

# Psychiatric services reduced not increased

**National Association of Practising Psychiatrists**

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The latest admission by Federal Health Minister, Dr Michael Wooldridge, that he had been wrong when he told the Parliament that his cuts to psychiatric rebates had resulted in a 10% increase in those seeing a psychiatrist is the latest in a list of policy blunders damaging Australia's health care said Dr Gil Anaf, President of the National Association of Practising Psychiatrists.

The Minister now admits that there has been a decline of 1% not an increase of 10% as he originally stated.

Dr Anaf said "The Minister is admitting that he has rationed psychiatric services to patients who are in great need. He justifies his u-turn by blaming his Department for incorrectly briefing him."

"Dr Wooldridge used as justification for these cuts to patients, the performance of a mythical Dr 747 who he claimed was a 'rorter' and had to be controlled."

However so far, "Neither the HIC [Health Insurance Commission] or the RANZCP [Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists] will attest to having seen any detailed evidence of Dr 747."

"It is difficult for our patients to fight for themselves, and even more difficult and painful for them to explain the benefits of their treatment publicly. It means giving up their privacy and taking on the Federal government and its bureaucracy who are prepared to use hearsay evidence about Dr 747 to get their way.

"Our patients are vulnerable and that is why we believe they have been targeted," Dr Anaf said.

"There needs to be a full inquiry as to why these incorrect psychiatric figures were produced in the first place. The Minister can't hide behind his department. What else is he saying that on checking will be wrong?"

Our patients suffer from a lack of trust. Many of those they have trusted have hurt them. The Minister's misleading of parliament is another example of the fact that the Minister will not effectively protect and represent some of the most vulnerable members of our society," said Dr Anaf.

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Telephone: 02 9556 2534 Fax: 02 9567 4681  
Address: PO Box 12 Arncliffe NSW 2205  
Internet: <http://www.napp.org.au>