

Women's Health: Priorities for the Victorian State Budget 2023



**WOMEN'S
HEALTH
SERVICES
NETWORK**

The Women's Health Services support the Victorian State Government's leadership and commitment to women's health and gender equality as part of its policy and reform agenda. The Women's Health Services welcome the Victorian Government's election commitment to

“give women's health the focus and funding it deserves”

(15 Nov 2022, Media Release The Hon. Daniel Andrews).

The Victorian Women's Health Services look forward to contributing to the outcomes of the 2023 Victorian State Budget. As the only state infrastructure that delivers specialist expertise on intersectional gender equity for our health system – both regionally and state-wide – the Women's Health Services are in a unique position to understand what investment and services are required to ensure that all Victorians are well.

In the State Budget 2023, the Women's Health Services look forward to seeing progress on gender responsive budgeting, and, will be expecting investment from the Victorian Government that:



Promotes primary prevention and health promotion for all Victorians.



Delivers to all women and girls in Victoria, access to safe and high quality sexual and reproductive health services, including abortion healthcare, across the life course.



Delivers investment in culturally safe, gender equitable mental healthcare and investment in the primary prevention of mental illness for women and girls.



Invests in health services and programs based on data and evidence to address a broad range of women's health issues.

The Victorian Women's Health Services are an integral part of our state's health system. We know that successful, thriving, and well-resourced public health systems invest in health promotion, as well as clinical services to address illness. By sustaining this investment over time, governments can strategically and practically reduce the pressure on our vastly overstretched public health system.

Prevention investment lowers healthcare costs and, reduces the costs to the economy associated with premature death and years spent in ill health. As evidence submitted by the Women's Health Services to the State Government in 2022 shows, increased investment in preventive health would pay for itself many times over.

The 2023 budget presents the opportunity for Government to sustain investment in primary prevention and make strides towards longer term change and address generations of inequitable health outcomes for women and delivers ongoing to social and economic benefits.



Who are the Women's Health Services?

The Victorian Women's Health Services work collaboratively to lead and coordinate best practice health promotion across Victoria. We are a crucial conduit between population-level strategies and community-level action and are a vital part of the Victorian Public Health infrastructure. We have a unique role as we are specialists in ensuring that health services and programs are gender equitable.

The Victorian Women's Health Services have been at the forefront of gender equity, improving women's health and wellbeing and addressing intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression in our community for over 40 years. Victoria's women's health sector grew out of the dire need to put women's health, equality, and safety in the public health spotlight – work that continues to this day.

Over the years, the role of the women's health sector and our place within the Victorian landscape has evolved from provision of information and clinical services through to state leaders in best practice health promotion. We have helped expand the scope of the state's health agenda to include preventative public health alongside clinical services, bringing the current VWHP priority issues into policy and programmatic focus through our evidence-building and advocacy.

Today, our role extends across the following fields of expertise:

- Testing innovation and promising practice
- Research and evidence-building, including monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.
- Bilingual health education
- Workforce development
- Sector and settings capacity-building, including public and private sectors, and community.
- Policy and advocacy
- Regional coordination and state-wide movement-building.

For further information please contact the CEO of your local Women's Health Service or Kit McMahon, Deputy Chair, Women's Health Services Network c/o kcmcmahon@whise.org.au

