

WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

There has been a delay in diagnosis of non-communicable and/or chronic conditions in Australian women over the course of the pandemic.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ISSUE:

Australian women often go undiagnosed, or have delayed diagnosis, of chronic illnesses and cancers.



Photo by [Joel Muniz](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Chronic illnesses, such as endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), and cancers, such as cervical and breast, have been limited in screenings and diagnoses. This has impacted women in Australia with an inability to get appropriate treatment and symptom management.

Though there has been some effort to increasing tests performed for screenings, women want to have more information about their health, including chronic illnesses. As symptoms vary by individual and severity, women are sometimes unaware of what is considered an abnormal symptom and therefore are misdiagnosed, delayed in diagnosis or remain undiagnosed until much later in life.

**2-3 KEY USERS:**

Lynette is a 40-year-old women who is suffering from painful periods at irregular intervals.

Amani is a 26-year-old student with a history of breast cancer in her family.

Emma has just turned 35 and been diagnosed with PCOS.

**2-3 POINT OF VIEW STATEMENTS:**

Lynette is getting more worried about her periods; this is the first month she's had to take time off work because of how debilitating the pain got.

Amani is unsure when she is meant to start regular screenings and checks for cervical or breast cancers.

Emma is worried about her future with PCOS management. She has been told that PCOS could trigger other health problems, particularly as it is such a late diagnosis.

KEY IMAGES: (2-3 key images with annotation)

Chronic reproductive conditions

Average of

7-12

years time between the onset of symptoms and diagnosis of endometriosis (Commonwealth Department of Health 2018).

1 in 9

women born between 1973 and 1978 were diagnosed with endometriosis by age 40-44 (AIHW 2019).

1 in 15

women born between 1989 and 1995 were diagnosed with endometriosis by age 25-29 (AIHW 2019).

8-13%

of women of reproductive age are estimated to be affected by PCOS (Monash University 2018).

Data of middle ages and reproductive years showing estimated average ages of ongoing symptoms and diagnosis.
Source: State Government of Victoria, Victorian Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan (2022-30)

INDUSTRY SECTORS:

GP clinics

Women's health clinics (breast/cervical screen)

Public & private health sectors

Specialist clinics

"Guaranteed timely access for all women to comprehensive coordinated prevention and life-long care, ensuring world-class health outcomes."

"To ensure that all women in Australia are clear on what the issues are that affect their health, how they can go about getting screening, diagnosis and the relevant treatment."

"Causes and consequences of gender inequality to be recognised, understood and used to inform all elements of the health system..."

"Any woman, irrespective of age, cultural background, socioeconomic conditions, or geographic location, can access information on any mental health or general health condition concerning them, has no barrier such as stigma or remote location preventing access to treatment and support, where the focus is on early intervention, integrated care, relapse prevention, and where affordability is not an issue."

"Holistic, integrated biopsychosocial approach to preventing ill health and managing it effectively when it occurs."

"Address the leading causes of death and disability for women using a comprehensive life-course approach... with a specific focus on the social determinants of health and equality for all women!"

"Gender-sensitive services that treat women holistically, encompassing all aspects of herself, not just the disorder she presents with - across the life course from pre-conception to old age."

"Make the health system more efficient by connecting key services - health promotion, prevention, treatment and care - so it is seamless for all women and girls."

Summary of What Women Want, as per the National Woman's Health Strategy 2020-2030. These themes contribute to the foundations of this opportunity card and how women are invested in their health and are now communicating their wants and needs in Australian healthcare.

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