



# NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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## GPs supporting mental health in secondary schools

The majority of mental health conditions have their onset in adolescence. Despite this, only one in four young people receive professional help. With teachers facing increasing numbers of students experiencing mental health problems in the classroom, there is an urgent need to find new ways of providing care for young people at risk.

One initiative, MindMatters Plus GP is having a positive impact on secondary school students. Under this initiative, which is an extension of the MindMatters mental health promotion program for schools, GPs in a number of divisions have provided classroom education sessions to over 5,158 secondary school students about a range of mental health issues commonly occurring in adolescents, how to obtain a Medicare Card and how a GP can help with emotional or mental health problems.

Surveys undertaken in divisions to measure the impact of these interventions, reported:

- that up to 85% of students felt that they had a greater understanding of how to find and make an appointment to see a GP
- and 73% indicated that they would be more likely to consult a GP as a result of participating in these activities.

Dr Jenny Thomson, ADGP Chair said "Many young people are not even aware of how to obtain a Medicare card, let alone what a GP does or how to make an appointment to see a one.

"Through this initiative, the young people involved in MindMatters Plus GP are now more aware of just how important a link with a general practice can be.

"They are realising they can talk confidentially to their GP about their mental health and emotional problems, and that there are options for help.

"MindMatters Plus GP bridges the gap between schools and general practice to provide networks of care for students with high mental health needs."

Divisions of General Practice worked closely with schools to develop information brochures and posters depicting a range of mental health issues and where students could seek help. Over half the students and teachers surveyed reported that these gave them a clearer understanding of how to seek help and how to obtain a Medicare card.

Dr Thomson added "To support young people with mental health problems, we have to reach them in their everyday environments, and reinforce the message that GPs are able to help – they can talk to their GP."

One student, who suffered from depression said, "My GP was great. He referred me to a counsellor and psychologist and I got help from there. If I hadn't gone to my GP, I would still be the same as I was a year ago".

The Australian Division of General Practice is currently working closely with the Department of Health and Ageing to develop sustainable models of youth mental health care and is committed to continuing to work with schools and other community organisations to care for young people with high mental health needs.

For more information please call Liesel Wett, ADGP Deputy Chief Executive Officer on 0414 43 45 81.

### WHAT IS ADGP?

- ADGP is the peak body representing 118 Divisions of General Practice and eight state-based organisations (SBOs) around Australia. The Divisions Network supports general practice and their practice teams and drives the implementation of innovative health strategies.
- ADGP, through the Divisions Network, works to integrate general practice with other sectors of the health system, both government and non-government, to deliver high quality care to the Australian community.
  - ADGP is committed to promoting the health of all Australians by supporting the role of Divisions in the nation's primary health care system.



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