DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND AGEING

The Hon Nicola Roxon MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

The Hon Warren Snowdon
Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services

The Hon Justine Elliot
Minister for Ageing

The Hon Kate Ellis
Minister for Sport

The Hon Mark Butler
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Aging

MEDIA RELEASES

1. Building a Health and Hospitals Network for Australia’s Future
2. Three Major Reform Projects Responded to in the 2010-11 Budget
3. More Comprehensive and Convenient GP and Primary Care
4. More GP Super Clinics and Extra GP Infrastructure
5. More Doctors and More Nurses in National Health and Hospitals Network
6. Personally Controlled Electronic Health Records for All Australians
7. Agreements Ensure Sustainable Access to Medicines
8. Quicker Access to High Quality Hospital Care
9. World First Action on Preventative Health
10. $325 Million Boost to Sport and Getting More Australians Active
11. Building the Foundations for Better Mental Health Care
12. Building a National Aged Care System
13. Closing the Gap – Strengthening Indigenous Communities
14. Rudd Government Continues to Tackle the Rural Health Challenge

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Cabinet-In-Confidence
## Health and Ageing - 2010-11 Budget at a Glance

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Cabinet-In-Confidence
MEDIA RELEASE

11 May 2010

BUILDING A HEALTH AND HOSPITALS NETWORK FOR AUSTRALIA’S FUTURE

The Rudd Government will put in place the most significant reforms to Australia’s health and hospitals system since the introduction of Medicare – to create a National Health and Hospitals Network that is funded nationally and run locally.

This Budget delivers an additional $2.2 billion over four years – for better access to more doctors, especially GPs, an unprecedented level of support and training for our nurses and the introduction of personally controlled electronic health records for every Australian.

The Budget is the culmination of the Rudd Government’s first term health reform agenda, with a focus on better hospitals and improved primary care and preventive health.

In total, this will see the Rudd Government provide a package of $7.3 billion over five years in additional investment to deliver more doctors, more nurses, more hospital beds, and shorter waiting times for all Australians.

The Australian Government will deliver a total of $7.3 billion in additional funding over the next five years to provide:

- expanded GP and primary care services, especially after hours;
- more support for nurses, particularly aged care nurses;
- quicker emergency department and elective surgery treatment times;
- personally controlled electronic health records;
- more training places for GPs and specialists;
- locum relief for rural nurses and allied health professionals;
- 1,300 new sub-acute hospital beds and 2500 additional aged care beds;
- new investments in prevention, including tough new action to tackle smoking; and
- new investments in mental health services, with 20,000 extra young people to get assistance.

These changes are underpinned by a secure future funding base for health and hospitals – with the Commonwealth Government taking dominant funding responsibility for hospitals for the first time.
The Commonwealth will also take full funding and policy responsibility for GP and primary care and aged care services.

**Better Access to After Hours Care, supported by *Medicare Locals***

The Rudd Government will establish a $416.8 million nationwide network of *Medicare Locals*, including to deliver national after hours care twenty four hours a day and seven days a week.

A National After Hours Access Service will mean anyone needing to see a GP outside normal business hours will:

- call their usual general practice, and if the practice is not open, the call will be directed to the National Health Call Centre Network;
- then speak to a nurse or GP about their illness; and
- if required, be referred to a local after hours GP service, with the appointment coordinated by Medicare Locals.

This will help people who are unwell get the treatment they need when they need it, and help take pressure off our over-stretched emergency departments.

Medicare Locals will work to improve and expand much needed after hours services, as well as better connect hospital, GP, allied health, aged care, mental health and Indigenous health services in local communities.

Medicare Locals will be there to help people access the care they need, acting as a patient guide to help navigate through the many avenues of health care.

**Expanding and upgrading primary care to build more GP Super Clinics**

A $355.2 million investment in more GP Super Clinics and expanded GP clinics will build better frontline health infrastructure.

This investment will deliver improved and expanded facilities in around 425 existing GP clinics and around 23 new GP Super Clinics.

Providing patients with more services in a single location in GP Super Clinics means patients are more easily able to get the full range of care they need.

It will mean less running around from one health professional to the next, and will provide patients with easier access to allied health care - such as physiotherapists, nutritionists and podiatrists – so that they can receive the services they need to stay healthy and out of hospital.

Helping health professionals work together in GP Super Clinics can also deliver a greater focus on prevention and the management of disease – and more room to train the next generation of doctors and nurses.
Investing in Australia’s nurses and doctors

Strong support for our health professionals is central to building better health and hospitals.

This Budget provides a $1.2 billion investment in the health workforce, including:

- $493.4 million for more support for nurses, with aged care nurses to receive $103.1 million extra;
- $40.6 million to support nurses and allied health professionals working in rural areas; and
- more than $640 million to deliver increase GP training places and more opportunities for young doctors to train as specialists.

Nurses are the backbone of our health system and this Budget recognises the importance of their skills and the need to keep them in the workforce.

The $103.1 million extra will be provided to recognise and support our essential aged care nurses. This funding will help more people train to join the sector, and those that are there to upgrade their qualifications and stay in the industry.

Better Supporting Nurses in General Practices

The Rudd Government will invest $390.3 million to support around 5000 full time practice nurses in GP clinics.

Practice nurses can relieve the pressure on GPs by providing immunisations and wound care, and ensuring patients are reminded about appointments and are educated on how to manage or prevent illnesses.

The Rudd Government is also investing $449.2 million for better coordinated care for patients with diabetes.

Personally controlled electronic health records

The Rudd Government will invest $466.7 million to establish personally controlled electronic health records – a landmark investment that will mean that as Australians go from one health service provider to another, their health information is not left behind.

For the first time, Australians will be able to check their medical history online – including information such as medications and whether their immunisations are up to date – as secure personally controlled electronic health records are progressively introduced from 2012.
Better hospital and sub-acute services

From 1 July 2010, the Rudd Government will invest more than $3 billion over four years to tackle key pressure points in our public hospitals, so patients will get quicker access to hospital services and better quality care. This will include:

- $753.2 million to cap emergency department waiting times at 4 hours and expand our emergency departments; and
- $803.0 million for additional elective surgery procedures and expanding capacity – with a guarantee that 95 per cent of surgery will be delivered on time from 1 July 2012.

A total of $1.63 billion for an estimated 1,316 new sub-acute beds by 2013-14 will support rehabilitation, palliative care, and mental health services – and help people get the right care for their needs.

Aged care

The Rudd Government will deliver a $532.9 million package to build a nationally consistent, Commonwealth-run aged care system.

This will provide more beds, extra packages of care, more GP and primary care services in aged care facilities, make it simpler for older Australians to get into the system, and invest in stronger consumer protection.

