



Australian Government  
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

# OFFICE FOR WOMEN

## National Report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Office for Women 2024

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# Introduction

Australia welcomes the opportunity to submit our National Review on Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 'Beijing+30 Report' (the Report) for the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). This report covers from 1 May 2019 to 1 June 2024.

In March 2024, the Australian Government launched the country's first national strategy with an explicit focus on achieving gender equality. [\*Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality\*](#) (the Working for Women Strategy) is a ten-year plan to shift the dial on gender equality. The Working for Women Strategy was developed in consultation with the Australian public. This Report has also been drafted alongside Australia's 9<sup>th</sup> periodic Report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Report) which will be submitted in September 2024.

The Australian Government (also referred to as the federal government in this report) works closely with states and territories on measures to progress gender equality. This Report focuses on the Australian Government's actions at a national level.

# Australia's gender equality achievements and priorities

## Australia's Gender Equality Priorities

The Australian Government is committed to creating a better, gender equal Australia for everyone. Australia's ambitious reform agenda is being delivered in partnership with state and territory governments and guided by consultation with the Australian public, civil society organisations, and First Nations communities.<sup>1</sup>

### *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality*

Australia's first ever national strategy to achieve gender equality, [\*Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality\*](#) (Working for Women Strategy),<sup>2</sup> was released in March 2024 and guides whole-of-community action to prioritise actions to achieve a gender-equal society. The Working for Women Strategy outlines where the Government will focus its efforts over the next decade to achieve its vision – an Australia where people are safe, treated with respect, have choices and access to resources, and equal outcomes no matter their gender. The Working for Women Strategy sets out a path to gender equality, with a focus on driving action in 5 priority areas:

1. ending gender-based violence,
2. unpaid and paid care,
3. economic equality and security,
4. health, and
5. leadership, representation and decision-making.<sup>3</sup>

It identifies the work underway to deliver on these priorities, as well as areas where the Government intends to focus its attention and future reforms. The Working for Women Strategy recognises addressing gender attitudes and stereotypes as a foundation that underpins each of the Strategy's priority areas. It also recognises that change is needed at a community level as Government alone cannot change individual attitudes.

To inform the Working for Women Strategy, the Government consulted with people around Australia to ensure their diverse voices were heard and included. Consultations reached people with lived experience of gender inequality, First Nations people, people with disability, people who are LGBTQIA+,

<sup>1</sup> In this report, First Nations people, Indigenous people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are used interchangeably. See Australia's Common Core Document (2023) for further information.

<sup>2</sup> The Australian Government, [\*Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality\*](#) (2024).

<sup>3</sup> The Australian Government, [\*Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality – Priority Area 5: Leadership representation and decision-making\*](#), 2024.

migrant and refugee people, those living in regional and remote areas, and people from all backgrounds.

### *An overview: Australia's domestic gender equality priorities*

The Working for Women Strategy supports the work of similar plans at the state and territory level and complements other Australian Government efforts to achieve gender equality. This includes significant national commitments on women's safety and health, led through the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (the National Plan) and the *National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030* (National Women's Health Strategy).

Rates of violence against women in Australia have remained alarmingly high over recent decades, despite increased efforts across the country. In October 2022, the Australian federal government and state and territory governments released the National Plan to guide action to achieve the goal of ending violence in one generation, supported by the *First Action Plan* and dedicated *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025*. The National Plan is supported by \$3.4 billion in federal funding commitments against the Plan.<sup>4</sup>

Significant legislative, policy and structural reforms for gender equality have been implemented in recent years. Since 2022 this has included:

- a. reintroducing gender responsive budgeting, including gender impact assessments, to the federal Budget process, whereby policymakers are now required to consider and outline the gender impact of all new proposals - gender impact assessment informed the design of the Government's recent tax cuts;<sup>5</sup>
- b. making the Government's Paid Parental Leave scheme longer, more flexible, accessible and gender equitable, including by committing to pay superannuation on the payment, sending a strong signal that both parents play a role in caring for their children;
- c. improving transparency and reporting on the gender pay gap by amending the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth) enabling the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) to publish the gender pay gap of employers with 100 or more employees, as well as including the Commonwealth public sector in workplace gender equality reporting.
- d. improving affordability of early childhood education and care and investing in childcare accessibility for First Nations families;

<sup>4</sup> All financial amounts in this report are in Australian Dollars.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Gender Responsive Budgeting: Including gender analysis in budget proposals*, PM&C Website, n.d.

- e. investing to better value paid care work and feminised industries, through reforming aged care, early childhood education and care, veterans' care and disability support to create a sustainable and productive care and support economy that delivers quality care and support with quality jobs;
- f. putting gender equality at the heart of the workplace relations system, making gender equality an objective of the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) (Fair Work Act), banning pay secrecy, legislating a statutory equal remuneration principle and establishing an Expert Panel on Pay Equity in the Fair Work Commission – these changes have supported two increases in the minimum wage;
- g. supporting skills development and improving representation of women in sectors where they are most underrepresented by including targets for women in apprenticeships, traineeships, and paid cadetships on major Australian Government funded construction and information communication technology projects through the Australian Skills Guarantee, and prioritising women through the National Skills Agreement, and fee free TAFE;
- h. investing in women's reproductive health by establishing endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics in every state and territory to provide women with access to experts and care they need, including improved diagnosis and services, and existing referral pathways, and reforming Australia's national health safety net – Medicare – to provide longer, more affordable consultations with general practitioners and gynaecologists and to make medicine cheaper;
- i. improving representation of women in parliament, where in the 47th Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 44.5 per cent of seats across both chambers are held by women – the highest recorded number of women in an Australian parliament; both the Federal Government and the Cabinet are gender equal;
- j. ensuring women and girls are safe online by expanding the powers of the eSafety Commissioner to empower the Commissioner to require social media companies and other digital platforms to remove serious online abuse;
- k. recommitting to and strengthening targets for the representation of women on government board and advisory bodies; and
- l. challenging misogynistic behaviours through national primary prevention campaigns targeted at driving attitudinal changes to eliminate violence against women and children.

Gender equality is a core value across Australia's foreign policy, international development, humanitarian assistance, security and trade efforts. Aligned to Australia's *International Development Policy*, Australia has a target that 80 per cent of overseas development investments effectively address gender equality, and a requirement that all investments over \$3 million have a gender equality

objective.<sup>6</sup> Australia's international gender equality priorities are (i) enhancing women's voice, mobilisation and leadership; (ii) advancing women's economic equality and inclusive trade; (iii) responding to and eliminating all forms of sexual and gender-based violence; (iv) delivering equitable education and health outcomes; (v) taking gender-responsive climate action; and (vi) implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

### *Australia's implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals*

Australia supports implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed by all UN Member States in 2015 as a global roadmap for sustainable development. Australia is making progress on the SDGs in a manner appropriate for our national circumstances and Federal system of government with:

- lead departments nominated for each SDG at the Commonwealth Level; and
- state, territory and local governments taking forward Goals and Targets relevant to their mandates and priorities, including the integration of the SDGs into policies, strategies, and programs led by their government agencies.

### *Prioritising Marginalised Communities*

Diverse groups of women in Australian society are more vulnerable to discrimination, poverty and violence than others, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, LGBTIQ+ people and women living with disability.

#### *First Nations*

Despite struggle and determination, the experiences and voices of First Nations women and girls have been excluded from historical efforts to advance gender equality. For First Nations women, gender inequality intersects with the impact of racism and ongoing injustice. The prejudice and systemic disadvantage that First Nations women face stem from the specific combination of gendered and racist assumptions. This is reflected in First Nations women experiencing alarming rates of violence, having unequal access to safe and culturally appropriate health care and education, being over-represented in the justice system and their children being over-represented in child protection and out-of-home-care, and facing socio-economic disparities.

The [\*Wiyi Yani U Thangani \(Women's Voices\) Report\*](#), [implementation framework](#) and [First Nations Gender Justice Institute](#) aims to elevate First Nations women and girls' voices, leadership,

<sup>6</sup>DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), [Australia's International Development Policy](#), DFAT, Australian Government, 2023.

determination and human rights in recognition of the intergenerational exclusion of their voices and experiences across the policy landscape.<sup>7</sup> It is underpinned by the principles outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of self-determination, participation in decision-making, respect for and protection of culture, and equality and non-discrimination. It builds on the first ever national consultation with First Nations women commissioned by the then Office for the Status of Women in 1986. The *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* is a commitment between governments and First Nations peoples to work in partnership to improve life outcomes for First Nations people. This agreement recognises the needs of First Nations women and girls, particularly in shared decision-making.<sup>8</sup> In addition to this, the dedicated *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan*, under the National Plan, is guiding immediate efforts on ending violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and provides a strong foundation for a standalone First Nations National Plan to keep women and families safe.<sup>9</sup>

### *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women*

The Australian Government recognises that women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may experience barriers in accessing health facilities, services and information. In Australia, proficiency in spoken English has an impact on women's personal income, with 86 per cent of women who spoke English *not well or not at all*, reporting a total weekly personal income of \$799 or below (or \$41,599 or below annually).<sup>10</sup> Women with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, often face barriers to advancing their careers through leadership in Australia.

The Australian Government acknowledges that women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities may also experience specific forms of gender-based violence that relate to other intersecting forms of inequality and discrimination, and may also include culturally specific norms about gender and relationships.<sup>11</sup> The National Plan highlights the need for tailored, culturally appropriate services and supports for diverse communities, including for men who seek to address their use of violence.<sup>12</sup>

### *Migrant and Refugee Women*

Migrant women face particular challenges relating to the formal recognition of overseas education, qualifications and skills and the need for access to childcare supports. As a result, migrant and refugee

<sup>7</sup> The Australian Human Rights Commission, *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Report*, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> The Australian Government, *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Social Services (DSS), *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025*, DSS, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>10</sup> ABS, *2021 Census of Population and Housing [TableBuilder]*, accessed 4 October 2023

<sup>11</sup> Department of Social Services, *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*, DSS, Australian Government, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Social Services, *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*, DSS, Australian Government, 2022.



women are more likely to work in low income, low skill and insecure jobs.<sup>13</sup> Migrant and refugee women also have a higher unemployment rate at 4.5 per cent compared to the overall women's unemployment rate of 3.4 per cent.<sup>14</sup> The Australian Government recognises the challenges faced by migrant and refugee women and provides a range of support services to facilitate their settlement in Australia. This includes the Adult Migrant English Program, a voluntary program that delivers up to 510 hours of basic English tuition to eligible migrants, refugee and humanitarian clients who do not have functional English.<sup>15</sup>

Migrant and refugee women, particularly temporary visa holders, may experience specific forms of family and domestic violence, including perpetrators using a women's visa status to control and abuse them.<sup>16</sup> The Government understands that women on temporary visas may not access support services for violence due to fears that doing so will affect their ability to stay in Australia. In recognition of this, the Australian Government established the Temporary Visa Holder Experiencing Violence Pilot (TVP) in 2021 to provide eligible temporary visa holders experiencing family and domestic violence with financial assistance packages for goods and services and access to legal advice for migration and family law.<sup>17</sup>

More information about the TVP can be found in section D – Violence against women.

### *Women with Disability*

The Government recognises that women with disabilities in Australia experience disproportionately worse outcomes compared with men and women without disabilities, in employment, pay equity, health and safety, and leadership. For example, women with disabilities are less likely to work, with 50.7 per cent of women with disabilities aged 15-64 years participating in the workforce, compared to 79.7 per cent of women without disabilities<sup>18</sup>. Women with disabilities are more likely to have experienced violence since the age of 15 (46 per cent) than women without disabilities (33 per cent)<sup>19</sup>. Chronic conditions are the leading cause of illness, disability and death in Australia – 41.3 per cent of women with 1 of 8 specific chronic health conditions (including coronary heart disease, diabetes and asthma) have disabilities, compared with 37.6 per cent of men<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), *Gender equality and intersecting forms of diversity*, WGEA, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024), *Labour Force Detailed February 2024* [TableBuilder], ABS website, 2024.

<sup>15</sup> Department of Home Affairs (DHA), *Getting Settled - Women Refugees in Australia*, DHA, Australian Government, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Department of Social Services, *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*, DSS, Australian Government, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Department of Social Services (DSS), *Increasing financial support for visa holders experiencing violence*, DSS, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Disability and the Labour Force 2018, Table 1.3, released 24 July 2020, accessed 14 May 2024.

<sup>19</sup> AIHW calculations using ABS data, Experience of violence - Safety, rights and justice, Sex and gender, last updated 30 November 2022, accessed 14 May 2024.

<sup>20</sup> AIHW, *People with disability in Australia, Chronic conditions and disability, Figure 1*, last updated 5 July 2022, accessed 14 May 2024.

In response to this disproportionate disadvantage, the Australian Government has initiated a number of key reforms, including responding to recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Review. Recommendations from the Royal Commission and NDIS Review cover a wide range of issues, for example in relation to human rights, violence, segregated settings, access to safe supports, restrictive practices, health and mental health, early childhood, housing and guardianship. The Australian Government is also reforming Disability Employment Services. Gender responsive budgeting ensures that responses and investments resulting from the reviews address gender equality to ensure women with disabilities are equally able to enjoy their rights and access the supports they need.

#### *Discrimination based upon Gender Identity*

The Australian Government recognises that individuals may identify and be recognised within the community as a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth, or as a gender which is not exclusively male or female. The *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* makes discrimination on the grounds of gender identity unlawful in key areas of public life, including legislation for recording or changing gender in identity documents. There is no requirement for any person to obtain legal recognition of their gender identity, however some people may wish to obtain legal recognition of their gender identity in their birth certificate.

The Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender apply to all Australian Government departments and agencies that maintain personal records (including employee records), and/or collect sex and/or gender information.<sup>21</sup> The Guidelines outline a consistent standard of evidence required for people to change or establish their sex and gender information on personal records.

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<sup>21</sup> Attorney-General's Department, *Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender*, AGD Website, n.d.

# Australia's challenges and set backs

## Challenges

### *Gender-Based Violence*

Gender-based violence is a national crisis in Australia, as it is across the world, and occurs across all demographic and age groups. Gender-based violence – including sexual violence and harassment, and domestic and family violence – is complex, intricately linked to women's position in society and is a product of power imbalances between men and women. This is exacerbated by systems that fail to hold perpetrators to account, enable violence to continue or put the onus for change on the women it has affected.<sup>22</sup>

First Nations people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTQIA+ people and people with disability who experience gender-based violence can face complex challenges where gender inequality overlaps with other disadvantage or prejudice. Responding to gender-based violence requires a range of measures from education and prevention to frontline services, as well as support for recovery and healing.

### *Unpaid and Paid Care*

Children have radically different effects on the earnings of men and women. In 2023, Australia's Treasury published a report demonstrating that the 'motherhood penalty', which is the divergence in earning between a man and woman following entry into parenthood, persists for the first 10 years of parenthood.<sup>23</sup> The share of gender inequality attributable to the motherhood penalty has only increased since the early 2000s, likely due to a decline in non-child related drivers of inequality, such as the rise in female educational attainment or the decline in employment discrimination. The report proposed that the reduction in a mother's earnings may result from choices within households and division of labour.

Women continue to shoulder the majority of unpaid work and care in Australia. They take time out of the workforce and work part-time to meet caring responsibilities. Similarly, women with caring responsibilities who want to work more hours can be prevented from doing so by lack of access to formal care and flexible work, and structural barriers.<sup>24</sup> This affects women's workforce participation and

<sup>22</sup> The Australian Government, [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality – Priority Area 1: Gender-based Violence](#), 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Bahar, E., Bradshaw, N., Deutscher, N., & Montaigne, M. (2023). *Children and the gender earnings gap: evidence for Australia* (No. 2023-02). Treasury Working Paper.

<sup>24</sup> The Australian Government, [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality – Priority Area 2: Unpaid and Paid Care](#), 2024.

career advancement, as well as their lifetime wealth accumulation. The underrepresentation of women in the workforce also has a significant impact on the Australian economy.

The economy and many Australian workplaces have been built around and uphold traditional, gendered divisions of paid and unpaid work. Paid work is more highly celebrated and the economic and social contribution of unpaid work is undervalued. This unpaid care is not just for children, but also aging parents, other family members and people with disability. Paid care work is also dominated by women and migrant workers – in part due to attitudes about women being 'natural carers' – and is also undervalued and often low paid and insecure. Gendered assumptions about parenting can also make it harder for same sex and gender non-binary parents to navigate care roles, parenting services and workplace entitlements and support.

