



National Women's Health Advisory Council Meeting Communiqué

On 15 March 2024, the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon. Ged Kearney MP, chaired the 6th meeting of the National Women's Health Advisory Council (Council).

The Council has been established to provide strategic advice and recommendations on how to improve the nation's health system to provide better, more targeted and effective healthcare for Australian women and girls to ensure improved health outcomes.

At the meeting:

1. The Council welcomed Ms Leah van Poppel as a Special Adviser to represent women and girls with a disability. Ms van Poppel provided a presentation on barriers and enablers, challenges and opportunities, and unique experiences of gender bias in the health system experienced by women with disabilities.
2. The Council discussed key themes from the National Women's Health Summit, held in Canberra on 14 March 2024, which included the importance of the health system addressing and considering intersectionality, the value of multidisciplinary clinical and research teams, the need for community-led interventions to increase availability of culturally safe services, recognising practitioners needing to spending time with patients to build relationships and deliver best care, and location and cost access barriers to care.
3. The Council received an update on a literature review on gender bias in the health care system, which is examining gender equity issues in the Australian context. The Council discussed how the initial findings could be used to inform their work.
4. The Council received an update on the #EndGenderBias survey and discussed the initial findings of the analysis of the survey data. The survey found:
 - Two-thirds of respondents have experienced health gender bias and discrimination in their diagnosis, treatment or follow-up care.
 - The most common aspects of care in which they experienced gender bias was in diagnosis and treatment, followed by follow-up care.
 - Consistent themes included feeling dismissed and disbelieved; being stereotyped as 'hysterical' and a 'drama queen'; and women's symptoms being readily attributed to other causes such as menstruation, lifestyle factors or even 'faking it'. This was particularly evident where women's symptoms related to pain. A summary report is available at www.health.gov.au/womens-health-advisory-council.
5. The Council received an update on the Monitoring and Reporting Framework to measure progress on implementation of the National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030. The update included insights from stakeholders about levels of awareness of the Strategy, its usefulness, and areas for improvement.
6. Professor Mark Cormack provided an update on the Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce - Scope of Practice Review.



7. The Council considered findings from its 4 subcommittees on safety; research; access, care and outcomes; and empowerment.

Key documents will be published on the website as they are available.

The next Council meeting will be held in May 2024.