

# The Importance of Women's Health

## 2024-25 Federal Budget Policy Brief

*'At the heart of women's health is the right to live well, to be safe, and to thrive — no matter who you are, where you live, or what your story is. As a First Nations woman and CEO of the Australian Women's Health Alliance, I know our health is shaped not just by medicine, but by systems, by justice, and by whether we are truly seen and heard.'*

*'This Budget shows that when governments listen, change is possible. It also reminds us how far we still have to go. Our vision is clear: a health system that sees the whole person, centres lived experience and delivers equity in every community. That means funding what works, valuing every voice, and ensuring no woman, no girl and no gender diverse person is left behind.'*

— Sandra Creamer, CEO, Australian Women's Health Alliance

### Key messages

- **Strategic investment:** The Australian Government's \$792.9 million commitment to women's health builds on recent momentum to tackle deep-seated structural inequities, particularly in reproductive and sexual health, menopause and access to care.
- **Mixed progress:** Reforms to Medicare, expansion of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and targeted workforce investments signal positive change. However, progress is uneven, and many transformative reforms remain incomplete.
- **Systemic gaps:** The Budget falls short on systemic reforms for violence-informed care, intersectional research and data equity. It does not address the structural supports required for marginalised communities.
- **Advocacy at risk:** Ongoing funding uncertainty for the Australian Women's Health Alliance threatens the long-term advocacy and national platform essential for sustained progress.

### Purpose

Women's health is not a niche issue, it is a national imperative. When we invest in women's health, we build stronger families, safer communities and a fairer future for all. To make meaningful change, we must look deeper: at the systems that shape our health, the structures that exclude and the voices that are too often left unheard.

The Australian Women's Health Alliance is the national voice on women's health. Guided by our [Gendered Framework for Action on Prevention and Healthcare](#), we recognise that health is determined not only by biology or behaviour, but by intersecting systems of race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, age and place.



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This policy brief presents a bold, evidence-based vision: a health system that is equitable, trauma-informed, and grounded in cultural safety. A system that respects the knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, listens to girls and gender diverse people and upholds the dignity of older women.

The brief is informed by research, rights-based analysis and the diverse lived experience of communities across the country. Women and girls' health must be considered across every portfolio and in every Budget.

We celebrate the progress made in the 2025–26 Federal Budget and we call on governments to go further, to be braver and to fund what works. The time for systemic change is now.

## Federal Budget and investing in women's health

As the national voice on women's health, the Australian Women's Health Alliance welcomes the \$792.9 million investment in women's health over 5 years from 2024–25. This package includes several important measures announced earlier this year that address structural inequity in women's health such as the following:

- **Medicare and clinical reforms:**
  - Reforms to Medicare and the expansion of the PBS are critical for reducing biases that disadvantage women, girls and gender diverse people. These include new Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) ultrasound items for severe endometriosis, new PBS listings for oral contraceptives and the first PBS listing for new menopausal hormone therapies in more than 20 years.
  - Support for women experiencing menopause also includes a new Medicare rebate for menopause health assessments, development of national clinical guidelines for treatment and funding for health professionals, and specialist support for menopause in the expanding network of endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics.
  - Structural measures, such as increased access to urinary tract infection (UTI) treatment and national trials to improve access to oral contraception from pharmacies, can improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes.
- **Workforce investment:**
  - A \$10.5 million investment over 2 years from 2025–26 will expand the Primary Care Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship Program to deliver an additional 100 graduate certificate or graduate diploma scholarships and 100 masters' scholarships per year. This measure supports nurses and midwives in undertaking postgraduate study, which is essential for addressing workforce shortages and enhancing quality care.
  - The extension of the First Nations Birthing on Country program until 30 June 2026 underscores the importance of providing affordable, culturally appropriate, and accessible health services so that all women and children can receive holistic, integrated, and tailored care.



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The Federal Budget also includes broader initiatives that will benefit women and gender diverse people. For example:

- **Bulk billing and cost reductions:**
  - A commitment of \$7.9 billion over 4 years from 2025–26 to expand bulk billing incentives to cover all Australians via the Bulk Billing Practice Incentive Program.
  - A \$784.6 million commitment over 4 years from 2025–26 to reduce co-payments under the PBS to \$25 from 1 January 2026, thereby reducing lifetime out-of-pocket costs for women and gender diverse people.

Despite these advances, the brief highlights a critical gap. Funding certainty for the Australian Women's Health Alliance remains unresolved, with our current funding ceasing in 2026. This systemic underfunding has long been the bedrock upon which inequity was built into our health system and urgent action is needed to address the gap.

## Intersectionality and systemic barriers

Intersectionality is key to understanding how different identities, including gender, sexuality, race, class, religion, and disability, shape how individuals are treated. Multiple forms of discrimination intersect and can profoundly compromise the health and well-being of women and girls. For example, lack of job security, insecure housing, and limited transport options intersect to create significant barriers to accessing care.

## Gaps and missed opportunities

- **Abortion care:** No funding for abortion care or follow-through on Senate Inquiry recommendations.
- **Violence and health:** No investment in domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) health system response or trauma-informed care, a critical and recurrent gap.
- **Research and data:** No dedicated funding for lived-experience-informed or intersectional research. Key data gaps in reproductive care, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), chronic pain and menopause remain.
- **Transport and access:** No national travel support scheme for regional, rural and remote women, despite geographic inequities in service access.
- **Digital health:** AI regulation and My Health Record upgrades are underway but lacking gender-responsive frameworks.
- **Agency and representation:** Advocates, co-design models and platforms amplifying lived experience remain unfunded.



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## Opportunities for future action

- Training and practice: Fund gender-responsive, trauma-informed training and practice across primary, specialist and digital health care.
- Data and research: Embed intersectionality into health data, funding, research and evaluation frameworks to close systemic gaps.
- Workplace rights: Legislate reproductive leave, including provisions for menopause, in workplace awards.
- Reproductive justice: Invest in safe and accessible abortion care, linking it to ongoing reproductive justice work.
- Violence-informed responses: Deliver health-led, community-based responses to gender-based violence with sustained funding.
- Policy advice infrastructure: Guarantee long-term funding for Australian Women's Health Alliance so it can continue to provide robust, intersectional national policy advice.

## About us

Australian Women's Health Alliance is the national voice on women's health. We highlight how gender shapes experiences of health and health care, recognising that women's health is determined by social, cultural, environmental, and political factors.

## Contact us

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*We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters on which we live and work. We pay our respect to Elders past and present. Sovereignty has never been ceded.*