News Release

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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Recognition of GP role in mental health welcomed

The Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd. (ADGP) has welcomed the election promises announced this week by the Coalition and the ALP to expand funding that targets the important role GPs play as the first point of contact for most people with a mental health problem.

“It is gratifying to see that both parties have recognised the importance of involving general practice in mental health initiatives”, said ADGP Chairman Dr Rob Walters.

“Whilst we welcome Labor’s pledge to review and consolidate the range of programs for primary mental health care to reduce the red tape burden, there would be concern that simply allowing additional providers to access Medicare rebates will fragment care and perpetuate existing barriers between health professionals.

“Furthermore, the implementation of programs such as *Better Outcomes in Mental Health* and *MindMatters Plus GP* has been largely contingent on the Divisions of General of Practice infrastructure, which has invested heavily in supporting these initiatives,” Dr Walters said.

“Through Divisions’ efforts, such as through the Better Outcomes’ allied health services initiative, many Australians have been able to access quality primary mental care for the first time. The additional funding directed to this support will ensure the program’s success is continued.

“We are also pleased to see the inclusion of specific services for children, young people, and rural and remote communities.

“General practice is the ideal setting to implement a coordinated, comprehensive youth health agenda, including mental health issues. It is the lynchpin for getting young people back on track and for helping disconnected young people re-engage with their families and communities.

“It is vital for GPs to be supported with quality education and training about how to be ‘youth friendly’ and deliver quality, preventative care to young people.

“Divisions of General Practice are uniquely placed to link GPs with specialist services, schools, youth centres and other primary care providers for better prevention, early intervention, targeted referral and continuity of care for young people,” he said.

ADGP is the peak body representing the Divisions of General Practice network which links 95 per cent of GPs across Australia in a national structure that supports general practice and improves community access to primary care.

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