



Australia Cancer Plan Implementation – Key Themes and Responses

In the lead up to the Australian Cancer Plan Implementation Webinar on 13 December, stakeholders submitted questions about implementation of the Plan. Eight key themes of interest were identified, including:

- Funding of implementation activities
- Alignment with State and territory plans
- Monitoring & Evaluation
- Workforce
- Equity in outcomes
- Collaboration
- Research and Clinical Trials
- Genomics in cancer control

Responses to key themes are outlined below.

Funding of implementation activities

- Cancer Australia encourages all organisations across the cancer control sector to consider their contribution to the Australian Cancer Plan's actions and goals in their business planning processes.
- To support implementation of the plan, the Australian Government committed \$735.7 million in the 2023-24 Budget:
 - To support the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation sector respond to cancer care needs on the ground, and ensure mainstream services are culturally safe and accessible for First Nations cancer patients and their families.
 - For the Australian Cancer Nursing and Navigation Program, to ensure all people with cancer have access to high quality and culturally safe care, irrespective of their cancer type or location.
 - To implement the National Strategy for the Elimination of Cervical Cancer in Australia, support nurses, First Nations health practitioners, and midwives to request pathology for cervical screening tests, and deliver Point of Care testing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
 - To introduce a National Lung Cancer Screening Program, by July 2025.
 - For the Cancer Patient Support Program, to achieve better outcomes for patients in priority populations increase equity across tumour types.
- Federal funding for new initiatives are decisions of Government, which includes compliance with [Public Governance, Performance and Accountability legislation](#), and associated instruments and policies.
- The Government, in partnership with state and territory governments, is also undertaking a review of the existing BreastScreen Australia program which will take account of findings from the Roadmap for Optimising Screening in Australia project on risk-based screening for breast cancer and will inform the strategic direction for the program.

Alignment with State and Territory Plans

- The Plan is a national plan. It is not intended to replace or duplicate existing plans including jurisdictional, population-specific, or tumour-specific plans and frameworks. The Plan was informed by many of the state and territory and tumour-specific plans in the development process.



- The 46 actions in the Plan represent the consensus of the Australian cancer sector about what the national system level priorities are for reform for the next 10 years.
- The Plan has been designed to leverage and complement a broad range of multisectoral, national and jurisdictional policies and strategies which, working together, will drive improvements in cancer care across Australia.
- The Plan sets high-level strategic priorities and broad actions to guide the sector, including state and territory governments. It guides the development or update of existing state and territory cancer plans, as well as plans for specific cancers and population groups.
- In implementing the Plan there is an opportunity to look for synergies across the various sector levels, to ensure the sector is working together to deliver a reform agenda for all Australians affected by cancer.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Information from stakeholders on activities that are contributing to implementation of the Plan is essential to monitor progress. Cancer Australia is keen to hear about implementation activities contributing to the Plan [here](https://canceraus.engagementhub.com.au/implementation-plan-activities) (<https://canceraus.engagementhub.com.au/implementation-plan-activities>). This information will be used to update the [Implementation Plan](#) regularly.
- A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework aligned with the [Implementation Plan](#) will be developed and supported by:
 - consultation with stakeholders
 - collection of data for key indicators across the life of the Plan, including through development of a national cancer dataset
 - independent reviews after 2, 5 and 10 years.
- Following these reviews, further actions for Strategic Objectives may be considered to ensure the Plan is on track to meet its 10-year ambitions.
- Stakeholders will be responsible for evaluating the success of their own implementation initiatives. [Cancer Australia welcomes the opportunity to hear about initiatives being undertaken across the sector and your success stories.](#)

Cancer Workforce

- A priority area of reform outlined in [Strategic Objective 5 - A Workforce to Transform the Delivery of Cancer Care](#) is: A cancer workforce with the right capabilities, capacity and experience is key to the delivery of high-quality cancer care.
- The Plan encompasses actions to identify current and emerging workforce undersupply in line with cancer workforce modelling and other national health workforce strategies, and to initiate planning with the sector towards building future workforce capacity and capability.
- Supporting and building a strong health workforce is a challenge across all of healthcare. The Australian Government has developed and invested in strategies and initiatives to address ongoing workforce challenges across the health sector, including:
 - [National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021–2031](#)
 - [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan](#)



- Current [Scope of Practice Review](#)
 - Strengthening Medicare reforms in primary care
 - Nurse Practitioner Workforce Plan
 - [National Nursing Workforce Strategy](#) currently in development
 - National Allied Health Workforce Strategy.
- There is a need for a coordinated and national approach to cancer workforce planning that optimises workforce capability and capacity in care across the cancer control continuum. State and Territory cancer plans also include strategies to grow a skilled and qualified cancer workforce.
 - The Australian Government recently announced investments specific to the cancer care workforce. An investment of \$166 million was announced in November 2023 for the [Cancer Nursing and Navigation Program](#), and \$197.9 million in May 2023 for the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to support the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation sector to respond to cancer care needs on the ground. This Funding will enable NACCHO to employ up to 260 new First Nations positions to deliver cancer treatment and other supports such as health promotion activities, support for patients to navigate cancer care following diagnosis, and access to treatment and care on Country.
 - Cancer Australia is engaging with and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professional organisations and clinical colleges to implement activities to build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cancer workforce across all disciplines.

