



# BUDGET OVERVIEW

## Strengthening Medicare

**Boosting the number and capacity of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics, making health care more responsive and accessible for women, and ensuring mental health care meets the needs of every individual.**

More Australians will have access to care for urgent, but not life-threatening, conditions. The Budget is growing the national network of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics by 29 (to a total of 87) and providing additional support for clinics located in regional, rural and remote areas (\$227m). This will help take pressure off stretched hospital emergency departments.

Using hospital outreach services in the community and more virtual care services, older Australians will get the health care and support they need in a safe and comfortable environment when it isn't necessary for them to stay in hospital, freeing up beds for other patients (\$882.2m).

A \$361 million package puts mental health at the heart of a stronger Medicare. Australians will get the right level of care for their level of need. Measures to shift away from a one-size-fits-all approach and relieve pressure on the Better Access initiative include:

- a new national early intervention service that anyone can access for free, whenever they need it (\$163.9m)
- an upgraded nationwide network of 61 Medicare Mental Health Centres to offer free, walk-in access to mental health care professionals for adults with more complex mental health needs (\$29.8m)
- funding Primary Health Networks to work in partnership with general practices to commission mental health workers to offer wraparound care for people with high needs in between medical appointments (\$71.7m)
- a new national peer workforce association will help to mobilise, professionalise and unlock the potential of this all-important workforce (\$7.1m)

Changes to MRI licencing agreements will expand access to Medicare funded services, almost tripling the number of fully Medicare eligible MRIs since 2022, from 227 to 620 machines (\$69.8m).

Medicare rebates for nuclear medicine imaging will receive a one-off boost and then rise each year to improve access and affordability (\$92.8m).

Rebates for many common pathology tests, including for infertility/pregnancy and tissue pathology, will rise each year for the first time in 25 years (\$174.1m) and COVID-19 tests will be permanently added to Medicare (\$335.7m).

Women with complex gynaecological conditions like endometriosis will benefit from 2 new Medicare rebates for longer gynaecologist consultations (\$49.1m).

Endorsed midwives will provide longer consultations under Medicare before and after the birth of a child (\$56.5m). There will be more access to professional indemnity insurance for midwives (\$3.5m) which will improve Birthing on Country services for First Nations mothers.

Free period products will be given to First Nations women and girls (\$12.5m), women going through menopause will have better treatment (\$1.2m) and there will be better support for families grieving miscarriage (\$7m).

A virtual contraception decision-making tool will support women and health practitioners providing contraceptive counselling (\$1.1m). More health practitioners will undertake training to deliver long-acting reversible contraception services (\$5.2m).

Outreach health care in women's crisis accommodation and services will be trialled to support women and children fleeing family, domestic and sexual violence (\$6m).

To boost the supply of health care in areas of shortage, the Budget provides \$17.4 million to support health services at risk of closing. Primary Health Networks and Rural Workforce Agencies will work with local communities to support people to get the care they need, close to home.

Charles Darwin University will be funded to establish a new medical school in the Northern Territory from 2026 (\$24.6m), and will be invited to apply for an ongoing allocation of 40 commencing medical Commonwealth Supported Places a year.

The Northern Territory Medical Program will also grow by 6 places with a total of 36 students a year to start from 2024 (\$4.7m). These investments will help develop and retain a locally trained medical workforce equipped to deal with the NT's unique health challenges.

The iconic Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) will be supported to ensure that, even when emergency strikes in the bush, world-class health care is not far away. For almost 100 years, the RFDS has provided emergency medical and primary health care services to anyone in rural and remote Australia. Funding will continue to allow the RFDS to provide its primary care and dental services to more Australians across more remote communities (\$74.8m).

**Total strengthening Medicare investment \$2.8 billion.**

## Total new investments



## Total new health investments

**\$8.5 billion**

**\$2.8 billion**  
Strengthening Medicare

**\$4.3 billion**  
Cheaper medicines

**\$1.3 billion**  
A fit and healthy Australia

## Total aged care investments

**\$2.2 billion**

## Fit and healthy Australia

**Preventing illness, detecting disease earlier, treating chronic conditions and reaffirming the importance of community and elite sport in encouraging an active, healthy life.**

A national skin cancer prevention campaign will reach groups most at risk, including men over 40 and young adults (\$15m). A targeted skin cancer screening program is a step closer, with funding to develop a national skin cancer screening roadmap and improve skin cancer data (\$10.3m).

Australians aged 45–49 will be able to join already eligible 50–74 year olds and screen for bowel cancer by requesting a free test kit. People who receive a positive screening result will be contacted to encourage appropriate follow-up care (\$38.8m).

Additional funding for Canteen's Youth Cancer Service Program will help meet the growing need for services for young people with cancer (\$6.9m).

