

28 July, 2011

Dear Committee Members,

Clinical psychologists' argument that they have earned the right to higher rebates, seems to be based on some sort of belief that rebates were put in place to benefit them. I would like to draw this to the attention of the Committee so that we do not lose sight of what is important here.

My understanding is that the rebates were put in place for the benefit of clients/patients. In a recent research into client satisfaction with Allied Health Workers, satisfaction was found to be high. And if there was a trend to more satisfaction with one type of psychologist over another, it was in the direction of general psychologists. (How can this be so ignored by proponents of higher rebates for clinical psychologists?) This being the case, when you start to dictate that some psychologists can attract higher rebates for their clients, all you really do is complicate issues of choice for clients. They may have a trusting therapeutic relationship with a psychologist, but find that when finances come into the equation, their freedom to choose that psychologist is compromised because he or she is not clinical, and cannot therefore attract a higher rebate for them. **This is looking after the clinical psychologist and not the client.**

All very experienced psychologists in this country, did their studies not because of a Medicare rebate gravy train - none existed! They must have had another motive, and/or the confidence that the service they would provide would bring clients. And this has turned out to be the case. Clearly, I am not a clinical psychologist, (I have a counselling masters) but for 20 plus years now Doctors have referred patients of varying levels of complexity to me, and received excellent feedback from their patients. I have had my fair share of suicidal people whom I have helped to safety. And I counsel couples and families - quite complex, and not even considered by Medicare.

Some clinical psychologists say they have heard of complaints against general psychologists. Believe me, general psychologists hear complaints about clinical psychologists (and indeed psychiatrists), but I for one don't believe because of that, that they are all incompetent.

I have recently been asked by an intending client, "are you clinical", unashamedly because "I want the higher rebate". Not because of any perceived difference in service delivery.

The public is happy with Allied Health Services. Rebate all psychologists equally. **Let the clients retain freedom of choice, let them find the therapist who suits them in a system that is uncomplicated by differing rebates.** If clinical psychologists are as superior as they believe themselves to be, the clients will flock to them, wallets at the ready, referrals in hand.

Thanks,