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## More funding needed to support youth mental health

The recent spate of teenage suicides in Victoria highlights the need for extra resources and funding into teenage mental health, says the Australian General Practice Network's (AGPN) chair Dr Emil Djakic.

Dr Djakic, a Tasmanian General Practitioner (GP), believes that while there are existing programs in place to help young people with mental health issues and their parents, their effectiveness is limited by their funding capacity to take on new clients and areas.

"The deaths of four young people all from the same school in Victoria has highlighted for all of us the great need that the Australian community has to help prevent tragedies like this from happening again," said AGPN chair Dr Emil Djakic.

**headspace** is one such early intervention initiative that has been designed to help young Australians deal with their mental health issues and is rolled out nationally through some of AGPN's network members.

However in many areas **headspace's** services are struggling to keep up with demand from the numbers of young people seeking help.

"**headspace** has enabled better engagement between GPs and teenagers. There has been a move to young people openly talking about their mental health as well as identify those who may be at a greater risk," Dr Djakic said.

"Once identified, the **headspace** staff have been able to assist the young person and parents deal with the mental health issues and in many, many situations have prevented tragedy," he said.

AGPN also supports a nation-wide rollout of positive parenting programs which aim to reduce the prevalence of anxiety and depression in young people and raise the awareness of parents of mental health issues experienced by teenagers.

"We know that there is good evidence for parenting programs that offer suggestions and ideas to help parents understand influences on teenage behavior and help teenagers learn how to deal with risky situations. These can go a long way in preventing these issues in the child's future," said Dr Djakic.

AGPN believes that if the federal government does not make a stronger commitment to youth mental health services funding, then we will continue to see more young lives lost to this preventable mental illness.

**For media interviews please phone AGPN Communications Manager Frith Rayner on 02 6228 0819 or 0402 267 190**