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MEDIA RELEASE

PROMISES WELCOMED BY NATIONAL AGEING BODY

The Australian Association of Gerontology (AAG) welcomes the election initiatives of all the parties in relation to the health and well being of ageing Australians, but stresses that research and education as well as health, hospitals, housing and aged care are crucial issues for a successful ageing policy.

The ALP Medicare Gold policy promises to improve links between hospital care, community care and aged care and reduce cost-shifting, but medical workforce, hospital capacity, community services and the hospital – community interface, are issues which will need to be addressed simultaneously.

The Coalition proposal for \$200 million for dementia initiatives, including the identification of Dementia as a National Health Priority was extremely welcome, as was the ALP proposal for \$5 million to develop a National Dementia Strategy. However, it must be recognised that dementia is not the only health issue faced by older Australians and there is urgent need for research into all health issues affecting older people and also into the many factors influencing the ability of older people to effectively participate in society and to maintain a high quality lifestyle.

“Despite the current aged care election auction, the commitments are still not adequate. In particular neither party is paying sufficient attention to the urgent need to build Australia’s capacity in ageing research.” Professor Tony Broe, AAG President stated “With rapidly changing demographics we are largely in uncharted territory in terms of our understanding of the many interrelated factors influencing the quality of life for ageing Australians. This is clearly the case for the older aged groups, where multiple health problems may affect wellbeing and where there is an ever growing need for research and understanding of the causes and treatment of medical conditions.” Professor Broe, went on to stress “equally if not more vital is understanding the social factors influencing well-being of the ageing, including suitability of care and effective social participation.”

There is need also for research into the challenges faced for the rapidly expanding group of healthy older people, where the issues may be economic and social, more than just the traditional areas of health and care. Professor Broe indicated “Access to continuing education is also a major contributor to healthy ageing.”

The AAG calls on both major political parties to give greater commitment towards research in the field of ageing. “Such research should cover all the social, economic, biological and medical factors, which will influence the outcomes for the ageing population. It must not be narrow in its application and must include the translation of research data into the real world and the identification of best practice models.”

The AAG supports the call by the National Aged Care Alliance for political parties to get the link between aged care and health right and to commit to the introduction of a national strategic framework for the health care of older people covering all settings where services are provided.

“It is certainly good news that both sides of politics have recognised the problems posed by our ageing population, but there is danger of complacency, particularly in the vital areas of research and education.”