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## Progress ending mental health stigma, but more to do

Australians may be more accepting of mental disorders like depression, but a significant stigma still exists around complex cases and issues like post-traumatic stress, addictions and eating disorders, says Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) CEO Mr Michael Roff.

“Recent research from Flourish Australia\* suggests 88 percent of Australians felt the country was more accepting and understanding of mental health issues over the past five to 10 years. This is great news, but we need to continue to build on that progress.

“While many Australians recognise depression as a common illness that affects many of us, there remains stigma around the more severe forms of mental disorder. When we encourage people to talk about mental health this week, we want them to talk about all forms of mental health, even the ones that might be scary to address or have more severe symptoms,” he said.

This mental health week (9-15 October 2016) the APHA is encouraging Australians to continue to talk about mental health, but broaden their discussions beyond depression to consider conditions like bipolar, addictions or post-traumatic stress disorder. It’s in these fields that private hospitals have expertise.

“The private hospital sector cared for 36,000 Australians with mental health disorders in the past year. It accounts for almost half of hospitalisations for mental health disorders in this country. It’s a significant contribution.”

Mr Roff said mental illnesses often emerge during teenage years and 18-24 year olds have the highest rates of mental illness.

“It’s important that families have mental health cover as part of their private health insurance, because even if parents have good mental health, they want to be sure their kids can access the highest quality health care should they need it.

“The health insurance companies continue to lobby government to end mandatory mental health cover, and in the meantime they make it very difficult for patients to access care. Considering that almost half of all Australians will experience a mental health issue in their lifetime, this is further evidence of the insurers putting profits before people.

“Private health insurers’ own statistics show high mental health claims particularly for young people, we know there are more Australians than ever seeking help for a variety of mental health disorders and mandatory cover means those Australians can get help when they need it.

“You don’t anticipate a car accident, you don’t expect a house fire and you can rarely anticipate when you might need care for a mental health issue. We have insurance for the first two without blinking, and we need to make sure Australians are covered for the third as well,” Mr Roff said.

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\*<https://www.flourishaustralia.org.au/>