

Australian College of Midwives 2022-23 Federal Budget Update – Health

The Australian Government 2022-23 Federal Budget was handed down yesterday. The Australian College of Midwives provide below a short overview of Budget measures which are relevant to the midwifery profession and for Health more broadly.

Budget Health Measures – General Overview

Key Measures include:

Strengthening First Nations' Health

The Government will provide \$314.8 million over 5 years from 2022–23 to support the Government's commitment to close the gap for First Nations peoples' health and wellbeing outcomes. Funding includes:

- \$164.3 million over 4 years from 2022–23 to invest in modern health clinics in areas of large and growing First Nations populations, as well as targeted investments to build capacity for chronic disease treatment and rehabilitation
- \$54.3 million over 5 years from 2022–23 to deliver up to 500 First Nations Certificate III and IV traineeships in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care
- \$45.0 million over 4 years from 2022–23 to invest in 30 new and upgraded dialysis units to improve the health of First Nations peoples with end-stage kidney disease
- \$22.5 million over 3 years from 2022–23 to build a dedicated Birthing on Country Centre of Excellence in Nowra, New South Wales (see midwifery section)
- \$14.2 million over 3 years from 2022–23 to provide additional support for rheumatic heart disease treatment, detection and prevention activities in high-risk First Nations communities
- \$10.1 million in 2022–23 for CareFlight to increase its capacity to deliver aeromedical services in the Northern Territory
- \$1.9 million in 2022–23 to provide two dialysis treatment buses in regional New South Wales and upgrade medical equipment to improve access to medical support for First Nations peoples
- \$0.3 million in 2022–23 for grants to community organisations for a medical consulting room, play areas and gym equipment to improve the health and wellbeing of First Nations peoples.

Primary Health

- \$235 million over 4 years to commence the roll-out of Urgent Care Clinics, including \$100 million over 2 years from 2022–23 to co-develop and pilot innovative models with states and territories to improve care pathways and inform program roll-out
- \$1.3 million to improve health outcomes for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) people by addressing their unique health needs and experiences

Medicare

- \$750 million for the Strengthening Medicare Fund to provide better access and care for patients. Delivery of the Fund will be informed by the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce, which will provide recommendations by the end of 2022
- \$229.7m to invest in general practices including Aboriginal and Community Controlled Health Services. It includes enhancing digital health capability, training, invest in infection control and meet accreditation standards with Strengthening Medicare GP grants of up to \$50,000 will be available, depending on practice size

Mental health – Telehealth Services

- \$47.7m to restore MBS item 288 and thus the 50 per cent loading for bulkbilled telehealth psychiatry services in regional and rural areas

Cheaper Medicines (PBS)

- \$787.1 million over 4 years to reduce the general patient co-payment for treatments on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme from \$42.50 to \$30 per script, saving 3.6 million Australians more than \$190 million in out-of-pocket costs

Women’s Safety

- \$1.7 billion over 6 years to support women’s safety, including \$1.3 billion to support implementation of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–23
- Implementing the Respect@Work Report, including \$32 million to fund Working Women's Centres in every state and territory. These centres provide free information and assistance on issues such as discrimination and pay equity
- \$169.4 million for an additional 500 frontline community workers to increase support for women experiencing violence

COVID-19

The Government will provide \$808.2 million in 2022–23 to extend elements of the Government’s response to COVID-19 until 31 December 2022.

Funding includes:

- \$759.9 million to extend the National Partnership on COVID-19 Response, which provides for 50 per cent of the cost of state and territory COVID-19 responses including vaccine delivery, testing and treatments
- \$48.3 million in 2022–23 to extend the GP-led Respiratory Clinics program, which delivers face-to-face care, respiratory assessments, COVID-19 testing and treatment of COVID-positive patients
- extending medical indemnity legislative arrangements to continue access to the Run-Off Cover Scheme to support eligible doctors and midwives returning to the workforce to help address shortages arising from COVID-19.
- \$410.3 million to provide and distribute PPE and COVID-19 vaccine in high-risk settings, including primary care settings, pharmacies, state-based clinical sites, aged and disability care facilities, and First Nations communities