



# **NEWS RELEASE**

**Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.**

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## **Community coordinators linked to general practice: the key to delivering mental health outcomes**

As COAG gears up to consider a new national plan for mental health mid year, the Australian Divisions of General Practice is calling for the establishment of a network of community coordinators based in the primary care setting.

Dr Jenny Thomson, Chair ADGP said “We know that one of the biggest drains on our health system, and one of the most distressing experiences for both consumers and their families, is the revolving door syndrome.

“Readmission data does little to convince us that the system is working well. We have unacceptable rates of readmissions in this country – in Victoria alone more than one in seven mentally ill patients discharged from psychiatric services are back in hospital within 28 days.”

“To promote clinical and social recovery it is vital that consumers are linked with a GP for their ongoing care and management. It is equally vital that once they are in the primary care setting they are supported with access to employment, housing and other support in the community. It is these factors that will determine their rate of recovery, and prevent relapse” said Dr Thomson.

“We have to break the mindset that responding to our national mental health problem is more dollars pouring into the acute care system.

“It is time to get practical. What we need is more accessible community-based care options for people with mental illness and their families. And that means an expanded primary mental health care system.

“Divisions of General Practice have already established a new network of access to psychological services (ATAPS) under the successful Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care Initiative.

“Divisions, working locally with their GPs, practice nurses and allied health providers, have put primary mental health care on the map. The national Divisions network is established, the ATAPS services are established and available across the country. How easy and cost effective would it be for the Australian government to simply augment existing contracts to incorporate a network of community coordinators?”

“We have an unprecedented opportunity to put in place a comprehensive and ambitious new national direction for mental health. A vital part of the mix is the health care setting where people first go for care – general practice - and boosts in the service systems already in place to support quality, GP-led primary mental health care.

“COAG is interested in improving participation in the community and employment for people with mental illness. A network of community co-ordinators linked to general practice to ensure ongoing physical and mental health care is delivered is part of the solution.”

ADGP’s ideas for a primary mental health care component to a new national mental health plan is available at our website at [www.adgp.com.au](http://www.adgp.com.au)

**For more information please call Jenny Thomson, ADGP Chair, on 02 6228 0800.**



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