

# HELP US HELP MORE

## Raise the Medicare rebate for psychologists to facilitate more bulk billing

**Help Us Help More.** Four simple words that sum up the dedication of psychologists across Australia.

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

As qualified professionals, we want to help. We can help. And you can help us help more.

By committing to support an increase in the Medicare rebate for psychologists, you can create more opportunities for Australians in your community to seek help for their mental health.

For psychologists, this isn't about competition or financial gain, this is about us helping Australians in their time of need.

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

By removing the current two-tier system\* (\*see below for explanation) for psychologists, and increasing the Medicare rebate, the Federal Government can help us help more.

Our ask is that you support our calls for an increase in the Medicare Benefits Schedule rebate for all psychologists so that the residents of your community can affordably access the mental health services they need.



## WHAT IS TWO-TIER SYSTEM FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS?

Under the current Medicare system, clients of Australian psychologists are rebated at two significantly different rates depending on the classification of the psychologist as either clinical endorsement or all other psychologists, including those with endorsement in other areas of psychology. This is despite their education and training being the same or similar and the fact that all psychologists provide the same service to the same standards, and to the same population group. Psychologists with clinical endorsement only account for 24% of psychologists in Australia.

**Clients of registered psychologists are rebated \$89 for a 50-minute session, while clients of clinical psychologists are rebated at \$129 – over \$40 more for the same kind of service.**

**There is no evidence to justify this difference in rebate amounts.**

AAPi is concerned this two-tier system has led to misinformation about the skills of all psychologists which is restricting access for the public to psychological services at a time when these services are needed more than ever. Furthermore, there is a disproportionate number of practitioners who qualify for the higher tier rebate operating in our major cities, thereby creating a major disparity in rural and regional areas of Australia.

**We recommend raising the rebate to \$150 for a standard 50 minute session, regardless of area of practice endorsement.**

This long-awaited higher rebate will assist those most vulnerable by making mental health services more affordable and encouraging more psychologists into private practice, which will help alleviate those areas with waiting lists, which is a problem in a high number of areas across the country.

AAPi's Private Practice Survey, conducted in late 2022, found that over 80% of respondents would bulk bill more if the rebate were raised to \$150.

We urge the Federal Government to implement this measure to ensure mental health care services are much more affordable for every Australian in need.

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## ABOUT AAPI

The Australian Association of Psychologists Inc (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, the AAPi's primary goal is to increase access to psychologists through addressing inequalities in funding.

Our work is of vital importance to deliver exceptional care and quality to the Australian public through caring, attentive, research-based psychology services to assist individuals, families and communities to achieve peace, balance and enhanced quality of life.

Over two in five Australians will experience a mental illness at some point during their lives and alarmingly, almost 40% of those aged 16-24 years had a mental disorder in 2020-21. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are seeing a spike in mental health challenges, with a growing trend in anxiety and indicators of PTSD and depression. It is therefore our priority to make highly skilled mental health professionals accessible to all Australians.

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