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Taskforce recognizes primary health care as fundamental to prevention agenda

Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) chair Tony Hobbs today welcomed the release of the Health Prevention Taskforce's discussion paper, *Australia: the healthiest country by 2020*.

"It is abundantly clear that our health system cannot be sustained with the current skew towards acute care and hospitals. While there will always be people who will need care in these settings, we need to increase our investment in promoting a healthy community and do all we can to prevent disease"

"To achieve this we clearly need to see a greater investment in prevention, which is currently less than 2 per cent of overall health outlays. It is also vital that we invest in the best possible, evidence-based prevention strategies" said Dr Hobbs.

"The ideas that the Taskforce have put before us are commendable and provide the community and health stakeholders with a prime opportunity to put forward ideas that will help shape the health system of the future."

"Recent estimates indicate that 88% of Australians visit a GP at least once a year with average visits of more than five per person per year, so there is no doubt that the general practice setting is a key setting for prevention"

"The Taskforce pays particular attention to the fundamental role of primary care providers – including practice nurses - in helping people make healthy choices and maintain healthy lifestyles especially through the delivery of community education and advice about nutrition, physical activity and the management of overweight and obesity".

"It is particularly pleasing that the Taskforce has not only recognized general practice as a key setting but that we need adequate incentives at a practice level to pave the way for more comprehensive preventative care" said Dr Hobbs.

"The divisions of general practice network is proud of its many achievements to date in prevention through innovative programs such as immunisation, Lifescripts and, more recently, the COAG Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Program."

"While a genuine prevention response must be intersectoral and involve a mix of strategies, programs such as those already run by divisions can play a part because they provide existing platforms on which we can easily and cost effectively build additional primary care based prevention initiatives".

AGPN will be encouraging our members to actively participate in the upcoming consultation forums to ensure there is strong general practice involvement in the discussions.

AGPN represents a network of 111 local organisations (divisions) as well as eight state-based entities. More than 90 percent of GPs and an increasing number of practice nurses and allied health professionals are members of their local Division. AGPN is involved in a wide range of activities including health promotion, early intervention and prevention strategies, chronic disease management, medical education and workforce support.

Our aim is to ensure Australians have access to a high quality health system by delivering local health solutions through general practice.

For further information or to organise a media interview, please call Jamie Snashall on 0407 438 746

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Delivering local health solutions through general practice

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