



THE AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
**COLLEGE OF
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**Submission to the
Senate Select Committee on Mental Health**

From the Western Australia Section of the College of Clinical
Psychologists – Australian Psychological Society

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Senate Select Committee on Mental Health

A Submission From The WASCCP

The Western Australia Section of the College of Clinical Psychologists of the Australian Psychological Society would like to make a submission to the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health on a number of the issues featured in the Terms of Reference for this review and in relation to the aspects of mental health in which clinical psychologists provide an important role.

- b. The adequacy of various modes of care for people with a mental illness, in particular, prevention, early intervention, acute care, community care, after hours crisis services and respite care:

Areas of concern:

- Over emphasis on the medical model in treatment of mental health problems
- Lack of treatment of mental health conditions that are not classified as serious mental illness but which contribute to the high utilisation rate of mental health services
- Adequate and appropriate treatment of less serious mental health problems would help prevent development of more serious psychiatric conditions and the early intervention in these less serious mental health problems could also help decrease the likelihood of these problems becoming more serious psychiatric conditions
- Need for a focus on psychological input in the early stages of anxiety and depression to help prevent exacerbation of these problems and development of other co-morbid problems
- Intervention in childhood/adolescence also helps prevent more significant mental health problems in adult life and reduces the burden of illness

- c. Opportunities for improving coordination and delivery of funding and services at all levels of government to ensure appropriate and comprehensive care is provided throughout the episode of care:

Areas of concern:

- Increased access to Medicare by consumers for psychological services
- Increased funding to graduate programs in clinical psychology to meet demand for psychological services (and on parity with funding to medical school programs)
- Increased funding for training placements for graduate programs in clinical psychology

d. The appropriate role of the private and non-government sectors:

- Increased access to Medicaid by consumers for psychological services, not just through GP but open access
- Increased rebates for Medicaid for psychological services

e. The extent to which unmet need in supported accommodation, employment, family and social support services, is a barrier to better mental health outcomes:

Areas of concern:

- One of the chief barriers to better mental health outcomes in this, besides lack of funding for such programs, is the continued emphasis on a medical model rather than a psycho-social rehabilitative model.
- Typically these programs are based upon regular contact with the psychiatrist and nurse to monitor compliance with medication but do not fund the use of clinical psychologists to help assess and implement psychological interventions that not only improve the quality of life for these individuals but also have been demonstrated to decrease the likelihood of re-admission to hospital due to medication non-compliance or illicit substance usage.

f. The special needs of groups such as children, adolescents, the aged, Indigenous Australians, the socially and geographically isolated and of people with complex and co-morbid conditions and drug and alcohol dependence:

Areas of concern:

- Increased resourcing needed to allow consumers of all the above-mentioned groups to have access to clinical psychology services.
- Clinical psychologists have the training and experience necessary to treat the mental health needs of these groups and have the training and experience needed for complex mental health problems.
- Treatment supplied by clinical psychologists have been supported through research as effective evidence-based practice which treats not only the behavioural symptoms but provide interventions which affect quality of life issues for these special needs groups on a much more efficient economic basis.

h. the role of primary health care in promotion, prevention, early detection and chronic care management:

Areas of concern:

- Research indicates that GP's are usually the first persons to see individuals suffering from mental health problems.

- It is important for GP's to have training to recognize that someone has a mental health problem and training in how to refer that individual to the appropriate mental health provider.
- Research from overseas indicate that most consumers with less serious mental health problems do not receive adequate care for their mental health problems from GP's and this can lead to a worsening of their mental health problems. Research also indicates that GP's tend to prescribe medication for less serious mental health problems which adds to the high cost of medical care, yet these individuals could be treated as effectively (and sometimes more effectively) by psychological interventions provided by clinical psychologists.

k. The practice of detention and seclusion within mental health facilities and the extent to which it is compatible with human rights instruments, humane treatment and care standards, and proven practice in promoting engagement and minimising treatment refusal and coercion:

Areas of concern:

- The use of detention and seclusion within mental health facilities are often necessary and effective with used in a humane and appropriate manner.
- However, by providing effective assessment and intervention programs, the need to use these types of practices can be greatly decreased.
- Clinical psychologists have the training and experience necessary to help nursing and medical staff in mental health facilities implement such care plans in an effective manner.
- Unfortunately, the use of clinical psychologists within mental health facilities is often very limited.

n. The current state of mental health research, the adequacy of its funding and the extent to which best practice is disseminated:

Areas of concern:

- Funding for research in mental health is greatly under-resourced when compared to funding for medical research even though the World Health Organisation has determined that depression is the biggest health problem in the world.
- Much mental health research should be done through the graduate programs in universities, but the funding overall to clinical psychology graduate programs is significantly below what is needed to have the academic staff necessary to complete such research and provide accredited training programs in clinical psychology.
- This disparity is highlighted even more when compared to the funding received for medical programs in universities.

Summary:

The Western Australia Section of the College of Clinical Psychologists of the Australian Psychological Society are encouraged by the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health being established as it feels that the mental health needs of Australians has not been appropriately recognised nor adequately resourced in the past. The Western Australia Section appreciates the opportunity to make this submission to the Senate Select Committee and looks forward to the eventual findings of the Committee and to, hopefully, a great improvement in the care and treatment of persons with mental health problems.