

## National Campaign Headquarters

### Cancer Voices Australia

Federal Labor's approach to health policy has always been to ensure Australians receive the best health care possible, regardless of where they live, and what they earn. And this has driven our approach to diagnosis, treatment and care for Australians affected by cancer. Australia's cancer survival outcomes are among the best in the world – and we want to ensure this remains the case.

That's one reason the Federal Labor Government has invested more than \$694 million to build a network of 26 regional Cancer Centres and associated accommodation facilities across the country – these will help ensure Australians in regional areas have world-class treatment available closer to home.

Federal Labor has worked hard in office to bring costs down – since 2007 we have committed nearly \$3.5 billion to improve the detection and treatment of cancer, including almost \$2 billion to cancer medicines through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

We have introduced Medicare rebates for MRI scans of the breast for women under 50 who are at high risk of breast cancer and with no symptoms.

The Rudd Labor Government has also committed \$357 million to modernise hospital and medical treatment facilities, boost the health workforce and provide sophisticated medical diagnostic and treatment technologies where they are needed. The package has a strong focus on cancer care, reflecting a growing need for cancer treatment in areas like Sydney's west, south east Queensland, South Australia and south-west Western Australia, and includes:

- \$12 million for construction of a medical research and education facility for the Westmead Millennium Institute which focusses on conditions including cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, major infectious and immune diseases and liver, eye, kidney and psychiatric diseases.
- \$6 million for a full Medicare license for the MRI machine at Mt Druitt Hospital giving patients in Sydney's west faster diagnosis of medical conditions.
- \$10 million for a new linear accelerator and mammogram machine at Nepean Hospital.
- \$10 million for a new statewide multidisciplinary cancer care team in Western Australia, including oncologists and radiotherapists, which will be expected to provide patient care in regional centres such as Kalgoorlie and Geraldton.
- \$10 million for critical cancer treatment infrastructure at Royal Princess Alexandra, Royal Brisbane and Prince Charles Hospitals in Queensland, delivering a significant number of chemotherapy chairs.
- \$890,000 for a cancer care nurse coordinator and a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island nurse coordinator for the Alan Walker Centre in Darwin.

The Rudd Labor Government was also pleased to commit to establishing a network of 34 Cancer Care Nurse Coordinators so people diagnosed with cancer get access to the specialist health services they need. The new Coordinators will help more than 7,000 rural and regional cancer patients and their families over the next four years and includes five Cancer Care Nurse Coordinators dedicated to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

The Federal Labor Government has invested more than \$4.1 billion since 2007 in improving cancer prevention, detection, treatment and care. A re-elected Rudd Labor Government is committed to building on our support and investment in a stronger and fairer health system for all Australians. We believe in investing

for the future, protecting the important services that Australians rely on, and ensuring Australians have access to the best cancer treatment in the world.

**Does your party support the removal of the ability to grant patents over naturally occurring human genetic material?**

Federal Labor is committed to ensuring Australians maintain reasonable access to affordable healthcare.

As you may be aware, in the United States, the Supreme Court recently handed down its decision in a similar case. The Court found that patents over naturally occurring genetic material were not valid. While this decision only applies to US patents, the Rudd Labor Government is closely considering its implications for Australia.

A re-elected Rudd Labor Government will continue to review the operation of the patent system to ensure it operates in the interests of all Australians.

In November 2011, the Federal Labor Government published a comprehensive response to several reviews and reports related to gene patenting. This response committed the Government to a number of reforms to the *Patents Act* which will make it more difficult to get a patent for products and processes, including those based on genetic sequences, which are not truly inventive. Federal Labor has delivered these reforms, having come into effect on 15 April 2013.

In addition, on 16 April 2012, an exemption came into effect to ensure that researchers carrying out basic research may work without worrying about patent litigation. However, as basic research moves towards the commercialisation of a product, the interactions between science, commerce and healthcare become complex and difficult to measure. In response, we have commissioned the Centre for International Economics to conduct a study into the economic benefits and costs of gene patents to health care, innovation and investment. This addresses the current absence of comprehensive economic evidence to inform the debate over gene-based patents. These studies are underway and their results will inform consideration of future policies involving gene patents.

