

# 5 Current initiatives relating to depression

This chapter is designed to provide a glimpse of current activities related to depression across the health care continuum. It should be noted, however, that neither a systematic review nor a comprehensive record of depression initiatives is provided. The level and diversity of activity in this area make a thorough review well beyond the scope of this report. Rather, examples of some of the key initiatives being undertaken across the nation are presented.

Currently, intersectoral linkages, collaborations and partnerships are not only encouraged, they are essential for finite resources to be put to the best possible use for the community as a whole, specific groups and individuals. Furthermore, individuals require a holistic, seamless and comprehensive health care response to their needs. Therefore, although in this chapter the current initiatives are presented by type of health care continuum intervention and also by sector of service delivery, this clearly does not reflect reality as no initiative sits solely within only one area of the health care continuum.

With these limitations in mind, this chapter attempts to acknowledge and inform about some of the initiatives currently under way, and also to highlight the areas where future collaborations can be fostered.

The health care continuum is represented broadly by the following categories:

1. promotion, prevention and community education;
2. early intervention;
3. management and treatment; and
4. evaluation and monitoring.

Within each of these areas, initiatives are divided into the following domains:

- **Commonwealth Government**  
These are initiatives that are primarily sourced by the Commonwealth Government, although some are located at the State and Territory level and have key stakeholders from other sectors. The Commonwealth Government is also involved in other initiatives that might be included in the non-government organisation (NGO), general practitioner, and other organisation sections.
- **State and Territory governments**  
These initiatives are primarily sourced by the State and Territory governments, although some have key stakeholders from other sectors. Again, State and Territory governments are also involved in initiatives that otherwise might be included in the NGO, general practitioner, and other organisation sections.
- **Non-government organisations**  
Consumer, carer, community and charitable organisations (broadly termed NGOs) have a central role in contributing services across the spectrum of the health care continuum. The ability of NGOs to work holistically with individuals and groups, and the significant input from consumers, enables workers to address the whole range of circumstances which impact on a

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person's mental health. In all kinds of innovative arrangements, the NGOs work closely with general practitioners, psychiatrists, self-help groups and educational institutions as well as government. While by no means comprehensive, the activities included under this category provide an indication of the variety of work that is being done in this area.

- **General practitioners**  
As this report has identified, general practitioners play a pivotal role in the management and treatment of depression. The importance of individual general practitioners, Divisions of General Practice, the RACGP, and the Integration Support and Evaluation Resource Unit (ISERU) at the University of New South Wales cannot be underestimated. The general practice initiatives encompasses the entire health care continuum and are evident throughout all sections of this chapter.
- **Other activity**  
Educational institutions, professional bodies, pharmaceutical industries, and private enterprise contribute considerably to the provision of mental health services to the Australian community. This category gives a broad outline of some of the work that is being either supported or provided by these groups.

## 5.1 Promotion, prevention and community education

### Commonwealth Government

The Second National Mental Health Plan, which was endorsed by Health Ministers in July 1998, has a major focus on mental health promotion, prevention and community education. In this context, a Mental Health Promotion and Prevention Action Plan is currently being developed to summarise opportunities for promotion and prevention initiatives across developmental age groups, priority populations, and adverse life events and settings. The Plan will include nationally agreed strategies relating specifically to depression. A three-year National Depression Action Plan is also being developed to outline strategies across the health care continuum arising out of this current report.

Related policy development initiatives include the National Strategy Against Drug Abuse, which recognises that depression is often a precipitating factor in drug misuse; the National Health Policy for Children and Young People, which recognises that depression, anxiety and the perceived lack of 'connectedness' in childhood and adolescence are predictors of more serious mental health problems or health risk behaviours later in life; and the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, which responds to youth suicide as a public health issue and provides a range of activities to prevent youth suicide in Australia.

The National Strategy for an Ageing Australia will develop a broad-ranging framework to identify challenges and possible responses for government, business, the community, and individuals to meet the needs of Australians as they age. Under the 'healthy ageing' and 'world-class care' themes, it will consider the impacts of ageing, and, in particular, examine the issues of dementia and

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depression in older persons. This will enable the government to develop short, medium and long term policy responses to population ageing as part of a coordinated national framework.

Current and proposed public health initiatives that address depression include the National Women's Health Program, which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Australian women, and The Supportive Care—Psychosocial Aspects of Breast Cancer Program, which will focus on the psychosocial needs of women with breast cancer. There is also the Active Australia initiative, a nationally collaborative venture that aims to increase the level of physical activity in the general population, recognising that moderate levels of physical activity are beneficial for mental health, including depression.

Related to the mental health of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, the Emotional and Social Well Being (Mental Health) Action Plan has been developed with the objective of enhancing the appropriateness and effectiveness of both mainstream and specialised mental health organisations for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. The action plan aims to build the capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled sector to respond to emotional and social wellbeing issues. This approach requires the development of partnerships with broader mainstream mental health services and programs. Under the Plan, Regional Centres have been established to develop and/or deliver educational and training packages addressing emotional and social wellbeing, improve linkages across and between sectors, provide support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers, and develop mental health information systems. The Plan was expanded in response to the Bringing Them Home report to include 50 new counselling positions, three additional Regional Centres, and parenting and family wellbeing initiatives.

The Commonwealth funds *Deadly Vibe*, a national monthly magazine aimed at showcasing achievements of young Aboriginal peoples and Torres Trait Islanders by promoting positive images and healthy messages, and sharing cultures, information and news. The *Deadly Sounds* radio program complements the magazine as a weekly Indigenous radio program broadcast nationally on community radio networks, including a number of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as well as juvenile detention centres.

The Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Substance Misuse Program funds approximately 60 programs nationally. These provide Indigenous-specific alcohol and drug education and prevention strategies, and treatment and rehabilitation services in non-custodial facilities within Aboriginal community controlled services. This Program recognises the links between depression and alcohol and drug misuse. A review of the program is underway and will guide future directions in responding to substance misuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

A large range of mental health projects have been funded under the former Divisions and Projects Grant Program (DPGP) of the General Practice Strategy, several of promotion and prevention initiatives. One of the major aspirations of the General Practice Strategy, Divisions Program is to encourage general practitioners to play a more active role in prevention and health promotion. Most of these projects either focus specifically on depression or more broadly on mental health.

