

# South Australian Women's Health Action Plan



Initiatives for 2010 and 2011



**Government of South Australia**

SA Health



# Background

The South Australian Women's Health Policy was launched by the Minister for Health in March 2005. The Policy aims to improve the health of all South Australian women and supports the priorities of South Australia's Strategic Plan 2007 and the SA Health Strategic Plan 2008-2010. Emphasis is on improving the health of women who have had the least access and experience the worst health outcomes, in particular Aboriginal women.

One of the key strategic directions of the SA Health Strategic Plan 2008-2010 is to strengthen primary health care by focussing on health protection and promotion; providing effective avenues for prevention and early intervention; facilitating effective coordination and continuity of care; minimising the burden of disease on the health system; and providing appropriate services closer to where people live.

As part of the GP Plus Health Care Strategy August 2007, GP Plus Health Networks have been established by regional health services to improve and integrate primary health care services. A key task for each Network is to produce a Health Improvement Plan for its geographical population. This process supports a population health and evidence-based approach to the planning, management and evaluation of service delivery to meet the priority population health needs. Central Northern Adelaide Health Service (CNAHS), Southern Adelaide Health Service (SAHS) and Country Health SA (CHSA) have commenced this process. The Children, Youth and Women's Health Service will not produce a separate Health Improvement Plan but instead will contribute to the plans prepared by CNAHS, SAHS and CHSA with respect to child and women's health. The regional health improvement planning process will incorporate gender-related analysis. This information will be used to assist in the identification of local health needs for women and gaps in service and be taken into account as part of the planning process for health services. The South Australian Women's Health Action Plan translates the South Australian Women's Health Policy into action and provides direction for planning, implementation and evaluation of health initiatives and services for women in South Australia and forms part of, and is consistent with, the strategic directions and planning processes outlined above.

Gender is a significant determinant of health and whilst women in Australia have a higher life expectancy than men, women are more likely to:

- > Earn less than men and be less financially secure
- > Undertake the majority of work in the home
- > Be discriminated against
- > Experience anxiety and depression
- > Undertake caring responsibilities for children, partners, parents and other family members
- > Be employed in casual, part time work
- > Experience violence from their partner
- > Be the victims of sexual assault including childhood sexual assault



Gender interacts with other significant determinants of health including Aboriginal status, race and culture, early life, education, employment, housing, physical and social environments and access to health services.

Biological factors account for differences in women's experiences of health, including risks for chronic diseases, for example osteoporosis, and some cancers, such as breast cancer. There are sexual and reproductive health issues that only affect women, such as pregnancy and gynaecological conditions, and sexually transmitted infections that affect women in particular ways.

The success of the Women's Health Action Plan depends on the partnership between the Department of Health, and the regional health services and the engagement of Statewide Clinical Networks. The regional health services within South Australia include Children, Youth and Women's Health Service, Central Northern Adelaide Health Service, Southern Adelaide Health Service and Country Health SA.

The Statewide Clinical Networks provide advice and leadership around particular health areas, develop evidence based models of care and have a monitoring role. Regional health services, including metropolitan and country women's health services, will continue to provide services and implement models of best practice in responding to women's health issues. Women's health services have a particular role in the development of best practice service models to meet the needs of women.

The Women's Health Action Plan Coordinating Group provides advice on the development, implementation and monitoring of the key initiatives within the South Australian Women's Health Action Plan. The South Australian Women's Health Action Plan: Initiatives for 2006/2007 was endorsed by the Minister for Health in August 2006. This Action Plan included 12 key initiatives focusing on the priority areas of the SA Women's Health Policy

All health regions have provided six monthly reports on their achievements against the indicators as part of their Health Service Performance Agreements. The reports were used to develop the Women's Health Action Plan Report Card, which was released in March 2009 by the Minister for Health.

To further implement the Women's Health Policy, the second Women's Health Action Plan has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders and endorsed by Portfolio Executive.

## Development and consultation process

Consultation on the development of the 2010 and 2011 Action Plan began early in 2009 and was undertaken with key stakeholders within the Department of Health, the health regions and the Office for Women and Premier's Council for Women. The progress of the 2006-2008 initiatives, new priorities for SA Health and emerging issues for women have been taken into consideration. In particular the focus of SA Health on the prevention, early intervention and treatment of chronic disease has seen this issue raised as a significant priority for the next Women's Health Action Plan.

