

# Investing in contraception, abortion and miscarriage care in Australia, Asia and the Pacific

Australian Government Pre-Budget Submission 2025-26  
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## Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work, live and learn. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current Australian Government's funding for abortion and contraception spans both domestic and international initiatives, aiming to improve access to essential services. However, challenges such as inaccessibility in rural and remote areas, societal stigma and sensitivities, and inequity in funding allocations remain. This prebudget submission proposes a series of solutions to address contraception and abortion inequities in Australia, and the broader Asia and Pacific region.

In Australia, funding for contraception, abortion, and miscarriage care is uneven and insufficient, creating barriers to equitable access. Only the Australian Capital Territory offers specific, territory-wide funding support for abortion and contraception care, while populous states like New South Wales and Victoria provide no direct funding, leaving individuals to bear significant out-of-pocket costs. These expenses disproportionately impact marginalised communities, especially in regional and remote areas. The rising cost of living further exacerbates these disparities. Australian Government investment is urgently needed to address these issues, ensure affordable access, and protect reproductive rights nationwide.

In the Asia and Pacific regions, current Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding levels need to increase to meet rising global needs, especially in regions affected by crises and climate change. Investing in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) through the ODA budget is a strategic, ethical, and cost-effective choice that saves lives, empowers women and girls, and builds healthier, more equitable, and climate-resilient communities. By funding SRHR, Australia can advance human rights and gender equality, enhance climate change resilience, improve public health outcomes, and contribute to a more sustainable and prosperous world.

Our key recommendations for investment are:

1. Protect clinical provision of abortion care, miscarriage care and contraceptive care
2. Publish transformative evidence on abortion, miscarriage and contraception care
3. Strengthen MBS item numbers for abortion, miscarriage and contraception provision
4. Ensure a minimum of 1% Official Development Assistance
5. Enable global health services to be gender responsive
6. Lead global dialogue to advance human rights and gender equity

The investments are essential and would be transformative.

## BACKGROUND

The Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Financial Services has called for submissions from individuals, businesses and community groups on their views regarding priorities for the 2025–26 Budget.<sup>1</sup> Submissions are due by Friday 31 January 2025.

This submission has been collated by two related non-profit organisations working in Australia – MSI Australia and MSI Asia Pacific. Both organisations are within the MSI Reproductive Choices global network.

Our submission highlights the urgent need for sustained and expanded funding for sexual and reproductive healthcare as a cornerstone of Australia’s health and development policies.

### **MSI Reproductive Choices**

MSI Reproductive Choices (formerly Marie Stopes International) is a global organisation providing access to contraception, safe abortion, and reproductive health services. Operating in 36 countries, it empowers individuals to make informed choices about their reproductive health. MSI focuses on underserved communities, addressing barriers to care with innovative, client-centered solutions. Its mission is to ensure everyone has the right to decide if and when to have children.

MSI Australia is a leading specialised advocate and provider of abortion and contraception services across Australia and has been operating in Australia for over twenty five years. We provide surgical, medical and telehealth choices for abortion and miscarriage care across Australia, we advocate for policy and legislative change, we provide information, counselling and mental health support, and we work to reduce stigma and discrimination in access to abortion and contraception. Through our subsidiary entity MS Health we also supply MS-2 Step (abortion medicine) through the PBS and supply other related products for sexual and reproductive healthcare.

MSI Asia Pacific is part of the global support office structure for MSI Reproductive Choices, with other offices in London (UK) and Washington (USA). In Australia, we focus on generating income, managing grants, and advocating for sexual and reproductive health in the region. We aim for communities and their health systems to be well-resourced for sexual and reproductive health, particularly in contraception and abortion care. We partner with MSI country programs, regional support teams, donors, and other stakeholders to mobilise resources and facilitate regional partnerships.

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<sup>1</sup> *Australian Government Treasury (2025), at [consult.treasury.gov.au/pre-budget-submissions](https://consult.treasury.gov.au/pre-budget-submissions)*

## **The current state of contraception and abortion care funding**

The Australian Government funds a variety of initiatives related to abortion and contraception through its domestic healthcare system and international aid programs.

In Australia, abortion and contraception services are partially funded through different elements of the public healthcare system – however, there are many funding gaps, large out-of-pocket costs experienced by many, and 10-15% of people seeking abortion care have no public funding support. Medicare provides limited rebates for abortion and contraception services and related consultations. MS-2 Step (the abortion medicine) and long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARC), such as intrauterine devices (IUDs) and contraceptive implants, are partially or fully subsidised under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Additionally, the contraceptive pill and emergency contraception are also subsidised under the PBS. State and Territory Government play a significant role in funding abortion services in public hospitals or clinics. However, the majority of public hospitals in Australia do not provide abortion care and accessibility can vary, with rural and remote areas experiencing very limited service provision. Public health initiatives often include sexual health education and communications campaigns rather than actual service delivery.

