

Disgraceful government neglect on ADHD reforms fails millions of Australians, warns psychologists

AAPi slams rejection of vital ADHD Senate Inquiry recommendations as government avoids responsibility.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Australia, 13 December 2024: The peak body for all psychologists in Australia has criticised the government for leaving millions of Australians with ADHD without the support they urgently need, following its response to the Senate Inquiry into ADHD diagnosis and support services.

Despite overwhelming evidence supporting the urgent need to address ADHD diagnosis and support for 1.2 million Australians, only one recommendation has been fully supported, nine are supported in principle, and five have merely been noted. The key recommendation – to develop and implement a comprehensive national ADHD framework – has been left without any meaningful commitment.

The government has ignored many of the pivotal recommendations from the Senate Inquiry.

AAPi President, Sahra O'Doherty, called the response a glaring failure to prioritise the mental health needs of Australians.

“I and all psychologists represented by AAPi are deeply disappointed with the Government’s apparent dismissal of the vast majority of recommendations by the Senate Inquiry,” she said.

“This shows a continued deprioritisation of the mental health needs of Australians. The evidence shows us that early assessment, intervention, and support for those with ADHD provide lifelong health, social, and economic benefits.

“And yet this response by the Government will provide little relief for the high demand for and barriers to accessing appropriate services, and will continue to perpetuate the stigma of ADHD within the community.”

In Australia, an estimated 1 in 20 people live with ADHD. Many face significant challenges accessing affordable diagnosis and treatment, with average wait times exceeding 12 months and services often concentrated in urban centres. This inequity has far-reaching consequences, contributing to educational underachievement, poor mental health outcomes, and lost productivity.

The Senate Inquiry into ADHD, initiated earlier this year to address these concerns, received more than 700 submissions from individuals, community groups, and medical professionals. It outlined significant barriers to accessing ADHD diagnosis and support services and proposed 15 recommendations to address these challenges.

Critical reforms needed to break down barriers

AAPi is urging the government to take immediate action on the barriers preventing Australians from accessing ADHD assessment and support services by providing:

- **Affordable diagnosis and treatment:** Introduce Medicare rebates for ADHD assessments, as offered for other conditions, to reduce the financial burden on individuals and families.
- **Increase Medicare rebates for psychologists:** The current low rebate prevents most psychologists from bulk billing patients, exacerbating long wait times and limiting access to care.
- **Address workforce shortages:** Invest in training and recruitment of healthcare professionals to reduce waiting times and expand access to ADHD services.
- **Simplify ADHD medication access:** Allow GPs to prescribe ADHD medications, with diagnoses conducted by psychologists and adequate Medicare funding in partnership with medical reviews, to eliminate bottlenecks and reduce costs.
- **Raise awareness and reduce stigma:** Launch a national neurodiversity-affirming public health campaign to improve understanding of ADHD and combat stigma within the community.

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About Australian Association of Psychologists Inc (AAPi):

AAPi is a not-for-profit peak body for psychologists that aims to preserve the rich diversity of psychological practice in Australia. Formed in 2010 by a group of passionate grassroots psychologists, 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 such as Medicare Better Access Scheme and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.