



# NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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## Divisions the answer to delivering the PM's mental health agenda in communities

ADGP has welcomed the Australian Government's commitment of \$1.8 billion over 5 years to mental health.

Dr Jenny Thomson, Chair ADGP said "Mental health problems can be chronic, disabling and have long lasting impacts on people's lives. This announcement is an unprecedented investment in mental health.

"No sector alone can respond to mental health problems and the impacts on individuals, families and communities. The solutions need to be wide ranging, comprehensive and intersectoral. This package is a very welcome step.

"Similarly better prevention, treatment and recovery support involves health professionals and community services working together. The Government has responded to calls that investment is needed in community-based multidisciplinary mental health care that is accessible, affordable and tailored to local need – not in more beds in the acute care sector. It is vital that new non-clinical services are linked in a coordinated way with general practice for patients ongoing care and management.

"We know 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."

For the mental health system, The *Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care* program has shown how team work can deliver results. In their first 2 ½ years, access to psychological services run by Divisions have already supported well over 26,000 consumers in the primary health care setting. 88 per cent of these clients - who are typically on low incomes, aged around 40 and been diagnosed with depression or anxiety - have got better.

"Unlike many mental health services which concentrate in major urban centres, the level of uptake of these Division-based services in rural areas has been proportionally higher than in urban areas. This highlights just how important they are to communities that would otherwise be facing an even more serious mental health service gap and just how vital the Divisions are to ensuring services reaching the whole community".

"Divisions can broker these outcomes Australia-wide. They 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" said Dr Thomson.

"We need to be looking very carefully at how we integrate and build on proven models such as Better Outcomes, More Allied Health Services (MAHS), MindMatters and emerging initiatives such as the National Youth Mental Health Foundation within this package of announcements. This will be the key to leveraging further gains.

"We also need support access to services in regional, rural and remote Australia. There are a number of successful models of outreach and regional service delivery driven through Divisions that can be replicated across the country"

"ADGP would urge the Australian Government to consult so we don't throw the baby out with the bathwater when designing the detailed arrangements of these new services.

"ADGP looks forward to talking further with government on the detail of this mental health agenda and of the solutions that can be implemented through Australia's unique network of Divisions of General Practice"

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