Through its overseas aid program, the Australian Government supports sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including access to abortion and contraception. This support is channelled through various avenues. The Australian Government funds organisations such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which provides family planning, contraception, and post-abortion care in developing countries. It also contributes to global initiatives like FP2030, which aims to improve access to modern contraception. The government also supports international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like MSI. Investments are made in training healthcare providers, improving reproductive health supply chains, and integrating SRHR into broader health and development programs. The Australian Government has funded programs addressing the unmet need for contraception and safe abortion in crisis and conflict settings, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

While Australia broadly supports SRHR, funding for abortion services faces political sensitivities in partner countries. Additionally, tracking specific allocations for abortion versus general SRHR funding can be challenging, as the government often reports funding at a broader level.

# INVESTING IN CONTRACEPTION, MISCARRIAGE AND ABORTION CARE IN AUSTRALIA

Access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, including contraception, miscarriage and abortion, remains a challenge in parts of Australia, particularly in regional and remote areas. The cost of an abortion, including consultation fees, surgical or medical procedures, medicines, and travel expenses can be prohibitive for many. This financial burden disproportionately affects marginalised communities and people with limited resources, making it increasingly challenging for them to exercise their reproductive rights. Addressing these issues will ensure that all Australians, regardless of location or socioeconomic status, have access to necessary reproductive health services.

## **Addressing Financial Barriers**

The current cost of living crisis not only places a strain on personal finances but also exacerbates existing disparities in access to healthcare services. It is imperative for policymakers to address these barriers and ensure that safe and affordable contraception and abortion options are accessible to all Australians, regardless of their economic circumstances. Investing in affordable contraception, miscarriage and abortion options is imperative to ensure that everyone can exercise their reproductive rights without financial strain.

## **Supporting Marginalised Communities**

MSI Australia is a respected service provider and partner for some State Governments (WA and Qld) though these are limited funding arrangements for only some regions. Only the ACT provides territory-wide funding support. There is no funding support from Governments in the two most populous states of New South Wales and Victoria. This places a financial strain on resources and leaves women and pregnant people with little or no choice in deciding their reproductive future. By investing in targeted programs and funding, the Australian Government can address these disparities and ensure equitable access to abortion, miscarriage, and contraception care for all individuals, regardless of their background or location.

## **Strengthening Public Health Outcomes**

Investing in abortion, miscarriage, and contraception care is a strategic and cost-effective choice that can significantly improve public health outcomes. By reducing unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions, Australia can enhance maternal and child health, prevent long-term health complications, and contribute to healthier populations.

## **Promoting Gender Equality**

Access to contraception and safe abortion is fundamental to gender equality and women's empowerment. By investing in these services, Australia can empower women and girls to complete their education, join the workforce, and actively participate in their communities. This investment will help reduce inequities faced by marginalised groups and foster inclusive development.

## **Building Climate Resilience**

Investing in reproductive health services can enhance climate resilience by addressing the disproportionate impact of environmental crises on women in climate-affected regions. Access to contraception allows families to plan pregnancies, reducing pressure on limited natural resources and enhancing community resilience.

## **Economic Benefits**

Investing in abortion, miscarriage, and contraception care yields significant economic benefits. Every dollar spent on contraception results in substantial savings by reducing healthcare costs related to maternal and newborn care and unsafe abortions. Healthier, educated populations foster stronger, more resilient economies, benefiting the entire nation.

## **Reinforcing Australia's Leadership**

The Australian Government has a critical opportunity to strengthen its investment in women's health services by addressing the unmet needs in abortion and contraception access and ensuring equitable service delivery across the country while the government continues to step up services. With clear, focused investments, Australia can improve healthcare outcomes, reduce health disparities, and better support women, people, and families in making reproductive choices that are right for them.

By prioritizing abortion, miscarriage, and contraception access in the budget, Australia can reinforce its global and regional leadership in healthcare. This investment will improve lives, build resilient communities, and position Australia as a compassionate and progressive leader in global health and gender equality.

# INVESTING IN GLOBAL SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE

Investing in SRHR through the Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget is a strategic, ethical, and cost-effective choice. It saves lives, empowers women and girls, and builds healthier, more equitable, and climate-resilient communities. For Australia, this investment aligns with its values, strengthens our role as a regional leader, and contributes to a more sustainable and prosperous world.

## **Advancing human rights and gender equality**

The ODA budget can play a pivotal role in ensuring access to SRH services, such as contraception and safe abortion, which are fundamental to human rights and bodily autonomy. By directing ODA funds towards SRHR, we empower women and girls to complete their education, join the workforce, and actively participate in their communities. Additionally, ODA investments in SRHR help reduce inequities faced by marginalised groups, including people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those living in poverty, fostering inclusive development.

