

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR OUR VALUED PATIENTS and CLIENTS:

Federal Government to Limit Access to Psychology Services to 10 Sessions Per Calendar Year

For many years, the number of psychology sessions Australians could access under the Medicare Better Access Program per calendar year was capped at 10. This arbitrary limit is insufficient for adequate treatment and has no regard for a person's circumstances or treatment needs. As part of the former Federal Government's COVID-19 initiative, the number of psychology sessions a person could access via Medicare in a calendar year was increased to 20 from 2020-2022. Many Australians, young and old, have benefited greatly from this initiative.

National bodies representing psychologists and mental health consumers, along with many individual psychologists, consumers, and politicians, have advocated strongly and extensively for these items to be retained. Dr. Collins is one of these advocates.

An extensive evaluation of the Better Access program by the University of Melbourne, released on 12 December, recommended that the additional 10 sessions be retained. However, on 12 December, the current Minister for Health, Mark Butler, announced that from 1 January 2023 the **Australian Government will slash Medicare sessions for psychology from 20 to 10 sessions per year.**

Response to the Government's Decision

This decision has been strongly criticised by consumer groups, peak psychology professional bodies, and politicians.

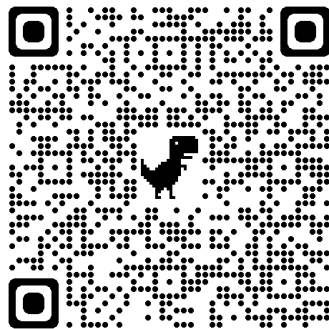
Dr. Marjorie Collins has written a media release in response, stating:

Minister Butler announced yesterday that Medicare rebated sessions for psychology will be slashed from 20 to 10 sessions from 1 January 2023. He claims to base this decision on the outcomes of an in-depth evaluation of the Better Access Scheme (BA). But, he has misrepresented the findings of that evaluation which shows that more sessions led to better outcomes for those who accessed them, with people with moderate to severe mental health conditions benefiting the most. The taxpayer-paid evaluation recommended, on the basis of evidence, that 20 sessions remain. The minister has ignored recommendations from the findings and cherry-picked statistics to suit his ideology. Psychologists are not able to provide effective therapy with only 10 sessions. It's equivalent to cutting one's chemotherapy part way through

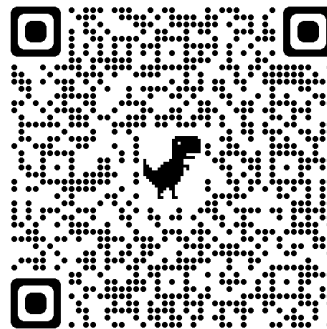
treatment. It defies logic and doesn't align with the evidence. The mental health of Australians will be compromised as a consequence of this ill-considered decision.

In an ABC News article, Suicide Prevention Australia chief executive Nieves Murray said she feared the changes would prevent people seeking help. "The decision to remove extra mental health supports at a time when interest rates are rising, housing pressure is growing and distress is high is baffling and very concerning," she said.

To see the Health Minister's Press Release and access the Better Access Evaluation Report, or to see the ABC News article, scan the QR codes below:



Minister's Press Release



ABC News Story

Our Team shares these serious concerns, and we will continue to advocate for this decision to be revised.

For now, our team will work with you to develop the most appropriate treatment plan for 2023. We understand that this decision may be distressing, and we are here to support you as we navigate the impacts of this change.

As government may be more inclined to listen to the view of the public, if you wish to share your view, you can email your local Member of Parliament and/or the Health Minister - minister.butler@health.gov.au

You can find out how to contact your local Member of Parliament by scanning this QR code:

