



National Campaign Headquarters

Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

The Rudd Labor Government is committed to a stronger, fairer health system for all Australians. Federal Labor believes in investing in health and our record is second to none. It was Federal Labor that founded Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and since 2007, it has been Federal Labor that has committed an extra \$20 billion investment in our hospitals. We have supported more doctors and nurses, have championed bulk billing and are now building Medicare Locals – giving local communities control of their health system, employing more local health professionals and delivering more health services closer to home.

A re-elected Rudd Labor Government looks forwards to continuing to work with the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons to ensure we continue to have a world class health system and workforce into the future to benefit all Australians.

Provision of adequate specialist medical training opportunities

The Rudd Labor Government is committed to a stronger and fairer healthcare system for all Australians. Access to medical care is a key determinant of universality and a vital part of this is securing the health workforce of the future. The Federal Labor Government has invested substantially and nationally in simulated learning environments. Since coming to office in 2007, Federal Labor has overseen significant increases in medical students (41 per cent) and Commonwealth-funded Specialist Training Program places (1,600 per cent by 2014, 50 per cent with at least some component in a rural location) and Australian General Practice Training (100 per cent by 2014, 50 per cent based in a rural location) places. That's also why Federal Labor recently announced \$8 million to fund internships for locally trained, overseas medical students, where possible, in private, rural settings.

Federal Labor commissioned the widely respected Health Workforce 2025 (HW2025) initiative in partnership with the states and territories, to provide medium to long-term national workforce planning projections for doctors, nurses and midwives.

In 2012, HW2025 Doctors, Nurses and Midwives was released, providing Australia's first major, long-term, national projections for these professions. The third volume that was released in 2012 was HW2025 – Medical Specialists, which found the number of medical specialists is increasing but that the workforce is not evenly distributed.

Recognising the value of national planning for a sustainable health workforce, Health Workforce Australia is continuing to build the evidence base on Australia's health workforce by expanding the HW2025 program to encompass different professions and sectors. In order to address these distribution issues, the Federal Labor Government has sought to reform the remoteness classification system used to inform districts of workforce shortage and associated workforce programs. Labor has also established end-to-end integrated rural training pathways to ensure students and advanced trainees can complete their training without having to return for extended periods to metropolitan areas.

Alcohol abuse

The Rudd Labor Government shares the concerns of the College and is strongly committed to changing Australia's drinking culture and reducing the harm from alcohol. That's why we have invested over \$103 million in the *National Binge Drinking Strategy* to raise awareness around harm from alcohol.

A key element of Federal Labor's *Strategy* is to change the attitudes of young people to alcohol. The *Be the Influence – Tackling Binge Drinking* social marketing campaign is about connecting with young people to bring about a cultural shift that encourages a more responsible attitude towards alcohol consumption and to give them the tools to challenge the acceptability of binge drinking in their peer groups.

The Rudd Labor Government is working with non-government organisations, health providers and industry to support women to make healthy lifestyle choices during pregnancy, and to promote awareness of the health risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy. Part of this is our commitment with the state and territories to adopt pregnancy warning labels. The Minister for Mental Health and Ageing recently approved funding for an independent evaluation of the Industry's voluntary labeling initiative, and if re-elected the results of the voluntary initiative will help to inform Federal Labor's future actions surrounding pregnancy warning labels on alcohol. On 6 August, the Rudd Labor Government also announced an additional \$20 million towards an action plan to address Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders to reduce the health risks from drinking alcohol, especially for pregnant women or those planning pregnancy.

In addition, the Rudd Labor Government recognises that marketing is another element in addressing alcohol abuse. We support responsible advertising by industry, and will continue to work closely with industry groups to ensure the codes and standards that govern alcohol advertising align with community expectations. Part of this is also Federal Labor's funding of \$25 million to support sporting organisations use an alternative to alcohol sponsorship. This program covers a significant portion of sporting participants in the 15-24 age demographic with around one million young Australians directly participating and many more involved indirectly through family, community and spectator participation. High profile sports organisations including the Football Federation Australia, Basketball Australia, Netball Australia, Swimming Australia, Hockey Australia, Surfing Australia, Athletics Australia and Australia University Sport are involved.