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*Clinical Practice Guidelines for Depression in Young People* were developed by the NHMRC and released in 1997 (refer Chapter 4 Box 4.2). The practice guidelines include guides for both general practitioners and mental health professionals plus two publications for consumers.

A *What Is Depression?* information pamphlet was developed as part of the National Mental Health Strategy's Community Awareness Program and aims to increase community awareness about mental disorder and reduce the stigma and discrimination experienced by people with a mental disorder, their families and carers.

Two projects to improve the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and adolescents have been funded under the National Mental Health Strategy and the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy. The Mind Matters: National Mental Health in Schools Project aims to provide for a whole-school approach to dealing with mental health issues and for the development and trialling of curriculum materials and staff professional development in 24 pilot schools across Australia. Supporting Families is a national parenting initiative, which includes seven projects that focus on primary prevention and early intervention support for families. These interventions may help reduce the incidence of depression in later in life.

## State/Territory governments

Each State and Territory provides parenting programs that aim to improve parenting skills and thereby reduce the risk of children developing mental health problems, including depression, in later life. States and Territories also provide a range of suicide prevention programs that address issues related to depression and suicide. These include programs to increase health providers' awareness of risk factors and warning signs of suicide (including depression), and to increase community knowledge of suicide, including understanding the relationship between depression and suicide. Similarly, States and Territories are providing programs to improve the resilience and coping skills of young people that may prevent the development of depression in later life.

### New South Wales

A State-wide program, the School-Based Education and Prevention Program for Depression in Young People is a collaborative venture conducted by the NSW Centre for Mental Health, the NSW Department of Education and Training and the Area Health Services. The program aims to improve the understanding, recognition, management and prevention of depression in state secondary schools. Similarly, the Dumping Depression project in the Central Coast Area aims to increase awareness of depression in young people.

The Development and Evaluation of an Interactive Computer Program about Depression in Young People is an education/information project in the Hunter Area that uses a computer program to inform young people about depression and direct them to sources of further information.

The Depression in Young People—NSW Interest Group is made up of mental health professionals with the aim of supporting and fostering the development of depression intervention projects.

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The Prevention of Postnatal Distress project is evaluating two preventive programs for postnatal distress in first-time parents.

### Victoria

Programs for young people include the Gatehouse—Links with an Area Mental Health Service project, which provides a model for developing linkages between schools and Area Mental Health Services. The Gatehouse project aims to prevent depressive symptoms in early adolescence, and thereby prevent or delay the onset of major depression. This project is researching interventions at three levels of the classroom curriculum, the classroom social climate, and the whole-school social climate.

### Queensland

Strategic planning is currently under way to address the requirements of the Second National Mental Health Plan. The focus in Queensland is on maintaining priority areas and progressing state-wide and district transition plans particularly in the areas of risk management, outcome measurement, consumer participation and professional development. Increasing the number of clinical pathways, particularly to strengthen the continuity of care across acute and mental health inpatient services and return to the community, and targeting strategies to improve consumer participation, are particular emphases. The Ten Year Mental Health Strategy for Queensland (1996) provides the framework for mental health service development and aims to promote quality and continuity of care through improved intersectoral linkages.

The Queensland Government Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy aims to prevent youth suicide, reduce the impact of suicide on families and communities, and enhance the quality of life for young people in Queensland through a range of suicide prevention, early intervention, intervention and treatment approaches. The major initiative is the development of local networks across Queensland to build targeted and sustainable responses to improving young people's mental health and wellbeing and appropriate responses to self-harming and suicidal behaviour.

The development and implementation of the Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy is assisted by the Young People at Risk established in 1995. This program aims to prevent suicidal and self-harming behaviours among young people aged 10–24 years through the provision of training, education and dissemination of best practice resources in the area of youth suicide prevention.

The Queensland School Nurse Program will place school nurses in state government secondary schools to address mental health and other issues of concern for young people through a preventive primary health focus for assessment, care and referral.

### South Australia

Many services and programs are directed at young people. These include the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Southern and Northern) link with the local communities through schools and local authorities to promote positive mental health awareness. School support liaison services are provided in both country and metropolitan areas. Adolescent Day Services at Enfield provide mental health promotion activities and forums with young people. The Southern CHAMPS project embraces the principles of youth partnership accountability. The Partnerships with

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Young People project increases the community's capacity to promote mental health by encouraging young people to engage in such activities as producing web site chat rooms and promotion material, and giving presentations to schools. The Second Storey Child and Youth Health Peer Support Projects provides support for young people by young people.

Mental health promotion is provided specifically for Aboriginal persons through Bridging the Gap and Aboriginal Mental Health—Port Augusta.

Information on mental health, and other issues for parents, is contained in *Parenting Easy Guides* put out by the Office for Families and Children.

### Western Australia

The Aussie Optimism Program is a research collaboration between Curtin University of Technology and the Health and Education Departments. It is a school-based depression prevention program for rural children aged 10–13 years, which is being piloted in rural communities from Geraldton to Albany. All year 5, 6 and 7 students are screened for symptoms of depression. School psychologists, school and community nurses and community health psychologists have been trained to provide the program. Children who participate in the program are being followed-up over two years, and levels of depression and optimism will be compared with a control group who have not undertaken the program. Data from two controlled pilot studies conducted in two urban schools in 1996, with six-month follow ups in 1997, indicate that the program has been successful in reducing depression and increasing self-esteem in children in the prevention groups compared to children in the control groups.

The RAP is being trialled as a universal program with year 8 classes in Merredin and Kalgoorlie. School staff and school psychologists have been trained to present the program, with the goal of embedding RAP within the future school curriculum. The trial involves collaboration between the Education Department of WA, the Health Department of WA, Curtin University of Technology and Griffith University, and is funded by the Health Department of Western Australia.

*Ymag* is a youth-oriented magazine started by the Health Department in 1998 and distributed widely throughout Western Australia. It provides information about a range of mental health issues and conditions including depression, suicide and stress. *Ymag* has been distributed widely throughout Western Australia.

