

MORRISON GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO EQUALITY AUSTRALIA

The Morrison Government believes all people are entitled to respect, dignity and the opportunity to participate in society, and recognises that to enjoy civil and political rights on an equal basis with others, people need to be able to do so free from discrimination.

The *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender identity, sexual orientation and intersex status in many areas of public life, including employment, education and in the provision of goods, services and facilities.

The Morrison Government is working to keep our economy strong, keep Australians safe and keep Australians together. Australia is stronger and more prosperous as a nation because of our diversity and cohesion. Our Government actively invests in programs that embrace our diversity and wants all Australians and all communities to benefit from Australia's economic and social development.

The Morrison Government will continue to consult and work with LGBTIQ+ organisations across the broad range of policy issues affecting LGBTIQ+ Australians within our existing frameworks.

The Religious Discrimination Bill provides protections to people of faith to ensure they are not discriminated against on the basis of their belief, similar to the protections provided on the basis of sex, age, race and disability. The bill was drafted over several years of extensive and wide consultation, with two parliamentary committees recommended passage of the bill.

As noted during the introduction speech for the bill, we must also ensure there are appropriate protections against discrimination in the education system. The expulsion of students because of their sexuality is unacceptable. The Prime Minister's position on this matter has been very clear for a number of years.

Our Government is proposing to amend the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* to ensure that religious schools will not have an exemption permitting them to expel students on the basis of their sexual orientation.

A re-elected Morrison Government will take its proposed Religious Discrimination Bill and other proposed legislative amendments forward separately and sequentially in the next parliament.

As the Prime Minister has previously said, the Morrison Government does not support LGBTIQ+ conversion therapy. This position has not changed.

Data Collection

The Morrison Government is supportive of the collection of statistical data relating to sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status where these factors are relevant to the health and welfare of the LGBTIQ+ community. Decisions on data collection are ultimately the responsibility

of agencies such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

The National Preventative Health Strategy

The Morrison Government launched The National Preventative Health Strategy (NPHS) 2021-2030 in December of last year. The Strategy recognises that social determinants are a key component of an individual's overall health and wellbeing. The Strategy has highlighted the importance of addressing social determinants for the LGBTIQ+ communities and the wider community, particularly in cancer detection, tobacco and alcohol use, stigma, and mental health and suicide prevention. These are issues that our Government are committed to addressing in partnership with the community.

To that end LGBTIQ+ Health Australia was one of the peak health groups that received funding in the third round of the Health Peak Advisory Bodies Programme. This will enable LGBTIQ+ Health Australia to continue their important work, providing expert, evidence-based and impartial advice to inform current health policy and program development. The program also helps support communication and consultation activities across the wider health sector, the community and government.

Mental Health

The Morrison Government has made mental health and suicide prevention a national priority. Our Government's almost \$3 billion National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan (the Plan) represents the single largest Commonwealth investment in mental health and suicide prevention in Australia's history.

The Plan includes establishing a new national network of 70 new adult Head to Health centres and child mental health hubs and funding for the largest ever expansion of Australia's headspace network to 164 locations (up from just 56 when the Coalition took office in 2013) to provide access to free, multidisciplinary mental health care

Support under Medicare has doubled with the Better Access Medicare subsidised psychological therapy sessions increasing from 10 to 20 per patient per year.

These investments will see our mental health and suicide prevention funding increase to an estimated record \$6.8 billion in 2022-23 in the health portfolio alone – a more than 100 per cent increase from \$3.3 billion since 2012-13 when Labor was last in Government.

The Morrison Government is committed to supporting the mental health of the LGBTIQ+ community, particularly the LGBTIQ+ youth - as demonstrated by the ongoing investment in child and youth mental health and LGBTIQ+ specific programs and services.

Our Government has provided \$7.33 million over three years to LGBTIQ+ Health Australia for Qlife, which provides online, telephone counselling and support services for LGBTIQ+ people. Additional funding has been provided to LGBTIQ+ Health Australia to increase Qlife telephone and online service capacity to meet COVID-19 demand.

The 2022-23 Budget also provided \$42.7 million to build on the findings of the National Suicide Prevention Trial (NSPT), which ran from 2016-17 to 2021-22 and included a specific focus on LGBTIQ+ people. As part of the trial, \$12 million was provided to Brisbane North and North Western Melbourne Primary Health Networks (PHNs) to deliver innovative regional approaches to suicide prevention, particularly among the LGBTIQ+ community. Commissioned activities included LGBTIQ+ specific suicide aftercare services, local media campaigns challenging stigma, and peer mentoring support programs for LGBTIQ+ young people and families of LGBTIQ+ people. The additional funding in the 2022-23 Budget will allow PHNs to employ Suicide Prevention regional response leaders and commission services to address specific risks in their local communities.

Primary Care

The Morrison Government has guaranteed Medicare, with record funding year on year, and we have made telehealth a permanent feature of the primary care system with more than 100 million services already provided.

Better access to healthcare for LGBTIQ+ people is a key foundation for reform under Australia's Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan, noting that LGBTIQ+ people can face barriers in accessing appropriate health care.

