

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

I am a Clinical Psychologist with more than 10 years professional practice experience. I have worked both in Australia and the UK. My work takes me all around regional NSW.

You will receive submissions from other Clinical Psychologists, particularly other members of the Australian Clinical Psychology Association (ACPA) and I am very much in agreement with the representations you will receive from Clinical Psychologists.

As a Clinical Psychologist I undertook my professional training in a highly regarded university program (University of Sydney). The standard of instruction was at the cutting edge of the profession. Most importantly if your work was not up to scratch the university would fail you and you would have to repeat subjects until you passed. If you still didn't pass you were shown the door.

In the years since then I have been aware that Psychologists who have gone the Generalist path, who have trained through private colleges, are not held to the same standard.

At issue is the two-tier system of higher rebates for the clients of Clinical Psychologists. There are many good reasons for making the distinction between services provided by Generalists and Specialist Clinical Psychologists. Foremost amongst these is the higher quality of service and the ability of post-graduate trained clinicians to take on more complex and tougher cases. I myself specialise in treating people with complex trauma and neurological injuries, something that I have received specialist training for at post-graduate level.

The central point I wish to make is that removing the two-tier system in Medicare is a disincentive for Psychologists to get specialist, university-based training. This leads to a "dumbing down" of our profession and an erosion of standards. The end result is that the Australian public gets a lower quality service.

Sought after specialists will abandon Medicare patients. This has happened in the case of NSW Workcover where Specialist Clinical Psychologists are declining injured workers because in 2010 Workcover implemented an across-the-board schedule fee which was well below standard rates for Clinical Psychologists.

Psychologists, who are weighing up their career options, will decide against getting the specialist training they need because they realise that they can hang their shingle out with minimal experience will no incentive to do further training.

I do hope that the committee considers how best to ensure that the Australian people can receive high quality mental health care and decides that the answer is in providing an incentive for psychologists to get the proper level of training, consistent with other parts of the developed world.

Thank you for your consideration.

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