### *Economic Equality*

Ensuring women's economic security is critical for reducing risk and ensuring women have choices. Women remain over-represented in lower income brackets, as lower paid workers, and as recipients of government payments.<sup>25</sup> Economic equality cannot be achieved while there is still a high gender pay gap and women experience higher levels of poverty. These gender gaps are driven by patterns of work and care; women's over-representation in part-time, low-paid, and insecure jobs; and barriers to career advancement.<sup>26</sup> The 2023 [Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities](#) (the White Paper) recognises the need to focus on women who face complex and intersecting forms of disadvantage, as well as looking at ways we can better value and share care work, ensure safe and respectful workplaces and reduce workforce gender segregation.<sup>27</sup> Australia's economic progress relies on a strong, highly skilled workforce, but high rates of industry gender segregation mean that Australia is unable to leverage the full extent of its talent pool.

### *Health*

Over many decades in Australia and around the world, women's control over their health has been challenged, especially their sexual and reproductive health. Women also face gender bias in the health system, which can prevent or delay their health conditions being properly diagnosed and treated. A lack of support for women's health not only affects their everyday wellbeing, it also impacts how they participate and thrive at work. Women who experience violence also have poorer health outcomes and the health system plays an important role in supporting women to leave and recover from violence.<sup>28</sup>

### *Leadership*

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<sup>25</sup> Department of the Treasury, [Women's Budget Statement](#), Treasury, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>26</sup> The Australian Government, [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality – Priority Area 3: Economic Equality and Security](#), 2024.

<sup>27</sup> Department of the Treasury, [Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities](#), Treasury, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>28</sup> The Australian Government, [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality – Priority Area 4: Health](#), 2024.

Gender equality cannot be achieved without women’s meaningful participation in leadership and decision-making roles. When women are not involved in decision-making and design processes, systems, policies, services, technology and infrastructure will not meet their needs. It can limit women's access to resources and services, especially for women in rural and remote areas, women with disability, women living in poverty and women who do not have English as a first language. This creates extra work across the community to bridge access gaps. Given the unequal impact of crises like climate change and conflict on women, it is particularly critical women have a seat at the table in efforts to address these challenges.<sup>29</sup>

### *Impacts of crises*

In recognition that the COVID-19 pandemic would exacerbate existing gender inequalities and violence against women in Australia, the Australian Government put in place a range of measures to guard against backsliding on gender equality and women’s empowerment, as well as future-proof against other global crises.

#### *Health Response*

The Australian Government developed a range of national health strategies and plans in response to the COVID-19 pandemic which considered the diverse health needs of Australians.<sup>30</sup> This was in addition to the *National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030* which ensures a health equity lens is applied to all preparatory work for future emerging crises including climate change. Australia was one of the first countries in the world to recognise the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and develop a specific *National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan*.

The Australian Government also implemented a range of health-related initiatives targeted to women during COVID-19. For example:

- a. Funding of \$11.4 million was provided to the Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health from March 2022 to February 2024, to establish and implement the Health in My Language program, a gendered approach to delivering COVID-19 vaccine information and health education to culturally and linguistically diverse people in their languages.
- b. To respond to the marked decrease in breast and cervical cancer screening at different points during COVID-19, funding of \$9.7 million was provided to BreastScreen Australia in 2022 for surge capacity for women who missed or delayed breast screening because of COVID-19.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The Australian Government, *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality – Priority Area 5: Leadership representation and decision-making*, 2024.

<sup>30</sup> For example, the *Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), National COVID-19 Health Management Plan for 2023*.

<sup>31</sup> Ministers – Treasury Portfolio, *2022-23 Budget boost to support Australian women and girls*, Ministers Website, 2022.

### *Financial support*

Women were more likely to experience economic insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic due to a range of factors including existing labour market inequalities, taking on a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, and female-dominated industries such as childcare, healthcare, retail and hospitality being most affected by health restrictions.

The Australian Government delivered a range of financial subsidies during COVID-19 that benefited women, noting that in general women comprised a larger proportion of financial subsidy recipients. For example:

- a. The 'JobKeeper Payment' was the largest fiscal measure in Australia's history. The JobKeeper Payment was designed to help businesses affected by COVID-19 to cover the costs of their employee's wages, so that more employees could retain their jobs and continue to earn an income. The measure, which ran between March 2020 to March 2021, supported businesses and households through temporary and targeted payments. On average, 55 per cent of JobKeeper recipients were men and 45 per cent were women, compared with men's and women's pre-pandemic shares of employment of 52.9 per cent and 47.1 per cent respectively.<sup>32</sup>
- b. An additional top-up payment, 'Coronavirus Supplement', was provided for new and existing recipients of select social security recipients. Around 54 per cent of Coronavirus Supplement recipients were women.<sup>33</sup>
- c. Two economic support payments were provided to eligible social security recipients, veterans, income support recipients and concession card holders. For the first payment, 58 per cent of recipients were women and for the second payment, 60 per cent of recipients were women.<sup>34</sup>
- d. The Australian Government expanded the Crisis Payment (a payment for income support recipients in financial hardship) to those who were required to self-isolate or care for someone in isolation.

### *Women's safety*

The COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the onset or escalation of physical and sexual violence against women by a current or former cohabiting partner.<sup>35</sup> The National Partnership on COVID-19 Domestic

<sup>32</sup> Department of Treasury, [Independent Evaluation of the JobKeeper Payment Final Report](#), Treasury, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>33</sup> Department of the Treasury, [Women's Budget Statement](#), Treasury, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>34</sup> Department of the Treasury, [Women's Budget Statement](#), Treasury, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>35</sup> Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), [Intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: A survey of women in Australia](#), ANROWS Website, 2021.

and Family Violence Responses supported states and territories to respond immediately to increases in domestic, family and sexual violence as a result of COVID-19. In Australia, research showed that specific groups of women were more likely to experience physical and sexual violence during the pandemic. This included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, young women aged 18 to 24, women with a restrictive health condition, women with disability, pregnant women, migrant and refugee women including those on temporary visas, and women experiencing financial stress.<sup>36</sup>

The Australian Government recognises that disasters increase stress, disrupt social networks and exacerbate financial inequalities which can increase the likelihood and severity of violence against women and children. To address this, the Australian Government delivered the 'Help is Here campaign' during COVID-19 to provide free, 24/7, confidential online and phone advice and counselling for women and men, who were at risk of experiencing, or perpetrating, family and domestic violence.<sup>37</sup>

#### *Future responses to crises*

The Australian COVID-19 Response Inquiry is currently underway to identify lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic to improve Australia's preparedness for future pandemics. The Inquiry will consider opportunities to better target future responses to the needs of particular populations, including across genders, age groups, socio-economic status, geographic location, people with disability, First Nations peoples and communities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.<sup>38</sup> The Final Report is due in September 2024.

#### *Climate change and disaster-risk reduction*

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring a gender-responsive approach to climate change, disaster and crisis mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery efforts including in leadership and advisory positions.

In *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality*, the Australian Government has committed to strengthening women's leadership, representation and decision-making. Given the unequal impact of crises like climate change and conflict on women, the Government recognises that it is critical that women have a seat at the table in efforts to address these challenges.<sup>39</sup>

The Australian Government is developing Australia's first *National Climate Risk Assessment* and a *National Adaptation Plan*, to better understand the risks and impacts to Australia from climate change

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<sup>36</sup> H Boxall and A Morgan, 'Who is most at risk of physical and sexual partner violence and coercive control during the COVID-19 pandemic?', *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, no. 618, AIC, Australian Government, 2021, doi:10.52922/ti78047.

<sup>37</sup> Australian National Audit Office (ANAO), *Australian Government Advertising: May 2019 to October 2021*, ANAO, Australian Government, 2022.

<sup>38</sup> Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry*, PM&C Website, 2023.

<sup>39</sup> The Australian Government, *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality – Priority Area 5: Leadership, representation and decision-making*, 2024.

and to invest in a plan to adapt to those risks.<sup>40</sup> The Government recognises that climate change impacts disproportionately affect women. The Adaptation Plan will be gender-sensitive, participatory and fully transparent and will ensure future climate adaptation funding is well-targeted to ensure that climate change does not disproportionately affect groups in vulnerable situations.<sup>41</sup>

In 2022, the Australian Government legislated Australia's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, to reach net zero by 2050 and 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.<sup>42</sup> The Government has committed to developing a *Net Zero Plan*, which will articulate how Australia will transition to a net zero economy, consistent with our international and domestic commitments.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, [Assessing and Adapting to Australia's Climate Risks](#), Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>41</sup> Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, [Assessing and Adapting to Australia's Climate Risks](#), Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>42</sup> Climate Change Authority, [2035 Emissions reduction Targets](#), Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>43</sup> Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, [Net Zero Plan](#), Australian Government, 2023.



# Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

## A. Women and poverty

### Key Data

#### *Income*

As of November 2023, the full-time adult average weekly earnings across all industries and occupations was \$1,982.80 for men and \$1,744.80 for women.<sup>44</sup>

25 per cent of women who wanted to leave a violent partner were unable to due to a lack of financial support,<sup>45</sup> and some reports indicate 15 per cent of women who returned to a violent partner did so because they had no money or nowhere else to go.<sup>46</sup>

#### *Housing and homelessness*

Women are the largest proportion of social housing occupants, at 55 per cent.<sup>47</sup>

Single women make up 49 per cent of Commonwealth Rent Assistance recipients, while single men make up 30 per cent.<sup>48</sup>

In 2021, women accounted for 44.1 per cent of the homeless population.<sup>49</sup>

#### *Young women and girls*

Young women are more likely to use specialist homelessness services due to family and domestic violence than older women.<sup>50</sup>

In 2022, younger women were more likely to be victims of sexual assault than older women (56 per cent were under 18 years old and 30 per cent were aged 18-34).<sup>51</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 2023](#), ABS website, 2024.

<sup>45</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Partner Violence – In Focus: Crime and Justice Statistics. 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Summers, The choice: Violence or poverty, 2022. Based on data from the Personal Safety Survey.

<sup>47</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Housing assistance In Australia 2021-2022](#), [TableBuilder], AIHW Website, 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Department of the Treasury, [Women's Budget Statement](#), Treasury, 2023.

<sup>49</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Estimating Homelessness: Census \(2021\)](#), [TableBuilder], ABS Website, 2023.

<sup>50</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Young women - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#), [TableBuilder], AIHW Website, 2024.

<sup>51</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Recorded Crime – Victims](#), [TableBuilder], ABS Website, 2022.

A 2021-2022 survey of over 125,000 people by the charity Share The Dignity found that 1 in 8 (12.6 per cent) of high school students experienced difficulty buying period poverty products every month, while one in ten tertiary students and employees experienced difficulty buying period products every month (10.8 per cent).<sup>52</sup>

Poverty is a multifaceted issue, and is highly gendered in Australia. Experiences of economic inequality have lifelong impacts, including an inability to escape and recover from violence, housing insecurity and homelessness, and lower superannuation balances and less security in retirement.

### *Social protection*

Australia recognises certain groups of people are more at risk of falling into poverty and hardship, such as Indigenous women, older women, single parents, those without secure employment, and women experiencing homelessness and intimate partner violence.

Australia has a targeted, means-tested social security system financed from general government revenue. In addition, it has payments and programs designed to provide additional income support to people who, for reasons such as age, disability, caring responsibilities or unemployment, cannot support themselves. This differs from many countries which have systems based on social insurance contributions. The amount a person receives does not rely on previous contributions and social security payments are not time-limited and are available to people as long as they remain eligible under the residency and means test.

Since 2019, the Australian Government has increased and extended eligibility for income support payments which will benefit women, who make up the majority of recipients, and reduce their risk of financial insecurity and poverty. Improvements include:

- a. Permanently increasing the rate of income support payments in 2023 for working aged and student payments, extending eligibility for the higher rate of payment for single Australians aged over 55 and who have been on payment for nine or more continuous months, of which women are the majority of recipients, and extending eligibility to the higher rate of JobSeeker Payment to single recipients with a partial capacity to work of less than 15 hours.<sup>53</sup>
- b. Increased Commonwealth Rent Assistance in two successive budgets to help with the cost of housing in Australia for private renters.<sup>54</sup> This change assists a significant number of women, particularly single women and older women, experiencing housing stress.

<sup>52</sup> Australian Council of Social Service, [Poverty in Australia: Who is affected](#), ACOSS Website, 2023.

<sup>53</sup> The JobSeeker Payment provides financial assistance for those between 22 and Age Pension age who are looking for work. It also applies for individuals who are sick or injured and unable to engage in their usual work or study for a short time.

<sup>54</sup> Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) is a payment paid to tenants who receive certain social security payments and who don't live in public housing.

- c. Expanding eligibility for the income support payment for single parents to parents with dependent children aged under 14 (previously aged under 8) in 2023. This change provides more support for single parents, particularly women – who make up 94.2 percent of Australia’s ‘Parenting Payment Single’ recipients – to balance parenting responsibilities with paid employment.<sup>55</sup>
- d. Establishing the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee in November 2022 to provide advice in the lead-up to national budgets on policies to address disadvantage and boost economic participation.
- e. Discontinued the ParentsNext program, which created additional, often burdensome, obligations on some parents before accessing parenting payments. A new program will support vulnerable parents on a voluntary basis, without creating additional steps to accessing parenting payments.

### *Retirement*

The Australian Government’s retirement income system aims to protect older Australians who have retired from formal employment, or reduced their working hours. It includes three pillars: compulsory employer-funded superannuation contributions through the Superannuation Guarantee,<sup>56</sup> supported by taxation concessions; voluntary private savings, including personal superannuation contributions which are also supported by taxation concessions; and the taxpayer-funded means-tested Age Pension which provides a safety net for people who are unable to support themselves fully in retirement and supplements the retirement incomes of those with lower levels of private savings.

Throughout a woman’s lifetime, lower hourly and weekly earnings and lower wealth accumulation compound to produce lower superannuation balances and less economic security in retirement. Australian women aged 60 to 64 have a median superannuation balance 25 per cent less than men of the same age. Although this difference is narrowing over time, as long as women have lower workforce participation and lower incomes than men, a gender gap in superannuation balances will remain.

The Australian Government has made investments to reduce the retirement savings gap and improve the fairness of Australia’s retirement income system. From July 2022 the \$450 per month threshold for superannuation guarantee eligibility was removed. This means that women who earn less than \$450 per month are now entitled to super contributions from their employers.<sup>57</sup> The Retirement Income Review, established in 2019 to conduct a review into the retirement income system, estimated that

<sup>55</sup> Department of Social Services (DSS), [Expanded DSS Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics – September 2023](#), data.gov.au, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>56</sup> Superannuation is a retirement savings system in Australia where employers and employees contribute a portion of earnings into a fund that grows over time to provide income in retirement.

<sup>57</sup> Australian Taxation Office (ATO), [Work out if you have to pay super](#), ATO Website, Australian Government, 2023.

around 300,000 individuals would receive additional superannuation guarantee payments each month as a result of this change, 63 per cent of whom are women.<sup>58</sup>

### *Paid parental leave*

In 2023, the Government announced they will be expanding the Government-funded Paid Parental Leave scheme by 6 weeks to 26 weeks by 2026. In addition, the Government will be reforming the scheme to make it easier for parents to share caring responsibilities, expanding access to more families through the introduction of a family income limit, and helping parents transition back to work by allowing Paid Parental Leave to be taken in blocks as small as a day at a time, with periods of work in-between.

From 1 July 2025, subject to the passage of legislation, superannuation will be paid on government-funded Paid Parental Leave. This will help reduce the impact of parental leave on retirement incomes and normalise parental leave as a workplace entitlement, like annual and sick leave. This is an important investment into women's superannuation, as women aged 60 to 65 have, on average, 25.1 per cent less superannuation than men of the same age.<sup>59</sup> From 1 July 2026, superannuation will be paid on payday, rather than retrospectively.<sup>60</sup> This maximises accumulation, and reduces the risk of missing out on superannuation if an employer collapses, and will particularly benefit those working in low paid and insecure jobs – a group where women are overrepresented.

