

To Whom It May Concern:

As a senior psychologist with over 25 years experience in clinical practice, specialising in forensic, trauma and addiction treatment and rehabilitation, I am appalled at the Government's proposed reduction of patient access to psychological treatment under the Better Access program.

Patient's in my care who are in receipt of treatment for trauma/addiction pathology will be irrevocably affected by the proposed reduction of treatment sessions and many will be significantly at risk as a consequence.

As a specialist practitioner in areas of complex and severe patient presentations, such cut backs in addition to the untenable and completely unjust two tiered Medicare rebate system, not only compromises my patients recovery but my practice viability as well. With, in excess, of 23 billion dollars spent on alcohol and drug addiction consequences in this country I am at a loss to understand the Governments cut backs in psychological treatment in the face of such cost to the Australian public.

Many of my peers, some of whom are in receipt of the higher Medicare rebate due to their APS Clinical College status - DO NOT have the training and experience to work in the specialist area of addiction, refer such clients to psychologists such as myself. Many of my peers who are in receipt of the higher Medicare rebate have no expertise in trauma treatment and rehabilitation also refer such patients to psychologist such myself. The ensuing rebate inequity affects both patient and psychologist.

If the Australian Government is serious about addressing the overwhelming increase in alcohol, drug and gambling abuse, the unacceptable statistics of suicides, the unacceptable increase in child abuse, abuse and violence to the aged, domestic abuse and family crisis, then then reduced patient access to psychologists will not be considered and the two tiered rebate system will be abolished.

Many private practitioners of psychology will not continue in the face of financial hardship brought about entirely by the ramification of the reduced patient access to the Better Access program and the two tiered system, and will place further stress on a mental health structure that can barely survive as it is.

The betrayal of the Australian Government to 80% of Australian practicing psychologists, who are potentially at risk of losing their livelihood due to the two tiered rebate system is unconscionable. The APS who has supported this 'sub class' of psychologist practitioners and sanction a situation whereby so called "generalists" are remunerated at approximately 50% less of the so called "specialist" fee for service, diminish and devalue their own members and in my belief breach their own code of conduct to members and elicit and sanction conflict for the majority of it's members.

Yours sincerely

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