

Published in part, in the *Weekend Australian Newspaper*, Health Section (*At the Coalface*) August 2010

Having worked for many years in both the public and private sectors in mental health, it saddens me to see no comprehensive plan for mental health care and service delivery. The key issues I hear from clients is that it's hard to know where to go for help, who is properly trained to provide psychological therapy and how to get timely access. Planning and funding is needed for mental health care, at a preventative and treatment level, for developing and expanding "Community Life Centres" (currently called "Community Health Centres"). These Life Centres could provide excellent community access to a range of non-medical services. I worked in one of these centres in the country of NSW many years back and it provided a range of professional services, including clinical psychology, under one roof. People walked in off the street and asked for an appointment with the Clinical Psychologist or any other provider. There were no GP referrals needed (which then frees up the GP waiting room). Many more of these centres should be established in metro and rural areas. This would reduce stigma, which has strongly been associated with going to a "mental health service" but one clinical psychologist per centre won't be enough. More highly trained people (specialist psychologists) who work with the high prevalence disorders of depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol abuse, relationship breakdowns etc need to be employed. The psychology specialists, (Clinical, Counselling, Child and Developmental Psychologists and Neuropsychologists) need to be more fully utilised because of their dedicated training in psychological services. The numbers of these professionals need to significantly increase, requiring Government funding of universities to expand training places and encourage people to train in these fields, like they support nursing and medical training.

Thank you

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PRINTED IN THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN 14th Aug, 2010