



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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GPs protect rights of Mental Health Consumers

General Practitioners have endorsed plans to end discrimination against mental health consumers seeking life and income protection insurance, under an agreement signed today by Australia's peak body representing GPs working in the community.

The Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) Chair, Dr Rob Walters, signed the Memorandum of Understanding between mental health organisations and the Investment and Financial Services Association (IFSA), in Sydney today.

"This Memorandum of Understanding is a vital first step in ensuring mental health consumers have fair access to income and protection insurance," Dr Walters said.

"Most people with a mental health problem see a GP before any other health care provider. GPs are the frontline in the delivery of mental health care and understand the devastating effects that mental illness can have on consumers, their families and carers.

"We are committed to protecting the rights of mental health consumers to timely and fair access to services such as insurance," Dr Walters said.

The Memorandum of Understanding seeks to ensure that the insurance industry works with mental health stakeholders to provide people with depression and similar mental health problems with fair and equitable access to life insurance and income protection insurance. Other mental health stakeholders signing the agreement today include the Mental Health Council of Australia, beyondblue: the National Depression Initiative, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists and the Australian Psychological Society.

"ADGP will work together with other mental health groups and the insurance industry to ensure that people who have or previously had a mental health condition are treated fairly and equitably when seeking insurance," Dr Walters said.

"We'll do this through ensuring improved communication and education, improved complaints resolution and improved underwriting and claims procedures.

"I am delighted to be signing this historic agreement on behalf of the Divisions of General Practice Network. I look forward to working with the other mental health groups and the insurance industry to address any barriers that mental health consumers face when seeking insurance," Dr Walters said.

ADGP supports 121 Divisions of General Practice across Australia and the 94% of GPs who are members of a Division of General Practice.

For comment:

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