Mental health

This Budget begins the task of reforming the mental health system, with a $180 million investment focusing on young Australians – the age group most in need of additional assistance.

Prevention

The Government is taking tough action on smoking and binge drinking by:

- increasing tobacco excise by 25 per cent;
- reducing the attraction of cigarettes through plain packaging;
- investing in campaigns to encourage people to quit smoking; and
- providing an additional $50.0 million for the National Binge Drinking Strategy.

Indigenous health

The Rudd Government is investing $38.5 million to continue the rollout of Opal fuel, expanding storage and distribution of Opal fuel to 39 new retail sites.

Reforms to pharmacy, pharmaceuticals and medical expenses for a fiscally sustainable health system

The Rudd Government has negotiated the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement and further reforms to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) to deliver huge
savings to the taxpayer – $2.5 billion over five years. This ensures PBS medicines remain accessible for all Australians, and that pharmacy services and access to pharmacists remains sustainable into the future.

The Government will also increase the threshold above which a taxpayer can claim the net medical expenses tax offset to $2000 and will index this rate to CPI. This will come into effect from 1 July 2010, and result in savings of $350 million over four years. The threshold has not been increased or indexed since 2002.

Record funding for health

The reforms and investment in this health Budget are fundamental to ensuring all Australians can enjoy better health and better hospitals thanks to improved access to high quality, sustainable health care as close to as home to possible.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister’s Office on 02 6277 7220
THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

11 May 2010

THREE MAJOR REFORM PROJECTS RESPONDED TO IN THE 2010-11 BUDGET

Today’s Budget is the culmination of the work of the Government’s three key health reform reports, and provides $7.3 billion in new funding to implement their key recommendations.

On coming to office, the Government commissioned three key reports to examine critical areas of the health system – the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (NHHRC), the Preventative Health Taskforce (the Taskforce) and the Primary Care Strategy.

More than 30 appointed experts led this work to comprehensively analyse our health system and provide advice to the Government about delivering better health outcomes and better health services for all Australians.

These experts led their own consultations, and their recommendations were further road tested by the Government in more than 100 local forums around the country in 2009 and early 2010.

This Budget has secured the future of our health system by funding a majority of recommended reforms called for by those experts.

In implementing and supporting 94 – the vast majority – of the NHHRC’s recommendations, the Government has made strategic reforms to fundamentally restructure the health system, including taking majority funding responsibility for hospitals, and funding hospitals for activity against strong national standards.

Key recommendations from the NHHRC on lifting the quality of care, improving access to hospital services through funding linked to performance targets, and filling the ‘missing links’ in the system such as sub-acute care and electronic health records, have been accepted and funded in this Budget.

A major reform funded by this Budget is the Government’s takeover of GP and primary care services – supported by investments in more GPs, more support for nurses
working in general practice, better access to after hours GP care, and better connected care in the community.

The first ever National Primary Care Strategy has also been released with the Budget, and implements the Draft Strategy developed by the External Reference Group.

The strategy recommends growing our primary care workforce, implementing personally controlled electronic health records, regionalising primary care services, boosting infrastructure, and better supporting chronic disease patients. Each of these key areas are being acted upon in this Budget.

Independent primary care organisations – Medicare Locals – will be established throughout the country, to enhance and better integrate services provided by local GPs and primary care providers, and make sure that working families have access to the health care they need, when and where they need it.

Understanding the need to put more energy into keeping people well and out of hospital, the Government is acting on 28 out of 35 key action areas recommended by the Preventative Health Taskforce, but has not adopted each individual sub-recommendation.

The Government supports and has funded vital preventative health infrastructure, as recommended by the Taskforce, including the establishment of a National Preventative Health Agency, and the most ambitious study of Australia’s health ever conducted.

On the Taskforce’s recommendation, the Government has announced the strongest ever package of measures to cut smoking rates, our biggest single cause of preventable deaths. A world first will be pursued by mandating plain packaging for tobacco.

Investments targeting diabetes, encouraging more participation in sport, and an ongoing commitment to working with industry and the broader community in prevention and health promotion, will help to deliver on the Government’s aim of keeping people healthy.

Responses to each report can be found at yourhealth.gov.au

The Government thanks Dr Christine Bennett, Dr Tony Hobbs and Professor Rob Moodie, and all their fellow Commissioners and appointees, for their hard work and the vision they have helped to create for better health for all Australians.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister’s Office on 02 6277 7220
MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND CONVENIENT GP AND PRIMARY CARE

The 2010-11 Budget will deliver a massive $1.2 billion boost to GP and primary health care to deliver real improvements in frontline health services for patients across Australia.

Better After Hours Access to primary care, through your Medicare Local

The Government will invest $416.8 million in establishing a nation-wide network of primary health care organisations, to be known as Medicare Locals. This major investment will also provide all Australians with access to high quality, affordable and integrated after hours GP services, making it easier for patients to get the treatment they need when they need it.

As we know, people get sick regardless of the time of day. The first priority of Medicare Locals will be to coordinate the expansion of access to after hours GP services, which will be linked to a new 24 hour national telephone-based service.

Under this new program, people who need to see a GP at night or on the weekend will:

- call their usual general practice, and if the practice is not open, the call will be directed to the National Health Call Centre Network;
- then speak to a nurse or GP about their illness; and
- if required, be referred to a local after hours GP service, with the appointment coordinated by Medicare Locals.

This means knowing that your loved ones can get the care they need, when they need it.

Over time, Medicare Locals will also support community health promotion and prevention programs, and take a greater role in community-based mental health service provision, including through the coordination of Commonwealth-funded community mental health programs.

Investing in more primary care infrastructure, including more GP Super Clinics

The Government will invest $355.2 million to build around 450 GP Super Clinic-type facilities. Around 23 new dedicated GP Super Clinics will be constructed and more
than 400 general practices, primary care and community health services, and Aboriginal Medical Services will be given Government assistance to build expanded facilities.

Additional services will be made available as a result of the infrastructure investment, with space made available in GP clinics for allied health services, group education (such as diabetes management), counselling and community health promotion.

**Comprehensive care for people with diabetes**

The Australian Government will transform the way Australians with long term illness are treated – starting with improving health outcomes for the nearly one million Australians living with diabetes, too many of whom end up being treated in hospitals unnecessarily.

The Government is committing $449.2 million to improve care for people with diabetes. For the first time, Australians with diabetes will have the option of signing up with a GP practice. The practice will be responsible for managing all aspects of their care and be paid, in part, for keeping patients healthy and out of hospital.

