



How the 2022-23 Budget is investing in health post-COVID

The Australian Government is investing \$4.2 billion in health measures to assist the transition into a living with COVID environment, resuming important health initiatives, and enhancing how we access and deliver health care.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Australia has been mitigated by necessary public health measures, international travel restrictions and quarantining, and the very high rates of vaccination.

The focus of Australians and Australia's health system on addressing the pandemic has meant delays in addressing other health concerns. In particular, there has been a decline in the regular screening and check-ups that are so important to detecting serious diseases before symptoms develop. As we learn to live with COVID-19, it is important that people continue to access important health services.

Permanent Universal Telehealth

The most prominent reform to our health system brought forward by the COVID-19 pandemic has been the rapid uptake of telehealth around the country. More than 100 million telehealth services, worth more than \$5 billion have been delivered since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Australian Government is supporting telehealth as a permanent part of Australia's health system, through the pandemic and beyond.

Increasing the focus on cancer screening post-COVID

The Australian Government is investing \$40.7 million to support Australians to actively manage their health, and help reverse the decline in screening and early detection and treatment of cancer which occurred during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This investment includes:

- \$9.7 million for short term surge capacity for BreastScreen Australia
- \$5.9 million for rapid cervical screening testing and follow-up, including Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander communities
- \$10.2 million for a cervical cancer screening campaign promoting the roll out of self-collect tests
- \$4.1 million for a pilot of non-medical healthcare provider delivery of cervical screening, and
- \$10.2 million for a colonoscopy triage nurse pilot to help improve colonoscopy access.

During the COVID-19 pandemic many Australians have delayed vital cancer screening, routine health checks and diagnostic tests. The delay in diagnosis and preventive care may have a significant economic and social impact on our health system and community well beyond the end of COVID-19.

Returning to sport post-COVID

The Australian Government is investing \$13.7 million over four years to fund proven Australian Sports Commission participation programs to increase participation in sport.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 many Australians have dropped out of sport, by choice to avoid exposure to the virus, or because of restrictions on gatherings or activities which stopped their chosen competition.

This investment includes:

- \$10.3 million to continue the delivery of national sport participation programs targeted at populations currently physically inactive or individuals who have 'dropped out' of sport, and
- \$3.4 million to boost AusPlay, Australia's national population survey, which tracks the sport and physical activity behaviours of all Australians, and identifies emerging trends such as the impact of COVID-19 on participation in sport and physical activity.

An additional \$79.6 million will be invested in the continuation of the Sporting Schools program for the 2023 and 2024 calendar years, to support children, young people, and their parents to reconnect with sport in a safe and healthy way. The program will also build confidence and a more widespread return to community sport following COVID-19 restrictions.

More information about these measures is available in the relevant factsheets.

COVID and influenza winter preparedness Plan

The Government will invest \$2.1 billion to support the health response and further build the resilience of Australia's healthcare systems – including by extending the COVID-19 National Partnership Agreement (NPA).

The Australian Government has already delivered more than \$9.9 billion through the COVID-19 NPA to date, including significant funding to allow state and territory hospital systems to process their backlogged elective surgeries.

The investment to support Australia's winter preparedness includes:

- \$1.2 billion to protect the residential aged care and disability care sectors
- \$356 million to protect other vulnerable population groups, and
- \$578 million for COVID-19 vaccination delivery and administration.

The Australian Government remains focused on protecting Australians from illness and infectious disease in the wake of the pandemic, knowing that seasonal influenza cases will rise as we enter the winter months.

Our Government spends more than \$450 million annually on the National Immunisation Program (NIP), more than \$100 million goes towards the annual influenza vaccinations, and more than \$35 million for Pneumococcal vaccinations.

Populations vulnerable to the flu include, children under five years, pregnant women, people 65 years and over, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with medical conditions. These groups are supported to receive their influenza vaccine free of charge through the NIP.

More than 9.5 million government influenza doses will be available for the 2022 season – around 100,000 doses more than in the previous two years – and more than 600,000 Pneumococcal vaccine doses which are utilised throughout the year, but peak during the influenza season.

Why is this important?

The Australian Government is investing in health post-COVID in line with the objectives of the *Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan*, the *National Preventative Health Strategy 2021–2030* and the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

These investments are helping Australian patients to achieve better health outcomes, while also supporting our health system to return to pre-COVID priorities.

The Government is prepared for the coming winter flu season with increased supplies of influenza vaccine and stocks of pneumococcal vaccine to protect those most vulnerable to these seasonal illnesses, including young children, senior Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those with compromised immune systems.

The Australian Government is also investing in measures to refocus all Australians on their broader health needs, including routine health checks, early diagnostic screening and physical activity and sport.

The pandemic led to many Australians delaying vital cancer screening, routine health checks and diagnostic tests, and extended lockdowns and health system preparations for COVID-19 management, reduced availability of many screening services.

Resuming these early detection and screening programs will help more Australians to identify significant health risks and diseases early, to enable effective and life-saving treatment.

Investing in sports programs to re-encourage participation post-COVID will help increase physical activity levels among people who may have stopped playing sport during the pandemic.

Additional investment in school sport will also encourage increased participation rates in young Australians, a critical time for physical activity and social development.

Who will benefit?

Australians who are at particular risk of winter diseases, like influenza and pneumococcal, benefit from the Australian Government's annual investment in the National Immunisation Program (NIP), providing access to free flu shots to vulnerable populations.

All Australians will benefit from the investment in health post-COVID, with a range of measures to increase elective surgery, diagnostic screening and tests, and participation in sport.

BreastScreen programs will boost the capacity of states and territories to screen between 110,000 and 300,000 additional women through extended opening hours. It will enable services to catch up on delayed appointments and missed screening during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The promotion of cervical screening self-collection will benefit under-screened priority population groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background, people with disability and people living in remote and rural areas.

The investment in the Sporting Schools program benefits 2.2 million students in the program every year.

The program also benefits teachers, principals and around 7,000 community-level coaches.

How much will this cost?

The Australian Government will invest \$4.2 billion over four years, from 2022–23 to 2025–26.