



Access to gender-affirming care for young people in Australia – February 2025

Recent announcements at both the state and federal levels have raised questions about access to gender-affirming care for young people in Australia. This factsheet outlines what these changes mean and what to expect moving forward.

Queensland

On 28 January 2025, Queensland Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, the Hon Tim Nicholls, announced that the state is starting a review of gender-affirming care for young people. As part of this review, Queensland has now 'paused' taking new patients under 18 for puberty blockers and gender-affirming hormone therapy. The government stated this decision was made to review current care models, despite existing evidence showing this care is acceptably safe and effective.

The details of how the review will be conducted are still unclear, including how much input will be taken from trans, non-binary, and gender diverse people and experts in clinical care of trans youth. This pause will remain until the review is complete and the government considers its findings.

National

On Friday 31 January 2025, Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Mark Butler MP announced that the government had taken a step to review and update the Australian Standards of Care and Treatment Guidelines for Trans and Gender Diverse Children and Adolescents. This review is being led by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), which is widely recognised in Australia and internationally for its rigorous, evidence-based approach in developing clinical guidelines. The process involves multidisciplinary panels, transparent decision making, and public consultation to ensure that the recommendations are up to date and meet the needs of all patients.

The goal is to develop new national guidelines based on the best available scientific evidence. These guidelines will be created using the NHMRC's Standards for Guidelines and the international GRADE approach, and they'll be shaped by expert input, including voices from those with lived experience. This approach follows established best practices in medical guideline development, similar to how Australia reviews other critical areas of healthcare

Interim advice on the use of puberty blockers is expected by mid-2026. More information on the NHMRC process is below and on its website: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-advice/guidelines-care-trans-and-gender-diverse-people>

Analysis

The NHMRC review is an important part of our ongoing commitment to high-quality health care for all people. This decision aligns with the key national framework, the *National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ People 2025–2035*,

Action 3: Support and drive consistency in key models of care and to establish best practice frameworks; b. Develop guidelines to support evidence-based health care for LGBTIQ+ people where there are gaps or identified needs

The aim is to ensure that gender-affirming care is acceptably safe, effective, and informed by the best available scientific evidence as well as by the voices of trans and gender diverse people. The NHMRC's established processes, including independent expert review and robust conflict-of-interest management, help reassure community members that this review is in the best interests of young people seeking gender-affirming care.

The Hon Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care has publicly stated that AusPATH and Transcend Australia will be involved in this process.

Understanding the review and its implications

Who are the NHMRC?

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is Australia's leading independent agency for health research and clinical guideline development. They are responsible for creating evidence-based guidelines that help ensure that health care is acceptably safe, effective, and based on the best available scientific research. They are recognised both nationally and internationally for their rigorous and transparent processes.

Why is the government reviewing gender-affirming care guidelines?

It is considered best practice for clinical guidelines to be regularly updated. It has been some time since the Australian Standards of Care and Treatment Guidelines for Trans and Gender Diverse Children and Adolescents were developed. Since then, there has been an enormous amount of research in this field. This needs to be reflected in updated guidelines. Having guidelines reviewed by the NHMRC ensures that they are robust and contemporary and will enshrine them as best practice.

Why is this review important?

This review will help ensure that gender-affirming care is based on new evidence, best practices, safety, effectiveness, and responsiveness to the meet the needs of trans and gender diverse people. It also aligns with national frameworks such as the *National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ People 2025–2035*. The government has stated that this is not an inquiry.

Is this just another Cass Review?

No. The NHMRC review is fundamentally different from the UK's Cass Review. The Cass Review was a government-commissioned independent review conducted outside the usual processes for developing clinical guidelines. In contrast, the NHMRC review follows Australia's established, evidence-based approach to updating clinical guidelines. It is being conducted by the country's peak medical research body, using internationally recognised standards to ensure that recommendations are based on rigorous scientific evidence and expert input, including the voices of trans and gender diverse people. Unlike the Cass Review, which has been widely criticised for contributing to the rollback of gender-affirming care in the UK, the NHMRC review is intended to strengthen and improve healthcare for trans and gender diverse young people in Australia.