## **Building climate change resilience**

ODA funding can significantly enhance climate change resilience by addressing the disproportionate impact of environmental crises on women in climate-affected regions. These women face increased risks of sexual and gender-based violence including reproductive violence, unintended pregnancies, and poor maternal health. Access to contraception, supported by ODA, allows families to plan pregnancies and enhances overall community resilience. Moreover, integrating SRHR into humanitarian aid ensures that women and girls are supported during climate-induced migration and displacement.

## **Improving public health outcomes**

The Australian ODA budget can save lives and prevent long-term health complications by funding SRHR services. Unsafe abortions and lack of access to contraception are leading causes of maternal deaths globally. ODA funding for SRHR reduces unintended pregnancies, leading to fewer unsafe abortions and improved maternal and child health. Additionally, SRHR programs funded by ODA include education and resources to prevent sexually transmitted infections, contributing to healthier populations.



## **Resourcing healthcare to reach underrepresented populations**

SRHR funding should focus on addressing inequities for priority populations, including young people, LGBTQIA+ individuals, Indigenous communities, and people with disabilities. Programs should be inclusive and culturally responsive, ensuring no one is left behind.

## **Driving economic growth**

Investing ODA funds in SRHR yields significant economic benefits. Every dollar spent on contraception through the ODA budget results in substantial savings by reducing healthcare costs related to maternal and newborn care and unsafe abortions<sup>2</sup>. When women and girls have control over their reproductive health, they are better able to participate in education, the workforce, and economic activities. Healthier, educated populations foster stronger, more resilient economies in partner countries.

## **Promoting regional stability and sustainable development**

ODA investments in SRHR address high levels of unmet need for contraception, unsafe abortions, and early marriages in Australia's neighbouring countries. This contributes to regional stability. SRHR directly supports Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), 5 (Gender Equality), and 13 (Climate Action), reinforcing Australia's commitment to global progress.

## **Positioning Australia as a leader in global health**

Australia is uniquely positioned to influence global SRHR policies through its leadership in multilateral forums. In the current global context this is now important more than ever. Strengthened advocacy can reinforce Australia's role as a champion of gender equality, reproductive rights, and inclusive development on the international stage. Supporting SRHR through the ODA budget enhances Australia's reputation as a compassionate and progressive global leader, fostering goodwill in partner countries.

## **Reinforcing Australia's commitment to human rights**

Global and regional anti-rights movements threaten progress on SRHR. Australia must take a strong stance in defending reproductive rights, promoting comprehensive sexuality education, and safeguarding the health and autonomy of LGBTQIA+ communities through both domestic and international advocacy.

The following recommendations outline investments that are both essential and transformative.

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<sup>2</sup> Copenhagen Consensus Centre (2015), at [copenhagenconsensus.com/post-2015-consensus/health-women-children](https://copenhagenconsensus.com/post-2015-consensus/health-women-children)

## RECOMMENDATIONS

By prioritising contraception and abortion access in the 2025–2026 budget, the Australian Government can reinforce its global and regional leadership in healthcare, improve lives and build resilient communities.

To increase access in Australia, we recommend the following domestic investments:

1. **Protect clinical provision of abortion care, miscarriage care and contraceptive care.**  
Create a transitional fund to protect and provide access over the next four years, particularly for marginalised regional and rural populations who have limited access options. Allocate **\$5 million per year** to protect in-clinic contraception, miscarriage care, medical and surgical abortion, and telehealth medical abortion.
2. **Publish transformative evidence on abortion, miscarriage and contraception care.**  
Invest **\$2.5 million** in a centre for research excellence to understand the intersectional need, map underserved areas and identify opportunities for improving abortion, miscarriage and contraception care across the health sector.
3. **Strengthen Medicare in terms of abortion, miscarriage and contraception provision.**  
Review all MBS item numbers linked to abortion, miscarriage and contraception to ensure access and equity. This should include ensuring nurse practitioners, registered nurses and midwives are enabled to prescribe medical abortion medication through the PBS.

To operationalise Asia and Pacific priorities, we recommend the following ODA investments:

4. **Ensure a minimum of 1% official development assistance:** Increase Australia's ODA spend to at least 1% of the federal budget to address gaps in maternal health, abortion care and contraception access<sup>3</sup>. Ensure initiatives reach priority populations, including young people, people with disabilities and those living in climate-affected regions.
5. **Enable global health services to be genuinely gender responsive:** Boost development funds to reach underrepresented populations. Commit \$35 million annually to The Gender Equality Fund as the primary mechanism for investing in global programs that advance gender equality and women's empowerment. Increase the Inclusion and Equity Fund to **\$15 million** annually.<sup>4</sup>
6. **Lead global dialogue to advance human rights and gender equity:** Develop a cross-portfolio fund for politicians, senior bureaucrats, Indigenous leaders and civil society representatives to attend global events on human rights and gender equality, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, the International Conference on Population and Development and Women Deliver.

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<sup>3</sup> Australian Council for International Development (2025), *Safer World for All*, at [saferworld.org.au](https://saferworld.org.au)

<sup>4</sup> Australian Council for International Development Pre-Budget Submission 2025–26