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Rudd and Roxon's plan for preventative health care welcomed

Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd and Opposition Health Spokeswoman Nicola Roxon's plan to reinvigorate primary health care has been welcomed by the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN).

AGPN Chair Dr Tony Hobbs said the plan *Fresh Ideas, Future Economy* is in line with arguments that AGPN have been consistently put to government at all levels. It identifies and addresses the future challenges the Australian health care system will face.

"AGPN have long advocated for a national and coordinated approach to primary health care.

"The AGPN *Primary Health Care Position Statement* provides a similar approach to that stated in the Labor Party's plan.

'Australia needs a national, coherent and cohesive policy framework to drive primary health care in a planned and structured way. A national policy approach and practical strategies are imperative to create a more effective primary health care system.'

'Health costs have been driven up by our ageing population, higher levels of chronic illness, changing patterns of disease, the need for more proactive care and rising community expectations.'

Exert from the AGPN Primary Health Care Position Statement 2005.

http://www.agpn.com.au/site/content.cfm?page_id=6675¤t_category_code=104&leca=16

"Census findings released yesterday show that the number of people over aged 65 has increased substantially. We know this ageing trend will continue.

"What we also know is that the costs of treating people aged over 65 are three times that of the rest of the population. The Rudd, Roxon plan is therefore very timely.

"Conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease and arthritis are far more prevalent in older Australians.

"The report recognises that for Australia to have a strong economy, a sustainable health system that focuses on prevention is critical," Dr Hobbs said.

Dr Hobbs said he is pleased with the four key recommendations stated by Labor's plan.

"We would look forward to being a part of a permanent task force to ensure Australians are guaranteed better long-term health outcomes.

"We are also particularly pleased with the proposal to 'Shift the focus on six minute medicine by beginning a reform process to provide incentives for GPs to practice quality preventative health care and an increased focus on multi-disciplinary care from primary care teams'.

"In addition addressing the wasteful and ongoing state and federal blame game is to be applauded.

"Prevention and better chronic disease management need to be the focus if we are to have a strong economy into the future," Dr Hobbs said.

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