In June 2012, the Federal Labor Government also requested that the Productivity Commission conduct an inquiry into Australia's legislative provisions for compulsory licensing and Crown use to determine if they can be invoked efficiently and effectively to ensure access to patented inventions. This responds, in part, to the Government's November 2011 commitment that it will not allow patent owners to block reasonable access to affordable medical treatments and essential diagnostic tests. The review was completed in March 2013 and found there was uncertainty around the scope of current Crown use provisions, particularly in the context of healthcare.

In response, on 30 May 2013, the Federal Labor Government moved to strengthen intellectual property safeguards and improve oversight of the patent system through the introduction of the Intellectual Property Laws Amendments Bill 2013. The Bill clarifies that Crown use can be invoked in relation to any service that governments have the primary responsibility for funding or providing. Some categories of patents, such as gene patents, raise complex legal and ethical questions. In the meantime these changes make it clear that, if necessary, the Federal Labor Government has the power to address unreasonable conduct by patent holders and protect patients' access to healthcare services.

**Should all cancer treatment centres, public and private clinics be required to be accredited for standards of clinical care?**

The Rudd Labor Government believes that the appropriateness of clinical care is a major focus in improving the quality of health care provision.

As part of Federal Labor's National Health Reform Agreement, all Australian Governments agreed that the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care should formulate and monitor safety and quality standards and work with clinicians to identify best practice clinical care, to ensure the appropriateness of services being delivered in a particular health care setting.

The purpose of the Clinical Care Standards is to:

- Support the delivery of appropriate care.
- Improve patient experience.
- Facilitate shared decision making between health professionals and consumers.

To support the Commission, a Clinical Care Standards Advisory Committee has been established to provide advice and input to the development and implementation of the Clinical Care Standards program.

A re-elected Rudd Labor Government will continue to closely monitor the progress of the Clinical Care Standards and will seek advice on accredited standards of clinical care for cancer treatment centres, public and private clinics.

**Cancer patients and their medical advisers need central access to authoritative best practice guidelines via a central website, such as Cancer Australia's. Would your Party support this?**

The Rudd Labor Government supports continued access to authoritative best practice guidelines via Cancer Australia's central website, and if re-elected would be happy to discuss with Cancer Voices other resources that would be useful to have available to patients, their families and medical advisers.

**Timing of approvals for new cancer drugs and tests is improving but needs more attention. Would your Party support further review of the TGA, PAC and MSAC processes to this end?**

If re-elected the Rudd Labor Government would be happy to engage with Cancer Voices on this issue.

**Does your party agree that public cancer patients should not have to face cost add-ons, especially for standard chemotherapy treatment?**

The Rudd Labor Government is committed to ensuring that cancer patients have continued access to quality, affordable treatment. That's why earlier this year Federal Labor announced a major review into chemotherapy pricing, and provided a one-off \$30 million boost for cancer drugs for six months pending the outcome of the review.

The Review will consider the funding of clinical services delivered as part of a cancer patient's chemotherapy treatment, and the different business models in the private and public health sectors that provide chemotherapy services and how these services have changed since the chemotherapy funding arrangements were implemented in December 2011.

The review of chemotherapy arrangements will report to the Minister for Health by October 2013 with recommendations for long-term arrangements for the funding of chemotherapy services. A re-elected Rudd Labor Government will closely consider the findings and recommendations of the review.

In addition, since coming to government, Federal Labor has added 30 new drugs to treat 15 different cancers at an additional cost of \$1.3 billion to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme since 2007, providing more affordable drugs for cancer patients.

**Community Pharmacy Agreements (CPA): health consumers recommend that the CPAs should have stakeholder participation, including health consumers, and be transparent regarding what \$15.6 billion over 5 years provides Australian taxpayers. What is your Party's view?**

The Rudd Labor Government is committed to and has led fundamental changes to health policy in Australia aimed at improving health and wellbeing for all Australians, the sustainability of our health system and the transparency and accountability of health spending to ensure that every dollar spent delivers better health outcomes and better value for Australian taxpayers.

