

VACCHO Federal Budget 2023 Summary

Overview

The 2023–2024 Federal Budget was released on May 9th, with the announcement of several boosts to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health priorities and ongoing funding for key areas of addressing family violence, easing the cost of living and changes to the NDIS. Most funding items are being delivered over several years; those started in the 2022–2023 financial years have been marked as such. Please note that this summary does not include a comparison to previous funding amounts.

[The budget documents can be found here.](#) NACCHO have also released their response to the budget, which can be found [here](#). For breakdowns in sectors such as Aged Care, Mental Health, AOD and family services, Members are encouraged to contact the peak bodies relating to those areas.

A Medicare-specific summary will be sent out to Members shortly; if you would like a copy please contact Jessica Bravo (jessicab@vaccho.org.au).

Projected spending on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health

2022–2023: \$1.13 billion
2023–2024: \$1.234 billion
2024–2025: \$1.328 billion
2025–2026: \$1.301 billion
2026–2027: \$1.285 billion

The Government has stated that expenditure across a range of functions to support First Nations people will increase and that the decrease beginning in 2025 is due to the cessation of payments from the Commonwealth to the Northern Territory under the National Partnership on Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment which terminates 30 June 2024 and includes initiatives under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

Investment of an additional \$1.9 billion over 2022–2027 in critical areas of health, aged care, infrastructure, employment, justice, women's safety and housing initiatives for First Nations people

Closing the Gap

- \$492.7 million over 5 years invested to support infrastructure, employment, justice, education and housing initiatives
- \$561.6 million over four years to improve health, with \$238.5 million over four years to improve First Nations cancer outcomes and \$141.2 million over four years to expand the Tackling Indigenous Smoking program
- an extension of the Closing the Gap Outcomes and Evidence Fund by two years to 31 December 2026
- \$11.8 million over two years from 2023–24 to address food security barriers by progressing improvements in accessing affordable food and other essential items in remote First Nations communities

The Voice

- \$336.6 million over two years from 2023–24 for the Australian Electoral Commission to deliver the referendum, including \$10.6 million to produce information pamphlets for the 'yes' and 'no' cases for distribution to all Australian households

- \$12.0 million over two years from 2022–23 for the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and the Museum of Australian Democracy for neutral public civics education and awareness activities
- \$10.5 million in 2023–24 to the Department of Health and Aged Care to increase mental health supports for First Nations people during the period of the referendum
- \$5.5 million in 2023–24 to the NIAA for consultation, policy and delivery

Healthcare highlights:

Aboriginal specific

- \$561.6 million provided to First Nations health, including \$238.5m for cancer outcomes and \$28.2 million over three years for the delivery of 30 dialysis units and workforce supports for kidney disease support
- \$38.6 million from 2022–2027 for Improving Health Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Islander people
- \$6.6 million in 2023–2024 for sexual health services as delivered through ACCHOs
- \$16.7 million over four years to develop a national campaign to promote increased uptake of First Nations Australians' health assessments

General

- \$3.5 billion over five years to triple bulk billing for under 16s, pensioners and Commonwealth concession card holders. This includes all face-to-face GP consults more than 6 minutes in length and telehealth consults between 6 and 20 mins in length. Longer telehealth GP consults can be bulk billed if a patient is registered with MyMedicare
- \$27.0 million over four years from to improve the provision of, and access to, primary care and support services by trialling integrated services and joint commissioning across primary health, First Nations health services, disability, aged care, and veterans' care sectors in up to 10 locations
- \$47.8 million over five years from 2022–23 (and \$12.3 million per year ongoing) to improve the treatment of chronic wounds by establishing a Chronic Wound Consumables Scheme for people with diabetes aged 65 years and First Nations people aged 50 years and over to provide eligible people with subsidised wound consumables.
- \$3.2 million over three years to fund the Australian Branded Food Database, Healthy Food Partnership and contribute to the ongoing implementation of the Health Star Rating system in collaboration with the states and territories

Medication:

- \$1.4 billion over five years from 2022–2023 to reduce patient costs and improve access to services delivered by community pharmacies
- Phased increases to the maximum dispensing quantities for 300 medicines on the PBS, including 60 days' worth of medicines for chronic health conditions. The aim of this is to reduce the number of GP appointments needed for prescriptions and visits to the pharmacy
- PBS changes to include medicines for a wider range of health conditions, including cystic fibrosis

Alcohol and other drugs:

- \$17.3 million over two years from 2023–24 for the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services Maintenance program, which provides financial support to the social and community services sector
- \$5.9 million in 2023–24 for the Alcohol and Drug Foundation to run the Good Sports program, which offers free support to community sports clubs to develop policies relating to AOD use and

mental health

- \$3.5 million over two years from 2023–24 to The Glen for Women, which provides culturally appropriate AOD treatment services to First Nations women in Central Coast NSW
- \$3.1 million over two years from 2023–24 to Hello Sunday Morning for its Daybreak program, which provides free online and mobile app services to support Australians experiencing problematic use of alcohol to reduce their intake and related harms
- \$1.4 million over two years to expand Strong Born campaign (Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder awareness)

