



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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Integrated primary care the key to keeping adolescents connected and healthy

In National Youth Week, Dr Jenny Thomson Chair of the Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) said that “With more than 75 per cent of serious mental health problems commencing during adolescence, the need to provide young people with the skills to maintain well-being, to identify the early signs and symptoms of mental illness and to stay connected with schools, families and workplaces has never been greater.”

Recent surveys by Mission Australia and Kids Help Line indicate that young people themselves rate suicide, self harm, depression, alcohol and other drug problems, coping with stress and bullying as the issues of most concern to them.

“These are problems that GPs deal with every day. This is particularly the case in rural communities where the GP is often the only source of professional mental health support”, Dr Thomson said.

“The problem is that less than one in four young people experiencing a mental health problem seek professional help and it is vital that we change that.

“We know what works best. We must target young people in their everyday settings – their school, family or community - and in the health care setting where they are most likely to seek help – primary care.”

“We also know that providing support to young people experiencing mental health problems as early as possible helps them stay at school and increases their employment and vocational opportunities”, said Dr Thomson.

“We have the opportunity to take a truly integrated approach to early intervention for youth mental health by connecting up programs across various government portfolios.”

Yesterday the Prime Minister announced a welcome package of new mental health measures including funds to help more young people with mental illnesses through the Youth Pathways Programme, the establishment of a cannabis hotline and the expansion of community based primary mental health care services.

“Funds will always be limited. To get best buys, we must link the Prime Minister’s new measures with an expansion of existing programs such as MindMatters and Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care that are already delivering results.

“Divisions are the perfect agents to achieve linked up programs on the ground in communities - they have the coverage, capacity, competence and local networks already in place to rapidly forge links between health and community services.

WHAT IS ADGP?

- ADGP is the peak body representing 118 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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Through MindMatters Plus GP and other local partnerships, Divisions of General Practice across Australia are working with schools and other local community organisations on programs to increase the mental health knowledge of young people, to promote early help seeking, to intervene early and to develop referral networks to link them up with youth friendly GP's and specialist access.

One student, who suffered from depression said, "My GP was great. He referred me to a counsellor and psychologist and I got help from there. If I hadn't gone to my GP, I would still be the same as I was a year ago".

Dr Thomson added, "At the community level, ADGP and the Divisions network will be part of the efforts of the National Youth Mental Health Foundation to deliver quality mental health care to young people."

The Australian Division of General Practice looks forward to working closely with the Australian Government and other mental health partners to develop sustainable models of youth primary mental health care and is committed to continuing to work with schools and other community organisations to care for young people with high mental health needs.

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