**More support for nurses working in general practice**

The Government is acting to ensure more Australians can more easily access appropriate health care, by making a strategic investment to support and recognise the work of practice nurses.

As part of the Government’s nursing package, $390.3 million will be provided to better support practice nurses and, for the first time, provide funding for GPs in urban areas to help employ practice nurses.

Annual incentive payments of $25,000 per full time GP for a registered nurse and $12,500 per full time GP for an enrolled nurse will be made available to eligible accredited general practices.

**Building a primary health care system for the future**

Through the National Health and Hospitals Network, the Australian Government is taking full responsibility for funding all general practice and primary health care services. The Commonwealth will continue discussions with the states and territories to finalise the scope of services included in the takeover by the end of 2010.

The Government is also responding to the review of primary health care it commissioned as part of the health reform process, with the release of Australia’s first *National Primary Care Strategy*.

The Government’s investments complement the additional primary care funding for:

- record numbers of GPs; and
• a new innovative approach to improve the treatment of diabetes in GP practices.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister’s Office on 02 6277 7220
11 May 2010

MORE GP SUPER CLINICS AND EXTRA GP INFRASTRUCTURE

The 2010-11 Budget will deliver a massive $1.2 billion boost to GP and primary health care including $355.2 million into building and upgrading GP Super Clinics.

This will honour the Rudd Government’s commitment to deliver real improvements in frontline health services for patients across Australia.

The Rudd Government will:

• upgrade around 425 primary care facilities into GP Super Clinics; and
• construct around 23 new dedicated GP Super Clinics.

This strengthens the Rudd Government’s $275.2 million GP Super Clinics program, which is delivering 36 GP Super Clinics.

GP Super Clinics take pressure off public hospitals, provide better integrated and more accessible care, help attract health professionals to areas of need and give health professionals of the future more training options.

Of the new GP Super Clinics, around nine large clinics will be built where doctors, nurses and allied health professionals will be supplemented by more specialised services such as renal dialysis, minor surgical procedures, rehabilitation services and radiology.

The remaining new GP Super Clinics will be built along the lines of the 36 clinics already under construction.

By providing patients with more convenient ‘one-stop shops’, the Government will help and encourage patients to get the primary care they need to stay fit and well, particularly if they suffer from chronic illnesses.

Three types of funding will be available to help existing general practices expand their facilities, with grants of up to $500,000. These larger grants will be available to those practices that also establish teaching facilities.
Additional services will be made available as a result of the infrastructure investment, with space made available in GP clinics for allied health services, group education (such as diabetes management), counselling and community health promotion.

This injection in GP Super Clinics builds on the additional primary care being committed to by the Rudd Government, including funding for:
- record numbers of GPs;
- more support and training for around 4,600 (full time equivalent) practice nurses; and
- a new innovative approach to improve the treatment of diabetes in GP practices.

These infrastructure investments are part of the Government’s move to take over full funding and policy responsibility for primary care.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister’s Office on 02 6277 7220
THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

11 May 2010

MORE DOCTORS AND MORE NURSES IN NATIONAL HEALTH AND HOSPITALS NETWORK

The Government will invest $1.2 billion in training and supporting more doctors, nurses and allied health professionals, as part of building a National Health and Hospitals Network.

This includes an additional $523 million investment in Australia’s nurses.

In total, the Government’s investments will:

• train almost 5,500 GPs and 680 specialist doctors;
• expand and improve support for more than 4,600 full-time equivalent nurses working in general practice, as well as other nurses working in training in aged care and rural areas; and
• support 800 allied health professionals working and training in rural areas over the next four years.

These investments will ensure our health workforce meets the needs of Australians today, and the growing demand for health services into the future.

More support for nurses in general practice

The Government will invest $390.3 million to support almost the equivalent of 4,600 full-time practice nurses in general practice, in a major boost to primary care.

For the first time, GPs in urban areas will be eligible for funding to help employ practice nurses.

More practice nurses will help take pressure off GPs by providing clinical support in areas such as wound care and immunisation; managing recall and reminders systems; and patient education in areas such as weight loss and reducing alcohol consumption and quitting smoking.

The Australian General Practice Network has found that practices employing a practice nurse see more than 800 extra patients each year. With GPs then able to see an extra 3.8 million patients each year across Australia, patients will find it easier to get an appointment.
Annual incentive payments of $25,000 per full time GP for a registered nurse and $12,500 per full time GP for an enrolled nurse will be made available to eligible accredited general practices.

By 2013-14, an estimated 4,537 GP practices will receive more funding – worth $31,500 per year on average – to make better use of highly skilled practice nurses.

Valuing our aged care nurses

The Government will invest $103.1 million to better support nurses working in aged care settings.

To better support the current aged care nursing workforce, the Government will provide:

- $59.9 million to provide incentive payments to existing aged care workers who upgrade their qualifications, and remain working in the aged care sector;
- $21.0 million to fund an additional 600 enrolled nurse training places and 300 registered nurse scholarships over four years – for aged care nurses to upgrade their skills in recognition of the increasing frailty of older Australians in aged care;
- $18.7 million to trial new models of care to expand and improve the role of nurse practitioners in aged care. Building on the 2009 Budget’s changes to provide access to Medicare and PBS for nurse practitioners, this investment will support greater access to primary health care services for aged care residents; and
- $3.5 million to explore regulation of personal care workers and assistants in nursing in aged care. This will assist in considering the inclusion of personal care workers in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

To better plan for aged care workforce needs into the future, the Government will also:

- provide $500,000 to conduct a research study on staffing levels, skills mix and resident care needs in Australian residential aged care facilities; and
- as part of the Productivity Commission’s inquiry into aged care, examine future workforce requirements, including the influences on supply and demand, and come up with options to ensure the sector continues to have a suitably qualified workforce to provide the best possible care.

Together, these measures will assist in building the aged care workforce needed to continue to provide high quality care to our ageing population.

Support for nurses and allied health professionals to train and work in rural areas

The Government will provide $34.1 million for two new rural locum programs to give around 3,000 nurses and 400 allied health professionals time to take leave, achieve appropriate work-life balance and attend continuing professional development over the next four years.
The Government will also invest $6.5 million in providing 400 additional clinical training scholarships over four years for allied health students in rural and regional areas – to provide more opportunities for allied health students interested in working in the bush.

**Mental health nurses**

The Government is committed to supporting and expanding the number of specialist mental health nurses.

As part of the Government’s mental health package, $13.0 million over two years will be provided to employ 136 mental health nurses and provide an estimated 11,700 sessions to people with mental illness.

