



Budget 2021–22

Women’s Budget Statement 2021-22

By

Senator the Honourable Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Women

and

Senator the Honourable Anne Ruston
Minister for Families and Social Services
Minister for Women’s Safety

and

Senator the Honourable Jane Hume
Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and
the Digital Economy
Minister for Women’s Economic Security

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Manager
Media Unit
The Treasury
Langton Crescent
Parkes ACT 2600
Email: media@treasury.gov.au

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Foreword

Respect, dignity, choice, equality of opportunity and justice are fundamental to the safety, economic security and status of women in Australia.

The 2021-22 Women's Budget Statement provides a \$3.4 billion investment towards promoting these values so that women, right across the country, can be safe from violence, economically secure, realise their potential and enjoy good health. Our policy response reflects the social and cultural diversity of Australian women, ensuring that opportunities and protections are available to *all* women.

When women are safe, economically secure and healthy it provides benefits for individuals, families, business, and the economy. Improving outcomes in these areas will not only enhance the lives and livelihoods of Australian women; it will grow our economy and build a better society for all Australians.

We have established a dedicated Cabinet Taskforce, bringing together key ministers, including all women in the Ministry, to apply their expertise, and the experiences of their communities, to better coordinate, inform and address critical issues facing women in Australia.

Women in visible positions of leadership are vital as role models to bring about cultural change, and to ensure respect for women in the workplace. That is why the Ministry changes announced on 29 March 2021 maintain the record representation of women in Cabinet for an Australian Government.

In this Budget, the Government is further committing to a comprehensive range of programs that will support more women to work in a greater array of industries and occupations, and open up entrepreneurial and leadership opportunities creating pathways for our future women leaders.

The 2021-22 Women's Budget Statement builds on our previous commitments and is focused on three priorities: women's safety; women's economic security; and women's health and wellbeing.

Everyone has the right to safety – in their homes, communities, workplaces, where they study, and online. Violence against women can take many forms, including physical, sexual, psychological, and financial abuse, as well as a range of controlling behaviours. Knowledge, awareness, and attitudes towards violence against women and children are changing within the Australian community. More people are seeking help for themselves and their families. Responding to violence against women requires a range of measures from education and prevention to frontline services, as well as financial and legal assistance to support women's recovery. The Government is steadfast in its commitment to reducing and preventing family, domestic and sexual violence.

Preventing and addressing workplace sexual harassment is central to advancing both women's safety and economic security and is a priority for our Government. In *A Roadmap for Respect: Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*, the Government sets out its commitment to creating a new culture of respectful behaviour in Australian workplaces.

The Government is committed to boosting women's economic security. This Budget invests in new and expanded initiatives to provide practical and effective support to increase women's workforce participation, reduce barriers to women working in the paid workforce, and to assist women to build a financially secure future.

Increasing women's workforce participation is an economic and social imperative. Australian women have made gains over recent decades supported by policies that have encouraged workforce participation. As we emerge from the most significant economic and health crisis in our recent history, women's workforce participation has again reached record highs at 61.8 per cent. The gender pay gap is also at a record low of 13.4 per cent, well down from the 17.4 per cent we inherited when we came to office in 2013, and it continues to narrow. But more can be done to advance the economic security of Australian women. We are committed to ensuring that women's workforce participation continues to grow and the gender pay gap continues to narrow.

Rebuilding a strong Australian economy will lay the best foundation to support women's workforce participation and economic security. That is why, in July this year, the National Cabinet will focus on women's economic security and further consider existing initiatives, programs and spending at Commonwealth and state and territory level. National Cabinet will also consider the value to Australian women of establishing a national plan for women's economic security.

Underpinning women's safety and economic security is ensuring that Australian women and girls achieve the best health outcomes. The Government is committed to promoting the health of all Australian women and girls through preventive health activities and strategies.

This Budget demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to creating more opportunities for women to fulfil their potential. To ensure Australia achieves the greatest and most enduring gains for women and girls, everyone needs to play a part — government, business, community and individuals. In this way, all Australians gain, and we are a better nation for it.

The Honourable Scott Morrison
Prime Minister of Australia

Senator the Honourable Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Women

WOMEN'S BUDGET STATEMENT 2021-22

Overview

For Australia to succeed, Australian women need the freedom and opportunities to make genuine choices about their career and their future, and be free from violence and the threat of violence.

The 2021-22 Women's Budget Statement outlines the Government's continued support for, and commitment to, women's safety, women's economic security, and women's health and wellbeing. The Government remains focused on ensuring Australia is a place where women are able to make the choices that are right for them. This includes an Australia:

- free from violence against women and children
- where women's workforce participation continues to grow and gender pay gaps continue to narrow
- that supports women's leadership aspirations
- where families have greater choice and flexibility to manage work and care
- that is inclusive of women with diverse lived experiences, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, women living in regional and remote Australia, culturally and linguistically diverse women, and those in the LGBTIQ+ community.

This Budget reinforces the Government's commitment to Australian women. On 29 March 2021, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a new Cabinet Taskforce, co-chaired by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, and comprising all women in the Ministry, as well as the Treasurer, Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Finance.

To complement the work of the Minister for Women, the Prime Minister also announced the establishment of three key roles. Senator the Hon Anne Ruston is the Minister for Women's Safety; Senator the Hon Jane Hume the Minister for Women's Economic Security; and Senator the Hon Amanda Stoker the Assistant Minister to the Minister for Women.

The Government has also initiated a series of engagements on women's safety and economic security through a National Women's Safety Summit and a July National Cabinet meeting on women's economic security.

Women who have experienced violence, family safety advocates, service providers and other stakeholders will be invited to take part in a two-day National Women's Safety Summit to be held on 29 and 30 July 2021. The Summit will build on the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22* (the National Plan) in a way that addresses evolving issues around family, domestic and sexual violence against women and children. This Summit is integral to fostering a national approach to addressing violence against women and children.

National Cabinet will meet in July to discuss women's economic security and take stock of all Commonwealth, state and territory initiatives, programs, and spending to address women's economic security.

Internationally, Australia is also engaging with its Pacific neighbours through various forums on issues relating to women's safety and economic security, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The 2021-22 Budget

The 2021-22 Budget builds on the 2018 and 2020 Women's Economic and Security Statements through significant additional investment.

The Government recognises that women from different walks of life face different challenges. The 2021-22 Budget includes specific measures to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse women. These new initiatives are designed to complement and build on existing initiatives to ensure all Australian women are safe, economically secure and have better health outcomes.

Women's safety

Ending violence against women is a national priority. Women have the right to be safe at home, at work and in society.

This Budget provides a further \$1.1 billion for women's safety measures and builds on the Government's previous and current commitments, including under the National Plan, which is our key policy framework. The National Plan commenced in 2010 and sets out four successive action plans, each over three years. The Fourth Action Plan, which was launched in 2019, is in its final stage. The Government is committed to boosting efforts during the transition to a new National Plan in 2022 and is delivering targeted responses.

This includes measures focused on preventing violence before it begins, delivering frontline and response services, providing financial support for women leaving a violent relationship, understanding the issues through data collection and monitoring, and expanding responses through the justice system. The 2021-22 Budget also provides

increased support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, measures to improve the online environment for women and children, and support for women from diverse communities.

Addressing workplace sexual harassment is central to improving women's safety and economic security. The Government is providing a further \$20.5 million in this Budget to prevent and respond to workplace sexual harassment, including the implementation of the 2020 *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report* (Respect@Work).

The Government's response to the Respect@Work Report, *A Roadmap for Respect: Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces* (the Roadmap), outlines long-term commitments aimed at creating a new culture of respectful behaviour in Australian workplaces. Addressing workplace sexual harassment requires leadership and engagement from all levels of government, as well as the business community, and will be a continuing focus for National Cabinet.

Women's economic security

There has been significant progress to strengthen women's economic security in Australia. Prior to COVID-19, women's workforce participation had increased to a record high and the gender pay gap narrowed to a record low with more women in work than ever before. Of the 1.6 million jobs created since 2013, around 60 per cent were taken up by women supported by policies implemented under this Government to increase workforce participation, including in the 2018 and 2020 Women's Economic Security Statements. This Budget builds on the Women's Economic Security Statements through an additional \$1.9 billion in measures to support women's economic security.

The Government will invest an additional \$1.7 billion to improve the affordability of child care for Australian families. An increase to the Child Care Subsidy will be provided for second and subsequent children aged five and under and the annual cap on child care subsidy payments will be removed for all families. This investment will generate an increase in women's workforce participation. It has the potential to add up to 300,000 hours of work per week, which would allow the equivalent of around 40,000 individuals to work an extra day per week, and boost GDP by up to \$1.5 billion per year. These changes strengthen our economy and provide greater choice to parents who want to work an extra day or two a week.

The Government is committed to increasing women's participation in education and training, and employment. The 2021-22 Budget is investing in the aged care workforce, providing further investment for women to enter science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers, expanding the Career Revive program and providing more support to women seeking education and career guidance. These measures will bolster women's workforce participation and provide more opportunities for women to pursue their chosen career pathway.

The 2021-22 Budget is also focusing on improving women's financial security. The Government will help to increase retirement incomes by removing the \$450 per month threshold under which employers do not have to pay the superannuation guarantee. This reform will assist people with lower incomes, particularly women.

The Government will provide assistance to separated Australian couples, by providing access to a streamlined court process and lawyer-assisted mediation services to support resolution of small claim property disputes. This will particularly assist women, who on average, experience far more significant drops in disposable income than men following separation or divorce.

Recognising that stable housing is important to women's economic security and wellbeing, the Government is establishing the Family Home Guarantee to assist eligible single parents with dependent children, the vast majority of whom are women, to enter the housing market sooner with a deposit of as little as two per cent of the purchase price.

Advancing women's leadership is a key priority of this Government. The successful Women's Leadership and Development Program is being expanded by \$38.3 million. This program funds innovative projects which assist women into leadership roles and improves outcomes for women more broadly.

The important work of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, which promotes gender equality in Australian workplaces, will be further enhanced, both through additional funding to assist the work of the Respect@Work Council and through a targeted review of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* to ensure it is fit for purpose.

There is a range of major women's sporting events on the horizon that will create new opportunities and inspire future generations of female athletes, coaches, officials and administrators. In 2022, Australia will host the Women's Basketball World Cup and in 2023, jointly with New Zealand, the FIFA Women's World Cup. Netball Australia has also won the bid to host the 2027 Netball World Cup. The Government is investing in a range of initiatives to support these important events and further increase opportunities for women in sport.

Women's health and wellbeing

The health of Australian women and girls is critical to their overall wellbeing and ability to participate in society. Women have experienced significant health gains in recent years, underpinned by Australia's world class health care system. The Government is continuing to provide funding for women's health at every life stage and is investing \$351.6 million in this Budget to deliver diverse initiatives that cover maternal, sexual and reproductive health, ageing, chronic conditions, preventative health, and mental health.

A strong economy is vital for women's interests

There is much Australia can be proud of. Women's employment has recovered well following the COVID-19 recession and the gender pay gap has continued to fall. Over recent decades, educational attainment levels have increased – there are now more than twice the number of Australian women with tertiary qualifications than in 2004. Almost 60 per cent of women aged between 25 and 34 have a tertiary qualification, compared to 46 per cent of men.¹

As Australia continues to recover from the effects of COVID-19, the Government is committed to delivering a strong economy, to ensure that all Australians can prosper. The targeted funding in this Budget for women's safety, economic security, and health and wellbeing will ensure that outcomes for women continue to improve.

1 OECD Australia Country Note – Education at a Glance 2020

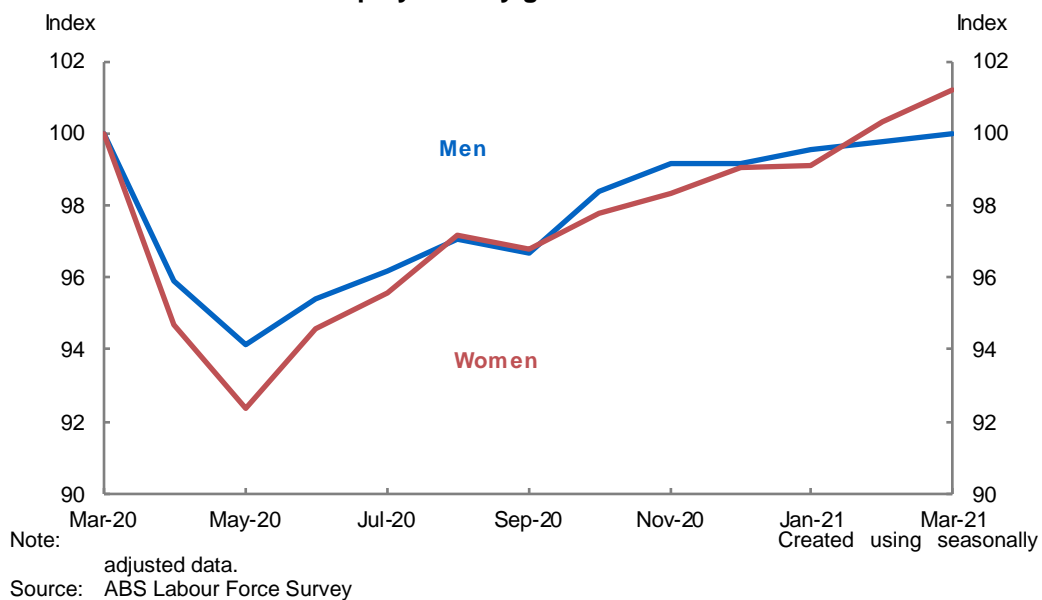
The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on women

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a serious and lasting impact on all Australians. Women and men have experienced the pandemic differently, with these differences partly explained by existing gender disparities in Australia's workforce and culture.

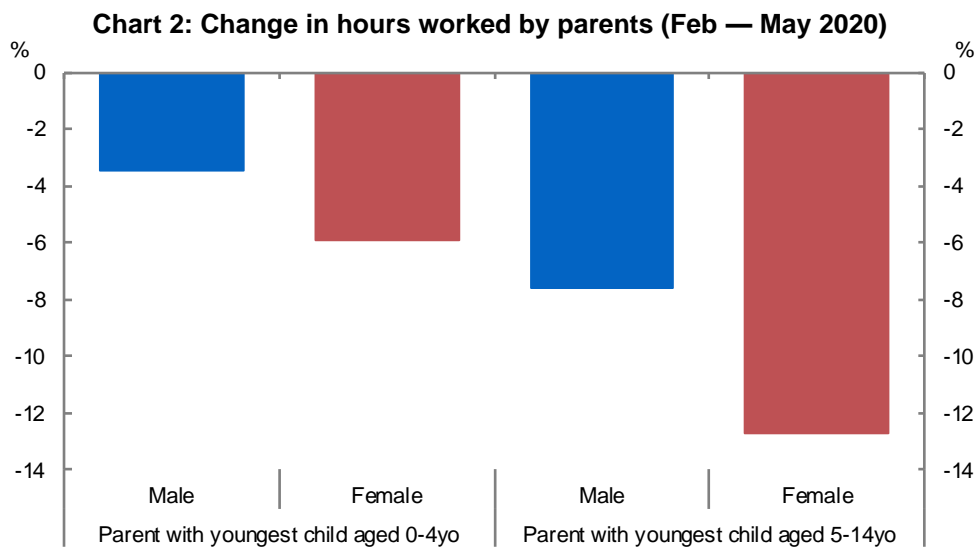
For too many women, the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the onset or escalation of violence and abuse. Two-thirds of women who experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former co-habiting partner since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic reported the violence had started or escalated since the pandemic began. Specific groups of women were more likely to have experienced physical and sexual violence during this time, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women aged 18–24, women with a restrictive health condition, pregnant women, and women in financial stress.

