

SENATE MENOPAUSE INQUIRY: SUBMISSION GUIDE

Menopause and perimenopause is not spoken about much publicly, **but more needs to be done to understand its impacts on women and people who menstruate.**

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Menopause can impact more than physical health and financial circumstances - there can be significant impacts on mental health, personal relationships, in the workplace and on a person's quality of life. **The gendered cost of treatment is yet another financial burden faced predominantly by women**, on top of the costs of a lifetime of menstruation.

We need more awareness both by GPs and by patients of the symptoms of peri and menopause, so that people know what treatments are available to them, and make them affordable.

HOW TO MAKE A SUBMISSION?

Writing a submission doesn't have to be daunting, and this guide will help you. Even a few sentences about your personal experience will have a big impact. Firstly, write your submission using the guidelines and tips on the following pages.

You can then either submit it via email to community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au or via the online portal following the steps below. **Note that if you email your submission, it will be published online unless you specifically request that it remain confidential.**

Submissions can be made until Friday 15 March 2024. After submissions close a series of public hearings will be held to take evidence from some submissions. The Committee will then incorporate evidence from submissions and the hearings into its report, which is due 10 September 2024.

- ▲ Register at <https://www.aph.gov.au/Help/Registerinordertomakeasubmission> (and confirm your registration by clicking the link that is emailed to you).
- ▲ Login at https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/OnlineSubmission/Submit (if you aren't already) and select 'Issues related to menopause and perimenopause', click 'next'.
- ▲ Confirm whether you are making a personal submission or submitting on behalf of an organisation.
- ▲ Fill in your contact details and click 'next'.
- ▲ Select whether you wish for your name and/or submission to remain confidential. If you don't select this, it will be published online on the committee's website.
- ▲ Upload your file (it can be a pdf, doc, docx or txt file).

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WHAT TO WRITE / TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Senate inquiry is looking to gather information on **all issues related to menopause and perimenopause**, with particular reference to the following topics:

a) the economic consequences of menopause and perimenopause, including but not limited to, reduced workforce participation, productivity and retirement planning;

- How has peri/menopause impacted you at work?
- Have you faced issues in your workplace that have impacted your ability to do your job, to apply for promotions, or forced you to plan your retirement sooner than you wanted?
- Have you had to pay for any physical/mental healthcare services or other support due to peri/menopause? Can you afford it?
- What kind of costs have you had, and how have they impacted you?

b) the physical health impacts, including menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms, associated medical conditions such as menorrhagia, and access to healthcare services;

- How has peri/menopause impacted your physical health?
- What's your experience been seeking healthcare support for those issues; have you struggled to get access to the healthcare you need, to be believed by healthcare professionals, or to know where to go for support?

c) the mental and emotional well-being of individuals experiencing menopause and perimenopause, considering issues like mental health, self-esteem, and social support;

- How has peri/menopause impacted your mental health and self esteem?
- Have you been able to seek mental health support?
- How long did it take to find the support you needed?
- Have you felt rage, depression, self-doubt, or anxiety more so than usual for you?

d) the impact of menopause and perimenopause on caregiving responsibilities, family dynamics, and relationships;

- How has peri/menopause impacted your family and relationships?
- If you are close to someone experiencing peri/menopause, how have their symptoms and experiences impacted your relationship?

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e) the cultural and societal factors influencing perceptions and attitudes toward menopause and perimenopause, including specifically considering culturally and linguistically diverse communities and women's business in First Nations communities;

f) the level of awareness amongst medical professionals and patients of the symptoms of menopause and perimenopause and the treatments, including the affordability and availability of treatments;

- How much did you know about peri/menopause before visiting a GP or other medical professional?
- How much did your GP or other medical professional know about peri/menopause?
- Did you have to visit multiple GPs or other medical professionals before you felt heard?

g) the level of awareness amongst employers and workers of the symptoms of menopause and perimenopause, and the awareness, availability and usage of workplace supports;

- Have you faced issues in your workplace with receiving the support you need?
- Have you experienced colleagues or your employer saying inappropriate or inaccurate things about people experiencing menopause?
- Have you felt comfortable being open about peri/menopause with your employer?
- What has your experience been when you've spoken about the issues you've been experiencing?
- Have you experienced discrimination?
- What concerns do you have about raising your needs at work?
- Have you felt sidelined for promotions or other opportunities due to your peri/menopause, or simply because you are a woman of a certain age?

h) existing Commonwealth, state and territory government policies, programs, and healthcare initiatives addressing menopause and perimenopause;

i) how other jurisdictions support individuals experiencing menopause and perimenopause from a health and workplace policy perspective; and any other related matter.

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TIPS FOR WRITING A STRONG SUBMISSION

When crafting your submission, keep the following tips in mind:

- ▲ Clearly address some or all of the terms of reference, focusing on the aspects that resonate with your experience (you do not need to address each one).
- ▲ Ensure your submission is relevant and highlights your personal and/or professional experience. Be clear about the physical, emotional and financial impacts of your experience.
- ▲ Keep your submission concise - submissions can be as short as a few paragraphs, and up to four to five pages at most.
- ▲ Begin with a brief introduction about yourself or the organisation you represent.
- ▲ Clearly emphasise your key points, ensuring the most important information is not buried.
- ▲ Outline potential solutions, as the committee seeks innovative ideas from submissions to form recommendations.
- ▲ Include only documents that directly relate to your key points.
- ▲ Only include information that you are comfortable seeing published on the internet.

If you'd like to hear more from us and get involved in our campaigns for women's equality, sign up here: <https://greens.org.au/campaigns/menopause-inquiry>.