More information about Paid Parental Leave is discussed at Section F – Women and the economy.

### *Housing and homelessness*

Housing is a critical enabler of women's economic security, safety and workforce participation. To help more Australians access safe and affordable housing, the Australian Government established the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council in 2022 to advise the Government on options to improve housing supply and affordability. The Government is also working with state, territory and local government to deliver better housing outcomes and has committed to delivering a new national target of 1.2 million well-located homes over five years from July 1 2024. In May the Government agreed to a \$9.3 billion National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness with the states and territories to provide homelessness support and additional social housing.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> The Australian Government, [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality – Priority Area 2: Unpaid and Paid Care](#), 2024.

<sup>59</sup> Australian Taxation Office (ATO), [Taxation statistics 2020–21, Snapshot Table 5, Chart 12, Median super balance by age and sex](#), ATO website, 2023.

<sup>60</sup> Australian Taxation Office (ATO), [Payday Superannuation](#), ATO Website, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>61</sup> Department of Social Services (DSS), [National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness](#), DSS, Australian Government, 2024.

In 2023, the Australian Government established the \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund. The Housing Australia Future Fund provides additional funding to address social and affordable housing and acute housing needs, including the particular needs of Indigenous communities and women, children and veterans. Returns from the Housing Australia Future Fund will help to deliver the Government's commitment of 30,000 new social and affordable rental homes, including for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence, and older women at risk of homelessness.<sup>62</sup> The Government also supports accommodation for women and children experiencing domestic violence through the National Housing Infrastructure Facility and Safe Places Emergency Accommodation program. The Commonwealth, state and territories have also agreed to a series of tenancy reforms to harmonise and strengthen renters' rights across Australia, including providing stronger protections for tenants experiencing family violence.

### *Gender-based violence*

The National Plan allocates resources to address the intersection of poverty and gender-based violence, recognising the impact of violence on women's economic security. By addressing violence and poverty as interconnected issues, the National Plan seeks to empower women in poverty to escape violence and achieve economic stability. Under the National Plan, the Government is providing comprehensive support services for women experiencing violence and poverty, including women's shelters, legal aid, and economic assistance.

Key Government initiatives include investing in crisis accommodation for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence (see Housing and homelessness subsection above), legislating ten days of paid family and domestic violence leave, and providing financial assistance for victim-survivors to leave violent relationships (see Section D).

The Crisis Payment is available as a one-off payment to income support recipients who are in severe financial hardship and have experienced an extreme circumstance such as gender-based violence that has changed their living arrangements. The rate of Crisis Payment is equal to one week of a person's maximum basic rate of income support.

In 2023, the Government permanently established the Leaving Violence Program (LVP) which supports victim-survivors of intimate partner violence, including migrants regardless of their visa status, to make choices about leaving violent relationships through the provision of individualised support packages. The LVP builds upon the successes and learnings of the Escaping Violence Payment (EVP) trial which was established in 2021 and the Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot (TVP), to establish a new program that ensures eligible victim-survivors leaving violence are able to access support.

More information about the National Plan and financial support initiatives for women experiencing violence can be found in section D – Violence against Women.

<sup>62</sup> Department of Treasury, '[Landmark housing legislation passes the Parliament](#)', Treasury, 2023.

## B. Education and training of women

### Key Data

In 2022, 226,000 women completed higher education compared to 160,000 men.<sup>63</sup> This has been a trend since 2017, where a higher proportion of women are graduating higher award courses than men.<sup>64</sup>

37 per cent of university and 17 per cent of VET (vocational education and training) enrolments in science, technology, engineering and maths fields are women.<sup>65</sup>

25 per cent of university and 22 per cent of VET (vocational education and training) health and education enrolments are men.<sup>66</sup>

In 2022, across all assessed year levels, female students attained a higher mean score than males in reading, writing, spelling, and grammar and punctuation. On the numeracy domain, females attained a lower mean score than males.<sup>67</sup>

Australia is committed to improving education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are most underrepresented. Australia rates 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for level of tertiary education women.<sup>68</sup> Women in Australia are very well educated – with almost 36 per cent of Australian women having a bachelor degree or above, compared with 28 per cent of men.<sup>69</sup> Yet, the gender pay gap is at 12 per cent, with a gender pay gap apparent at the graduate entry level. It is clear that women are not receiving the economic benefits of their educational outcomes.<sup>70</sup>

### *Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) occupations*

In Australia, women are significantly underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) occupations, which are high-earning fields with stable employment. In order to

<sup>63</sup> Department of Education, *Selected Higher Educations Statistic, Completions Summary, 2022*. [Microsoft Power BI](#).

<sup>64</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), *Australia's Gender Pay Gap Statistics*, WGEA, Australian Government, 2019.

<sup>65</sup> Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) *STEM Equity Monitor: Vocational education and training enrolment and completion in STEM and other fields*, DISR, Australian Government, 2020.

<sup>66</sup> Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR), *STEM Equity Monitor: University enrolment and completion in STEM and other fields*, DISR, Australian Government, 2020.

<sup>67</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Primary and secondary schooling*, AIHW Website, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>68</sup> OECD, *Adult education level (indicator), 2022*, OECD website.

<sup>69</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Education and work, Australia, May 2023*, ABS website.

<sup>70</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Average weekly earnings, Australia, November 2023*, ABS website.

advance gender equality, women must be supported to enter and remain in STEM education and careers. To achieve this, the Australian Government has made a number of investments to advance diversity in STEM.

In 2019, the Australian Government released two guiding policy frameworks, including the *Women in STEM Decadal Plan* and the *Advancing Women in STEM Strategy*.<sup>71</sup> These frameworks set out the government and sector's respective commitments to improving Australia's gender equity in STEM across six focus areas; leadership and cohesion, evaluation, workplace culture, visibility, education, and industry action.

The Australian Government also delivers a range of Women in STEM initiatives, which are co-led by the STEM sector, to collectively seek to improve the participation of girls and women in STEM. These initiatives aim to enable girls and women to access STEM education, to recruit and retain women in STEM careers, and to enhance the visibility of women in STEM. This includes the provision of outreach and education to promote STEM opportunities, break down gender-based stereotypes and support greater participation of women in STEM from early education through to professional career development. These programs provide women with access to support over their careers, including information on scholarships and grants.

In 2022, the Government commissioned an independent Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review, which examined the delivery and impact of government-funded Women in STEM initiatives, and cultural and structural barriers that limit participation and retention of under-represented groups in STEM professions.<sup>72</sup> In February 2024, the Government released its final recommendations report.<sup>73</sup> The report makes 11 recommendations on how policies and programs can help overcome cultural and structural barriers that limit women and girls, and other under-represented groups, from participating in STEM education and careers. In response to the Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review, the Government is scaling up Women in STEM and science engagement programs that are creating positive change to attract and retain more women, and other under-represented groups, in STEM education and jobs.

### *Improving Education and Training*

Jobs and Skills Australia was established in 2022 to provide expert advice on the current, emerging and future skills and human capital needs of the economy, and on the effectiveness of the national skills system in meeting these needs. Jobs and Skills Australia has a legislative function to provide advice on

<sup>71</sup> The Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR), [Advancing Women in STEM Strategy](#), DISR, Australian Government, 2019.

<sup>72</sup> The Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR), [Diversity in STEM review terms of reference | Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review final recommendations report | Department of Industry Science and Resources](#), DISR, Australian Government, 2022.

<sup>73</sup> The Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR), [Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review final recommendations Report](#), DISR, Australian Government, 2024.



opportunities to remove barriers to gender equality in the provision of training and in the labour market, to improve gender equality outcomes.

Gender equality is included as a national priority in the 2023 National Skills Agreement, which provides funding to support state and territory skills sectors to deliver skills for critical and emerging industries, including care and support services.<sup>74</sup> The Skills Guarantee, which comes into effect on 1 July 2024, includes sub-targets for women in apprenticeships, traineeships and paid cadetships on major Australian Government funded construction and information and communications technology (ICT) projects.

The Commonwealth and state and territory governments' Fee-Free TAFE (vocational education and training) initiative provides tuition-free training placements for eligible people wanting to train, retrain, or upskill is exceeding targets and actively removing financial barriers to training and upskilling. Fee-Free TAFE is targeted towards priority cohorts, including women facing economic insecurity, women undertaking study in non-traditional fields and unpaid carers.<sup>75</sup> In 2023, more than 355,000 Australians enrolled in Fee-Free TAFE, surpassing the initial first year target of 180,000 places, with 62 per cent of these enrolments by women.

### *Improving Education outcomes for First Nations people*

The Australian Government recognises the gap in learning outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their non-Indigenous peers. The Australian Government is committed to a national curriculum that incorporates education on First Nations histories and cultures. The Australian Curriculum was reviewed between 2020 to 2022. The revised Australian Curriculum (Version 9.0) was endorsed by all education ministers in 2022 for implementation in schools from 2023. Version 9.0 of the Australian Curriculum deepens students' understanding of First Nations histories and cultures and their contribution to the building of modern Australia, as well as the perspectives of First Nations peoples on the arrival of British settlers and its impact.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> The Australian Government, *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality – Priority Area 3: Economic Equality and Security*, 2024.

<sup>75</sup> Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), *Fee-Free TAFE - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations*, DEWR Website, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>76</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures (Version 8.4) | The Australian Curriculum (Version 8.4)*, ACARA Website, n.d.



## C. Women and health

### Key Data

#### *Life Expectancy*

In Australia, a boy born in 2019–2021 can expect to live to the age of 81.3 years and a girl can expect to live to 85.4 years.<sup>77</sup>

Women are more likely than men to see a General Practitioner (86.9 per cent compared to 77.6 per cent) or medical specialist (40.5 per cent compared to 35.1 per cent).<sup>78</sup>

Women are more likely than men to have one or more chronic health conditions: 1 chronic condition (27.6 per cent of men and 28.5 per cent of women) 2 chronic conditions (12.2 per cent of men and 13.7 per cent of men) and 3 or more chronic conditions (7.6 per cent of men and 10.2 per cent of women)<sup>79</sup>.

55 per cent of women experiencing bothersome symptoms that they attributed to menopause, reported negative impacts on their mental and emotional wellbeing, while 32 per cent reported negative impacts on their relationship with their partner.<sup>80</sup>

24 per cent of women did not discuss bothersome symptoms they attributed to menopause with a doctor because they didn't think anything could be done.<sup>81</sup>

#### *Mental health*

In 2020-2022, 17.4 per cent of Australians aged 16-85 saw a health professional for their mental health in the 12 months prior to interview. Of this cohort, more women (21.6 per cent) than men (12.9 per cent) saw a health professional for their mental health.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Deaths in Australia](#), AIHW Website, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>78</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Patient experiences, 2022-23](#), [TableBuilder], ABS website, 2024.

<sup>79</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Health conditions prevalence](#), [TableBuilder], ABS website, 2022.

<sup>80</sup> Jean Hailes for Women's Health, Australasian Menopause Society, Women's Health Research Program (Monash University) (2023), [The impact of symptoms attributed to menopause by Australian women](#), Jean Hailes website, 2024.

<sup>81</sup> Jean Hailes for Women's Health, Australasian Menopause Society, Women's Health Research Program (Monash University) (2023), [The impact of symptoms attributed to menopause by Australian women](#), Jean Hailes website, 2024.

<sup>82</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing, 2020-2022](#), [TableBuilder], ABS website, 2023.

More males die by suicide compared to females in Australia. However, females tend to self-harm or attempt suicide at higher rates than males.<sup>83</sup>

The rate of death by suicide for First Nations women is 2.5 times the rate for non-Indigenous women.<sup>84</sup>

Gender bias, barriers to accessing targeted services, and a lack of appropriate research and data, contribute to the structural obstacles to improving women's health outcomes.

### *The National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030*

The National Women's Health Strategy was released in August 2019, and built on the preceding *National Women's Health Policy 2010*.

The National Women's Health Strategy identifies specific actions to address the health issues that affect women and girls throughout their lives, and aims to reduce inequalities in health outcomes between men and women, and between sub-population groups of women and girls. The National Women's Health Strategy identifies five priority areas: maternal, sexual and reproductive health; healthy ageing; chronic conditions and preventative health; mental health; and the health impacts of violence against women and girls.

The National Women's Health Strategy identifies priority populations of women and girls in Australia, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls, culturally and linguistically diverse women and girls, those affected by the criminal justice system, and members of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities. The National Women's Health Strategy notes that, through targeted health policy design, education and service delivery focusing on the particular needs and circumstances of priority groups, there is substantial scope to improve health equity among all women and girls and across the whole population.

In 2024, Australia is developing the first ever 10 Year National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people to guide how Australia addresses health disparities and make improvements across the health system.<sup>85</sup>

### *Woman-centred care: Strategic directions for Australian maternity services*

In 2019, the Australian and state and territory governments endorsed the *Woman-centred care: Strategic directions for Australian maternity services* (Woman-centred Care Strategy) to provide national strategic

<sup>83</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Suicide and self-harm monitoring, Ambulance attendances: Suicidal ideation, and suicidal and self-harm behaviours*, AIHW Website, Australian Government, 2022.

<sup>84</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Suicide and self-harm monitoring, Ambulance attendances: Suicidal ideation, and suicidal and self-harm behaviours*, AIHW Website, Australian Government, 2022.

<sup>85</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), *Pathway to better health for LGBTIQ+ communities | Health Portfolio Ministers*, DHAC Website, Australian Government, 2023.

directions to support Australia's high-quality maternity care system and enable improvements in line with contemporary practice, evidence, and international developments. Of primary importance is that Australian families have access to safe, high quality, respectful maternity care. The Woman-centred Care Strategy recognises that women want to access maternity care in their geographic location and that outreach services and telehealth care enhance maternity care in rural and regional areas.

A Baseline Report for the Woman-centred Care Strategy was published in April 2023 and provides a snapshot of Australia's maternity services when the Woman-centred Care Strategy was released in 2019; where Australia is now; and how future progress can be measured.<sup>86</sup> Work on implementation for the Woman-centred Care Strategy continues.

### *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond*

The *Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and Beyond* aims to support all mothers, fathers, partners and babies in Australia by providing support for mothers to breastfeed their infants, and provides a framework for integrated action to inform Commonwealth, state, territory and local government policies and programs. It seeks to ensure Australia provides an enabling and empowering environment that protects, promotes, supports and values breastfeeding as the biological and social norm for infant and young child feeding.<sup>87</sup> In 2023, the Australian Government announced additional funding to the Australian Breastfeeding Association's Helpline, which provides breastfeeding information and peer support for mothers and their families.

### *Gender Bias in the Health System*

Australia understands that a tailored evidence base, targeted health care, and specialised services are all required to achieve better health outcomes for women and girls. In February 2023, the Australian Government established a National Women's Health Advisory Council (NWHAC), which provides strategic advice to government on improving Australia's health system for women and girls, and aims to provide a better, more targeted healthcare system for Australian women and girls that is culturally safe and appropriate.

In March 2024, the NWHAC released initial findings from the #EndGenderBias survey, which was conducted to better understand the barriers and bias women and people assigned female at birth, face in the health system.<sup>88</sup> The survey found that two thirds of respondents reported they experienced health care-related gender bias or discrimination themselves, and almost 80 per cent of caregivers

<sup>86</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), [Monitoring and evaluation services for women-centred care – Strategic directions for Australian maternity services](#), DHAC, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>87</sup> Australian Breastfeeding Association, [Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy: 2019 and beyond](#), Australian Government, 2019.

<sup>88</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), [#EndGenderBias survey results – Summary report | National Women's Health Advisory Council](#), DHAC, Australian Government, 2024.

reported that a person they cared for had similar experiences. Consistent themes included feeling dismissed and disbelieved; being stereotyped as ‘hysterical’ and a ‘drama queen’; and women’s symptoms being readily attributed to other causes such as menstruation, lifestyle factors or even ‘faking it’.<sup>89</sup> This was particularly evident where women’s symptoms related to pain.