Women were also more likely to experience economic insecurity during the pandemic. The initial economic impacts of COVID-19 hit women's employment harder than men's. At the height of the downturn in May 2020, female employment had fallen by around 470,000 or 7.7 per cent (Chart 1), while male employment fell by around 400,000, or 5.9 per cent, over the same period. This is in stark contrast to previous recessions, which disproportionately impacted male employment.

Chart 1: Employment by gender since March 2020



Women were also more likely than men to face reduced working hours. At the peak of the crisis, the decline in working hours for women was around 25 per cent larger than that for men. There were also 100,000 more women than men stood down on zero hours in April 2020. Mothers lost more hours in the initial months of the crisis than fathers, with total hours worked by mothers of school-aged children decreasing by 13 per cent between February and May 2020 (Chart 2).



Source: Treasury analysis using ABS Longitudinal Labour Force Survey.

Female-dominated industries were the most affected by health restrictions. Within these industries, women were also more likely to lose employment. For example, while women accounted for 55 per cent of the workforce in the accommodation and food services industry at the start of 2020, they made up over 63 per cent of employment lost.² In part, this reflects the higher rate of casual work for women, particularly in hard-hit sectors. Pre-COVID-19, Australian women were in part-time employment at two and a half times the rate of men; with 25.7 per cent of women in employment in casual positions compared with 22.5 per cent of men.

As well as being at greater risk of job loss, women were also more likely to be working less during the crisis either through working reduced or zero hours or leaving the labour force entirely. While this was in large part due to industry-specific restrictions, there is evidence that women were also more heavily affected by school and child care closures, taking on more of the burden of home schooling and care through reduced paid work. More than three-quarters of Australians with children reported having to keep their

² ABS Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, February 2021 (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001)

children home from school or child care in May 2020, decreasing to 35 per cent by September 2020.³

Box 1: What's happening in the rest of the world?

The uneven nature of the COVID-19 shock was not unique to Australia. Across the world, the pandemic has served to highlight, and in some cases exacerbate, disparities in the working lives of men and women.

Globally an estimated 5.0 per cent of women's employment was lost in 2020, compared with 3.9 per cent of male employment⁴. This is again mostly due to the fact that 40 per cent of employed women work in sectors severely affected by shutdowns. Across all regions, women were also more likely than men to drop out of the labour force.

According to UN research, women are more likely than men to report an increase in their unpaid workload since the start of the pandemic. A recent survey of parents in the UK, the US and Germany revealed that women are spending more hours than men on child care during a typical work day – even when both parents are working from home.

In countries with high rates of COVID-19, women have been more vulnerable at work, making up the majority of essential care sector workers.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 243 million women and girls globally were subject to sexual and/or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in the previous twelve months. Data from UN Women shows that violence against women and girls intensified during COVID-19.

3 ABS Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey, September 2020, Australia

4 International Labour Organization Monitor, COVID-19 – The World of Work 7th Edition

A strong labour market recovery for women

Since the peak of COVID-19 restrictions in the early part of 2020, the labour market in Australia has recovered strongly for men and women, with employment for women now 1.2 per cent higher than its pre COVID-19 level, and employment for men returning to its pre-pandemic level.

Much of this can be explained by the high rate of employment growth in the industries hard hit in the early stages of the crisis, in which women were highly represented. Total employment in accommodation and food services grew nearly 200,000 between May 2020 and February 2021, with women making up 55 per cent of this increase.⁵

Women's total employment, full-time employment, and overall labour force participation are now all higher than they were in March 2020, with all three measures improving more for women by March 2021 than for men. The strong labour market recovery will limit the harmful impacts of scarring – the risk that a long-term absence from the workforce will have consequential lasting impacts on employment and earnings over time.

Going forward there is the potential for increased use of home-based work and other forms of workplace flexibility to help reduce barriers for women entering or increasing their participation in the workforce, as well as potentially improving work-life balance for both men and women. Women are now more likely than men to want to increase the amount of work they do from home (17 per cent of women versus 11 per cent of men), reflecting demand for more flexibility.⁶

Support for women during the peak of the pandemic

The Government's economic response was designed to support Australian households and businesses through the worst of the pandemic.

The JobKeeper Payment was the largest fiscal measure in Australia's history. The JobKeeper Payment was developed in the second half of March 2020 in response to a steep deterioration in economic activity and employment. The measure supported businesses and households through temporary and targeted payments, which kept businesses in business and individuals connected to their employer. It was designed to work in tandem with the amended JobSeeker arrangements (including the Coronavirus Supplement), to provide significant income support to individuals in a wide range of situations. The JobKeeper Payment was first introduced on 30 March 2020, initially for a six-month period, and extended for a further six months from 28 September 2020 to

5 ABS Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, February 2021 (cat. no. 6291.0.55.001)

6 ABS Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey, February 2021, Australia

28 March 2021. More than 1.7 million women, making up 46 per cent of recipients, were supported by the first phase of the JobKeeper Payment and around 750,000 women, making up 41 per cent of recipients, were supported by the extension phase of the JobKeeper Payment.

The Government established the temporary Coronavirus Supplement in April 2020 to provide additional financial assistance to Australians affected by the economic impacts of COVID-19. Between 27 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, the Government provided over \$20 billion in Coronavirus Supplement payments to over 3 million Australians on an income support payment to help them get through the worst of the pandemic. Around 54 per cent of Coronavirus Supplement recipients were women. While there are fewer women than men receiving JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance (other), more women than men receive other income support payments, such as Parenting Payment and Youth Allowance (student and apprentice).

The Government provided \$9.4 billion through two Economic Support Payments of \$750 to eligible social security, veterans, income support recipients and concession card holders. Around half of those who benefited were pensioners. The first payment, from 31 March 2020, went to over 7 million Australians (of which 58 per cent were women) to help them manage the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The second payment from 13 July 2020 benefited around 5 million Australians (of which 60 per cent were women). The Government also provided \$2.6 billion for two additional Economic Support Payments of \$250 to pensioners and other eligible recipients, benefiting around 5.1 million pensioners and veterans, low income families and eligible concession card holders who were not in receipt of a primary income support payment. Around 60 per cent of recipients of the additional support payments were women.

The Government brought forward Stage 2 of the Personal Income Tax Plan from 2022-23 to 2020-21 and provided additional targeted support to low- and middle-income earners. Low- and middle-income earners are already benefiting from bringing forward the tax cuts in Stage 2 of the Personal Income Tax Plan and the retention of the low and middle income tax offset (LMITO) for 2020-21. To further support around 10.2 million low- and middle-income earners, of which 49 per cent are women, the Government will retain the LMITO, worth up to \$1,080 for individual taxpayers, in 2021-22.

The Government introduced the Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment for individuals unable to earn an income in the event that they were required to self-isolate, quarantine or care for someone with COVID-19. The payment removes the financial pressure that might make someone attempt to work while sick. All states and territories, except the Northern Territory, have entered into agreements with the Government to implement the payment.

The Government implemented the \$150 million Coronavirus Domestic Violence Support Package to support women and children experiencing family, domestic and

sexual violence during COVID-19. Of this funding, \$130 million has been provided to state and territory governments to invest in and enhance specialist services to support those most at risk of violence during COVID-19 – services such as crisis accommodation, frontline services and perpetrator intervention programs. The remaining \$20 million was directed to boost capacity for Commonwealth-funded national programs including 1800RESPECT, MensLine Australia, the Men's Referral Line and the Support for Trafficked People Program to meet additional demand and complexity. The Government also delivered the Help is Here campaign to provide information about accessing assistance.

The Government also provided funding of more than \$63.3 million for the legal assistance sector to help address the impact of COVID-19. Recipients of the funding included Legal Aid Commissions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Community Legal Centres and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services.

Women's safety

Everyone has the right to be safe in their homes, their communities, workplaces, and online. The rates of violence against women in Australia are unacceptable. Experiences of violence can have a profound impact on an individual's life and wellbeing, including their workforce participation and economic security. Violence against women has been estimated to cost Australia \$26 billion annually.⁷

Improving women's safety, economic security, wellbeing and prosperity requires a culture of dignity and respect. A society that supports and values women is important for all Australians. To ensure that a coordinated and collaborative approach is taken to reduce violence against women, the Government is playing a leading role in bringing together all states and territories through the National Federation Reform Council Taskforce on Women's Safety. Co-chaired by Minister Payne and Minister Ruston, this forum brings together all Commonwealth, state and territory Women's Safety Ministers to support collective action.

Violence takes many forms including physical, psychological, emotional and financial. The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the National Plan) recognises the different types of violence experienced by women and children and has focused on reducing family, domestic and sexual violence. Measures in this Budget build on the National Plan including improved support to assist women experiencing or escaping family and domestic violence, investments in the family law system, increased primary prevention and education efforts to change behaviours and attitudes.

Violence against women and children

Women are more likely than men to be victims of family, domestic and sexual violence.

- On average, one woman is killed every nine days.⁸
- One in four women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a current or previous intimate partner since the age of 15.⁹
- Approximately one in two women aged 18 and over have experienced sexual harassment during their lifetime.¹⁰

7 KPMG (2016) *The cost of violence against women and their children in Australia*

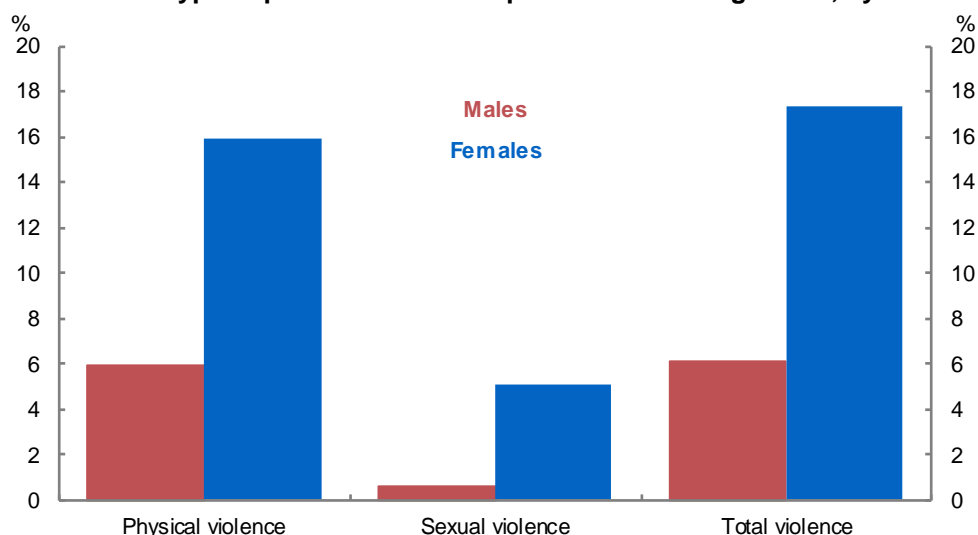
8 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) (2019) *FDSV in Australia: continuing the national story*.

9 ABS Personal Safety Survey 2016

10 ABS Personal Safety Survey 2016

- In 2018, the rate of police-recorded sexual assaults was almost seven times higher for females (154.4 per 100,000) compared to males (23.5 per 100,000). There has also been an increase in the number of police-recorded sexual assaults of women, with most of this increase occurring after 2014.¹¹

Chart 3: Type of partner violence experienced since age of 15, by sex



Source: ABS Personal Safety Survey

Rates of violence are higher for groups that face multiple forms of discrimination, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, older women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds including women on temporary visas, and those in the LGBTIQ+ community. For instance, in 2016-17, Indigenous women aged 15 and over were 34 times as likely to be hospitalised due to family violence as non-Indigenous women.¹²

While attitudes towards violence against women are improving, some attitudes remain concerning.¹³ One in five Australians believe that many actions that constitute domestic violence are normal reactions to day-to-day stress and frustration.¹⁴ Two in five Australians believe that women make up false reports of sexual assault to punish men.¹⁵

11 AIHW (2020) *Sexual Assault in Australia*

12 AIHW (2019) *FDSV in Australia: continuing the national story*.

13 ANROWS (2018) *Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 NCAS*

14 ANROWS (2018)

15 ANROWS (2018)

Reducing violence against women and children

The National Plan is being delivered by the Commonwealth, states and territories through four, three-year action plans. The National Plan has established key national infrastructure that supports women and children.

- 1800RESPECT (2010) – Australia’s national, 24/7 professional online and telephone counselling service to assist individuals who have experienced or are at risk of sexual assault and family and domestic violence. 1800RESPECT has grown significantly in its reach over the course of the National Plan, answering 267,896 calls and chats in 2019-20 compared with the 8,730 calls in its first year of operation (October 2010 to June 2011).
- Our Watch (2013) – established to lead national best practice efforts to prevent violence against women and children and drive the culture and behaviour change necessary in the community. In 2015, Our Watch launched *Change the Story*, the national framework for a consistent and integrated approach to preventing violence against women and children in Australia.
- Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) – an independent national research organisation to produce and share evidence on women’s safety. ANROWS is responsible for delivering the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS), which explain how people’s understanding of and attitudes towards violence against women are changing over time.

The Commonwealth’s investment of \$340 million in the Fourth Action Plan (2019-2022) of the National Plan is directed to 33 initiatives, which are being delivered across social services, health, legal, veterans’ affairs, women’s, Indigenous Affairs, education, and communication portfolios.

The Government has also introduced a range of policies, programs and legislative reforms to ensure the family law system is safe and fit for purpose, and to protect and assist victims of family and domestic violence, including to identify and mitigate escalation of violence.

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022

The 12-year National Plan is an initiative of the Commonwealth, state and territory Governments. It is our key policy framework and is delivered through a series of four three-year plans, which have built on each other over time.



The new National Plan

The current National Plan will end in June 2022. Through the National Federation Reform Council's Taskforce on Women's Safety, the Government is working with states and territories to develop the new National Plan, which will further build on progress so far.

The new National Plan

The current 12-year National Plan is due to finish in June 2022. Through the National Federation Reform Council's Taskforce on Women's Safety, the Government is working with states and territories to develop a new National Plan. The new National Plan will build on achievements to date and respond to new and emerging issues and evidence, including responses to non-physical violence such as coercive control and the increasing use of sophisticated technology to facilitate abuse.

Violence against women is a complex problem that requires a long-term and coordinated response at all levels of government and in the community. Over time understanding and awareness of family, domestic and sexual violence continues to grow, and more Australians are seeking help for themselves, their family or friends. The Government recognises there is more work to be done to ensure women and children can live lives free from violence.

