

SPEAKING NOTES FOR THE MINISTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION,
CHILD CARE AND YOUTH

THE HON KATE ELLIS MP

INAUGURAL WORLD CHILDREN OF PARENTS WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS
(COPMI) AND 6TH NATIONAL CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH
CONFERENCE

VIDEO MESSAGE

- Mr Philip Robinson, Chair Board of Directors, AICAFMHA
- Members of the Children Of Parents with a Mental Illness Initiative National Reference Group
- Members of the COPMI International Consultation Group
- COPMI national initiative staff members
- Consumers and carers, including young people and children
- Distinguished guests
- Ladies and gentlemen
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- Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you all today.
- Unfortunately I am unable to be with you in person but I'm pleased to be able to officially launch this new range of education and information resources via video message.
- Reducing the impact of mental illness is a priority for the Australian Government and we are providing significant funding to address mental health issues.
- Through better management and treatment and importantly early intervention - I know that we can make a real difference in the lives of those affected by mental health problems.
- On top of the funding through the Medicare Benefits Scheme and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Government funding for mental health-specific programs will

nearly double over the next four years, reaching \$923.6 million over the four years from 2008-09.

- This includes funding for mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention programs for children and young people such as initiatives for high-risk groups, including those targeting children of parents with mental illness.
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- Data from the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing in 2007 showed that almost half of the Australian population have experienced mental illness at some point in their lives.
- The onset of mental illness experienced by many of Australia's adult population has its onset in childhood or adolescence. Mental illness is also a major challenge facing many of our young people.
- Furthermore it is also estimated that up to 23 per cent of Australian children have a parent with a mental illness. This equates to almost one million Australian children.
- The important resources that I am proud to be launching today are a creation of the COPMI National Initiative and are being supported through funding from the Australian Government.
- These resources aim to promote better mental health outcomes for children who have parents with a mental health problem or disorder.
- *Keeping Families and Children in Mind* is a flexible e-learning resource for mental health workers, designed for both individual study and for use in groups.
- The six modules provide workers with information about issues faced by parents who experience mental illness and the impact on their family, along with scenarios about families for workers to reflect on in their own practice.
- *Piecing the Puzzle Together* is an information booklet for families where a parent has a mental illness and is raising children in the 2-7 age groups.
- The booklet was produced in consultation with mental health service consumers and carers and is available in seven different languages.

- *Helping to Piece the Puzzle Together* is an associated information supplement for early childhood workers who work with children and families where a parent has a mental illness or mental health problem.
- It was produced with input from staff in child care centres and junior primary education and from infant mental health professionals.
- And finally *Just Being Me* is a resource package for teachers in junior secondary schools.
- Developed in association with *Mindmatters*, another Australian Government school-based mental health promotion and early intervention initiative, it utilises existing class texts to increase students awareness of mental illness and its potential affects on families, reduce stigma and increase help-seeking behaviours.
- These resources will be distributed shortly to key government and non-government organisations.
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- Thankfully through your efforts we can help to provide adequate support for children of parents with a mental illness in Australia.
- I thank you for the opportunity to join you today via this video message and to officially launch these important new resources.
- Finally, for those of you attending the events starting tomorrow, I would like to wish you a very successful conference.