

Too many of our children are falling through the cracks

The current state of accessibility and affordability to psychology services, in particular for neurodiverse families, is a matter of pressing concern and demands immediate attention and action.

The Australian Association of Psychologists Incorporated stands in firm agreement with the need for enhanced screening, assessment and treatment support for neurodiverse children, as pointed out [in these pages](#).

The statistics detailed in it underscore the urgency of the situation, with approximately 20 per cent of ACT students experiencing some form of disability. This implies that one in five children in the region may be grappling with worsening symptoms and a diminished quality of life.

To address this crisis effectively, the government must spearhead critical changes that prioritise the mental wellbeing of the nation's youth.

One crucial step towards improving mental health support for students is the introduction of more psychologists in schools, establishing a minimum of one psychologist for every 500 students.

This proactive measure ensures that early interventions can be implemented, fostering a nurturing environment for neurodivergent children to thrive academically and emotionally.

Investing in a rural and remote psychology workforce with place-based education is another fundamental initiative that lays the foundation for sustainable change.

Graduates from such programs are more likely to remain in these areas, thereby addressing the pervasive issue of workforce shortage.

Their presence promotes community-based initiatives and collaborations, extending the scope of mental health care beyond clinical settings to create a more holistic approach.

Allowing provisional psychologists to offer Medicare rebates to their clients would potentially increase the total number of individuals providing psychological services by 22.5 per cent.

This substantial increase would play a pivotal role in addressing the growing demand for mental health services and bridge the gap in the availability of qualified professionals.

A significant increase in the Medicare rebate for mental health patients to \$150 for all psychologists is necessary and long overdue. This increase would reduce out-of-pocket expenses, ensuring mental health services are more accessible, especially for those in lower socioeconomic areas.

It would increase bulk-billing rates, making psychological support available to a broader segment of the population.