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depressioNet Users Respond to Prime Minister's Announcement on Mental Health

MELBOURNE – Australia's only 24/7 online support service for people with mental illness, **depressioNet.com.au**, is abuzz with chatter about the Prime Minister's announcement of increased funding for the country's mental health system.

"I notice that they are going to bring psychologists into the Medicare system – wonderful," says Sue of Brisbane. "More out-of-hospital support is needed and more drug counseling should be brought under the mental health banner.

"We need better backing for the carers and ongoing support following hospital discharges, more power to the police in dealing with – not punishing – the mentally ill."

'dNetter' Eve says Mr. Howard's announcement is good news, but "well and truly overdue."

Eve has been battling depression and an anxiety/panic disorder for a long time and finds it "extremely difficult to access ongoing therapy. I am an unpaid carer living on a government carer's payment, so a private psychologist is simply unaffordable for me." She hopes the Medicare rebate "will be realistic and not leave a huge gap for people to pay."

As a member of the **depressioNet.com.au** online support service Eve says she has found the site indispensable, as it is somewhere she can go for support anytime, day or night.

"There are many depression sites on the web but depressioNet is unique in the way it is run and moderated – always with the safety of members at the forefront and with a trained team member on duty at all times.

"It's been invaluable in my recovery and I would like to see some of the new funds going to depressioNet to enable it to continue helping others like me."

"Many medications have been found to be beneficial in treating depression and related illness," says Tanya of Sydney. "They are not always on the PBS scheme and are usually prohibitively expensive for many patients. I am thinking particularly of some of the newer anticonvulsants such as Lamictal and Neurontin and antipsychotics such as Abilify."

Another user of the service, Reg, believes some of the funding should be used for the compulsory psychological counselling of the parents of children with mental illnesses, psychology classes for teenagers, anti-bullying education and follow up.

Reg also says that greater attention needs to be paid to issues such as diet and nutrition, along with alternative therapies such as, “the wider study and implementation of the wellness class at Geelong Grammar School mentioned in the recent 60 Minutes segment on male depression.”

ABOUT: **depressioNet** is a deductible gift recipient, not-for-profit charity. Its purpose is to empower people to make informed choices and find solutions to the challenges of living with depression.

Since June 2000, **depressioNet.com.au** has provided a comprehensive, independent resource for information, help and 24-hour, peer-based support to more than a million people with depression, their families and friends. **depressioNet.com.au** provides extensive information about depression, its impact and treatment, along with access to a personal referral service to professional treatment and support. **depressioNet**'s trained Online Care Team ensure **depressioNet** is a safe and supportive online environment. **depressioNet.com.au** is supported by healthcare professionals and funded through a variety of partners, grants, donations from the community and federal government financial assistance. Its need to gain ongoing financial support for day-to-day operations continues.

Attention Editors and Producers: The founder of **depressioNet.com.au**, Leanne Pethick, is available for interviews and comment.