In Australia, there is a significant gender gap at the highest career levels of the health and medical research sector. In 2022 the Australian Government’s lead agency for funding health and medical research, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) introduced new special measures under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* to address systemic disadvantage faced by female and non-binary applicants to its Investigator Grant scheme.<sup>90</sup> This aims to ensure that more women have the opportunity to contribute to the improvement of human health through their research and will inspire a new generation of researchers. In 2023, 52.3 per cent of competitive grants funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council went to women.<sup>91</sup>

Between 2015 and 2022, the NHMRC awarded \$734.4 million for 737 new grants with a focus on women’s health. These grants cover a broad range of research relevant to women’s health, from discovery science through to clinical research, health services and public health research.<sup>92</sup>

### *Women’s Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights*

Equitable access to pregnancy termination services is a key measure of success in the National Women’s Health Strategy, with the maternal, sexual and reproductive health priority including actions to increase access to sexual and reproductive health care information, diagnosis, treatment and services. Australia’s health system provides for safe and legal termination of pregnancies in all states and territories. Early termination (up to 14 weeks gestation) is available Australia-wide and later term terminations are available in most states and territories, noting the laws relating to the legal conditions under which a termination can be performed (e.g., gestational limits) vary across jurisdictions. Medical termination (up to 9 weeks gestation) is available Australia-wide and surgical terminations are available in all states and territories.<sup>93</sup>

The Government acknowledges geographic location and high out of pocket costs can affect access to pregnancy termination services. From August 2023, a number of restrictions for health professionals prescribing and dispensing MS 2-Step (mifepristone and misoprostol), (a medical product used for the termination of pregnancy up to 63 days of gestation) were lifted. These changes mean any health

<sup>89</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), [#EndGenderBias survey results – Summary report | National Women’s Health Advisory Council](#), DHAC, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>90</sup> National Health and Medical Research Council (NHRC), [Working towards gender equity in Investigator Grants](#), NHRC, Australian Government, 2022.

<sup>91</sup> National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), [Outcomes of funding rounds](#), NHMRC website, 2024.

<sup>92</sup> Department of the Treasury, [Women’s Budget Statement](#), Treasury, 2024.

<sup>93</sup> MSI Australia, [Australian Abortion Access Scorecard](#), MSI, 2024.

practitioner with the appropriate qualifications and training can prescribe MS 2-Step, subject to state and territory prescribing rights, allowing greater access to medical abortion across Australia.<sup>94</sup>

Women can suffer for years with debilitating conditions and deserve to have their concerns taken seriously with better access to specialised care. To better support women and girls, the Australian Government is funding endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics in every state and territory to provide expert, multidisciplinary care to women seeking specialised care.<sup>95</sup> Recent reforms to Medicare will support longer and more affordable appointments with general practitioners and gynaecologists, and the scope of practice for midwives has been expanded. New Medicare services for endorsed midwives will be introduced, unlocking their potential to provide longer consultations under Medicare, in the important weeks before and after the birth of a child.

To help women make informed decisions about contraception, the Government announced a virtual contraception decision-making tool to support women and health practitioners providing contraceptive counselling. This will be complemented by scholarship funding for health practitioners to undertake training to deliver long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) services. More trained health practitioners will ensure more women can access LARCs as their contraceptive of choice, no matter where they live.<sup>96</sup>

Women should not face higher out-of-pocket costs for health services simply due to their gender.<sup>97</sup> A review of MBS items will focus on LARCs and diagnostic imaging and will help identify any gender bias in the rates of Medicare rebates and payments. This will help better balance the health system to meet the needs of all women.<sup>98</sup>

### *Women's Health research and data collection*

Australia is extending support for research and data collection activities that improve women and girls' health outcomes, including funding to continue and strengthen the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (a national population-based study that has been running for 27 years and explores factors that influence health across the lifespan of over 57,000 women in four age cohorts<sup>99</sup>), establishing a First Nations data access strategy and governance mechanism, increasing the diversity of participants, and expanding the collection of comprehensive maternal and perinatal data.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), [Amendments to restrictions for prescribing of MS-2 Step](#), DHAC, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>95</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), [Endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics](#), DHAC, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>96</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), [Strengthening Medicare](#), DHAC, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>97</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), [Strengthening Medicare](#), DHAC, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>98</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), [Strengthening Medicare](#), DHAC, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>99</sup> Department of the Treasury, [Women's Budget Statement](#), Treasury, 2024.

<sup>100</sup> Department of the Treasury, [Women's Budget Statement](#), Treasury, 2024.

In 2024, the Government announced it will develop a new sexual and reproductive health data set to help inform sexual and reproductive health policy and improve healthcare access outcomes, and national data collection on miscarriage will be improved through a miscarriage data scoping study and a national audit of Early Pregnancy Assessment Service (EPAS) clinics.

In 2024, the Government announced through an updated Medical Research Future Fund 10-year Investment Plan, that investment will be made in research into health priorities such as women's health including menopause, pregnancy loss and infertility.<sup>101</sup> The NHMRC is also funding research projects on breast and ovarian cancer, endometriosis and the mental health impacts of infertility treatment as part of their 2022 Ideas Grant funding.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Department of the Treasury, *Women's Budget Statement*, Treasury, 2024.

<sup>102</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), *Boost to Research Targeting better Health outcomes for Women*, DHAC, Australian Government, 2024.

## D. Violence against women

### Key Data

#### *Women's Safety in Australia*

1 in 5 women (22 per cent) and 1 in 16 men (6.1 per cent) experienced sexual violence.

1 in 3 women (31 per cent) and 2 in 5 men (42 per cent) experienced physical violence.

1 in 4 women (23 per cent) and 1 in 14 men (7.3 per cent) have experienced intimate partner violence.<sup>103</sup>

In 2022-23, one woman was killed every 11 days by a current or former intimate partner.<sup>104</sup>

59.7 per cent of single mothers have experienced intimate partner violence.<sup>105</sup>

In 2020-21, First Nations women were 33 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than non-Indigenous women, with the figure even higher in remote areas of Australia.<sup>106</sup>

72 per cent of women with psychological or intellectual disability have experienced violence or abuse since the age of 15.<sup>107</sup>

Women who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual or queer were more likely to have experienced sexual violence (13 per cent) than women who identified as heterosexual (2.4 per cent).<sup>108</sup>

1 in 2 Australians surveyed reported that they had experienced some form of Technology-facilitated Abuse (TFA).

Violence against women must end so women can be and feel safe – at home, at school, at work, in their communities and online. The Government is committed to effective action to improve women's safety and has made a number of investments and reforms over the last 5 years.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Personal Safety, Australia](#), ABS, Australian Government, 2021-22. Released 15 March 2023.

<sup>104</sup> The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner, [Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner's interim statement to Parliament](#), Australian Government, 30 November 2023.

<sup>105</sup> Summers A [The Choice: Violence of Poverty](#). University of Technology Sydney, 2022.

<sup>106</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, [Family, domestic and sexual violence data in Australia](#), 2022.

<sup>107</sup> Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, [Final Report - Nature and extent of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation](#), published 29 September 2023.

<sup>108</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Sexual violence, 2021-22](#), ABS, accessed 25 January 2024.

<sup>109</sup> The Australian Government, [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality – Priority Area 1: Gender-based violence](#), 2024.



### *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*

Released in October 2022, the National Plan sets the policy agenda guiding the work of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, family safety experts and front-line services to address family, domestic and sexual violence.<sup>110</sup> It is the second national plan, following the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022*. The National Plan guides Government action across four intersecting domains of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing to help break the cycle of violence and support victim-survivors. Initiatives under the National Plan support sustained action, effort and partnership towards the vision of ending gender-based violence in one generation. The Australian Government has invested \$3.4 billion to initiatives under the National Plan since October 2022.

The National Plan has ambitious and measurable targets set out in an Outcomes Framework, which will be measured through a Performance Measurement Plan and Evaluation Strategy.<sup>111</sup> Practical actions to implement the National Plan are outlined in the five-year First Action Plan and dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan.<sup>112</sup>

The Government recognises the importance of self-determination and empowerment of First Nations women and girls and is committed to working in genuine partnership to achieve outcomes equal to all Australians. Recognising the unique experiences and needs of First Nations women and challenges they face when seeking support for violence, the Government works in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on initiatives under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan to achieve the best possible outcomes. The Government is also developing a standalone First Nations National Plan.

In May 2024, the Australian Government and state and territory governments agreed to a number of priorities to further strengthen efforts to end violence against women, building on actions already underway under the National Plan. Governments agreed to strengthen efforts to prevent violence through targeted evidence-based approaches, improving police and justice responses to high-risk and serial perpetrators, strengthening national consistency and driving best practice approaches to addressing violence, improving information sharing about perpetrators, and maintaining a focus on First Nations people.

### *Key prevention and early intervention initiatives*

<sup>110</sup> Department of Social Services, [National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032](#), (DSS), Australian Government, 2022.

<sup>111</sup> Department of Social Services, [Outcomes Framework 2023-2032](#), (DSS), Australian Government, 2022.

<sup>112</sup> Department of Social Services, [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023 - 2025](#), (DSS), Australian Government, 2022.



The National Plan puts a key focus on prevention and shifting community attitudes around gender-based violence, particularly in the area of perpetrator accountability and working with men and boys. The Government is investing in a range of initiatives under the National Plan to prevent violence:

- The Stop it at the Start primary prevention campaign to drive positive change in behaviours and attitudes around violence.
- The National Consent Campaign to improve community understanding and attitudes on consent and respectful relationships to reduce sexual violence.
- The Healthy Masculinities project trial to help young men and boys learn to have healthy, respectful relationships.
- Investing in high quality, evidence-based, age-appropriate consent and Respectful Relationships Education in Australian primary and secondary schools.
- Funding to support Our Watch, the national leader for primary prevention of violence against women and children, to deliver on key priorities under the National Plan and continue existing successful initiatives.
- Delivering a range of new measures to tackle factors that exacerbate violence against women, including online misogynistic content targeting children and young people.
- Establishing a new statistical dashboard by mid-2024 to provide timelier reporting on female intimate partner homicide.

### *Training, education and awareness*

The Australian Government continues to fund training and education programs for the judiciary through the Family Violence in the Court training program, and the ongoing maintenance of the National Domestic and Family Violence Bench Book. The Australian Government has also provided funding for the development of a training program for legal practitioners on identifying and responding to clients affected by coercive control.

The Government is also developing a national training and education package to enhance the effectiveness of police responses to family, domestic and sexual violence equipping law enforcement to effectively identify and support victim-survivors with a focus on First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse women.

In September 2023, the Australian Government together with state and territory governments released the National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence to establish a shared national understanding of coercive control. Improved awareness of coercive control will inform more effective responses to family and domestic violence and promote more consistent support and safety outcomes for victim-survivors.

### *Improving family law system responses*

The Australian Government has delivered a number of measures to enhance the family law system's capacity to manage and appropriately respond to allegations of family violence and child abuse.

The *National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems* (National Framework) enhances and expands the two-way flow of information between the family law courts and relevant State and Territory courts and policing, child protection and firearms agencies. The National Framework ensures decision-makers across these systems have access to the information needed to assess, manage and respond to risks of family violence or child abuse. This initiative builds on the increased information sharing facilitated by the Co-location Program, which has co-located police and child protection agency officials in family law court registries across Australia from early 2020.

The Australian Government continues to support the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia's (FCFCOA) family safety screening and specialised case management program (the Lighthouse Project), first established in 2020. The FCFCOA has also been funded to expand the provision of culturally responsive support for First Nations Australians attending the Court. This measure supports the engagement of Indigenous Family Liaison Officers to ensure First Nations families engaging with the family court system, including those presenting with family violence concerns, receive appropriately-tailored support.

In addition, the Family Law Amendment Act 2023 has repealed the presumption of 'equal shared parental responsibility', and associated requirements for courts to consider specific care time arrangements. The new legislation makes it clear that, when a court is making parenting orders in the best interests of the child, it must consider the safety of the child and those who care for the child. This includes looking at past family violence and family violence orders. Changes also enable Courts to appoint Independent Children's Lawyers in more matters arising under the 1980 *Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction*, and include requirements for them to meet directly with children. To address the issue of systems abuse, courts now have powers to make 'harmful proceedings orders', which aim to prevent parties initiating further unmeritorious family law proceedings that might harm the other party, or a child.

The Australian Parliament also passed the Family Law Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2023, with provisions commencing on 6 May 2024. This provides family law courts with stronger powers to request information from child protection, police and firearms agencies (known as information sharing agencies) about any risks to family safety, including family violence, child abuse or neglect. This in turn improves the family law court's access to salient information in a parenting matter so that they are supported to make well-informed decisions that are in the child's best interest.

### *Support for legal assistance and frontline services*

Frontline response services are delivered by states and territories and local government and are supported by national programs and investment. The Australian Government provides funding to states and territories to support frontline service delivery under the 2021-27 National Partnership on Family,

Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses (National Partnership). The Government has also invested in a range of services and initiatives that support women's safety, including funding for 1800RESPECT, Australia's national counselling, information and referral service for people affected by domestic, family, and sexual violence. 1800RESPECT provides frontline support, and includes options for phone, text, video call and online chat counselling support.

The Australian Government continues to fund programs to support the provision of legal assistance for those experiencing or at risk of family, domestic and sexual violence. Australia provides more than \$2.4 billion over 5 years for legal assistance services across Australia through the National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-2025. This includes funding for: legal services for women, including those experiencing, or at risk of, family violence; Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships, which deliver wrap-around services to women who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, family violence; and Family Advocacy and Support Services to provide free legal advice and support at court for people affected by domestic and family violence.

The Australian Government is working to strengthen the capability of service providers to deliver accessible, trauma-informed and culturally safe services for First Nations peoples, including funding 16 Family Violence Prevention Legal Service providers delivering critical legal and non-legal services to support First Nations victim-survivors.<sup>113</sup> The Government also funds First Nations healing services, such as Healing for Strong Families, which will establish place-based healing programs for First Nations families impacted by family violence or child protection. The First Nations Family Dispute Resolution pilot also supports Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to deliver culturally-safe family dispute resolution services.

### *Sexual harassment in the workplace*

In 2020, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner released the *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report*.<sup>114</sup> The report made 55 recommendations directed to all levels of government and the private sector for policy and legislative reforms to prevent and address workplace sexual harassment. The report outlined five key areas of focus which underpin its recommendations; data and research, primary prevention, the legal and regulatory framework, workplace prevention and response, and support, advice and advocacy. The Government has committed to the full implementation of the Respect@Work report and substantive work to implement all 55 recommendations is largely complete.

The Australian Government has made significant amendments to the *Sex Discrimination Act* in response to the recommendations, including:

- introducing a positive duty on employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual and sex-based harassment, hostile work environments, and

<sup>113</sup> The Department of Social Services, [Increased support to end violence against women and children](#), DSS, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>114</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, [Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report](#), AHRC, Australian Government, 2023.

victimisation as far as possible, along with complementary compliance and enforcement functions for the Australian Human Rights Commission that commenced in December 2023.

- clarifying that victimisation is unlawful and can form the basis of a civil action
- expressly prohibiting sex-based harassment and conduct that results in a hostile work environment
- applying the scope of sexual harassment protections to all forms of workers and introducing a further object of the Act, being to ‘achieve substantive equality between men and women’
- expanding liability to an individual who is an accessory to sexual harassment
- removing procedural barriers by enabling representative complaints and extending the timeframe to make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission, and
- providing the Australian Human Rights Commission with a broad inquiry function in relation to systemic unlawful discrimination.

These amendments have strengthened the legal and regulatory frameworks and shifted the system to focus more on preventative efforts to eliminate sex discrimination and sexual harassment, particularly in the workplace. Under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*, the Government has registered the *Workplace Gender Equality (Matters in relation to Gender Equality Indicators) Instrument 2023*, in February 2023. This means that employers required to report to the WGEA will need to report data surrounding sexual harassment in the workplace.

### *Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner*

In 2022, the Australian Government established Australia’s first national Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner to amplify the voices of people with lived experience of violence, provide policy advice, promote coordination and accountability across government and communities, and monitor the progress of the National Plan. Australia is only one of three countries in the world to have such a position.<sup>115</sup>

The Commissioner established a Lived Experience Advisory Council in 2023 to empower people who have experiences of gender-based violence to lead the way to a deeper understanding of what prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing needs to look like. The Council comprises individuals with personal experiences of gender-based violence, the legal and justice systems and support systems and structures.<sup>116</sup>

### *Financial assistance*

<sup>115</sup> Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, *The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission*, Australian Government, 2022.