**Providing Career Support and Choices for Nurses**

The Bringing Nurses Back into the Workforce Program has returned 756 nurses to the workforce. This program will cease in 2010, with allocated funding being redirected towards the $523 million in new nursing initiatives included in this Budget.

**Training more doctors**

As previously announced, the Government will fund more training opportunities for young doctors by investing $640 million to deliver an additional 5,500 training GPs, 680 medical specialists, and 5,400 pre-vocational general practice program (PGPPP) training places over the coming decade.

The Government is providing funding to:
- double the number of places available for medical graduates to train to become a GP to 1,200 a year by 2014;
- more than double the current number of places available for medical graduates to undertake training to become specialist doctors in private, community and rural settings from 360 to 900 by 2014;
- double the number of places available for junior doctors to experience a career in general practice before they become a fully fledged doctor to 975 places a year by 2014.

**More allied health professionals**

For the first time, the Government will invest $5.3 million to support up to 1,000 allied health workers take leave and attend training courses to improve and update their skills.

The Government is also providing $6.5 million for 1,000 extra clinical training scholarships for allied health students to help train our future physiotherapists, podiatrists and dieticians.

This additional investment in Australia’s health workforce is in addition to the commitment to fund 60 per cent of training in public hospitals as part of the National Health and Hospitals Network.
These changes will mean that the Government is training and supporting more doctors, more nurses and more allied health care professionals than ever before.

Australians will be more likely to remain fit and well for longer because they can get the care they need, from a significantly expanded workforce of health professionals.

These investments are essential to ensuring our health system is able to cope with demands and pressures of our growing and ageing population.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister’s Office on 02 6277 7220
PERSONALLY CONTROLLED ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS

Australians will be able to check their medical history online through the introduction of personally controlled electronic health records, which will boost patient safety, improve health care delivery, and cut waste and duplication.

The $466.7 million investment over the next two years will revolutionise the delivery of healthcare in Australia.

The national e-Health records system will be a key building block of the National Health and Hospitals Network.

This funding will establish a secure system of personally controlled electronic health records that will provide:

- Summaries of patients’ health information – including medications and immunisations and medical test results;
- Secure access for patients and health care providers to their e-Health records via the internet regardless of their physical location;
- Rigorous governance and oversight to maintain privacy; and
- Health care providers with the national standards, planning and core national infrastructure required to use the national e-Health records system.

Benefits for patients

Patients for the first time will be empowered with easy-to-access information about their medical history - including medications, test results and allergies - allowing them to make informed choices about their healthcare.

They will be able to present for treatment anywhere in the country, and give permission for health professionals to access their relevant history at the touch of a button.

Patients will no longer have to remember every detail of their care history and retell it to every care provider they see. Parents will not have to remember the vaccinations their child has had, and doctors and nurses won’t have to thumb through paper records.
Patients will control what is stored on their medical records and will decide which medical professionals can view or add to their files, meaning privacy will be strengthened.

A personally controlled electronic health record will have two key elements:
- a health summary view including conditions, medications, allergies, and vaccinations; and
- an indexed summary of specific healthcare events.

**Benefits for health providers and the health system**

Poor availability of health information across care settings can be frustrating and time consuming for patients and health professionals alike.

It can also have damaging effects on a patient’s health outcomes through avoidable adverse drug events and lack of communication between health care providers.

About 2-3 per cent of hospital admissions in Australia are linked medication errors. It equates to 190,000 admissions each year and costs the health system $660 million.

About 8 per cent of medical errors are because of inadequate patient information.

Clear, quickly available information will reduce such incidents, avoid unnecessary tests and save scarce health resources.

**Implementation of personally controlled electronic health records**

Personally controlled electronic health records will build on the foundation laid by the introduction of the Individual Healthcare Identifiers later this year. Under this, every Australian will be given a 16-digit electronic health number, which will only store a patient’s name, address and date-of-birth. No clinical information will be stored on the number, which is separate to an electronic health record.

Implementation will initially target key groups in the community likely to receive the most immediate benefit, including those suffering from chronic and complex conditions, older Australians, Indigenous Australians and mothers and newborn children.

This investment includes funding for the first two years of the individual electronic health record business case developed in consultation with all states and territories and the National Electronic Health Transition Authority (NEHTA).

Subject to progress in rolling out the core e-Health infrastructure, the Government may consider future investments, as necessary, to expand on the range of functions delivered under an electronic health record system.

**Reforms to take health system into 21st century**

A national e-Health records system was identified as a national priority by the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission and the draft National Primary
Health Care Strategy. It was also supported by the National Preventative Health Strategy.

The Government's reform plans in primary, acute, aged and community care also require a modern e-Health infrastructure. It is a key foundation stone in building a health system for the 21st century.

A personally controlled electronic health record will not be mandatory to receive health care. For those Australians who do choose to opt in, they will be able to register online to establish a personally controlled e-Health record from 2012-13.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220
THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

11 May 2010

AGREEMENTS ENSURE SUSTAINABLE ACCESS TO MEDICINES

The Rudd Government will save taxpayers $2.5 billion over five years through the negotiation of health agreements that will deliver better value for money and continue to provide Australians access to essential medicines.

These savings will help to fund the Government’s $7.3 billion investment in our health and hospital system, as part of the National Health and Hospitals Network.

Pharmacy Agreement

The Pharmacy Agreement with the Pharmacy Guild will save taxpayers money, provide better pharmacy services for consumers, and give stability to Australia’s 5,000 community pharmacies.

Key features of the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement include:
- a gross saving to taxpayers of $1.0 billion over five years, including a freeze on the pharmacy dispensing fee indexation in 2010-2011 and 2011-2012;
- $968.7 million to ensure all PBS medicines will be made available within 24 hours no matter where people live;
- $697.5 million to fund better services to consumers, including medication reviews, provision of dose administration aids, and to fund pharmacists to identify and resolve patients’ medicine-related issues;
- a patient service charter that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the pharmacists and pharmacy, and the expected level of patient care;
- safer prescriptions, through $82.6 million in e-prescription incentives; and
- a total investment of $15.4 billion, to ensure pharmacies will continue to dispense medicines to all Australians and provide a range of programs and services.

More value for money from the PBS

The Memorandum of Understanding negotiated with Medicines Australia will ensure that taxpayers get a better deal on PBS medicines, and provide the pharmaceutical industry with certainty.

The MOU will save taxpayers about $1.9 billion over five years, particularly by extending price disclosure to take advantage of discounting of off-patent medicines, including generics.
This means that when prices drop through competition, the price the Government pays for PBS medications will also drop.

This will help ensure that Australians can continue to have access to essential and innovative medicines on the PBS.

There will be no extra costs to patients, and more transparent pricing arrangements mean that some patients – particularly non-concessional patients – may pay less.

