



Australian Preterm and Early Term Birth Prevention Program

Every Week Counts
Round 2 Announcement

Issue 1 | April 2025

\$5.3 Million in Funding to Expand National Preterm Birth Prevention Program

The Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance, Women's Healthcare Australasia, and its partners, have warmly welcomed the awarding of **\$5.3 million in Federal Government funding to expand the Every Week Counts Australian Preterm and Early Term Birth Prevention Program.**

The announcement, made last week by the Assistant Minister for Health, The Hon Ged Kearney, continues the Commonwealth's long-standing commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of Australian women and their babies. Key areas of focus for the second phase include: partnering with women and families to support information decision-making, early pregnancy screening for preterm birth risk factors, safely prolonging pregnancy by reducing early term caesareans or inductions, and implementing culturally safe continuity of care models for First Nations women and babies.

Chair of the Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance, Professor John Newnham, said the continuation of funding will enable the Commonwealth-funded Australian Preterm and Early Term Birth Prevention Program to improve pregnancy outcomes for more women across the country.

"These teams have generously shared ideas, know-how and data with each other on how to support more women to safely continue their pregnancy to 39 weeks. Together they have already averted more than 4,000 untimely early births, making a big impact on the lives of those children and their families."



"The Alliance and WHA will be working in partnership with maternity consumers, First Nations leaders jurisdiction partners and maternity hospitals across Australia to ensure Australia is the world's first nation to strategically and safely lower its rate of untimely and harmful early birth."



CEO of Women's Healthcare Australasia, Dr Barb Vernon, said the renewed funding for the National Program will spread best practice prevention care to even more maternity hospitals across the country.

"Unfortunately, First Nations babies are twice as likely as non-indigenous babies to be born too early," Dr Vernon said. "We know we need to expand access to culturally safe and trauma-informed maternity care services, co-designed and delivered with First Nations communities and healthcare professionals if we are serious about addressing this inequity."

[Read full article here](#)

Trust, meaningful conversations key to improving First Nations preterm birth outcomes

Dr Kiarna Brown is a proud First Nations Obstetrician and Gynaecologist living and working on Larrakia Country in the Northern Territory. As Lead of the Top End chapter of the Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance, Dr Brown has written this Op Ed as part of National Close the Gap Day 2025 (Thursday, 20 March).



Easily one of the proudest moments of my life was walking out of Hospital with my first-born baby in my arms. I remember it so vividly. I'd had a smooth pregnancy and a great birth. My bouncing baby boy was three days old when we left the hospital. He was healthy and I genuinely felt like the cat that got the cream as I walked the hospital corridors to my car.

There are few times in my life when I have felt that happy. Sadly, this is not the case for everyone. As an Obstetrician working in the Northern Territory, I see the devastating effects of babies born too early far too often. Preterm birth is the definition given to babies born alive before 37 weeks of pregnancy are completed. It remains the single greatest cause of childhood death and disability in Australia.

Despite the broad improvements seen in reducing rates of early birth across the country through the Every Week Counts National Preterm Birth Prevention Program, these positive outcomes have not as yet extended to First Nations women.

[Read full article here](#)



First Nations Leaders Gather for Yarning Circle

The recent First Nations Yarning Circle, led by Professor Cath Chamberlain, aimed to seek advice from First Nations leaders and experts on the critical steps maternity services across Australia need to take in order to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and families have access to culturally safe, trauma-informed maternity care. The insights gained will guide the next phase of the National Preterm Birth Prevention Program, supporting hospitals to adopt Aboriginal-led, culturally safe models of care and ultimately improving outcomes for First Nations families across Australia.

[Read more here](#)

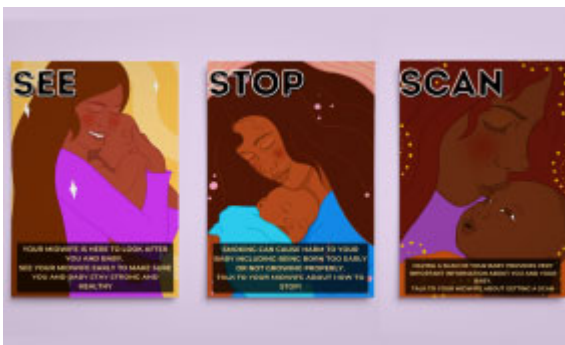
Meet the team preventing preterm birth for women of Western Australia

The Preterm Birth Prevention Clinic established at King Edward Memorial Hospital has played a foundational role in Australia's world-leading national preterm birth prevention program.

In 2024, the clinic saw more than 240 women identified as being at increased risk of early birth. Servicing remote locations such as Port Headland, Karratha, Esperance and Christmas Islands via telehealth, the team is able to engage pregnant women as early as 7 weeks gestation to begin their care plans.



[Meet the team](#)



'See, Stop, Scan' key to ensuring best pregnancy outcomes for First Nations mums and bubs

This innovative campaign being led out of the Top End features posters, DL flyers and information sheets for antenatal clinics and GP clinics, offering the following advice:

See: See your midwife early to make sure both you and baby stay strong and healthy.

Stop: Smoking can cause harm to your baby, increasing the risk of being born too early or not growing properly.

Scan: Having a scan of your baby in the second trimester to provide very important information about you and your baby.

[Find out more here](#)

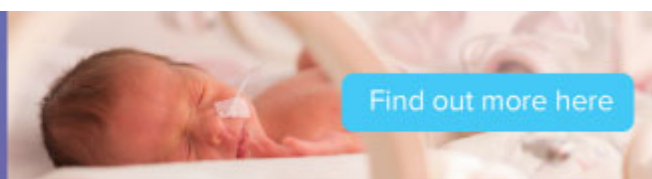
From pandemic to preterm birth: Skye and Anastasia's story

An emergency induction. First time mother. Global pandemic. The perfect storm appeared to unfold for Skye Leahy and her husband Sean for their birth of their daughter, Anastasia in 2020.

[Read Skye & Anastasia's Story](#)



Key Dates
and Information



[Find out more here](#)



Australian Preterm
and Early Term Birth
Prevention Program



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ALLIANCE



WOMEN'S
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AUSTRALASIA



Institute for
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Our Partners

The Every Week Counts Australian Preterm and Early Term Birth Prevention Program is a partnership with clinical leadership from the Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance, quality improvement and administration leadership from Women's Healthcare Australasia and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), which is being funded by the Commonwealth Government through the Women's Healthcare Australasia.

Partner organisations include Menzies School of Health Research, Clinical Excellence Queensland, Clinical Excellence Commission, Safer Care Victoria, SA Health, King Edward Memorial Hospital, Women's and Babies Research, Every Week Counts, Centre of Research Excellence in Stillbirth, and the Perinatal Society of Australia and New Zealand.

For further information please contact Women's Healthcare Australasia

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