



Federal Budget 2022-23 – Women's Health

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The Federal Budget includes making a \$330.6 million investment in key pillars of the National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030 (the Strategy). While we welcome this investment in women's health and wellbeing, there are significant gaps and missed opportunities that could focus on health equity and improve the health and wellbeing of all Australian women.

We are pleased to see the investment in the treatment, management and diagnosis of endometriosis, a debilitating condition that effects 1 in 9 Australian women. This is an important step towards improving health outcomes, but more is needed to improve community and clinicians understanding of the condition and reduce the time to diagnosis.

While the majority of the new initiatives funded are related to reproductive health, pregnancy and maternal health, there is a disappointing lack of attention given to increasing provision of and accessibility to contraception, especially the highly effective long-acting reversible contraceptive methods. We welcome funding for reproductive health, pregnancy and maternal health initiatives, however there must also be investment in other areas of women's health where inequity is experienced. Women's health is more than pregnancy and reproduction.

Much of the spending focus also continues to be on treatment and tertiary healthcare and there is little to no real spending on preventative health measures. Without long term, genuine funding commitment to preventative and public health that prioritise addressing health inequity and have a gender lens applied, we are limiting in the improvements that can be made to women's health and wellbeing.

Of significant concern is the lack of new investment in addressing health inequity between women through initiatives for priority populations. Unacceptably, there are no new initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's health. This Budget includes \$1.05 million per year for four years to fund community-led initiatives and organisations to support women and girls at higher risk of poorer health outcomes, with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, migrant and refugee women, older women and women with disabilities. This commitment falls very short of the investment needed to improve the health of women who experience the greatest health inequity.





We are pleased to see the 4-year funding commitment to establish a National Advisory Council for Women's Health to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the Strategy. This is a welcome move that will help ensure accountability and delivery for the important outcomes of the Strategy. It is pleasing to see that 'The Council will bring together representatives of key women's health organisations, including the voices of consumers and priority populations'.

As stated in the Strategy, 'intimate partner violence is the greatest health risk factor for women in their reproductive years. It contributes more to the burden of disease of adult women aged 18-44 years than any other risk factor, including smoking, alcohol and obesity.' Outside of the \$140 million for health responses and trauma recovery included to support the next National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032, there is no other funding dedicated to the ongoing health impacts of violence against women and girls. We welcome the \$25m in the budget over five years to provide specialised and dedicated services for women to address the impacts of domestic and family violence, and to research recovery responses. The Illawarra Women's Trauma Recovery Centre (NSW) will bring together multiple support services - primary health care, mental health care, legal, housing and financial supports - delivered in one place for as long as needed. There is a great need for recovery programs; other jurisdictions have the capacity to pilot similar place-based, holistic centres, and further investment in recovery responses is needed.

New initiatives summary:

- \$81.2 million over four years for genetic testing for cystic fibrosis, spinal muscular atrophy and fragile X syndrome
- \$58.3 million to improve the treatment, management and diagnosis of endometriosis.
- \$23 million over four years to support families who have experienced stillbirth or miscarriage and to respond to the National Stillbirth Action and Implementation Plan.
- Changes are also being made to the Medicare Benefits Schedule to support women's health. The Government will invest \$21.4 million over four years from 2022-23 for new and amended items relating to obstetrics and gynaecology services to improve health outcomes for pregnant women.
- \$4.2 million over four years from 2022-23 to fund community-led initiatives and organisations to support women and girls at higher risk of poorer health outcomes, with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, migrant and refugee women, older women and women with disabilities.
- \$1.7 million investment over three years from 2022-23 to support community-led approaches to the prevention of female genital mutilation or





cutting and support health workforce training to address the health impacts of these harmful practices.

- \$39.8 million over three years from 2023-24 for the McGrath Foundation to continue and expand the Breast Care Nurses Program which delivers specialist nursing support to breast cancer patients.
- \$10.6 million over four years from 2022-23 to expand eligibility under Medicare for MRI services relating to the diagnosis of breast cancer.
- \$4.0 million over four years from 2022-23 to continue support of Ovarian Cancer Australia's Teal Support Program which provides a free telehealth service supporting women with ovarian cancer.
- \$0.5 million over three years from 2022-23 to improve education and treatment of cardiovascular disease in women to enable continuation of the Her Heart Hub website.
- \$20.2 million over 3 years from 2022-23 for services relating to cervical cancer and \$9.7 million over 2 years from 2022-23 for short term surge capacity for BreastScreen Australia to address the decline in testing and screening services which occurred during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Subsidise the cost of Trodelvy® (sacituzumab govitecan), a drug for the treatment of triple negative breast cancer, through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), benefiting around 580 patients each year. Without the subsidy, patients may pay over \$80,000 per course of treatment.
- \$24.3 million over four years from 2022-23 to implement a pilot program to identify innovative and evidence-based models of care to best address the needs of people with eating disorders and continue to fund existing treatment and support services.
- \$1.6 million over four years from 2022-23 to fund the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to establish a National Advisory Council for Women's Health to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the Strategy.
- \$1.6 million over three years from 2022-23 for the extension a second wave of the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health – Mothers and their Children's Health (MatCH) survey for 2022.

