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**Minister for Health and Ageing**  
**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**RELEASE OF PREVENTATIVE HEALTH TASKFORCE FINAL REPORT**

The final report of the Preventative Health Taskforce was released today by the Rudd Government after a visit to the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne.

Preventative health is a priority area for this Government. The Rudd Government \$872 million investment in preventative health through COAG is the biggest of any Australian Government.

The Taskforce was commissioned by the Government to investigate and make evidence based recommendations on ways we can improve our health. The Taskforce's three key priority areas of obesity, alcohol and tobacco cost our economy over \$31 billion every year, in areas such as the health system, crime and lost productivity.

The Taskforce has made several findings, set a number of what it describes as 'ambitious' targets, and made 35 recommendations and 139 sub-recommendations.

The Government will consider the Taskforce's recommendations alongside those of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission.

Some of the recommendations, such as the establishment of a National Preventative Health Agency, are already in train. This Agency has been funded by the Government's record investment in preventative health and legislation to formally establish the Agency will come before the Parliament in the next sitting period.

The Commission recently found that chronic, potentially preventable conditions – such as cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes – consume about 70 per cent of the nation's health care Budget, yet less than two per cent of health expenditure is directed towards preventing illness.

It is vitally important that we do better on keeping people healthy and out of hospital so we can improve and extend lives and reduce the pressure on our hospital system.

A tour of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre provides a tangible example of the importance of preventative health. Obesity causes one fifth of colorectal, breast, uterine and kidney cancers. In 2005, around 9,500 people died from cancers resulting from smoking or excessive consumption of alcohol – this represented 25% of all cancer deaths in that year. Of all cancers lung cancer remains our biggest killer of both men and women. While less people are smoking than ever before, thousands of young people continue to take up the habit each year and tobacco remains the single-biggest preventable cause of death and disease in Australia. Reducing smoking rates to less than 10% would mean approximately one million

fewer smokers in Australia and would prevent the premature deaths of almost 300,000 Australians.

The Taskforce's full report can be found at [www.yourhealth.gov.au](http://www.yourhealth.gov.au)

I encourage people to read the recommendations and take the opportunity to provide their thoughts to the Government on this very important topic.

I would like to thank the Chair of the Preventative Taskforce Professor Rob Moodie, along with all the members of the Taskforce, for their hard work and dedication to this important task.

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