

24 July 2020

The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health

By email to: Minister.Hunt@health.gov.au

Dear Minister

Re: Continuation of telehealth item numbers during COVID-19 pandemic

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) continues to welcome the Department of Health's ongoing work to support the delivery of psychiatry services by telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We hope that you are able to consider the RANZCP's recent request (17 July 2020) to urgently implement telehealth item numbers for the delivery of psychiatry inpatient services. We are also in contact with your Department to offer every assistance to progress these considerations.

I am also writing to request the continuation of all existing COVID-19 telehealth items for a further period of at least six months, from 30 September 2020 onwards, to facilitate ongoing access to psychiatry during the pandemic. This approach is now particularly crucial for mental health care and outcomes given the significant and continuing rise in the incidence of COVID-19 infections in Australia. An extension will also allow for proper evaluation of the effectiveness of these measures.

Recently I and the President Elect, Dr Vinay Lakra met with Mark Roddam, First Assistant Secretary (Mental Health), on 3 July to discuss the best approach for continuing to support the use of telehealth during the pandemic. I have also written to the Department outlining our willingness to work with the Department of Health to determine how telehealth could be utilised to provide high quality accessible care beyond COVID-19. To help inform these discussions, the RANZCP will shortly be able to share the results of its recent member survey on telehealth, to which more than 1000 psychiatrists have responded.

For any queries on the points raised, please contact Rosie Forster, Executive Manager, Practice, Policy and Partnerships Department via rosie.forster@ranzcp.org or by phone on (03) 9601 4943.

Yours sincerely



Associate Professor John Allan
President

Ref: 1849

Cc:

Mr Mark Roddam, First Assistant Secretary, Mental Health Branch, Mark.Roddam@health.gov.au
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