



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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Mental health Medicare measures welcome, but equity at risk

The Federal Government's *Better Access to Mental Health Care* announcement today has been welcomed by Australia's peak body representing general practice.

The Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) Chair Dr Tony Hobbs said the new funding will go a long way to improving the community's access to mental health services.

"These new Medicare arrangements are unprecedented – they recognise the crucial role of front line workforces such as GPs, psychologists, and other allied mental health professionals in mental health care" said Dr Hobbs.

"For too long we have focused on state-funded mental health services – this is not the main game. This package delivers team-based care in community settings to all Australians who need it.

"The Government has listened to ADGP and has removed the requirement for compulsory training, while providing resources to make quality training available to those who want it.

"This removes the hurdles that prevented all GPs being able to participate in the *Better Outcomes* initiative but recognises that many GPs value the opportunity to access additional mental health education" said Dr Hobbs.

"However, Medicare funding arrangements alone will not deliver accessible and equitable mental health care."

"In many areas, including outer metropolitan areas, there will simply not be the private practice workforce. We know that every allied mental health professional group is unfailingly concentrated in urban areas."

"ADGP was pleased to hear the Prime Minister and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing announce new funding of \$51.7 million over five years for divisions of general practice for extra mental health services in rural and remote areas".

"But there are other areas where inequity problems are likely to occur and we don't believe this funding will go far enough."

"We risk a system that will result in those who have access to mental health services, and those who don't being determined by where the patient lives rather than need".

WHAT IS ADGP?

- ADGP is the peak body representing 119 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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We are urging the government to instigate a formal process with ADGP to monitor and find solutions to any potential service inequities.

We also urge the government to increase funding to the already established and successful division-run access to psychological services to help address emerging inequities.

For more information please call Kate Carnell, ADGP Chief Executive Officer, on 0415 662 266 or Dr Tony Hobbs 0429 424 423.