



MEDIA RELEASE

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Federal budget sets the scene for stronger women's health outcomes, with further funding commitments anticipated

MELBOURNE – 12 MAY 2023

Women's health is on the agenda with key building blocks announced in Tuesday's Federal budget – but more investment is needed over the short and longer-term to address key priority areas, including sexual and reproductive health and mental health.

Dianne Hill, CEO of Women's Health Victoria said, "The government is giving strong signals that it recognises and values the need to invest in women's health both in the immediate and long term. While the Federal Budget announcements this week are a positive start, we are anticipating further investment to be made. We look forward to the government's response to the recommendations of the upcoming Senate Inquiry on Universal Access to Reproductive Healthcare report on 25 May. Longer term, we will be anticipating significant further investment across the 5 priority areas of the National Women's Health Strategy 2020 – 30."

Women's Health Victoria welcomes a range of measures announced in Tuesday's budget designed to improve the health of women and contribute to gender equality.

The government's commitment of \$26.4 million for research on women's health, including the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, is a positive step towards addressing the role of sex and gender in shaping women's differential health outcomes. The introduction of a new Medicare number for longer appointments will also benefit women, who are more likely to present to their GPs with complex issues or more than one chronic condition.

The decision to extend telehealth for sexual and reproductive health care until 30 December 2023 will ensure Australians can continue to access the vital care they need, although the lack of certainty beyond the end of 2023 must be addressed. The announcement of \$46.8 million over four years to recognise the important roles of nurse practitioners and practicing midwives is also likely to improve access to abortion care and medication.

In mental health, Women's Health Victoria welcome announcements of \$6.2 million in 2023-24 to support children to build and maintain a positive body image and reduce body dissatisfaction and appearance pressures; and \$2.8 million to ensure Australians can continue to access support for eating disorders, which disproportionately affect women and girls.

Despite these important commitments, no funding has been allocated in response to the Health Education Research (HER) Centre Australia's call for at least 20 specialist women's mental health clinics across Australia. With women experiencing mental ill-health at twice the rate of men, Women's Health Victoria looks forward to further investment in this area.

The National Women's Health Strategy provides the roadmap to address critical areas of need in women's health across the rest of the decade, while the forthcoming Senate Inquiry into Universal Access to Reproductive Healthcare report is expected to outline a path towards an equitable and universally accessible sexual and reproductive health system.

To support the National Women's Health Advisory Committee in steering the implementation of these policy and system reforms, Women's Health Victoria looks forward to the Government building on the announcements in Tuesday's Budget with further investment.



"These announcements provide positive signs of the Government's commitment to addressing gender inequality in Australia and put in place important building blocks to address gendered health outcomes and a framework for more dedicated investment in the future. This is not a short-term issue but requires sustained investment and capability-building to address gender equity and improve women's health outcomes across the whole health system," said Ms Hill.

"Many women in Australia do not have access to timely, affordable or culturally safe sexual and reproductive health care. In the face of Roe v Wade in the United States, we must ensure that reproductive rights and justice are protected and embedded in mainstream health care. We eagerly await the findings of the Senate Inquiry on Universal Access to Reproductive Healthcare and encourage the government to prioritise urgent funding for the recommendations."

Media inquiries - For media inquiries, please contact Colleen O'Sullivan, Senior Communications and Digital Coordinator at Women's Health Victoria at colleen.osullivan@whv.org.au or 0410 009 600.

Available for interview: Women's Health Victoria CEO, Dianne Hill.

About Women's Health Victoria

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) is a not-for-profit, statewide women's health promotion, advocacy and support service, focused on improving the lives of Victorian women. WHV collaborates with women, health professionals, policy makers and community organisations to influence and inform health policy and service delivery for women. Our work is informed by a feminist approach to health promotion and the social determinants of health.

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