The Women's Health Action Plan Coordinating Group also considered the following issues in planning for the development of the 2010 and 2011 Action Plan:

- > Key initiatives in the 2006-2008 Action Plan that require further work have been included in the 2010 and 2011 Action Plan.
- > Advice from Professor Ilona Kickbusch - Adelaide Thinker in Residence, in her report *Healthy Societies: Addressing 21 Century Health Challenges* (2008), on the importance of consideration of gender as a critical determinant of health in the 21Century and her recommendations on addressing body image and eating disorders.
- > Increased SA Health commitment to early intervention, illness prevention and health promotion.
- > SA Health Strategic Plan 2008-2010, focus on Aboriginal health, primary health care, mental health, partnerships and research.
- > Priorities identified in consultation and discussion papers for the second National Women's Health Policy.
- > The South Australian Men's Health Strategic Framework 2008-2012 is a complementary document to the South Australian Women's Health Policy and Action Plans, recognising the interconnection between men's and women's health and the significance of gender as a determinant of health.

The consultation process identified six key areas for inclusion in the 2010 and 2011 Action Plan to be implemented over a 2 year period:

- > Gender influences on health – addressing social determinants approach
- > Sexual and reproductive health
- > Women's safety and impact of violence on women's health
- > Mental health
- > Chronic disease prevention and self management
- > Aboriginal women's health



## Priority groups

Priority groups for all the key initiatives and strategies of the 2010 and 2011 Action Plan are:

- > Aboriginal women
- > Rural women
- > Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds including refugee women
- > Women who are socially and financially disadvantaged.
- > Women with disabilities
- > Women in prison

## The 2010 and 2011 initiatives at a glance

1. Application of gender analysis to health policy, service and program planning and evaluation by central health units, health regions and health services in South Australia.
2. Provision of gender sensitive mental health policies, services and programs that include specific strategies to reduce psychological distress of women and promote recovery of women from mental health problems.
3. Provision of sexual and reproductive health service and program responses for women with the least access and the poorest health outcomes.
4. Provision of health services that provide appropriate responses to women who have experienced violence, including sexual violence and the recognition of the impact of violence on women's mental health.
5. Provision of health services and programs that take into account gender issues in the planning, delivery and evaluation of chronic disease health promotion, early intervention and self management programs.
6. Improve the cultural responsiveness of health programs and services to meet the needs of Aboriginal women.

## Reporting & evaluation

The Women's Health Action Plan Coordinating Group will monitor the implementation of the South Australian Women's Health Policy.

The Coordinating Group includes representatives from:

- > Children, Youth and Women's Health Service
- > Central Northern Adelaide Health Service
- > Southern Adelaide Health Service
- > Country Health SA
- > Office for Women
- > Premier's Council for Women
- > Department of Health (including the Aboriginal Health Division)

Health regions will provide six monthly reports on their achievements in implementing the strategies within the Action Plan as part of performance reporting and these will be provided to the Health System Performance Indicators Committee. Information from the reports will also be used to develop a report card on the Women's Health Policy and Action Plan. The SA Women's Health Action Plan will also be reviewed in the light of the National Women's Health Policy when it is finalised.

**Enquires about this publication can be made by contacting:**

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# Key Initiative 1:

Application of gender analysis to health policy, service and program planning and evaluation by central health units, health regions and health services in South Australia.

## Women's Health Policy – Integrated Strategies and Drivers for Change

Gender influences the use of health services by women and impacts on women's health status. To achieve equitable outcomes for both women and men, health services must consider the different influences on women and men, recognising that the same treatment does not always yield equal results.

Strategies	Responsibility
<p><b>1.1 Promote use of gender analysis within SA Health.</b></p> <p>Gender impact assessment will allow SA Health to identify which aspects of their policies, programs or services impact on, or are affected by, the gendered nature of our society and institutions. A range of gender analysis tools are available and will be provided to SA Health to assist regional health services consider gender issues as part of the health improvement planning process and as part of service planning generally.</p>	<p>Department of Health – Statewide Service Strategy Division and Regional health services in partnership.</p>
<p><b>1.2 Regional health services to provide opportunities for professional development on the use of gender analysis tools.</b></p> <p>Training of relevant staff in regional health services will ensure that the gender impact assessment is incorporated at all levels of policy, service and program development.</p>	<p>Regional health services to provide leadership at local level.</p>

## Outcomes for Women:

- > Evidence-based policies and programs within regional health services are more sensitive to women's needs.
- > Women will experience a health system which is responsive to their lives, backgrounds and circumstances.

## Key Initiative 2:

Provision of gender sensitive mental health policies, services and programs that include specific strategies to reduce psychological distress of women and promote recovery of women from mental health problems.

### Women's Health Policy – Mental Health

The mental health system should take into account the particular needs and circumstances of women. There needs to be an emphasis on early intervention and a holistic approach to women's mental and emotional health that recognises the connection between physical, social and mental health.

