

THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2009

HEALTH EXPERTS TACKLE THE TOUGH QUESTIONS

A roundtable series, to be launched today, will pick up on the Rudd Government's challenge to base Australia's health reform on evidence, according to a health policy expert at The Australian National University.

Mr Robert Wells, director of the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APHCRI) at ANU, said the University had considerable health expertise to face the challenges of the changing face of health care and medical workforce shortages.

"The Government has indicated that they want to undertake serious reform of the system," Mr Wells said. "We believe the evidence should be put on the public table and be available for comment and debate."

The National Health Reform Series, hosted by ANU, will be launched by the Hon Warren Snowdon MP, Minister for Indigenous Health, Rural and Regional Health and Regional Services Delivery and will, over the next six months, examine options for implementing reform across the primary health care sector.

The first roundtable will examine whether the health system can be reformed without changing the medical profession. It will feature presentations and a panel discussion involving Melbourne GP and former commissioner for the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, Dr Mukesh Haikerwal, and Australian General Practice Network chairman Dr Emil Djakic.

Associate Professor Kirsty Douglas, who is a Canberra-based general practitioner and research fellow at APHCRI, will talk about the evidence around primary health care workforce. Mr Mike Wood, who is Deputy Chairman of the Productivity Commission, will speak about the Productivity Commission's 2006 report on the Australian health workforce before the event comes to a close.

Dr Haikerwal, who is also the clinical leader for the National e-Health Transition Authority and was the national president of the Australian Medical Association, said Australia generally "has excellent health care primarily due to the highly trained health workforce".

"The increased demands for health care, the way it is changing and the lack of health care personnel we have on the ground means we have to work more collaboratively, leveraging the different skills we all have," Dr Haikerwal said.

The event will be streamed live online at www.livestream.com/ANUCHANNEL

A press conference will be held in Committee Room 2s1, Parliament House, Canberra after the event at 12.30pm. For more information or to arrange interviews contact: Will Wright - 02 6125 2026 or 0432 130 469

ANU MEDIA: Simon Couper
(02) 6125 4171
0416 249 241

Martyn Pearce
(02) 6125 5575
0416 249 245

Penny Cox
(02) 6125 3549
0424 016 978

Christina Apps
(02) 6125 6125

MEDIA RELEASE



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