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MEDIA RELEASE

Peak psychology body pleads "Help Us Help More"

Mental health workforce shortage could be eased by 8000 provisional psychologists

A new report examining Australia's mental health crisis says the gap between the demand for, and supply of, mental health services will continue to widen and provides an immediate solution for increasing the mental health workforce by 22 per cent.

Under Pressure: Australia's Mental Health Emergency, produced by The McKell Institute, was released today at a Parliament House event by peak body the Australian Association of Psychologists (AAPi) as part of its "Help Us Help More" campaign.

AAPi Executive Director Tegan Carrison said the report comprehensively concluded that unless out of pocket costs are lowered and the workforce increased, the mental health emergency would persist and Australians would continue to struggle.

"Allowing provisional psychologists (who are already working under supervision) to offer their clients rebates under Medicare would immediately add almost 8,000 mental health care professionals to the workforce, which represents a 22 per cent increase," she said.

Ms Carrison said the report examined the demand for services and the reasons behind it, the barriers to access, the consequences of inaction, the strain on the workforce and the economic cost of the national mental health crisis.

"The report's recommendations to help ease this crisis also include providing access to additional subsidised psychological therapy sessions under the current MBS for those with more complex mental health needs; increasing the Medicare rebate for psychologists; offering incentives to regional and rural psychologists; expanding career pathways and providing more Commonwealth supported places for psychology students.

"Today we are calling on the Federal Government to help us help more by adopting these practical measures in the upcoming Federal Budget to urgently improve the affordability and availability of mental health care support to Australians."

Key findings from the report

- In 2020/21, over two in five Australian adults (aged 16-85 years) reported having experienced a mental disorder over the course of their lifetime.
- Claims for mental health conditions grew by 73% between 2000/1 and 2019/20, and represented 28% of all disease claims in 2019-20.
- In 2018-19, the annual cost to the economy of mental ill-health and suicide in Australia was estimated to be up to \$70 billion.

- Since the beginning of the pandemic, 88% of psychologists have seen an increase in demand for their services.
- At the end of 2022, 38% of psychologists were still unable to see new clients.

Summary of recommendations from the report

1. Provide access to additional subsidised psychological therapy sessions under the current MBS for those with more complex mental health needs. With limited supply of psychologists, the mental health care system should prioritise greater access to those with complex needs.
2. Increase the Medicare rebate for psychologists to enable more bulk billing. This would decrease the out of pocket expenses and enable more bulk billing, ensuring that mental health services would be more accessible for those in lower socioeconomic areas.
3. Offer incentives to rural and regional mental health practitioners. This would entice practitioners to service more regional areas and alleviate the build-up of demand currently faced by regional practitioners.
4. Expand MBS eligibility to provisional psychologists. This would allow provisional psychologists to offer rebates to their clients and improve access and timeliness of services.
5. Improve career pathways for psychology students Create a career pathway for those studying psychology, so that they're practice- ready when they finish. One way to achieve this would be to reinstate the 4+2 internship program - an intensive supervised training program for those who have finished the university component of their education.
6. Provide more Commonwealth Supported Places for psychology students. Provide a minimum number of Commonwealth Supported Places for students studying psychology. This would mean that places with no, or reduced, fees would be earmarked for those wanting to train as psychologists. The number of these places would align with and be determined by workforce demands and job vacancies.

A full copy of the report is available [here](#). Please note this is embargoed until 4am, Tuesday 14 Feb.

About “Help Us Help More”

Australia has experienced significant challenges in recent years, including COVID and natural disasters, meaning the nation's mental health is at risk more than ever before.

As qualified professionals, we want to help, we can help, and YOU can Help Us Help More.

We aim to involve our members, their clients, the community and key stakeholders in mental health to support the campaign, and let the federal government know that substantial funding and operational changes to mental health care delivery are required if we are going to provide quality care for Australians living with mental ill health.

Our aim is simple - to ensure psychologists can deliver the best possible care and that vulnerable Australians have access to quality mental health care, whenever and wherever they need it.

For information visit www.helpushelpmore.com.au

About 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.

For more information visit www.aapi.org.au

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About The McKell Institute

The McKell Institute is an independent, not-for-profit research organisation dedicated to advancing practical policy solutions to contemporary issues.

For information visit www.mckellinstitute.org.au

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