Western Australian youth suicide prevention strategies include gatekeeper training for a variety of professionals who work with young people. The training covers indicators of suicide risk and how to support suicidal young people. A project to train additional trainers funded under the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy is nearing completion and has included the development of extensive training materials. Training has also been provided to general practitioners under a nationally funded project. The Office of Youth Affairs has prepared information for the community about youth suicide and its prevention. Information for parents is currently being developed with funding from the National Strategy.

The Western Australian Government has recently endorsed an Aboriginal youth suicide prevention policy and program. This will ensure that existing strategies are appropriately adapted to meet the needs of Aboriginal young people and their communities, as well as develop a range of specific prevention strategies.



## Promotion, prevention and community education

The Childbirth Stress and Depression Project has resulted in initiatives to address a range of major difficulties and problems that had been identified by both health consumers and health professionals in the area of childbirth and mental health. These include training workshops for health professionals, community information sessions, the formation of a Postnatal Depression Support Association, and the provision of information packages to all women who gave birth in Western Australia during 1997.

### Tasmania

Community education about depression takes place through a variety of forums. Mental Health Service workers regularly give addresses to various groups. The magazine *Open Mind*, produced by the Tasmanian Association for Mental Health, is circulated widely. The Tasmanian Consumers Advisory Group (TasCAG) provides information to carers and consumers on depression.

### Australian Capital Territory

In October 1998, the Department of Health and Community Care released the document *The Future of Mental Health Services in the Australian Capital Territory, Moving Towards 2000 and Beyond: A Whole of Territory Strategic Plan*. The plan provides opportunities for the promotion and prevention of mental disorders, including depression.

Healthpact provides resources and leadership for the promotion of good health in the ACT community. The plan, *Promoting Wellbeing in the Community: A Healthpact Strategy 1998-2000*, will guide activities for the program for the next three years. The emphasis is on a 'whole population' approach to the promotion of mental health and wellbeing. Identified in the plan are strategies that encourage partnerships between organisations that promote mental health and wellbeing to prevent, where possible, mental health problems from occurring.

The Department of Health and Community Care has developed the first ACT Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, which should be finalised by the end of 1998. The strategy focuses on building and maintaining partnerships between organisations in order to maximise their effectiveness for preventing youth suicide.

The Child, Family and Youth Health Program provides services for families with postnatal depression in a range of settings and aims to increase awareness of postnatal depression in the community, particularly for health professionals, families with young children, and individuals within the target group.

### Northern Territory

A five-year strategic plan for mental health services in the Northern Territory is currently under development. Specific initiatives aimed at depression will be considered under this plan.

## Non-government organisations

Kids Help Line has advocated to promote awareness of depression in young people through a media release and over 80 print and electronic media interviews intended to promote interest in activities to enhance resilience in young people.

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Kids Help Line runs Being There peer skills workshops for young people across Australia. These workshops focus on the development of a range of social and personal skills that improve the personal competence of young people.

Mental Illness Education Australia (MIEA) is a non-government national organisation that aims to promote greater understanding of mental health issues, particularly among young people, their teachers, school counsellors and the wider community. MIEA includes depression as an important part of their classroom presentations.

Another national association, ANAMH, the Australian National Association for Mental Health used the National Mental Health Week 1998 as a vehicle to educate the public about depression. As well as a broad range of promotional activities, a seminar on depression for the Greek community was held in Melbourne.

The Depression and Mood Disorders Association of New South Wales has a number of groups operating in the Sydney area and publishes a newsletter, *MANDA*.

In an innovative approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth suicide prevention, the Commonwealth has provided seed funding from the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy for the LUMBU Foundation, the Foundation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families and Young People. The Foundation will focus on reducing self-harming behaviours among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people by providing small grants to support local community activities aimed at building the self-esteem of young people, strengthening families and promoting healthy lifestyles.

The Australian Transcultural Mental Health Network has been funded by the Commonwealth to promote the quality and accessibility of services to meet the mental health needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Its aims have been mental health promotion, the establishment of an information service, professional and community education, and research.

PaNDa (Post & AnteNatal Depression Association) is one of many organisations that provide a service to women suffering from postnatal depression and their families. PaNDa is a Victoria based organisation that provides two broad services. It supports women and their families suffering from postnatal mood disorders and also educates professionals and the wider community about postnatal depression and its effects. By raising awareness of postnatal depression among the general community and health professions, and by providing support and information to those affected, PaNDa aims to reduce the trauma that postnatal depression creates for thousands of families in Australia each year.

Providing a specific service for carers, the Carers Association in the ACT, through its Community Education and Development Unit, works with at-risk groups, such as young carers, carers of people with mental illness, and carers of people from a non-English speaking background. In all States and Territories, the Association for Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill (ARAFMI) offers support for carers of people with depression. The 'Offspring' group, convened by ARAFMI in Victoria, is specifically for older adolescents and young adults who have a parent/s with mental illness. In Victoria, the National Network of Adult and Adolescent children who have Mentally Ill parent/s Vic. (NNAAMI) is a self-help group that provides mutual aid and support to its members.



## Promotion, prevention and community education

SANE Australia is a national charity that helps people seriously affected by mental disorder through applied research; development of resources for consumers, carers and professionals; and campaigning for improved services and attitudes. As such, SANE's work is not diagnosis-specific, but involves many initiatives that relate to depression. *SANE Factsheets* are one-page information sheets that can be downloaded from the Internet or purchased as a master set for photocopying. These are available in a range of topics, including depression and bipolar disorder. Additionally, the SANE video kits, *Rockets and Rollerblades* for consumers and *Snapshots and Signposts* for carers, outline strategies for combating depression.

The Australia-wide GROW mutual help groups movement (over 400 groups in Australia) provides assistance to people suffering from depression through its structured group method, educational program and social networking supports. In particular, the shared learning in the GROW groups and the building of a community of friendship addresses the self-isolating characteristic of depression.

