



News Release

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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GP^s HELP STUDENTS BEAT BACK TO SCHOOL BLUES

The Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) has reminded Australian families that the start of the new school year presents many challenges as well as opportunities for students, particularly for those moving into secondary school.

“Australia’s young people live in an increasingly complex world where they are asked to make many decisions and adapt to change at an increasingly rapid pace” said ADGP Chair, Dr Rob Walters.

Starting school again after a long break, changing schools and making the transition into secondary school can be stressful. Supporting young people at this time of the year is important.

Dr Walters said that general practice has a key role in supporting the emotional and social wellbeing of young people and in preventing more serious problems from developing.

“This is important to remember at the start of the school year in light of statistics showing that an estimated 14% of children and young people may potentially have mental health problems”, he said.

Dr Walters said some of the best ways for families and young people to ease the pressures at the start of the school year is to keep communication channels open, keep up activities that relieve stress like music, art or sport and talking to someone they trust like a friend, teacher, school counsellor or doctor.

“As a GP, I often see young people who need to talk to someone outside their family about the issues they face” said Dr Walters.

“GPs can be an early port of call for young people facing challenges brought about by change. They can provide families and young people with information and advice and can work with other health providers to address problems early, coordinate care and provide support,” he said.

An encouraging new initiative being managed by ADGP is the *MindMatters Plus GP* initiative. This is a national demonstration project run through Divisions of General Practice that aims to develop comprehensive primary care support networks for students by working to link school communities with general practice.

“The initiative is already showing promise and is particularly targeting young people at risk,” said Dr Walters. “*MindMatters Plus GP* is taking an integrated approach by linking existing services and avenues of support for young people.

“By linking *MindMatters Plus GP* with initiatives like *Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care* and case conferencing items, GPs are supported to work with other health professionals to better manage a young person’s health. This means that the connections now being made between schools and general practice are likely to be long lasting” said Dr Walters.

For comment: Dr Rob Walters, ADGP Chair, 0418 127 123
For further information: Kerry Ungerer, Communications Manager, 0412 424 309