



Media Information

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Melbourne welcomes government's new approach to mental health

A new approach to mental health has been agreed to at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting held last week.

According to Garry Kingshott, CEO, Melbourne Convention + Visitors Bureau (MCVB), Melbourne has been at the forefront of mental health issues for some time and praises the government's new approach.

"Last year Melbourne secured one of the largest mental health Congresses in the world, to be held in 2007. The Congress aims to bring together more than 5,000 psychiatrists and mental health professionals. Patients and their families will also partner in the coming event," he said.

Dr Julian Freidin, President, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), whose headquarters are based in Melbourne, said that the success in securing the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) International Congress was a testament to the quality of the submission put together by the College and the City of Melbourne's Convention and Visitors organizations.

"A number of organizations worked together behind the scenes to help secure the WPA for Melbourne. We are extremely thankful to MCVB, the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre (MECC) and the City of Melbourne," said Dr Freidin.

"The mandate for the conference is to provide opportunities for show case, discussion and global exchange of information relating to mental health policy, practice and service delivery. The Congress will boost collaborative research and provide a forum for strengthening of partnerships between all involved in the mental health arena including psychiatrists, general practitioners, mental health nurses, psychologists, patients, their families and the wider community.

"Holding the Congress in Australia will help strengthen networks between our members, particularly in the Asia Pacific, and make mental health issues and service development requirements more visible in Australia and the Asia Pacific," he said.

The government's new agreement on health issues includes increased spending by just over \$1 billion on new health initiatives. A national action plan will be developed within the next three months to boost the quality of services and provide for sustained improvement in services to the mentally ill.

Dr Freidin said he was delighted with the government's decision.

"Mental health is such an important issue and our leaders are beginning to recognize this" said Dr Freidin.

The WPA International Congress, *Working Together for Mental Health: Partnership for Policy and Practice* will be held from 28 November – 2 December 2007.

Ends

Media information: Janelle Schreiber or Michelle Rawlings, Schreiber Public Relations

Tel: + 61 3 9598 5522 M: +61 (0) 412 402 137

E: janelle@schreiberpr.com.au or michelle@schreiberpr.com.au

Dr Julian Freidin, RANZCP President, 0419 770 259