

7 May 2026

The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

Re: Advocacy for Medicare Rebate for Registered Counsellors and Psychotherapists

At its meeting on 27 April 2026, Council discussed the growing and demonstrated community need for accessible and affordable mental health support. Recognising the important role of qualified counsellors and psychotherapists in supporting our community experiencing mental health challenges, trauma, grief, relationship difficulties and other psychosocial issues.

Council resolved to write to you. Please find below the resolution which was passed at the meeting.

“That Council resolve:

- A. To recognise a growing and demonstrated community need for accessible and affordable mental health support, and:
1. Note the increasing demand for accessible and affordable mental health services locally and across Australia.
 2. Recognise the important role of qualified counsellors and psychotherapists in supporting individuals experiencing mental health challenges, trauma, grief, relationship difficulties and other psychosocial issues.
 3. Note that registration with recognised national peak bodies the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) and the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) as fully qualified counsellors and psychotherapists requires practitioners to hold undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications, meet ongoing professional development requirements, have clinical supervision of their practice, and meet national professional standards.
 4. Note that under the current Medicare system and Mental Health Treatment Plan framework, Medicare rebates are available for services provided by certain allied health professionals including psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists, but generally do not extend to counsellors and psychotherapists who are registered members of PACFA or ACA.
 5. Recognise that excluding qualified counsellors and psychotherapists from Medicare rebates limits community access to timely and affordable mental health support and places additional pressure on the existing mental health workforce.

B. Having regard to Resolution A above, to:

1. Write to the Hon. Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care and relevant Federal Members for Knox:
 - i. Requesting the Commonwealth Government address mental health workforce shortages, and improve access and affordability by:
 - Including Registered Counsellors and Psychotherapists as eligible Medicare Benefits Scheme (MBS) providers.
 - Creating counselling/Psychotherapist provider numbers.
 - Mandating their inclusion in Public Health Network (PHN) multidisciplinary teams.
 - Updating PHN workforce strategies to ensure Registered Counsellors and Psychotherapists are included as mental health providers.
 - Allowing PHNs to refer clients directly to counsellors and psychotherapists.
 - Providing PHNs with funding to deliver services via an expanded workforce including Registered Counsellors and Psychotherapists.
 - ii. Advocating for the inclusion of appropriately qualified counsellors and psychotherapists who are registered members of PACFA or ACA as eligible providers under Medicare-supported Mental Health Treatment Plans; and
 - iii. Requesting that the Commonwealth Government consider establishing appropriate qualification, registration and supervision standards to enable these practitioners to deliver Medicare-rebated counselling services.
2. Provide a copy of this resolution to the Prime Minister, the local Federal Member of Parliament, the Australian Local Government Association, the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA), and the Australian Counselling Association (ACA).
3. Receive a report to a future Council meeting (to be determined in consultation with the Mayor) outlining any response received from the Hon. Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care, and detailing any actions undertaken as a result of this resolution."

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the above with you. I look forward to receiving your response.

If you have any enquiries regarding these requests, please contact me on 0498 880 807 or email: cr.paige.kennett@knox.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Cr Paige Kennett
Mayor

c.c. The Hon Mark Butler MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care
Ms Mary Doyle MP, Member for Aston
Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA)
Australian Counselling Association (ACA)
Australian Local Government Association

Enquiries: Cr Paige Kennett
Document ID: D26-127635

15 May 2026

Cr Paige Kennett
Mayor
Knox City Council
By email: Eleonore.Smith@knox.vic.gov.au

Dear Cr Kennett,

Thank you for your letter of 7 May 2026 and for providing the resolution adopted by Knox City Council at its meeting on 27 April 2026. ALGA strongly recognises the growing community need for accessible and affordable mental health support and the increasing pressures being experienced by councils and communities across Australia, including the critical role played by appropriately qualified counsellors and psychotherapists.

The issues raised in Council's resolution—including mental health workforce capacity constraints, restrictive Medicare and Mental Health Treatment Plan settings, affordability and access to services—are matters ALGA is hearing through its ongoing engagement with councils and state local government associations. These issues will inform ALGA's continued advocacy with the Australian Government and our broader policy work on mental health funding and service delivery. We support and encourage councils to continue raising these concerns directly with Commonwealth ministers and local federal members, and we appreciate Knox City Council providing its resolution to inform our advocacy work.

Yours sincerely,



Amy Crawford
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Local Government Association



Australian Government
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Ref No: MC26-010035

Cr Paige Kennett
Mayor
Knox City Council
cr.paige.kennett@knox.vic.gov.au

Dear Mayor Kennett

Thank you for your correspondence of 7 May 2026 to the Minister for Health and Ageing and the Minister for Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the Hon Mark Butler MP, regarding Medicare-subsidised services and the role of counsellors and psychotherapists. The Minister has asked me to reply.

The Australian Government recognises the growing demand for accessible and affordable mental health support and the important role that counsellors and psychotherapists play in delivering care.

The Productivity Commission Inquiry into Mental Health (2020) and the House of Representatives Select Committee Inquiry into Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (2021) acknowledged the calls from counsellors and psychotherapists to be recognised under the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS). Both inquiries found that the regulatory frameworks governing these professions required further consideration before MBS eligibility can be assessed, and in response the Government has developed National Standards for Counsellors and Psychotherapists.

The National Standards were developed in consultation with the sector, including the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) and the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA). They set expectations for education, supervision, ethical practice and professional capability to support safe, high-quality services across the counselling and psychotherapy workforce. The National Standards are available on the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's (department) website: [National Standards for Counsellors and Psychotherapists – Summary report](#)

Further work is underway to support implementation of the National Standards, including consideration of appropriate regulatory arrangements. Information on this work, including updates on recent consultations, is available through the department's Consultation Hub: www.consultations.health.gov.au

The Government funds Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to plan and commission regionally appropriate mental health and suicide prevention services based on the needs of their communities. PHNs have flexibility in how services are delivered, including the composition of their workforce, and may include a range of suitably qualified professionals where appropriate.

Thank you for writing on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Gelbart", with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Lisa Gelbart
Director
Mental Health Workforce Section

9 June 2026