



PSYCHOLOGY PRIVATE AUSTRALIA Inc.

THE FEDERATION OF ORGANISATIONS OF PRIVATELY PRACTISING PSYCHOLOGISTS OF AUSTRALIA

CONSTITUENT BODIES

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Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health From Psychology Private Australia Inc

Psychology Private Australia represents the state associations of privately practising psychologists in Australia.

The following is a summary of the submission. The full submission will be forwarded in the next week and will contain our statements on mental health; the results of a pilot survey of medical practitioners, members of the general public and clients of psychologists; the potential psychologist contribution to mental health; the training and experience of psychologists and the problems with the current *Better Outcomes in Mental Health* policy as well as its negative impact on human rights in mental health. It will comment on each of the Terms of Reference as it relates to contributions by psychologists.

Some of the specific reference points to be addressed

Reference Point a There are serious barriers to the aims and objectives of the current National Mental Health Strategy.

People in the community are not being told what constitutes good and proper training for the treatment of their psychological disorders.

They are not being given proper access to available and fully trained professionals. Fully trained and experienced psychologists in the private sector are a valuable mental health resource that is being wasted.

Some of the Government policies e.g. *Better Outcomes in Mental Health*, actually support poor standards of training and promote access to this for consumers via Medicare rebates for GPs for "Focussed Psychological Therapies".

Psychologists are experts in psychology. Medical students, GPs and Psychiatrists are taught psychology by psychologists. Brand name therapy tools such as CBT and IPT can be provided by a variety of people, but if the therapists do not have the underpinnings of a broad knowledge of psychology, these therapy tools or techniques may be inappropriate and do not have the desired long term success. When this happens, the techniques will become devalued. (Articles will be attached with the submission).

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Psychotherapy delivered by psychologists can be based upon knowledge gained from research in psychology on topics such as perception, stress, motivation, empathy, meaning, assimilation, and personality. Arguably, all these topics cut across all forms of brand-name psychotherapies. The practising psychologist as a Science-Practitioner has the broad psychological research background and the experience and expertise to apply the research for the appropriate assessment and therapy for different individual problems.

The current Government policy devalues the role of psychologists by assuming that GPs with minimal training (26 hours) can provide psychological therapy without the vast body of psychological knowledge that is unique to the training of psychologists, and is essential for psychological assessment and successful long term outcomes.

(Our submission will attach a paper by Jillian Horton-Hausknecht given at the National Congress of Psychology Private Australia on 16th April 2005). These are Human Rights issues in mental health.

Reference Point b Prevention and early intervention would be facilitated if people were able to access psychological help in the private sector, just as they are able to access early medical assistance for medical problems. For financial reasons, this help from trained and experienced professional psychologists is denied to people, particularly to those who could most benefit.

Reference Points f, h, i It is crucial for a successful national mental health strategy to provide for early intervention for children and adolescents. Early psychological intervention can alleviate and prevent long term adult psychological problems which in turn become, not only a drain on the national mental health costs, but also have untold negative impact on individuals and the community at large. For example, the impact on suicide rates, drug abuse, mental illness, unemployment, the poverty spiral and crime incurs huge costs in both human misery and financial costs to governments.

It is crucial for children and adolescents to have affordable access to the private psychology sector.

Reference Point i. Psychologists offer non-drug psychological intervention which potentially reduces iatrogenesis. However, encouraging inappropriately and inadequately trained GPs to attempt to provide psychology services could increase iatrogenesis.

These and other terms of reference points will be expanded in our full submission.

Susanne Wilkie
President Psychology Private Australia Inc.