

Access to Allied Psychological Services - ATAPS – Flexible Care Packages

As mentioned in previous communications, there will be changes to the ATAPS program, whereby funds will be directed to deliver new packages of care for people with severe mental illness being managed in the community.

In the Federal Budget papers, it states, a multi-disciplinary plan will be developed to include clinical services (psychological therapy and clinical case management provided by mental health nurse, psychologist, social worker or occupational therapist) and other services such as social rehabilitation and social work services.

The facts are that:

The new proposed ATAPS program caters for a different client group from the Better Access program; the new funding allocated to it will not change that;

The AASW has already raised an issue that highly qualified and experienced social workers are often not being contracted by GP Networks to provide these services. While some Divisions do contract social workers, many tend to use only psychologists;

Social workers in ATAPS are not required to be AASW members and so are not accountable through the Ethics Complaints Management System or obliged to completed accredited Continuing Professional Education (CPE) each year;

Social workers in ATAPS are not currently required to be accredited by the AASW, meaning they are not necessarily advanced mental health practitioners. Whilst there are many experienced social workers in ATAPS services, there is no requirement for them to meet the requirements of an Accredited Mental Health Social Worker.

The mental health services to be offered through the new ATAPS program are for the 'most serious' MH disorders (schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder, for example)

The Government has announced these 'new packages' for ATAPS but we are yet to see the details.

AMHSW access to referrals to provide Better Access services will cease on April 1, 2011 and there is no transition plan to assist members move from this program to ATAPS.