

PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

22 November 2007

PUBLIC HEALTH MAKES ELECTION GAINS

An Election Scorecard released today by the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) shows that there has been a welcome recognition that the most important gains to Australia's health will come from determined action on prevention.

An analysis of commitments made by the major parties shows that in the final weeks of the campaign Labor has made significant commitments to action on prevention, including increased funding for tobacco control, declaring obesity a national health priority and supporting early childhood programs. Labor is already committed to putting prevention "front and centre", with a National Preventative Health Strategy and a special Australian Health Care Agreement on prevention.

While the Coalition has increased funding for prevention programs, particularly under the COAG agreements, there is a lack of specific commitments to new preventive activity in the Coalition's health policy.

The Public Health Scorecard for the major parties gives the Labor Party a B plus. Kevin Rudd and Nicola Roxon have made both general and specific commitments on prevention, and Kevin Rudd has made a personal commitment to reducing the Aboriginal life expectancy gap. This is a major step forward for public health, especially if they get tough on anti-health advertising.

The Coalition gets a C minus. There have been some important developments in recent years, and the Government's recent funding for physical activity programs is laudable, but there is little attention to prevention in the Coalition's health policies.

The minor parties, particularly the Greens, have also made a strong commitment to prevention, with new funding and policies to counter alcohol and junk food advertising aimed at children.

PHAA President Professor Mike Daube said, "whoever wins this election, the state of Australia's health depends not simply on the way hospitals are organised, but whether the new Government is willing to increase funding for prevention from the present figure of just one per cent of direct Commonwealth health expenditure, to be tough on the tobacco, alcohol and junk food interests, and to put \$460m a year into Indigenous health, as recommended by the AMA."

"Surveys consistently show massive public support for action on prevention. We know how to save tens of thousands of lives and remedy health inequities. Public health professionals will be vigilant to ensure that the next Government seeks not only to improve our hospitals and health systems, but also the overall health of our community."

**For more information contact PHAA National President
Professor Mike Daube 0409 933 933**