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Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND CONVENIENT GP AND PRIMARY CARE

The 2010-11 Budget will deliver a massive \$1.2 billion boost to GP and primary health care to deliver real improvements in frontline health services for patients across Australia.

Better After Hours Access to primary care, through your *Medicare Local*

The Government will invest \$416.8 million in establishing a nation-wide network of primary health care organisations, to be known as *Medicare Locals*. This major investment will also provide all Australians with access to high quality, affordable and integrated after hours GP services, making it easier for patients to get the treatment they need when they need it.

As we know, people get sick regardless of the time of day. The first priority of *Medicare Locals* will be to coordinate the expansion of access to after hours GP services, which will be linked to a new 24 hour national telephone-based service.

Under this new program, people who need to see a GP at night or on the weekend will:

- call their usual general practice, and if the practice is not open, the call will be directed to the National Health Call Centre Network;
- then speak to a nurse or GP about their illness; and
- if required, be referred to a local after hours GP service, with the appointment coordinated by Medicare Locals.

This means knowing that your loved ones can get the care they need, when they need it.

Over time, *Medicare Locals* will also support community health promotion and prevention programs, and take a greater role in community-based mental health service provision, including through the coordination of Commonwealth-funded community mental health programs.

Investing in more primary care infrastructure, including more GP Super Clinics

The Government will invest \$355.2 million to build around 450 GP Super Clinic-type facilities. Around 23 new dedicated GP Super Clinics will be constructed and more

than 400 general practices, primary care and community health services, and Aboriginal Medical Services will be given Government assistance to build expanded facilities.

Additional services will be made available as a result of the infrastructure investment, with space made available in GP clinics for allied health services, group education (such as diabetes management), counselling and community health promotion.

Comprehensive care for people with diabetes

The Australian Government will transform the way Australians with long term illness are treated – starting with improving health outcomes for the nearly one million Australians living with diabetes, too many of whom end up being treated in hospitals unnecessarily.

The Government is committing \$449.2 million to improve care for people with diabetes. For the first time, Australians with diabetes will have the option of signing up with a GP practice. The practice will be responsible for managing all aspects of their care and be paid, in part, for keeping patients healthy and out of hospital.

More support for nurses working in general practice

The Government is acting to ensure more Australians can more easily access appropriate health care, by making a strategic investment to support and recognise the work of practice nurses.

As part of the Government's nursing package, \$390.3 million will be provided to better support practice nurses and, for the first time, provide funding for GPs in urban areas to help employ practice nurses.

Annual incentive payments of \$25,000 per full time GP for a registered nurse and \$12,500 per full time GP for an enrolled nurse will be made available to eligible accredited general practices.

Building a primary health care system for the future

Through the National Health and Hospitals Network, the Australian Government is taking full responsibility for funding all general practice and primary health care services. The Commonwealth will continue discussions with the states and territories to finalise the scope of services included in the takeover by the end of 2010.

The Government is also responding to the review of primary health care it commissioned as part of the health reform process, with the release of Australia's first *National Primary Care Strategy*.

The Government's investments complement the additional primary care funding for:

- record numbers of GPs; and

- a new innovative approach to improve the treatment of diabetes in GP practices.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220