<sup>116</sup> Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, *Appointment of a National Lived Experience Advisory Council to amplify the voices of people with lived experience of domestic, family and sexual violence* Australian Government, 2023.

Financial insecurity is a major contributing factor in a woman's decision to leave, stay in or return to a violent relationship.<sup>117</sup> According to the 2021–22 Personal Safety Survey, of the 1.4 million women who experienced violence by a previous partner whilst living together, 43 per cent temporarily separated. Of these women, 21.5 per cent returned to the partner due to lack of financial resources.<sup>118</sup>

In 2021, the Australian Government introduced the Escaping Violence Payment (EVP) trial and the TVP to provide financial support to victim-survivors to help them leave violent relationships. As at 30 April 2024, the EVP has supported more than 48,000 Australians and the TVP has supported over 4,300 temporary-visa holders experiencing family and domestic violence. A 2023 independent evaluation of the EVP trial found 92 per cent of clients surveyed agreed the payment helped relieve financial stress and 51 per cent agreed that without the payment they could not have left a violent relationship.<sup>119</sup> In May 2024, the Australian Government announced it will permanently establish a Leaving Violence Program from 2025 as an ongoing financial support program to support victim-survivors of intimate partner violence to help with the costs of leaving that relationship.

In 2023 the Australian Government introduced the right for millions of workers to access paid family and domestic violence leave. Eligible employees are entitled to 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave through the *Fair Work Amendment (Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Act 2022*. Paid family and domestic violence leave helps individuals maintain their economic security and undertake activities such as attending legal proceedings, counselling, medical appointments, relocation or other actions to escape a violent situation.

### Online Safety

Women, girls, trans and gender diverse people face disproportionate and distinct forms of online abuse. This includes a wide range of complex and interrelated harms. In 2021, the Australian Parliament passed the *Online Safety Act 2021*, which expanded the powers of the eSafety Commissioner.<sup>120</sup> The eSafety Commissioner is Australia's national independent regulator for online safety and actively promotes gender equality by addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) across the spectrum of prevention, protection, and proactive and systemic change. eSafety has substantial enforcement powers to protect all Australians from online harms, including powers requiring online service providers to remove harmful content including image-based abuse and serious adult cyber abuse.

The *Online Safety Act 2021* provides an important avenue for women who experience seriously harmful online abuse to seek assistance when platforms fail to act, through complaints-based schemes. These include the Cyberbullying Scheme, which provides protections for children under 18 experiencing

<sup>117</sup> Department of the Treasury, *Women's Budget Statement*, Treasury, 2024.

<sup>118</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Personal Safety, Australia*, ABS, Australian Government, 2021–22.

<sup>119</sup> Department of Social Services, '[Evaluation of the Escaping Violence Payment \(EVP\) trial](#)', (DSS), Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>120</sup> eSafety Commissioner, '[Our legislative functions | eSafety Commissioner](#)', eSafety Commission, Australian Government, 2023.

cyberbullying, Adult Cyber Abuse Scheme, which provides protections for the most seriously harmful online abuse directed at an Australian adult, as well as an Image-Based Abuse Scheme to address the sharing and threatened sharing of intimate images without the consent of the person shown. This includes artificially-generated or manipulated images such as deepfakes. The *Online Safety Act 2021* also includes the Online Content Scheme, which regulates illegal and restricted content, including child sexual exploitation material.

eSafety delivers a number of programs designed to prevent and respond to technology facilitated gender based violence, including:

- Publishing the 2021 report 'Technology-facilitated abuse of women with intellectual or cognitive disability', which explores experiences of technology facilitated abuse among women living with intellectual or cognitive disability.<sup>121</sup> This research informed eSafety's development of resources for disability services staff, frontline workers, and specialist support staff in the domestic and family violence sectors.<sup>122</sup>
- the 'Preventing Tech-based Abuse of Women Grants Program' launched in 2023 that supports NGOs to develop innovative programs that address the drivers of TFGBV, challenge the social norms that give rise to the use of online violence, and promote positive online behaviours and accountability among men and boys.
- the Safety by Design initiative, launched in 2019, which provides online platforms with a set of realistic, actionable and achievable measures to better protect and safeguard individuals online. It includes guiding principles developed in consultation with industry and other valued stakeholders, and assessment tools for industry.

The Government is also introducing a range of reforms that seek to address the changing ways gender-based violence is perpetuated online. In 2023, the Government established the Online Harms Ministers Meeting to coordinate policy across the Australian Government to address online harms experienced by Australians. In June 2024, the Australian Government introduced legislation to Parliament to ban the creation and non-consensual distribution of sexually explicit deepfake material. Digitally created and altered sexually explicit material is a damaging form of abuse against women and girls that can inflict deep harm on victims. The reforms will make clear that creating and sharing sexually explicit material without consent, using technology like generative artificial intelligence, will be subject to serious criminal penalties.

More information about online safety can be found at Section J. Women and Media.

<sup>121</sup> eSafety Commissioner, *Technology-facilitated abuse of women with intellectual or cognitive disability*, Australian Government, 2021.

<sup>122</sup> eSafety Commissioner, *Domestic, family and sexual violence workers*, Australian Government, 2024.

## E. Women and armed conflict

### *Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021-2031)*

In 2021, Australia released the second *Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021-2031)*, a whole-of-government plan developed in consultation with Australian academia and civil society organisations. *Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021 – 2031)* is a 10-year strategy to realise gender equality and the human rights of women and girls in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The Australian Government entities with responsibility to implement *Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021 – 2031)* are the Australian Federal Police, Department of Defence (including the Australian-Civil Military Centre), Department of Home Affairs, and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Each entity is guided by its own implementation plan, which captures specific outputs that contribute to each of the four National Action Plan outcomes. *Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021 – 2031)* outcomes are (i) supporting women's meaningful participation and needs in peace processes; (ii) reducing sexual and gender-based violence; (iii) supporting resilience, crisis, and security and law and justice efforts to meet the needs and rights of all women and girls, and (iv) demonstrating leadership and accountability for Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Australia values the expertise, insights, and experiences of civil society, including women's rights organisations and women human rights defenders, and recognises their roles in implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Released in 2021, the Framework for Civil Society-Government Engagement on Women, Peace and Security ensures that civil society and government meaningfully engage in Australia's efforts to implement the WPS agenda.<sup>123</sup>

### *Women's Participation in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*

Australia makes the most of the transformative potential of the WPS agenda by placing women's meaningful participation at the centre of efforts to protect and promote women's and girls' human rights, prevent and resolve conflict, and establish enduring peace. To action WPS, different parts of the Australian Government focus on particular components of the agenda. For example:

- The Australian Department of Defence focuses on enhancing capacity through increased women's participation and leadership across all defence force ranks and employment occupations; deploying more women on exercises, operations, humanitarian and disaster response missions; and the appointment of women to key engagement and representational roles.
- The Australian Federal Police works with partner law enforcement services to increase women's meaningful participation and leadership through improved gender composition, policies and conditions for women in their services.

<sup>123</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Framework for Civil Society-Government Engagement on Women, Peace and Security under the second Australian National Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021 – 2031*, DFAT, Australian Government, 2021.



- The Department of Home Affairs works to strengthen Pacific women's meaningful participation and leadership at all levels within customs administrations in support of more effective outcomes for operational procedures, global trade facilitation and national security.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade supports women's and girls' participation and leadership in peace processes through international engagement, advocacy and funding of regional women peace mediator networks.

### *Australian Defence Force (ADF) training for military personnel*

The ADF conducts training for all military personnel on international humanitarian law. In August 2022, the Australian Defence Force introduced doctrine titled, 'Gender, Peace and Security'. This doctrine provides guidance on incorporating gender considerations throughout the planning, execution and assessment of ADF military operations at all levels, i.e. from the strategic to the tactical level. Defence's response to implementing *Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021 – 2031)* titled '*Defence Gender, Peace and Security Mandate 2020-2030*' aligns activities along six Lines of Effort: Policy and doctrine; Training and education; Personnel; Mission readiness and effects; International Engagement; and Governance and reporting.

The ADF's Directorate of Gender, Peace and Security ('GPS') coordinates implementation of the Mandate, and the Defence GPS Steering Group serve as the primary assurance mechanism. ADF personnel are encouraged to report through their chain of command any violations of International Humanitarian Law and human rights of women and girls, in accordance with obligations created under United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

Australia has supported key United Nations initiatives such as Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and the Global Compact on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the Action for Peace Declaration (A4P) and the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians and incorporated these principles into pre-deployment training for Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel deploying to peacekeeping operations.

### *Accountability for the Violation of the Human Rights of Women and Girls in Conflict*

Australia's commitment to eliminating sexual violence in conflict is longstanding and is consistent with our international engagement on human rights, gender equality and the WPS agenda. Australia recognises the importance of gender across all international institutions, including at the International Criminal Court. Since 2021, Australia has co-facilitated consultations at the International Criminal Court on the important issue of sexual and gender-based crimes. The Australian Government look forward to continued engagement with the Court, states parties, and civil society on how we can all strengthen our efforts to prevent and punish gender-based crimes at the national and international levels.



Australia has partnered with Legal Action Worldwide to establish a Gender Justice Practitioner Hub, which will support the integration of gender justice into efforts for accountability for serious international crimes, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. In 2023, and following the Australia-funded Gender & International Criminal Law Conference in The Hague, convened by Legal Action Worldwide, the International Criminal Court's Office of the Prosecutor has committed to developing a comprehensive set of publicly available principles on the crime of gender persecution, which will provide guidance for improving the prevention of gender persecution, and ensuring protection and participation of its survivors.

### *Trafficking in persons, especially women and children*

In recent years, compounding crises—such as natural disasters, armed conflict, climate change and the implications of the COVID 19 pandemic—have contributed to a global rise in trafficking in persons, especially for women and children who remain disproportionately affected.

Australia, together with Indonesia, as Co-Chairs of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, is building regional capacity to strengthen victim-survivor identification and protection. This includes efforts to promote greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities technology presents in identifying and supporting victim-survivors of trafficking in persons.

The Australian Government has continued to progress work to strengthen Australia's response to trafficking in persons and other forms of modern slavery. Legislation is before Parliament to establish Australia's inaugural federal Anti-Slavery Commissioner, who will work across Government, industry and civil society to: support compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth), which governs our supply chain transparency framework; engage with and support victims and survivors of modern slavery; and help fight modern slavery in Australia and abroad.

In 2023, the Government tabled in Parliament the report from a statutory review of Australia's Modern Slavery Act and published a report from a targeted review of Australia's modern slavery offences in the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth), which included consideration of technology-facilitated crime. The Government is also engaging with people with lived experience through a pilot Survivor Advisory Council, meetings, and civil society, to directly inform policy review and development. These examples help ensure we remain equipped to respond to all forms of modern slavery, however they occur.

The Australian Federal Police can refer people who have experienced modern slavery, including forced marriage and those at risk of forced marriage, to the Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP), delivered by the Australian Red Cross, for case management support and assistance with their accommodation, medical, mental health, legal and migration, and skills development or social support needs. In 2023, the Australian Government announced \$24.3 million in additional funding for the STPP from 2023-24 to 2026-27 to introduce an additional referral pathway for people to access the program without having to engage with the Australian Federal Police and make enhancements to better meet the needs of victim-survivors.

## F. Women and the economy

### Key Data

#### *Employment in Australia*

Women's workforce participation rate is 62.8 per cent, compared to 70.8 per cent for men.<sup>124</sup>

Women's unemployment rate is 3.8 per cent, compared to 4.3 per cent for men.

Women make up 39.4 per cent of all full-time workers and 66.8 per cent of part-time workers. This trend has remained relatively unchanged over the last decade.

#### *Gender pay gap in Australia*

The national gender pay gap is currently 12.0 per cent based on Australian Bureau of Statistics full-time average weekly ordinary time earnings data.<sup>125</sup> On average, women working full-time can expect to earn \$1,744.80 per week, compared to \$1,982.80 per week for men. This is a gap of \$238.00 per week. The Women's Gender Equality Agency estimates that amongst private sector employers (with 100 or more employees), 62% of median employer gender pay gaps are over 5% and are in favour of men.<sup>126</sup>

In 2020-21 women's median taxable income was \$44,547, 25.0 per cent lower than men's.<sup>127</sup>

For people approaching retirement (ages 60-64) women's superannuation balances were 25.1 per cent lower than men's in the 2020-21 financial year.<sup>128</sup>

There have been significant improvements in women's economic equality and security since 2019. More women are attaining higher educational qualifications and participating in the workforce, increasing financial independence.<sup>129</sup> However, gaps persist between women's and men's economic outcomes. On average, women in Australia have lower workforce participation than men, lower earnings including in retirement, are overrepresented in care and education industries, underrepresented in management roles, and undertake more unpaid care and domestic work. These factors significantly impact women's lifetime earnings, including their retirement incomes with considerable implications for older women.

<sup>124</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Labour Force, Australia, April 2024](#). ABS, Australian Government, released May 2024.

<sup>125</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 2023](#). ABS, Australian Government, released February 2024

<sup>126</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), [WGEA Data Explorer](#), 2024.

<sup>127</sup> Australian Taxation Office, [Taxation statistics 2020-21, Table 4, Chart 3](#). ATO, Australian Government, Released August 2023

<sup>128</sup> Australian Taxation Office, [Taxation statistics 2020-21, Table 5, Chart 12](#). ATO, Australian Government, Released August 2023.

<sup>129</sup> Department of the Treasury, [Women's Budget Statement](#), Treasury, 2024.

Australia also recognises there is a strong relationship between economic insecurity and violence against women.

The Working for Women Strategy outlines a number of Government ambitions to achieve economic equality. This includes balancing unpaid work; closing the gender pay gap; and closing the retirement income gap. Many of these objectives are mentioned and expanded upon within other Priority Areas of this Report, as we know women's economic equality is dependent on a multitude of factors.

### *Advancing the World of Work*

The Women's Economic Equality Taskforce (the Taskforce) was established in September 2022 to provide independent expert advice to Government on a wide range of women's economic equality issues. The Taskforce delivered its final report in October 2023.<sup>130</sup> The final report makes seven broad recommendations, with 47 sub-recommendations that focus on short- and long-term effort. The recommendations cover themes such as care, work, education and skills, the tax and transfer system, and the role of Government. The Taskforce's report and recommendations were considered during the development of the Working for Women Strategy, and helped shape the priority areas.

The Taskforce was comprised of eminent women selected based on their wide-ranging skills and lived experiences to ensure women's voices are at the centre of policy and decision-making. The taskforce was an important contributor, alongside other consultation, research and engagement pathways, in driving progress towards gender equality and keeping women at the centre of government policy and decision making.

### *Tax reforms*

The Australian tax-transfer system plays a key role in distributing income among Australian households, through a targeted system of payments (including income support and family payments), in-kind support (such as subsidised health care and education) and a progressive income tax system. Women, particularly women with children, are more likely to adjust their work hours in response to changed tax rates than men. People with less formal education and those with reduced potential to earn higher incomes are also more responsive to changes in after-tax incomes than other cohorts.<sup>131</sup>

The Australian Government is delivering tax reforms, informed by gender analysis, in an effort to ease cost of living expenses for women by increasing disposable income and providing additional support for essential expenses like childcare and health care. From 1 July 2024, the Government's revised tax cuts will deliver a tax cut for all taxpayers, and provide greater tax relief to low and middle-income taxpayers, who are disproportionately women.<sup>132</sup> Women are overrepresented in low paid industries

<sup>130</sup> Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), [Womens Economic Equality Final Report](#), PM&C, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>131</sup> Department of the Treasury, [Women's Budget Statement](#), Treasury, 2024.

<sup>132</sup> Department of the Treasury, [Women's Budget Statement](#), Treasury, 2024.

and occupations that are most likely to benefit from the changes, such as nursing, aged care, early childhood education and teaching. Increasing the financial reward for hours worked supports women to take on additional paid work, should that be their preference. These changes are expected to increase women's workforce participation by 0.37 per cent.<sup>133</sup>

### *Workplace relations reforms*

In 2022, the Australian Government made gender equality an objective of the *Fair Work Act 2009* so the Fair Work Commission can better consider gender equality in its decision-making.<sup>134</sup> The Fair Work Commission is Australia's workplace relations tribunal responsible for setting the minimum wages for Australia and helping with issues in the workplace.<sup>135</sup> Since this change, there have been two annual wage reviews that take into account the need to achieve gender equality.