The Government is making targeted investments now, while also looking to continue efforts to improve women's safety through a new National Plan to commence in July 2022. The new National Plan, including the investment package from the Commonwealth Government (as well as any investments made by states and territories), will be informed by experience and lessons learned from the first National

Plan, insights from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence, and targeted consultations, including the National Women's Safety Summit on 29-30 July 2021.

Importantly, the new National Plan will also consider Closing the Gap targets and the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*.

In December 2018, the Government passed historic legislation which enshrined five days' unpaid family and domestic violence leave each year as the new minimum entitlement for all employees in the National Employment Standards (NES), ensuring all employees have access to this leave regardless of the size of their employer. This followed careful consideration of the issue by the Fair Work Commission over a number of years, which was based on extensive submissions from unions, employers and other interested parties.

As foreshadowed in its 2018 decision, in April 2021, the Fair Work Commission announced the review of the family and domestic violence leave clause in modern awards. Further consideration of the issue of paid family and domestic violence leave at the Commonwealth level will be appropriately informed by the Commission's reassessment of the issue. It is important to note that the current legislated leave entitlement is a minimum standard. It does not preclude employers from providing additional support to employees experiencing family and domestic violence, and the Government recognises that a number have chosen to institute more generous arrangements in their workplaces.

Safety for women from diverse backgrounds

Women from diverse backgrounds often experience higher rates of family, domestic and sexual violence, which are not well measured and often go unrecorded. The Government recognises and respects diverse lived experiences and is working to address the drivers of violence against all women. The 2021-22 Budget provides further targeted support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, migrant and refugee women and women with disability.

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience disproportionately high levels of violence compared to non-Indigenous women. Through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the Government has committed to a new family safety target and priority reforms to change the way Government works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This new target is to reduce the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children by at least 50 per cent by 2031, as progress towards zero. This will only happen through targeted action.

The Government is also investing funding under the Fourth Action Plan for specific activities, in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children remain a priority cohort. The funding is being provided for a range of collaborative, practical, Indigenous-led solutions to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children are safe from violence.

To ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are at the decision-making table, Government has provided \$2.97 million under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Ms June Oscar AO, to deliver the *Wiyi Yani U Thangani* (Women's Voices) project. The *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Report* was delivered in December 2020 and elevates the diverse, lived realities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls. It provides a pathway forward for ensuring that women and girls can actively engage in their futures. Stage Two of the project is underway and involves awareness raising of the Report's findings, as well as collaboration with communities to develop implementation plans and practical tools.

Supporting migrant and refugee women

Women from refugee backgrounds are particularly at risk of financial abuse and reproductive coercion. This, combined with low awareness around services available means there are high rates of under-reporting of family violence among refugee women.

Promoting access to existing culturally safe family violence services, developing the capacity of services, and providing culturally sensitive training on respectful relationships and relevant Australian laws is integral to ensuring refugee and migrant women are included in the Government's women's safety agenda.

Since July 2020, the Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative's Group Mentorship Pilot Program has recruited, vetted, trained and matched local volunteer mentor groups with refugee households to provide self-directed and holistic settlement and integration support. Mentor groups provide support in a flexible and responsive way that encourages respectful relationships by education and by example. They also reduce risk factors for family and domestic violence by providing refugee women with flexible, responsive wrap-around support and social connection. Mentor groups can also help women experiencing violence to report abuse and access support.

The Humanitarian Settlement Program providers, Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) providers, Australian Migrant English Program providers and National Community Hubs Program providers all build trusting relationships with refugees and other migrants in the delivery of services and are often a first port of call for information and support.

Supporting women with disability

More than two million women and girls with disability live in Australia, making up approximately 20 per cent of the population of women. Women and girls with disability are more likely to experience violence and abuse than women and girls without disability and are less likely to report this abuse for both personal and systemic reasons.¹⁶ In addition, more than two in five workers with disability have been sexually harassed at work in the last five years.¹⁷

While women with disability face many of the same forms of family, domestic and sexual violence, women with disability also experience and are at more risk of particular forms of violence, such as forced sterilisation, seclusion and restrictive practices, and experience violence in a range of institutional and service settings such as in residential institutions and aged care facilities.

To hear directly from Australian women living with disability, the Government is funding the establishment of a new National Women's Alliance for women with disability. The new Alliance will be selected through an open grant process, with the successful organisation to be announced in June 2021. It will provide advice to policy makers on the issues affecting women living with disability and inform the development of policy solutions.

Improving the family law system and strengthening justice responses

Separated parents who engage with the family law system frequently experience a range of complex issues, often including family violence. In response, the Government is extending a range of programs to ensure that families navigating the family law system, especially where violence has been or could be an issue, are supported with appropriate legal and support services. The Government also recognises the need to work with states and territories to ensure criminal justice responses are strong and effective to make perpetrators accountable and to support victims and survivors.

To protect victims and survivors of family violence from re-traumatisation, the Government introduced a ban on direct cross-examination by their ex-partner. In the 2020-21 Budget, the Government also continued funding for the Family Violence and Cross-examination of Parties Scheme, which ensures Legal Aid Commissions can provide legal representation when the cross-examination ban applies. This means that victims of family violence can pursue fairer, faster and safer outcomes in family law matters, without fear of experiencing further trauma. The Government is also building on extending a range of other programs to ensure families engaging with the family law

16 Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2019) *Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy*

17 Australian Human Rights Commission (2018) *Everyone's business: Fourth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*

system, especially where violence has been or could be an issue, are supported through legal and related services. The Government also recognises the need to work with states and territories to ensure criminal justice responses are strong and effective, as well as accessible to, and supportive of, victims and survivors.

Building a strong evidence base

The Government recognises that an important foundation for ending violence against women is a strong evidence base. Data is critical to providing a better understanding of violence against women and girls. Better data can increase understanding of the types and forms of violence women and children experience, the support services accessed, attitudes towards violence and changes over time.

Research and statistics are valuable tools for developing evidence-based policies and interventions to end violence against women. There are a number of key data sources on violence against women, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey and ANROWS National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey.

New initiatives

This Budget builds on – and complements – existing measures aimed at addressing violence against women and children. As governments transition to the new National Plan, the Government is providing funding to ensure essential services continue.

Improving frontline responses

Providing frontline services to respond to violence is primarily the responsibility of the states and territories. The Government is investing up to \$261.4 million over two years from 2021-22 under a **new National Partnership Agreement** to be negotiated with the states and territories. This Agreement will bolster frontline family, domestic and sexual violence supports to ensure women and children can access support when they need it, building on the \$130 million provided in 2020 in response to COVID-19, and recognising the ongoing demand for services and the continuing impacts of the pandemic on women's safety. States and territories will be required to contribute to the National Partnership, reflecting their primary role and responsibilities in the delivery of frontline services.

The Government will work with states and territories to ensure the funding is prioritised for those who need it most. Funding will be prioritised for key services, including accommodation, helplines, sexual violence and legal support services and perpetrator interventions.

The Government will also provide a further \$25.3 million for continued funding of a number of targeted frontline services. Additional funding of \$12.6 million over three years will be provided for **Safe Places program** projects to renovate, build or purchase emergency accommodation for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence. This initiative will fund outstanding applications from the current Safe Places Grant Opportunity and builds on the previous \$60 million commitment announced in September 2020.

Funding of \$3.7 million over four years is also being provided to strengthen **disaster relief and recovery responses for women and children** experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence. Natural disasters are often linked with increased rates of family, domestic and sexual violence. This investment will build the capacity of frontline responders and agencies to assist women and children experiencing violence. This initiative will have a positive impact on regional areas affected by disasters and addresses a recommendation of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

The Government is funding services to assist perpetrators change their behaviours. Funding of \$4.1 million over three years is being provided for the **Coordinated Enforcement and Support to Eliminate (CEASE) Domestic Violence Program trial**. The trial, which is focussed on deterrence, will make an important contribution to the evidence base on what works to address perpetrators' use of violence and help to shape future responses. Extended funding of \$4.9 million over three years is also being provided for **perpetrator-focused services**, including the No To Violence Men's Referral Service and MensLine Australia's Changing for Good program.

Providing financial assistance and support

The Government is committed to removing barriers to women leaving family and domestic violence situations, including helping women to set themselves up after leaving a violent relationship. The Government is providing \$164.8 million over three years in **financial assistance and support to women affected by family and domestic violence**.

A two-year trial will run to 30 June 2023 to provide immediate financial assistance to support women leaving a violent relationship and help them rebuild their lives. The package will enable eligible women to access up to \$5,000 in financial assistance. This will include a cash payment of a maximum \$1,500 and the remainder in goods. This will support women with costs such as rent, legal assistance and purchasing furniture. The program will be delivered by community service providers.

A pilot program in Services Australia will also be delivered to provide specialist case management to victims and survivors so they only need to tell their story once. This 'Tell Us Once' approach, will transform the service experience for customers affected by family, domestic or sexual violence. The No Interest Loans Scheme for Family and Domestic Violence (NILS-DV) will be promoted to increase awareness for people who would benefit from the scheme, which provides loans up to \$2,000 to help women get back on their feet.

Leading prevention

Prevention efforts will reduce and ultimately end violence. The Government is building on its commitments with a \$35.1 million package, including expanding national primary prevention campaigns to address new and emerging issues targeted at young people, as well as continuing the award-winning campaign, **Stop It At The Start**. To address gaps in young people's awareness, the

Government is investing in **new programs to better inform young Australians about consent and respectful relationships**.

Targeted services for women from diverse backgrounds

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children

The Government is providing \$57.6 million to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to break the cycle of violence through culturally safe, community-driven, evidence-based and trauma informed solutions.

The Government is establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council, which will represent Indigenous communities and facilitate shared decision-making and partnerships. The new Advisory Council will play a key role in informing responses to the Closing the Gap target, as well as guiding development and implementation of the next National Plan.

To expand service delivery and address gaps, the Government is investing \$26.0 million over four years for the **Family Violence Prevention Legal Services program**. This will also **improve the quality, capability, and cultural safety of Indigenous and non-Indigenous family violence services**. This includes improving the cultural safety of mainstream services to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, including to establish three new services.

The Government is providing \$31.6 million in funding over five years for a new dedicated **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Personal Safety Survey**, to be delivered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). High-quality data that provides insights into the prevalence and experience of violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has been lacking and is needed to measure progress against the Closing the Gap family safety target and inform future investment and policy responses. The survey will build further understanding of the specific issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and enable measurement of the prevalence of family and sexual violence.

Supporting migrant and refugee women

The Government is providing funding to **improve migrant and refugee women's safety**. The funding will increase capacity for early intervention, grass-roots and social and economic inclusion support. It will also fund a pilot program to support temporary visa holders experiencing family violence to explore visa options that are not reliant on their partner.

The Government is **extending the Temporary Visa Holders Payment Pilot** with \$10.3 million to be provided from 30 June 2022 to 2023. Through this program, the

Australian Red Cross provides up to \$3,000 to eligible temporary visa holders to help them cover expenses such as food, accommodation, utilities and other essentials and medical care. Extended funding will also be provided to nine Community and Women's Legal Centres across Australia to continue to help women in this challenging situation to access legal assistance and migration support.

To continue the delivery of **critical services for culturally diverse communities** through to 30 June 2022 when the current National Plan comes to an end, \$6.8 million in funding is being provided. This extended funding will ensure that organisations can continue to provide local-level prevention initiatives in culturally diverse communities.

Supporting women with disability

This Budget also invests \$9.3 million over three years for the **preventing and responding to violence against women and girls with disability** measure. The Disability Royal Commission highlights that women with disability experience significantly higher levels of all forms of violence. This funding will be used to develop resources that will help drive a reduction in violence against women and girls with disability and improve responses when violence occurs.

Building on existing support in the family law system

The Government is providing \$416.2 million over four years to support women and families experiencing family and domestic violence through a number of measures to increase information sharing and support in the family law system beyond the support already provided through the National Legal Assistance Partnership. This work complements a range of existing programs that support victims of family violence during family law disputes.

- The Government is providing \$85.0 million over three years from 2022-23 in additional funding for enhanced social supports under the **Family Advocacy and Support Services** and for 26 new locations, including in regional areas. This will enhance the capacity of victims and survivors of family and domestic violence to obtain access to justice and ongoing support while engaging in the family law system.
- The Government is providing \$101.4 million over four years from 2021-22 to increase access to **Children's Contact Services** for families across Australia who are unable to safely manage arrangements themselves for the contact and changeover of their children.

- The Government is providing additional funding of \$60.8 million over four years from 2021-22 to enable the family courts to implement a **new approach to Family Law Case management**. The Government is committed to reforming the federal family law system to ensure that it meets the needs of families by delivering a safe, child-centred, supportive, accessible, timely and efficient system for Australians. This measure builds on the Government’s legislation, which received Royal Assent on 1 March 2021, to structurally reform the family law courts by bringing together the Family Court of Australia and Federal Circuit Court of Australia under one administrative structure.
- The **National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing** between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems will improve family safety outcomes in the family courts and through the state and territory family violence and child protection systems, by ensuring decision makers have prompt and timely access to all relevant family violence information. The Government is providing \$29.0 million over four years for this new initiative.
- The Government is providing \$129.0 million over four years from 2021-22 for **increased legal assistance funding** to help women access justice. This funding will be directed to women’s legal centres, to enable these providers to respond to increasing demand for domestic violence assistance.
- In addition, this Budget provides \$4.7 million over two years to **strengthen criminal justice responses to sexual assault, sexual harassment and coercive control**. The Government will lead a national discussion that will focus on increasing rates of conviction, supporting the needs of traumatised victims and increasing consistency of laws. The Government will engage with states and territories as part of a scoping study on a program of work to improve women’s safety, which may include measures related to evidence law reform, harmonisation of protections for vulnerable witnesses and the definition of consent, development of minimum sentencing standards, and the co-design of national principles for the criminalisation of coercive control. A nationally consistent approach to these criminal justice responses will reduce unnecessary barriers to reporting and prosecuting alleged offending, and will encourage victims to seek justice through the criminal justice system.
- Additional funding of \$6.3 million in 2021-22 will be provided to facilitate increased justice for victims of sexual assault. Under the **Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties Scheme** (the Scheme), state and territory Legal Aid Commissions will receive ongoing funding. The Scheme helps victims of family and domestic violence continue to access legal representation to reach fairer, faster and safer outcomes in family law matters, without fear of

experiencing further trauma by being directly cross-examined by their perpetrators.

- The Government is increasing **access to legal and mental health support services to women** across Australia who have experienced, or are experiencing, family violence. This will be delivered through enhancements to the 21 existing Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships allowing for regional outreach services and specialist mental health supports.

Better data for policy development

The Government recognises that an important foundation for ending violence is a strong evidence base and is investing \$48.9 million to **bolster data collection and research**. In addition to the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Personal Safety Survey, two of the most important sources of national data on violence will receive ongoing funding.

The Government is providing \$30.0 million over four years for **national research and surveys on family, domestic and sexual violence**, including for Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), the Personal Safety Survey and the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey. This research will provide further insights into how people understand violence against women, their attitudes towards it, what influences their attitudes, and if there has been a change over time.

