

Submission to the Senate regarding Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services

I would like to make the following points for the Senate's consideration of the above matter:

b(ii)

In regards to **the rationalisation of the allied health treatment sessions:**

Decreasing the number of available sessions the public can access through Medicare rebates is unfair. I believe the amount of people accessing this service speaks volumes about how greatly it is needed. It is therefore immoral to decrease access to a service which has already been offered and is clearly needed and actually being accessed. Is the government prepared to increase access in the public health system if it goes ahead with the proposed rationalisation of number of sessions to meet the demand? I argue the number of sessions is appropriate and that the public health system would be overwhelmed if people could not use private practitioners at a decreased rate through the Medicare system.

b(iii)

In regards to **the two-tiered rebate structure:**

This is an unfair system making an entirely arbitrary distinction between those psychologists with an Honours degree and those with a Masters degree. There is no actual reported evidence that a psychologist with a higher degree is any more effective than other psychologists. It seems unjust that a psychologist the first year after leaving university with a Masters can get a higher rebate for their client than a psychologist without a Masters but with 20 years experience. Does the client get any better service? There is no evidence for this. This is unfair both for the client and the psychologist whose earnings are limited by the two tiered system. When you take into account that the vast majority of psychologists do not have a master's degree this seems even more unjust.

I would argue that the number of allied health sessions remains the same and that the two-tiered rebate structure is dismantled and there is one rebate for all psychologists.

Yours sincerely

4th August 2011