In 2022, the Australian Government established two expert panels in the Fair Work Commission – one to address Pay Equity, and one to help address low wages and workplace conditions faced in the care and community sector.<sup>136</sup> The expert panels have supported and funded an uplift in wages for aged care workers, and implemented skills and training initiatives to increase the diversity and profile of the aged care workforce.<sup>137</sup> In 2022, the Fair Work Commission delivered a decision to increase pay in the aged care sector by 15 per cent over four years.<sup>138</sup> This important investment is a positive step to improving women's pay in general as women make up more than 85 per cent of Australia's aged care workforce. Fair and better wages will also attract and retain more workers in the aged care sector.<sup>139</sup>

The 2023 White Paper acknowledges that although women are participating in the labour market at higher rates than ever before, more needs to be done to achieve gender equality. The White Paper recognises the need to focus on women who face complex and intersecting forms of disadvantage, as well as looking at ways we can better value and share care work, ensure safe and respectful workplaces and reduce workforce gender segregation.

### *Unpaid and Paid Care Work*

<sup>133</sup> Department of Treasury, *'Advice on amending tax cuts to deliver broader cost-of-living relief'*. Treasury, 2024.

<sup>134</sup> The Australian Government, *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality – Priority Area 3: Economic Equality and Security*, 2024.

<sup>135</sup> The Fair Work Commission, *About us | Fair Work Commission (fwc.gov.au)*, 2024.

<sup>136</sup> The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, *Job Security and Gender Equality: Secure Jobs, Better Pay*, 2022.

<sup>137</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), *Better and fairer wages for aged care workers*, DHAC, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>138</sup> The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, *Fair Work Decision on Aged Care | Ministers' Media Centre (dewr.gov.au)*, DEWR, Australian Government, March 2024.

<sup>139</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC), *Better and fairer wages for aged care workers*, DHAC, Australian Government, 2024.

To achieve gender equality, unpaid and paid care responsibilities need to be equally shared, and care needs to be valued. The Australian Government is committed to helping families balance caring responsibilities and to value unpaid and paid care and support work.

Understanding the reality of the motherhood penalty, the Australian Government is committed to implementing policies that promote and achieve gender equal distribution of care.<sup>140</sup> In 2023, the Government extended the Paid Parental Leave (PPL) Scheme, which is paid based on the weekly rate of the national minimum wage. The revised scheme increased PPL from 18 weeks to 20 weeks per family in 2023, increasing to 26 weeks per family in 2026. The reforms also introduce ‘reserved leave’ which means that from 1 July 2026, each parent will have 4 weeks of leave for their exclusive use, with the remaining 18 weeks available to be shared. Reserved leave encourages both parents to take leave, and sends a signal, especially to men, that their role as carers is valued. The Government has also strengthened rights to access unpaid parental leave and flexible work, and made breastfeeding a protected attribute through reforms to the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

Australia recognises the care and support sector is highly feminised, and has implemented a variety of measures to reduce and redistribute unpaid care, while strengthening the rights of paid care and support workers. The imbalance in unpaid care undermines women’s lifelong economic security by limiting their participation in paid work and leadership roles. To address this, Government initiatives include:

- Cheaper Child Care reforms: In 2023, child care became cheaper for most Australian families, with the Child Care Subsidy rates increasing to improve affordability of early childhood education and care (ECEC). This enables women to reduce the amount of time they spend caring for children and increase their workforce participation, according to their preferences.
- Investment in childcare accessibility for First Nations families: As part of the Government’s Cheaper Child Care Reforms, the hours Indigenous children are eligible for subsidised care will increase from up to 24 hours a fortnight to 36 hours. These simple changes will benefit approximately 6,600 First Nations families. Not only do the changes help ease cost of living pressures, they provide even more opportunities for First Nations children to access the development, education and health benefits of early childhood education and care helping ensure they are school-ready.<sup>141</sup>
- Release of the *Early Years Strategy 2024–34* (the Early Years Strategy): On 7 May 2024, the Australian Government released its Early Years Strategy to shape its vision for the future of Australia’s children and their families. The Early Years Strategy recognises how critical the early years are for children’s development and continued success over their lifetime and aims to deliver the best possible outcomes for Australian children.<sup>142</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Bahar, E., Bradshaw, N., Deutscher, N., & Montaigne, M. (2023). *Children and the gender earnings gap: evidence for Australia* (No. 2023-02). Treasury Working Paper.

<sup>141</sup> Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *‘Making childcare more accessible for Indigenous families’*, PM&C Website, Australian Government, 2022.

<sup>142</sup> Department of Social Services, *Early Years Strategy*. DSS, Australian Government, 2024.

## G. Women in power and decision-making

### Key Data

#### *Australian Private Sector*

The percentage of women on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) 200 boards is 36.4 per cent.<sup>143</sup> The percentage of women in ASX300 boards is 35.6 per cent.

Chief Executive Women's 2023 Senior Executive Census reported that:<sup>144</sup>

- 20 women were Chief Executive Officers (CEO) in the ASX200, up from 14 women in 2022.
- 26 women were CEOs in the ASX300 (9 per cent), up from 18 women (6 per cent) in 2022.
- 23 per cent of ASX300 companies have gender balanced executive leadership teams, an increase from 17 per cent in 2022.

#### *Australian Government*

The representation of women on Australian Government boards is 51.6 per cent; 42.3 per cent of Chair and Deputy Chair positions are held by women.<sup>145</sup>

There are 10 women in the Cabinet (43.5 per cent), the largest number of women ever in an Australian Cabinet.<sup>146</sup>

There are 102 women in the Australian Parliament (of 227 people).

The proportion of women in the House of Representatives is 39.1 per cent.

The proportion of women in the Senate is 56.0 per cent.

According to the Equal Power Now: Girls, Young Women and Political Participation report, from Plan International, 72 per cent of young Australian women don't feel politics is an equal or inclusive space for them, with just 1 in 10 believing Parliament was a safe workplace.<sup>147</sup>

There have been remarkable improvements in women's representation in Australia's public life and key leadership roles over recent decades, particularly at all levels of government. This is the result of concerted efforts to boost representation, but there is still a long way to go.

<sup>143</sup> Australian Institute of Company Directors, [Gender Diversity Progress Report - March 2023 to June 2023](#), AICD.

<sup>144</sup> Chief Executive Women, [CEW Senior Executive Census](#), Chief Executive Women, 2023.

<sup>145</sup> Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, [Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Report 2022-2023](#), PM&C, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>146</sup> Australian Parliament House, [Address labels and CSV files](#), APH Website, Australian Government.

<sup>147</sup> Plan International Australia, [Three quarters of young women voting for first time in the federal election do not believe Australian politics is an equal space for women and people of colour](#), Plan International Website, 2022.

As at 30 May 2024, women make up 56.0 per cent of the Senate and 39.1 per cent of the House of Representatives, making up at total 44.7 per cent of the 47th Australian Parliament. The Government is gender equal and women hold 10 of a total 23 positions in the current Cabinet.<sup>148</sup> This is the highest number of women in a Cabinet in Australia's history, and was achieved through concerted effort to ensure the Cabinet reflects the gender diversity of Australia.

### *Women's participation in public sector decision making*

With the release of the Working for Women Strategy on 7 March 2024, the Government introduced new gender balance targets for women to hold 50 per cent of Government board positions across portfolios and in Chair and Deputy Chair positions.<sup>149</sup> As at 30 June 2023, women held 51.6 per cent of positions on Australian Government boards, meeting the Government's target for women to hold 50 per cent of overall Australian Government board positions and maintaining the highest overall result since reporting began in 2009.<sup>150</sup>

To increase gender equality and diversity in politics, the Australian Government has provided funding to equip and encourage more women across the political spectrum to run for public office at local, state and federal levels. The project, delivered by Women for Election Australia from February 2023, includes place-based training events, online training forums, and a tech-based training platform containing candidate resources and support forums.<sup>151</sup> The project will increase the number and diversity of women running for public office and getting elected, and encourages the participation of women from politically under-represented communities.

Women are well represented at all classification levels in the Australian Public Service (APS) including the Senior Executive Service (SES), where women's representation is 53 per cent.<sup>152</sup> Women are slightly less represented than men at the SES Band 3 level, the highest level, although their representation continues to rise. This progress is due to targeted gender equality strategies implemented within the APS to promote more women into senior leadership positions, underpinned by the *Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2026*.

<sup>148</sup> The Cabinet, consisting of senior Ministers presided over by the Prime Minister, is the government's pre-eminent policy-making body. Major policy and legislative proposals are decided by the Cabinet. The Prime Minister selects Ministers for Cabinet positions.

<sup>149</sup> The Australian Government, *Women's Budget Statement*, May 2024.

<sup>150</sup> The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards, PM&C Website, 2023.

<sup>151</sup> Women for Election, *'EQUIP: Power Edition'*, Women for Election Website, 2023.

<sup>152</sup> Australian Public Services Commission, *State of the Service Report 2022-2023*, APSC, Australian Government, 2023



### *Women's participation in the private sector*

The 2023 Chief Executive Women's Senior Executive Census found that Australian women's representation in private sector leadership roles has increased since 2022. However, change is incremental. In the top 300 ranked Australian companies (ASX 300), women held 9 per cent of CEO positions in 2023, up from 6 per cent in 2022.<sup>153</sup>

Women are underrepresented in key decision-making roles across almost all industries in the Australian workforce. While women make up half of the employees in the 2020-21 WGEA dataset (51 per cent), women comprise only:

- 19.4 per cent of CEOs
- 32.5 per cent of key management positions
- 33 per cent of board members
- 18 per cent of board chairs.

The Australian Government has provided grant funding to organisations to increase gender equality, extend leadership and economic participation opportunities for women, and build a safer more respectful culture in Australian workplaces. Projects funded include those that target women in leadership, particularly in male dominated industries where gender pay gaps are high, including construction and fisheries. These projects are also designed to influence decision makers in the industries, to bring about structural and societal change, and make workforces safer and more attractive for women.

### *First Nations Leadership*

Australia understands the importance of lifting all women from all backgrounds into decision-making positions. *Wiyi Yani U Thangani* (Women's Voices) is a multiyear systemic change project set out to capture and respond to the strengths, aspirations and challenges of First Nations women and girls. First Nations women and girls consulted on the report identified a need for capacity-building to encourage broad-based leadership, succession planning and the skills required to represent at the interface with government and external parties.

The Australian Government is working in a new way with First Nations leaders and communities, one that supports First Nations ownership, enables true partnerships with Government and recognises the diversity of cultures and circumstances of First Nations Australians.<sup>154</sup> Through the 'Empowered Communities' initiative, the Australian Government is backing First Nations leaders who want to

<sup>153</sup> Chief Executive Women, *CEW Senior Executive Census*, Chief Executive Women, 2023.

<sup>154</sup> National Indigenous Australian Agency, '*Culture and Empowering Communities | NIAA*', NIAA Website, Australian Government, n.d..



introduce positive changes in their communities and regions by putting First Nations culture and participation central to government decision-making.

In 2023, the Australian Government announced the SES 100 initiative aimed at increasing the number of First Nations SES leaders across the Australian Public Service from 54 to 100.<sup>155</sup> This initiative includes a range of non-specialised roles such as policy development and implementation, program and project management, strategic communication, corporate policy, compliance and enforcement programs, service delivery, and corporate operations.

#### Case Study: Wiyi Yani U Thangani - Martu Leadership Program

The Martu are the traditional owners of a large part of central Western Australia. The Martu Leadership Program combines learning in the 'whitefella' world and learning in the Martu world. The first of these two streams involves building confidence and capacity in areas of Western knowledge including: government structures and processes, native title law, corporations law, trust law, criminal law and sentencing, corporate finances and governance and the operations of not-for-profit and for-profit companies. The learning in Martu world is cultural advancement in Martu Law, which contains sensitive knowledge not publicly discussed. The two streams support Martu people to implement effective Martu-led initiatives and drive vitally needed changes in the way mainstream Australia engages with the Martu world.

"I'm proud, happy—we can change the future for the better." Martu Leadership Program participant.

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<sup>155</sup> Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *'Boosting representation of First Nations people at SES levels across the APS | Ministers Media Centre (pmc.gov.au)'*, PM&C Website, Australian Government, 2023.

## H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

### *Australia's system of government*

Australia has a federal constitutional system in which legislative, executive and judicial powers are shared or distributed between the Australian Government and the constituent states and territories. Under Australia's system of government, powers are distributed between:

- a) The Australian Government;
- b) Six state governments – New South Wales (NSW), Queensland (QLD), South Australia (SA), Tasmania (TAS), Victoria (VIC), Western Australia (WA);
- c) Two self-governing territory governments – the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and the Northern Territory (NT);
- d) 537 local government councils.

### *The Federal Office for Women*

Australia has an extensive network of gender equality structures that support progress towards achieving gender equality. The Federal Office for Women, located within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is responsible for driving whole-of-government reforms necessary to achieve gender equality. The Office for Women works across government to place women and gender equality at heart of policy and decision-making and to provide quality gender advice to the Minister for Women and the Prime Minister. Australia's Office for Women was established in 1974 and in 2024 celebrated 50 years of work to promote gender equality. All Australian jurisdictions, ministers and departments also share responsibility for promoting gender equality and the advancement of women and girls.

### *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality*

In March 2024, the Australian Government launched the Working for Women Strategy – the first national strategy focused on progressing gender equality. Developed in consultation with over 3,000 people and organisations, including women and girls from diverse backgrounds, the Working for Women Strategy outlines the Government's vision for gender equality – an Australia where people are safe, treated with respect, have choices, and have access to resources and equal outcomes no matter their gender.

The Working for Women Strategy recognises addressing gender attitudes and stereotypes as a foundation that underpins each of the Strategy's priority areas. It also recognises that change is needed at a community level as Government alone cannot change individual attitudes. Over the course of the Working for Women Strategy, the Government will measure progress towards attitudinal change in Australia through the following key outcomes: community attitudes and beliefs in Australia reject gender inequality; and people are not limited by gender roles.

## *Australia's Women's Budget Statement and Gender Responsive Budgeting*

In 1984, Australia became the first country in the world to develop a women's budget statement to ensure budget decisions would be made with full knowledge of their impact on women. Australia reinstated an annual Women's Budget Statement in 2021. As an official Budget document, the Women's Budget Statement forms an important mechanism through which the Australian Government can be transparent about its consideration of gender equality in making budgetary decisions. The statement highlights the key proposals in the national budget that are invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and will be a reporting mechanism for the Working for Women strategy.

Australia's gender responsive budgeting framework places gender equality at the centre of Government decision-making. In 2022 the Australian Government introduced gender analysis requirements on a select number of budget proposals.<sup>156</sup> In 2023, the Australian Government introduced gender analysis requirements for all new budget proposals, as a means of mainstreaming gender equality across government. This requirement weaves consideration of gender impact through the budget process and is a key way the Government can identify and fund measures that close gender gaps.

### Gender analysis in practice: Expansion to Paid Parental Leave

The Government's expansion to the PPL scheme was designed to improve support for families and to have a positive impact on gender equality by encouraging fathers and partners to play a more active role in the care of children.

In expanding the PPL scheme to 26 weeks by 1 July 2026, the Government also sought to support more equal sharing of parenting and household responsibilities. Compared to women, fewer men take up Government-funded PPL. In 2022–23, 171,280 parents received Parental Leave Pay (with 99 per cent being the biological mother), while 88,645 parents claimed Dad and Partner Pay (with 98 per cent being the biological father).

Gender analysis concluded that fathers and partners taking leave following the birth or adoption of a child has positive impacts for women and their families. Under the new scheme, parents can take a portion of PPL at the same time which will increase to four weeks from 1 July 2025 (up from two weeks currently). This supports parents to optimise their health, family and work obligations, with periods of concurrency allowing fathers and partners to undertake child caring duties and support the birth parent during recovery from childbirth. Research suggests this leads to more equitable division of care over a child's lifetime.<sup>157</sup>

<sup>156</sup> Definition of Gender Responsive Budgeting: Gender Responsive Budgeting is a system of budgeting that aims to embed gender equality throughout the policy development and budget cycle process. It is a tool for governments to clearly understand gender impacts of proposals in policies and the allocation of resources.

