



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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General practice vital to community-based mental health solutions

The Australian Divisions of General Practice has welcomed COAG's commitment to national innovation and renewed investment and cooperation in mental health and is calling for the new mental health blueprint to be underpinned by a strong primary mental health care strategy.

Kate Carnell, ADGP, CEO said "Mental health is one of the most important health issues in the country presently. It is an issue that truly spans the health, social and economic agendas of governments.

"People with mental illness have worse physical health. Without early intervention and support they are likely to develop several chronic health problems that will disrupt their families, their capacity to stay connected to communities and workplaces and to lead productive lives.

"We must recognise the crucial role that front line workforces such as GPs, psychologists and practice nurses play in service delivery – already GPs deliver twice as many mental health consultations as the public mental health system.

"While we don't want to see a decline in available acute care options and hospital beds, this is not the fix we need.

"We must ensure that vital services and referral options are available where people go for care and where those at risk are first identified – in schools, communities, families and in primary care."

ADGP has recommended a \$450 million, 3-point package over 4 years that focuses on prevention, early intervention and recovery to support those at risk, experiencing early onset or on discharge from hospital:

- \$194 million over 4 years to continue and expand *MindMatters* in Australian secondary schools and introduce a primary schools program and to implement a national initiative to support parents of children and young people based on the Triple P Positive Parenting Program
- A minimum of \$220 million over 4 years to expand access to psychological services (ATAPS) and introduce a primary care placement scheme for GPs and intern psychologists and other allied health professionals under the *Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care* program
- \$35.4 million over 4 years for a regional network of Community Co-ordinators based locally in Divisions of General Practice to link people leaving hospital and community mental health services with their GP, employment and housing and other social supports.

Jenny Thomson, ADGP Chair said "The Divisions network has been the engine room for key Australian Government general practice based programs such as the *Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care Initiative* and *MindMatters* and will have a key role in the National Youth Mental Health Foundation.

"Division-led programs are delivering results, are supported by expertise and can be cost effectively expanded. The Divisions network is the obvious mechanism for driving change rolling out any new or expanded programs.

"We look forward to working with governments to develop practical primary mental health care solutions as part of the revitalised national mental health agenda that COAG will consider mid-year."

For more information please call Kate Carnell, ADGP CEO, on 0415 662 266.

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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