A re-elected Rudd Labor Government would be happy to discuss this further with Cancer Voices Australia.

**Does your Party agree that a Medicare rebate should be given to those cancer diagnostic tools which are commonly used overseas, eg PET scans?**

**Lymphoedema garments currently do not have a Medicare item number and are very costly for those who need them: would your Party support adding this to Medicare coverage?**

Federal Labor founded Medicare, and continues to provide support to Medicare investing around \$35 billion in the current financial year – the biggest investment in its history to help people meet the costs of medical services.

With regard to access to Medicare Rebates, applications to list new services or change existing services on the Medical Benefits Scheme can be made by engaging with the Medical Services Advisory Committee. For further information and cut off dates please visit

<http://www.msac.gov.au/internet/msac/publishing.nsf/Content/msac-application-process-lp-1>

**What is your view on the need for equity in access to palliative care services, with appropriate funding via the states?**

The Rudd Labor Government is committed to ensuring that Australians have appropriate support to extend the reach and effectiveness of palliative care services. Federal Labor believes it is important people receive the best palliative care available, wherever they live and whatever their circumstances. That's why since coming to Government we have made major investments into palliative care and supporting services in a number of areas, including through historic increases in funding to State and Territory Governments.

The Rudd Labor Government is committed to ensuring that our investments meet the needs of the community and represents fair value to consumers and taxpayers. To this end, we will continue discussions with industry, pharmacists and other groups on the best and most effective way to ensure the efficient supply of PBS drugs to the community.

In 2011 Federal Labor released the updated National Palliative Care Strategy *Supporting Australians to Live Well at the End of Life* to ensure a nationally consistent and coordinated approach to the delivery of palliative care services across Australia. The National Palliative Care Program funds national initiatives that support patients, families and carers; improve access to palliative care medicines; provide education, training and assist workforce development; and promote research and quality improvements in palliative care services.

Federal Labor has also provided \$500 million to States and Territories for the enhancement of sub-acute care services, including palliative care, under the Council of Australian Governments significant National Partnership Agreement on Hospital and Health Workforce Reform. Federal Labor has also invested the biggest ever injection of money into Tasmania's palliative care sector to help services provide home-based care, making \$50 million available for palliative care providers over the next four years.

In addition, as part of Federal Labor's *Living Longer, Living Better* aged care reforms we committed \$19.8 million to establish specialist advisory services on palliative care. As part of our *Living Longer, Living Better* aged care reforms we also recently announced that Australia's aged care workers will receive specialist palliative care training and advance care planning expertise through a \$14.95 million contract awarded by the Rudd Labor Government to a consortium headed by Palliative Care Australia and Austin Health in Melbourne. A 24 hour, 7 day a week national telephone line will also be established to advise aged care staff and GPs on palliative care and advance care planning issues.

Federal Labor has also invested \$10 million to enable Advance Care Directives to be included on the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record, to ensure that people are able to share their end-of-life plans with any of their chosen doctors, hospitals, family members or carers, regardless of geographic location. This includes the 110,000 people requiring palliative care each year.

The Rudd Labor Government has also committed \$5.5 million over seven years from 2013-14 for the establishment of Hummingbird House, a new children's hospice in East Brisbane, Queensland. The not-for-profit organisation Queensland Kids will operate the service, providing respite and care for children with a life limiting illness and an alternative for families whose children require end-of-life care.

**Co-ordination of cancer care: cancer patients commend the introduction of national guidelines to ensure clarity re what co-ordination of services should be provided and expected – would your party support this?**

A re-elected Rudd Labor Government would be happy to consult with stakeholders including Cancer Voices Australia regarding the introduction of national guidelines for cancer care.

**Cancer patients and referring doctors need access to Directories of Cancer Specialist Services, similar to NSW's *Canrefer* website. Would your Party support this development in other states?**

A re-elected Rudd Labor Government would be happy to consult with stakeholders including Cancer Voices Australia regarding the introduction of Directories of Cancer Specialist Services.

**Patient held cancer treatment and care plans will improve efficiency and outcomes: what is your view on requiring these be introduced?**

The Rudd Labor Government believes in a modern health system, providing high quality treatment to every Australian, no matter where they live and making sure that doctors have access to updated patient information, reducing the risk of preventable medical record errors.

