

2023-2024 Budget: Midwifery

The Australian College of Midwives is pleased to see that some of our Pre-Budget submission asks have been recognised and implemented by the Federal Government. In particular the removal of Collaborative Arrangements and implementation of scholarships for midwives were key requirements of our submission. This is a positive step towards the recognition of the value of midwives as primary care providers in this country.

Removal of Collaborative Arrangements Legislation

Removal of the legislated requirement for collaborative arrangements between participating midwives, nurse practitioners and medical practitioners.

The Government will enable our highly trained participating (endorsed) midwives to prescribe PBS medicines and provide services under Medicare without the need for a legislated collaborative arrangement. This will require legislative change, and thus will take some months to come into being.

Scholarships for Midwives

Funding to grow and upskill the medical and health workforce and improve access to essential services by investing in training, workforce incentives and trials for innovative models of care, includes:

\$50.2 million over 4 years from 2023–24 to establish the Primary Care and Midwifery Scholarships program to support registered nurses and midwives to undertake post-graduate study and improve their skills.

Mental Health Training for Midwives

\$17.8 million over 5 years from 2022–23 to upskill the mental health capabilities of the broader health workforce through training, resources, and professional development materials. This will include reviewing and improving undergraduate curricula for nursing, midwifery, and allied health to ensure students are receiving contemporary training in mental health.

\$6.8 million over 3 years for mental health first aid training for 7,800 medical students and 55,500 nursing, midwifery and allied health students.

\$1.4 million over 3 years to ensure undergraduate nursing, midwifery and allied health students receive consistent education in mental health.

Woman Centred Care Strategy

Support for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Woman centred care: Strategic directions for Australian maternity services, to ensure Australian maternity services are equitable, safe, woman centred, informed, and evidenced-based.

Multi-disciplinary primary care

PHNs will be funded to commission multidisciplinary care from allied health, nurses, and midwives (\$79.4m) to support smaller or solo primary care practices, to increase patient access and improve the management of chronic conditions.

MBS

\$10.9 million in 2023–24 to support the MBS Continuous Review program to ensure the MBS remains clinically appropriate.

COVID-19 Measures

Support eligible doctors and midwives through continued access to the Run-Off Cover Scheme by extending the medical indemnity legislative arrangements to address workforce shortages arising from COVID-19.

Women's Health

The Budget tackles gender bias in the health system by building the women's health evidence base, investing in mental health supports, and providing tailored investments in women's health care.

- \$26.4 million over 4 years from 2023–24 to extend support for research and data collection activities that support women and girls' health outcomes.
- Funding to strengthen the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sector and support prevention and treatment of chronic disease will help support strong health outcomes for First Nations women.

In addition, the Government is continuing to deliver the investment of \$22.5 million over 3 years (2022–23 to 24–25) to build a dedicated Birthing on Country Centre of Excellence in Nowra, New South Wales to ensure First Nations babies are born healthy and strong in a culturally safe environment. Birthing on Country returns maternity services to First Nations communities and enables self-determination, connection to family, culture and community throughout pregnancy and birth.

- MRFF investments in research that addresses issues impacting women's health will continue through the second 10-year Investment Plan. In particular, the MRFF's Preventive and Public Health Research Initiative will provide \$75 million over 10 years for research focused on improving maternal and early childhood outcomes, including those for vulnerable populations.
- IVF: From 1 July 2023, the Government will subsidise the storage costs of eggs, sperm, or embryos for Australians with cancer, and those at risk of passing on genetic diseases or conditions who have undergone MBS-covered genetic testing.
- The Government is ensuring women have access to appropriate health services and support. Longer GP consultations, cheaper medicines and increases to the maximum dispensing quantities will ease financial pressures for women.

In applying a gender equity lens to its work, the National Women's Health Advisory Council (which ACM sits on) will also work to improve access to timely, quality care for women in order to address known health disparities and delayed diagnoses and increase awareness of women's health matters.

- The Government has established 20 Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain GP Clinics across Australia at a cost of \$16.4 million, to support those experiencing endometriosis and pelvic pain. There is a \$58.3 million suite of initiatives aimed at improving approaches to endometriosis and pelvic pain including establishing a digital platform for key resources and developing a new endometriosis management plan.
- Support is also being provided through Medicare for women having difficulty conceiving by listing a new magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan, following a recommendation of the Medicare Benefits Schedule Review Taskforce.

Violence Against Women and Children

Every Australian deserves a life free from violence. All women and children should be able to live safely without fear, whether at home, at school, at work, in their community or online. Women and children are not a homogenous group, and every experience of violence is unique.

To further women and children's safety, including under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032, the Government is investing \$589.3 million in addition to the initial record investment of \$1.7 billion in the October Budget to end violence against women and children in one generation.

Recognising that First Nations women and children experience unacceptably high rates of violence, the Government is investing \$194 million in specific funding to deliver priorities emerging from the developing dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan. This will also support the development of a new standalone First Nations National Plan for Family Safety.

ENDS