

# JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui and The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

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## New Zealand's collaborative approach to addressing mental and physical health launched in Australia

Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui (Te Pou) and The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) are delighted their "Equally Well" was launched in Australia today by Professor Allan Fels, Chair of the National Mental Health Commission of Australia.

Established in New Zealand in 2014, Equally Well is a collaboration of people and organisations working together to address the physical health disparities of people living with mental illness. Evidence has shown that people who experience mental health and addiction problems don't have the same access to quality care and treatment for physical illness as everyone else, and as a result, can have reduced life expectancy.

More than 100 organisation have committed to action in New Zealand by signing the Equally Well Consensus Statement and the collaboration has already received two international awards. In Australia, 53 organisations, including all state and territory governments, have committed to supporting Equally Well, with the hope that today's launch will increase awareness and lead others to commit to the Equally Well principles.

"We are honoured the National Mental Health Commission of Australia has seen the value in our collaborative approach and adopted the concept. We know in New Zealand, for many individuals and organisations, physical health now appears to have a higher priority in recognition of these unacceptable disparities in health outcomes," says Robyn Shearer, Chief Executive of Te Pou.

RANZCP have been leading partners in both the New Zealand and Australian Equally Well Consensus Statements.

"The fact that Australians and New Zealanders with serious mental illness are dying 10 to 20 years earlier than the general population, and mainly because of poor physical health, is simply not acceptable in the twenty first century," says Dr Kym Jenkins, President of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists.

"Better screening, earlier treatment and management of co-existing physical health conditions will help people with a mental illness – and will reduce costs to the national health system."

The issues behind the significant difference in mortality are complex and interrelated.

"We need many people working across the health-related sectors to address these entrenched and long-standing health inequities, that's why we took a collaborative approach to bringing about change," says Helen Lockett, Equally Well Strategic Lead.

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“The launch of the Australian *Equally Well Consensus Statement* is a crucial step in bringing people together and we look forward to working alongside our Australian colleagues to improve the physical health of people who experience mental health conditions and addiction.”

**END**

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**NOTES**

**Equally Well**

Equally Well is a group of people and organisations with the common goal of reducing physical health disparities between people who experience mental health and addiction problems, and people who don't. Mental health and addiction service users are important partners in this work.

Equally Well uses the principles of collective impact to bring about change at both a system and service delivery level across the health and health-related sectors, to address this disparity.

<https://www.tepou.co.nz/initiatives/equally-well-physical-health/37>

**Te Pou o te Whakaaro Nui (Te Pou)**

Te Pou provides a backbone support function to the Equally Well collaborative. Te Pou is the national centre of evidence based workforce development for the New Zealand mental health, addiction and disability sectors. Te Pou includes Matua Raki (addiction workforce development) and Disability Workforce Development. Te Pou are funded in most part by the Ministry of Health.

[www.tepou.org.nz](http://www.tepou.org.nz)

Te Pou is part of a group of organisations called the WiseGroup [www.wisegroup.co.nz](http://www.wisegroup.co.nz)

**The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists**

RANZCP is a membership organisation that prepares medical specialists in the field of psychiatry, supports and enhances clinical practice, advocates for people affected by mental illness and advises governments on mental health care.

[www.ranzcp.org/Home](http://www.ranzcp.org/Home)

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## **The National Mental Health Commission of Australia**

The National Mental Health Commission is Australia's first. It was set up on 1 January 2012 to report independently to the Prime Minister on what's working and what's not.

The Commission's work aims to improve the lives of Australians with a lived experience of mental health difficulties and suicide risk, their families, friends and other support people. Our purpose is to provide insight, advice and evidence on ways to continuously improve Australia's mental health and suicide prevention systems and to act as a catalyst for change to achieve those improvements.

The Commission strive to increase accountability and transparency in mental health through the provision of independent reports and advice to the Australian Government and the community. The Commission provides cross-sectoral leadership on the policy, programs, services and systems that support better mental health and social and emotional wellbeing in Australia.

[www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/)