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Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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New health taskforce on prevention - tobacco, alcohol and obesity priorities

The Australian Government today announced the establishment of a new National Preventative Health Taskforce.

The taskforce, made up of health experts from around Australia, will develop strategies to tackle the health challenges caused by tobacco, alcohol and obesity, and develop a National Preventative Health Strategy by June 2009.

The Government also announced that it would take immediate action to ensure preventative health measures become a key part of health funding agreements between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments.

Today's announcement follows the release of a new report showing the annual social costs of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs have grown to \$56.1 billion.

The taskforce will be chaired by **Dr Rob Moodie** – an internationally recognised leader in health promotion and preventative health.

Dr Moodie is the Professor of Global Health at the Nossal Institute for Global Health at the University of Melbourne, and is the former CEO of VicHealth.

The taskforce will provide evidence-based advice to governments and health providers on preventative health programs and strategies, focusing on the burden of chronic disease currently caused by obesity, tobacco and alcohol.

By July 2008, the taskforce will provide advice to Government on the framework for the Preventative Health Partnerships to be included in the Australian Health Care Agreements between the Commonwealth and the states and territories.

The Australian Government is determined to bring a greater focus to prevention in health policy. The Preventative Health Taskforce will play a crucial role in this task.

Joining Dr Moodie on the taskforce will be:

- **Professor Mike Daube**, Professor of Public Health at Curtin University of Technology and former Director-General of WA Department of Health;
- **Professor Paul Zimmet** AO, Professor and Director of the International Diabetes Institute, and expert in obesity and type 2 diabetes prevention;

- **Ms Kate Carnell** AO, CEO of the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN), former ACT Chief Minister, and former pharmacist;
- **Dr Lyn Roberts** AM, CEO of the National Heart Foundation, with wide ranging experience in public health promotion, particularly in cardiovascular disease and cancer, and current Chair of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance;
- **Mr Shaun Larkin**, General Manager of Benefits Management at health insurer HCF, and advocate of the role of the private health insurance sector in prevention; and
- **Professor Leonie Segal**, Foundation Chair in Health Economics at the University of South Australia.

The Australian Health Ministers Conference will be asked to nominate two government representatives with particular experience in Indigenous public health, rural and remote public health, and community (including allied) health.

The taskforce will also co-opt external expertise as required, including medical and clinical expertise from the Commonwealth's Chief Medical Officer, Professor John Horvath, and nursing expertise from the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer.

The taskforce will also seek input from the food, alcohol and medicines industries, from health consumers, and from experts outside the health portfolio in such areas as transport and town planning.

The terms of reference and membership of the taskforce have been developed following consultation with our state and territory health counterparts.

The taskforce will report directly to the Minister for Health and Ageing, and will be supported by the Department of Health and Ageing.

The announcement coincides with today's National Prevention Summit, co-hosted by the Australian Institute of Health Policy Studies and VicHealth.

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