To establish a **comprehensive data and reporting system and new performance and monitoring framework**, the Government is providing \$18.9 million over four years. This will include an enhanced 'state of play' report, delivered by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), which will compile and synthesise all available family, domestic and sexual violence data, with an on-line presence and interactive data. AIHW will also develop a prototype national data set to bring together fragmented data from states and territories. This measure includes funding for scoping and an integrated data set. For the first time, this will enable national reporting to understand service demand and gaps. This will provide a more complete picture of the life experiences and outcomes of people experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence, including victim survivors and perpetrators, in order to inform policy and improve outcomes for women and children.

Addressing women's safety at work

Addressing workplace sexual harassment is central to improving women's safety and economic security. Nearly 40 per cent of women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years.

In the 2018-19 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, the Government commissioned the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Ms Kate Jenkins, to conduct the National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces. The Inquiry Report 'Respect@Work' was tabled in Parliament by the Attorney-General on 5 March 2020.

As part of the 2020 Women's Economic Security Statement delivered in the 2020-21 Budget, the Government committed \$2.1 million to fund the implementation of key recommendations from the Report. This included the establishment of the Respect@Work Council, which provides the foundation for implementing other recommendations in the Report. This funding enabled action to commence on:

- developing the Respect@Work website as an online platform to provide free, practical information and education resources for employers and workers
- developing a package of training and education resources on the nature, drivers and impacts of sexual harassment as well as the rights and responsibilities of workers and employers
- preparing for the fifth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian workplaces.

Box 2: A Roadmap for Respect

On 8 April 2021, the Australian Government announced its full response to the Sex Discrimination Commissioner's Respect@Work Report, *A Roadmap for Respect: Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*. The response sets out the Government's long-term commitment to preventing and addressing sexual harassment and building a culture of respectful relationships in Australian workplaces by agreeing to (in full, in part or in principle) or noting all 55 recommendations in the Report. The response is informed by five key principles:

- everyone has a right to be safe at work
- policy should be evidence-based
- prevention must be our focus
- simplicity and clarity make the law easier for Australians to understand and access
- laws must be consistent with broader legal frameworks and fundamental legal principles.

A Roadmap for Respect emphasises that addressing sexual harassment will require leadership and engagement from all levels of government, industry groups, professional organisations, employers, workers and the private sector.

The Respect@Work Council, which held its first meeting on 19 March 2021, will continue its work to implement the recommendations from Respect@Work.

On 9 April 2021, National Cabinet discussed the Respect@Work Report and the Government's *Roadmap for Respect*. National Cabinet re-affirmed its commitment to addressing sexual harassment in the workplace. States and territories have agreed to provide a formal response to the Respect@Work Report including recommendations specifically relevant to their jurisdiction by the end of June 2021.

Prior to the Government's response to Respect@Work, to ensure women's safety in parliamentary workplaces, the Government, in consultation with the Presiding Officers, the Opposition, minor parties and independent Members of Parliament, on 5 March 2021 established an Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces. The review is being led by Commissioner Jenkins. The aim of the review is to ensure all Commonwealth Parliamentary workplaces are safe and respectful and the national Parliament reflects best practice in the prevention and handling of bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault. The Review will report by November 2021.

On 21 March 2021, the Government also announced an independent and confidential 24/7 telephone service to support current and former Commonwealth ministerial, parliamentary and electorate office staff, and those who have experienced serious incidents in a Commonwealth Parliamentary workplace. The Parliamentary Support Line 1800 APH SPT (1800 274 778) is operated by Medibank Health Solutions, which provides 1800RESPECT. The new service is free, anonymous and independent. It is confidential and can provide information, counselling and referrals in response to sexual violence, assault, sexual harassment or other serious incidents in the workplace.

New initiatives

Further to initial funding provided through the 2020 Women's Economic Security Statement, the Government is providing an additional \$9.3 million over four years to support the **Respect@Work Council Secretariat**. The establishment of the Council was a response to Recommendation 14 of the Respect@Work Report and this further investment will assist with implementing other key recommendations. Funding is being provided to the Attorney-General's Department to support the Council to implement a range of practical measures, as well as drive amendments to the legislative and regulatory framework, designed to improve legal and regulatory responses to workplace sexual harassment.

The Government is increasing funding to provide legal assistance to workers who experience, or are at risk of, sexual harassment. This funding will allow for specialist lawyers with workplace and discrimination law expertise to deliver these services to help vulnerable workers to address their legal issues and empower them to take action if required. This funding will be subject to ongoing discussions with states and territories in the context of their responses to the Respect@Work Report, which are due by the end of 2021.

In response to a range of recommendations in Respect@Work (Recommendations 4, 8, 13 and 54), the Government is committing \$5.3 million over three years to **build evidence and further develop primary prevention initiatives**. To address the recommendation to implement a National Sexual Harassment Research Agenda (Recommendation 4), ANROWS will receive funding to deliver research projects into sexual harassment. The Government is also funding Our Watch to develop and deliver primary prevention initiatives into sexual harassment, as well as review and update its existing national guidelines for reporting violence against women to include a specific focus on sexual harassment (Recommendations 8 and 13). Funding will be committed in 2021-22 to promote 1800RESPECT with a focus on sexual violence.

The Government is committed to working with states and territories to increase access to legal assistance for workers who experience sexual harassment (Recommendation 53). Comcare will deliver **National Forums for Commonwealth, state and territory work health and safety (WHS) Inspectors on sexual harassment** (Recommendation 36), and training for employers and managers covered by Commonwealth WHS laws to better understand and meet their obligations. The initiative will promote national consistency and support Australian workplaces to address sexual harassment by building the knowledge

and technical expertise of WHS regulators and the capacity of duty holders to implement measures to prevent and appropriately respond to sexual harassment.

The Government is providing \$6.0 million to **strengthen the role that the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) will play in preventing workplace sexual harassment** (Recommendation 42). This will further prevent and respond to workplace sexual harassment by ensuring accurate, up-to-date data is available and best practice approaches are being promoted. In addition to supporting the Respect@Work Council, WGEA will further support the Council by increasing education and awareness activities aimed at primary prevention of workplace sexual harassment and will promote education tools and resources developed by the Council.

The Government will **amend the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012** (WGE Act) to require public sector organisations to report to WGEA on gender equality initiatives (Recommendation 43). Pending legislative amendment of the WGE Act, WGEA will adapt its reporting and data management system for the public sector and work with the Australian Public Service Commission and relevant APS agencies to create a more comprehensive, representative and accurate data set of the Australian workforce. These changes will assist public and private sector organisations to benchmark performance against each other in order to better understand their progress against key metrics of gender equality, including to address workplace sexual harassment.

The Government is providing \$0.2 million in 2021-22 to **working women's centres** to support the continued delivery of free information, advocacy, support and advice on work-related matters including workplace sexual harassment. (Recommendation 49).

For those recommendations of the Respect@Work Report directed at both the Commonwealth and state and territory governments, funding arrangements will be discussed between both levels of government. This will be considered through the appropriate forums once state and territory governments provide their responses to the Respect@Work Report at the end of June 2021.

Improving the online environment

The Government is committed to ensuring women's safety in all aspects of life, including online. Three in ten Australian women aged 18-55 have experienced online abuse or harassment and of those women nearly 40 per cent reported these experiences made them feel that their physical safety was threatened.¹⁸ Women are also disproportionately victims of non-consensual sharing of intimate images, with nearly 70 per cent of complaints of this type of abuse coming from women.

In 2015, the Government introduced the eSafetyWomen program, which was designed to empower Australian women to take control of their online experiences. Through the eSafety Women program, the eSafety Commissioner provides physical and online resources, as well as tool kits targeted at people at risk and front line staff, such as staff in crisis centres and women's shelters, who support and respond to at-risk people and situations. In the 2018-19 Budget, the Government announced additional funding of \$1.2 million for the eSafetyWomen program.

In 2018, the Government passed landmark legislation to prevent the sharing of intimate images online without consent. The *Enhancing Online Safety (Non-consensual Sharing of Intimate Images) Act 2018* makes it an offence to post, or threaten to post, an intimate image on a social media site, via email or SMS, or on a website, without consent. The eSafety Commissioner was empowered with enforcement capabilities, including the ability to take fast and effective action to have images removed and to limit further sharing of images, which is the primary concern of victims.

In 2019, as part of the Government's investment in the Fourth Action Plan, the Government announced that the eSafety Commissioner would receive an additional \$2.5 million over three years to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to address technology-facilitated abuse. The Government also provided \$1.5 million over three-years to support the development of technology-facilitated abuse resources for women with intellectual disability and training for front-line workers.

18 Amnesty International (2018) Ipsos MORI Online Poll

New Initiatives

Creating a safe space online

The Government is providing \$26.2 million to create a safe space online for women and children.

The Government is investing \$18.0 million over two years from 2021-22 for **eSafety to bolster its investigations team into image-based abuse, adult cyber abuse, cyberbullying and harmful online content**. This funding will allow eSafety to respond rapidly to reports of harassment and abuse, the majority of which are experienced by women, and deliver a new data analysis capability to identify online safety trends, issues or newly emerged harms with a particular focus on women and children. Under this initiative, eSafety will also develop cutting edge web-crawler software that can investigate intimate images shared without consent.

The Government is committing \$3.0 million over two years from 2021-22 for eSafety to implement technologies that identify intimate images that have been shared without consent to assist in the rapid removal of image-based abuse material. The development of new technologies to address this form of abuse will allow eSafety to provide greater support to victims who have had intimate images shared online. The proposal will allow eSafety to develop and implement a new program of resources, training and technology-based tools for children, young people, frontline domestic violence workers and child welfare officers. The materials will be targeted to support each of these cohorts better identify early warning signs, implement strategies and inform court and policing interventions.

In addition, the Government is providing \$5.2 million in 2021-22 for a new, **National Online Safety Awareness campaign** to raise awareness of the Government's Online Safety Bill. The campaign will commence six months after the Bill receives Royal Assent and will inform Australians of the new and strengthened schemes put in place to support them.

Women's economic security

Supporting women's economic security is essential to raising the status of women in Australia and giving women the choice to make decisions in their best interests. Stronger women's economic security provides benefits for individuals, families, business, and the economy.

The Government is committed to strengthening women's economic security by supporting: women's labour force participation, employment and enterprise; women's education, skills and leadership; and women's financial security, including through home ownership and adequate retirement incomes. Progress in all these areas will help to address the longstanding disparity between women and men's economic circumstances.

Women's employment is at a record high and the gender pay gap has narrowed to a record low, supported by policies that encourage workforce participation. While progress has been made, there is more work to do. The 2021-22 Women's Budget Statement builds upon the work of the 2018 and 2020 Women's Economic Security Statements with new initiatives. Key measures include: changes to the Child Care Subsidy to support families with multiple young children who face some of the highest workforce disincentives; initiatives to assist women into a greater array of industries and occupations, including STEM; programs that support women's career choices; changes to superannuation; and a pathway to home ownership for single parent households.

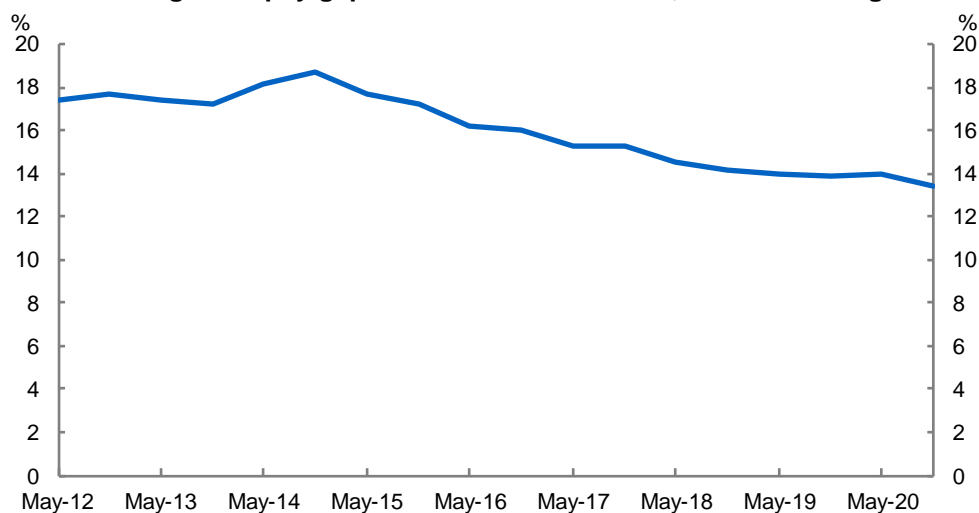
Continuing to improve women's economic security will require an ongoing effort, which involves cultural change and changes to gender norms. This includes addressing biases in decisions around pay across and within industries, and addressing perceptions around the career opportunities that are available to women. It also includes being open to different choices around who cares for dependent children and support for different paths to pursue careers. While the Government can empower families with choice through policy settings, it is the decisions of individuals and families that will ultimately affect outcomes.

The gender pay gap

An internationally established measure of the gender pay gap is the difference between the average full-time earnings of women and men in the workforce. The gender pay gap is the result of social and economic factors that reduce women's earning capacity over their lifetime. The gender pay gap contributes to lower economic security for women and, in turn, can inhibit women's safety. Currently the Australian gender pay gap is 13.4 per cent and, while it has fallen from 17.4 per cent since 2013, it remains an ongoing challenge to progressing women's economic security (Chart 4).

The gender pay gap is influenced by a number of factors, including lower wages, discrimination and bias, and women’s greater time out of the workforce.

Chart 4: The gender pay gap has narrowed over time, but remains significant



Source: ABS Average Weekly Earnings

Closing the gender pay gap requires cultural change to remove the barriers to the full and equal participation of women in the workforce. Data from both the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) and the ABS show the gender pay gap is not just about lower female workforce participation, time out of the workforce caring for dependent children or different occupational choices, though these are critically important drivers. It is observable within almost every industry in Australia (Chart 5). The impact of the gender pay gap accumulates over a lifetime, leading women to have less retirement savings than men and, in some cases, an increased likelihood of women living in poverty in old age.

Female-dominated industries and occupations do typically attract lower pay than male-dominated ones (Chart 6). For example, women make up more than three quarters of the health care and social assistance industry which attracts lower pay than male-dominated industries such as mining where 17 per cent of the workforce are women. In addition, male-dominated industries typically offer higher levels of discretionary payments including bonuses, commissions, shift allowances and overtime.¹⁹ This leads to higher gender pay gaps for total remuneration compared with ordinary time earnings.²⁰ The within-industry gender pay gap for full time employees

¹⁹ www.wgea.gov.au/the-gender-pay-gap#what-does-the-gender-pay-gap-mean

²⁰ www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/18_04_Industrial_segregation.pdf

is particularly large in more professionalised industries with low reliance on award wages, including professional, scientific and technical services and finance.

