

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Leader of the House
Minister for Health
Minister for Health Infrastructure
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THE LASTING IMPACT OF WOMEN'S PAIN REVEALED

The Allan Labor Government's landmark Inquiry into Women's Pain has revealed the significant impact pain conditions like endometriosis, pelvic pain and migraines are having on the lives of Victorian women and girls.

The results from the survey of more than 13,000 women, girls, carers, families and healthcare workers highlight the negative experiences that many have had when seeking care.

Women and girls have shared their experiences of sexism and misogyny, feeling ignored or dismissed by clinicians who attributed their pain to psychological and personality factors, as well as culturally unsafe care.

They also told us about cases of delayed diagnosis, the high cost of care and the impact pain can have on their quality of life, relationships with family and friends, and their careers.

Nurses made up the majority of healthcare workers who participated – observing that lack of knowledge about women's health of available clinicians was the biggest barrier to care for many of their patients.

The survey was offered in 10 community languages, including Arabic, Turkish, Vietnamese, Italian and Greek.

About 40 per cent of women who participated in the survey were from regional and rural Victoria – their insights highlighted the importance of being able to access the right care closer to home.

The stories and experiences generously shared by Victorian women and girls in the survey, via written submissions and forums over last few months will now form the development of recommendations to improve the way women's healthcare is delivered in Victoria.

The results come at the same time as the Labor Government prepares to launch its \$5 million Mobile Women's Health Clinic.

Operated by BreastScreen Victoria to make free healthcare more accessible for women living in rural and regional parts of Victoria, the new mobile women's health service will hit the road in late October.

The mobile clinic will offer a variety of women's health services including sexual and reproductive health information, advice, clinical services and referrals to other necessary specialists.

All services will be delivered by an experienced nurse who will work to build connections with women, their community and local health services.

This is an expansion of BreastScreen Victoria's existing successful mobile breast screening service and will be open to women of all ages.

The Labor Government's \$153 million transformation in women's health is also delivering 20 new women's health clinics, expanding our sexual and reproductive health hubs network, doubling the number of laparoscopies for endometriosis and associated conditions and providing scholarships for more than 100 women's health specialists.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

"These survey results are an important step towards building a new system that is informed by the voices of women, girls, families, carers, the healthcare clinical workforce and researchers."

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“Our new mobile women’s health clinic will help us bring new services directly to women in regional Victoria, offering a safe and inclusive space for care.”

Quote attributable to BreastScreen Victoria Acting CEO Luke Neill

“BreastScreen Victoria understands the challenges regional Victorian women face accessing healthcare. We're working with the government on this program to offer additional women's health services as part of our mobile breast screening service.”

Quote attributable to CEO of Royal Women’s Hospital and Co-Chair of the Inquiry into Women’s Pain Professor Sue Matthews

“After decades of seeing women feeling dismissed and unheard, we are delighted that so many Victorians have shared their personal stories with us. We are excited to have this open and honest dialogue on how women and girls experience pain and to ensure women are heard.”