issues with Robyn Miller  
30 July 2008: Family Violence with Terry Melvin.  
18 June 2008: Family Constellations with Catherine Ingram  
2007 (10 sessions): Couples Counselling with Rosalie Pattenden and Ray Hawkes, Centacare

I am arguing, and hoping that you will decide in your enquiry, using myself as an example which I am confident can be generalised to other counselling psychologists, that we as counselling psychologists have received, and will continue to receive, advanced training in psychopathology and treatment for mild, moderate and severe mental health disorders, after having completed a minimum of 6 years of university training and 2 years of supervision, and therefore, the distinction between clinical and counselling psychologists should not be made, and/or counselling psychologists should not be excluded from the top tier. We are extensively trained, and are specialists in the provision of assessment, diagnosis, and evidence-based psychological therapies for mental health disorders as approved under Better Access.

Yours Sincerely,

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**Counselling Psychologist**