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Media release

Diversity of psychologists critical for diverse mental health needs

A shortage of educational and developmental psychologists could negatively impact the way mental health needs are managed into the future, according to the peak body for all psychologists.

Executive Director of the Australian Association of Psychologists, Tegan Carrison, said the fact that only 5% of Australian psychologists have education and developmental endorsement means there could be a skill set shortage in years to come.

The statistic was highlighted in the Australian Government's National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy released this month. (page 21)

"While we are most supportive of the new strategy, this figure has raised some serious concerns about the lack of diversity for psychology," she said.

"There are currently more than 4,300 registrar supervisors in the area of clinical psychology but only 304 in the educational and development field. And if you look at Masters degrees, there are only four options for educational and developmental psychology while for clinical psychology there are more than 40 choices."

Ms Carrison said unfortunately, the degrees were controlled by market demand which created an uneven playing field when it came to the psychology workforce.

"Although the same amount of education and training is required for areas of practice endorsement, clinical psychologists are rebated or paid 40% more than all other types of psychologists.

"This discriminatory system under Medicare divides psychologists into two different rebate categories: those with clinical endorsement and those without. Australians can only access the higher rebate when seeing clinical psychologists, who represent just 30% of all psychologists.

"This means 70% of psychologists in Australia are placed on a lower Medicare rebate, despite research showing that all psychologists get excellent treatment outcomes.

"We need to ensure that our universities are producing a diversity of psychologists who can continue to care for a community with an incredibly diverse range of mental health needs."

Tegan Carrison is the Executive Director of the Australian Association of Psychologists Inc (AAPi), a not-for-profit peak body for all psychologists in Australia.

About Australian Association of Psychologists Inc (AAPi)

The AAPi is a not-for-profit peak body for 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.

About Tegan Carrison, Executive Director, AAPi

Tegan has spent over 15 years in public health promotion and is passionate about advocating for the rights of health care professionals and improving access for the community. After studying Nutrition and Health Promotion at Deakin University, Tegan went on to become an experienced clinical educator, supervisor, and mentor, including starting a student-led interprofessional clinic with the University of Queensland's not-for-profit UQ Health Care. Tegan also brings a wealth of experience in business management, administration and human resource management. She is passionate and dedicated to improving access to mental health services and creating the leading members association for psychologists in Australia.