



Access to medicines – National Medical Stockpile

The Australian Government is committed to building a modern, world-leading health system. This Budget will continue to shape the long-term capability of the National Medical Stockpile (NMS) - a crucial component of Australia's health emergency infrastructure - investing a further \$29.9 million over the next 2 years.

The NMS underpins Australia's preparedness for public health emergencies such as pandemics, natural disasters and the threat of terrorist attack, and has played a critical role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the NMS has acquired, stored and distributed up to \$3.3 billion in vital medical supplies, including ventilators, face masks, gloves, goggles, gowns, hand sanitiser and life-saving medicines. In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Australian Government has dispatched:

- more than 91 million masks and face shields, and
- more than 18 million gowns, gloves and goggles.

The success of the COVID-19 response, and expansion of the NMS capacity, has allowed Australia to donate critical items to other countries in need.

The 2021–22 Budget will commence the first phase of work to enhance the long-term capability of the NMS. This includes undertaking research, consultation and planning for a phase two business case for the long-term end-to-end solution for the NMS.

Long term capability enhancement will include improved governance and information management arrangements, and establishing a comprehensive end-to-end Inventory Management System to accurately track inventory into and out of the stockpile.

There will also be significant funding over 12 months to sustain the NMS inventory in its current state.

Why is this important?

The NMS is a highly secure facility ensuring our nation is equipped to address emergency incidents that threaten public health. The NMS was crucial in supplying PPE during the 2019–20 Black Summer Bushfires, as well as during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The stockpile also contains supplies of medicines deemed to be nationally important to preserve public health and to ensure the ongoing access to necessary medicines in the event of public health emergencies, including significant medicine shortages.

Who will benefit?

All Australians benefit from the NMS. It provides reassurance and security for our collective public health in the face of emergencies, natural disasters, pandemics and the threat of terrorist attack.

In the event of such an incident, all Australians, especially vulnerable and at risk groups, may need access to essential medical supplies including medicines and personal protective equipment.

How much will this cost?

The Government is investing \$29.9 million over 2 years, from 2020–21.