



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia

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Our reference: 17/5264

Medicare Benefits Schedule Review
Department of Health
GPO Box 9848
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Sir / Madam

**General Submission to the Medicare Benefits Schedule Review - HEADSS
Adolescent Psychosocial Risk Assessments**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a general submission to the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review.

As the WA Commissioner for Children and Young People, I have a statutory role to advocate for and promote policies, laws, programs and services that enhance the wellbeing of all children and young people in WA. My functions are set out broadly under section 19 of the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006 (WA)*.

In performing my role the best interests of children and young people must be my paramount consideration. I must give priority to, and have special regard for, the interests and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and children and young people who are disadvantaged for any reason.

It is with these responsibilities in mind that I provide these comments.

I am recommending the MBS Review team consider the inclusion of HEADSS Adolescent Psychosocial Risk Assessments under the MBS Health Assessment Items 701 - 707 and 715. Currently young people are not included as an eligible target group for whom these MBS items can be used.

The HEADSS Adolescent Psychosocial Risk Assessment is recommended by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians for use in primary, secondary and tertiary care, and is commonly used in Australia. The HEADSS assessment helps health professionals to develop rapport with a young person, while systematically gathering information about their lives, including family, peers, school and intimate matters. It helps to identify areas for intervention and prevention, and develops a picture of the young person's strengths and protective factors. HEADSS assessments are recommended annually for all young people aged 10 to 24 years.

The period of adolescence is second only to early childhood in the rate and breadth of developmental change. Young people have specific health needs that stem from the physical, behavioural, psychological and cognitive developments they are experiencing, including in areas such as sexual health and relationships, mental health, alcohol and drug use, body weight, nutrition and injury prevention. During adolescence, young people form

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health-related attitudes and behaviours that can stay with them for life, making it a critical time for supporting positive health practices.

The opportunity to assess a young person's psychosocial background including strengths and supports, and to detect underlying concerns, risk factors and significant issues which require intervention, is a critical step towards reducing adolescent morbidity and mortality.

Including HEADSS Adolescent Psychosocial Risk Assessments under the MBS Health Assessment Items 701 - 707 and 715 would support greater use of this important health assessment by health professionals and make the assessment more accessible and affordable for young people.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide a submission to the MBS Review. Should you wish to discuss any of these matters in more detail, please contact me on 6213 2297 or via info@ccyp.wa.gov.au

Yours sincerely



COLIN PETTIT

Commissioner for Children and Young People

8 August 2017