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## Media Release

October 14, 2021

### **Physicians and Paediatricians welcome National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) has welcomed the Federal Government's [Strategy](#) launched yesterday, which provides a roadmap for strengthening mental health and wellbeing support for children from birth to 12 years of age, as well as their families and communities.

The RACP has been calling for education for parents and carers and is pleased to see the focus on increasing parents' awareness of mental health issues in their children and removing stigma in seeking help. A 2017 national child health [poll](#) by the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne showed that only a third of parents and carers reported feeling confident that they would recognise mental health symptoms in their child.

The RACP supports the broad directions of the strategy and is delighted it has been developed in consultation with medical and mental health experts and has a strong voice of children and families. The RACP encourages governments across Australia and New Zealand to capitalise on the knowledge and experience of paediatricians, and other child and adolescent health professional groups, to develop effective and innovative models of care delivery of mental health services for children and young people.

President of the RACP Professor John Wilson says, "Currently, it can be very difficult for families to find help for their children in a timely way. We commend the focus on helping families navigate the service system and the development of more collaborative, multidisciplinary models of care. The establishment of a national network of child and family mental health centres is an important step forward."

Findings from a recent [study](#) by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute shows three-quarters of Australian children with mental health disorders aren't getting professional help. The impacts of school closures, social isolation, employment impacts and financial stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic have only compounded existing mental health issues for children and their families.

"We welcome the continuum approach which recognises the opportunity and benefits of intervening early – both early in life and early in an illness. A collaborative approach that involves local service providers such as paediatricians and psychologists can promote a culture of wellbeing both at home and in the education system. It is also crucial that there is

appropriate support to address the trauma experienced by children with more complex needs, including those in out-of-home care.

“There is a shortage of trained mental health professionals providing services to children in rural and regional areas and the RACP calls for this to be addressed in the strategy. Equitable access to a range of support services and providers as part of the strategy is going to be paramount, and access also needs to be culturally appropriate.

“These areas are where the focus of the strategy must be strengthened. Every child deserves the chance to flourish in a positive environment and access the necessary services and tools that supports their wellbeing and mental health.”

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**About the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP)**

The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of over 18,000 physicians and 8,000 trainee physicians, across Australia and New Zealand. The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, infectious diseases, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine, and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patient.

The College offers 61 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.