The Budget furthers Australia's goal of eliminating HIV transmission by 2030 and implements HIV Taskforce recommendations (\$43.9m), including expanded access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and more free self-test kits.

Measures will reduce the spread of communicable diseases, including blood borne viruses, STIs and vaccine preventable illnesses (\$126.5m), especially in First Nations communities.

Continuing reforms to deliver world-class newborn bloodspot screening programs nationally will save lives and deliver better outcomes with early intervention (\$25m).

There is funding for the highly successful Men's Sheds movement (\$6.1m) and education and training for health professionals (\$2.1m). The Male Health Initiative will continue to provide health information, awareness and support to men and boys (\$3.4m).

People struggling with or at risk from harmful alcohol and illicit drug use will benefit from extended funding for 20 treatment and prevention services (\$41.6m).

The Healthy Food Partnership and the Branded Food Database will improve the food supply and help Australians to eat better (\$1.4m).

Research at the Australian Prevention Partnership Centre will help deliver a solid evidence base for policy-makers in preventative health (\$1.1m).

More than 2 million young Australians each year will continue to have access to free school sports programs, in addition to successful programs like the Water and Snow Safety Program, the Participation Grants Program, and Sporting Schools, among others (\$132.7m).

New facilities at the AIS in Canberra will help elite and emerging athletes to be as successful as possible when representing Australia on the world stage (\$249.7m).

Anti-doping and integrity functions will continue through Sport Integrity Australia to enhance the safety, reputation and standing of sporting contests.

**Total fit and healthy Australia investment \$1.3 billion.**

## Quality Aged Care

**Strengthening the quality of aged care services and connections that underpin quality aged care. Improving wait times for in-home care, bolstering the workforce, delivering an enhanced quality and safety regulator and better technology for the sector.**

An extra 24,100 Home Care Packages (\$531.4m) in 2024–25 support more Australians to access in-home aged care than ever before.

To protect older Australians accessing aged care services, and ensure a high standard of safe and quality care, the Budget will deliver a stronger regulatory framework and a well-resourced, capable Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (\$111m).

Technology systems and digital infrastructure will be upgraded across the aged care sector (\$1.4b) in preparation for the new Act.

Measures will improve staffing solutions to create better conditions for the aged care workforce. Support will grow the number of home care workers in regional, rural and remote areas where workforce shortages are the most acute. Support for better career pathways for nurses in aged care will be extended (\$88.4m).

States and territories will be supported to upskill residential aged care workers, and deliver outreach services, virtual care and complex care to older Australians outside of hospital settings.

The Specialist Dementia Care Program will support people living with dementia to successfully transition from hospital to aged care services and fund clinical in-reach services. It will also enable Australian Dementia Network researchers to ready the health system for promising new dementia diagnostic and treatment options (\$32.1m).

Preparatory work will continue for the new rights-based Aged Care Act (\$27.8m). The new Aged Care Act will put older people at the centre of aged care. It will also support the Government's response to the Aged Care Taskforce. These reforms are crucial to create a sustainable sector that delivers high-quality care. The Government is continuing to consult with older Australians and stakeholders to ensure there is broader support for reforms to improve the standard of aged care.

**Total aged care investment \$2.2 billion.**

## Cheaper Medicines

**Making medicines cheaper for all Australians, supporting pharmacies to provide critical services, increasing access to affordable and life-changing medicines and funding our best and brightest health and medical researchers.**

The Government is investing up to \$3 billion to strengthen the pharmacy sector and keep medicines cheaper.

The cost of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines will remain constant instead of rising with inflation. There will be a one-year freeze on the maximum cost of a PBS prescription for everyone with a Medicare card and up to a 5-year freeze for pensioners and other Commonwealth concession cardholders (\$318m).

To help patients who have difficulty managing their medicines, the number of Government-subsidised Dose Administration Aids – often known as Webster Packs – that a pharmacy can provide will increase to 90 services per week, from 60 (\$151.1m).

Eligible First Nations people will benefit from expanded access to the Closing the Gap PBS co-payment which will mean all PBS medicines are either free, or have the low co-payment of \$7.70 for eligible people (\$11.1m).

More life-changing high-cost medicines will be either added to the PBS or expanded, including medicines to treat a specific type of early breast cancer and two different types of heart disease (\$2.7b). This includes access to COVID-19 oral antiviral treatments through the PBS which will be extended (\$1.3b).

For the first time, pharmacists will be funded to provide free flu and other National Immunisation Program vaccines at aged care and disability homes (\$0.9m).

Progress towards a National One Stop Shop will help remove red tape, increase the number of national clinical trials and help patients to get early access to promising treatments (\$18.8m).

Ground-breaking new health and medical research through the Medical Research Future Fund (\$1.4b over 13 years).

**Total cheaper medicines investment \$4.3 billion.**