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## **Cancer Council, COSA applaud ‘unprecedented’ investment in rural cancer care**

### **Closing the regional gap a highlight of Rudd cancer plan**

The gap in cancer care outcomes between rural and metropolitan Australia should begin to close significantly thanks to \$560 million in the 2009-10 Budget to build a network of regional cancer centres.

Described by Cancer Council Australia and the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia (COSA) as “an unprecedented move by a Commonwealth Government”, the initiative is a highlight of the Rudd Government’s \$2 billion cancer plan.

Cancer Council Australia Chief Executive Officer, Professor Ian Olver, and COSA President, Professor Bruce Mann, said their organisations had for a number of years sought a whole-of-government solution to the inequities in rural cancer care, which until the 2009-10 Budget announcement had been seen as a state issue.

“For the Government to make such a substantial investment in capital grants to build regional cancer centres shows they are serious about reducing inequities in cancer care outcomes and in working with other jurisdictions to put services where they are desperately needed,” Professor Olver said.

“It is an unprecedented move by a Commonwealth Government to show such a strong commitment to a national problem that has been well-documented, but until now has been seen largely as a state and territory issue.”

Professor Mann said Australians in rural and remote areas had poorer cancer survival rates than those in city areas, with outcomes worsening the further from a large population centre a patient lived.

“The best way to reduce the geographical disparity in cancer outcomes is to build capacity on the ground in regional areas – and this groundbreaking commitment from the Australian Government is set to do that,” Professor Mann said.

Professor Olver said Cancer Council Australia also welcomed other measures in the \$2 billion cancer plan, in particular the announcement of \$120 million to convert Australia’s outdated analogue breast mammography system to digital, which would significantly improve the system’s efficiency.

He said Cancer Council Australia was disappointed there was no new money to expand the Government’s interim bowel cancer screening program and that Cancer Council would redouble its efforts to encourage the Government to fully implement the program by 2012.

**Media contacts:** Glen Turner, 0412 443 212, [glen.turner@cancer.org.au](mailto:glen.turner@cancer.org.au)  
Paul Grogan, 0409 456 727, [paul.grogan@cancer.org.au](mailto:paul.grogan@cancer.org.au)