These reforms are in addition to other measures adopted by the Government that provide stability and policy predictability to the industry for the next four years, cut red tape and speed up the addition of new medicines to the PBS.

The Government will also fund a $10.0 million generic medicine awareness campaign to assure consumers that different brands of the same medicine have the same clinical effect.

The Government appreciates the role which the Pharmacy Guild and Medicines Australia have played in constructively negotiating reforms that will result in better services for consumers, certainty for community pharmacy and the pharmaceutical industry, and a more sustainable PBS for the future.

The Government is not only delivering fundamental reform of our health and hospitals system, but delivering it in a fiscally responsible and sustainable way by achieving value for money from every dollar invested in health.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister’s Office on 02 6277 7220
THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

11 May 2010

QUICKER ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY HOSPITAL CARE

The Government will invest more than $3.5 billion over four years to deliver better public hospital services for all Australians.

The Rudd Government will invest:

• $753 million to progressively reduce emergency department waiting times - with waiting times capped at four hours, to be progressively implemented from 1 January 2011;
• $803 million to progressively reduce waiting times for elective surgery - with 95 per cent of Australians to receive their surgery within clinically recommended times from 1 July 2012;
• $1.63 billion for an estimated 1,316 new sub-acute beds by 2013-14 – to support more rehabilitation, palliative care and mental health services, including in residential services and community-based settings; and
• $200 million to use flexibly across the emergency departments, elective surgery and sub-acute services on the highest priorities within each state and territory.

A healthier community also means a healthier and more productive workforce, so these important reforms will also help strengthen our economy for the future.

These investments will support the delivery of around 1.2 million emergency department services and 90,000 extra elective surgeries over four years.

The 1,316 new sub-acute beds will support the delivery of an estimated 24,900 services a year, as well as freeing up an equivalent number of beds in public hospitals, once all the new beds are operational from 2013-14.

Through the establishment of the National Health and Hospitals Network, agreed at COAG in April 2010 with all states and territories except Western Australia, the Government is also making major reforms to the way public hospitals are funded and run:

• For the first time, the Commonwealth Government will become the dominant funder of Australia’s public hospitals, funding 60 per cent of hospital activity, new and operating capital, and teaching, training and research costs.
• Local Hospital Networks will be established – to provide local clinicians and local communities with a greater say in how their hospital services are delivered.
Local Hospital Networks will also work with Medicare Locals to improve integration between hospital services and GP and primary care services in local communities.

From 1 July 2012, Local Hospital Networks will be paid on the basis of an efficient price for each public hospital service they provide to patients, under service agreements with the states and territories.

Over time, the Commonwealth will work with the states to move to fund 100 per cent of the efficient price of outpatient services such as allied health clinics. This will mean more services being provided in the community over time.

Changing the way hospitals are funded and run will make Australia's public hospitals more responsive to local communities. New funding arrangements – in particular the introduction of activity-based funding – will reduce waste and duplication.

This will ensure taxpayer health dollars are being used to deliver health services as effectively and efficiently as possible.

As part of the reforms agreed at COAG in April 2010, the Government will regularly publish data on the performance of Local Hospital Networks against national standards.

Additional funding will be provided to all States and Territories from 1 July, with the exception of Western Australia. The Government continues to discuss health and hospitals reform with WA.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister’s Office on 02 6277 7220
THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

11 May 2010

WORLD FIRST ACTION ON PREVENTATIVE HEALTH

The Rudd Government will boost its efforts in preventative health with world leading new action on smoking and other chronic disease risks.

Preventative health measures in the Budget include:

- the world’s toughest regime on cutting smoking rates;
- $27.8 million for a new, hard-hitting anti-smoking campaign;
- $50.0 million to boost efforts to tackle binge drinking;
- a new approach to managing diabetes as part of reforms to primary care;
- a $262.7 million boost to sport funding to encourage participation in sport and active recreation; and
- $54 million to deliver the most ambitious study of Australia’s health ever conducted.

The Rudd Government has made preventative health a major funding and policy priority since coming to office. Reducing the burden of preventable health conditions is central to delivering a sustainable health system in the future.

Tobacco crackdown

Australia is set to have the world’s toughest measures against tobacco, our single largest cause of premature death and disease, killing 15,000 Australians a year.

Excise on tobacco products was increased by 25 per cent from 30 April. This is expected to lead to 87,000 Australians quitting smoking.

For the first time, proceeds from all tobacco excise – approximately $7.5 billion per year – will be directly invested into funding better health and hospitals.

In a world first, all tobacco products will be sold in plain packaging by 1 July 2012. This will remove one of the last frontiers for cigarette advertising. Internet advertising of tobacco will also be restricted in line with restrictions for other media.

The Government will also launch a new hard-hitting $27.8 million campaign targeting high-risk and disadvantaged groups. This increases total spending on anti-tobacco campaigns to more than $85 million over the next four years.

These measures deliver on key recommendations from the Preventative Health Taskforce.
Binge Drinking Campaign

The Government will invest an additional $50.0 million in the National Binge Drinking Campaign. This includes:

- $25.0 million to provide sponsorship to community organisations as an alternative to alcohol sponsorship;
- $20.0 million for community level initiatives to tackle binge drinking; and
- $5.0 million for enhanced telephone counselling and referrals for people with alcohol-related problems, and possible expansion of existing social marketing.

These additional investments in alcohol programs were agreed with the Australian Greens and Senator Xenophon in the context of the passage of the ‘alcopops’ legislation last year.

Fighting diabetes and lifting participation in sport

As part of the Government’s reforms to primary care, under a $449.2 million investment in fighting diabetes, for the first time diabetic patients will have the option of signing up with a GP practice of their choice that will be responsible for their care. Payments will be partly based on keeping patients healthy and out of hospital.

Diabetes complications result in 32 per cent of all avoidable hospital admissions.

The Government is also committing $262.7 million in new funding for Australian sport – which will include a focus on the junior and community level – to encourage greater participation in sport and physical activity.

Australian Health Survey

Together with the National Heart Foundation, the Australian Government has engaged the Australian Bureau of Statistics to undertake the $54 million Australian Health Survey, which will be the most comprehensive research on the health of Australians ever undertaken.

Starting from next year, 50,000 Australians will be asked to complete the survey, including information about health issues, medications, nutrition, exercise and optional pathology samples.

The information generated by the survey will provide health researchers with crucial data on the risk factors for disease and changing patterns of disease in the Australian population.

The Government thanks the National Heart Foundation for its support for this important project.

