



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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School's back – but many students with mental health problems are still not seeking help

Fourteen per cent of Australian children and adolescents experience mental health problems, yet only one in four receives help. The most common reasons adolescents report for failing to seek help for mental health problems are:

- a desire to manage their problems themselves
- a belief that nothing will help
- not knowing where to seek help
- being afraid of what people will think of them.

When adolescents seek professional help, GPs and school-based counsellors are their professionals of choice.

Through the *MindMatters* Plus GP initiative, Divisions of General Practice have been working with schools and other local service providers to improve the mental health literacy of school teachers, students and parents; and to develop clear referral pathways between schools and primary care providers to deliver best practice, continuous care for young people experiencing mental health problems.

To date, over 5,000 students and approximately 2,000 parents from 24 schools have accessed education sessions designed to promote help seeking and provide information about a range of mental health conditions. Specific sessions have included information on:

- obtaining a Medicare card
- how a GP can assist a person experiencing emotional or mental health problems
- the signs, symptoms and treatment of common mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.

Divisions of General Practice have also worked closely with school teachers and other local service providers to develop comprehensive referral pathways to support individuals with high mental health care needs. The *MindMatters* Plus GP initiative has given teachers more confidence to refer students whom they feel may have an emotional or mental health problem to a local GP.

One teacher reported that prior to the *MindMatters* Plus GP initiative "GPs weren't even in the loop and staff didn't really realise just how important a link they could be."

GPs involved in the initiative are reporting that they now have more young people consulting them and teachers are now referring students earlier for help. One GP said "The teachers themselves have been given more skills to recognise the presentations and patterns of symptoms of mental illness and are picking up on them much earlier. They now have clearly defined pathways where they can approach the start of care and get that rolling much more quickly."

Kate Carnell, CEO of ADGP said "The *MindMatters* Plus GP is working well, but only in 24 schools. It needs to be expanded to give the maximum number of young people the best chance possible."

ADGP has put in a budget submission to the Australian Government to roll this important project out across Australia.

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