Chart 5: Full-time ordinary earnings gender pay gap by industry

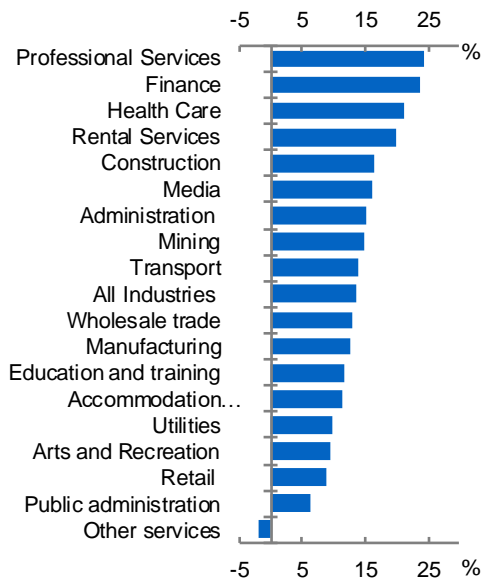
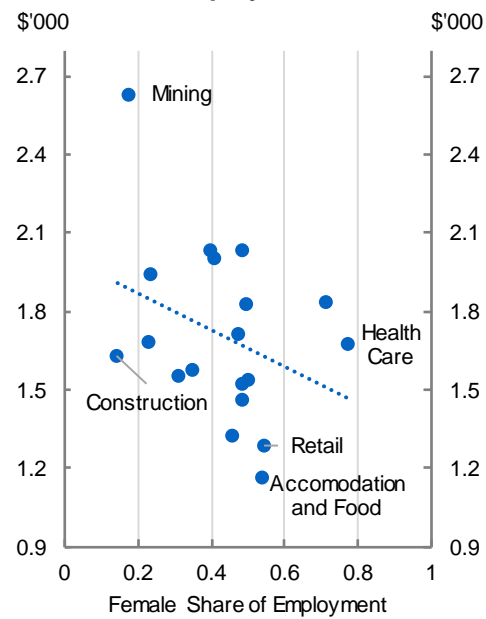


Chart 6: Average weekly full-time ordinary earnings, by female share of employment



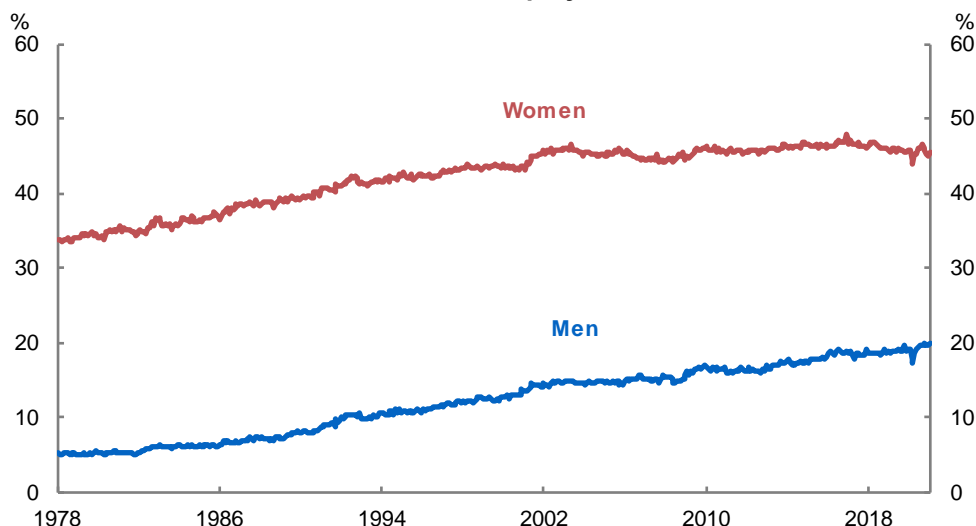
Source: ABS Average Weekly Earnings, November 2020; ABS Labour Force Quarterly, February 2021

Participation, employment and enterprise

As in many other countries, Australian women’s labour force participation rates have increased significantly over the last several decades to a record high of 61.8 per cent in March 2021. Between 2000 and 2019, the participation rate for Australian women aged 15 to 64 increased by 8.6 percentage points. The increase for Australia was larger than for many comparable countries, but there is still more to be done.

A large share of the increase in women’s employment through the 1980s and 1990s was made up of part-time employment, with the share of employed women working part-time increasing from around 34 per cent in the late 1970s to around 45 per cent by the early 2000s (Chart 7).

Chart 7: Part-time employment share



Source: ABS Labour Force Survey

A key demographic driver of women’s participation over recent decades has been changes in fertility decisions, with women having fewer children, and having children later in life. With peak fertility rates moving from ages 25-29 to 30-34, there has been a corresponding increase in participation by women in their late 20s.

While the participation rate for mothers is lower than for other women of the same age, the gap has decreased. In 2005, mothers in couples with children aged 0-4 had a workforce participation rate 27 percentage points below that of other coupled women in the same age group (25-44). By 2020, this gap had decreased to 18 percentage points.²¹

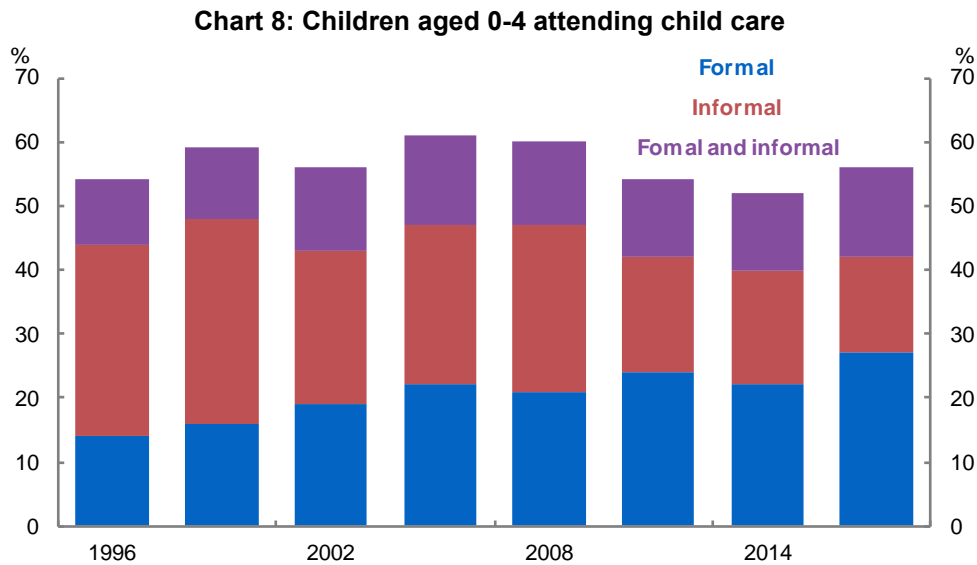
One factor contributing to the increased workforce participation by mothers with young children is changing attitudes around women returning to work after having children, with survey data showing increasing societal support for women combining work and parenting responsibilities.²²

The increased workforce participation by mothers with young children has likely also been supported by changing child care arrangements. The proportion of children that attend some form of child care (formal or informal) has been relatively stable over time (Chart 8). However, there has been a large shift from informal to formal care. Between 1996 and 2017, the proportion of children aged 0-4 who only attended formal care increased from 14 to 27 per cent, while the proportion who only attended informal care decreased from 30 to 15 per cent. The decrease in informal care might also have been

21 Treasury analysis of ABS Labour Force Survey microdata, January 2021.

22 AIHW 2020, Australian Families Then & Now: How we worked (aifs.gov.au). Melbourne Institute, HILDA 2019 Statistical Report.

important for the increase in the workforce participation of older women, as being looked after by a grandparent is the most common type of informal care.²³



Source: ABS Childhood Education and Care

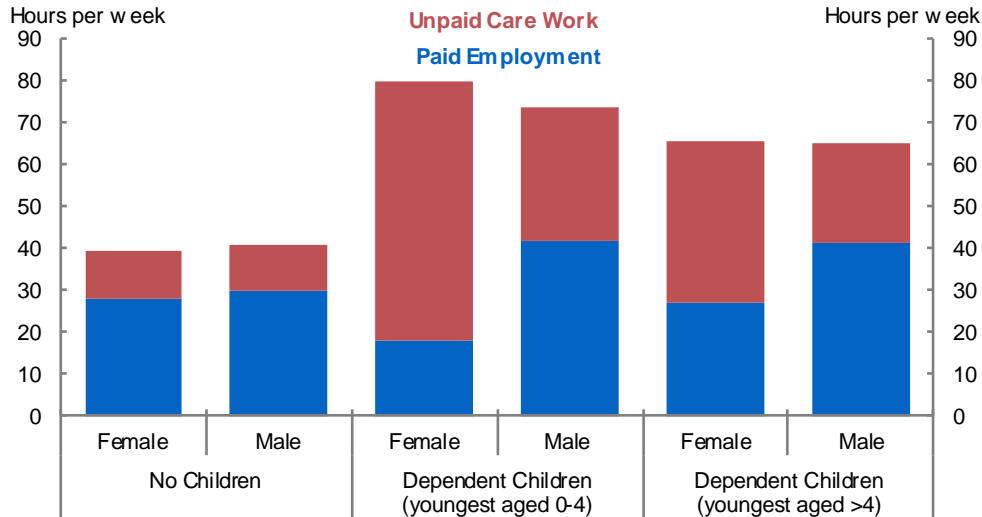
The largest increase in women’s workforce participation has occurred for the age group 55-64, which has increased by more than 40 percentage points since the 1980s. This can partly be attributed to broader changing social attitudes and stronger workforce attachment at lower ages, but the gradual increase to the female age pension eligibility age beginning in the 1990s is also likely to have had an effect.

Despite the gains in women’s participation over time, a higher proportion of unpaid work (including care) continues to be undertaken by women which limits the scope for greater labour force participation. Women on average spend 30 hours per week on unpaid housework and child care, while men spend on average 19 hours. In particular, women are much more likely than men to make adjustments to their paid work after having a child, while paid work patterns for men remain essentially unchanged when they become fathers.²⁴ These patterns appear to persist even as children get older and many women re-engage with paid work (Chart 9).

²³ ABS Childhood Education and Care, June 2017, Australia.

²⁴ From Crabb, A (2019) Men at Work, Quarterly Essay 75.

Chart 9: Mean weekly hours spent on paid employment and unpaid care work



Note: Includes adults aged 18-64. Unpaid care work includes housework, child care, caring for elderly or disabled relatives, and outdoor tasks.

Source: Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia, Release 19.0.

The time spent on unpaid work may influence the form of employment, increasing the likelihood of working in part-time, casual and contract work. In Australia, women comprise 68 per cent of all part-time workers. While working part-time provides flexibility for managing work and family responsibilities, where roles involve casual employment, they do not offer the same security and predictability as permanent roles, often carry less responsibility and can present limited career options.

The Government's recent changes to industrial relations legislation to improve the opportunities for long-term casual employees to convert to permanent employment will help to provide women in long-term casual employment with greater security.

Existing programs supporting participation

Access to affordable child care, parental leave pay and flexible work arrangements all give families greater choice about how to manage work and care. The Government is committed to supporting the choice of women to participate in the workplace, providing \$9.7 billion in 2020-21 in child care support and around \$2.4 billion annually in paid parental leave. Alongside these record levels of funding for child care, the Government has supported the child care sector through the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Child Care Subsidy

On 2 July 2018, the Government introduced the Child Care Subsidy to provide better targeted financial support to families, with more support for those who earn the least. Since the introduction of the Child Care Subsidy, out-of-pocket child care expenses for families have fallen 18 per cent since June 2018. In 2019-20, over a million eligible

families received a subsidy covering up to 85 per cent of their child care fees, with the subsidy designed to provide more assistance to low- and middle-income families. Around three-quarters of all subsidies go to families earning under \$150,000 a year.

The Child Care Safety Net provides vulnerable and disadvantaged families additional support, and is made up of the Additional Child Care Subsidy and the Community Child Care Fund. The Additional Child Care Subsidy is a top up payment which provides targeted assistance to those facing barriers in accessing affordable child care such as for families who need help to support their children's safety and wellbeing; for grandparents on income support who care for their grandchildren; for families experiencing significant financial stress; and for parents transitioning from welfare to work. There are 26,780 children being supported by the Additional Child Care Subsidy. This is an increase of around 5,000 children compared to the September quarter 2018.

The Community Child Care Fund provides grants to child care services to reduce barriers to accessing child care in disadvantaged, regional or remote communities. The Fund supports access to affordable early childhood education in communities where it is needed most. These grants support Closing the Gap targets by increasing participation of Indigenous children in early childhood education and care, and improving access for families.

Access to child care is central to women's labour force participation. In 2018-19, almost half of the women who were looking for more work cited child care responsibilities as the main barrier for not being available to start in a new job. This compares to just three per cent of men.

Paid Parental Leave

The Government's Paid Parental Leave scheme commenced on 1 January 2011 and is made up of Parental Leave Pay and Dad and Partner Pay. Since it commenced, more than 1.5 million people have received Parental Leave Pay and over 650,000 claimants have received Dad and Partner Pay. In 2019-20, the Government provided \$2.4 billion in Parental Leave Pay and Dad and Partner Pay payments.

Parental Leave Pay helps employers retain valuable and skilled staff by encouraging women to stay connected with the workforce when they become parents. The scheme provides long-term benefits for business as more women of child-bearing age stay connected with the workforce and their careers, and contribute to the economy. The scheme also encourages gender equity, by providing flexibility around when leave can be taken and the ability to transfer some or all of the leave to a partner.

From 1 July 2020, the Government enabled families to split their 18 weeks Parental Leave Pay entitlement into blocks of leave. This measure allows families to use their leave entitlement in a way that better suits their individual family needs, caring responsibilities and working arrangements. Families can now take an initial Parental

Leave Pay period of up to 12 weeks within the first 12 months of the birth or adoption of a child, with the remaining entitlement of up to 6 weeks to be taken any time within the first two years. Data at 28 February 2021 shows that, while most claimants have chosen to receive their Parental Leave Pay as one continuous 18-week block, around 9.3 per cent of claimants have split their Parental Leave Pay, suggesting families value the extra flexibility this initiative offers.

In 2019-20, the number of private sector employers offering paid parental leave for primary carers was 52.4 per cent, with 46.4 per cent of employers offering paid parental leave for secondary carers.²⁵ In the private sector, women account for 93.5 per cent of all primary carer's leave utilised with men accounting for 6.5 per cent. Primary carer's leave is most commonly available in large organisations. It is available in 79.2 per cent of organisations with 5,000 or more employees compared with 46.5 per cent of organisations with fewer than 250 employees. Of those employers offering paid primary carer's leave, 7-12 weeks is the most common length of leave (21.3 per cent).

Understanding participation, unpaid work and family flexibility

The 2018 Women's Economic Security Statement included funding to reinstate the ABS Time Use Survey, which collects comprehensive data on how Australians use their time. Results from the survey were last published in 2008. The Survey commenced in late 2020, with the first set of findings expected to be published in mid-2022.

The Survey will provide a greater understanding of the workforce participation gap between women and men and will lead to a more in-depth understanding of women's lives at work and at home. The results will be used by governments, researchers and community groups to better understand people's decisions about employment, family, child care and volunteering as well as the time pressures they experience.

