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## Government health spend saving Aussie lives

State and Federal Government spending on public health activities during 2004-05 released in an Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report has today been commended by Australia's peak body representing general practice, the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN).

The report states \$338.3 million was spent on immunisation programs around the country.

AGPN Chair Dr Tony Hobbs said the immunisation spend alone reflects government commitment to protect all Australians against preventable infectious diseases that can hospitalise and or lead to death.

"\$338.3 million is a significant portion of the health budget.

"This will continue to increase with the recent government commitments to immunise against cervical cancer and the Rotavirus," Dr Hobbs said.

The Rotavirus is responsible for almost half of the hospitalised cases of gastroenteritis in children less than five years of age.<sup>1</sup> The Australia wide campaign will contribute to reducing the incidences of these cases.

The report indicates that a large part of the \$338.3 million was spent on the successful pneumococcal and meningococcal vaccination programs.

AGPN CEO Kate Carnell said the report also highlighted the government's move to a prevention or wellness health system.

"Increased screening programs for certain conditions such as cervical cancer not only saves lives but reduces the future pressure on the health system.

"The 15% increase in money spent on cervical cancer screening and the decision to list Gardasil (the HPV vaccine) demonstrates the government's pledge to protecting Australians. Screening programs work and they save lives.

"The Government's decision to extend the practice nurse Medicare item for pap smears to include urban practices has opened the door for more women who prefer a female to conduct this screening procedure.

"AGPN are confident that health policy and spending will continue to follow this progressive path," Ms Carnell said.

**For more information please call AGPN CEO Kate Carnell on 0415 662 266**

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<sup>1</sup> National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance of Vaccine Preventable Diseases