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MEDIA RELEASE

Federal Labor providing better health services in Port Stephens and the Hunter

Health services in the Hunter will receive a boost from Federal Labor's National Health and Hospitals Reform Plan.

This includes two GP Super Clinics; commitments to MRI and PET machines which are important in diagnosing conditions such as cancer; a Medicare office in Belmont; and support for local dementia services.

GP Access After Hours

Federal Labor is committed to securing the long-term future of after hours services in the Hunter region, currently provided by *GP Access After Hours*.

GP Access After Hours is a uniquely successful, locally-driven partnership between the Commonwealth and NSW governments and the Hunter Urban Division of General Practice.

Since it was established in 2003, *GP Access After Hours* has provided over 400,000 services to patients through its five clinics at the Toronto Polyclinic, and Newcastle Community Health Centre, and Maitland, Belmont and John Hunter hospitals.

GP Access After Hours also provides an after-hours telephone triage and advice service, a transport service, and a home visit service.

Non-urgent presentations to public hospital emergency departments have been reduced by as much as 60 per cent since the *GP Access After Hours* service was established.

A Rudd Labor Government will seek to negotiate a long-term funding arrangement for the provision of after hours services in the Hunter/Newcastle region with the Hunter Urban Division of General Practice, the NSW Government, and local doctors and health professionals.

GP Super Clinics

Labor will invest \$5 million to establish two *GP Super Clinics* in the Charlton electorate and Port Stephens.

Each of these areas suffer from doctor shortages. In the Charlton electorate, there is about one GP for every 2000 people. At the same time, significant new

residential development is planned for southern Lake Macquarie, with as many as 25,000 new residents likely to move to the Lake Macquarie area by 2020.

By investing in health infrastructure that will provide high quality facilities, flexible work practices, and relocation incentives, Federal Labor's *GP Super Clinics* will help attract young graduates to areas like Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens.

Residents in the southern parts of Shortland will also benefit from Labor's commitment to a *GP Super Clinic* in the north of the Central Coast.

The precise location and suite of services to be delivered at Federal Labor's *GP Super Clinics* in southern Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens will be determined in consultation with GPs, the Hunter Urban Division of General Practice, and the local community.

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) for Maitland

Federal Labor supports the provision of Medicare funding for an MRI machine in Maitland.

MRI is an important medical technology used to diagnose a range of conditions, including cancer.

There is a tender process currently underway for the provision of an additional Medicare-rebateable MRI machine in the Newcastle-Hunter area.

Medicare office in Belmont

The establishment of a Medicare office in Belmont will be a top priority for a Rudd Labor Government.

This will make it easier for the residents of this community to claim their Medicare rebates.

There are many elderly people in the Belmont, Swansea and Marks Point area who have difficulty in travelling to Charlestown or Lake Haven to claim their Medicare rebates.

Hunter Dementia and Memory Resource Centre

Federal Labor will contribute \$200,000 towards the Hunter Dementia and Memory Resource Centre in Hamilton.

This centre will provide a range of direct support services to people living with dementia, their carers, families and friends.

The local community and Alzheimer's Australia NSW have already contributed significant funding to this project. Federal Labor's \$200,000 commitment will allow the fit-out of the building purchased with funds raised by the local community to be completed.

It is estimated that 8,000 people with dementia live in Newcastle, with at least an additional 10,000 are directly involved in their care. By 2010 the number of people with dementia in the Hunter region is expected to increase to over 15,000.

PET (Positron emission tomography) scanner

Federal Labor will fund a Medicare licence for the PET scanner at the Mater Hospital.

PET scanners are an extremely valuable tool in analysing cancer and planning treatment for cancer patients.

Currently cancer patients who cannot afford to access the privately provided service in the Hunter region are forced to travel to Sydney to access PET services, or go without.

Labor's \$2.5 billion National Health and Hospitals Reform Plan

Health and hospital services in the Newcastle-Hunter region will benefit from the commitments Federal Labor has already made as part of its \$2.5 billion National Health and Hospitals Reform Plan, including:

- Our \$600 million to reduce elective surgery waiting times at public hospitals.
- Our \$81 million plan to put more than 9,000 extra nurses in Australia's hospitals in 5 years.
- Our \$800 million plan to improve dental health.

Federal Labor has a national plan to improve health and hospital services around the country. The Howard Government only has a plan for the election.

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