

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**9 November 2025**

# **It shouldn't be painful to be a woman**

Today's release of the landmark report from the Victorian Government Inquiry into Women's Pain is a watershed moment.

It shows the power of real-life experience to act as a catalyst for change.

Thousands of women have bravely shared their personal stories.

More than 70% of the respondents have had their pain dismissed due to a health system shaped by deeply rooted gender bias. This bias shapes how healthcare is delivered, funded and understood.

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) Chief Executive Officer Sally Hasler said it is clear that deep and lasting reform is required.

"The report calls out the need for system reform and new models of care. This is a really powerful and courageous collection of women's evidence – we owe them change," Ms Hasler said.

"The report details how 95% of respondents sought assistance for their pain – yet they faced major barriers to accessing care such as being ignored and dismissed, costs being too high and long wait times.

"Unmanaged pain affects women's relationships, social activities and mental health. Thousands of respondents also said that unmanaged pain had a severe impact on their ability to work or study, impacting our community and economy.

"In addition, diagnosis delays and ineffective treatment results in worsening conditions and unnecessary suffering, not to mention money flushed down the toilet.

"We know this issue reflects broader system bias that extends beyond individual practitioners. Partnering closely with healthcare providers is essential to driving meaningful change."

Ms Hasler said the Victorian and Commonwealth governments needed to work together to implement the report's ambitious recommendations and focus on priority populations including people in regional communities, First Nations people and people from different cultural backgrounds.

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“The Inquiry into Women’s Pain report outlines major recommendations to improve the health system to make it more responsive and fair for everyone,” she said.

“This includes building the skills of health professionals, and ongoing investment to ensure medical research includes considerations of sex and gender.

“Further, reform of Medicare time-tiered items will help ensure primary care funding reflects the time and skill required by doctors to help people experiencing chronic pain.

“We ask that Medicare funding be increased to cover longer appointments for people living with complex health needs and that rebates for specialist services don’t leave women unfairly out of pocket.

“The report also highlights the importance of supporting timely and affordable access for priority populations – this means helping women to access evidence-based health information and referral to services.”

“WHV is ready to help people navigate the system, find the right women’s health clinic or other service for their needs, based on our years of experience running the *1800 My Options* service.”

Ms Hasler said WHV expresses gratitude to the 13,000 people who bravely spoke up and made their voices heard, and congratulates the Victorian Government for being willing to listen.

“Being a woman is joyous, and it shouldn’t mean a lifetime of pain,” she said.

“We have heard the issues loud and clear, and we know what needs to be done to improve women’s health.

“We urge the Victorian Government to commit to implementing all recommendations in the report and we call on all healthcare services and providers to review their practices considering these critical findings.

“Now, it’s time to act.”

-ENDS-

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**About Women’s Health Victoria**

Women’s Health Victoria is a statewide, feminist, non-profit organisation working with government, the health sector, and the community to improve health outcomes for women (cis and trans inclusive) and gender diverse people. We advocate for healthcare rights and access, deliver health promotion resources, and operate vital information and support services, so that all Victorians have the opportunity to access optimal health and wellbeing, free from bias and discrimination. For more information, visit [whv.org.au](http://whv.org.au)

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