Strategies	Responsibility
<p><b>2.1 Develop mental health policies and programs that address gender specific issues for women including the mental health effects of violence.</b></p> <p>A range of mental health policies and strategic guidelines are being developed centrally by the Department of Health. These will address gender specific issues for women and men. The impact of violence on women's mental health as a significant issue in women's experience of psychological distress and recovery will be identified.</p>	<p>Leadership by Mental Health Unit, Department of Health.</p> <p>Regional health services to lead and participate at the program level.</p>
<p><b>2.2 Develop a statewide report on current service responses to eating disorders and poor body image across South Australia and provide recommendations for future improvements in this area.</b></p> <p>A statewide report will provide recommendations for the prevention and treatment of eating disorders and the promotion of positive image for South Australians, ensuring age, gender and cultural considerations are taken into account. The project will also develop a synopsis of current service responses to eating disorders and poor body image across SA and guidelines for treatment that are evidence-based. Key partnerships will be identified and strengthened in relation to national and statewide strategies.</p>	<p>Leadership by Mental Health Unit, Department of Health.</p> <p>Regional health services to participate on Project Advisory Group.</p>

Key Initiative 2 continued

**2.2.3 Improve the prevention and early detection of antenatal and postnatal depression and provide better care, support and treatment for expectant and new mothers who experience depression, or who are at risk of experiencing depression.**

As part of the National Perinatal Depression Initiative, routine and universal screening for depression will be provided to all women during pregnancy and following birth. Clear and agreed pathways to care, support and treatment services will be developed for those who experience depression or who are at risk of experiencing depression. Further training for health professionals will be provided to help them screen expectant and new mothers to identify those who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, perinatal depression and provide or make referrals for appropriate treatment, care and support.

Mental Health Unit, Department of Health to work with Health regions to coordinate implementation of the NPDI.

**Outcomes for Women:**

- > Women will experience mental health services that are sensitive to gendered issues, including the mental health effects of violence.
- > Young girls and women will be able to access evidence-based services that provide appropriate pathways for treatment and referral for eating disorders.
- > As part of routine perinatal services, women will be screened for depression and provided with access to appropriate care, support and treatment.

## Key Initiative 3:

Provision of sexual and reproductive health service and program responses for women with the least access and the poorest health outcomes.

### Women’s Health Policy – Access to Health Services and Reproductive Rights

Health service development and delivery will be responsive to women’s needs, flexible in approach and respectful of women’s rights. Access to women’s health and sexual and reproductive services will be effectively coordinated, so that women receive holistic, integrated care.

Strategies	Responsibility
<p><b>3.1 Develop best practice standards for termination of pregnancy services in South Australia and a plan for implementation for all public health services that provide termination of pregnancy services.</b></p> <p>Development and implementation of best practice standards will encourage a consistent standard in the accessibility and quality of termination of pregnancy services provided in public health settings. This applies to clinical practice and the structures and functions that impact on a woman’s personal experience of the service including timeliness, length of stay, post-termination of pregnancy care and support services.</p>	<p>Leadership by Department of Health – Statewide Service Strategy Division with the SA Maternal and Neonatal Clinical Network.</p> <p>Regional health services to participate on State Advisory Committee to develop standards.</p> <p>Regional health services to develop plan for implementation.</p>
<p><b>3.2 Ensure the continued provision of women’s specific health services to rural women.</b></p> <p>Rural women’s health services are maintained and adequately staffed and resourced.</p>	<p>Leadership by Country Health SA.</p>
<p><b>3.3 Develop an evidence based, gynaecological oncology pathway, incorporating clinical and supportive care requirements for SA and NT women with gynaecological cancers, their families and carers.</b></p> <p>This pathway will encourage a consistent standard in the accessibility and quality of care for women with gynaecological cancer.</p>	<p>Leadership by Department of Health - Statewide Service Strategy Division with Statewide Cancer Clinical Network.</p>

### Outcomes for Women:

- > Women will experience a consistently high standard of care when accessing sexual and reproductive health services within South Australia.
- > Rural women will have access to specific women’s health services irrespective of where they live.

## Key Initiative 4:

Provision of health services that provide appropriate responses to women who have experienced violence, including sexual violence and the recognition of the impact of violence on women’s mental health.

### Women’s Health Policy – Women’s Safety

Health services will develop policies and guidelines to promote women’s safety, provide immediate responses when needed and link women to a range of services and community support. Mental health services should be sensitive to the needs of women who have experienced violence.

