



Overview – How the 2021–22 Budget is investing in the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Across the pillars of *Australia's Long Term National Health Plan*, the Australian Government is investing more than \$781.1 million to prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and ageing outcomes. This investment will contribute to priority reforms and health targets set out in the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The Government is also committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts and stakeholders on the design and delivery of health and ageing policies and programs.

Australian Government health initiatives in the 2021–22 Budget include measures that are specially targeted at delivering greater access to services across the care continuum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through a more culturally appropriate workforce.

These include:

- \$630.2 million to improve the experience and care of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as part of the reforms to the Aged Care system. This will assist Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) to expand into aged care, deliver an additional 43 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Care Services, and increase representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the aged care workforce
- \$18.2 million to support the COVID-19 vaccine rollout for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19, co-chaired with the Deputy CEO of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, will continue to provide advice to ensure the rollout of vaccines is safe, timely and effective
- \$79 million to implement key initiatives under the renewed National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy, developed and delivered in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This will support the development of community integrated regional suicide prevention plans to ensure crucial local suicide prevention services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- \$22.6 million to support the Government's changes to the Practice Incentives Program – Indigenous Health Incentive. This will encourage continuity of care

to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and expand the eligibility for the program to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under 15 years of age

- \$12 million to continue the Rheumatic Fever Strategy, and \$19.1 million to continue and improve the trachoma elimination program, which supports screening and treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and
- Working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop and finalise in mid-2021 the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–31* and the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021–2031*.

The 2021–22 Budget also includes broader measures that support improved access and effectiveness of health services, including those in rural and remote communities, which will further benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These include:

- \$12 million in continuing to enhance the National Cancer Screening Register, which will facilitate the direct distribution of bowel screening kits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care centres
- \$9.6 million for 90 workplace training packages to attract and retain allied health professionals in rural and remote communities, expanding the Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway, including up to 30 packages for ACCHS
- \$8.3 million to deliver 20 more scholarships over 2 years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying mental health related disciplines, and training to improve the skillset of the health workforce to appropriately and effectively respond to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with mental health issues
- \$23 million in Remote Community Preparedness and Retrieval, which includes funding for Point Of Care Testing to continue until the end of 2021, to limit the impact of COVID-19 in remote communities. These measures complement the vaccine rollout, and
- Removing employment criteria that excluded some privately practicing midwives from the Commonwealth’s two medical indemnity schemes, the Midwife Professional Indemnity Scheme (MPIS) and the MPIS Run-Off Cover Schemes. This will provide equity in access to these schemes, including for those employed by ACCHS.

For further information, refer to the relevant fact sheets.

Why is this important?

Closing the Gap is a whole-of-government priority and all portfolios are responsible for improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes a commitment to invest in community controlled service delivery and transform mainstream services to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The actions and investment outlined in the 2021–22 Budget represent the next step toward the delivery of these commitments across the health and aged care systems, ensuring greater access to services through the delivery of more responsive and effective care.

The additional funding in this Budget will contribute towards growing the ACCHS sector, which is a key Priority Reform area in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Measures also reflect the commitment to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Who will benefit?

These measures will deliver greater access to services across the care continuum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through a more culturally appropriate workforce.

Greater access to primary and preventive care will combat the burden of disease and ensure earlier access to treatment, and responsive care.

Improvements across the mental health system may reduce suicides, and drive better and more responsive care.

Reforms across the aged care sector will mean older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receive the services they need to support healthy ageing.

How much will it cost?

More than \$781.1 million is being invested to increase and improve access across the health and aged care systems. This is in addition to the approximately \$4 billion already being provided through the Indigenous Australians' Health Programme over 4 years.