

Submission
No 7

**INQUIRY INTO EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND
APPROPRIATE DELIVERY OF OUTPATIENT AND
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 1 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

Hi Team,

I'd like to add my voice to the many regarding terms of reference a, e, g, and h.

I am a psychologist working in private practice in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven regions. There are no other blanket bulk-billing psychologists in these areas anymore.

I am saddened by the trend since I first began in this career regarding access to psychology (and psychiatry) services. It seems clear to me that people with money are able to access services, and people without, are not. This trend is increasing and worse still, it seems normalised within the community. Individuals who may be at risk by avoiding therapy that would otherwise be beneficial, are doing so because of the bottom line. The "it's just business" attitude seems to have become normalised in allied health communities also to some degree. The realities are that provision of mental health services cost considerable amounts and more needs to be done to assist allied health providers to maintain cost-free services.

There are also not enough psychologists, and at a time where the need in the community is increasing.

Telehealth has been a helpful initiative and many clients seem to benefit from this. In my experience, it is best used as an adjunct to in-person attendance, with in-person meetings being most helpful to solidify the therapeutic relationship prior to an episode of care incorporating telehealth.

It can feel demeaning to clients from diverse backgrounds, calling psychology or psychiatry services and having to explain their circumstance in the hopes of finding a bulk-billed provider. Blanket cost-free care is the answer to reducing barriers to diverse communities, including low socioeconomic demographics. The trend is for support to increase in wealthier postcodes, and decrease in poorer ones. This is clearly unhelpful.

Thanks for considering these notions of my experience working in private practice out of community centres, often in low socioeconomic areas.