<sup>157</sup> D Wood et al., '[Dad days: How more gender equal parental leave could improve the lives of Australian families](#)', *Grattan Institute*, 2021.

To encourage more men to take up Government-funded PPL, the Government is increasing the reserved period of leave for each parent to four weeks by 1 July 2026. This means those weeks can only be accessed by that parent but with flexibility for parents to take up to four weeks concurrently (from 1 July 2025). These changes, together with the increase in the total amount of PPL available, are designed to encourage more equal sharing of parenting and household responsibilities. This contributes to gender equality and better supports parents to spend time with their children and participate in family life. Single parents will be able to access the full entitlement as it increases. By using gender responsive budgeting, decision makers gained an informed understanding on how design impacts men and women differently and could make informed decisions about resource allocation.

### *Publishing the Gender Pay Gap*

The gender pay gap is an internationally recognised measure of how we value the contribution of women and men in the workforce. WGEA delivers Australia's gender equality reporting and data collection program, and supports employers to remove barriers to women's participation in the workforce.<sup>158</sup> WGEA is a regulator and influencer with a vision for women and men to be equally represented, valued and rewarded. Australia reports two national gender pay gaps, which are drawn from two key datasets. The current national gender pay gap is 12.0 per cent, based on Australian Bureau of Statistics full time average weekly ordinary earnings data.<sup>159</sup> The WGEA average total remuneration gender pay gap (for private sector employers with 100 or more employees) is 21.7 per cent.<sup>160</sup> This figure includes the total remuneration full-time equivalent earnings, including superannuation, overtime, bonuses and other additional payments.

Following amendments to the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* in 2023, the Government has taken action to close the gender pay gap through publishing employer gender pay gap data.<sup>161</sup> In February 2024, WGEA published, for the first time, the gender pay gaps for private sector employers with 100 or more employees in 2022–23. This dataset found a median total remuneration gender pay gap of 19 per cent.<sup>162</sup> The dataset captures the gender pay gaps for almost 5,000 Australian private sector employers, covering almost five million employees. The Government's decision to publish employer gender pay gaps is a catalyst for change, bringing transparency and accountability as well as creating healthy

<sup>158</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), '[Welcome | WGEA](#)', WGEA Website, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>159</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), '[Average Weekly Earnings, Australia](#)', ABS Website, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>160</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), '[WGEA Gender Equality Scorecard 2022-23](#)', WGEA Website, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>161</sup> Australian Workplace Gender Equality Agency, '[Reporting gender equality performance | WGEA](#)', WGEA Website, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>162</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), '[Employer Gender Pay Gaps Snapshot](#)', WGEA Website, Australian Government, 2024.

competition among peers. For employers, it is an opportunity to reconsider how they hire, promote, retain and remunerate their staff. For employees, it equips them with the information they need when choosing employers and to raise questions with their current employer. In early 2025, WGEA will publish employer gender pay gaps for the Federal public sector. WGEA also publishes yearly Gender Equality Scorecards which provide an update on the state of workplace gender equality in Australia.

### *Working for Women Program*

The Office for Women administers the Working for Women Program (WfWP) (previously known as the Women's Leadership and Development Program), a grant program funding a range of projects to improve the lives of women and girls in Australia. More than 76,000 women and girls across Australia are estimated to benefit from projects funded between 2019 and 2027.<sup>163</sup>

To ensure women's voices are central to the policy development process, the Office for Women also provides funding for the National Women's Alliances. These civil society organisations collaborate with the Office for Women and government to inform policy and decision making on the following priority areas:

- Women's safety
- Women's economic security and leadership
- Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and migrant and refugee women
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- Women living in rural, regional and remote areas of Australia
- Women with disability

### *Gender responsive procurement*

Government procurement is a prime opportunity to boost women's economic equality. Through the Workplace Gender Equality Procurement Principles, Australian businesses that employ 100 or more people must be compliant with the *Workplace Gender Equality Agency Act 2012* in order to be eligible to win Government work valued at or above a certain threshold. Compliance requires employers to report to the WGEA on their performance against the Gender Equality Indicators (GEIs) in the *Workplace Gender Equality Agency Act 2012* and communicate their performance to employees, shareholders and governing bodies. From 1 April 2023, employers with 500 or more employees were also required to have policies or strategies in place to support the 6 GEIs. The GEIs represent the key areas where workplace gender inequality persists and where progress can be achieved through focused action. The GEIs cover the gender composition of the workforce and of governing bodies, equal remuneration, flexibility and care friendly work arrangements, workplace consultation on gender equality, and efforts to prevent and address sexual harassment.

<sup>163</sup> This information has been derived from Women's Leadership and Development Program grant recipients' anticipated impact data.

### *Australia's gender data and statistics*

The Australian Government is committed to improving the collection and use of high-quality and accessible intersectional gender-disaggregated data and statistics. From 2023, the Australian Government has released an annual *Status of Women Report Card* on International Women's Day to report on the challenges that women continue to face in Australia and highlight areas where more progress is needed.<sup>164</sup>

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) regularly updates a publicly available collection of *Gender Indicators*. The ABS maintains the *Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables*, which standardises the collection and dissemination of data relating to sex and gender. The ABS conducts a regular *Time Use Survey* to provide a rich and contemporary source of information on the division of paid and unpaid work in Australia. Measuring the time spent on paid and unpaid work provides a holistic indicator of economic contributions and a strong evidence base to advance gender equality.

A Gender Data Steering Group was established in 2022 to maximise the impact of the government's major data holdings as an evidence base for gender equality policy. A gender data action plan, complementing the Government's *Data and Digital Government Strategy*, is being developed to further support efforts to improve the use of gender-disaggregated data by building data and analysis capabilities in the Australian Public Service.

The Australian Government is committed to continually improving intersectionality of data and recognises that limitations in current data impacts the ability to measure all people's experiences of inequality. The Government is committed to ensuring First Nations communities retain ownership of their cultural knowledge and intellectual property, and is promoting the Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles as they relate to gender-disaggregated data.

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<sup>164</sup> Australian Government, [Status of Women Report Card 2024](#), Working for Women Website, 2024.

## I. Human rights of women

### Key Data

Australia is a party to the 7 core international human rights treaties, including the:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Australia has a strong framework for protecting and advancing human rights through the Australian Constitution, Commonwealth, state and territory legislation and administrative measures, policy and practice, institutions such as independent courts and the common law.

### *The Australian Human Rights Commission*

The Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission) is Australia's National Human Rights Institution, responsible for protecting and promoting human rights domestically and internationally. The Commission comprises a president as well as 7 commissioners who are each responsible for a different area of human rights, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner
- Age Discrimination Commissioner
- Children's Commissioner
- Disability Discrimination Commissioner
- Human Rights Commissioner
- Race Discrimination Commissioner
- Sex Discrimination Commissioner

Domestically, the Commission investigates and conciliates complaints about discrimination and human rights breaches, advocates to government for the consideration of human rights in laws and policy making, provides advice, reviews laws, and makes submissions to parliamentary inquiries. It plays an important role in promoting and raising awareness about human rights issues through education and training, as well as events, discussion and media outreach. The Commission undertakes research into human rights and discrimination issues in Australia and holds national inquiries into human rights issues. It has the power to intervene, with leave of the court, in relevant court proceedings. Commissioners



may also assist the Federal Court and the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia. It produces guidelines for employers and provides training and resources for organisations to assist them in supporting diversity and inclusion and addressing modern slavery.<sup>165</sup>

On the international level, the Commission runs international education and training programs for other human rights institutions in the Asia-Pacific region. The Commission takes part in the monitoring and scrutinising of Australia's performance in meeting its international human rights commitments and, in doing so, provides independent reports to the UN.

For the reporting period 2019 – 2024, the Commission completed a number of projects that are relevant to the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls including:

- National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces -Respect@Work: The Commission conducted an education campaign around the new laws and produced factsheets and information to support employers and employees navigating them.  
Discussed under Section D – Violence Against Women.
- Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces: In 2021, the Australian Human Rights Commission launched the *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces* to ensure Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces (CPWs) are safe and respectful, and that the nation's Parliament reflects best practice in the prevention and handling of bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault. The Report was delivered in late 2021 with a proposed Framework for Action to ensure that CPWs are safe and respectful, upholding the standing of the Parliament, and are a worthy reflection of the community that they serve.<sup>166</sup>
- *Wiyi Yaniu U Thangani* (Women's voices): Published in December 2020, the [Wiyi Yaniu U Thangani \(Women's Voices\): Securing our Rights, Securing our Future 2020](#) Report set out the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls, the principles they think ought to be enshrined in the design of policy and programs, and the measures they recommend to be taken to effectively promote the enjoyment of their human rights in the future.<sup>167</sup> This work will be carried forward by First Nations Gender Justice Institute established in 2024.<sup>168</sup>

### *Australia's International Human Rights Commitments*

The Australian Government is committed to advancing gender equality and the rights of women and girls at home, in our region and through broader international engagement. The Ambassador for Gender Equality is the lead advocate for Australia's work on gender equality and the human rights of

<sup>165</sup> Parliament of Australia, '[Australian Human Rights Commission](#)', APH Website, n.d..

<sup>166</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, [Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces](#), AHRC, Australian Government, 2021.

<sup>167</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, [Wiyi Yaniu U Thangani Report \(2020\)](#), AHRC, Australian Government, 2020.

<sup>168</sup> The Australian Human Rights Commission, [First Nations Gender Justice Institute | Wiyi Yaniu U Thangani \(Women's Voices\) \(humanrights.gov.au\)](#), AHRC, Australian Government, 2024.



women and girls internationally. The Ambassador engages in international advocacy, public diplomacy, and outreach in support of Australian Government policies and programs to promote gender equality.

Achieving gender equality is critical to realising the human rights of all people and sustainable development. Australia is committed to working with the international community to advance gender equality and ensure women and girls' empowerment is at the centre of our international efforts.

Australia is submitting its 9<sup>th</sup> Period Report on the CEDAW in late 2024.

## J. Women and the media

### Key Data

Media coverage of women's sport rarely rises above 10 per cent of total sports coverage on any given day in Australia.<sup>169</sup>

Despite the inequality of women's sports media coverage, the FIFA Women's World Cup Matilda's games commanded record breaking crowds and the highest ever recorded viewership<sup>170</sup>, debunking myths women's sport cannot attract crowds equivalent to men's sport.

48 per cent of women in media have experienced intimidation, abuse or sexual harassment in the workplace.

41 per cent of women in media have experienced harassment, bullying and trolling on social media.

81 per cent agreed there is a gender pay gap in the media (report cites further research on gender pay gap).<sup>171</sup>

Australia recognises that to achieve gender equality, rigid attitudes and behaviours around gender need to keep changing. This means challenging stereotypes that limit how people behave, are perceived and are treated at work, at school, in relationships, in their homes, online and by their communities. Media plays an important role in setting and upholding societal examples and the portrayal of women and girls.

### *Gender based discrimination and bias in media*

A critical challenge for ending violence against women is the changing nature of technology, and the risks posed to women by online environments. Social media algorithms can push misogynistic content to young people, normalising sexist or even violent attitudes and undermining gender equality. There is also growing concern around the role of violent online pornography in normalising gender-based violence within the Australian community.

The 'Stop it at the Start' campaign is a long-running national primary prevention campaign that aims to drive attitudinal change and contribute to a reduction in violence against women and children. The next phase of the campaign includes a counter-influencing campaign in online spaces where violent and misogynistic content thrives, intended to counter the corrosive influence of online content targeted at young adults that condones violence against women. It will raise awareness about a proliferation of

<sup>169</sup> Deakin University, '[Sports journalism: one simple way to increase coverage of women's sport | this.](#)', Deakin University this. Website, n.d..

<sup>170</sup> BBC, '[World Cup: Matildas score TV rating record in semi-final loss to England](#)', Marita Moloney, 17 Aug 2023.

<sup>171</sup> Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, '[Mates Over Merit: The Women In Media Report](#)', MEAA, 2020.

misogynistic influencers and content, and encourage conversations within families about the damaging impact of the material.

eSafety delivers a number of programs designed to address gender based bias and discrimination in media, including:

- ‘Women In the Spotlight’ launched in 2021, which provides training and resources to raise awareness about gendered online abuse and elevates and protects women’s voices online, including social media self-defence. The program equips women with the skills to engage safely and confidently online as part of their working lives and leadership in their communities, as well as the knowledge they need to deal with abuse online.
- Partnering with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), a network funded by the Australian Government, to create online safety resources for journalists, newsrooms and media organisations, which were published on World Press Freedom Day 2022, recognising that journalists who are female or from diverse racial or social backgrounds more likely to experience online abuse.<sup>172</sup>

### *Diverse representation in broadcasting*

Women’s underrepresentation in the media reinforces and can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring national broadcasters reflect the diversity of Australia, and supports gender equal representation. The Australian Government funds the ABC and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), both of which have a role to reflect the diversity and interests of all Australians.

In 2021, the ABC relaunched the ‘50:50 Project’ as ‘50:50 Equality’ to continue the delivery of news stories more relevant to Australians.<sup>173</sup> Building on the successful steady increase in female representation in stories across 2020, the 50:50 Equality project’s focus has shifted to representation of other Australian communities, including people with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse people and First Nations people.

The SBS is Australia’s multicultural and multilingual national broadcaster. It provides broadcast and digital media services to inform, educate and entertain all Australians while reflecting Australia’s multicultural society. The SBS Inclusion, Equity and Diversity Strategy (2022-2024) includes targets to increase the on and off screen representation and career progression of women, First Nations people, people with disability, LGBTIQ+ people and culturally and linguistically diverse people, to ensure their workforce reflects the diversity of Australian society.<sup>174</sup>

### *Changing social norms and gender stereotypes*

<sup>172</sup> eSafety Commissioner, *Supporting journalists to engage safely online*, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>173</sup> Australian Broadcasting Corporation, *Diversity and Inclusion, Annual Report 2020 – 2021*, 2020.

<sup>174</sup> Special Broadcasting Service, *Inclusion, Equity and Diversity Strategy (2022-2024)*, 2022.

The Working for Women Strategy is underpinned by the recognition that gender equality cannot be achieved without addressing the rigid attitudes and stereotypes that affect people over their lifetime. Over the course of the Strategy, the Government will measure progress towards attitudinal change in Australia through the following key outcomes:

- community attitudes and beliefs in Australia reject gender inequality
- people are not limited by gender roles.

The Australian Government funded primary prevention of violence against women and their children organisation Our Watch in 2021-22 to expand its national media engagement initiative which promotes responsible and ethical reporting of violence against women in response to Recommendation 13 of the Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report.<sup>175</sup> The initiative includes updating the Media Making Change website (including guidance material on reporting sexual harassment), mentoring and upskilling journalists through a fellowship program and driving increased engagement with the Media Making Change website.<sup>176</sup> This work has been expanded through further Australian Government funding (2022-2027) that will implement further campaigns and strategies to raise awareness and deepen community understandings of the drivers of gendered violence and the roles the community can play in preventing them.

The Australian Human Rights Commission is currently developing a National Anti-Racism Strategy to tackle racism and promote racial equality in Australia. This strategy will include a National Anti-Racism Framework which will support the Australian Government, civil society, businesses and the community to tackle racism and promote racial equality in Australia, including in the media. It will also include the 'Racism. It Stops with Me' campaign, which seeks to raise public awareness, deliver public education and build community capacity to combat racism and discriminatory attitudes.

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<sup>175</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, [Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report \(2020\)](#) | [Australian Human Rights Commission, AHRC, Australian Government, 2020.](#)

<sup>176</sup> Our Watch, ['Media Home | Media Making Change | Ending violence against women - Our Watch'](#), [Website], n.d.

## K. Women and the environment

### Key Data

78 percent of Australian women are concerned about climate change, compared to 72 per cent of men.

82 percent of women are concerned about climate change impacts (i.e. heatwaves), compared to 73 per cent of men.

72 percent of women support targets and actions to limit warming and meet net zero, compared to 67 per cent of men.

Evidence shows that in Australia that violence against women increases after disasters (e.g. bushfires).

The green economy will be responsible for 67 million new jobs globally by 2030.<sup>177</sup>

In Australia, women make up 35 per cent of the overall clean energy workforce, but as low as 2 per cent of technical roles such as licenced electricians.

