



## How the 2022–23 Budget is investing in the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The Australian Government is investing \$133.5 million in the 2022–23 Federal Budget to prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and ageing outcomes.

This investment builds on over \$1 billion of recent investment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and ageing, which includes significant funding for improved aged care, mental health services, as well as infrastructure for Aboriginal Community Controlled health services (ACCHS).

The Government continues to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health experts, in line with the commitments in *the National Agreement on Closing the Gap* and the new *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031*, released in December 2021.

The 2022–23 Budget includes the following measures that are specially targeted at delivering better health and ageing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout their lives:

### **Building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and access to culturally safe healthcare**

- \$13.9m to Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme places in 2022–23 and 2023–24 to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people graduating with care and support focused qualifications through targeted support and mentoring for students during their studies and transition into the workforce.
- \$8.6m over three years for the National Closing the Gap Policy Partnership on Social and Emotional Wellbeing (Mental Health). This Partnership will maintain momentum in reducing the devastating and disproportionate impact of mental ill-health and suicide on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities.
- \$8.5m over three years to expand the Red Dust Program, which delivers culturally appropriate programs in remote Northern Territory communities focused on social and emotional wellbeing, sexual health, relationships, alcohol and other drugs, and Foetal Spectrum disorder. The program also provides employment and professional training, which will continue to build a skilled Indigenous mental health workforce in remote communities, and promote mental health pathways and careers.
- \$2.4m as part of the \$16.6m to support local mental health services in response to the 2022 East Coast floods, for local ACCHS to deliver culturally appropriate, locally-designed mental health services in impacted communities.

Other initiatives that will contribute towards building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce and access to care include:

- \$18 million to guarantee rescues services and emergency aeromedical services through CareFlight which supports population health in the Northern Territory, in particular in largely Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the Top End
- \$47 million over four years to protect the mental health of young Australians, including increasing access to culturally safe mental health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people through targeted resources and supports, and through specific programs such as Flying headspace which will provide access to headspace services in very remote communities in South Australia. This will also support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander allied health students and graduates to pursue careers in headspace, and
- \$60.7 million over four years for the implementation of the 10 Year Mental Health Workforce Strategy including an emphasis on building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health workforce through first preference access to training positions.

### **Ongoing responses to communicable diseases**

- \$43.3 million in 2022–23 to continue key elements of the COVID-19 response, and the transition to living with COVID for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and remote communities. This includes:
  - the Royal Flying Doctor Service's Remote Community Preparedness and Retrieval measure in response to outbreaks and vaccination delivery
  - critical support for access to COVID-19 services including testing and vaccination supported by Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service
  - the Remote Point of Care Testing Program which operates in 150 rural and remote communities
  - targeted communications about COVID-19, vaccinations and boosters, and
  - support to rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to shift focus from responding to COVID-19 only to also include broader infectious disease health risks.
- \$5 million in 2022–23 to implement key activities under the Fifth National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Blood Borne Viruses (BBV) and Sexually Transmissible Infections (STI) Strategy 2018–2022, to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with, or at risk of BBV and STI.

### **Improving the support, experience and care of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**

- \$6.1 million to continue the Government's Strengthening Regional Stewardship of Aged Care initiative to enhance engagement and links between Government, aged care providers and local workforces to improve aged care and health outcomes for those living in regional and remote locations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- \$20.1 million in additional funding to support the transition to the Australian National Aged Care Classification (AN-ACC) as the new funding model for residential aged care from 1 October 2022. The AN-ACC better funds remote and very remote specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential aged care facilities which will improve the support, experience and care of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in these areas.

Other initiatives that will contribute to improving support, experience and care of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people include:

- \$50.4 million to deliver Authorised Nurse Immuniser Training to support all aged care providers across Australia, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Providers. This measure will assist in upskilling the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce, and ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care residents have access to a sustainable, place-based model for ongoing vaccinations
- \$37.6 million to deliver the Aged Care Infection Prevention and Control Training Measure to enhance capability at all aged care providers across Australia, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Providers, and
- \$32.8 million for clinical placements and targeted training in the care and support, and mental health sectors. This investment includes increasing clinical placements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses in the care and support sector, targeted training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability support workers, and partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to expand the Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) in Aged Care Services.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing**

The 2022–23 Budget also includes initiatives that will contribute to improved health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and families, including:

- \$4.2 million to continue Red Nose's Hospital to Home program to provide intensive support for women and families experiencing stillbirth. Improving access to this service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and families will be a key focus, and
- \$5.1 million to provide intensive, individualised support for women and families experiencing miscarriage or stillbirth. Funding will be prioritised for services that focus on providing culturally safe care and link to other services for women who are pregnant with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander baby.

Support for the Rugby World Cup 2027 and the Women's Rugby World Cup 2029 will also provide benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including legacy support partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to implement mentor programs and provide access to specialist nutrition, medical and health services and Rugby Australia's high-performance programs.

### **Why is this important?**

This investment is the next step toward the delivery of commitments and targets in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, ensuring better access to culturally safe and responsive care across the health and aged care systems.

### **Who will benefit?**

These measures will improve access to culturally safe and appropriate health and ageing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

This Budget also provides increased education and employment opportunities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and ageing workforce.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will have increased social and emotional wellbeing supports, which will likely result in better mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

## How much will it cost?

The Australian Government is investing \$133.5 million to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this Budget.

This is in addition to significant recent investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health:

- \$781.1 million invested in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health through the 2021–22 Budget to improve aged care, mental health, trachoma and Rheumatic Heart Disease outcomes; and
- \$4.3 billion provided through the Indigenous Australians' Health Programme over four years, including the following recent announcements:
  - \$187 million commitment to extend the Tackling Indigenous Smoking Program for an additional four years;
  - \$54.7 million to bring forward funding increases for ACCHS, introduce longer term four year rolling funding agreements and a 3% annual increase (including indexation) in funding to the ACCHS sector; and
  - \$336 million announced with the release of the Closing the Gap Implementation Plan in July 2021 to improve infrastructure in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, and improve healthy birthweight outcomes.