

Federal Budget 2022

Issued 29 March 2022

The Treasurer has released the 2022-2023 Budget. For general information about the budget see:

- The official budget website: <https://budget.gov.au>
- Budget Paper No 2 (the detail):
https://budget.gov.au/2022-23/content/bp2/download/bp2_2022-23.pdf
- Health Portfolio Budget Statements:
https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2022/03/budget-2022-23-portfolio-budget-statements-portfolio-budget-statements_0.pdf
- Health stakeholder pack: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/budget-2022-23-stakeholder-pack>
- Minister's media release: <https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-greg-hunt-mp/media/record-investment-in-the-future-of-australias-health-system>

Hepatitis Australia attended the health sector briefing with:

- The Hon Greg Hunt, Minister for Health and Aged Care
- The Hon Dr David Gillespie MP, Minister for Regional Health
- Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care Services, Minister for Sport
- The Hon David Coleman MP, Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
- Q&A Host: Dr Brendan Murphy, Secretary Department of Health

We've have done an initial analysis of the 2022 Budget papers and have begun liaising with Australian Department of Health officials to seek further clarification and details.

1. Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C specific investment

On the surface the 2022-2022 Budget provides no increased investment specifically for hepatitis B and hepatitis C. The specific item in the budget is:

The 2022-23 Budget includes \$8.6 million over one year to allow key organisations to continue programs that aim to eliminate HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as public health threats by 2030, through the implementation of five National Blood Borne Viruses (BBV) and STI Strategies 2018-2022.

\$5 million of this funding is for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander BBV and STI Strategy initiatives in 2022-23, while the remaining \$3.6 million is for initiatives funded under the HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C strategies in 2022-23¹.

This funding partially responds to Hepatitis Australia's first priority in our pre-budget submission:

¹ [Budget Paper No. 2](#) p 107

“Continue to resource the implementation of the five National Blood Borne Virus and Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategies (including the National Hepatitis B and National Hepatitis C Strategy), consistent with Australian Government implementation expenditure to date (\$45m over 4 years)”²

While the continuation of funding for another 12 months is welcomed, this investment does not address the long standing barrier to achieving the targets and goals of the National Hepatitis B Strategy and the National Hepatitis C Strategy, namely:

- There is insufficient investment in the national response, particularly for hepatitis B
- Where there is investment it is often short-term and provided for the delivery of services at the last minute.

We are hoping that the new National Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C Strategies will provide an opportunity to address this structural barrier.

We have developed a media statement, please see attachment 1.

1. General investment that supports the goals of the National Hepatitis B Strategy and National Hepatitis C Strategy

There are new initiatives that elevate the health needs and address inequities experienced by priority populations including:

- \$5.9 million to support **priority populations**, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, to catch up on missed health screening opportunities.
- \$10.6 million is allocated to establish a **CALD Health Advisory Group**, which will leverage engagement with CALD communities into important health messaging.

We welcome new investment to address the health needs for people who use drugs including roll-out of critical harm reduction activities:

- \$343.6 million to expand the National Ice Strategy
- \$19.6 million for take home naloxone

The Budget includes funding to make **universal access to telehealth** permanent – at a cost of \$512 million to-date. This significant measure improves access to treatment and care for people living with hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

Hepatitis Australia welcomes the Australian Government investment of \$6.3 billion from 2022–23 to 2031–32 in the second **Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF)** 10 Year Investment Plan. This is a key opportunity to realise the hepatitis sector and Hepatitis Australia’s calls for a specific research mission for viral hepatitis. The MRFF is a long-term investment supporting Australian health and medical research and medical innovation.

Summary of initiatives to note:

There are a range of further initiatives that will support access to diagnosis, treatment and care for people living with hepatitis B and hepatitis C:

- The Budget includes funding to make **universal telehealth** access permanent – at a cost of \$512 million to-date.
- \$14 million to amend the current **MRI of the liver** item to include all cancer types that have potentially spread to the liver

² [Our submissions | Hepatitis Australia](#)

- The **Primary Health Care 10 year plan** includes \$14 million for an amendment to the current MRI of the liver item to include all cancer types that have potentially spread to the liver.
- \$5.9 million to support **priority populations**, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD) communities, to catch up on missed health screening opportunities.
- The **Preventive Health Strategy** includes a new \$15 million communication campaign encouraging people to stay up to date with their health checks and to encourage continued uptake of telehealth.
- The **10-Year Stronger Rural Health Strategy** was unveiled in 2018–19 and the Government originally invested \$550 million in the Strategy. This investment is built on through \$296.5 million in the 2022–23 Budget. We are continuing to improve access to critical and life-saving diagnostic imaging in regional and rural areas, with a \$66 million investment through the deregulation of Medicare funded MRI services. Removing the current MRI equipment eligibility requirements, from 1 November 2022, will increase access to subsidised, clinically-necessary MRI services at any comprehensive diagnostic imaging facility that meets quality and safety requirements. It will help put downward pressure on out-of-pocket costs to consumers and reduce the need to travel for these diagnostic scans
- \$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 **Remote Point of Care Testing Program**, which operates in 150 rural and remote communities 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
- \$66 million over four years, to deregulate and expand access to **Medicare funded magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) services in regional, rural and remote areas** from 1 November 2022, providing critical diagnostic imaging services to more regional and rural Australians
- \$10.6 million is allocated to establish a **CALD Health Advisory Group**, which will leverage engagement with CALD communities into important health messaging.
- \$5.0 million in 2022-23 to strengthen **Australia's response to emerging infectious diseases** by providing funding to the Australian Partnership for Preparedness Research on Infectious Disease Emergencies, to support national coordination of efforts across academic institutions