### General practitioners

The work of general practitioners contributes to promotion and prevention activities in many ways, but particularly through relationship counselling, bereavement interventions, obstetric shared-care support for new mothers, as well as opportunistic screening for alcohol and other drug misuse and the existence of other risk factors for depression.

The ACT Division of General Practice is planning to conduct a six-month pilot Healthy Ageing program in collaboration with ACT Community Care. The program's objectives include the promotion of a screening tool for use in general practice to diagnose depression, and the enhancement of community awareness about depression and its associated risk factors. Following the initial pilot phase, the program will be extended to all general practitioners with the aim of having a sustainable program operating after the year 2000.

### Examples of other activities

The Department of Psychology at the University of Queensland, with NHMRC funding, is undertaking the Problem Solving for Life Project aimed at providing a controlled outcome evaluation of the effectiveness of a problem-solving program in preventing the onset of depression in adolescents. The intervention involves the delivery, by teachers, of a universal prevention program aimed at all year 8 students. Eight weekly sessions are designed to fit within the regular school curriculum over one school term. Students are trained in adaptive thinking styles, positive problem orientation, and problem-solving skills.

Research funded by Wesfarmers examines depression prevention in rural women. Seventy-six rural women with depressive symptoms and therefore at risk for depression were randomly assigned to either traditional CBT, an intervention based on learned helplessness theory and interpersonal psychotherapy, or a no-treatment control group. Both treatments produced significant changes in depression and hopelessness, but only the treatment based on learned helplessness theory resulted in maintenance at six-month follow-up.

## 5.2 Early intervention

### Commonwealth Government

Specific early intervention initiatives under the National Mental Health Strategy include the Griffith Early Intervention Program, which incorporates a school-based approach to early identification and intervention for anxiety and depression. The program has developed a national network and resource materials for young people aged 6–16 years with anxiety and depression symptoms. This included the development of the RAP, a school-based depression prevention program, promoting mental health and resilience in young people.

AusEinet, the Australian Early Intervention Network for Mental Health in Children and Young People has been funded under the National Mental Health Strategy and the Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy to promote early intervention in mental health problems specifically for children and adolescents. The project has three interrelated streams. Stream 1 focuses on the development of a national communications network around early intervention. Stream 2 is concerned with the reorientation of services to early intervention by placing mental health workers in selected agencies throughout Australia. Stream 3 aims to identify and promote best practice in early intervention for specific disorders. An external evaluation of the project is due to be completed in mid 1999.

Under the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy there are seven projects funded aimed at informing good practice in the development of hospital and health service protocols for young people presenting as suicidal. This target group includes depressed people and the evaluation results will be available in late 1999.

Under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Emotional and Social Well Being (Mental Health) Action Plan, early intervention initiatives include facilitating the development of a range of culturally appropriate mental health care models, and 50 new positions for trained Indigenous counsellors located primarily in community controlled services.

The Early Intervention Program for Humanitarian and Refugee Entrants, funded under the Commonwealth's Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy, is directed at people exposed to traumatic circumstances, extensive loss and poor living conditions in their country of origin, and who face adjustment to a new culture. The program comprises multiple interventions to enhance mental wellbeing and alleviate anxiety symptoms, PTSD and depressive symptoms. Community-based services work collaboratively, referring to specialist health services when necessary.

Another Commonwealth program is the Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma, which provides funding for services for survivors of torture and trauma in each State and Territory. Under this program, services are aimed at people with multiple and complex needs requiring long-term interventions.

## State/Territory governments

### New South Wales

A pilot study undertaken in the Northern Sydney area, A Targeted Depression Prevention Program in Schools, is the first program in NSW to employ targeted intervention for depressive symptoms in schools. The study involves screening all year 9 students for depressive symptoms, with those identified offered an intervention.

In the Central Coast area, the Early Intervention for Depression project is developing best practice guidelines for early identification, presentation and intervention for depression in young people.

Examples of early intervention/prevention programs for depression in adults are the Early Intervention in Depression and Anxiety program, which provides access to psychological services for people with depression and anxiety who present to general practitioners, and the Specialist GP Liaison Project, which incorporates collaboration with specialist general practitioners to facilitate the early identification of depressive symptoms. The Best Practice in Non-Major Adult Depression project aims to support at risk adults within southern NSW by increasing community awareness of adult depression, improving the knowledge and skills of primary health care and mental health workers, and providing prevention and management services.

Programs that assist in the early identification of postnatal depression include the Post Natal Training Program in the New England area, which provides training for mental health staff in the recognition and effective treatment of postnatal depression. The General Practitioner Education and Training in Postnatal Mood Disorders program aims to educate and train general practitioners in the identification, management and treatment of postnatal depression.

The detection and early intervention of depression in older people is the focus of a number of projects. The Aged Care Mental Health project in the central coast area aims to improve the recognition and appropriate management of depression in older persons, and involves seconding a mental health worker to aged care services. In the Hunter Valley area, a mental health worker has been employed to work in conjunction with established services to examine and prevent suicidal behaviour in older people, including at-risk groups, such as depressed persons. The Depression in Older People project is a multi-sectoral approach to determine the incidence of depression in older people in the New England area.

Projects to assist people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds include a project to promote early identification and intervention for depression among the Vietnamese community being conducted by the Liverpool Health Service. The Central Sydney Area Health Service is supporting Unrecognised and Untreated Depression: the Impact of Having Poor English *or* Communication Skills. There are also two projects related to postnatal depression, Chinese Postnatal Distress and Screening for Postnatal Depression in Non-English Speaking Women. The NSW Transcultural Mental Health Centre has promoted and facilitated the education of mental health professionals in transcultural mental health through developing a course for counsellors.

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### Victoria

The Victorian Department of Human Services has requested tenders for two action-based research projects examining barriers to health and welfare services, for men aged 50 years and over and for men aged between 16–25 years.

The Victorian Department of Human Services also funds the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture to provide medium- to long-term interventions for survivors of torture and trauma. Referrals include people identified through the early intervention program funded by the Commonwealth. In addition, under the Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, early intervention and long-term treatment is provided for adolescent survivors of torture and trauma. For adults, adolescents and children, a wide range of risk and protective factors are addressed. These include physical health, trauma, social support, settlement demands and bereavement. An important part of the service is the training of other service providers to be appropriately responsive to the needs of a traumatised population. Each of the States and Territories operates a similar service, funded in part by the State/Territory.

