



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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Senate Select Committee recognises Divisions as the solution

ADGP has welcomed the comprehensive primary health care thrust of the First Report from the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health.

Dr Jenny Thomson, Chair ADGP said “We agree with the Committee that acute care has been over emphasised in the current debate. The investment needs to be in community-based mental health care that is accessible, affordable and tailored to local need.

“The Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care program is one such model. It has been a major success story and ADGP supports further enhancements to this program so that it can be consolidated and truly embedded in the mental health service delivery landscape.

“The Committee has recognised that innovative multidisciplinary teams and comprehensive community based care is the answer - a system that combines primary care with specialist interventions in an integrated way delivers better mental health outcomes.”

Many Divisions already run programs which pool and integrate Commonwealth and State resources – the North East Division in Victoria runs a co-located fully integrated mental health counselling service using Commonwealth and State funds, and North and West Queensland Primary Health Care also pools funds to provide their region with a network of primary care providers delivering outreach services. ADGP supports in principle the idea of expanded systems of community mental health care through the proposed Better Mental Health in the Community Initiative. We would recommend these be primary care-led through Divisions with joint investment by state and federal governments.

Dr Thomson added “The Committee’s recommendations are firmly in line with ADGP’s Primary Health Care Position Statement launched last year to put forward ideas to solve the current health policy dilemmas.

“And we should make more of recent reforms that have shown promise. It makes good sense to build on and adapt service delivery models such as More Allied Health Services and access to psychological services under Better Outcomes.

“These are already being implemented by the Divisions network and can rapidly be expanded to deliver better integrated, multidisciplinary community-based mental health solutions sensitive to local need.

“It is particularly heartening to see bi-partisan recognition of the central role Divisions can play in driving the shift to community-based multidisciplinary care.

“Divisions are a network of ‘can do’ organisations in which governments can have confidence and the only infrastructure with reach into Australia’s most rural and remote areas to provide locally targeted and effective health solutions to national problems.

“ADGP also supports a bio-psychosocial model of care that incorporates medical expertise along with measures to promote social reintegration back to the community after hospitalisation.

“Our submission to COAG recommended a new network of community co-ordinators linked to general practice to deliver ongoing coordination of physical and mental health care as well as access to community services such as housing, employment placement and other social programs.

“Comprehensive primary mental health care is essential to a strong mental health system. Divisions are the platform to take forward primary mental health care solutions such as those recommended by the Committee.”

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