



Preventive Health – Preventing pre-term birth

The Australian Government is investing \$13.7 million for the national rollout of a world-leading program to prevent pre-term birth in Australia. This investment includes:

- \$8.8 million to roll out the successful Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance (The Alliance) program nation-wide
- \$2.5 million to deliver a national education campaign to raise awareness of safe and effective strategies to prevent pre-term birth, and
- \$1.9 million to improve data and analysis for future policy development.

The Alliance is a partnership of clinical leaders, researchers, maternity hospitals, and communities working together to safely reduce the rate of early birth.

Why is this important?

The rate of pre-term birth, or being born too early (before 37 weeks gestation), has been rising. In Australia, 8.7% of Australians births are pre-term. The rate is 14% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Pre-term birth is the single greatest cause of death in young children and one of the major causes of lifelong disability, including cerebral palsy, blindness, deafness and behavioural and learning problems at school age.

This successful program has already been introduced across Western Australia and includes clinical guidelines, an outreach process for health care practitioners, a public health awareness program for women and their families, and a new referral clinic for high risk pregnant women in Perth.

The Alliance report the first year of this program delivered a 7.6% reduction in the rate of pre-term births in Western Australia.

Who will benefit?

Australia's expectant mums, their unborn babies and families will all benefit from the national rollout of the program to prevent pre-term birth. It will help inform mums and families about the risk factors and dangers of pre-term birth, without medical necessity. A reduction in the rate of pre-term birth will also improve the health outcomes for thousands of babies born every year.

Medical practitioners, midwives, sonographers and pharmacists who provide care, advice and clinical services to expectant mothers will all benefit from additional information and support on the issue of pre-term birth.

How much will this cost?

The Australian Government is investing \$13.7 million over 3 years, from 2021–22.