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Media Release

AIA Australia partners with Australasian Menopause Society to combat frequent misdiagnosis of menopause

Melbourne, 7 February 2022. Leading life, health and wellbeing specialist AIA Australia has partnered with the Australasian Menopause Society (AMS), a group of doctors and allied health professionals who are driving awareness about the commonly overlooked life stage of menopause.

In Australia there are two million women who have recently gone through menopause and approximately 80,000 women move into the postmenopausal stage each year. Perimenopausal (women transitioning to menopause) and menopausal females make up approximately 40 per cent of all health care visits in Australia¹. There can be a lack of understanding about the symptoms of menopause, which are often diagnosed as predominately mental health-related and therefore not managed optimally.

AIA Australia's income protection claim data demonstrates that women in the 45-55 age bracket are 50 per cent more likely to experience depression or anxiety than men. Concerned about this statistic, the insurer believes that there is a significant need for increased education and access to evidence-based information about menopause, to ensure that the correct diagnosis is reached; allowing for better quality of life for patients and reduced burden on the health care system.

Women transitioning into menopause are at risk of mood disturbance; however the seriousness of mood fluctuation is often underestimated. Australian statistical data shows that in 2020 the highest suicide rate for females is the 45-49 age bracket, highlighting that midlife is a time of risk². Concerningly, during this time women with pre-existing mental illness may experience an exacerbation of their symptoms and even women who have never experienced depression previously are at a heightened risk of depression when compared to pre-menopausal women.

While deterioration in mood can be diagnosed by a medical practitioner, often it is not considered that a contributing causal factor could be menopause, meaning that symptoms may be treated pharmacologically with antidepressant medications in the first instance. While antidepressant medication may be needed by some women, a multi-faceted management plan involving recognition of changing social roles, psychological therapies, a healthy lifestyle and consideration of hormonal treatment is a more appropriate approach. Females experiencing menopause related depression mostly improve with treatment; however it is important that clinicians offer a holistic and evidence-based management plan to ensure that any mental ill-health does not deteriorate and become chronic.

AIA Australia Chief Shared Value and Marketing Officer, Stephanie Phillips said *"At AIA Australia we have a strong belief in the importance of early intervention so that our customers get the right treatment, before their condition worsens. We're pleased to be working with the Australasian Menopause Society so we can empower women experiencing menopause to know that they are not alone and there is a wide range of support available if they need it."*

President of the Australasian Menopause Society, Dr Karen Magraith said, *"The Australasian Menopause Society is pleased to be partnering with AIA Australia to promote awareness of*

¹ <https://www.menopause.org.au/about-ams/mission-and-vision>

² https://lifeinmindaustralia.imgix.net/assets/src/uploads/LiM_Australian_national_suicide_data_2020_FINAL.pdf

menopause. Menopause is an important transitional stage in life and many women experience a variety of symptoms. In addition, after menopause women are more vulnerable to the development of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis. Knowledge about menopause is crucial to women and those around them, so that they can receive the support they need, and so that they can be empowered to set themselves up for a healthy life in the years to come.”

To learn more about the Australasian Menopause Society, visit: <https://menopause.org.au/about-ams>

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About AIA Australia

AIA Australia is a leading life insurance specialist with over 48 years' experience and a commitment to help Australians live healthier, longer, better lives. In 2014 the company launched AIA Vitality, a world leading, science-based health and wellbeing program, to the Australian market. In July 2017, AIA and its partners launched AIA's health insurance business, now known as AIA Health Insurance.

In 2021, Commlnsure Life was integrated into AIA Australia. The lives of more than 3.8 million Australians are protected and enhanced through AIA Australia's unique value proposition of life, health and wellbeing. Our vision is to embrace shared value in championing Australia and New Zealand to be the healthiest and best protected nations in the world.

AIA Australia has been recognised with multiple awards, including the Women in Finance Employer of the Year Award (2018, 2019), Super Review's Best Insurer of the Year (2018, 2019), iSelect Partner Awards Insurer of the Year (2019), Insurance Asia International Life Insurer of the Year (Australia, 2020), Shared Value Awards Corporate Organisation Leading Through Shared Value (2019) and Shared Value Awards Organisation of the Year (2020).

Further information at www.aia.com.au.

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