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For immediate release

COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE A PRIORITY

The Chief Executive Officer of Melbourne's Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS) has welcomed news of the Commonwealth's growing interest in the importance of community based healthcare, particularly for the aged.

CEO Dan Romanis says that, as the largest provider of Home and Community Care (HACC) services in Victoria, RDNS has a vital interest in the current debate about the reform of community and aged care systems and processes.

"We strongly support any proposal to simplify the processes within which community care is delivered across Australia. In particular the current system needs to be made easier for clients to navigate," he says.

But Mr Romanis has issued a caution.

"Victoria currently has one of the best - if not the best – systems of community care in Australia. Whilst we welcome the Commonwealth's involvement and interest in the importance of community care we also flag the need for significant further investments in this system here in Melbourne as well as right across Australia".

Noting yesterday's statement that the Commonwealth recognises the need to build an adequate workforce to meet increased service demands, including boosting the number of nurses, Mr Romanis says, "This contrasts with the current situation in which RDNS has to fund the vast majority of the cost of providing hands-on graduate nurse training for nurses entering the workforce.

"In 2012 we expect to be training 40 graduate nurses for their first full year as nurses. Yet the vast majority of the costs in providing this training – about \$30,000 per nurse – we will be expected to fund ourselves."

On proposals to establish a "nationally consistent aged care system", Mr Romanis says: "Any changes to current systems must ensure that the 9,000 people we care for each day here in Melbourne continue to benefit from the best standards and the leading integrated system of community home based care in Australia.

"This must not be at the expense of achieving national consistency by pursuing a one-size-fits-all solution.

"Many aspects of our current systems require significant further funding to ensure that Victorians continue to benefit from the outstanding systems and standards which currently exist in community care.

"We look for assurances from decision makers at all levels of government that Victoria's current systems of quality community based care will be enhanced by any changes which are implemented and that independent charities like RDNS will not be pushed into further fundraising to support quality care for people in their homes," Mr Romanis says.

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