Response to the Preventative Health Taskforce

The Government has today released Preventative Health Action, a comprehensive response to the report from the Preventative Health Taskforce, detailing the
Government’s response to the Taskforce’s report, including strong action on smoking.

The actions included in the 2010-11 Budget build on a strong record of action in prevention since the Government came to office in 2007, including:

- a record $872.1 million in the National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health agreed to by COAG in November 2008;
- a $100.6 million investment in tackling high rates of smoking in Indigenous communities; and
- closing the tax loophole on ‘alcopops’ which has resulted in a reduction of spirits consumption of 3.45 million standard drinks per week.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister’s Office on 02 6277 7220
$325 MILLION BOOST TO SPORT AND GETTING MORE AUSTRALIANS ACTIVE

The Rudd Government will boost the number of Australians participating in sport and drive Australia’s continued sporting success through the delivery of $324.8 million ongoing funding.

‘Australian Sport: The Pathway to Success’ is backed by $195.2 million in new funding – the biggest funding injection to sport in our nation’s history.

The Rudd Government will invest a record $1.2 billion in sport over the next four years, building on our $300 million boost to community sporting facilities in 2009, the single largest investment in community sporting infrastructure that this country has ever seen.

Australia has always been at the forefront of innovation and doing things differently to ensure our competitive edge when it comes to sport.

What has become clear is that our approach to sport has stagnated over the past decade, resulting in stunted participation rates, skyrocketing obesity numbers and an emerging decline in our international sporting performances.

The Rudd Government is forging a new way forward for Australian sport.

‘Australian Sport: The Pathway to Success’ delivers on the Rudd Government’s commitment to boost funding to both community and elite sport.

For the first time, it also delivers significant investment to the all-important development pathway - the vital link connecting grassroots and high performance sport.

The Australian Government’s whole-of-sport approach focuses on delivering in three key areas:

1. Increasing the number of Australians participating in sport
2. Strengthening sporting pathways
3. Striving for success

Specific initiatives under these three areas include:
Delivering the first Sport and Education Strategy to bring a new focus on the delivery of quality sport in schools and boost the number of our children participating in sport.

Requiring National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) to have an increased focus on participation outcomes as part of their funding agreements with the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and boosting funding opportunities for NSOs to grow grassroots participation through direct grants to community clubs.

Delivering a National Sport and Active Recreation Policy Framework that will for the first time enable a co-ordinated, whole-of-sport approach to sport from Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments.

Additional coaching and officiating training opportunities for up to 45,000 community coaches and officials, and subsidise the costs associated with training for 5,000 new community coaches and officials.

Investing in the development pathway by doubling the Local Sporting Champion program to support 8,000 junior athletes to participate in competition; and boosting opportunities for up and coming athletes to compete in domestic competition.

Doubling our talent identification program to support 10,000 aspiring Australian athletes and employ more talent scouts.

Requiring Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) Scholarship holders to volunteer at local community sporting clubs or junior sport programs.

Boosting funding to identify, attract, develop and retain our high performance coaches including support for incentive packages and professional development.

Expanding funding support to our high performance athletes to support their training and participation in international competition.

Re-aligning our high performances institutions and academies in a landmark partnership with State and Territories that will deliver a more cohesive system for sporting excellence.

The Rudd Government will also deliver a $324.8 million investment into the ASC funding base to create a secure platform to plan beyond Budget cycles.

In particular, this will assist in better preparation for major events such as the Olympic and the Paralympic Games.

This significant suite of reforms represents the largest reform of Australian sport in three decades.

It will boost the number of Australians participating in sport, especially our children, while positioning Australia to continue to shine on the international stage.
In recognition of the significant leadership role played by the ASC, Australia’s peak national sport agency will be tasked with implementing ‘Australian Sport: The Pathway to Success’ and distributing funding.

The Rudd Government’s vision for sport not only brings a new strategic focus, but also helps equip our community to tackle the health and ageing challenges we face in the 21st century.

For media inquiries, please contact Jayne Stinson on 0458 547 512
BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR BETTER MENTAL HEALTH CARE

The Rudd Government will deliver more youth-friendly mental health services, more mental health nurses, and more support for people with mental illness through a $175.8 million package to improve mental health services.

These investments are a down payment to address immediate service gaps in the mental health sector.

As part of the establishment of the National Health and Hospitals Network, the Government intends to take a greater policy and funding role for primary mental health services – to provide better coordinated care for people with mental illness.

More youth-friendly mental health services

The Government will invest $78.8 million to deliver up to 30 new youth-friendly mental health services and provide extra funding for the existing 30 headspace sites to help 20,000 more young people suffering from mental health problems each year.

headspace services provide an entry point to existing primary, community-based and specialist mental health services, as well as broader drug and alcohol programs.

Funding of $25.5 million will also be provided to expand the Early Psychosis Prevention and Intervention Centre model, developed in Victoria, to help up to 3,500 more 16-25 year olds each year get earlier diagnosis, treatment and support for psychosis.

More mental health nurses

The Government is committed to supporting and expanding the number of specialist mental health nurses. $13.0 million over two years will be provided to employ 136 mental health nurses and provide an estimated 11,700 sessions to people with mental illness.

Better coordinated care for people with mental illness

A total of $58.5 million will be directed to care packages, providing both clinical and non-clinical care, to better support up to 25,000 people with severe mental illness in a primary care setting.
Under these arrangements, people with severe mental illness who are referred by their GP or psychiatrist can receive a personally tailored package of care.

Patients will find care for their mental health problems easier to access thanks to the services and assistance provided by Medicare Locals.

Medicare Locals will better integrate primary health care in local communities and help to coordinate existing Commonwealth mental health programs such as Personal Helpers and Mentors services, Support for Day to Day Living, and Mental Health Respite.

**Sub-acute beds**

The Government’s $1.6 billion investment in sub-acute care beds will also support the provision of additional ‘step up’ and ‘step down’ sub-acute services for people with mental health needs, easing their transition from acute care to the community.

This means that patients can be given more appropriate and timely care out of hospital, helping them get the treatment they need quicker.

**For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister’s Office on 02 6277 7220**
BUILDING A NATIONAL AGED CARE SYSTEM

The Rudd Government will build on reforms to aged care that will create a national system that will provide better support for older Australians.

The Rudd Government will invest $907.5 million over four years to deliver more highly qualified aged care workers, more aged care places, more health care services and greater protections for older Australians.

This will include up to $280 million to the states and territories to support long stay older patients in public hospitals.

This significant investment will support the integration of the aged care system with Local Hospital Networks through the Government’s National Health and Hospitals Network reforms, to provide better health and better care for older Australians.

Over the next four years, the Rudd Government will provide more than $47 billion for aged and community care services, including $10.8 billion in 2010-11.