25 WGEA – Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard 2020

New initiatives

The Government is committed to preserving family choice, while addressing barriers which make it difficult for parents with more than one child to return to work or work additional hours. By increasing the **Child Care Subsidy** for families with two or more children aged five and under, the Government will help support the choices of working Australian families, particularly women. From 11 July 2022, the Child Care Subsidy for the second and subsequent children in care will be increased by 30 percentage points, up to a maximum of 95 per cent. The current hourly fee caps, which continue to put downward pressure on fees, will continue to apply.

Families with multiple children in formal long-day care arrangements, whether this be centre-based day care or family day care, face high workforce disincentive rates due to the out-of-pocket expense associated with having multiple children in child care. In some cases, disincentive rates can exceed 100 per cent, meaning that families become financially worse off despite working additional days. Policies that reduce high disincentive rates may reduce barriers to labour force participation of the affected groups, which can have significant long-run benefits. Greater participation results in higher tax revenue, higher levels of spending on goods and services and higher economic growth. This also benefits business as it will enable firms to increase the hours of productive employees, avoiding additional hiring and training costs.

In addition, to ensure families are able to fully benefit from the increased subsidy, the annual subsidy cap of \$10,560 will be removed from 1 July 2022 for all families. This will help around 18,000 families. Removing the annual cap helps support the choices of parents to work the hours they want to work and, in particular, reduces barriers that secondary income earners face when seeking to work more.

In combination, the increase in Child Care Subsidy for families with multiple young children in centre-based day care and the removal of the annual cap is expected to cost \$1.7 billion over five years and to benefit around 250,000 families who currently receive the Child Care Subsidy. It will add up to 300,000 hours of work per week, which is equivalent to around 40,000 individuals working an extra day per week, and will boost the level of GDP by up to \$1.5 billion per year.

Existing programs supporting employment and enterprise

Women as entrepreneurs and business owners

As of October 2020, 35 per cent of small businesses were owned by women and of the six million employed Australian women, 12.3 per cent operate a small business. Over the past two decades, the number of female-run small businesses has grown by 46 per cent – a growth rate almost double that of men starting their own business over the same period of time.

Women often face additional challenges in establishing and growing their business, particularly in relation to access to capital and supportive networks. The Government is committed to ensuring women can access the support they need to grow their businesses domestically and globally. Girls and young women across Australia also need to have the knowledge and skills to start their own small businesses and create employment opportunities for themselves and for others. The digital economy and technological change have transformed the Australian economy and young women need to be well placed to take advantage of these opportunities.

The Government's Boosting Female Founders Initiative provides co-funded grants to majority women-owned and led start-ups, and facilitates access to expert mentoring and advice. The Initiative, announced in the 2018 and further expanded in the 2020 Women's Economic Security Statements, provides \$52.2 million in competitive grant funding plus \$1.8 million in mentoring support. The program commenced in 2020, with round one of the Initiative providing approximately \$11.9 million in grant funding to 51 successful applicants. Round two closed on 22 April 2021.

The Entrepreneurs' Programme delivers advice, networking and grants to help Australian small and medium businesses and start-ups strengthen, grow, innovate and commercialise nationally and globally. Over the course of 2020, the Entrepreneurs' Programme has been implementing changes to better assist women-led businesses. Following the implementation of new delivery partner arrangements from 1 July 2020, representation of women has increased from 17 per cent to 31 per cent in the facilitator cohort. In particular, women's representation amongst Commercialisation Facilitators now stands at over 40 per cent and over 50 per cent amongst Strengthening Business facilitators, positioning both offerings to better assist women-led start-ups and businesses.

The Government is supporting young women and girls to become entrepreneurs through an initial \$3.6 million in the 2018 Women's Economic Security Statement and an additional \$5.0 million in the 2020 Women's Economic Security Statement for the Academy for Enterprising Girls (otherwise known as the Future Female Entrepreneurs program) across Australia. The program engages girls and young women nationwide, particularly those in rural and regional communities, through a digital platform and in-person workshops. The program helps provide the tools and support they need to

prosper in the digital economy, start their own business and secure their own economic future.

Women are also supported by the Government's New Enterprise Incentive Scheme program which helps people to start and run a new small business. Changes to expand the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme program mean that women who are working part-time or who have other caring responsibilities can now benefit from the program.

Supporting the return to work

Returning to work after a career break can be challenging, particularly for women who are not returning to an existing job or have had significant time out of the labour market. There are a number of Government programs that have been designed to directly address this challenge.

The Career Revive pilot, funded under the 2018 Women's Economic Security Statement, supports 30 medium-to-large regional businesses across a diversity of industries and locations to attract and retain women returning to work after a career break. Under the pilot, business consultants work with business to improve workplace practices and policies to create workplaces that are supportive for women and assist those who are seeking to return to work after a career break.

ParentsNext is a pre-employment program that aims to help parents plan and prepare for employment before their youngest child starts school. Parents receive personalised assistance to help them identify their education and employment goals, improve their work readiness and link them to activities and services in the local community. Between 1 July 2018 and 31 March 2021, more than 160,000 parents participated, of whom 95 per cent were women and more than 28,000 were Indigenous women. In the 2020–21 Budget, the Government invested a further \$24.7 million into ParentsNext to streamline the program from 1 July 2021. These changes will better direct support to disadvantaged parents of young children to help them plan and prepare for work.

The Launch into Work program trials pre-employment projects that are co-designed with employers to prepare job seekers for identified entry-level roles in their business. The program proactively responds to labour market demands and supports women into long-term employment pathways. As at 31 March 2021, 42 projects had been completed with 465 job seekers commencing employment, of whom 82 per cent were women.

The Government's main employment program, jobactive, has an outcomes-focused approach and offers a mix of incentives, services and obligations to help job seekers find work. As at 31 March 2021, there were 604,977 female participants in jobactive representing 49.5 per cent of the caseload.

New initiatives

The Government is removing barriers that exist for women accessing non-traditional roles and re-entering the workforce after career breaks. The Government is investing an additional \$12.2 million over two years to enable a fourth grants round of the **National Careers Institute Partnership Grants Program** to support projects that facilitate more career opportunities and supported career pathways for women. The Program provides grants to develop and deliver career advisory products and services for people at all stages of their careers to improve outcomes and create education and training pathways. The expanded program will create greater awareness of career pathways and career information for women in non-traditional industries and occupations, and enhance partnerships between industry, employers, schools and tertiary providers that support women.

At a cost of \$13.9 million over four years, the Government is establishing an **Early Stage Social Enterprise Foundation** focused on providing capacity building and financial support for early stage social enterprises that improve the economic security of Indigenous women, particularly those who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence. The Foundation will provide flexible loans and grants to approximately 30 Australian social enterprises each year to support Indigenous women entrepreneurs to innovate and solve social issues facing their communities.

Following a successful pilot, funded under the 2018 Women's Economic Security Statement, the Government is providing \$2.6 million over three years to expand the **Career Revive Program** to reach 60 additional businesses, in both regional and metropolitan locations. Under this initiative, a business consultant will work with medium-to-large employers to identify and implement changes to their workplace to better attract and retain women, with a particular focus on assisting women who are seeking to return to work after a career break. The expanded initiative will include businesses that operate within industries that experience higher levels of gender segregation, such as mining, construction, manufacturing, and wholesale trade, and will increase the local labour market opportunities available to women in the COVID-19 recovery.

The Government is improving access to the existing **Mid-Career Checkpoint** program by lowering the requirement for participants to be out of paid employment for two or more years to only six or more months. This will support more women in their return to work after taking time off. The program offers free career counselling services for those who have taken time out of the workforce to undertake caring responsibilities, to help them return to work or advance their careers after returning to work. The program is open to all eligible Australian workers aged 30-45 years but is primarily targeted at women because it is typically women who have taken time out of the workforce to be the primary caregiver to their children.

Education and skills

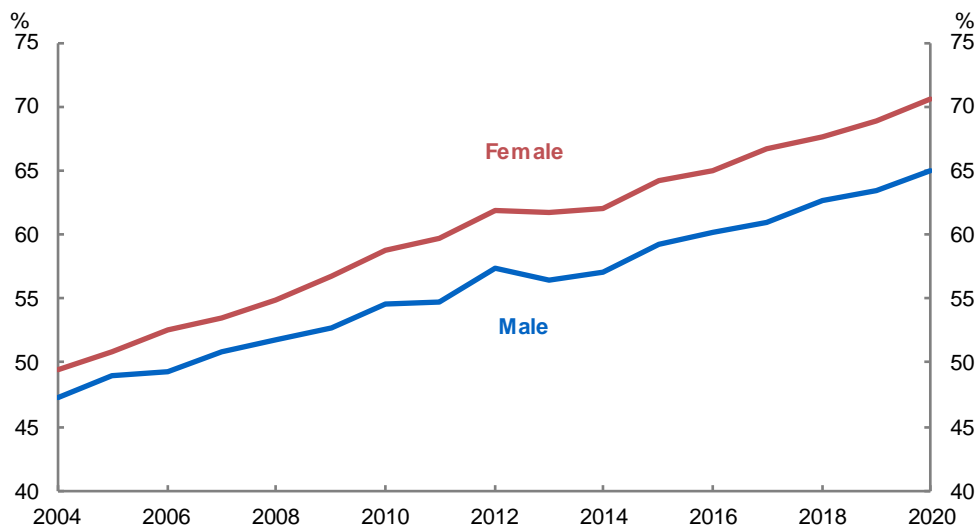
A high-quality education and training system maximises life choices for every Australian at every stage of life. Providing quality education is perhaps the most powerful policy lever available to improve lifetime incomes and reduce entrenched disadvantage. Increasing educational attainment drives improvements in human capital accumulation, supports labour productivity, individual earning capacity, and individuals' health outcomes, as well as broader economic prosperity and social wellbeing. Increases in Australian women's educational attainment over time have driven corresponding improvements in labour force participation and supported reductions in the gender pay gap.

Schooling outcomes

There is a long-term trend towards high school completion in Australia. This trend reflects an increasing proportion of recent generations of young people completing high school, including to go onto further study in vocational education and training (VET) and at university.

While broadly based, the increase in Australians completing Year 12 in greater numbers over time is more pronounced among women than men. In 2020, 70.6 per cent of women had completed Year 12 or equivalent, up from 49.5 per cent in 2004 and compared to 65.0 per cent of men, up from 47.2 per cent in 2004 (Chart 10). This represents a 21.1 percentage point increase for women over this period, compared to a 17.8 percentage point increase in male Year 12 attainment.

Chart 10: Proportion of people aged 15-64 having completed Year 12



Source: ABS Cat. 6227.0, Education and Work, Australia, November 2020.

The Government provides significant funding to support schooling outcomes. Since 2000, Commonwealth recurrent funding for schooling has increased by over 500 per cent. This Budget includes record funding for schools, with \$24.1 billion in 2021-22 and \$315.2 billion from 2018 to 2029 under the Government's Quality Schools Package.

New Initiatives

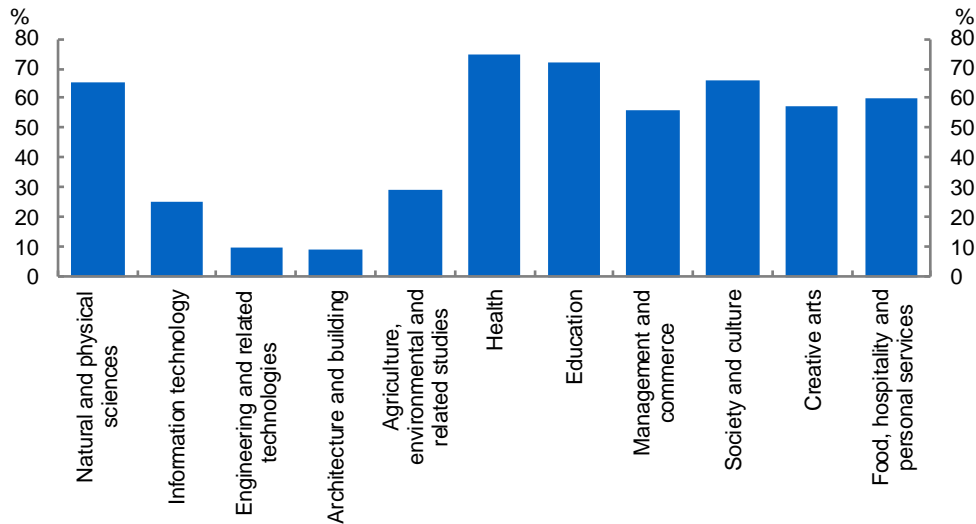
To contribute towards key targets of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and to ensure gender equity in the provision of support for Indigenous students, the Government is investing \$63.5 million over four years from the Indigenous Advancement Strategy to support **Additional Places in girls academies**. The proposal would provide an additional 2,700 places by 2023 and is expected to generate up to 50 new jobs in the first year and up to 135 new jobs by 2023. Girls academies provide culturally appropriate support to girls and young women to achieve year 12 attainment, and in their transition to employment or future study. These academies also directly improve social and emotional well-being by providing a structured safe environment in which young women can share their experiences and where they can be supported to enter adulthood and the workforce.

Vocational Education and Training

Undertaking skills and training pathways is critical for employment in skilled occupations. Graduates of VET tend to have strong labour market outcomes. Female students comprised 46 per cent of total VET students in 2019 having increased from 44 per cent of total VET students in 2015, the first year of consolidated VET sector data.

Since 2015, female VET students have made up more than two-thirds of all program completions in the education, health or natural and physical sciences fields of study. Conversely, women represented 11 per cent or less of all program completions in the engineering and related technologies and architecture and building fields of study between 2015 and 2019.

Chart 11: Fields of education for female VET students, 2019



Source: NCVET, Total VET students and courses, August 2020.

Women outperform men in some areas in VET. For study commencing in 2015, women in VET had an observed actual qualification completion rate of 43 per cent, slightly higher than that for men (40 per cent). Female VET graduates have slightly poorer outcomes than male graduates. The proportion of women with an improved employment status after training was 54.1 per cent in 2020, lower than 57.9 per cent of men. The proportion of women employed or in further study was 79.5 per cent for women in 2020, compared to 81.1 per cent of men.

The Government established a \$1 billion JobTrainer Fund in 2020 in partnership with the states and territories to support Australians to undertake free or low fee training in areas of skills need. The existing JobTrainer Fund has demonstrated success in delivering training in priority skills areas, supporting almost 115,000 enrolments, including job seekers and young people, with women accounting for 56 per cent of enrolments. The Commonwealth is committed to investing more in VET and helping to ensure a strong pipeline of qualified care workers and workers with digital skills

New initiatives

The Government is providing an additional \$500 million to expand the **JobTrainer Fund** by a further 163,000 places and extend the program until 31 December 2022. It will support 10,000 digital skills training places and 33,800 places for existing and new aged care workers to upskill. The JobTrainer Fund has demonstrated success in supporting women to reskill and upskill, with 56 per cent enrolments in JobTrainer courses by women. It is expected that the extension will also support a majority of women to upskill and reskill.