Federal Labor introduced the personally controlled electronic health record - a medical record that travels with you, from doctor to doctor, specialist to specialist, reducing the need to repeat your medical history again and again and preventing avoidable mistakes such as medication errors. Over 520,000 people have signed up to ehealth so far, with more than 20 million documents loaded and we've supported more than 96 per cent of Australian practices to get the IT systems they need for ehealth. Recently the Rudd Labor Government expanded ehealth to allow people to include advanced care directives. This will mean people will be able to share their end of life plans with doctors, hospitals, families and carers.

We have also launched the My Child's eHealth app – giving parents easy access to their child's medical history. This vital information can help save lives in emergency situations.

A re-elected Rudd Labor Government would be happy to consult with stakeholders including Cancer Voices Australia regarding patient held cancer treatment and care plans.

### **Cancer patients want cancer research to be more focused on personalised medicine and targeted therapies: does your Party commit to supporting this as a priority?**

The Rudd Labor Government sees medical research as a core part of our health system – it's one of the reasons why we now have Australia's first dedicated Minister for Medical Research sitting at the Cabinet table.

The Rudd Labor Government has increased investment in health and medical research with National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) annual grants at record levels of \$771 million in 2013-14. This funding supports over 8,500 researchers at over 80 institutions including hospitals, medical research institutes and universities. This figure is almost 25 per cent higher than the annual investment in the NHMRC that Labor inherited from the Howard Government in 2007.

Through our Health and Hospitals Fund, Federal Labor has invested \$700 million to build and upgrade medical research facilities across the nation. And under Federal Labor's February 2013 Innovation Statement, \$9.9 million was allocated towards expediting clinical trials reform particularly in the area of streamlining ethical and governance review, and approval processes for clinical trials, standardising the costs of clinical trials and developing a web portal to make it easier for patients to participate in trials.

In addition, on the 20 August the Rudd Labor Government announced a new Medical Research Innovation Fund innovation fund which to help our world class researchers translate their ideas into better treatment for patients. The Federal Labor Government will contribute \$125 million to be matched at least dollar for dollar by private sector investors, generating a total investment of \$250 million, a major injection of investment capital into our emerging biotechnology sector.

Federal Labor will also implement around \$70 million of investments and reforms as part of its initial response to the 2013 McKeon Review of Health and Medical Research. This includes delivering \$47.5 million in funding for 19 Centres for Research Excellence to encourage research in fields identified as national priorities. This also includes establishing four new Centres that will focus on Indigenous health, national clinical trials, international health and genomics. These measures build on Federal Labor's record investments in medical research which will see over \$3.8 billion invested in the NHMRC from 2008-09 to 2016-17.

The Rudd Labor Government also believes that improved cancer data will help to improve cancer care.

The clinical management and outcomes of many cancers depends on the stage of disease at diagnosis. However, there was no national cancer data in this area, leaving gaps in our knowledge.

That's why earlier this year Federal Labor provided Cancer Australia with \$2.4 million over four years to collect, collate and report national data on:

- The stage of the disease when cancer is diagnosed.
- The treatments applied at each stage.
- How frequently cancer recurs after treatment.

National collection and reporting of this data will fill a significant gap in our knowledge by identifying areas that may benefit from new approaches to the delivery of best practice cancer care.

It will also provide important insight into variations in survival outcomes by cancer type and of the cancer pathway after diagnosis. Through this funding, Cancer Australia will also develop a framework to monitor and report on a set of indicators that will benchmark cancer control efforts in Australia, nationally and internationally.

The Rudd Labor Government will continue to strongly support medical research in Australia. This is in stark contrast to the Coalition who has pledged to 'protect' medical research funding over the forward estimates, simplify grant applications, consolidate and streamline ethics committee processes, transition to longer grant

periods and prioritise clinical trials reform. Their pledge to ‘protect’ medical research funding and not grow it, means the medical research sector will be \$88 million worse off under the Coalition over the forward estimates. The Coalition’s other claims regarding the streamlining of grant application processes and advancing clinical trials reform have already been implemented by the Federal Labor Government.

