



Preventive health – Stillbirth autopsies

The Australian Government is building on its commitment to reduce the number of stillbirths by 20% by 2025 through a \$1.8 million additional investment to increase the number of stillbirth autopsies to better understand the reasons underlying these tragic deaths.

This investment includes:

- a non-competitive grant opportunity for the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists (RANZCR) to assist and encourage their members to perform more stillbirth autopsies, and
- developing educational resources for parents to increase awareness and support informed decision-making regarding autopsies on stillborn babies.

At a population level, autopsies and investigations can provide vital information on the causes and factors contributing to stillbirths that can inform strategies to help prevent future stillbirths.

This investment follows on directly from \$10 million committed over 4 years to reduce rates of still birth in 2020–21 MYEFO, which included \$1 million to increase the rate of stillbirth autopsies and investigations.

Why is this important?

In Australia, there are 6 stillbirths each day, affecting more than 2,000 Australian families each year. Fewer than half of these will have an autopsy conducted to shed light on the cause.

An autopsy can assist bereaved parents to understand the reasons for their baby's death, and may provide them with information that can help prevent a stillbirth recurring in a future pregnancy.

This builds on the Government's \$99.4 million investment to date for perinatal services and support, which includes \$19.5 million for stillbirth specific measures.

Who will benefit?

Bereaved parents who have lost a baby to stillbirth will benefit from this proposal, as it helps ensure they are informed about autopsy and investigation options which are available following stillbirth, and will support them to make decisions. Furthermore, with increasing evidence that many stillbirths can be prevented, an increase in autopsies will assist in research to prevent further tragedies for many more Australians.

The RCPA and the RANZCR will receive funding to support clinicians including perinatal pathologists and radiologists to increase their capacity to undertake stillbirth investigations and autopsies and ensure that these services are available to bereaved parents who choose to access them.

How much will this cost?

The Australian Government is investing an additional \$1.8 million over 4 years, from 2021–22.