Equity in outcomes

- [Strategic Objective 2](#), Enhanced consumer experience 10- year ambition is: People affected by cancer are partners in culturally safe, equitable and responsive cancer care, and health services and systems are trusted and supported for optimal experience, quality of life and cancer outcomes.
- A person-centred focus to cancer care, underpinned by the Optimal Care Pathways, improves the experience of people affected by cancer, their families and carers. Health professionals also experience greater satisfaction, together with safety improvement and the cost-effectiveness of care.
- A guiding principle of the Plan is [achieving equity](#) in cancer outcomes and experience for all Australians affected by cancer. This ambition spans all cancer types, population groups and geographic locations.
- The Plan focuses on [10 priority population groups](#) whose outcomes are currently poorest, including [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people](#), and people living in rural and remote areas.
- The Plan acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health belongs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander hands, and the critical role the Aboriginal Community Controlled health sector plays in leading approaches to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- The Plan will work alongside other cancer plans and strategies for specific population groups and cancer types, including the recently released NACCHO Cancer Plan which shares many goals with the Australian Cancer Plan, including a focus on prevention, screening and early diagnosis, and culturally safe care.
- The NACCHO cancer plan acknowledges that synergies exist between the two plans and that by working together, these two plans will achieve better outcomes for more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples, their families and communities at a faster pace.



- Funding, through the 2023-24 Budget, has been provided to NACCHO to support the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Services sector. Programs delivered by NACCHO will support cancer prevention, screening, early diagnosis, treatment and wrap around navigation support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cancer patients and their families.
- Funding has been provided to Cancer Australia to ensure mainstream health services are culturally safe and accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the Plan will highlight whether gaps are being closed for population groups and types of cancer where outcomes are currently poorest. A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will provide the foundations to identify any gaps and address progress towards the Plan's goals.
- Improving experiences and outcomes for people with the poorest cancer experiences and outcomes will be a key measure of success for the Plan.
- The newly-announced [Cancer Patient Support Program](#) is being implemented by the Department of Health and Aged Care. The program will fund initiatives that will build equity across the cancer control spectrum by providing opportunities to organisations that specifically focus on increasing equity across tumour types, and/or priority population groups. It will ensure a diverse range of evidence-based projects are funded that assist in addressing gaps in the system, ensuring that any investment through this opportunity is complementary, and not duplicative to existing Government funded programs.

Collaboration

- Achieving the goals and ambitions of the Plan will require ongoing collaboration across the cancer control sector.
- Cancer Australia is encouraging all stakeholders to seek out partnerships and pool expertise to achieve the progress needed to reach the goals and ambitions of the Plan.
- Cancer Australia has facilitated collaborations through its implementation priorities, including for the development of the National Cancer Data Framework (with Cancer Council Australia and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) and work to design and embed patient reported experiences and outcomes into national performance monitoring (with Movember).
- The partnerships with Movember and Cancer Council Australia are examples of how ideas can grow through collaboration. These projects started with a single organisation, they expanded as the originators reached out to other organisations with shared interests, and over time they have become national partnerships.
- Cancer Australia encourages smaller non-Government organisations and consumer support organisations to continue investing their resources to support their community, and undertake planning to ensure that their activities align with the goals of the Plan.
- Cancer Australia continues to support community organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations through the [Supporting people with cancer grant initiative](#). This initiative aims to fund evidence-based projects to reduce the impact of cancer and better support people affected by cancer.

Australian Comprehensive Cancer Network (ACCN):

- Cancer Australia, in consultation with the sector, has developed the [ACCN Framework](#) – a national framework for networked, distributed comprehensive cancer care to facilitate the provision of the best quality cancer care as close as safely possible to where patients live.



- The ACCN will provide strategic leadership and drive excellence in cancer care across the sector and will improve equitable access to comprehensive cancer care by creating and strengthening linkages and sharing expertise.
- This will be done by virtual connections between existing and developing Comprehensive Cancer Centres and other cancer services spanning the cancer continuum throughout Australia, including regional hospitals, Primary Health Networks, and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.

Research and Clinical Trials

- High quality research and clinical trials are fundamental to the delivery of the Plan, and importantly, are also key to the delivery of equitable and optimal cancer care across the continuum.
- The Plan addresses the criticality of investment in this area through [Strategic Objective 4](#), Strong and Dynamic Foundations, with its 10- year ambition of A modern, fit for purpose cancer control infrastructure, advanced by the innovative application of technology, research and data to improve Australia's cancer outcomes.
- The Australian Government makes a significant investment in novel, innovative and collaborative cancer research and clinical trials, including through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Medical Research Future Fund and Cancer Australia's own research programs. Cancer Australia has strong relationships with the cancer research sector including partnerships with philanthropic funders to coordinate on investments into priority areas of cancer research.
- The Plan provides the Australian Government with a platform to build further partnerships with organisations across the sector, such as other government funders, philanthropy, and research institutes, towards achieving the shared goals of the Plan and [Strategic Objective 4](#).
- Cancer Australia has conducted a strategic review of its cancer research and clinical trials investments with the view to strengthen their alignment with the goals and objectives of the Plan. Going forward, Cancer Australia will work closely with our colleagues at NHMRC, the Health and Medical Research Office, and the sector to ensure our programs remain fit for purpose and address emerging research needs.

Genomics in cancer control

- The Government is investing \$28.1 million to establish a new Agency, [Genomics Australia](#), to support the integration of genomic medicine as a standard of healthcare in Australia.
- The development of the [National Framework for Genomics in Cancer Control](#) (the Framework) is a 5-year action of the Plan. It will span the care continuum including personalised prevention, risk-stratified screening, diagnosis and treatment, supportive care, and agile foundations specific to cancer care (models of care, research and data, quality and safety and funding considerations).
- The Framework considers incorporation of genomics into risk-based screening and early detection, as well as access to genomics to inform treatment. It will establish approaches to determining who, how and when people at risk of, and with cancer, will have access to genomics, with a focus on mitigating the risk of broadening disparities in care and outcomes.
- Wider stakeholder consultation on a draft Framework is planned for 2024.



- The Department of Health and Aged Care is considering how genomic testing could play a part in future population-based screening programs, through an environment scan of the Population Based Screening Framework.