

## **MEDIA RELEASE - GOLD COAST**

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### **Six months on, psychology session cuts are taking a serious toll**

Cuts to the number of subsidised psychology sessions are taking a serious toll on the mental health of Australians, with some psychologists reducing the number of Medicare-related clients, despite long waiting lists.

Peak body for all psychologists, Australian Association of Psychologists (AAPi) said in the six months since the Medicare sessions were reduced from 20 to 10, the mental health crisis had not slowed and worryingly, access had not improved, with psychologists reporting their clients are struggling.

Gold Coast psychologist and member of AAPi, Dr Leanne McGregor, works with Indigenous and marginalised young mothers who often cannot afford to pay for sessions and said spacing the 10 sessions out over a year was proving challenging.

She has a waiting list of 10 weeks for her next available appointment and 32 people on her books in line for an earlier appointment.

“I sometimes offer my services for free if they are in crisis and at risk,” Dr McGregor said.

“As a result of the session cuts and the Medicare rebate remaining low, I am now no longer able to take on as many clients.

“If I did not offer bulk billing services, only those who are affluent would be able to access my services. If the rebate was increased to the same amount for all psychologists, I would be able to afford to offer more bulk billed sessions to marginalised clients.”

AAPi Executive Director Tegan Carrison said the Federal Government had not provided adequate alternatives since the Better Access psychology sessions were cut.

“The Federal Budget did not even contain a dollar figure for the response to the Better Access evaluation and there has been very little since the government staged the round table in January for relevant mental health bodies,” she said.

“We are inundated with questions from psychologists about what other services are available to support clients who need additional sessions. Unfortunately options outside of Medicare are few and far between.”

Ms Carrison said the recent [report](#) from the AIHW, revealing suicide as the leading cause of death in men and women aged 15 - 44, was terrible evidence of the extent of the mental health crisis around the country.

“Alongside the ongoing cost of living crisis, the situation is not going to improve,” she said.

“We have some practical solutions that, if implemented quickly, would quickly ease the burden. These include a \$150 rebate for all psychologists\* and allowing the 8000 provisional psychologists to practice under Medicare.”

Ms Carrison said AAPi was calling on people across the country to write to their Federal MP to express their concern.

“We are asking anyone who cares about the lack of access to mental health care to visit [helpushelpmore.com.au](http://helpushelpmore.com.au) and use the email template to write to their MP,” she said.

*\*Currently there are two different Medicare rebates offered for psychology sessions. This is known as the [two-tier system](#). Clients of clinical psychologists receive around \$136 while clients of registered psychologists receive \$92.*

*According to figures from the [Psychology Board of Australia](#), there are 44,365 practicing registered and provisional psychologists, only 26% of whom have clinical endorsement. This means clients being treated by 74% of psychologists are receiving a lower, or no Medicare rebate.*

### **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.