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Slashing Medicare funded psychology sessions a huge concern

THE AUSTRALIAN public is strongly supporting calls for the Government to commit to ongoing access to 20 Medicare funded psychology sessions for people seeking mental healthcare, Prof Caroline Hunt President of the Australian Clinical Psychology Association said.

“There is a real concern leading up to the 2022 Federal Budget that Medicare rebated psychology sessions will be slashed by half and cast back to the 10 sessions previously funded through Medicare before the COVID-19 pandemic,” Prof Hunt said.

“As we head into the new Government’s Wellbeing Budget the public and mental healthcare professionals are looking for some assurances about the fate of their mental health and wellbeing through ongoing access to psychology services.

“People want to see these 20 Medicare rebated sessions made permanent so Australians with complex mental health conditions, and those navigating the ongoing mental health effects of the pandemic, natural disasters and rising cost of living, can get the help they need.

“Complex mental health issues are unlikely to be resolved in just 10 psychology sessions. Also, while we are past the days of harsh lockdowns, there are mental health effects for people continuing to wrestle with the culmination of the major, multiple stressors impacting our society.”

More than 20,000 people have signed [a petition by Sydney teenager Hayley Prenter](#) calling for Medicare funding for 20 psychology sessions to be made permanent. Ms Prenter’s petition has been supported by a broad range of psychologists as well as thousands of individuals concerned about their access to ongoing mental healthcare.

“I’ve accessed psychology sessions in the past and felt really let down when I got to the 10 sessions and realised, I could no longer afford to keep attending appointments,” Ms Prenter said.

“Last year, I was doing my HSC in the middle of the south-western Sydney hard lockdown and having access to the 20 psychology sessions through Medicare was an important support.

“I’m very concerned the Federal Government hasn’t given any assurance to people like me, that the 20 sessions will become permanent. Many of us risk finding ourselves unable to afford ongoing care from our trusted psychologists because Medicare funding for psychology sessions could be slashed from 20 to 10 sessions a year.”

- Ends -

Prof Hunt and Ms Prenter are available for interview

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