

## 2024/25 FEDERAL BUDGET ANALYSIS

This briefing outlines measures announced in the Australian Government's 2024/25 Budget, handed down 14 May 2024. In this paper, we highlight the budget measures that relate to the areas of HIV, Bloodborne Viruses (BBVs) and others that are of particular interest to the communities of Health Equity Matters, including the continued commitment to virtual elimination of HIV transmission through the response to HIV Taskforce recommendations. The briefing draws on Treasury papers as well as analysis from other peak organisations. The budget papers can be viewed in full [here](#). This budget can be viewed in conjunction with the [2023-24 budget](#).

### Key Points

- The Government is delivering \$43.9 million to ensure better access to HIV testing, treatment and information and strengthening its commitment towards virtual elimination of HIV transmission by 2023.
- The Government is delivering an additional \$126.5 million to address blood borne viruses (BBVs) and sexually transmissible infections (STIs).
- The budget strengthens Australia's commitment to public health with funding to preventative care, mental health, pandemic preparedness, Medicare Urgent Care Centres and medical research.
- The budget ensures continued management of health issues affecting First Nations and Papua New Guinea communities.

### The budget commits \$43.9 million to rigorously pursue the virtual elimination of HIV transmission

The initiatives below directly relate to the activities that address priorities identified in the HIV Taskforce Report recommendations. The Government will:

- 1. Provide support to national peaks including Health Equity Matters and National Association of People with HIV Australia (NAPWHA) to continue to drive the national response to HIV.**  
**Investment:** \$3.7 million (over two years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Provides an opportunity to deliver the Government’s objectives to virtually eliminate HIV transmission in Australia. It will allow the HIV peak organisations to deliver targeted strategies to support members and continue offering guidance to the Government regarding HIV and other emerging issues.

**2. Expand access to HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for people ineligible for Medicare.**

**Investment:** \$26.0 million (over two years from 2025–26)

**Impact:** Provides additional funding to support the access to PrEP for people ineligible for Medicare. This measure alleviates the challenges many Medicare-ineligible people experience in accessing HIV prevention measures.

**3. Continue funding the HIV Online Learning Australia (HOLA) program to provide current education and training to the HIV sector.**

**Investment:** \$2.1 million (over two years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Allows for the continuation of HOLA, which enables Health Equity Matters and NAPWHA to develop the skills and capabilities of the HIV community workforce.

**4. Expand the implementation of CONNECT, the HIV testing vending machine initiative, nationally.**

**Investment:** \$3.8 million (over two years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Improves accessibility to testing kits throughout Australia, which will increase the testing rates among populations that might test infrequently or not at all. The machines dispense free Atomo HIV Self-Test kits once the person shares key details via a registered website via a QR code.

**5. Continue funding the Emen8 website, a critical information hub for sharing HIV information.**

**Investment:** \$3.0 million (over two years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Facilitates the continuation of Australia’s online sexual health and wellbeing initiative for gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. Managed by ACON and Thorne Harbour Health, Emen8’s content covers news, entertainment, travel, community events, culture, sex, and well-being.

**6. Expand the national HIV self-test mail-out initiative.**

**Investment:** \$2.5 million (over two years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Improves accessibility to HIV testing for individuals who might face barriers, such as a lack of local testing services, stigma or privacy concerns. Free self-test kits are provided by NAPWHA.

**7. Fund the development of workforce education and training pilot on HIV prevention.**

**Investment:** \$1.6 million (in 2024–25)

**Impact:** Delivered by our clinical partners, ASHM, this program builds the capacity of Australian GPs who might not be overly familiar with sexual health services to prescribe PrEP to eligible populations.

**8. Fund the establishment of a national HIV multicultural peer navigation program.**

**Investment:** \$1.0 million (in 2024–25)

**Impact:** Raises the awareness of HIV among recently arrived migrants and people who are born overseas, especially gay and bisexual men, and helps link them into appropriate services.

## The budget commits \$126.5 million toward BBVs and STIs

The initiatives below directly relate to the implementation of the *Eighth National HIV Strategy (2018-2022)* and the *Fifth National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Bloodborne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy 2018-2022*. The Government will:

**1. Fund vaccination uptake in First Nations communities.**

**Investment:** \$32.3 million (over two years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Reduces the impact of preventable communicable diseases through vaccine provision and helps address historical disparities in healthcare access and outcomes for the First Nations communities.

**2. Expand syphilis and sexually transmissible infections testing in First Nations communities.**

**Investment:** \$28.6 million (over two years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Addresses the ongoing outbreak of syphilis affecting remote and regional Aboriginal communities.

**3. Provide additional support for the national bloodborne viruses and sexually transmissible infections strategies.**

**Investment:** \$17.5 million (over two years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Provides Aboriginal-Controlled Community Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and Aboriginal Medical Services (AMSs) with additional support to enhance their services' impact amongst First Nations communities. This includes implementing culturally safe sexual health services for First Nations peoples.

**4. Extend molecular point-of-care testing for communicable diseases for First Nations, rural and remote communities.**

**Investment:** \$16.5 million (over two years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Enhances availability and access to rapid point-of-care testing with the potential to overcome barriers such as low-resource settings and providing culturally appropriate services for First Nations communities.

**5. Continue funding peak bodies to implement the national BBBs and STIs strategies.**

**Investment:** \$7.9 million (over two years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** This funding will contribute to previous work committed to the national BBV and STI strategy to further strengthen peak bodies that play a central role in delivering the strategy's recommendations.

