

To whom it may concern,

I am a psychologist in private practice in South East Queensland. I am writing regarding the proposed changes to the Medicare system for Psychologist's. I have spent a great deal of my time travelling to rural areas to provide much needed psychological help to areas which are considered to be extremely low socio-economic regions. One such area is Murgon in the South Burnett region. Murgon has a population which has attracted people because of the low cost of housing. The psychological problems are significant and what I find in my practice is that it takes nearly the six sessions to build rapport when the client is then likely to say "I want to tell you something that I have never told anybody", this is usually then followed by a tragic story. My concern is that with the rigidity of the system proposed we are looking at the prospect of causing harm either by trying to stop the person telling their story or allowing them to continue when the resources to follow through are not there to allow them to complete their healing. As stated previously my clients are frequently desperately poor and if I did not bulk bill and sometimes travel out to their homes they could not access this support, as often the cost of fuel alone to come to my office is too much for them to be able to attend. The question that I am asking myself is, 'Can we as psychologists continue to practise?', because to open Pandora's box, without continuing support for the client, cannot be justified given that our aim is to assist and not to harm. There appears to be a significant improvement for many people since the original scheme was introduced and my concern is that the waiting times for those in need will be increased as they wait to see a psychiatrist.

Regards,

Janice Wood

Psychologist