The Budget includes \$8.6 million to establish the National Closing the Gap Policy Partnership on Social and Emotional Wellbeing to maintain momentum in reducing the devastating impact of mental ill-health and suicide on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities. The partnership will be co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and state and territory governments. A further \$8.5 million will be invested in the Red Dust Program to support culturally appropriate mental health care in remote Northern Territory communities, focused on social and emotional wellbeing, sexual health, relationships, and alcohol and other drugs.

HIV

- Commencing in 2023-24, the Budget provides \$12.5 million per annum for people living with HIV who are not eligible for Medicare, to access care.

Alcohol and other drugs

The Budget invests \$372.4 million to help build safe and healthy communities by reducing the impact of drug and alcohol use. This provides certainty of funding for alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment services through:

- \$343.6 million in ongoing support for the National Ice Action Strategy (NIAS) and delivery of critical drug and alcohol treatment services, prevention programs and research activities
- \$19.6 million for the expansion of the national Take Home Naloxone (THN) program, which will see the opioid overdose-reversing medication available at no cost and without a prescription in all Australian states and territories, and
- the continued funding of four critical drug and alcohol prevention and support programs, and renewed funding to SMART Recovery, which directly support the aims of the National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030 and National Drug Strategy 2017–26, at a cost of \$9.2 million:
 - Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF) - Good Sports program
 - ADF – Reducing harm from illicit drugs through support for families
 - Hello Sunday Morning (HSM) – Daybreak program, and
 - SMART Recovery – online platform.

This funding will ensure the programs can continue to achieve goals under the National Drug, National Alcohol and National Ice Action Strategies and build on gains from previous investment and outcomes.

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme

A general initiative that will support people living with hepatitis in Australia is through changes to the PBS Safety Net. From 1 July 2022, the **PBS Safety Net threshold** in each calendar year will be lowered by the equivalent of 12 fully priced scripts for concession card holders and the equivalent of two fully priced scripts for non-concessional (general) patients.

- For concessional patients, the safety net threshold will be lowered from \$326.40 to \$244.80 a saving of up to \$81.60.
 - When concession card holders reach the safety net threshold, after 36 full priced concessional scripts, they will receive PBS medicines at no charge for the balance of the year.
- For general patients, the general safety net threshold will reduce from \$1,542.10 to \$1,457.10 a saving of up to \$85.00.
 - This means that after the equivalent of about 34 full priced general co-payments, general patients pay only the concessional co-payment of \$6.80 per PBS script for the balance of the year.

Mental health

There are two interesting initiatives in the mental health space looking at addressing **stigma**:

- \$409,000 for stigma reduction and career promotion activities to encourage students to choose a career in mental health
- \$1.8 million to build the mental health literacy of Australian parents to reduce stigma, and support parents to connect with early-intervention supports for their children

Infrastructure

The budget also includes announcement of infrastructure:

- \$375.6 million over four years to contribute to the establishment of a **Western Australian Comprehensive Cancer Centre** in Perth through a joint funding partnership with the Western Australian Government. The Centre will improve access to our world-class cancer care and ensure better cancer outcomes for Western Australians. The Centre will co-locate a state-of-the-art treatment facility, including intensive care and emergency department facilities with dedicated research and

clinical trial resources. The establishment of a WA Comprehensive Cancer Centre will see cancer patients in WA, including rural and remote communities, receive more comprehensive, integrated care for all types of cancers, including liver cancer.

Research

Through the second 10 Year Investment Plan, the Budget provides funding to enhance and expand existing MRFF funding initiatives, including an additional:

- \$374.4 million for clinical trials
- \$478 million for preventive and public health research
- \$70 million for primary health care research, and
- \$240 million for medical research commercialisation.

The Budget also invests \$944 million to extend existing initiatives beyond the end of the current 10 Year Investment Plan, from 2028–29 until 2031–32, comprised of:

- \$240 million for the Emerging Priorities and Consumer Driven Research initiative
- \$12 million for the Global Health initiative
- \$280 million for the Frontier Health and Medical Research initiative
- \$80 million for the Clinician Researchers initiative
- \$92 million for the Rapid Applied Research Translation initiative
- \$200 million for the National Critical Research Infrastructure initiative, and
- \$40 million for the Research Data Infrastructure initiative.

A further \$590.8 million will be provided to extend existing MRFF Missions that demonstrate outcomes, or to create new missions to address emerging priorities.