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18 March 2020

Parliament House Canberra
The Hon Greg Hunt MP
The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP
Minister.Hunt@health.gov.au
department@treasury.gov.au

Dear Ministers

Re: Financial hardship for Bowen Therapists and other health care professionals

We write to you on behalf of the nearly 2500 Bowen Therapists in Australia, most of whom are represented by their membership to the Bowen Association of Australia and Bowen Therapists Federation of Australia.

Most Bowen therapists are sole traders and work from small clinics or share a premise with other similar health professionals. The average charge for a session is between \$70 and \$90. Since the federal government introduced changes to legislation around private health funds last year, many of our therapists have been greatly impacted in their ability to make a living. While our therapy is no less effective than it was before, being dropped from health fund lists has meant that many Australians have chosen, or been financially forced, to move to other therapies, such as remedial massage, which still attracts the rebate; or even to other more manipulative therapies, such as physiotherapy, that can be attained under Enhanced Primary Care. Through no fault of their own, our members have lost a considerable portion of their income due to this governmental decision.

For many members, especially in regional and rural areas, they have also been affected by the ongoing drought and the reduced income which has been affecting their towns. And then recently, the unprecedented bushfire emergency, which has devastated so much of our country, has further reduced our members' ability to earn a living.

Now, our members face a new existential threat. COVID-19 has had a very sudden effect of keeping people away from physical, face to face and hands-on therapies. The encouragement of social distancing and working from home has had an entirely understandable impact on the bodywork therapists in Australia.

We write to ask you to reconsider your support packages for industry and individuals in therapeutic roles, to assist them through the COVID-19 emergency. As the party for small business, you'd be aware that small business people spend a large portion of their income in other businesses. While you have recently announced a package for sole traders, this excludes a large portion of our members since many do not have sizeable superannuation funds (if at all) and essentially you are just offering them the chance to use their own money now to the detriment of their financial future.

We ask for assistance for the many health professionals who are sole traders with modest incomes who do not have the wealth and resources to see them through this unforeseen challenge. We would like all Bowen therapists to have access to payments through recovery relief packages considering their livelihoods are on the line.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Susan P. Marte'.

Susan Marte
President - Bowen Association Australia Inc
and on behalf of Bowen Therapists Federation of Australia