



Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia
20th July 2011

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Commonwealth Funding and Administration of Mental Health Services

In response to points b) and e) Terms of Reference:

As a sole Psychologist practitioner for the last 17 years on an isolated, rural and remote island, Psychological service provision is considered a valuable mechanism by community, to assist those presenting with Mental Health issues.

Working relationships between the Psychologist and the (ever changing) General Practitioners on the island, provide options for the Assessment and Treatment of those in need.

GPs play a significant role in initiating such proposed and appropriate care via a Mental Health Care Plan, and continued opportunities for Case Management, as well as sometimes involving visiting service providers.

This local practitioner can provide access, immediacy, consistency and continuity of care. To fly a patient off the island is highly disruptive as well as cost prohibitive, let alone securing a seat on the plane for timely treatment.

With changes to the Better Health Initiative, I believe our community is at risk, since the number of consultations is now reduced from 12 plus 6 for exceptional circumstances per year, to only 10 now per year.

As a Counselling Psychologist it continues to amaze me that the two tiered Medicare Funding system exists, as Qualifications, Training, Supervision, Assessment and Treatment methodologies are very similar to that of Clinical Psychologist.

This community has a free for service mentality, GP services are bulk billed as are my Psychological services. I consider the time, effort, commitment and the expense of operating a Private Practice truly deserves better recompense. Community consultation would support this notion.

I recommend that the two tiered system be abolished and the number of funded consultations for a GP Mental Health Care Plan be extended.

Kind Regards,

Anna De La Rue MAPS

Counselling Psychologist.