Mental health:

- \$17.8 million over five years to upskill mental health capabilities of broader workforce
- \$260.2 million over two years for psychosocial community supports
- \$8.7 million over three years to establish and operate 2 independent national mental health lived experience peak bodies to advise on mental health policies and programs
- \$91.3 million over five years for additional psychology placements to develop workforce
- \$0.9 million over two years to support Head to Health services in Shepparton, Seymour and Mildura

NDIS:

- \$7.6 million over two years to pilot alternative commissioning approaches to improve access to supports in remote and First Nations communities
- Addition \$1 million under the National Disability Advocacy Program to extend individual advocacy support for First Nations people with disability
- \$31.4 million over four years for the National Disability Data Asset to improve policy development
- \$732.9 million over four years invested in NDIA initiatives, including
 - \$48.3 million to prevent fraudulent usage
 - \$73.4 million over four years to support participants to manage their plan and holding support systems to account
 - \$63.8 million to support lifetime approaches to ensure plans are more transparent and flexible for life events

Family services:

- \$194 million over five years to establish a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Violence Action Plan
 - Included is \$145.3m for immediate safety concerns, \$23.2m for culturally responsive healing programs aimed at early intervention and recovery and \$17.6m on family safety initiatives
- \$7.8 million over five years (and \$4 million in 2027) to develop a standalone First Nations National Plan for Family Safety and establish a peak body for First Nations family safety
- \$68.6 million over 2 years to support the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services to deliver support for First Nations victim-survivors

Aged care:

- \$81.9 million over 3 years to develop and implement a new Aged Care Act and \$72.3m to support a new Aged Care regulatory framework
- \$77.3 million over 4 years to improve Community aged care outcomes, including:
 - \$52.1 million over 2 years for aged care providers in very remote areas under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program and \$1.7 million over two years to appoint an interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner

- \$7.6 million over 2 years to fund capacity building for ACCOs to provide aged care services
- \$4.1 million over 4 years to develop mandatory cultural awareness training for aged care staff
- \$8.1 million over 3 years to support accountability measures and obligations
- \$487 million extension over four years of Disability Support for Older Australians Program
- \$166.8 million in 2023-2024 to provide additional 9500 home care packages.

Cost of living:

- \$300 million for 2023-2024 to cut energy bills for tenants in social housing properties by around 30% through funding energy upgrades in partnership with state and territory governments
- Increasing JobSeeker base rate by \$3 per day
- Increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance
- 15% increase to award rate wages for aged care workers
- JobSeeker and Youth Allowances will increase by \$40 per fortnight in September following legislation amendments, and will continue to the indexed
- 55 to 59 year olds who have been on the payment for 9 or more continuous months are now eligible for the highest basic rate to address age discrimination and health difficulties

Parenting:

- Single parent payment eligibility expanded from children under 8 years to children under 14 years; this will increase the payment by \$176.90 per fortnight for single parents with a child between 9 – 14yo, up to \$922.10
- Earning arrangements increased the income free area for recipients with one child to \$202.60 per fortnight, and an additional \$24.60 per child from there. A parent on the Parent Payment (single) with one child can earn at least \$2622.35 per fortnight before losing additional payments.

Housing:

- Increasing maximum rates of Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 15% over 5 years starting 2022-2023
- National Cabinet proposal is being developed to outline reforms to increase housing supply and affordability
- Increasing National Housing Finance and Investment Corp's liability cap to \$7.5b to provide more low-cost loans to Community Housing providers. This is expected to support 7000 new social and affordable housings
- States have been offered an additional \$67.5m to tackle homelessness. This is transitional funding to 30 June 2024 to cover the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement while reform occurs

Community specific - miscellaneous:

- \$199.8 million over six years in integrated package to address entrenched and concentrated disadvantage through partnership with communities, state and territory governments and key stakeholders
- \$38.4 million over four for rural and remote culturally appropriate education packages in First Nations communities. Funding will support pilots of community-led models for culturally appropriate distance learning for students
- \$21.6 million in 2023-2024 to extend the Indigenous Boarding Providers grant program
- \$150 million over four years to improve water security for regional and remote communities

Other areas of note

A class action against the Commonwealth has been filed in the Federal Court Victorian Registry on behalf of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons who lived and worked in the Northern Territory during the period 1 June 1933 to 12 November 1971, and whose wages were allegedly unjustly withheld, inadequate or not paid as a result of wage control legislation. Costs associated with this litigation (if any) and any potential related future litigation are not quantifiable until the matter is determined by the Court or otherwise resolved.