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MEDIA RELEASE

Retirement of two rural psychologists will create healthcare gap in community

Two registered psychologists will retire this Friday, leaving a big gap in mental health services in the Whitsunday region.

Justine McAllister from Bowen and **Janice Armstrong** from Cannon Valley are well respected in their communities and after long careers in private practice, both have decided to retire.

Registered psychologist **Christine Franklin**, from Cannonvale, said the departure of the women was not only sad for the rural communities but would leave a tremendous hole in terms of meeting future mental health needs in the area.

“Both these women have served their communities exceptionally well and I thank them for their professional efforts in caring for the mental health needs of residents for many years,” she said.

“As far as I know there are no replacement psychologists lined up at this time. There is no financial incentive for psychologists to come to this region whatsoever because the government doesn’t give rural communities the recognition they really need.

“This area is just spectacular. How can we not be attracting professional people to paradise?”

Ms Franklin is a member of the Australian Association of Psychologists ([AAPi](#)) and said the inequity of the two-tier rebate system for psychologists made it challenging for registered psychologists to run a viable practice.

Currently, clients of registered psychologists are rebated at \$88 for a standard 50-minute session, while those of clinical psychologists are rebated at \$129 – over \$40 more for the same session.

AAPi Executive Director, Tegan Carrison, said the client rebate for all psychology services across the board should be raised to \$150 so that private practices remain viable and the community can afford the support it so desperately needs, when they need it. AAPi is also advocating for further incentives for rural health professionals.

The two women will be farewelled at a lunch in Airlie Beach on Friday 19 November.

About the Australian Association of Psychologists Inc (AAPi):

The AAPi is a not-for-profit peak body for all psychologists that aims to preserve the rich diversity of psychological practice in Australia. Formed in 2010 by a group of passionate grassroots psychologists, the AAPi's primary goal is to address inequality in the profession and represent all psychologists and their clients equally to government and funding bodies. Its primary mission is to lobby for equitable access for the Australian public to professional psychological services funded under the current Medicare Better Access Scheme.