The Ethnic Mental Health Consultants Program, supported by the Victorian Mental Health Branch for a period of three years, provides for ethnic mental health workers in each of the health care networks in the metropolitan area of Victoria. The role of these consultants is to increase the accessibility of public mental health services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, develop and implement strategic plans for the provision of culturally sensitive mental health services, establish partnerships that better integrate services in the mental health service sector, and support the development of culturally sensitive practice.

The Victorian Transcultural Psychiatric Unit has established and operated a postgraduate diploma in transcultural mental health services.

### Queensland

A range of early intervention strategies and activities are being undertaken in Queensland. Queensland Health is developing a Mental Health Outcome Plan for depression, which will include identified priorities and evidence-based strategies for responding to depression in the community. There is also an Ethnic Community Mental Health Program, mental health programs aimed at Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, and targeted programs in child and youth mental health services for at risk populations as defined in the Child and Youth Mental Health Policy.

### South Australia

The Early Detection of Emotional Disorders project screens high school students to identify those most at risk of developing an emotional disorder, including depression, and then provides intervention/treatment for these students.

### Western Australia

Western Australian youth suicide prevention strategies provide several early intervention approaches. These include: social workers based in emergency departments of major teaching hospitals who ensure that young people treated for deliberate self-harm and attempted suicide receive appropriate assessment and follow-up care; suicide intervention officers within several mental health services who provide support to people identified to be at risk of suicide; and protocols in

senior high schools throughout the State to reduce the likelihood of imitative suicidal behaviour following the suicide of a student. There are also several interagency networks that have formed to assist vulnerable youth following the suicide of a peer.

### **Tasmania**

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provides a range of early intervention services, including the Triple P Positive Parenting Program. A worker has also been appointed on the North West Coast under the AusIEnet program, to assist development of services for young people, and a survey of young people will be held in late 1998 to assess attitudes towards mental health services.

### **Australian Capital Territory**

The Child, Family and Youth Health Program is conducting a project to increase awareness of postnatal depression in the community. In partnership with medical officers, the project provides early identification and treatment of postnatal depression and depression in families.

### **Northern Territory**

Mental Health Services on the Tiwi Islands are working with Charles Sturt University and the Community Council to develop culturally appropriate strategies and protocols to prevent youth suicide. The early detection of depression, in its various cultural contexts and manifestations, is one of the main aims of this project.

A Child, Family and Youth Health Program is also funded with the aim of increasing awareness of postnatal depression in the community, thus ensuring early identification and intervention. The project also offers assessment and treatment of postnatal depression in partnership with medical practitioners.

## **Non-government organisations**

Kids Help Line logs over 400,000 problem-related calls from children and young people all over Australia each year. Broad-based training ensures that all counsellors are aware of the importance of early intervention and the symptoms that suggest referral. Specific training relates to depressive symptoms, suicide prevention, self-harm and eating disorders.

The Carers Association of Australia advocates for the needs of carers of the frail aged and people with illnesses and disabilities, including those with mental disorders. The Association also recognises that family carers are a group at risk of developing depression, especially when the care provided is long-term and intensive or due to marked changes in the care recipient.

## **General practitioners**

Many Divisional activities focus on improving working relationships with other mental health service providers to ensure that people with depression can access required services across the health care continuum. Many general practitioners are also undertaking structured programs to obtain skills in the early identification, management and treatment of depression. Other activities include:

- screening young people for suicide ideation and risk;

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- postnatal depression screening and intervention;
- support groups for new parents at risk; and
- depression screening in elderly persons.

The Western Division of General Practitioners has funded the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture to produce a manual for general practitioners, supported by a four-session training program, to enable general practitioners to assess and effectively treat physical and mental health problems presenting in the refugee population.

## Examples of other activities

The Department of Psychological Medicine at the University of Sydney has three major initiatives in depression: a screening program for postnatal depression; a prophylaxis for postnatal depression (information for midwives about the risk of postnatal depression); and the education of general practitioners to improve their ability to recognise and treat depression. The Graduate Medical Program also has sessions on the recognition and management of depression in all medical settings and across the lifespan.

The Centre for Health Equity Training Research and Evaluation has initiated the Unemployment and Health Project in South Western Sydney over the past five years to address the health-related problems of unemployment. The project claims to have demonstrated that it is possible for the health sector to respond to the health needs of people who are unemployed through better service provision, increasing the capacity of individuals and communities, and policy development.

## 5.3 Management and treatment

### Commonwealth Government

General practitioners provide a greater proportion of mental health care than any other health professionals. Shared-care arrangements with mental health professionals make it possible for general practitioners to care for more people who are severely disabled by mental health problems and disorders, including depression. Many projects employing shared-care models have been funded under the former DPGP of the General Practice Strategy. Whereas some of these projects have emphasised the management of depression, most have included depression within a broader focus on mental health care needs. Approximately two-thirds of Divisions of General Practice conducted mental health interventions of various kinds between 1992 and 1998.

In addition, a number of Psychiatry Pilot Projects are being funded under the National Mental Health Strategy to investigate ways of improving access to psychiatrists and overcoming current sub-optimal distributions between States and Territories, the public and private sectors, sub specialities, and geographic areas within States and Territories. Most of the models being trialled involve cooperative, shared-care activities between general practitioners and psychiatrists or other mental health professionals. Six pilot projects are currently under way, targeting a range of community groups including adults, older people, children, and Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.



Building on the experience of these pilots, demonstration projects are being established to investigate integrated service models. The basic model is for public sector mental health services and private psychiatrists to work together in providing integrated services. However, there is also the capacity to expand the model to include local general practitioners. The treatment focus of both the psychiatry pilots and the integrated service trials is on mental health problems, including depression.

The Care Net Illawarra Co-ordinated Care Trial has identified that one-third of the trial population are suffering from depression. As a result, all general practitioners participating in the trial are attending a cognitive behavioural training program. A volunteer program for participants suffering from depression is also being developed. Dealing with depression is considered to be an important part of the care planning aspect of coordinated care, since it may have a strong relationship with emergency hospital admission, as well as ongoing need for a high level of other services.