The Federal Labor Government has also requested the Australian National Preventive Health Agency investigate the public interest for a minimum floor price of alcohol as well as the self-regulation of alcohol advertising. This process is underway through community consultation and if re-elected the Rudd Labor Government will consider the advice of the review.

Ensuring timely access to safe and effective surgical care

The Rudd Labor Government is committed to ensuring Australians in need have access to safe and effective surgical care.

Under Federal Labor's reform of the Australian health system, *A National Health and Hospitals Network for Australia's Future*, we introduced Activity Based Funding, the Independent Pricing Authority to pay for activity and the National Health Performance Authority to establish credible measures of performance. Federal Labor also continues to support the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care to lead and coordinate health care safety and quality improvements in Australia.

The Federal Labor Government has also contributed a record extra \$19.8 billion investment in public hospitals, assisting to improve in the percentage of patients who had urgent surgery on time and increasing the percentage of patients leaving emergency departments within the four hour target period.

Under Federal Labor, the Council of Australian Government (COAG) Reform Council (CRC) submitted its 2012 performance report to COAG on 31 May 2013. This report is an independent assessment of the performance of state and territory Governments against performance benchmarks and targets set out in the \$3.3 billion National Partnership Agreement on Improving Public Hospital Services. The CRC is required under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations to assess performance against the National Elective Surgery Target and the National Emergency Access Target. These targets include specific performance benchmarks that must be achieved by government prior to Cabinet determining that reward payments are to be made. Under the agreement, reward payments of up to \$400 million are available to states and territories between 2012–13 and 2016–17.

The latest data shows that nationally there are early signs that the National Elective Surgery Target is helping to reduce the overall length of time patients wait for their operations and the National Emergency Access Target is improving emergency department service efficiency in an environment of growing presentations.

Although significant progress has been made, we acknowledge there is still more work to be done by all Governments to ensure timely access to safe and effective surgical care. A re-elected Rudd Labor Government would be happy to continue to work with the College in this regard.

Funding models

The Rudd Labor Government is committed to delivering better health outcomes for all Australians – and ending the blame game between jurisdictions about where funding responsibilities lie.

That's why under Federal Labor's National Health and Hospital Network, the Commonwealth took on the responsibility of implementing national standards across the country, national prices for hospital services and the majority of the funding responsibility.

This means that for the first time we have a national strategy for health, rather than eight disparate and disjointed state or territory run health systems. It also means for the first time that we have national standards to drive and deliver better hospital services and clarify what is sensibly done at the national level (clinical standards, access to care, consistent funding), what should be done at a state level (planning, purchasing, industrial relations, owning and managing assets) and what is best done locally with more input from our local doctors and nurses (such as flexible service delivery to meet needs of the community).

Our reforms mean that the Commonwealth now meets 100 per cent of the outpatient services that move into the primary care setting, allowing it to more rationally fund and support all of primary care, and shape services around people, not programs.

Self-education tax deduction

Federal Labor understands that surgeons like many other professionals and employees, are required to undertake continuing professional development in order to meet specific license requirements and ensure their knowledge remains up to date. This provides a benefit not only for the professionals and their employers but for the wider Australian community. This is why the Rudd Labor Government supports work related self-education expense deductions.

In April 2013, Federal Labor announced reforms to better target this deduction as part of a package of measures to make a down-payment on the *Better Schools Plan*, which included a \$2,000 cap on work related self-education expenses.

The *Better Schools Plan* is the biggest education funding reform in forty years, with schools sharing in an extra \$14.5 billion in public investment over the next six years. While our economy has powered ahead in recent years, our school system has fallen behind. The gap between the highest performing and lowest performing students is higher in Australia than in other OECD countries, and this disadvantage can all too easily follow students beyond their school years.

The *Better Schools Plan* reforms involve measures to lift the quality of teaching and learning in our schools, empower school leadership, meet student needs and improve transparency and accountability.

The Rudd Labor Government has decided though to defer the introduction of the cap until 1 July 2015. We have also made it clear from the outset that it will consult closely with employers and employees to better target this concession while still supporting essential training. To that end, the Treasury released a discussion paper in May 2013, has accepted written submissions and met with key stakeholders. This is providing an opportunity for all stakeholders to provide input as to how the policy objective can be achieved.

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