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**Minister for Ageing**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**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**