Following on from our record in government a re-elected Rudd Labor Government will continue our important investment health and medical research, including in cancer research.

**Would your party support a conscience vote about legalising the medical use of marijuana for the terminally ill?**

While the Rudd Labor Government understand the concerns of Cancer Voices and their members on the medical use of marijuana for the terminally ill, the circumstances under which medicines and other controlled substances are made accessible in Australia are determined through a classification process known as scheduling. Scheduling decisions made under the Therapeutic Goods Act are independent of Government involvement. By this process, cannabis is included as a prohibited substance under Schedule 9 of the Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons. Schedule 9 consists of substances for which there is no approved medical use. Such substances, due to their potential to cause serious harm, remain illegal to make, own sell or use under state and territory drugs and poisons legislation. Scheduling decisions, which act as recommendations for implementation through specific jurisdictional legislation, are based on applying scientific and clinical expertise to decision-making. This is to ensure that benefits to consumers outweigh any risks associated with the use of medicines and medical devices.

No form of cannabis can be approved for medical use in Australia, unless an application is made to the Therapeutic Goods Administration with supporting data to assess its quality, safety and efficacy. The Federal Government cannot coerce a sponsor to make an application for a medicine and approval cannot be given without an application.

**Travel for rural patients can be costly and deter treatment: would your Party commit to reconsidering a national patient travel assistance scheme, including assistance to participate in clinical trials?**

The Rudd Labor Government is committed to improving access and support for cancer patients in rural, regional and remote Australia and recognises the important role that clinical trials play in Australia, both in improving the health of all Australians and in the Australian economy. Closing the gap in cancer outcomes between the city and the country remains a high priority for a re-elected Rudd Labor Government - our plan is to deliver better cancer care for all Australians – irrespective of where they live.

That’s why Federal Labor has invested \$694 million to build 26 regional cancer centre projects and associated accommodation facilities to enable regional Australians to receive care closer to home and their community.

All Australian states and territories currently operate a Patient Assisted Travel Schemes. These schemes provide a subsidy to assist with travel, escort and accommodation expenses incurred when rural and remote Australians travel over 100 kilometres to access specialised health care not available within a specified distance from their place of residence.

A re-elected Rudd Labor Government would be happy to discuss the issue of continued support for rural, regional and remote patients with Cancer Voices Australia.

**We look for a commitment to continue excellent initiatives introduced over the current Government's term, eg improved cancer data collection by the AIHW and Cancer Australia.**

Earlier this year Federal Labor invested an additional \$226.4 million to deliver a new cancer care package – *World Leading Cancer Care* – to support Australians whose lives are touched by cancer. This package is part of Federal Labor's continued investment in the fight against cancer.

This package invests more than \$226 million in detection, prevention and cancer care and support services.

As part of this package patients will continue to access affordable chemotherapy drugs building on 32 new or amended medicines that have been listed for 15 cancers since 2007, as well as new funding for CanTeen to support a national network of specialist services for 12-24 year olds who are living with cancer.

In addition the package provided an extra \$30 million in interim funding to increase the fees paid to pharmacists for preparing and dispensing chemotherapy medicines while a review of chemotherapy arrangements is undertaken, and \$2.4 million to collect cancer data and benchmark cancer control efforts.

This package builds on the vital work Federal Labor began since Government in 2007 to ensure people can access early detection, treatment and quality care, where and when they need it.

A re-elected Rudd Labor Government is committed to building on our support and investment in a stronger and fairer health system for all Australians. We believe in investing for the future, protecting the important services that Australians rely on, and ensuring Australians have access to the best cancer treatment in the world. This is in stark contrast to Tony Abbott who plans to cut health spending to the bone.

Authorised and printed by G.Wright, Australian Labor Party, 5/9 Sydney Avenue, Barton ACT 2604

Australian Labor Party  
PO Box 6222 KINGSTON ACT 2604  
T: 1800 10 31 31 E: [campaign13@chq.alp.org.au](mailto:campaign13@chq.alp.org.au)  
| [www.alp.org.au](http://www.alp.org.au)