



# NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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## GPs seek support for mental health care

Dr Rob Walters, Chair of the Australian Divisions of General Practice, today called for more support for GPs treating people with mental illnesses. Dr Walters was speaking at a National Mental Health Summit hosted by the NSW Government.

“Most people who seek help for mental health problems go to their GP before any other health care provider. In 2000-01, this equated to almost 11 million visits to GPs for mental health related conditions,” Dr Walters said.

“In order to deliver the best possible mental health care to patients, GPs need accessible quality mental health education, training and peer support, access to allied health professionals, support from the private psychiatry workforce and better linkages with the public mental health system.

“People turn to GPs for advice, treatment and referral when they are at vulnerable stages in their life such as retirement, divorce or when becoming parents. GPs also play a vital role in supporting and counselling the families of people with mental illnesses as they go through what can be an extremely stressful period in their lives.

“Recognising the early warning signs of mental illness at these times is vital. Early intervention and better integration between general practice and other community services will reduce the incidence of serious mental illnesses and deliver better outcomes for patients and their families.

“The pressure on GPs to deliver mental health care is only going to increase. Rising rates of illness, high levels of unmet need and a population more inclined to seek help for mental health problems will all drive up demand.

“If we are serious about better meeting community mental health needs, now is the time to ensure that mental health care in general practice is a key priority and that primary mental health care reform is accelerated.

“ADGP is currently developing a blueprint for mental health care in general practice: *Primary Mental Health Care in Australia: The Next Ten Years* which highlights the priority areas of need for GPs and Divisions.

“We look forward to presenting our blueprint to governments and working with other health providers and consumers to achieve better outcomes for the 3.6 million Australians every year who experience a mental health problem,” Dr Walters said.

*ADGP supports 121 Divisions of General Practice across Australia and the 95 per cent of GPs who are members of a Division of General Practice. Over 95 per cent of Divisions are involved in mental health activity. A copy of the ADGP policy will shortly be available on our website [www.adgp.com.au](http://www.adgp.com.au).*

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