Australia's Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan supports reform and investment in primary health care over time, to ensure any funding and policy changes deliver real improvements in patient care and outcomes.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that all Australians are able to access timely and affordable, high quality health care by providing Medicare rebates for services listed on the MBS and free hospital services for public patients in public hospitals.

HIV in Australia

The Morrison Government has invested \$45.4 million to support the implementation of the National Blood Borne Virus (BBV) and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Strategies (2018-2022) since 2018. This investment by the Morrison Government is the greatest increase in funding to prevent, diagnose and treat STIs and BBVs in at least two decades. Our Government's record support is improving our collective efforts to prevent and address the impact of BBVs and STIs.

This funding has supported national awareness and prevention strategies to reduce the impact of BBVs, such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C, and STIs, with a specific focus on syphilis, gonorrhoea, and chlamydia; projects that improve diagnosis and treatment options; and health professional and community education. The Morrison Government funding has also provided targeted assistance to diverse and vulnerable populations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

The Morrison Government 2022-2023 Budget committed a further \$8.6 million to support key organisations to continue programs that aim to eliminate HIV, viral hepatitis, and STIs as public health threats by 2030, through the implementation of five National Blood Borne Viruses and STI Strategies 2018-2022. Our Government's approach to funding and implementing these strategies

will continue to include an ongoing commitment to principles of partnership, harm reduction and a community lead response.

The Morrison Government will continue to work closely with the community to address stigma and discrimination and improving quality of life, with a particular focus on actions to address the stigma that leads to delays or prevents people from seeking diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing support. This approach will inform the Morrison Government's discussions with groups such as AFAO regarding the development of national BBV and STI strategies for 2023 and beyond.

A re-elected Morrison Government will commit to develop and implement new national strategies on HIV, blood-borne viruses and STIs for the period from 2023 and seek to drive further reductions in HIV transmission through community-led campaigns and peer education.

The Morrison Government has taken many critical steps in helping to end the transmission of HIV infection in Australia, including a \$180 million investment to list medicines tenofovir with emtricitabine for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule (PBS) in 2018. In the first two years since pre-exposure prophylaxis was listed on the PBS, the number of HIV notifications in Australia have decreased by 25 per cent, from 841 in 2018 to 633 in 2020. The Morrison Government will continue to follow the medical advice in further expanding access to this treatment through the PBS.

From 1 April 2022, Vocabria® (cabotegravir) and Cabenuva® (cabotegravir and rilpivirine injections) are listed on the PBS for the first time for the management of HIV infection, benefitting more than 9,000 Australians each year, who without subsidy may pay more than \$17,000 a year for treatment.

In 2021, the Morrison Government committed more than \$39 million over 5 years to support people living with HIV in Australia, who are not eligible for Medicare, to access the treatment they need. This investment will benefit an estimated 1,000 people currently living with HIV in Australia each year, providing access to appropriate and equitable HIV treatment and care.

Our Government aims to make it easier for Australians to give blood, and is committed to providing high-quality, safe, secure and affordable supply of blood and blood products to meet the needs of Australian patients. Blood donor deferral policies are risk based, drawing on the most current scientific evidence and consistent with international approaches.

Any proposed changes to donor deferral periods by Lifeblood will be considered by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) as they are received. The safety and wellbeing of both blood donors and recipients of blood products is foremost in decision making under the national blood arrangements.

In 2020, TGA and state and Federal governments approved a Lifeblood submission to reduce the donation postponement for donors with a higher sexual activity-based risk from 12 to three months, since the last sexual contact. This change was implemented in early 2021. The TGA continues to regularly engage with LifeBlood regarding the rules and regulations surrounding blood donations in Australia.

Family, domestic and sexual violence

The Morrison Government announced a historic \$1.3 billion investment in women's safety initiatives in the recent Budget. This brings our commitment to \$2.5 billion over the first five years of the National Plan to end Violence Against Women and their Children.

The development of the next national plan has been the culmination of over 18 months of consultation with advocates, victim-survivors, service providers, researchers and other experts across Australia. Our Government acknowledges that to succeed we must listen and engage with those with diverse lived experiences, and we know that we must get this right.

The Morrison Government established the National Plan Advisory Group to inform the development of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children, with members representing a range of groups in the Australian community, including LGBTIQ+ communities. The Advisory Group has played a key role in the plan's development.

As part of our 2022-23 Women's Budget Statement, the Coalition committed \$222.6 million to prevention initiatives. This specifically included \$104.4 million in new funding to support the leading primary prevention organisation Our Watch. This funding represented about a 65 per cent increase on annualised funding to enable Our Watch to boost its efforts in prevention for LGBTIQ+ people, women with a disability and migrant women. The funding will also be used to develop further resources to educate young people about consent.

International

Social inclusion remains a priority of the Morrison Government's human rights engagement internationally. The Coalition Government consistently champions equal rights and an end to violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons, including through our diplomatic network and in key United Nations forums.

In the Indo-Pacific, our Government continues to work with UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, to improve access to HIV prevention and testing services for vulnerable populations, including LGBTIQ+ persons.

The 2022-23 Budget included \$1.0 million over 5 years from 2022-23 to establish a Human Rights Advocacy Program to provide grants of up to \$100,000 to human-rights focused organisations to advance Australia's human rights priorities.