



THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

11 JUNE 2008

National Primary Health Care Strategy

The Rudd Government will develop a National Primary Health Care Strategy to better tackle the health challenges of the 21st century, and make sure that families can get the health care they need.

The strategy will look at how to deliver better frontline care to families across Australia, with priorities including:

- Better rewarding prevention.
- Promoting evidence-based management of chronic disease.
- Supporting patients with chronic disease to manage their condition.
- Supporting the role GPs play in the health care team.
- Addressing the growing need for access to other health professionals, including practice nurses and allied health professionals like physiotherapists and dieticians.
- Encouraging a greater focus on multidisciplinary team-based care.

A review of the Medicare Benefits Schedule primary care items is also being undertaken alongside development of the Primary Health Care Strategy – with a focus on reducing red tape for doctors, simplifying the Medicare schedule, and giving more support to prevention.

Australia needs a health care system that keeps people well, not just one that looks after them when they are sick.

Strong primary health care is central to this and to keeping patients, their families and carers at the centre of their care. The strategy will provide a road map for the future direction of primary care in Australia.

An External Reference Group of health experts will support the Government in developing the strategy.

The Reference Group will be chaired by Dr Tony Hobbs – current Chair of the Australian General Practice Network and a GP Obstetrician at Cootamundra in the NSW Riverina district.

Joining Dr Hobbs will be:

- Dr Rod Pearce, National Chairman, AMA Council of General Practice.

- Professor Lyn Littlefield OAM, executive director of the Australian Psychological Society and Honorary Executive officer of the Allied Health Professions of Australia.
- Professor Hal Swerissen, an expert on health policy at La Trobe University.
- Dr Barbara Vernon, Executive Director, Australian College of Midwives.
- Mr Peter Fazey, president of the Australian Physiotherapy Association.
- Associate Professor Noel Hayman, Clinical director of the Inala Indigenous Health Service, Brisbane.
- Mr Mitch Messer, Consumer Health Forum of Australia.
- Ms Anne Matyear, President of the Australian Practice Nurses Association (APNA).
- Judy Liauw, Community Pharmacist, and councillor on the Pharmacy Guild, Tasmania.
- Professor Mark Harris, Professor of General Practice, University of NSW.
- Professor Claire Jackson, a practising GP and Professor in General Practice and Primary Health Care, University of Queensland, Director Mater Centre for Integrated Health Care and General Practice, Mater Hospital, South Brisbane.
- Dr Vasantha Preetham, a practising GP in Perth and RACGP President.

Work on the strategy will link with current related health reform processes, including the COAG Health and Ageing Working Group, development of the Australian Health Care Agreements, the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission, and the Preventative Health Strategy.

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