

1 August 2011

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

Dear Sir or Madam:

I would like to provide the following information for consideration on the matters currently being before the Senate inquiry. These matters pertain to the role of Clinical Psychologists in the treatment of mental health issues, the need for specialist interventions and current two tiered system of medicare rebates for patients accessing mental health services.

Whilst all psychologists are qualified to work within the mental health field there are indeed unique specialisations within. These specialisations are clearly reflected in the role descriptions of current Better Access program. General psychologists are targeted to provide focused psychological strategies whereas clinical psychologists are to provide TREATMENT of a broad and complex mental health issues. The following information has been sourced from the American Psychological Association to expand upon the description and unique abilities of a clinical psychologist. This description is supported throughout many countries of the world.

“Clinical Psychology is a general practice and health service provider specialty in professional psychology. Clinical psychologists assess, diagnose, predict, prevent, and treat psychopathology, mental disorders and other individual or group problems to improve behavior adjustment, adaptation, personal effectiveness and satisfaction.

What distinguishes Clinical Psychology as a general practice specialty is the breadth of problems addressed and of populations served. Clinical Psychology, in research, education, training and practice, focuses on individual differences, abnormal behavior, and mental disorders and their prevention, and lifestyle enhancement.

In addition, Clinical Psychology has a special focus on the areas of personality and its development and course, and psychopathology and its prevention and remediation. This emphasis includes the full span of psychopathological disorders and conditions, etiologies, environments, degrees of severity, developmental levels, and the appropriate assessments, interventions, and treatments that are associated with these conditions. Understanding of ethical principles, of diversity and of cultural context are integral components of the knowledge base of all aspects of Clinical Psychology.

Psychological assessment requires knowledge of the developmental and sociocultural normative expectations for the individual(s) assessed. The assessment of attitudinal, cognitive psychophysiological, affective, and/or

behavioral functions of individuals and groups is used to identify and measure unique characteristics which may require modification or amelioration to facilitate performance and social competence. Knowledge includes that of theoretical and applied principles of measurement and assessment, administration and scoring, and interpretation of results across diverse populations.

The knowledge base of intervention requires mastery of theories of psychotherapy and psychotherapeutic methods and awareness of current literature on effectiveness and emerging interventions. In addition, Clinical Psychology is built on knowledge of principles of behavioral change, clinical decision-making, and the professional and ethical concerns surrounding clinical practice. Clinical Psychology practitioners have a knowledge base relevant to the populations served, such as cultural awareness, and patterns of normal and deviant development across the life span.

Consultation utilizes knowledge of consultation models in clinical psychology; the theoretical and empirical bases of assessment, diagnosis and intervention; and knowledge of the roles and functions of other professionals with whom clinical psychologists interact, such as physicians, attorneys, and educators. Supervision requires knowledge of the theoretical, clinical and empirical bases set forth in the rich and extensive literature on clinical supervision as a professional activity.

Research and inquiry in Clinical Psychology utilizes knowledge of methodology, including experimental, correlational and epidemiological methods; knowledge of experimental designs including single-subject, case study, group, quasi-experimental designs; qualitative and quantitative designs; and knowledge of statistics including parametric, nonparametric, and multivariate approaches. Additional expertise that informs research and inquiry is expected in personality, psychopathology, program evaluation, process and outcome research, psychometric principles, validity and reliability of clinical techniques and procedures, sensitivity and specificity of techniques and procedures and ethics of research.”

I urge you to consider these points with the gravity needed in such matters.

Submitted for your information.