

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Changes to Better Access will make mental health care more inaccessible**

Peak body for all psychologists, the Australian Association of Psychologists (AAPi), says imminent changes to Better Access will create more barriers to mental health care.

The Federal Government announced that Better Access will need to be linked to MyMedicare from 1 November 2025, with referrals to these plans to be made by a GP at a person's MyMedicare registered GP practice; or if they are not registered, by their usual GP.

AAPi Executive Director Tegan Carrison said people should be able to access mental health services without the need for a GP referral.

“Given the current mental health crisis and the fact that one in five Australians say they have experienced a mental health disorder, these changes are just another impediment to people getting the prompt and professional support they need,” she said.

“When it comes to GPs, not everyone has a regular GP, can afford to see their regular GP, or can get into see their usual GP in a timely fashion - or even want to discuss their mental health with that GP, for a myriad of reasons.

“We would like to see Better Access giving people the option of a direct appointment with a psychologist without having to see their GP, which would ease the burden on GPs and increase access for consumers.

Ms Carrison said the changes spelled concerns about the future of Better Access.

“We believe there may be a push for GPs not to refer people for a Better Access mental health treatment plan and instead push them towards the Federal Government's newly announced digital services.

“Despite the government heavily investing in the marketing and implementation of digital mental health as a ‘cost-effective’ solution to the ongoing mental health crisis, consumers remain hesitant to use these, with uptake remaining low. Only 4.8% of Australians are accessing these digital options.

“The government is betting the farm on alternative solutions to our current mental health crisis and avoiding what all psychology peak bodies and those at the coalface are telling them.

“We need to grow the psychology workforce, reduce red tape and bureaucracy, appropriately fund Better Access by raising the Medicare rebate to \$150 and allow decisions like the number of appropriate sessions to be made by the treating health professional, not the government.”