The Government is also investing an additional \$2.7 billion over four years to extend the **Boosting Apprenticeship Commencement (BAC)** wage subsidy, which will include 5,000 additional gateway services for women and in-training support services for women commencing in a non-traditional trade occupation.

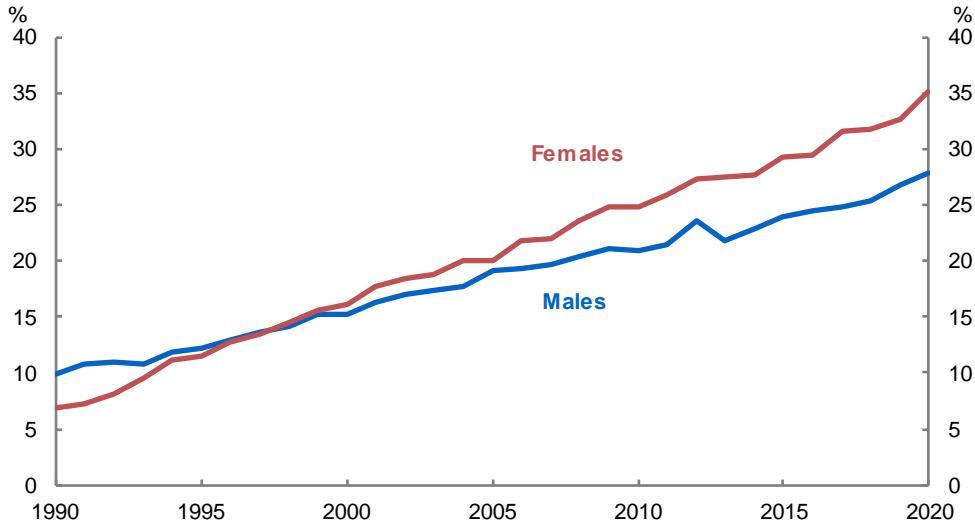
Higher education

There has been a long-term increase in the level of women's educational attainment, resulting in increased numbers of women entering skilled professions and accessing better paid jobs.

Australian women are increasingly achieving higher levels of education. In 2020, 2.9 million women aged 15 to 64 had a university qualification. Of these, 1.1 million women had a postgraduate degree or graduate diploma or certificate.

In recent decades, more women have obtained a higher education qualification than men. As a result, since 1998 there has been a higher proportion of women than men with a bachelor degree or higher (see Chart 12). In 2020, 35.2 per cent of women aged 15 to 64 had a bachelor degree or higher, more than double the proportion in 2000.

Chart 12: Proportion of people aged 15-64 with a bachelor degree or higher



Source: ABS Cat. 6227.0, Education and Work, Australia, November 2020.

The broad fields of education studied by women and men are somewhat different. Female students predominately study education, health, society and culture, and the creative arts. In contrast, men mostly study in STEM-related fields, including architecture and building, information technology and engineering and related technologies.

There has been strong growth in the number of women studying STEM in recent years. The number of female undergraduate students whose main field of study was STEM increased from around 58,000 in 2005 to almost 68,000 in 2019. This has been supported by Government initiatives to encourage women in STEM.

The Government is strengthening the higher education system through its Job-ready Graduates Package. The reforms will improve university funding arrangements with targeted investment in areas of national priority to ensure the system delivers for students, business and the community, and improves transparency and accountability for the higher education sector. The package will create more places at Australian universities for domestic students, with an additional 39,000 by 2023 growing to 100,000 in ten years.

Box 3: Encouraging women in STEM

Encouraging gender equity in STEM education and careers is a key priority for the Government. Action on STEM is critical to Australia's ability to compete in international markets, to create new opportunities for industries and to support high living standards. Women are still a minority in STEM-qualified occupations, making up only 13 per cent of people in STEM-qualified occupations in 2020. STEM skills in the digital economy are critical for the future. Enabling women to enter, re-enter, remain and progress in the STEM workforce is one way to help boost women's earning potential.

The Government has implemented several initiatives to support more women to gain education, skills and work experience in STEM. These have included the Curious Minds program, aimed at highly capable female students in Years 9 and 10 who have an interest in STEM, and combines camps and a coaching program to ignite girls' interest in STEM.

Through the Girls in STEM Toolkit the Government is empowering girls, and supporting their teachers and families, to see a future for themselves in STEM. This will be crucial to ensuring a future pipeline of women in STEM.

The Government's Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship grants (WISE) support investment in gender equity initiatives by eliminating barriers for women's participation in STEM education and careers, and entrepreneurship. The WISE program has already provided \$7.97 million for 46 projects across Australia.

Under the *Advancing Women in STEM 2020 Action Plan*, the Government's vision for 2030 is that Australia's education system, from early education to tertiary, supports the active inclusion of girls and women and enables them to explore their full potential.

From 2021, the Women in STEM Cadetships and Advanced Apprenticeships Program will support women working in STEM industries to complete an Advanced Diploma through a combination of study and work-integrated learning experiences. The program has subsequently been expanded to support nearly 600 women across Australia.

Box 3: Encouraging women in STEM (continued)

Women remain significantly underrepresented in STEM, particularly in engineering and information technology. However, some early indications of progress are visible. 2019 saw the highest proportion of women enrolled in all university STEM fields of education since 2015, both undergraduate and postgraduate. The proportion of women across all STEM-qualified industries has continually increased since 2016 rising from 24 per cent to 28 per cent in 2020.

New initiatives

To further grow the pool of women in STEM, the Government is investing \$42.4 million over seven years to support more than 230 women to pursue **Higher Level STEM Qualifications**. These scholarships will be provided in partnership with industry, to build job-ready experience, networks and the cross-cutting capabilities to succeed in modern STEM careers. This program will complement the Women in STEM Cadetship and Advanced Apprenticeships Program announced in the 2020-21 Budget, which targets women to enter industry-relevant, pre-bachelor study.

Supporting women's leadership and equality

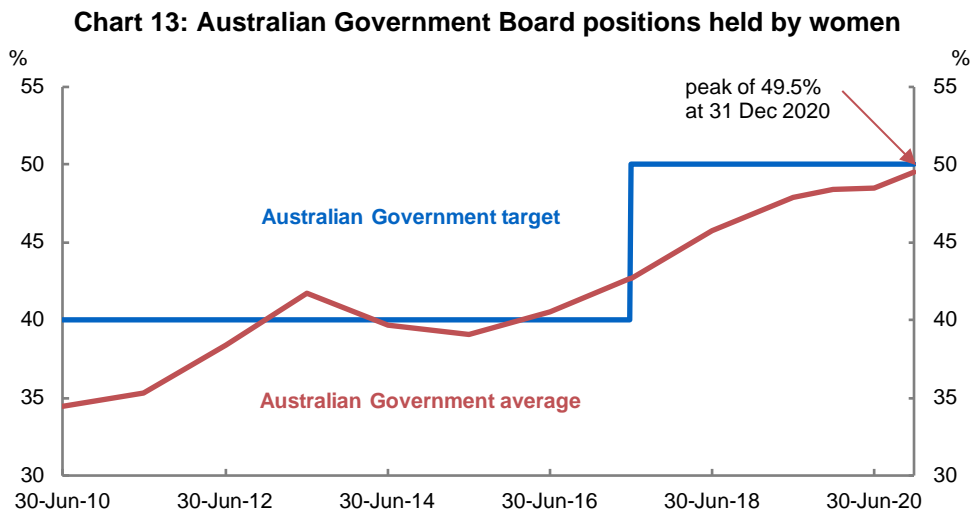
Women in leadership positions helps reduce gender pay gaps, and provides role models and mentors for the next generation of leaders. Appointing a female Chief Executive Officer, increasing the share of female key management personnel and increasing female representation on boards or governing bodies can all lead to substantial improvements in outcomes.

The barriers to women's progress into leadership positions, however, remains multi-faceted and can include factors such as: perceptions of leadership; a lack of role models; rigid career structures with a high degree of occupational segregation; poor workplace cultures, including workplace sexual harassment; and, a lack of access to flexible working arrangements that support work and family.

While there have been some recent marginal improvements in gender balance at the senior levels of Australia's larger workplaces, senior roles remain heavily

male-dominated. The number of women CEOs has only increased slightly to 18.3 per cent in 2019-20, a 1.2 percentage point increase on the previous year.²⁶

The Government is committed to supporting more women into leadership positions. In 2016, the Government committed to women holding 50 per cent of Australian Government Board positions overall and 40 per cent of positions at the individual board level. At 31 December 2020, a record 49.5 per cent of positions on Australian Government Boards are filled by women. This compares to 41 per cent in June 2013 (Chart 13). This compares with only 32.9 per cent of women on ASX200 company boards.²⁷ Setting goals and publicly reporting on progress are important for driving change.



Source: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

The Australian Public Service (APS) is playing a leading role in demonstrating commitment to gender equality. As at 30 June 2020, 60 per cent of the APS workforce and 48 per cent of the Senior Executive Service cohort are women.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), an Australian Government statutory agency, supports the promotion of gender equality in Australian workplaces in accordance with the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (WGE Act). The agency's vision is for women and men to be equally represented, valued and rewarded in the workplace.

²⁶ WGEA (2021) *Gender workplace statistics at a glance*

²⁷ Australian Institute of Company Directors (2021) *Board Diversity*

WGEA helps improve gender equality in Australian workplaces with advice and practical tools for employers, including by promoting flexible working arrangements and employer-funded paid parental leave for women and men, and the need for more women in leadership positions. It also administers the annual workplace gender reporting requirements for larger private sector entities and universities.

As part of the 2018 Women's Economic Security Statement, the Government provided \$8 million to upgrade WGEA's reporting and data management system, which is now operational. WGEA partners with the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) and, every year since 2016, BCEC has produced an annual report using WGEA's longitudinal dataset to explore and analyse trends and identify policies and practices that work to address gender inequality in the workplace. In 2020, WGEA and BCEC undertook a world-first study on gender diversity in company leadership.

Over the past five years, more than 50 per cent of successful, Government-supported candidates for key international roles have been women. Australia has served as a United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women Member (2020-2023) and Commission on the Status of Women Bureau Vice-Chair (2020-2021) and was successfully elected to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Committee (2021-2024).

The Government invests in the Women Leaders in Sport program to provide women with development opportunities to reach their leadership potential in the sports industry as coaches, officials, administrators, team captains and mentors. The Women Leaders in Sport program for 2019 comprised Leadership Workshops for individuals and organisations, as well as development grants of up to \$3,000 for individuals, and up to \$20,000 for organisations.

Australia is investing in developing women leaders in the Pacific through the *Pacific Women Lead* program (\$170 million, 2021-26). This program, led by women, seeks to ensure Pacific women and girls, in all their diversity, are safe and equitably share in resources, opportunities and decision-making, with men and boys. Australia also plays a leading role internationally to support women's voices and leadership. In April 2021, Australia launched its second *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2031*. As part of the National Action Plan, the Government will deepen Australia's engagement with ASEAN, including to support an inclusive COVID-19 recovery.

New initiatives

The Australian Government is committed to supporting more women into leadership positions and to further closing the gender pay gap. The Government is providing \$38.3 million over five years to expand the successful **Women's Leadership and Development Program**. This builds on the \$47.9 million expansion to the Program announced as part of the 2020 Women's Economic Security Statement. This program funds projects such as *Women Building Australia* run by Master Builders Australia to support more women into building and construction. These initiatives form part of the Government's response to increasing gender equality, extending leadership and economic participation opportunities for Australian women, and building a safer, more respectful culture.

The Government will **review the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012** (the Act). Under the Act, employers with 100 or more employees are required to report to WGEA on a number of gender equality indicators. In the last reporting period, there were nearly 11,500 employers who reported to WGEA and approximately 98 per cent were compliant with their reporting obligations. Future access to this data – which helps to drive continuous improvement – requires ongoing compliance by employers. A review of the Act, to be completed by the end of 2021, will consider the current legislation and gender indicators, along with ongoing employer reporting obligations. The targeted review will identify areas of future focus for WGEA to further promote gender equality over the next ten years and WGEA's ongoing work to support the recently established Respect@Work Council. This measure builds on the amendments to the Act to require public sector organisations to report on gender equality initiatives.

Athletes as role models

The Government is providing funding of \$12.0 million over two years to provide a **grant to Football Australia** for eight additional Matildas international matches, international tours and domestic camps for each of the seven existing national youth teams. This will continue to demonstrate the importance and leadership of sportswomen as elite role models. In addition, the funding will provide for a new Club Development Officer program for community engagement in football by people from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds.

A grant of \$5.0 million in 2021-22 will be provided to Basketball Australia to deliver the **FIBA Women's World Cup in 2022** and to establish a Pathways Program for Basketball Administrators, Coaches and Officials to accredit more women, and an Indigenous Women's Leadership Program to encourage more Indigenous women to get involved in basketball. This will support increased women's participation and leadership in basketball.

Financial security and home ownership

Improving women's financial security, particularly adequate superannuation, complements efforts to help narrow the gender pay gap. Moreover, access to home ownership has significant economic and social benefits, including increased workforce participation, improved education and health outcomes, reduced welfare dependency and leads to a more comfortable and secure retirement.

Financial Security

Women's financial security can be improved by measures that increase financial literacy, assist women through legal proceedings and improve incomes in retirement.

Financial literacy and legal support services

In 2016, the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Australia (HILDA) Survey showed one in two adult women struggled with basic financial literacy concepts such as inflation, compound interest and risk diversification. This compares with one in three adult men. In 2018, women (41 per cent) were significantly more likely to report that dealing with money is stressful and overwhelming than men (28 per cent).

Issues with financial literacy can contribute to the incidence of financial abuse, which is worse for women. One in six women will experience financial abuse in their lifetime. In 2016, almost one in two women and one in three men who experienced emotional abuse from their most recent previous partner reported also experiencing financial abuse. Financially abusive behaviour consists of controlling or trying to control knowledge of, access to, or making decisions about household money, as well as decisions related to working or earning money.

To enhance women's financial security, in 2018-19 the Government provided \$10.0 million to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) to provide Grants Supporting and Strengthening Community Financial Capability and Wellbeing. The funding is administered on behalf of ASIC by Ecstra, a not-for-profit body. Grants provided under program focus on initiatives that help to ensure more

women are in control of their financial lives. The grant round closed in February 2021 and the program is anticipated to be complete in mid-2022.

As part of the first Women's Economic Security Statement in 2018, the Australian Government invested \$98.4 million in new Funding for Family Law Services and initiatives to support women and their families to recover financially after separation. This funding provides separated families with access to affordable and timely support services.

Although the measure was delayed due to COVID-19, the Government will shortly introduce enabling legislation to deliver the Improving the Visibility of Superannuation Assets in Family Law Proceedings measure, which was announced as part of the 2018 Women's Economic Security Statement. The Government is building an electronic information sharing mechanism between the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) and the Family Law Courts to allow superannuation assets to be readily identified during family law proceedings. Allowing the ATO to provide this information to the Courts will ensure more just and equitable superannuation splitting outcomes.

New initiatives

After separation or divorce, women experience far more significant drops in household disposable income than men. Divorce, in some circumstances, leads to court proceedings adding a heavy burden on people who are already emotionally and financially stressed. It is a time-consuming process and for many women it is too costly and is resolved too late to support them when they need it most.