Australia recognises that women play a critical role as agents of change in climate action and awareness. Women are at the forefront of climate education, raising awareness and climate literacy within their families and communities. Despite this, women are underrepresented in the green economy due to the highly gender-segregated nature of clean energy focused industries, including the construction, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste industries. Women are more susceptible to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, including economic vulnerabilities, health impacts, and a lack of access to resources.

### *Australia's climate change framework*

The Australian Government is taking concerted action to adapt to climate impacts and to build resilience and disaster readiness in our communities. The Government is developing Australia's first National Climate Risk Assessment and a National Adaptation Plan, to better understand the risks and impacts to Australia from climate change and to invest in a plan to adapt to those risks. The Australian Government is investing funding to identify and prioritise nationally significant risks to Australia from climate change impacts and provide a robust and scientifically sound evidence base for government investment in adaptation measures. The Government understands that climate change is disproportionately affecting women across the world. The adaptation plan will be gender-sensitive, participatory and fully transparent and will ensure future climate adaptation funding is well-targeted to ensure that climate change does not disproportionately affect groups in vulnerable situations.

<sup>177</sup> Boston Consulting Group, ['Why Climate Action Needs a Gender Focus | BCG'](#), BCG Website, 2021.

In 2022, the Government legislated Australia's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, to reach net zero by 2050 and 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. The Government committed to developing a net zero plan, which will articulate how Australia will transition to a net zero economy, consistent with our international and domestic commitments.

Implementing the Target and Plan will spur a transformation of the workforce, including different skills, types and number of jobs available. There will be an opportunity to consider women's workforce participation in the sectors targeted, which can support women's economic security. The Government will take a gender responsive approach as the sectoral plans and net zero plan are developed. The Government will engage extensively with industry, the climate movement, experts, unions, the community and with all levels of government to develop these sectoral plans, ensuring they are robust, ambitious but achievable, and accepted by the community. Engagement of and opportunities for women will be a key focus of this work.

At COP26, the Australian Government announced it had joined the Equal by 30 Campaign. The campaign is a public commitment by public and private sector organisations to work towards equal pay, equal leadership, and equal opportunities for women in the clean energy sector by 2030. The Government made five additional Equal by 30 commitments on December 2022, including the creation of the Australian Women in Energy Roundtable for industry to promote equality initiatives and policies accelerating women's participation in the clean energy workforce. Targeted efforts under Equal by 30 are complimented by the Government's support of women's participation in men-majority industries through Fee-Free TAFE and the Australian Skills Guarantee.<sup>178</sup>

Australia is committed to the full implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Gender Action Plan (GAP) and promoting gender-responsive and socially inclusive climate action, and recognises the unique contributions of women and girls, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and youth in national, regional, and domestic climate change action. In 2024, Australia made a submission to the UNFCCC sharing information on its progress on the implementation of the activities contained in the UNFCCC GAP.

Australia endorsed the Gender-responsive Just Transitions and Climate Action Partnership at COP28, and is committed to driving work to strengthen all women's and girls' leadership and meaningful participation, decision making, capacities, and livelihoods in climate action to achieve gender equality.

Australia is also one of 13 member countries of the Equality in Energy Transitions Initiative, a collaboration between the Clean Energy Ministerial and International Energy Agency, with the aim of advancing the transition to a low carbon economy through advancing women's participation in clean energy and closing the gender gap in the energy sector. Under the Initiative, Australia has nominated three Equality Initiative Ambassadors, to inspire the next generation of women leaders in the clean energy sector.

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<sup>178</sup> Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, '[Equal by 30 - DCCEEW](#)', DCEEW Website, n.d.

## L. The girl child

### Key Data

#### *Girls in Sport*

In 2022, 46 per cent of Australian girls (aged 0 to 14) participated in organised outside-of-school hours sport-related activity at least one a week.<sup>179</sup>

Girls aged 9 to 14 years report lack of confidence (in competence/self/body image), cost of activities and transport, and quality of sport experience (coaching, facilities, non-inclusive/welcoming environments) as barriers to participation in sport.<sup>180</sup>

#### *Abuse*

In 2021 to 2022, around 1 in 31 Australian children aged under 18 came into contact with the child protection system.<sup>181</sup>

In 2021 to 2022, about 1,200 children were the subject of a substantiation of abuse in care.<sup>182</sup>

Most child sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone known to the child. Around 1 in 10 women in Australia report that an adult sexually abused them before they turned 15.<sup>183</sup>

#### *Education*

In 2022, across all assessed year levels, female students attained a higher mean score than males in reading, writing, spelling, and grammar and punctuation. On the numeracy domain, females attained a lower mean score than males.<sup>184</sup>

Girls aged 15 to 19 reported more likely than boys to say they experienced school, mental health, or relationship challenges.<sup>185</sup>

<sup>179</sup> Australian Sport Commission, [AusPlay Data Portal: Sport-related participation – frequency of participation](#), 2023.

<sup>180</sup> Clearinghouse for Sport, [Factors influencing participation](#), Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>181</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, [Child protection Australia 2021-2022](#), the Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>182</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, [Child protection Australia 2021-2022](#), the Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>183</sup> The National Office for Child Safety, [National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse](#), Australian Government, 2021.

<sup>184</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), [Primary and secondary schooling](#), AIHW Website, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>185</sup> Mission Australia, [Youth Survey Report 2023](#), 2023.

Girls only make up about a quarter of enrolments in year 12 information technology, physics and engineering classes.<sup>186</sup>

In 2023, it was reported that 48 per cent of parents with daughters talk to their kids about STEM at least once a week. This is up from 42% in 2020–21.<sup>187</sup>

Girls make up the majority of students in many year 12 STEM subjects, including in the fields of biological sciences, earth sciences, chemical sciences and agricultural and environmental studies.<sup>188</sup>

### *Behaviours*

In 2023, a report found that 59.3 per cent of females aged 12 to 18 were dissatisfied with their body.<sup>189</sup> The same report found that 47.9 per cent of females reported a high level of concern about their body image.<sup>190</sup>

Of young men aged 16 to 24 years, 22 per cent believe that men should take control in relationships and 36 per cent believe that women prefer it this way.<sup>191</sup>

Fathers are less likely to feel comfortable with the idea of their sons playing with dolls, or crying when sad (75 per cent), compared to mothers (87 per cent).<sup>192</sup>

One in three (34.8 per cent) Australians hold a negative bias about women's ability to participate fully economically, politically or in education.<sup>193</sup>

Australia is committed to eliminating discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls. Over the past five years, Australia has implemented a variety of measures to combat negative social norms and practices, and support girls to meet their needs and aspirations.

Girls are regularly outperforming boys in literacy, and more women than men enrol at university. However gender differences in education and training choices become apparent in secondary school.

<sup>186</sup> Department of Industry, Science and Resources, *The State of STEM Gender Equality in 2023*, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>187</sup> Department of Industry, Science and Resources, *The State of STEM Gender Equality in 2023*, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>188</sup> Department of Industry, Science and Resources, *The State of STEM Gender Equality in 2023*, Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>189</sup> The Butterfly Foundation, *Body Kind Youth Survey 2023*, 2023.

<sup>190</sup> The Butterfly Foundation, *Body Kind Youth Survey 2023*, 2023.

<sup>191</sup> Politoff, et al. (2019). *'Young Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality: Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)*. ANROWS Insights, Issue 01/2019. Sydney: ANROWS.

<sup>192</sup> OurWatch, *'Challenging gender stereotypes in the early years: the power of parents'* [website], 2018.

<sup>193</sup> United National Development Programme (UNDP) (2023), *2023 Gender Social Norms Index: Breaking down gender biases: Shifting social norms towards gender equality*, UNDP Human Development Reports website, accessed 26 January 2024.



The Australian Government is committed to building a pipeline of young female entrepreneurs and provide them with the tools and skills they need in technology and business through the 'Future Female Entrepreneurs Program'.

#### Case Study: Future Female Entrepreneurs Program

The Australian Government funds the Future Female Entrepreneurs Program, which includes the *Academy for Enterprising Girls*, aimed at young girls aged 10-18, to develop their skills in STEM, entrepreneurship and decision making and the *Accelerator for Enterprising Women*, aimed at supporting young women, aged 18-24, with the skills required to run their own business.

The *Academy for Enterprising Girls* is the flagship program, bringing entrepreneurial awareness, skills and confidence to school aged girls across Australia. The Academy utilises an online platform that contains webinars, articles, and videos, and provides e-learning modules to build leadership and entrepreneurial skills in students. The project also delivers full-day workshops in schools, all of which were co-designed with students, educators and industry.

With Government funding commencing in 2018-19, the long-term vision of the *Academy for Enterprising Girls* program is for young women to confidently pursue entrepreneurship and STEM careers at the same rate as their male counterparts. To date, the Academy has held entrepreneurial workshops for approximately 8,500 participants and approximately 3,000 individuals have enrolled in the online Academy.

#### *Positive gender attitudes and an end to stereotypes*

The Australian Government is taking a multi-layered and comprehensive approach to engaging with men and boys through activities under the National Plan that focus on changing attitudes and behaviours to stop violence from occurring, re-occurring and escalating. This includes funding for the following initiatives:

- Healthy Masculinities Trial and Evaluation to support school-aged boys and young men to have healthy relationships with masculinity;
- Teach Us Consent to promote consent and healthy sexual relationships via social media to young people aged 16 years and over; and
- Supporting Adolescent Boys Trial focused on early intervention of adolescent boys who have experienced family and domestic violence and may be using or at risk of using violence in their relationships.

The Government is making sure children and young people can access age-appropriate consent and respectful relationships education. Since 2023, Respectful Relationships Education has been embedded across all years in the Australian Curriculum for primary and secondary schools and is designed to help schools develop and sustain a whole-school approach to preventing gender-based violence by

promoting gender equality and respectful relationships. Through the Consent and Respectful Relationships Education measure, the Government is ensuring students have access to high quality respectful relationships education to help prevent violence. This complements other primary prevention measures in the National Plan such as national campaigns to raise awareness of consent and respectful relationships.

'Our Watch' and the 'Stop it at the Start' campaign discussed in Section J – Women and the Media, provide further examples about how Australia is promoting the rights of the Girl Child.

### *Promoting participation of First Nations girls in economic and social life*

Australian governments have a number of measures to promote and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls to participate in social, economic and political life. The first ever *Wiyi Yani U Thangani* (Women's Voices) National Summit was held in 2023. The Summit was stage 3 of the *Wiyi Yani U Thangani* project, which brought together over 900 First Nations women delegates for decision-making, innovation and celebration. This work will inform whole-of-government policies and strategies to support social and economic security for First Nations women and girls, and work towards the development of the National Framework for Action.

The Wiyi Yani U Thangani Institute for First Nations Gender Justice, based at the Australian National University, is focused on improving life outcomes for First Nations women and girls. The Institute's research initiatives are articulated by the *Change Agenda*, the guiding framework for the Institute, and will examine the spaces impacting the lives of First Nations girls, through a First Nations gendered lens. This will take a holistic view and may include education, health, the child protection system including law and justice, community safety and family violence, and young people's connection to country as a fundamental source of wellbeing. The Institute will identify local, national and international best practice initiatives and approaches and work with governments to effect the systems change required to enable improved outcomes for First Nations girls.

### *Improving the lives of children*

Preventing and responding to child sexual abuse is a priority of the government. In 2021, the Government released the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021 – 2030* (the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse).<sup>194</sup> The National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse is the first of its kind in Australia, and provides a nationally coordinated, strategic framework for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. It seeks to reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia. The National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse was a key recommendation of the Royal

<sup>194</sup> National Office for Child Safety, [National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021 – 2030](#), the Australian Government, 2021.

Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and responds to approximately 100 other Royal Commission recommendations to address child sexual abuse in all settings.

The Australian Government is committed to understanding the impacts of child maltreatment in Australia. This is reflected through the Government's funding of the Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS). The ACMS was funded and designed to identify how many Australians in the general population experienced any of the five types of child abuse (physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exposure to domestic violence). In 2023, the ACMS delivered their Report, providing the first national representative data on the prevalence of child maltreatment.<sup>195</sup> The Report found that child maltreatment is widespread and harmful in Australia, and proposed eight recommendations identifying actions required at the individual, community, and societal levels to reduce child maltreatment. In 2023, Australian Government, under the National Strategy to prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse, committed \$22.4 million to continue the important ACMS work.<sup>196</sup>

Australia recognises that children's policy, funding, and programs should not be siloed, and should be better integrated and coordinated to give all children in Australia the best start in life. In May 2024, the Australian Government released the Early Years Strategy to shape its vision for the future of Australia's children and their families. The Early Years Strategy recognises how critical the early years are for children's development and continued success over their lifetime and aims to deliver the best possible outcomes for Australian children.<sup>197</sup> It acknowledges the important role parents and caregivers have in their child's life, and seeks to provide the information and skills they need to raise nurtured, safe, connected, and healthy children.

### *Improving access to period products*

Since January 2019 period products in Australia are no longer subject to the goods and services tax. Despite this the cost of period products remains a barrier for many women and girls. Women living in remote communities can experience barriers to accessing period products due to travelling greater distances, and remoteness can increase the cost of period products as much as 100 per cent.<sup>198</sup> This issue particularly impacts First Nations women and girls, as the proportion of the First Nations population increases with remoteness (from 1.9 per cent in major cities to 32 per cent in remote and very remote areas).<sup>199</sup> Research has shown that some girls in remote communities may skip school for

<sup>195</sup> Haslam D, Mathews B, Pacella R, Scott JG, Finkelhor D, Higgins DJ, Meinck F, Erskine HE, Thomas HJ, Lawrence D, Malacova E. (2023). *The prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in Australia: Findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study: Brief Report*. Australian Child Maltreatment Study, Queensland University of Technology.

<sup>196</sup> Ministers for the Department of Social Services, *Australian Child Maltreatment Study*. Australian Government, 2023.

<sup>197</sup> Department of Social Services, *Early Years Strategy*. DSS, Australian Government, 2024.

<sup>198</sup> Share the Dignity, *'Indigenous Menstrual Health'*, Share the Dignity, 2023, accessed 26 April 2024.

<sup>199</sup> Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, *'Profile of First Nations People'*, Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, 2023, accessed 4 May 2024.

several days during their periods, because period products are unaffordable or unavailable, or buying period products is too shameful.<sup>200</sup>

### *Increasing girls' representation and participation in sport*

Australia is committed to achieving equal participation of women and girls in sports, acknowledging the important health, social and economic benefits it brings to drive gender equality. In 2023 the Australian government announced the development of a new *National Sport Plan* which envisions enhancing diversity, inclusion and equity in sports for all Australians, including girls. To tackle abuse, bullying, discrimination and sexual misconduct in sport. The Australian government funds programs like 'Empowering Women and Girls in Sport', aimed at addressing sport integrity issues facing women and girls, and the Safe Sport Hotline which delivers wellbeing and psychological services to those who feel they have been discriminated against in their sport. In 2024, the Australian Government established the \$200 million *Play our Way* program to promote equal access, build suitable facilities and support grassroots initiatives to get women and girls to engage and participate in sports.

### *Preventing and protecting women and girls from forced marriage*

Australia's response to forced marriage forms part of the Australian Government's strategy to combat serious forms of exploitation, including human trafficking, slavery, and other slavery-like practices such as servitude and forced labour. Under Australia's *National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-25*, approximately \$4.4 million has been granted to community-based projects and research to combat modern slavery including forced marriage, which under the *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)* is an offence. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) can refer people who are in or at risk of forced marriage to the Support for Trafficked People Program (STTP).

The STTP is discussed in detail under section E – Women and armed conflict.

Australia engages in extensive awareness raising activities on forced marriage. By educating the community of the prevalence of forced marriage and building awareness, Australia aims to empower more people to seek help and report their experiences or suspicions to the Australian Federal Police. The Australian Government registers and regulates Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants. There are currently around 10,000 marriage celebrants and each celebrant is legally required to complete professional training on an annual basis. In 2022, celebrants were required to complete an activity on free and voluntary consent. The activity included significant content on forced marriage.

<sup>200</sup> N Lansbury, '*Indigenous girls missing school during their periods: the state of hygiene in remote Australia*', The Conversation, 2017, accessed 26 April 2024.