



# NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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## COAG health agenda – GPs key to prevention strategy

The Australian Divisions of General Practice has welcomed COAG's commitment to renewed attention on early intervention and prevention with a focus on better management of chronic illnesses through its new initiative *Australian Better Health Initiative*.

Kate Carnell, ADGP, CEO said "The time has come to make some real investment in the notion that prevention is better than cure.

"This is a fundamental shift in direction in health policy and all governments have a stake in taking this seriously by backing it with practical strategies introduced in key settings where people go in their everyday lives like general practice.

"Quality preventative primary health care is important to community wellness, social and economic participation and national productivity and is the key to keeping the lid on health system costs"

ADGP Chair Dr Jenny Thomson said "The evidence is irrefutable: not only do primary care-led systems achieve better outcomes and contain cost, we also know that brief interventions by GPs on quitting smoking, eating healthier food, drinking alcohol safely, exercising more and achieving and maintaining a healthy weight work.

"Investing more in preventative primary health care is good health policy and something that governments must seriously embrace".

"Lifestyle behaviours are the largest group of preventable risk factors for death and disease in Australia. GPs provided education and counselling on weight and nutrition in 1.5 million more consultations over 2004-05 than in 1998 according to a report on General Practice Activity in Australia 2004-05 by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare."

Of patients attending general practice consultations around half are overweight or obese, about 1 in 5 are smokers, two-thirds do less than recommended physical activity levels and one fifth drink alcohol at risky levels.

"Medicare incentives for preventative checks to keep patients healthy, national implementation of *Lifescrpts* and provide support to patients and expansion of practice nurse incentives to increase the number of practice nurses available to assist practice teams in lifestyle advice and interventions for patients should be central to a prevention agenda" said Ms Carnell.

"These are all solutions that are set out in ADGP's 2006-2007 Federal Budget Submission".

"We must not forget that the majority of people see their GP at least once a year. The Divisions network support practice teams and are a fully established vehicle through which new and expanded measures to promote health and prevent illness can be introduced in general practice" said Ms Carnell.

**For more information please call Kate Carnell, ADGP CEO, on 0415 662 266.**

### WHAT IS ADGP?

- ADGP is the peak body representing 119 Divisions of General Practice and eight State-based organisations (SBOs) around Australia. The Divisions Network supports general practice and their practice teams and drives the implementation of innovative health strategies.
- ADGP, through the Divisions Network, works to integrate general practice with other sectors of the health system, both government and non-government, to deliver high quality care to the Australian community.
- ADGP is committed to promoting the health of all Australians by supporting the role of Divisions in the nation's primary health care system.



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