

Health

Western Australia continues to benefit from a well-funded health system. The health system is beginning to stabilise following the pandemic with ambulance ramping down compared to March last year, and elective surgery wait times down since the pandemic peak.

In this budget we see continued efforts to reduce the load on the WA hospital system and investment in both immediate solutions – such as the WA Virtual ED - and longer-term reforms that support new ways of providing care. This investment sees the continuation of highly successful models, including the health navigator program, and investment in establishing a statewide electronic medical record.

This budget hinted towards the importance of community-based health services, with a \$14 million investment in community-based services (BP2, V1, P309) such as the Medical Respite Centre. While we strongly support investment in community-based care it was disappointing to note the absence of investment in women's community-based health services.

Despite playing a critical role in ensuring women have access to safe, local, and holistic health care, the longevity of these services is threatened by serious, and chronic, underfunding.

Initiative	Child Development Services (BP2, V1, P306, P310)
Investment	\$38.8 million (\$15.7 million in 2024-25, \$23 million in 2025-26)
Description	<p>This investment addresses the growing demand for Child Development Services across metropolitan and regional Western Australia. Investment will increase the required specialised, multidisciplinary workforce, including a significant increase in clinical staff such as paediatricians, clinical nurse specialists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists and audiologists.</p> <p>(Also see Children and Families fact sheet).</p>
Implications	<p>Referrals to child development paediatricians have risen 132% over last decade – leading to significant delays in diagnosis and treatment of children with developmental delays. This investment works to ensure the health system can meet increased demand.</p> <p>It should be noted that this solution prioritises the health system response, and it is unclear if funding will be used to address problems relating to needing a formal diagnosis before receiving critical early development advice and support. There continues to be an opportunity to better utilise frontline child and family services, who can provide early identification of risk, prioritise referrals and provide earlier intervention.</p>

2024 - 2025 Budget

Initiative	Health Navigator Program (BP2, V1, P306, P310)
Investment	\$6,594,000 over two years
Description	<p>The continuation of the Health Navigator Pilot Program helps to support vulnerable, out-of-home-care children and young people to get the best start in life. Skilled health system navigators' partner with carers, case workers and young adults to access comprehensive health assessments through collaborative cross-agency service delivery that maximises health and wellbeing benefits within a culturally safe environment.</p> <p>This initiative is also discussed in the <i>Children and Families Factsheet</i>.</p>
Implications	The Health Navigator Program is demonstrating good early outcomes for children in out of home care and receiving positive feedback from participants. The program has positioned health as a priority, built health profiles and health histories for participating children, and ensured that health needs are quickly met. The program has also strengthened connections between relevant service providers. Continuation of this program will continue to improve health outcomes for children in out of home care and demonstrates commitment to new models of health care in WA.

Initiative	Perth Children's Court – Therapeutic Programs – Health Navigator Pilot (BP2, V1, P306, P310)
Investment	\$1,755,000 over two years
Description	<p>The Justice's In-Roads Health Navigator Pilot will provide continuity of healthcare services to a discrete cohort of youth aimed at intervention and offence reduction.</p> <p>This initiative is also discussed in the <i>Justice Factsheet</i>.</p>
Implications	Building on the known positive outcomes of health navigation services, this project will pilot the navigator model within the youth justice context. If successful, this model will work to ensure improved health outcomes are a priority for youth in the justice system.

Initiative	Medical Respite Centre (BP2, V1, P306, P309)
Investment	\$3,573,000 over two years
Description	This year's budget sees continued support for the Medical Respite Centre which provides a cost-effective substitute for a long-stay hospital admission in a safe, community-based environment that provides homeless people with purposeful reconnection links to both housing and social support.

Implications	Continued support for the Medical Respite Centre ensures that people experiencing homelessness can continue to access high quality community-based health care, particularly on hospital discharge, and reduced risk of preventable hospital readmission.
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Initiative	Electronic Medical Record – Digital Medical Record (BP2, V1, P306, P308)
Investment	\$8,786,000 over two years
Description	An EMR will bring together a single, integrated view of a patient’s record that delivers a suite of capabilities to support clinical decisions and workflows, including medication management and alerts for observations. This funding builds upon the roll-out of the Digital Medical Record across all health sites which sets a consistent and strong foundation for the implementation of the EMR across the State.
Implications	The EMR will contain all patient information that is collected within public hospital walls. Once established, the EMR will allow real time sharing of patient information and analytics to support clinical decision making, and will be key in improving patient safety, patient flow and experience. The EMR will also increase opportunities for new virtual models of care. The EMR will particularly benefit patients who may visit multiple health services, such as patients moving between regional and metro hospitals, and patients who access virtual care.

Initiative	Karratha Health Campus (BP2, V1, P309)
Investment	\$2,300,000 over an unknown time period
Description	A four-chair renal dialysis unit within the Karratha Health Campus.
Implications	Investment in renal dialysis unit at Karratha Health Campus is a great step toward ensuring regional communities have timely access to quality care, closer to home. The establishment of this unit will help reduce the need to travel for dialysis and allow patients to be closer to their families, friends, and support networks.

Initiative	Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (BP2, V1, P306, P309)
Investment	\$27,702,000 over four years
Description	Additional funding for the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme.
Implications	Additional funding for the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) will help ensure regional and remote Western Australians continue to have access to specialist health care located in regional hubs or the Perth metro region. While additional funding has not been earmarked for a specific purpose, overspend on the PATS in the 2023/24 actuals indicates

	<p>that additional funding will be used to cover increased costs of travel, accommodation, and food.</p> <p>No funding has been specifically identified to support a review of the PATS. A lack of commitment to such a review neglects a key ask of regional communities in WA, as outlined in the WACOSS 2024 State Budget Submission, and leaves communities struggling to navigate a service that may no longer be fit for service.</p>
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Initiative	WA Country Health Service Critical Staff Accommodation Program (BP2, V1, P309)
Investment	\$7,700,000 over an unknown time period
Description	Supports staff attraction and retention through the provision of quality and safe housing.
Implications	Inadequate access to safe and secure housing makes it difficult to retain and recruit healthcare staff to regional areas, with inadequate housing a key driver of chronic workforce shortages, over reliance of locum workers, and reduced service capacity. This investment will help support the recruitment and retention of regional health workers by ensuring they have somewhere safe and secure to call home and ensure regional West Australian's have access to high quality health care.