



Ministerial Expert Panel on Women's Health

Meeting communiqué

The inaugural meeting of the Ministerial Expert Panel on Women's Health (expert panel) with a focus on women's cardiovascular health was held on 31 March 2026. The meeting was attended by expert panel members and was chaired by the Hon Rebecca White MP, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health and Assistant Minister for Women.

This first expert panel is focussing on the disproportionate impact of cardiovascular disease on women's health outcomes, recognising cardiovascular disease as a leading cause of illness and death among Australian women. The panel noted the persistent sex and gender disparities in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and outcomes, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

The expert panel acknowledged that addressing these inequities requires a coordinated, intersectional and evidence-informed approach that builds on existing momentum across governments, health services, researchers, advocates and communities.

At the meeting, the Chair outlined her vision for the expert panel as a mechanism to drive system-level change, strengthen accountability and ensure women's voices and lived experiences are embedded in health policy and practice in cardiovascular disease.

During the meeting, the expert panel:

- endorsed the Terms of Reference
- discussed current initiatives underway to improve women's cardiovascular health and identified gaps and opportunities to accelerate progress
- highlighted the importance of a life-course approach
- considered priority issues including early recognition and diagnosis, awareness and prevention, data and evidence gaps, research participation, clinical guidance, workforce capability and equity across the care continuum
- discussed the possibility of utilising existing touchpoints to have conversations on cardiovascular risk
- raised the introduction of sex-specific national screening programs for cardiovascular disease and consideration during pregnancy and the post-partum period.
- highlighted the importance of consumer-centred care, culturally safe and trauma-informed approaches, and improving access to timely, evidence-based cardiovascular care for women across diverse settings
- acknowledged that improving the cardiovascular health of women is likely to also have a positive health impact on the broader family
- recognised the importance of improving health literacy to educate and empower women to prioritise their cardiovascular health

- recognised the existence of inherent bias and systemic inequities
- agreed to convene two stakeholder roundtables, focusing on:
 - consumer and non-government perspectives on women's cardiovascular health care, and
 - clinical guidelines, pathways and implementation challenges

These roundtables will support the expert panel's work by gathering insights from women with lived experience, advocates, clinicians and researchers.

- agreed a forward schedule of meetings for 2026 to progress the expert panel's work plan.

The next meeting of the expert panel will be held in April 2026.