



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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Primary care-led change central to COAG health agenda

On the eve of tomorrow's COAG meeting where governments will look at better ways of working together to improve health outcomes, the Australian Divisions of General Practice is calling for any future national health agendas to be underpinned by a strong primary health care strategy.

Kate Carnell, ADGP, CEO said "The indications are that COAG will be giving particular emphasis to prevention and early intervention, mental health, workforce issues and rural and remote issues.

"These are important community issues and vital areas of health policy. They are also areas of health care delivery in which innovation, reform and genuine investment are long overdue.

"A national approach to primary health care policy and a practical strategy to create a more robust primary health care system is vital.

"Quality preventative primary health care is important to the social and economic participation of the community. Keeping people well and in the workforce contributes to their well being as well as national productivity.

"With irrefutable evidence that primary care-led systems achieve better outcomes and contain cost, investing more in primary health care is something that governments must seriously embrace.

"ADGP has been very clear about what we think needs to change – our key solutions are set out in our Primary Health Care Position Statement and our 2006-07 Federal Budget submission.

"Medicare incentives for preventative checks to keep patients healthy, national implementation of *Lifescrpts* and expansion of practice nurse incentives should be central to a prevention agenda.

"There can be no single more important investment than that in the health of Australia's children. This is an issue that spans both a mental health and prevention agenda. Any blueprint must support the central role of general practice as a source of advice for parents and the first point of coordinated care and referral for children" said Ms Carnell.

"We particularly support national implementation of the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program. We hope that governments at the upcoming COAG meeting will give serious consideration to an investment in Triple P as part of a revitalised national mental health agenda.

"We have a \$450 million blueprint for a primary mental health agenda that will build on important programs already established by the Australian Government. Key planks in our mental health agenda include a \$220 million expansion of the successful *Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care Initiative* and \$35 million for a network of Community Co-ordinators to broker support for people leaving hospital so they can lead full and productive lives and return to the workforce.

WHAT IS ADGP?

- ADGP is the peak body representing 119 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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“These measures will provide quality care to people in the community and will stop the hospital revolving door syndrome, easing the cost pressures on limited specialist public mental health services.”

Ms Carnell added, “Sustainable multidisciplinary teams are part of the solution to Australia’s health workforce problems. We need incentives that take us away from traditional models of financing health care to models that reward team-based care. We also need an incentive scheme for practice amalgamation, co-location and expansion.

“Change is so often confounded by the shared responsibilities for health across governments and a tendency to look at the hospital system for a quick fix.

“A primary health care strategy and the Divisions of General Practice network is the obvious mechanism for driving change rolling out any new proposals.

“Governments can be confident that the Network’s coverage, capacity, and consistency can deliver. We urge governments to use us as their preferred provider of primary health care services to local communities right across Australia.

“We have the capacity to be flexible, cost effective, outcomes orientated and locally focussed and to quickly mobilise to implement primary health care solutions. And we have the unique reach to deliver programs to regional and rural/remote Australia.

“We urge COAG to give serious consideration to the crucial role of the primary health care setting and the leverage that can be achieved by working through the Divisions network in their deliberations tomorrow – a Network that is established, well tested and well placed to integrate a range of primary health care programs.”

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