

## MEDIA RELEASE

**Minister for Ageing  
Minister for Disability Services  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs  
The Hon. Paul Lynch MP**



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# Older people's mental health a priority

Minister for Ageing Paul Lynch today used Seniors Week to highlight the impact of depression on people aged over 60 years.

Presenting a prize at the Black Dog Institute writing competition in Randwick today, Mr Lynch said an estimated eight percent of older adults in Australia experienced depression.

Mr Lynch said diagnosing depression in older people can be difficult.

"Many people assume that a problem with memory or concentration is due to age-related changes in thinking, rather than a symptom of depression," he said.

"Older people may also find it difficult to talk about their feelings of sadness because depression, along with other illnesses can impair memory and concentration," Mr Lynch said.

To raise awareness about the issue, the Black Dog Institute initiated the national writing competition with the theme "*Late Onset Depression: Finding Answers for older people and their carers*".

Mr Lynch presented the first prize cheque of \$2000 to Gillian Charlton from Bensville on the Central Coast for her story titled "You'll love it once you're in."

The essay, along with other winning entries, appears on the Black Dog Institute website [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)

Black Dog Institute Executive Director Gordon Parker said the competition provided a treasure trove of advice and experiences.

"I believe older people will find it useful to hear these stories from others and what they found to be helpful in managing their depression," he said.

Member for Coogee Paul Pearce said it was appropriate that the winners were announced during Seniors Week.

"Seniors Week encourages older people to be active in their community. We know that social isolation is a problem among older people," he said.

“That’s why maintaining and developing good relationships are important. Seniors Week plays an important part in building these relationships,” Mr Pearce said.

For information about Seniors Week events, visit [www.nswseniorsweek.com.au](http://www.nswseniorsweek.com.au)

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