Under the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, the Out of the Blues program has been offered through the Mood Disorders Unit at Southern CAMHS Flinders Medical Centre, South Australia with the goal of reducing the incidence of suicidal behaviours and suicide in young people through the treatment of affective disorder. In order to develop best practice service delivery models, the project is trialling and evaluating specific psychotherapeutic techniques, and intensive case management for young people diagnosed with affective disorders.

The Depression in the Elderly: A Shared Care Model of Management evaluated the use of a collaborative, shared-care intervention for the assessment and management of depression amongst older persons in residential care. The intervention consisted of removing barriers to care, carer education, health promotion programs, and health education to de-stigmatise depression. Overall, the intervention was found to be effective and also had positive outcomes in practical terms for the large retirement village under study. The project was funded by the Commonwealth's Aged Care Support Program and General Practice Evaluation Program, the University of Sydney, the NSW Health Department, and the NSW Institute of Psychiatry Research Grant.

Under the National Mental Health Strategy, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) are developing clinical practice guidelines for clinical care pathways in mental health services. Guidelines will be developed in the five areas of major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, panic disorder and agoraphobia, and anorexia nervosa. A scoping study has been conducted as a first stage of developing clinical care pathways for mental health services in Australia, which could also have applications in New Zealand.

The Commonwealth funds CRS Australia (formerly the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service) to provide rehabilitation services to help people with physical, psychiatric, intellectual or sensory disabilities to obtain or maintain employment. CRS Australia provides individual and group vocational rehabilitation programs for people who have a depressive condition (as well as other conditions) that is affecting their ability to gain or maintain employment or to live independently in the community. This includes people with depressive conditions associated with unemployment and adjustment to disability.

## Current initiatives relating to depression

The Drug Utilisation Sub-Committee of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee and the Pharmaceutical Manufacture's Association are jointly undertaking a study to examine the use of antidepressant drugs in the Australian community in the 1990s.

### State/Territory governments

#### New South Wales

Specifically for young people, implementation of the *NHMRC Guidelines for Depression in Young People* in the mid-western area aims to facilitate the identification of young people with depression and ensure that effective intervention and treatments are provided. The Changeways Program in Wairoa aims to provide an accessible treatment for young people with depression through an outpatient CBT program.

Beating the Blues is a six-week program to help people develop cognitive behaviour skills to apply in their daily lives with a view to reducing the levels of depression. The Macarthur Mental Health Service provides a depression clinic that delivers CBT to adults with major depression.

There are numerous treatment programs throughout NSW to assist women suffering from postnatal depression. These include the Post Natal Depression Support Group in the mid-North Coast area, which provides a treatment group for sufferers of postnatal depression; and the Parent–Infant Interaction in Depressed Parents, which aims to improve parent–infant interaction skills in parents where the mother has been identified as depressed. There are also a number of postnatal support groups provided by area health services.

Initiatives occurring in the area of treatment for depression in the elderly include the Healthy Aging Depression Therapy Program, which provides a holistic treatment program for older people with depression. Latelife Depression is developing a system of care that maximises early detection of depression in older people and aims to standardise assessment, intervention and follow-up utilising a multidisciplinary team. Nursing Clinics for Depression provide a regular service to residents and staff of nursing homes and hostels regarding the management of depressed persons in these settings.

Research is currently being undertaken by a team from the Community Health Services and Programs, Eastern Area Health Service into the prevalence of depression and psychosis (delusions and hallucinations) in cognitively impaired residents of nursing homes. Guidelines will be formulated for diagnosing and managing psychiatric comorbidity in nursing home residents, and two intervention strategies for the management of depression, psychosis and associated behavioural problems will be evaluated.

There are a number of support group approaches to assist with depression. Blues Busters provides a support group approach to managing depressive thoughts. Overcoming Depression is an eight-week program that aims to improve the mental health of people with depression. The Depression Support Group, in Mudgee, aims to foster a social support network and develop management skills to assist with depression.

### Victoria

The Victorian Department of Human Services is commissioning action-based research into innovative treatments of depression in adolescents aged between 12–18 years. The focus is to incorporate the use of mainstream clinical services within an integrated multi-agency service delivery model. One project will be located in a rural region, and another in a metropolitan area. The requirement for a multi-system framework as a service context for the implementation of these projects is directed at enhancing models of collaboration, as well as providing treatment and service delivery suitable to young people diagnosed with clinical depression. The projects are designed to actively encourage and develop linkages between child and adolescent mental health services, welfare services and other agencies through cooperative inter-service arrangements, better treatment programs tailored to individual needs, shared training and professional development activities, strengthening staff exchanges, and widely disseminating knowledge regarding best practice.

For youth in rural settings the Pilot Research into Innovative Treatment for Depression in Adolescents in a Rural Setting aims to access depressed adolescents by screening through a multi-agency model and providing treatment wherever the agency is situated. The agencies involved include CAMHS, schools, Youth Accommodation and Support Services, Protective Services and drug and alcohol services.

Victorian specialist mother–baby services provide consultation and support to area mental health services to enable them to deliver effective treatment and care to women with postnatal disorders, including depression. The mother–baby services also provide consultation and support to other service providers including general practitioners, private psychiatrists, maternal and child health services, and others involved in the postnatal care of mothers and their babies.

The Hormone Replacement Therapy—A New Approach to Treatment Resistant Depression in Post-menopausal Women is a collaborative approach between private psychiatrists and the Dandenong Area Mental Health Service and aims to study the effect of HRT for treatment-resistant depression in post-menopausal women.

The Elders Mood Disorders Clinic at the St George's Hospital Academic Unit for Psychiatry of Old Age commenced in March 1998 and is the only mood disorder clinic specifically for older persons. The clinic utilises a shared-care approach with general practitioners, offering assessment, diagnosis and treatment as well as ongoing education and training.

