



ABN 23 000 543 788

31st July 2008

## COLLEGE OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS VICTORIAN SECTION

The Secretary  
Senate Community Affairs Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Thankyou for this opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Australia on behalf of the Victorian Section of the APS College of Clinical Psychologists.

### **Protecting the quality of specialist Clinical Psychology services under Medicare**

We seek the support of the Government in maintaining the highest standards of training for Clinical Psychologists, thereby protecting the quality of specialist psychological services provided under Medicare to individuals suffering from mental health problems.

The introduction of Medicare-funded specialist services provided by Clinical Psychologists has enabled many individuals to access to high quality psychological; assessment and treatment for mental health problems. The higher Medicare rebates available to members/ those eligible for membership of the College of Clinical Psychologists has also increased the attractiveness of obtaining eligibility for entry to the College.

Academic standards required for admission to the College of Clinical Psychologists are an approved postgraduate degree in Clinical Psychology (DPsych or Clinical Masters with an additional year of supervision by a College member in a mental health setting).

There has always been an exceptional route for entry to the College to enable admission to eminent psychologists; for example those who have made a significant contribution to the specialist field, or those with equivalent training overseas. Before the introduction of Medicare rebates for Clinical Psychologists only a few applicants a year sought to join the College in this manner. In March this year the National Committee of the College of Clinical Psychologists was told that up until 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2008 2,100 applications had been received from psychologists seeking to be recognised as eligible for membership

of the College; 500 of these applications were via the exceptional route and half had only four years of university training.

Since the introduction of Medicare the College of Clinical Psychologists has been under great pressure from a number of sources to change/reduce the standards required for entry to the College, which the Commonwealth Government has set as the criteria for recognition as a Clinical Psychologist to provide specialist mental health services under Medicare. Such pressures include proposed/ enforced changes in

- Hours of training required for those seeking access via the exceptional route.
- Current requirements for a traditional research thesis to obtain a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology.
- Current requirements for supervision toward College membership to be provided by psychologists who are members of the College of Clinical Psychologists.
- Current approval of Clinical Psychology Courses by the Clinical College  
The College of Clinical Psychologists Competencies document
- Inclusion of “Bridging Courses” as a Standard Entry into the Clinical College.
- Replacement of current Competencies of the College of Clinical Psychologists.

Individuals and groups seeking to reduce standards are hoping to allow more psychologists to call themselves specialists in Clinical Psychology and experts in the provision of clinical psychology services for mental illness in order to access higher Medicare rebates for their clients.

The College of Clinical Psychologists welcomes Government initiatives which enable more clients to access psychology services and for more psychologists to provide them. The College of Clinical Psychologists is committed to the maintaining the highest standards for Clinical Psychology services for the assessment and treatment of mental health problems under Medicare based on the scientist practitioner model and consistent with international standards.

We are concerned that any lowering of standards of eligibility for specialist Medicare rebates will result in a lower quality of psychological treatment for clients with mental health problems. We trust that we have the support of the Government in helping us to protect these standards to ensure the public can access the best available evidence based psychological practice to meet their mental health needs.

Sincerely,

Julie Barrington,  
Victorian Chair and Section Representative

[APS College of Clinical Psychologists Victorian Section](#)