According to the NHMRC, their guidelines are based on a review of the available evidence and follow transparent development and decision-making processes. They are informed by the judgement of evidence by experts, and the views of consumers, community groups and other people affected by the guidelines. In this sense it is very distinct from an open, Parliamentary inquiry, in which all manner of persons can have input.

Will this impact my access to puberty suppression?

At this stage, the review itself does not change access to puberty suppression or other forms of gender-affirming care. The NHMRC review is focused on updating clinical guidelines based on the latest evidence, and it does not have the authority to restrict or alter existing healthcare services provided by the states and territories. In fact, in her [statement](#), Hon Ged Kearney MP, has called for continuity of care while the review takes place.

However, in Queensland, the government has temporarily paused new referrals for puberty suppression and gender-affirming hormone therapy while conducting a separate state-led review. If you are in Queensland and have concerns about accessing care, it's important to speak with a trusted healthcare provider or reach out to community-controlled organisations for support and information about your options.

How can I share my thoughts or concerns?

The review process will include public consultation at some point where anyone can provide feedback. Please be reassured that organisations like [Transcend Australia](#) and [AusPATH](#) will continue to advocate for the best care for trans and gender diverse children and adolescents. In addition, local LGBTIQ+ community-controlled organisations offer support and can help you share your experiences or concerns.

Will this affect the availability of care?

The review is intended to ensure quality and consistency of gender-affirming care. It is not expected to limit access; rather, it aims to ensure that all people receive the best possible care based on robust, evidence-informed guidelines. Importantly, there has been no indication from other states or territories, except Queensland, that the clinical care will be interrupted in any way.

Next steps and resources

The review process is ongoing, and further updates will be provided as new information becomes available. Community members are encouraged to stay informed through trusted sources and to reach out to [local LGBTIQ+ community-controlled organisations](#) for support and advice. These organisations continue to be crucial partners in ensuring that lived experience informs practice and policy.

If you are concerned about these changes, consider sharing your feedback with community-controlled organisations or participating in public consultation when it opens. Your feedback and engagement are vital to shaping a health care system that respects and meets the needs of trans and gender diverse young people.

For more information, please refer to the official NHMRC communications or contact your local community-controlled organisation.

This factsheet has been prepared by Transcend Australia, AusPATH and LHA to provide clear, accessible information about the recent developments in gender-affirming care guidelines. Please feel free to share it with others who may benefit from this update.

About Transcend Australia

Transcend Australia is a national organisation supporting trans, gender diverse, and non-binary young people and their families through peer support, advocacy, and resources.

Founded in 2012, it was the first national family support network in Australia and continues to work towards improving access to gender-affirming care and strengthening protective factors for young people's wellbeing.

About AusPATH

The Australian Professional Association for Trans Health (AusPATH) is the national peak body for professionals working to improve trans health care through education, policy development, and research. Established in 2009 and renamed in 2019, AusPATH connects over 600 healthcare professionals, promotes best practice, and provides training to ensure trans people have access to high-quality, evidence-based care.

About LHA

LHA is the national peak organisation promoting the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people and communities. LHA is uniquely placed with membership across states and territories and strategically positioned to provide a national focus to improving the health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people.

Links

- [Australian Standards of Care and Treatment Guidelines for Trans and Gender Diverse Children and Adolescents](#)
- [NHMRC Guidelines](#)
- [Transcend Australia](#)
- [LGBTIQ+ services directory](#)
- [National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ People 2025–2035](#)
- MEDIA STATEMENT: [Health care for trans and gender diverse Australian children and adolescents](#)
- [Comments by The Hon Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care](#)
- MEDIA STATEMENT: [Independent Review into puberty blockers](#)
- [Clinical review and health service investigation into paediatric gender health services, Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service](#)
- [Terms of reference](#) for the Clinical Review into Paediatric Gender Health Services at the Cairns Sexual Health Service, CHHHS, scheduled to be completed by 30 April 2025.
- [Terms of reference](#) for the Health Service Investigation into Paediatric Gender Health Services at the Cairns Sexual Health Service, CHHHS, scheduled to be completed by 30 June 2025.