The Community Aged Depression Education Therapy program, undertaken by the Aged Persons Psychiatric Service, Bendigo Healthcare Group, aims to reduce the level of depression and anxiety and improve coping skills in older people. The group offers support plus education on management and prevention. There is also a support and rehabilitation group conducted in the Shepparton area, which provides peer support and rehabilitation for clients with long-term depression.

The effective administration of ECT for the treatment of depression is being researched by the Grampians Psychiatric Services with the aim of ensuring the optimal administration of ECT. The University of Melbourne is also undertaking research into the effectiveness, rate of relapse, and cognitive effects of unilateral and bilateral ECT.

## Current initiatives relating to depression

### Queensland

To promote the management and treatment of depression, general practitioners and youth sector services throughout Queensland have been provided with the *NHMRC Clinical Guidelines for Depression in Young People*. A Depression and Anxiety Group, which uses CBT and psycho-education in the treatment of depression and anxiety, and a CBT Depression Management Program to educate clients in strategies for coping with depression, are also underway.

Specifically to address the needs of physically ill people in hospital with depression, the Consultation Liaison Psychiatry: Detection of and Early Intervention for Depression in the General Hospital project is being conducted at three hospital sites in Brisbane.

A project that aims to reduce the incidence of depression related to grieving is being conducted by the Loss and Grief Unit at the Centre for Primary Health Care.

The Wu Chopperen Social Health Program provides support and counselling to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders for a wide range of social and emotional issues, including depression. As well as providing practical welfare assistance to alleviate some of the stressors in people's lives, specific counselling (based on narrative therapy) addresses the associated emotional distress. It has been found that with ongoing support, individual clients have gained significant improvements to their health and wellbeing. In particular, they are able to control the extent to which depression and other emotional problems dominate their lives.

Project 300 is a joint initiative of Queensland Health, the Queensland Department of Public Works and Housing and the non-government community sector in Queensland. It is a three-year plan that aims to provide 900 people in the three major long-stay psychiatric hospitals in Queensland with the opportunity to live independently in the community. A significant component of the model is the collaborative teamwork of the three stakeholders—community mental health services, disability support agencies, and the host agencies (the latter two are non-government organisations). Key workers employed through the host agencies purchase various types of disability support services individually tailored to client need. Independence from direct support services for the key workers enables clients to change or employ new support agencies and increase or decrease their level of support.

### South Australia

A 12-month Women and Depression Project, managed by Women's Health Statewide Community Health Service, aims to develop an alternative to existing medical models of service delivery for women experiencing the effects of depression. The effectiveness of this service in a variety of health care settings was evaluated along with its potential for adaptation to mainstream health services. The project also aimed to give service providers in mental health, community health and women's health the experience of working holistically with women experiencing severe and long-term mental illness.

The Mothers and Babies Service focuses on women who are vulnerable to depression in both the antenatal and postnatal periods. Helen Mayo House is a state-funded service that assists women experiencing postnatal depression in a setting where they are able to remain with their children.

There are a number of initiatives to deal with the depression and grief, trauma and loss experienced by Aboriginal people, particularly those who are part of the generation of stolen children. These include narrative therapy and a centre for grief and healing. Another specialist focus is provided through Rosemary Wanganeen's Therapy, which is available to Aboriginal people who are able to access services at their healing centre.

### Western Australia

All public and private mental health services treat and manage depression. Public mental health services have been significantly expanded over the past three years and services are now more accessible for all people in the community.

The Health Department also purchases postnatal depression services delivered through women's and community health services in close liaison with local mental health teams. Planning is currently occurring to expand these services.

### Tasmania

The Tasmanian Mental Health Service Strategic Plan for the next three years is being prepared and will contain strategies for depression.

Currently, management and treatment of depression is a major focus of the services provided by adult acute services and a range of other services, in both the public and private domains. Services for women experiencing postnatal depression are also provided. An initial data analysis shows that people with depression used 25 per cent of all inpatient bed days for 1997. A reference group has been established between Mental Health Services and Divisions of General Practice. This will examine various models for partnerships, and will foster adoption of the *SPHERE* program of education for general practitioners on the identification and management of depression.

### Australian Capital Territory

One of the specific aims within the Calvary Hospital Psychiatric Unit Generalist Program is to assist people to manage depression without a hospital admission. The program includes training in stress management, assertiveness, self-awareness and involvement in the community, along with the provision of family support.

Calvary Hospital also provides a cognitively based program, Overcoming Depression, which explores the use of cognitive strategies to manage depressive symptoms and enhance quality of life.

The Postnatal Depression Project, being conducted by the ACT Mental Health Service, is developing a coordinated model of postnatal depression services in collaboration with other agencies. The project is aiming to ensure that services provided are accessible, integrated, coordinated and consumer focused and that the model of care supports prevention, early detection and appropriate treatment for postnatal depression.

### Northern Territory

The Aboriginal Mental Health Worker Program, where western and traditional approaches are utilised in a two-way approach, provides a culturally appropriate and effective intervention in the assessment and treatment of a wide range of mental illnesses and mental health problems, including depression.



## Current initiatives relating to depression

The Darwin Urban Mental Health Services provide an inpatient Mothers and Babies treatment program to assist women suffering from postnatal depression.

As part of the implementation of the Northern Territory's new mental health legislation, all procedures and protocols relating to ECT for the treatment of depression (and other conditions) have been reviewed and revised to ensure that they reflect best clinical practice and nationally accepted standards.

## Non-government organisations

The Queensland Association for Mental Health auspices a number of smaller self-help groups and conducts recovery programs for mental health workers with the aim of demonstrating strategies of hope and self-reliance in people with long-term serious mental illness.

SANE Australia has undertaken the Blueprint Project, which has researched and developed a series of guides to good practice in the community care of people seriously affected by mental disorders. The SmokeFree Project was developed especially to help people with a mental disorder quit or reduce smoking. Depression may be a major factor in smoking and a feature of this program is helping people deal with depressive symptoms that may arise during an attempt to give up smoking. The SANE Mental Illness Helpline is a national freecall number to provide consumers and carers with information regarding mental disorders, including depression.

