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# Anger at mental health rebates

JANE HANSEN

A TWO-tier rebate system among groups of psychologists is harming patients at a time when mental health is at crisis point, the Australian Association of Psychologists says.

Under the Better Access program, which allows patients with a mental disorder to receive up to 10 individual counselling services subsidised by Medicare, patients of clinical psychologists receive a rebate of \$127 for a 50-minute session as opposed to registered psychologists, whose patients receive only \$87.45.

About 70 per cent of psychologists are registered psychologists.

Australian Association of Psychologists executive director Tegan Carrison said: "Given our current mental health crisis, it is imperative that this issue is addressed and barriers (rebate amount a client receives) to accessing a psychologist are removed."

Last week the findings of the Medicare Benefits Schedule Review Taskforce recommended a committee be

established to "urgently" review "access to, and rebates for, Better Access sessions delivered by different professional groups".

Clinical psychologists are required to hold a Masters degree, however when the registration system for psychologists moved from state-based systems to being federally managed, existing paid members of special interest Colleges of the Australian Psychological Society were "grandfathered" into the new endorsement system.

So some clinical psychologists may not hold a Masters.

"A clinical psychologist has an endorsement in psychology based in a clinical setting, like a hospital and a registered psychologist is everyone else that does not have that endorsement," Ms Carrison said.

"We don't think there is any difference."