A national aged care system

The Rudd Government will take full funding and policy responsibility for aged care.

Investments of $38.3 million will be made to take responsibility for the Home and Community Care program (except in Victoria and Western Australia), to build a consistent aged care system, covering basic care at home through to nursing homes.

To help older Australians and their families access the information and services that best suit their needs, the Rudd Government will invest $36.8 million over four years to establish one-stop shops throughout the country to provide information and assessment services.

Building the aged care workforce

A skilled aged care workforce is central to providing high quality care to older Australians.
The Rudd Government will provide more than $310 million over the next four years for aged care workforce development programs, funding more than 31,000 aged care training places and scholarships focused on improving clinical care.

New initiatives in this Budget include:

- $21 million to support an additional 600 enrolled nursing places and 300 undergraduate nursing scholarships.
- $18.7 million to fund up to 25 projects to identify appropriate models of practice and to promote access to nurse practitioner services in aged care.
- $59.9 million for incentive payments of up to $5,000 to support and encourage up to 50,000 aged care workers over the next four years to improve their qualifications, assisting with workforce recruitment and retention.

More aged care places

The Rudd Government will double the size of the successful Zero Real Interest Loans initiative that provides low-cost finance to support investment in aged care by providing a further $300 million in loans, supporting the development of up to 2,500 aged care places.

To support aged care services in rural and regional areas, from 1 July 2010 the Government will provide a $10.1 million funding boost to rural and remote community care providers.

We will also invest $122 million for more than 280 sub-acute beds, or their equivalents to expand services in rural and remote Multi-Purpose Services.

The Rudd Government will also allow transition care services to be able to be provided in rural and remote hospitals, where appropriate, providing up to 500 additional transition care places in rural and remote communities.

To assist state and territory governments meet the cost of older Australians in hospitals who are eligible for aged care but waiting for a suitable aged care place, the Rudd Government will provide up to $280 million to help states and territories meet the cost of these long stay older patients in public hospitals.

The Government will also work with the states and territories to accelerate planning approvals and have more land released for aged care allowing services to become available more quickly.

Improving access to primary health care services

Too many older Australians are unnecessarily admitted to hospital when better care in the community and in aged care homes would have kept them healthy and out of hospital. Aged care homes also report difficulties obtaining GP and primary care services.

The Government will invest $98.6 million over five years to improve access to primary health care for older Australians. This funding will provide increased financial
incentives to GPs to provide more services in aged care homes, with a 50 per cent increase in the incentive payment to GPs providing at least 60 attendances a year to older people in aged care homes and more than doubling the incentive payment for GPs who provide at least 140 attendances a year.

Under this funding from 2012-13, the Government will also set up a flexible funding pool, to be administered by Medicare Locals, to target gaps in primary health care services for aged care recipients.

This Budget measure is expected to result in an additional 295,000 GP and primary health care services to older Australians over the next four years.

Better protections for care recipients

A total of $72.4 million is being provided to strengthen consumer protection in aged care.

This includes improving complaint handling by better equipping the Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme to improve the timeliness and thoroughness of investigations, and to strengthen the oversight of accommodation bond holdings, to better protect residents’ savings.

Building the aged care system for the future

In preparing for the challenges ahead, the Government has asked the Productivity Commission to undertake a major inquiry into the aged care system.

To support the work of the Commission and assist aged care providers improve their financial sustainability, the Government will provide $7.0 million for a benchmarking tool and business advisory services so that aged care providers compare and improve business practices.

The Government will also conduct a research study on staffing levels, skills mix and resident care needs in Australian residential aged care facilities.

This will help build a more sustainable aged care sector while establishing the information base needed for long-term reform.

For all media inquiries, please contact Kathryn Conroy on 0448 249 447
MEDIA RELEASE

11 May 2010

CLOSING THE GAP – STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The Rudd Government is building on its commitment to close the gap in life expectancy and life opportunities for Indigenous Australians through targeted investment to strengthen Indigenous communities.

Since 2008 all Australian governments have committed over $4.6 billion to close the gap under a new partnership approach agreed through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

Through the implementation of the COAG agreements and unprecedented effort and support across the Australian community, we are seeing the start of real and sustainable progress.

The Government has also committed $1.2 billion since 2007 to continue the Northern Territory Emergency Response and a further $1.5 billion since 2007 to other Indigenous specific measures.

This year’s Budget focuses on making sure that programs are implemented and services are delivering in a way which is effective and targeted to meet the specific needs of Indigenous communities.

To achieve this, governments are working in partnership with Indigenous Australians because Indigenous Australians are the ones who are best placed to lead change in
their own lives, in their families and in their communities. Governments can help, but closing the gap will not happen without the commitment of Indigenous people.

Community Safety

The Australian Government is working with the States and Territories to strengthen policing and improve the safety of Indigenous communities and maximise the impact of other investment in education and housing.

The Government will invest in the following three measures:

- Support for the Australian Federal Police to continue their work as a part of Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory, at a cost of $9.2 million over two years, while new Northern Territory Police complete their training and become fully operational.
- Funding of $6.6 million over two years for the National Indigenous Child Abuse and Violence Intelligence Task Force to continue to investigate patterns of violence, serious crime and abuse of power and trust in remote Indigenous communities.
- Expanding the rollout of Opal fuel to reduce petrol sniffing in Indigenous communities at a cost of $38.5 million over four years. This will increase the number of participating sites to 145, benefiting a further eleven communities.

In addition, in recognition of the importance of progressively meeting the need for a strengthened police presence in remote Northern Territory communities, the Australian Government and Northern Territory Government are releasing the recently completed Independent Review of Policing in Remote Indigenous Communities in the Northern Territory and it is now available at www.fahcsia.gov.au

The Review Report assesses outstanding needs and makes a number of recommendations about improved support infrastructure and management support. As an immediate response, both Governments have agreed to establish a joint working party to address the Review’s recommendations including development of an implementation plan to progress agreed recommendations over the next five years.

Employment

Having a job not only gives people financial independence, it also brings the social and economic benefits that are essential for the development of strong, independent communities. To increase and improve employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians, the Government is:

- extending the reforms of the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program to the Torres Strait at a cost of $44.3 million over four years. These reforms will provide CDEP participants in the Torres Strait with the same incentives and participation requirements as others in the CDEP program and will provide funding for 237 jobs delivering services funded by the Australian Government;
- continuing the Business Skills for Visual Artists initiative, at a cost of $4.0 million over four years, which supports ethical commerce in the Indigenous visual arts sector by assisting Indigenous artists with professional
• development, business skills training and access to the commercial marketplace;
• improving Indigenous employment, recruitment and retention practices in Commonwealth public sector organisations employing workers outside the Australian Public Service Act 1999, at a cost of $1.6 million.

