

MEDIA RELEASE

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New support for local women with endometriosis and pelvic pain

Today The Hon Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care announced the first ACT Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain GP Clinic. The ACT's clinic will be run by Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT (SHFPACT) coordinating expert, multidisciplinary services and care for endometriosis and pelvic pain. This is one of 20 new clinics across Australia that were announced today.

"Too many women suffer for years with what we know can be debilitating conditions. They deserve better access to specialised care. These clinics are about providing women with an accessible front door to the care that they need. Gathering expertise under one roof, fostering that knowledge to improve diagnosis and services, having referral pathways in place – these are all crucial elements to getting the support that women need right," said Assistant Minister Ged Kearney MP.

SHFPACT Executive Director Tim Bavinton said the new ACT Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain GP Clinic will be able to support people living with endometriosis and pelvic pain.

"We're looking forward to assisting the primary health care system here in the Canberra region to provide a better response to the need in the community. We have some great clinicians and great services that are over demanded and overwhelmed and we're looking forward to assisting everybody to step with confidence into this area of complex healthcare," said Mr Bavinton.

Endometriosis affects at least 1 in 9 Australian women and can have an extensive, devastating impact on the daily lives of sufferers, with many waiting years before diagnosis.

"When I first presented at my GP 30 years ago I was prescribed a high dose oral contraceptive pill. That was considered treatment and that was considered management of problem periods. I spent close to 20 years trying to find out exactly what was wrong with me. It wasn't until I was in my 30s that I had adequate treatment and realised that I had endometriosis and was then given appropriate care. In that time it was swings and roundabouts, trying to find clinicians who not only recognised and understood what was going on for me but who could then provide adequate care," said Erin Smith.

Capital Health Network (CHN) CEO Megan Cahill said SHFPACT will receive over \$700,000 over four years to support the employment of specialised staff, including medical, nursing and allied health professionals, investment in equipment or fit-outs such as pelvic physiotherapy areas, as well as resources, training and development.

"The clinics will strengthen what is often the first point of contact in the health system to reduce diagnostic delays and promote early access to multi-disciplinary intervention, care and treatment. The clinics will also raise awareness of endometriosis and pelvic pain, build professional knowledge and skills in this area, and improve access to information and care pathways," said Ms Cahill.

CHN is supporting the ACT Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain GP Clinic with funding through the Australian Government's PHN Program. It will be located at SHFPACT, 28 University Ave, Canberra City. Phone 6247 3077.