## General practitioners

The most common way of managing depression in general practice is within general mental health shared-care programs, continuing medical education activities and within depression and anxiety interventions. Specific programs in depression encompass depression in all population groups, postnatal depression, and depression in older persons.

The detection and management of depression by general practitioners is the priority area of the ISERU. The ISERU has formulated a number of ventures, such as the development of a National Divisions Depression Program, a preliminary report titled *What Divisions are Doing about Depression*, the dissemination and evaluation of general practitioners' uptake of the *NHMRC Clinical Guidelines on Depression in Young People*, and an ongoing role for the National Mental Health Network of ISERU. The ISERU has an advisory role on all aspects of standards, quality monitoring and effectiveness and evaluation.

The National Divisions Youth Alliance has developed a network of interested stakeholders in youth health from the Divisions sector. The group has formed in conjunction with the Adolescent Health Network of Access (Support and Evaluation Resource Unit) and is currently formalising a National Committee for the development of a youth health website. This will be operationalised on the existing National General Practitioner network at [www.gpnetwork.net.au/divyouth](http://www.gpnetwork.net.au/divyouth).

Other examples of Divisional work include: adopting and coordinating Division-wide use of the SPHERE Depression and Anxiety Treatment Package for General Practitioners; developing local clinical guidelines for primary care of depression;



after-hours management of psychiatric emergency and suicide risk; shared care protocol development for psychiatric emergency support to general practitioners; post-discharge planning for suicide attempts and depression-related admissions; and general practitioner-developed family and carer interventions for those caring for people with depression.

*SPHERE* is a depression project that was launched nationally at the Austin Hospital in Melbourne in February 1998. The national secretariat of the program includes representatives from each of the Departments of Psychiatry from medical schools across Australia. The project was developed in association with general practitioners, clinical psychiatrists and psychologists. The overall aim of the project is to equip practitioners with the necessary clinical skills and knowledge base to treat effectively 60–70 per cent of the people who present to general practice with depression and anxiety disorders.

### Examples of other activities

Pharmaceutical companies have contributed significantly to the management and treatment of depression. Most pharmaceutical companies have developed consumer support programs to encourage adherence to ongoing medication regimes (Eli Lilly – Breakthrough, Pfizer – Rhythms). SmithKlein Beecham has also supported the development of primary care support personnel with mental health expertise. Additionally, the INSIGHTS program, conducted over the last five years by the Roche pharmaceutical company, in association with psychiatrists and general practitioners, is estimated to have reached almost half of the general practitioner workforce. Pfizer pharmaceuticals actively promoted the PRIME-MD diagnostic program in Australia and has recently provided extensive support for non-pharmacological treatments developed at the University of New South Wales.

The Focused Educational and Psychological Therapy Program (FEPP) is being funded by the pharmaceutical industry to provide a practical, focused, psychological therapy approach for use by general practitioners in the treatment of depression. FEPP comprises strategies based on principles of CBT and interpersonal therapy combined with consumer education materials. General practitioners will be trained in the use of FEPP by video instruction together with face to face workshops. FEPP is designed for both acute treatment (six weeks) and maintenance therapy (12–18 months).

The NHMRC has funded projects on depression in people with tinnitus and diabetes at the University of NSW. The aim of the tinnitus project, which has been completed, was to develop and evaluate a psychological intervention for the amelioration of tinnitus-related distress. The diabetes project aims to develop and evaluate a psychological intervention for the reduction in stress related to life events, daily hassles and the diabetes itself.

## 5.4 Evaluation and monitoring

Evaluation and monitoring are components of most of the initiatives previously presented. This section, therefore, describes only those additional activities that have not yet been described.

## Current initiatives relating to depression

### Commonwealth Government

The 1997 SMHWB along with this collaborative *National Health Priority Areas Report on Mental Health* are major Commonwealth initiatives to monitor depression in the Australian population. Additionally, data on the prevalence of depression in children and adolescents will be available in early 1999.

The Office for the Older Australians and Mental Health Branch are currently conducting a scoping study into the needs of older people who have a mental disorder. The study is auspiced by the National Mental Health Working Group and examines whether any special action is required to ensure appropriate accommodation, care and treatment for older people with psychiatric disability, including depressive disorders. The AIHW has been commissioned by the Office for the Older Australians to report on the extent to which existing service systems meet the needs of this client group, and also advise on modification to existing data sets that would ensure that more appropriate data were collected in the future related to older people with mental disorders.

The Commonwealth is planning an evaluation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Emotional and Social Well Being (Mental Health) Action Plan. This evaluation, due for completion by December 1999, aims to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and appropriateness of the services provided under the Action Plan. In particular, given the innovative approach to service delivery that the Action Plan seeks to set in place, the evaluation will aim to identify models that represent good practice in a range of settings.

### State/Territory governments

#### New South Wales

Macquarie University, in collaboration with Northern Sydney Mental Health Services, is evaluating the *ACE* depression prevention targeted program for secondary school students.

The impact of the *RAP* program in Catholic schools in Western Sydney is being evaluated.

The Centre for Mental Health, NSW Health Department is undertaking a consultancy to develop an Evaluation Manual for Suicide Prevention Programs in NSW. The Centre is also in the preliminary stages of planning the evaluation of the NSW School Depression Prevention Project.

#### Western Australia

Western Australia purchased additional data from the 1997 SMHWB that will provide State-specific data on the prevalence of depression and associated disorders. This will assist service planning and evaluation.

The Health Department is also contributing to the development of a Western Australian Aboriginal child health survey that will provide similar information to the Western Australian Child Health Survey.

A major program to enhance mental health clinical information systems and data bases is underway that will improve capacity for service evaluation and research in relation to all mental health issues.

A Centre for Mental Health Research has also been established. Its purpose is to undertake applied research in mental health. This may well include research in relation to the prevention and treatment of depression.

### **Tasmania**

Tasmania is in the process of installing a new information system which will allow more accurate collection and analysis of data on depression. A major survey of health and wellbeing being conducted later this year will provide information to facilitate better service provision.

### **Australian Capital Territory**

ACT Mental Health Services has appointed a project officer to collect data regarding the management of postnatal depression both within and outside the service. Service protocols will be developed from these data.

