

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010**



## **CONGRATULATIONS TO YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPION**

**headspace**, the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, extends its congratulations and well-wishes to one of our founding Directors, Professor Patrick McGorry, on being named Australian of the Year. This national recognition is well deserved, and represents a major step forward in his work for youth mental health reform in this country.

**headspace** CEO Chris Tanti says, "Professor McGorry has worked tirelessly for more than 30 years in the field of youth mental health. One of his most significant achievements is conceiving, lobbying for and successfully commencing **headspace** – a worldwide first in mental health. Thanks in large part to Professor McGorry we know that mental ill health in young Australians is one of the most significant issues facing this country.

He has helped change the way we understand the emergence of mental health difficulties and its impact on a young life. Through his research and clinical practice he has helped lead Australia towards the delivery of more humane, personal and accessible youth mental health services, and has been justified in his belief that prevention is better than cure," said Mr Tanti.

Mental health is a leading area of concern to young Australians because it is the key health issue faced by young people (Mission Australia 2009). Mental health disorders account for over 50% of the total disease burden in Australian youth, led by depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia<sup>1</sup>. Almost 24% of Australians aged 12-25 years experience a mental disorder in any year. This equates to 478,000 males and 526,000 females.

"Australia faces substantial costs arising from mental illness in young people. Since 75% of mental health disorders emerge before the age of 25<sup>2</sup>, preventative interventions targeted to young people have the capacity to generate greater personal, social and economic benefits than intervention at any other time in the lifespan," said Mr Tanti.

There are currently 30 **headspace** centres across the country where young people can go to get help for emerging mental health issues. Early, effective intervention, targeting young people aged 12 – 25 years should be a community and Government priority. All those involved with **headspace** and all those who work to raise awareness of this issue join together to congratulate Professor McGorry on this well deserved honor.

**For media enquiries, please call Maree Sidey on 0417 385 208**

1. <sup>1</sup> Begg, S, Vos, T, Barker, B, *et al.* The burden of disease and injury in Australia 2003. Canberra; 2007.

2. <sup>2</sup> Kessler RC, Berglund P, Demler O, Jin R, Merikangas KR, Walters EE (2005) 'Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication' *Arch Gen Psychiatry* 62(6):593-602.