



**Media Release**  
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## **WHV calls for gender sensitive approach to mental health**

Victorian women's health policy experts and advocates have today encouraged a gender sensitive approach to policy and practice around mental health, as part of Mental Health Week Oct 10 – 16 2010.

Executive Director of Women's Health Victoria, Ms Marilyn Beaumont, said that it was wrong to separate mental and physical health, as the two are often intertwined.

"Mental health actually makes up 15 per cent of Victorian women's total disease burden, so we need to ensure we have effective ways of addressing and targeting mental health.

"Women who suffer from poor mental health often have physical health conditions and vice versa.

"The use of a gender sensitive understanding in treatment methods has proven far more effective than the blanket approach that is usually deployed in the treatment of mental health.

"To ensure a high quality of care, policy makers and service providers in both the mental health and physical health sectors need to consider the relationship between mind and body, and the differences between women and men's experiences.

"Women have higher rates of correspondence between mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety with chronic physical illnesses such as cardio-vascular disease and type 2 diabetes compared to men.

"It is crucial to ensure that we are getting the right sorts of treatment to those who need it. Otherwise we risk piecemeal or ineffectual treatment which could otherwise be far more effective," said Ms Beaumont.

"Women with mental health conditions need appropriate services that are relevant and effective and acknowledge that those needs are different to those of men.

"Our ten point plan indicates the need for a gender sensitive approach to policy and practice to enable the development of effective intervention and evaluation.

For more information on the Ten Point Plan for women's health see: <http://whv.org.au/publications-resources/publications-resources-by-topic/post/10-point-plan-for-victorian-women-s-health-2010-2014/>

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