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For immediate Release

ADA supports the National Preventative Health Agency Bill 2009

The Australian Dental Association supports the Federal Government's initiative to introduce the Australian National Preventative Health Agency which will report directly to the Minister of Health, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP. This initiative follows the introduction of the Australian National Preventative Health Agency Bill 2009.

The introduction of the Bill demonstrates the Government's concerted efforts to provide all Australians with preventative advice and will boost Australia's capacity to combat preventable diseases and set the nation up for a healthier and more prosperous future.

This legislation ties in neatly with one recommendation of the Final Report of the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission (NHHRC) '*A Healthier Future For All Australians*' regarding oral health, that is to have additional funding for oral health promotion.

"The introduction of this Bill provides an opportunity to achieve broader community benefits than those focused upon in the Bill such as obesity, smoking and alcohol related systemic diseases. It is important to maintain an overall approach to preventative healthcare and indeed healthcare in general, "Dr Neil Hewson, Federal President of the Australian Dental Association (ADA) said today.

"A coordinated approach to preventative healthcare that incorporates dental care is crucial. It is important to remember that almost all dental problems are preventable. While there is a large focus at the moment on issues such as obesity and heart disease, messages need to be disseminated throughout the community which state that a healthy diet and lifestyle can not only decrease the risk of onset of obesity and diabetes but can also have dental health benefits. Alcohol and tobacco, for example, are high risk factors for oral cancers and sugary foods should be recognised as health threats alongside alcohol and tobacco. We look forward to working with Government to integrate oral prevention programs into the preventative health strategy".

Dr Hewson congratulated the Federal Government for introducing the Bill, noting that there are still some limitations to the Bill. For example, where you live has an impact on your ability to access certain services. "We need to be able to ensure that people living in rural and remote areas will have access to preventive health initiatives. This is an area that the ADA is actively addressing through our support for fluoridation of rural and remote water supplies and incentives to encourage dentists to work in these areas. Early preventative measures can have a positive impact for the individual but we need to ensure they are accessible for all in the community".

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The Australian Dental Association Inc. (ADA) is the peak national professional body representing about 10,000 registered dentists, who are the vast majority of dental care providers. ADA members work in both the public and private sectors. The primary objectives of the ADA are to encourage the improvement of the oral and general health of the public and to promote the ethics, art and science of dentistry and to support members of the Association in enhancing their ability to provide safe, high quality professional oral care.