

## ACPA Statement

### Telehealth recommendations promising as funding expiry looms

8<sup>th</sup> March 2021

ACPA continues to advocate for the continuation of MBS funded telehealth for important mental healthcare as the March 31, 2021 funding expiry nears.

Recently, the MBS Review Taskforce published their [Telehealth Recommendations Report \(2020\)](#)

The report aligns closely to many of the objectives ACPA is seeking for our members and clients.

The ACPA Board is encouraged by this report but remains vigilant in our advocacy to ensure Australians have ongoing access to high quality psychology services through telehealth.

A large proportion of Australians with mental health problems never seek professional help for their problems or take too long a time getting there. In fact, research has indicated that the key reasons people don't seek help include affordability, poor physical health, and geographic inaccessibility<sup>1</sup>. This is particularly relevant for young people.

Telehealth, when combined with the option of face-to-face care from a reputable provider, improves access to important psychology care for a range of Australians and it's imperative the Federal Government extends MBS telehealth rebates for psychology services.

The report from the MBS Review Taskforce sets up important principles including psychology services which include:

- patient-focused, safe and high quality,
- demonstrating increased mental health and wellbeing for patients,
- provided in the context of continuity of care between patient and practitioner.

If realised these goals would help address some of the unmet need in the community.

Adoption of the principles outlined in the Report, and the extension of telehealth items for clinical psychology services, will increase access to high quality care that fits a patient's need and preferences providing genuine clinical value both for individuals and for the health system overall.

Telehealth also provides assurance there could be a continuity of care for patients during the pandemic.

While we are living in a pandemic, we do not know where or when the next lockdown or outbreak maybe. We know MBS funded telehealth which is readily accessible for psychology services is a crucial tool in ensuring continuity of care for clients.

ACPA will continue to work with stakeholders and government on this crucial issue and will keep members aware of any announcements.

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<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30657197/#:~:text=Findings%3A%20Over%20one%20in%20five,%2C%2030%25%20in%20Canada>).