## The budget strengthens Australia's commitment to preventative health

The Government will provide \$514.8 million over four years from 2024–25 to support preventive and other health initiatives. The Government will:

**1. Fund the National Medical Stockpile so that it can continue to respond to health emergencies and improve pandemic preparedness.**

**Investment:** \$303.9 million (over two years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Improves pandemic preparedness and enhances the national capacity to address future health threats, whether these threats are general health threats such as COVID-19 or concentrated threats like mpox. Our communities witnessed the benefits of rapid access to mpox vaccines enabled through the National Medical Stockpile in mid-late 2022.

**2. Continue funding the Antimicrobial Use and Resistance in Australia project, which monitors antimicrobial use and resistance.**

**Investment:** \$22.3 million (over four years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Ensures the monitoring of the novel use of antibiotics by our communities, as we explore other options to address changes in the prevalence of STIs, such as syphilis through the use of Doxycycline. This will support the safe and effective use of antibiotics to prevent STIs and support us in targeting health promotion and education to population groups who can benefit from novel uses of antibiotics.

**3. Continue funding preventive health and chronic disease research, including patient and clinician services for Australians with chronic conditions.**

**Investment:** \$22.1 million (over two years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Supports better health outcomes for people with HIV (PWHIV) and LGBTQIA+ communities by improving our understanding of the impact of chronic diseases. Community and clinical care for PWHIV will need to focus on multi-morbidities associated with aging. Similarly, the prevalence of communicable diseases is higher among LGBTQIA+ people compared to other Australians.

## The budget boosts Australia's commitment to mental health

**The Government will provide \$888.1 million over 8 years to respond to the Better Access evaluation and to strengthen Australia's mental health and suicide prevention systems.** This includes the provision of the free national digital mental health service, wrap-around care for people with severe and/or complex needs in primary care settings, mental health and suicide prevention services, and culturally appropriate mental health supports to First Nations, children, and youth.

**Investment:** \$888.1 million (over 8 years)

**Impact:** Improves accessibility to culturally appropriate mental health services, particularly for those with complex needs and from marginalised communities and enhances the quality of provided care. Strengthening suicide prevention services will contribute towards reducing the incidence of suicides and provide timely support to those at risk. This is of particular relevance to the LGBTQIA+ community, as the mental health outcomes are disproportionately lower and the suicide prevalence is higher compared with the mainstream community members.

## The budget supports ongoing access to life-saving vaccines

**The Government will provide \$631.1 million over four years from 2024–25 to support ongoing access to life-saving vaccines.**

**Investment:** \$631.1 million (over four years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** This investment signals that the government remains interested in ongoing low prevalence and concentrated epidemics as in the case of mpox. Vaccines are a key tool in epidemic preparedness.

## The Government will provide \$480.2 million to secure cheaper medicines

**The Government will provide \$480.2 million over five years from 2023–24 to reduce patient costs and improve access to medicines,** including a cap on general and concessional Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) co-payments until 31 December 2025.

**Investment:** \$480.2 million (over five years from 2023–24)

**Impact:** Ensures that the cost of PBS-subsidised medication will not increase across the next eighteen months. Access to medications with as few barriers as possible is critical for the HIV response. This initiative ensures that co-payments for HIV therapy and PrEP medication will not increase until 2026.

## The budget ensures MBS remains clinically appropriate

**The Government will provide \$895.6 million over four years from 2024–25 to ensure the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) remains clinically appropriate and reflects modern medical practices.**

**Investment:** \$895.6 million (over four years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Improves primary healthcare and clinical practice through amendment of MBS items and an extension of the MBS Continuous Review program to ensure the schedule remains clinically appropriate. This investment will enable the government to accommodate ongoing clinical advances in HIV care.

## The Government will continue to fund life-saving medical research

**The Government has committed an additional \$1.4 billion over 13 years from 2024–25 through the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) to continue to invest in life-saving medical research in Australia.**

**Investment:** \$1.4 billion (over 13 years from 2024–25)

**Impact:** Increased research funding accelerates breakthroughs in treatment, prevention, and possibly even a cure for HIV, thereby bolstering the country's efforts in combating the epidemic.

## The budget ensures continued management of Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea cross-border health issues

**The investment aims to continue programs to prevent, protect and control communicable diseases in the Torres Strait Islands and Far North Queensland.** Particular focus will be placed on primary healthcare workers in reducing the risk of communicable diseases, blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections.

**Investment:** \$31.4 million (over four years from 2024-25)

**Impact:** This program will enhance the delivery sexual health services in Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait addressing sexual challenges such as HIV and syphilis among the communities that inhabit and travel through these regions.

## The budget commits funding for Medicare Urgent Care Clinics

**The Government will provide funding to boost the capacity of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics. This will include a further 29 Medicare.**

**Investment:** \$227.0 million (over three years from 2023–24)

**Impact:** This commitment will add 29 additional Medicare Urgent Care Clinics across Australia and improve access to these clinics in regional and rural areas. This enables hospitals to concentrate resources on people with acute healthcare needs and ensure better healthcare and support in residential accommodation. This will also mean people with compromised immunity will not have to visit hospitals each time they need health care and support. This reduces time in hospital environments where they are at risk of acquiring respiratory infections.