



THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Key Step Towards Better Primary Health Care

Health Minister Nicola Roxon has called for public submissions to respond to the new discussion paper on Australia's first ever National Primary Health Care Strategy, released today.

Primary health care is the frontline care in the community – provided by GPs, nurses and allied health professionals. As such, the Strategy will be a core element of the Rudd Government's response to the health challenges of the 21st century.

We seek input from all sectors of the community – our hardworking doctors, nurses and allied health professionals, as well as working families and individuals who are consumers of health services.

The Rudd Government wants to work with all of these groups to build on the strengths of our health system, and deliver the health care Australians deserve.

- Primary care is in need of reform for many reasons, including:
- An ageing population
- The growing burden of chronic disease, and the need to shift the focus of the health system to prevention
- Health workforce shortages
- Growing inequalities between those with good access to primary health care and those without it
- A failure by the previous Liberal Government to plan for the future of the health system

The Discussion Paper was released today at the Australian General Practice Network's 10th Anniversary Forum in Darwin. It outlines directions for reform, and proposes ten elements of a better primary care system:

- Accessible, clinically and culturally appropriate, timely and affordable care;
- Patient-centred and supportive of health literacy, self-management and individual preference;

- More focused on preventive care, including support of healthy lifestyles;
- Well-integrated, coordinated, and providing continuity of care, particularly for those with multiple, ongoing, and complex conditions.
- Safe, high quality care which is continually improving through relevant research and innovation;
- Better management of health information, underpinned by efficient and effective use of eHealth;
- Flexibility to best respond to local community needs and circumstances through sustainable and efficient operational models.
- Working environments and conditions which attract, support and retain workforce;
- High quality education and training arrangements for both new and existing workforce.
- Fiscally sustainable, efficient and cost effective systems.

The paper also argues that greater equity in access and outcomes is essential, as is greater accountability for performance and outcomes.

The primary health care strategy is being developed by the Department of Health and Ageing with assistance from an External Reference Group, chaired by Dr Tony Hobbs.

In order to develop a National Primary Health Care Strategy, a draft of which will be presented to the Minister by mid-2009, community contributions will be crucial. People and organisations with an interest in primary health care can make a submission until 27 February 2009. The discussion paper, "Towards a National Primary Health Care Strategy", can be downloaded from the Department's website at: <http://www.health.gov.au/primaryhealthstrategy>

Submissions can be made by emailing nphcs@health.gov.au, or by writing to
National Primary Health Care Strategy
Secretariat
MDP 94 GPO BOX 9848
Canberra ACT 2601

More information on how to make submissions is available at
<http://www.health.gov.au/primaryhealthstrategy>

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