

MEDIA RELEASE

24 November 2009



Psychologists support APHA call for allied health involvement in health reform process

The Australian Psychological Society (APS), Australia's largest allied health representative body, strongly supports the call from Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) for the allied health sector to be involved in the design, governance and delivery of the Government's new primary health care system.

"The Government has committed to reforming the primary health care system," said Professor Lyn Littlefield, Executive Director of the APS, "however, to this point, there hasn't been any significant detail about how this will be done. Reform must include allied health professionals as equal partners with nurses and medical practitioners, and the allied health sector needs to be involved at inception to achieve a primary health care system that is effective, well-designed, and adequately funded and resourced."

She said the design of the new primary health care system would require a total rethinking of health care.

"We must remove barriers to health care, and the needs of the consumer should drive the design of the new system," Professor Littlefield said. "We need a consumer centred approach that looks at the whole person and matches health provision to the needs of each person."

She said the benefits of a remodelled system with input from allied health would be many.

"An integrated approach will lead to better health outcomes, particularly as it will provide scope to utilise preventative health strategies at the primary health level and better coordinate care for people with complex and chronic conditions," Professor Littlefield said. "It will also reduce costs for both the consumer and the Government by eliminating unnecessary consultations. It will save time for the consumer and free up GPs for the cases that most require their care."

In addition, she said, the allied health sector had many models of care that could be adapted to enhance the delivery of primary health care and many established systems for working collaboratively, as well as tested interdisciplinary training programs to address key health issues.

"The Government has a bold vision for primary health care reform; a vision that can't be realised without allied health," Professor Littlefield said. "Allied health must be intimately involved in the process of reform."

The APS is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia, representing more than 17,500 members. The APS is committed to advancing psychology as a discipline and profession. It spreads the message that psychologists make a difference to peoples' lives, through improving psychological knowledge and community wellbeing.

For media enquiries please contact:

Karen Coghlan

Australian Psychological Society

T: 03 8662 6638 | M: 0414 740 891

www.psychology.org.au

