



THE
AUSTRALIAN
PAIN SOCIETY

Response to the Victorian Government's Bridging the Gender Pain Gap Report

11 November 2025

The Australian Pain Society (APS), the multidisciplinary association representing medical and allied health professionals as well as researchers working across the pain sector, welcomes the release of the *Bridging the Gender Pain Gap* report. We commend the Victorian Government for recognising the significant and often overlooked burden of persistent pain experienced by women and girls across the state.

The report echoes what people with lived experience, clinicians, and researchers have long highlighted: women's pain is too often underestimated, misunderstood, or inadequately addressed. Meaningful change requires both service reform and a shift in how chronic pain is understood and managed within the health system.

APS strongly supports the development of a Women's Pain Action Plan and the establishment of dedicated clinical services. These initiatives are important steps toward improving access to timely, appropriate care. We also endorse the report's call to invest in workforce capacity. The establishment of Women's Health Clinics across Victoria have been a positive development in expanding access to specialist services, however most women first seek care in primary and community settings. To achieve system-wide improvement, the broader workforce must have access to high-quality training.

The report makes clear that women often feel dismissed by healthcare professionals, with delays and misdiagnoses compounding their experiences. Clinicians themselves recognise these concerns, reporting knowledge gaps and a desire for better education in women's pain. Australia is home to world-class pain scientists at the forefront of innovation, and the recommendation for dedicated funding for women's health and pain research is a positive move to redress gender inequity. However, there is a gap in translating the evidence into practice which requires collaboration from all sectors to overcome. Effective pain management relies on interdisciplinary collaboration, and clinicians benefit from training and support that enable them to apply contemporary pain science and a biopsychosocial approach with confidence.

"Service expansion must go hand-in-hand with workforce development. To make real progress, we need to ensure clinicians across medical, and allied health have access to contemporary pain education and feel equipped to support people living with pain," said Bernadette Smith, President of the Australian Pain Society.

The APS looks forward to ongoing engagement with the Victorian Government and sector partners, including supporting the alignment of initiatives with the Faculty of Pain Medicine's National Standards for Health Practitioner Pain Management Education. Strengthening interdisciplinary capability will help ensure that women and girls not only gain access to pain services, but receive the holistic, person-centred care they deserve.

About the Australian Pain Society

The Australian Pain Society is a multidisciplinary association whose purpose is to advance pain management through education, research, and advocacy for transformational improvements in clinical care. Our national membership is drawn from over 40 health disciplines covering a variety of medical, nursing, and allied health perspectives.

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