

To the Committee Secretary,

**Re: Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services**

1. As a practitioner and advocate of mental health services, I would argue if psychological therapy sessions were reduced from 12 (18) to 10 per calendar year under the Better Access scheme in most situations, it would be difficult to treat a DSM-IV-TR disorder/comorbid conditions successfully. In twelve years of clinical practise, success in treatment has been dependent on a number of individual factors such as connecting with the patient, practitioner and patient self-awareness, motivation, and commitment to change, in addition to working within a scientific-practitioner framework, all of which mediate length of treatment.
2. There is a lot of conjecture around psychology qualifications and training in Australia. I think there will be varying views depending on historical factors (e.g. what period of time the practitioner undertook training; the general consensus on what was acceptable/available at the time) and (naturally) self-interest possibly due to substantial financial, time and emotional investment. It has been interesting to read how colleagues compare and contrast the pathways/qualifications (and even, thesis requirements) to registration/ endorsement – I am not sure how to tease it all apart and put it back together in a fair and equitable way and as such, have no comment/stance regarding the two-tier Medicare rebate debate. I would hope that there will be more post-graduate training opportunities in the future for all psychologists, if desired, and that the training is more broad-ranging in terms of treatment modalities.
3. I hold a PhD (in the area of counselling and clinical psychology supervision) (conferred in 2006, QUT). I hold a Bachelor of Psychology with Honours (conferred in 1998, GU). I have a counselling psychologist endorsement with the PBA. I returned to University to undertake the clinical master course as a mature age student/experienced practitioner and am about to obtain a clinical psychologist endorsement with the PBA. I have worked in clinical and counselling psychology in junior and senior positions for the past 12 years. I am unsure what the difference is between a clinical psychologist and a counselling psychologist. I have supervised more than 20 provisional and fully registered psychologists – I have not noticed a difference in knowledge or skill level between psychologists other than experience and self-awareness.

I am not sure how helpful these (personal/subjective) comments will be but thank the committee for their reflection and hard work on this issue and hope we obtain the best possible outcome for our patients/clients and the industry as quickly as possible.

Kind regards,

Karla Johnston, PhD.