



Overview – How the 2021–22 Budget is investing in the health of regional Australia

Across the pillars of *Australia's Long Term National Health Plan*, the Australian Government is investing an additional \$36 billion to ensure all Australians benefit from quality health services no matter where they live. The health and wellbeing of Australians living in regional, remote and very remote Australia is a priority for the Australian Government.

Helping our rural, regional and remote areas grow the number of local doctors, nurses and allied health workers to ensure equity of access is a focus of the Government.

The investments continue the success of the 10 year *Stronger Rural Health Strategy*. Over 2 years, an additional 700 doctors and 700 nurses are providing services to regional communities.

The Government's rural and regional health investments include:

- \$3 billion to continue the critical services rural and regional Australians have relied on during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:
 - supporting the COVID-19 vaccination rollout, with priority given to residents of remote communities of fewer than 5,000 people, and
 - \$204.6 million to continue MBS-subsidised telehealth services.
- \$65.8 million in the first 4 years, which will be ongoing and demand-driven, to implement a progressive incentive schedule that increases bulk billing payments for doctors working in remote areas and rural towns
 - From 1 January 2022, the Rural Bulk Billing Incentive (RBBI) will progressively increase from the current rate of 150% of the incentive in metropolitan areas as classified under the Modified Monash Model (MM) to:
 - 160% in MM 3-4, medium (population 5,000 to 15,000) and large (population 15,000 to 50,000) rural towns
 - 170% in MM 5, small rural towns (population up to 5,000)
 - 180% in MM 6, remote areas, and

- 190% in MM 7, very remote areas.
- Over \$668 million in aged care reforms (including in home care, residential aged care services and sustainability, residential aged care quality and safety, workforce, and governance) will deliver improvements to rural, regional and remote communities, including:
 - a new residential aged care funding model – Australian National Aged Care Classification – which will improve funding for rural and remote aged care providers
 - a new \$10 per resident per day Government Basic Daily Fee Supplement for residential aged care
 - A one-off lump sum payment of \$1,145 per residential aged care resident in non-metropolitan areas as part of the initial response to the Royal Commission
 - \$630 million to enable equitable access to aged care for First Nations people and other special needs groups, including:
 - \$396.9 million to enable aged care providers to improve or build new buildings, including staff housing, in areas with limited access to services.
 - \$13 million to strengthen regional aged care stewardship, and
 - an additional \$25 million to expand the Rural Locum Assistance Program, ensuring continuity of clinical care and strong clinical leadership, so aged care providers in rural and regional areas will have increased access to a surge workforce.
- Providing support to individuals, services and regional communities as part of Australia’s largest investment in mental health and suicide prevention, including:
 - \$171.3 million for psychosocial support services, including a regional loading, for people with a severe psychosocial disability who are currently not supported by the National Disability Insurance Scheme
 - \$111.2 million to ensure Australians, including in regional, rural and remote areas, have greater access and choice for high quality, free and low cost digital mental health services
 - \$79 million for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health national crisis services and support
- \$9.6 million to expand the Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway in regional and rural Australia

- \$2.2 million over 5 years, to trial local approaches to alleviate workforce shortages through an expansion of the Delivering Innovative Rural Health Models
- \$12.4 million through the John Flynn Prevocational Doctor Training Program to almost double the number of rural primary care rotations for prevocational doctors
- \$29.5 million to increase non-GP medical specialist training, in areas facing workforce shortages
- \$300,000 to begin developing a streamlined program for the Rural Procedural Grants Program (RPGP) and the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) Procedural GP payments
- \$20.7 million for a one-off funding pool to assist rural and remote private diagnostic imaging providers replace older diagnostic imaging equipment providing up to 50% of the replacement cost
- \$13.7 million for allied health case conferencing to better support multidisciplinary care for patients
- \$301.8 million for the next wave of My Health Record, which benefits regional and rural Australians by ensuring their health data is quickly available to their clinician even if they have to travel away from their regular doctor
- \$40.8 million for the Sporting Schools program to deliver high quality and diverse sport-based activity to students at up to 5,750 primary schools and 750 secondary schools, and
- \$9.7 million for Surf Life Saving training and beach safety equipment to support clubs around Australia to keep beach-goers safe.

For further information, refer to the relevant fact sheets.

Why is this important?

Australians, no matter where they live, deserve access to high quality health and aged care services. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring adequate support is provided so that even remote areas and those with low populations can access the care that locals need, when they need it.

The Australian Government's range of investments and programs helps ensure that rural, regional and remote Australians can access services including primary care and medicines, mental health care, aged care, and preventive health programs.

Who will benefit?

Approximately one third of Australians, around 8.5 million, live outside the nation's metropolitan centres. This population is spread across regional, rural and remote communities, and for many people, access to quality health care services, providers and workers can be limited. The

Australian Government's continued commitment to invest in rural and regional health means all Australians can benefit from quality health services no matter where they live.

How much will it cost?

Combined, the Australian Government will invest around \$4.5 billion in programs and initiatives that will improve the health of Australians in regional, rural and remote locations.