Strategies	Responsibility
<p><b>4.1 Publication of <i>Best Practice Guidelines on Responding to women who have experienced sexual violence</i> and implementation of Guidelines within health regions.</b></p> <p>Standards of best practice will include the development of a minimum standard of skills. The health system workforce will receive training to recognise and respond appropriately to women who have been raped and sexually assaulted. Regions will develop a process for implementation.</p>	<p>Publication of guidelines by Children, Youth &amp; Women’s Health Service and Department of Health.</p> <p>Regional health services to develop implementation plan.</p>
<p><b>4.2 Increase professional development opportunities for mental health workers on working with women who have experienced violence.</b></p> <p>Increase use of evidence based counselling models that address the impact of gendered violence on women’s mental health.</p>	<p>Department of Health Mental Health Unit leadership.</p> <p>Regional health services participation and provision of training.</p>
<p><b>4.3 Participate in the SA Health response to the Family Safety Strategy.</b></p> <p>SA Health regional health services are participating as partners, in the implementation of the Family Safety Strategy led by Office for Women.</p>	<p>Regional health services participation.</p>

### Outcomes for Women:

> Women’s experience of violence will be validated and responded to in an appropriate and timely manner.

# Key Initiative 5:

Provision of health services and programs that take into account gender issues in the planning, delivery and evaluation of chronic disease health promotion, early intervention and self management programs.

## Women’s Health Policy: Integrated Strategies

Chronic diseases are state and national health priority areas and health services will be required to demonstrate that services and strategies designed to impact on these health issues include specific gendered approaches and responses to women.

Strategies	Responsibility
<p><b>5.1 Inclusion of gender specific data in policy and program material on chronic disease and risk factors developed by SA Health.</b>            Gender specific data on prevalence and burden of disease should be included for all chronic diseases and considered in the development of all prevention, early intervention and treatment policies.</p>	<p>Department of Health leadership – Statewide Service Strategy Division.            Regional health service implementation.</p>
<p><b>5.2 Development of gender sensitive service models for chronic disease prevention and self management by women’s health services and mainstream primary health care services.</b>            Gender analysis on relevant chronic disease prevention will be included as a component of the development of Health Improvement Plans by the GP Plus Health Networks established at the regional level.</p>	<p>Department of Health leadership – Statewide Service Strategy Division.            Regional health services to implement as part of health improvement planning process.</p>
<p><b>5.3 Development and distribution of information on women and chronic disease to increase awareness of gender influences on risk factors for chronic disease and experience of chronic disease.</b>            Resources will be developed and distributed by regional health services to increase awareness of the impact of gender as a significant determinant of health and influence on women’s experience of chronic disease.</p>	<p>Department of Health leadership – Statewide Service Strategy Division and            Regional health services in partnership.</p>

## Outcomes for Women:

- > Women at risk or living with a chronic disease will be able to access programs and services that are responsive to their lives, backgrounds and circumstances.
- > Women will experience improved physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

## Key Initiative 6:

Improve the cultural responsiveness of health programs and services to meet the needs of Aboriginal women.

### Women's Health Policy - Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing

The Women's Health Policy recognises the imperative to improve the health of Aboriginal women who have experienced unacceptable levels of poor health for too long. All health services will commit to the provision of Aboriginal specific health services for women that respect their culture and rights. There will be a specific emphasis on increasing the full participation and leadership of Aboriginal women in the health system and Aboriginal communities. .

Strategies	Responsibility
<p><b>6.1 Apply Aboriginal Health Impact Statement to all women's health programs and services.</b></p> <p>It is a requirement that all programs and services apply an Aboriginal Health Impact Statement and this should include the consideration of women specific issues</p>	Department of Health and all regional health services.
<p><b>6.2 Develop good practice guidelines in relation to gender in supporting recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff.</b></p> <p>Increasing recruitment and retention of Aboriginal women in the health workforce will require specific strategies that acknowledge the multiple roles within Aboriginal women's lives as paid and unpaid workers, advocates, volunteers and carers.</p>	Department of Health, Aboriginal Health Division -Aboriginal Health Workforce Development Team and all regional health services.
<p><b>6.3 Plan and implement models of accessible and appropriate perinatal care for Aboriginal women and their families.</b></p> <p>A Framework of Care For Aboriginal Women and Women from Low Socio-economic Areas 'Preconception, Antenatal and Early Childhood' has been developed and year one priority actions will be implemented. The Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Care worker program will be implemented in rural South Australia and developed across metropolitan Adelaide.</p>	Department of Health, Health Promotion Branch leadership with SA Maternal and Neonatal Clinical Network.  Regional health service implementation. Country Health SA with Children, Youth and Women's Health Service for Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Care Program.

### Outcomes for Women:

> Aboriginal women have access to an appropriate and accessible health care system that is respectful of their culture and rights.



For more information

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