Education and Early Childhood

In this year’s Budget, the Australian Government will invest $15.4 million over four years into a flexible funding pool to support projects that improve education outcomes for children and young people under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014.

The Plan identifies how governments, education providers and communities will work together to achieve the Government’s targets in educational outcomes. It helps to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people will benefit from the additional $2.6 billion being invested in the Smarter Schools National Partnerships with the States and Territories.

Funding of $59.4 million will be provided to improve the quality of budget based funded early childhood services to meet key aspects of the new National Quality System for early childhood education and child care by 2014. Children attending around 140 centre based early childhood services, including around 100 Indigenous services, will benefit from improvements to the physical environment of the service, level of qualifications of staff at the service, and governance and administrative capacity. The remote service delivery communities with budget based funded early childhood services will be in the first phase of implementation.

These services are directly funded by the Australian Government to provide childcare and early learning opportunities to vulnerable and disadvantaged children in areas where the market would otherwise fail to deliver child care.

Housing

Housing is crucial to close the gap. Children cannot grow up healthy and get a good education if their home environment is unsafe and overcrowded.

The Government is continuing its support for Indigenous Australians to have access to affordable housing and accommodation, including home ownership, through two important measures:

• A temporary transfer of $56.0 million in unutilised capital from the Home Ownership on Indigenous Land program (HOIL) into the Home Ownership Program while further land tenure reform takes place on Indigenous land in remote communities. This will enable more people to access the oversubscribed Home Ownership Program, boosting the numbers of Indigenous people able to buy their own homes in regional and urban areas. This capital will be made available to HOIL customers as demand for that program accelerates.
• A $6.9 million capital investment for Aboriginal Hostels Limited to make necessary repairs to a number of its hostels.
Flexible Remote Service Delivery

Under the Remote Service Delivery Strategy, all Australian governments have signed up to a concentrated and accelerated approach to tackle deep-seated disadvantage.

After decades of uncoordinated, ad hoc actions from governments at all levels, a comprehensive and sustained approach is vital to provide residents of remote Indigenous communities with the facilities and services that could be expected in any Australian town of a similar size, location and need.

As the Prime Minister announced in his second annual address to the Parliament on progress towards closing the gap in February 2010, the Australian Government is investing $46.0 million into a Remote Service Delivery Flexible Funding Pool in response to the advice of the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services to ensure flexibility in delivering programs to benefit Indigenous Australians. The fund will allow the Government to respond flexibly and quickly to the projects that are identified as high priority by community members, reducing red tape and bureaucratic delays.

Indigenous Broadcasting

The Rudd Government is committed to supporting the Indigenous broadcasting sector. This year’s Budget includes funding of $15.2 million in 2010-11 for National Indigenous Television, complementing the substantial existing investment in Imparja television, Indigenous Community Television, community radio stations, remote Indigenous media organisations and remote Indigenous broadcasting services. In 2010, the Australian Government is reviewing its investment in the Indigenous broadcasting and media sector, to ensure that resources allocated to Indigenous broadcasting are delivering the best results for Indigenous people.

Indigenous Legal Assistance Services

The Government will provide an additional $34.9 million over four years for the Indigenous legal aid services program as part of its broader access to justice package to provide additional funding for legal assistance services to improve access to justice in the community.

These services are delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services across Australia. The additional funding will assist in meeting increasing demand for these services and improve access to justice for Indigenous Australians across Australia, supporting key Government priorities, including social inclusion and closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

For all media inquiries, please call Jessica Walker on 0430166633
MEDIA RELEASE

11 May 2010

RUDD GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO TACKLE THE RURAL HEALTH CHALLENGE

People living in rural and remote Australia will benefit from significant improvements in the delivery of health, hospital and aged care services under the Rudd Government’s health reforms.

Building a National Health and Hospitals Network will deliver better health and hospitals for rural Australians and their families.

By taking on 100 per cent funding and policy for primary care, the Australian Government will have the platform to reduce the fragmented care that is all too familiar to people trying to access the care they need.

The 2010-11 Budget also continues the Government’s commitment to ensuring all Australians get the health care they need, when they need it, regardless of where they live.

Enhancing the rural health workforce

The Government is committed to building the critical workforce needed to deliver essential health services in rural and regional Australia.

The Government is investing $639.0 million to deliver:

- 5,500 new GPs or GPs undergoing training in the next decade of which 50 per cent will be in rural and regional Australia ($344.9 million);
- 975 places each year by 2013 for junior doctors to experience a career in general practice before they become a fully fledged doctor, with placements in rural and regional areas a priority ($149.6 million); and
- 680 more specialist doctors in the next decade with the delivery of training in rural and regional areas a priority ($144.5 million).

The Government also recognises that keeping nurses in rural and remote areas is critical. The Government is investing:

- $28.8 million into a rural locum scheme to give around 3,000 nurses in rural areas time to take leave and attend continuing professional development;
• $390.3 million to support an expanded and more flexible role for nurses in general practice, particularly in chronic disease management and prevention; and
• incentive payments of $25,000 for a registered nurse and $12,500 for an enrolled nurse will be made available for eligible general practices (capped at five incentives).

To address the shortage of allied health professionals in rural Australia, the Government will provide:
• 400 more clinical training scholarships over four years for allied health students in rural and remote areas (up to $11,000 each) at a cost of $6.5 million; and
• a new $5.3 million rural locum scheme to support around 400 allied health locum placements over four years.

Bolstering rural aged care

This Budget continues the Government’s commitment to older Australians. The 2010-11 Budget provides:
• capital funding of $120 million for 286 sub-acute beds or their equivalent in rural and remote Multi-Purpose Services (MPS), allowing long stay older patients in hospital beds to be discharged to more appropriate care settings; and
• up to an additional 300 aged care places in Multi-Purpose Services by allowing these services to be established in larger communities of up to 6,000 people; and
• $10.1 million to increase the viability supplement payment for community aged care providers, giving a much-needed boost to community aged care services in rural and remote areas.

Addressing areas of special need

• The Government will provide an additional $5.0 million to assist Australians living in rural and remote areas who have difficulty in accessing ophthalmology services, including cataract surgery. Eye teams managed through the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program (MSOAP) will be sent to regions in need.
• The Government is providing $5.5 million for a 12 month extension of the Mental Health Support for Drought Affected Communities initiative. Many of these people and communities need ongoing support and mental health assistance to help them cope with the drought’s devastating impact.

For all media inquiries, please contact Alice Plate on 0400 045 999