

Mental Health Submission

My name is Annette Valentine Eriksen, from Denmark but now living in Australia. I love Australia and I find many people very easy going and helpful. I'm a qualified teacher, career guidance counsellor and counsellor & psychotherapist.

I have worked with students here for a couple of years and have now been self-employed for almost two years. My work with the clients has been very rewarding and I appreciate their openness towards me.

Having said that I do believe very strongly that if Medicare rebate was an option with highly qualified Counsellors and Psychotherapists (having a master degree) we could save more young people from trying to commit suicide or actually being successful in their attempt. Furthermore, more male clients have told me they prefer me as their counsellor due to my holistic approach in my work with them. But often they have to stop receiving my services due to financial reasons and I can't argue with that. Australia is not a cheap country to live in and it is only getting more expensive and wages are not following in the same rate as daily costs.

Australia is having more immigrants myself included and I do believe cultural diversity is one of the many great assets about Australia but more awareness about counselling is needed in this group of people as well.

Going forward I can only encourage the government to recognise Counsellors and Psychotherapists with a master degree as qualified Counsellors and Psychotherapists, offer Medicare to clients who want to see a Counsellor and provide more mental health awareness for young people, male and everyone living in a remote area.

I work as a phone Crisis EAP and Online Counsellor, more employers need to take a very good look at their management style, remove managers who are bullying their staff, introduce stress management tools and become trained in fields of self-care, stress management, anxiety and depression as well. Mental Health First Aid course should be mandatory for every manager of an organisation larger than a certain number of employees.

I'm very grateful for living in this country, I look forward to seeing more appreciation for Counsellors and Psychotherapists going forward and I look forward to being a part of this process so it also will become more safe and reliable for clients as well.

Many thanks for the opportunity to make a submission.