



INSTITUTE OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

PO Box 2117
Marmion WA 6020

www.icp.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Clinical psychologists call for certainty from Government on extra Medicare funded psychology sessions

The Institute of Clinical Psychologists is calling on the Federal Health Minister Mark Butler to provide certainty to patients and psychologists by extending into 2023 the COVID-19 health measure which provided 10 extra Medicare funded psychology sessions per year during the pandemic.

The 10 COVID-19 psychology items will cease on December 31, 2022, and while the government is undertaking an evaluation of the [Better Access initiative](#), the outcome of this evaluation is not expected to be completed by year's end.

President of the Institute of Clinical Psychologists Dr Marjorie Collins says not continuing the 10 extra sessions would be a huge blow to mental health consumers.

"It is now December, yet we do not know what treatment options will be available from 1 January 2023. Treatment plans are predicated on the number of available sessions.

It gives very little time for adequate and well considered decision making by government. It does not give adequate scope for psychologists to ensure continuity of care or treatment planning. And it does not give those receiving treatment adequate certainty about their treatment options from next month," she said.

"We believe an extension of 20 sessions is reasonable, until such time as decisions have been drawn from a well-considered review of the results from the Better Access Evaluation," Dr Collins added.

[Recent statistics released by the Health Department](#) show 50 per cent of psychology items are bulk billed, so the impact of sudden out of pocket expenses will be widespread across the population.

Concerningly, termination of the 20 psychology sessions will have the greatest impact on clients who are disadvantaged and unable to pay out of pocket costs, as well as families already struggling with increases in the cost of living.

When the 10 COVID-19 items for psychology are terminated from 1 January 2023, patients will be required to attend their GP to request new mental health treatment plans (MHTP). With many thousands of Australians suddenly needing new MHTPs because their partly used plans will become redundant, the impost on our GPs will increase, at a time when they have reduced availability.

"Psychologists, and our patients, hope for a quick resolution, and the continuation of an adequate number of Medicare rebated psychology sessions," said Dr Collins.



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Ends.

For interviews contact: *Dr Marjorie Collins, clinical psychologist and President the Institute of Clinical Psychologists*

PH: +61 414 360 858 or ***Email:*** president@icp.org.a