



The Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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\$5 million for research to improve mental health in elderly Australians

The Turnbull Government and beyondblue will provide a total of \$5 million for research to help improve mental illness among our older Australians.

The funding will be allocated to seven innovative projects that will look to reduce depression, anxiety and suicide in elderly Australians by supporting evidence-based approaches.

One project includes a trial to reduce the prevalence of depression in Australian nursing homes and another projects look at improving health and social participation outcomes in older adults with depression and anxiety.

Minister for Health Greg Hunt said older people are particularly vulnerable to developing mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety and that's exacerbated by declining physical health, chronic pain, loneliness, grief and loss of independence.

"Ten to 15 per cent of older adults in Australia experience depression, but for people living in residential aged the rate is much higher—around 30 per cent," Minister Hunt said.

"The highest suicide rate among men remains in the 85-and-over age bracket. These research projects will save lives."

beyondblue and the Government, through the National Health and Medical Research Council, will each provide about \$2.5 million to fund the projects.

beyondblue CEO Georgie Harman said the mental health of older Australians was too often forgotten.

"beyondblue is delighted to partner with the NHMRC to underwrite these important and sorely needed research projects," Ms Harman said.

"But we're not just co-funding this research, we will share the findings and use them to drive forward our work and advocacy.

"We can't forget about the mental health and wellbeing of generations who have contributed so much to our communities."

The Turnbull Government has made health and medical research a priority and mental health is a key area of focus.

The Coalition Government is delivering an increase of \$338.1 million in mental health funding, with a focus on suicide prevention, research in older Australians and advancing the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan.

Over the next four years, the Government is delivering \$6 billion in record funding for Australia's health and medical research sector, including \$3.5 billion for the National Health and Medical Research Council, \$2 billion in disbursements from the Medical Research Future Fund and \$500 million from the Biomedical Translation Fund.

(ENDS)

The projects funded are:

Chief Investigator (A)	Project	Administering Institution	Funding
Associate Professor Viviana Wuthrich	Translating evidence-based psychological interventions for older adults with depression and anxiety into public and private mental health settings using a stepped care framework	Macquarie University	\$1,022,888.60
Professor Ronald Rapee	Improving health and social participation outcomes in older adults with depression and anxiety	Macquarie University	\$780,652.20
Professor Osvaldo Almeida	BAN-Dep: A trial to decrease the prevalence of depression in Australian nursing homes	University of Western Australia	\$864,281.80
Professor Robert Sanson-Fisher	A randomised controlled trial of an online peer support intervention for reducing symptoms of depression among community-dwelling older adults living in rural Australia	The University of Newcastle	\$496,233.10
Professor Andrew Page	Evidence for suicide prevention in planning transitions from employment to retirement in older age populations	University of Western Sydney	\$233,914.00
Associate Professor Sunil Bhar	Elders AT Ease Program (ELATE): A cluster randomised controlled trial of a sustainable and scalable mental health service for Australian residential aged care facilities	Swinburne University of Technology	\$985,750.60
Professor Colleen Doyle	The impact of befriending on depression, anxiety, social support and loneliness in older adults living in residential aged care facilities	National Ageing Research Institute	\$652,734.35