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MEDIA RELEASE

Recommendation was to extend psychology sessions, not cut them back

The Federal Government's decision to return to subsidising just 10 psychology sessions a year goes directly against a recommendation in the Better Access review.

Peak body for psychologists, The Australian Association of Psychologists(AAPi) says the government has ignored the recommendation from the Better Access review, which actually called for the sessions to be extended.

Executive Director Tegan Carrison said recommendation number 12 stated: "*the additional 10 sessions should continue to be made available and should be targeted towards those with complex mental health needs*".

"This decision is a backwards step that will harm the most vulnerable. To cut back session numbers in the thick of a mental health crisis will have a detrimental impact.

"To deny people equitable access to mental health support is denying the symptoms of the country's mental illness as a whole."

Ms Carrison said cutting the session numbers was not addressing the core issue.

"The core issue, as the review rightly pointed out, is the cost of mental health care, because the rebates are too low," she said.

"The review stated that barriers to accessing the program were mostly financial - '*many felt that the gap payment was too high*'.

"This is why AAPi continues to call for a \$150 rebate for psychology clients across the board, which would make it so much more affordable for the general population.

"AAPi deeply disagrees with the rationales provided by the Minister to support the cutting of services."

Ms Carrison said AAPi would be making an urgent case to the government for the decision to be reversed.

"This is a case of access denied, not better access whatsoever," she said.

ENDS

Tegan Carrison is the Executive Director of the Australian Association of Psychologists Inc (AAPi), a not-for-profit peak body representing all psychologists in Australia.

About Australian Association of Psychologists Inc (AAPi)

The AAPi is a not-for-profit peak body for all psychologists that aims to preserve the rich diversity of psychological practice in Australia. Formed in 2010 by a group of passionate grassroots psychologists, the AAPi's primary goal is to address inequality in the profession and represent all psychologists and their clients equally to government and funding bodies. Its primary mission is to lobby for equitable access for the Australian public to professional psychological services funded under the current Medicare Better Access Scheme.