Focus on mental health welcomed

The Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) has welcomed the creation of the new Deputy Chief Medical Officer role with a focus on mental health.

APHA CEO Michael Roff congratulated Associate Professor Ruth Vine on her appointment.

"APHA will work collaboratively with the Associate Professor Vine to promote good mental health care in Australia. Private psychiatric hospitals provide important care to Australians, particularly in the most prevalent mental health disorders – anxiety and depression.

"Private hospitals have entered into agreements with the Federal and State/Territory Governments to meet the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. As experts are predicting a considerable uptick in mental health stressors for Australians as a result of the pandemic, the services provided by private mental health facilities will be essential," he said.

Mr Roff said Australians were now able to access a once-in-a-lifetime, immediate upgrade of their private health insurance to access private psychiatric hospital care should they need it. Affordable access to quality mental health care is a key challenge right now, which is why the immediate upgrade is such an important measure.

"We also have to recognise that a lot of people who need care now don't have private health insurance – so public and private sectors, Commonwealth and States need to work together," he said.

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Media contact: Frith Rayner, Director Communications and Marketing, 0413 971 999

The Australian Private Hospitals Association (APHA) is the peak industry body representing the private hospital and day surgery sector. The private hospital sector treats 4.5 million patients a year, including treatment of a third of chemotherapy, 60 percent of all surgery, 74 percent of all elective musculoskeletal surgery and 80 percent of rehabilitation.