

MEDIA RELEASE

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AMA welcomes government's significant investment in women's health

The federal government has shown a strong commitment to women's health by announcing several measures that will improve access to reproductive healthcare.

AMA President Dr Danielle McMullen said the federal government's announcement of a Medicare funding boost for long-term contraceptives was a particularly significant step forward for women's health.

"Long-acting reversible contraceptives are the safest and most effective form of contraception, and we are pleased to see the federal government commit to a boost in Medicare funding that will provide greater access to intrauterine contraceptive devices and implants, particularly through general practice," Dr McMullen said.

"We are also pleased to see the listing of new oral contraceptive pills and menopausal hormone therapies on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme from March 1, which will provide almost immediate savings for women."

Last year, the AMA made a [strong call for action to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs](#) to improve equality for women suffering from menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms in Australia.

"The federal government has taken very positive steps forward in response to our calls, also promising to introduce a new Medicare rebate item for menopause health assessments on July 1, so women experiencing menopause and perimenopause can get the support they need from their GP," Dr McMullen said.

Additional funding to increase the number of endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics and expanding their role to encompass menopause and perimenopause is also an important part of efforts to ensure patients have access to multidisciplinary care.

"This announcement today is a major investment in women's health and will provide significant relief for women across Australia," Dr McMullen said.

The AMA, however, is disappointed to see the federal government follow state and territory governments in announcing funding for two national trials that side-step best practice, medical prescribing and proven oversight for some treatments for urinary tract infections (UTIs) and oral contraceptives for certain women.

"We strongly opposed these trials being implemented in states and territories, due to the fragmentation of care and undermining the role of family GPs, who are more qualified to guide the treatment of UTIs," Dr McMullen said.

"The Therapeutic Goods Administration has previously said the risks of the pill mean it should only be prescribed by a doctor, and we note that the government's commitment only extends to supporting eligible patients who have already been prescribed oral contraception by a GP.

"With better access to long-acting reversible contraceptives, patients should really be having a conversation with their GP about what is the safest and most effective option for them, and this includes concession card holders who often face no out of pockets costs for a visit to a GP.

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"If these are to be genuine trials, there will need to be strong governance arrangements, well designed and evidence-based protocols and independent evaluation. Most importantly, they must be underpinned by collaboration with a patient's usual GP."

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