

## Unlocking the potential of Mental Health Nurses by enabling access to the MBS

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The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMHN) is the pre-eminent and authoritative voice of the mental health nursing profession in Australia. It provides leadership to, and advocacy for mental health issues across the mental health sector and nursing, as well as setting national standards of practice in mental health nursing.

ACMHN has once again called on the Government to act on behalf of the mental health of Australians and fund the services of mental health nurses through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS).

“Credentialed Mental Health Nurses (MHNs) in Australia are highly skilled, and educated mental health professionals. They have postgraduate qualifications and many are experts in the provision of psychotherapy, including working with those with the most complex health issues – the kind of health issues that are presenting in Australians with the ongoing social and economic pressures of 2020,” said ACMHN CEO, Stephen Jackson.

Successive Governments have failed to recognise the expertise or potential of MHNs and now is the most crucial time for MHNs to be recognised as providers of specific services.

“MHNs have been locked out of providing care under the Medicare Benefit Scheme including COVID-19 funding for tele-health measures. MHNs should have full access to the MBS, and their therapeutic skills recognised by all funders of mental health services,” continued Mr Jackson.

“A very simple solution could be rolled out – to provide qualified, experienced and credentialed mental health nurses with MBS item numbers for the provision of mental health services directly related to COVID-19,” he said.

Mental health nurses, both in primary care and private practice, currently have very limited access to MBS. This means the system is not set-up to support mental health nurses working with people with mental health conditions, nor those who develop mental health conditions.

“In unprecedented times like this, Australians are facing a very daunting reality – not being able to support their family financially, not able to secure new work, and not able to have the social support they need,” Mr Jackson said.

“At this crucial time we need to support Australia's mental health needs before it spirals downwards. A qualified and experienced mental health nursing workforce can provide essential support for people in need. The more people that we can get to – that can see a mental health nurse during this time (or talk to them on the phone or video) – the more we can provide case management, preventative support and support those at risk.”

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