To help support women's economic security, the Government is investing \$10.7 million over two years to streamline the process and provide lawyers to **assist with mediation to distribute property** of less than \$500,000 between parties and after separation following a relationship breakdown. The proposal will help women achieve financial security and control, recover financially from separation, and move on with their lives.

Retirement incomes

Australia's retirement income system continues to provide effective support to retirees and encourages individuals to make provisions during their working lives to support their retirement needs. Retirement incomes comprise one or a combination of a means-tested Age Pension, compulsory superannuation, and voluntary savings, including home ownership and voluntary superannuation contributions.

The Age Pension plays an important role in supplementing the superannuation savings of retirees and allowing them to maintain their living standards, benefiting 1.4 million women. It also provides a buffer for retirees whose retirement income and savings fall due to market volatility, and for those who outlive their savings. In 2019-20, the Government spent \$50 billion on the Age Pension, to provide support for Australians later in life.

The superannuation system provides income in retirement through compulsory and voluntary savings during people's working lives. The superannuation system is supported through a number of tax concessions to encourage people to save for an adequate retirement.

The Retirement Income Review found that the median gender gap in superannuation balances at retirement is currently 22 per cent and has narrowed over time. However, a persistent gap between the superannuation savings accumulated by men and women remains, in part because the retirement income system does not fully account for a number of factors that contribute directly to the superannuation savings gap, including lower wages and breaks in fulltime work which lead to lower contributions to superannuation throughout women's working lives.

The Government has implemented a range of measures to help address the gap between men's and women's superannuation balances.

- Introducing the Low Income Superannuation Tax Offset, which reduces the tax on superannuation contributions for low-income earners by providing a Government superannuation payment of up to \$500 per year.
- Providing a Government co-contribution of up to \$500 to low or middle-income earners who make after-tax superannuation contributions. The co-contribution scheme is predominantly used by women. In 2018-19 around 244,700 low- and middle-income women received co-contributions, which was around 65 per cent of recipients.
- Enabling individuals with balances below \$500,000 to catch up on their retirement savings by accessing unused portions of their concessional contributions cap on a rolling five-year basis, which benefits women who have taken time out of the workforce or those with lower balances.
- Increasing the number of people who can claim a tax offset for spouse contributions to superannuation by increasing the income test threshold for the recipient spouse.

- Facilitating contribution splitting, which allows people to help their spouse accumulate their own superannuation by splitting up to 85 per cent of their concessional contributions in a year. This broadens superannuation to individuals outside the workforce, a majority of whom are women.
- Increasing the flexibility to make voluntary contributions through removal of the 10 per cent rule. Previously individuals had to derive less than 10 per cent of their assessable income from employment sources to claim a tax deduction on personal super contributions.
- Enacting the Protecting Your Super Package, which sees superannuation members reunited with low balance and inactive accounts, bans exit fees and caps certain fees on low balance accounts.
- The Government's Your Future, Your Super Package announced in the 2020-21 Budget will benefit Australians by \$17.9 billion over 10 years by reducing unneeded multiple accounts, introducing a new 'YourSuper' comparison tool, protecting superannuation balances from fee erosion, holding superannuation funds to account for underperformance and increasing the transparency and accountability of super funds. This will help all Australians grow their superannuation balances and to make the most of their superannuation savings.

New Initiatives

The Government is focused on improving retirement outcomes for women who, on average, retire with lower superannuation balances and lower retirement incomes. At a cost of \$31.5 million over the forward estimates, the Government is **removing the \$450 per month threshold** under which employees do not have to be paid the superannuation guarantee (SG). The Retirement Income Review indicated that of all people currently affected by the threshold, 63 per cent are women. This reform improves the coverage of the superannuation system and will help to increase retirement savings for cohorts with lower incomes, including women.

The Government is **extending access to the downsizer contribution** by reducing the minimum age requirement from 65 to 60. Downsizer contributions allow people to make a one-off, post-tax contribution to their superannuation of up to \$300,000 per person (\$600,000 per couple) from the proceeds of selling their home, outside the usual contribution caps. This gives Australians more flexibility to contribute to their superannuation, especially women and those with moderate balances. Around 55 per cent of those who have used the downsizer contribution to date are women, and 73 per cent have balances less than \$500,000.

The Government is also **removing the work test** at a cost of \$33.7 million over the forward estimates. This will further improve the flexibility to make superannuation contributions. This measure will allow those aged 67 to 74 years to make or receive non-concessional and salary sacrificed contributions without meeting the work test, subject to existing contributions caps.

Housing for women

Access to secure and stable housing has significant social and economic benefits, with the Government providing support through a number of programs. Based on the 2017-18 Survey of Income and Housing, around 4.2 million women (or around 70 per cent) in a couple own their home, either outright or with a mortgage. Of those not in a couple, around 1.2 million women (or around 35 per cent) own their home, either outright or with a mortgage.

The Retirement Income Review noted that private savings, including home ownership, is a pillar of the retirement income system and a major influencing determinant of retirement outcomes. On average, equity in the family home represents the largest share of net wealth for Australians aged 65 and over. Homeowners have lower housing costs

and an asset that can be drawn on in retirement, which provides for a more secure retirement compared to those who continue to rent.

The Government supports home ownership through a number of programs, including the First Home Loan Deposit Scheme, New Home Guarantee and the First Home Super Saver Scheme.

By the end of 2020-21, the Government expects to spend around \$8.2 billion to support housing in Australia, including the HomeBuilder program. HomeBuilder provides eligible owner-occupiers with a grant to build a new home or substantially rebuild an existing home. The \$8.2 billion in Commonwealth funding includes around \$5.5 billion for Commonwealth Rent Assistance to help around 1.7 million eligible Australians, of whom around 56 per cent are women. Further, it includes around \$1.6 billion under the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement for states and territories. The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement identifies women and children affected by family and domestic violence as a priority cohort for assistance from homelessness services.

New initiatives

Recognising the importance of housing, and building on the success of the First Home Loan Deposit Scheme, the Government is establishing the **Family Home Guarantee**. From 1 July 2021, 10,000 family home guarantees will be made available over four years to eligible single parents with dependants to build a new home or purchase an existing home with a deposit of as little as two per cent, regardless of whether that single parent is a first home buyer or previous owner-occupier.

In 2021-22, it is estimated that around 125,000 single parents with dependants may be eligible for the Family Home Guarantee (subject to lenders criteria). Of these 125,000 single parent households, around 105,000 (or 84 per cent) are female headed. This measure will give single parents and their dependants access to stable housing which is an important foundation for social, economic and emotional wellbeing.

In addition, the Government has committed around \$124.7 million for an additional two years of funding for social and community services workers in the housing and homelessness sectors. This funding will support the states and territories to meet their social and community housing responsibilities. Women represent 84 per cent of the 500,000 Australians employed in the social and community services sector.

Women's health and wellbeing

The health of Australian women and girls is critical to their overall wellbeing and ability to participate in society. Better health outcomes also improve women's capacity to work, leading to higher workforce participation, stronger employment outcomes and higher wages. The Australian Government is committed to supporting and promoting the health of all Australian women and girls throughout their lives.

The Government continues to work towards improvements in women's health through the *National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030* and its priority areas of focus, including: maternal, sexual and reproductive health; healthy ageing; addressing chronic conditions and preventative health; improving mental health; and, addressing the health impacts of violence against women and girls. In addition, in the 2021-22 Budget the Government will fund a number of new initiatives. These include maternal health initiatives, reforms to Medicare items, new PBS listings and significant reforms to aged care. The Government also continues to focus on the importance of investing in awareness and education, health interventions, service delivery and research to maximise physical, mental and social health at every age.

In most areas, Australian women experience strong health outcomes as would be expected from Australia's world class health care system. For example, an Australian girl born during the period 2014-16 can expect to live to nearly 85 years, which sees Australia having the seventh highest female life expectancy amongst OECD countries.²⁸ However, women in Australia experience more of the total disease burden than men, are more likely to have multiple chronic conditions and are more likely to experience sexual violence.²⁹ Moreover, the significant improvements in health have not all been experienced equally by all Australian women – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have higher rates of co-morbid conditions, including diabetes, breast, cervical and ovarian cancers than non-Indigenous women. These areas will remain a continuing area of focus for the Government beyond the 2021-22 Budget.

The National Women's Health Strategy

In 1989, Australia's first National Women's Health Policy recognised the need to address gendered experiences of the health system and the disproportionate and significant impact of certain health conditions on Australian women and girls. Much has changed since the first National Women's Health Policy. Significant societal shifts have occurred, and advances in technology as well as changing lifestyles and habits have impacted on the health and wellbeing of Australian women and girls.

²⁸ aihw.gov.au/reports/international-comparisons.

²⁹ AIHW, Health of Australia's females.

The Government's *National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030* (the Strategy) outlines Australia's national approach to improving health outcomes for all women and girls, particularly those at greatest risk of poor health. The Strategy identifies specific actions to address the health issues that affect women and girls throughout their lives and aims to reduce inequities in health outcomes between men and women, and between sub-population groups of women and girls. Acknowledging the unique needs of different population groups is a key element along with identifying targeted interventions to improve outcomes.

Key priorities and actions of the Strategy have been developed to drive change and improve health outcomes. These are:

- maternal, sexual and reproductive health – increase access to information, diagnosis, treatment and services for sexual and reproductive health; and, enhance and support health promotion and service delivery for preconception, perinatal and maternal health
- healthy ageing – adopt a life course approach to healthy ageing; address key risk factors that reduce quality of life and better manage the varied needs of women as they age
- chronic conditions and preventative health – increase awareness and prevention of chronic conditions, symptoms and risk factors; invest in targeted prevention, early detection and intervention; and, tailor health services for women and girls
- mental health – enhance gender-specific mental health awareness, education and prevention; focus on early-intervention; and, invest in service delivery and multi-faceted care
- health impacts of violence against women and girls – raise awareness about, and address the health and related impacts of, violence against women and girls; and, co-design and deliver safe and accessible services.

At the launch of the Strategy in April 2019, more than \$50 million was committed, including for health promotion grants, educational resources, drug and rehabilitation programs and to help individuals and couples with the prevention and treatment of involuntary infertility. To date, 15 health promotion grants have been awarded under the Strategy.

Maternal, sexual and reproductive health

Australia's health system recognises that conception, pregnancy and parenthood present unique challenges for women.

For a range of reasons, sometimes starting a family is not straightforward. In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) and other assisted reproductive technologies have helped hundreds of thousands of Australians become parents. In 2021, the Government strengthened support for couples trying to become pregnant through the launch of the YourIVFSuccess website. Until now, there has not been an easy way for consumers to find and compare fertility clinics or to estimate their individual chance of success. The YourIVFSuccess website helps people estimate their chances of success through this treatment so they can make the decisions which are right for them.

Endometriosis impacts at least one in nine women and can have a debilitating impact on their health, wellbeing and productivity³⁰. Around 15 of every 1,000 hospitalisations in 2016-17 among females aged 15-44 were endometriosis related³¹. Launched in July 2018, The National Action Plan for Endometriosis is a blueprint to increase research and improve the understanding and awareness of endometriosis as well as diagnosis and treatment for women experiencing this debilitating disorder. Specific funding was also committed to develop Australia's first ever clinical guidelines for endometriosis.

With support from the Government, the Pelvic Pain Foundation of Australia developed PPEP-Talk to enable students, teachers and parents to learn how to recognise when menstruation symptoms are not normal and where to go for advice and help. PPEP-Talk is currently delivered to 80 schools in South Australia and 60 in Western Australia. Evaluation of activity in 2019-20 reported by the Pelvic Pain Foundation demonstrated success in reducing student absenteeism attributed to endometriosis and pelvic pain and greater management of period pain by 75 per cent of female students that participated.

The Government has been actively working to create better maternity services for Australian women and has developed *Woman-Centred Care: Strategic directions for Australian maternity services* (WCC). The WCC provides national strategic directions to support Australia's high-quality maternity care system and enable improvements in line with contemporary practice, evidence and international developments.

In 2019, 30 per cent of women aged 14-49 who were pregnant in the previous 12 months reported drinking alcohol while pregnant.³² The Government has committed \$75 million since 2013 to reduce the impact of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in Australia, which is fully preventable. This funding has been used for awareness raising campaigns, data

30 AIHW (2019) *Endometriosis in Australia: prevalence and hospitalisations*.

31 AIHW (2019) *Endometriosis in Australia: prevalence and hospitalisations*.

32 AIHW (2021) *Measuring risky drinking according to the Australian alcohol guidelines*.

collection, improvement of diagnostic and support services, education and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder resources, and the ongoing support of programs. On 31 July 2020, new labelling requirements for mandatory pregnancy warning labels on packaged alcoholic beverages came into force. A three-year transition period will allow for industry to apply the labels, which will support women to be appropriately informed about the risks associated with the consumption of alcohol while pregnant.

The Government also funds a range of measures to support pregnant women and their partners. This includes:

- the Healthdirect Pregnancy Birth and Baby website and helpline to support expecting parents, and the parents, families and carers of children aged up to five years
- the Australian Breastfeeding Association for the National Breastfeeding Helpline
- the extension of the Pertussis (whooping cough) Vaccine to pregnant women
- obstetric MRI for pregnant patients with suspected fetal central nervous system abnormalities.

Support for mothers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

In the 2014-15 Budget, the Government announced the Better Start to Life measure. It provided \$94.0 million over three years to expand the New Directions: Mothers and Babies Services program and the Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program.

The Mothers and Babies Services program provided Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families improved access to antenatal and postnatal care, standard information about baby care, and practical advice and assistance with breastfeeding, nutrition and parenting. It also monitors developmental milestones, immunisation status and infections and funds health checks for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children before starting school. The program's evaluation identified an improvement in seven out of eight measures for Mothers and Babies Services organisations, compared with four out of eight measures for non-Mothers and Babies Services organisations. The seven measures where Mothers and Babies Services organisations improved were all 'process of care' indicators such as child health checks and immunisations recorded.³³

The Australian Nurse-Family Partnership aims to improve pregnancy outcomes by helping women engage in good preventative health practices; supporting parents to improve their child's health and development; and helping parents develop a vision for

³³ New Directions: Mothers and Babies Services – assessment of the program using nKPI data – December 2012 to December 2013.

their own future, including continuing education and finding work. As at March 2021, the Partnership had supported 2,707 mothers since it commenced in 2009 across 13 sites. An evaluation of the program in Australia will commence shortly.

New initiatives

The Government is committed to supporting a national approach to improving health outcomes for all women and girls in Australia. Funding of \$16.6 million over four years (plus \$4.2 million in 2025-26) is being delivered to implement initiatives to support the **National Women's Health Strategy** across maternal, sexual and reproductive health including endometriosis. This funding will allow Jean Hailes for Women's Health to continue their work, including the annual women's health survey and education of health professionals. Funding of \$5.0 million will assist the Pelvic Pain Foundation of Australia to continue to deliver the PPEP-Talk across 140 schools.

The Government is providing the **Women and Infants Research Foundation** \$13.7 million to expand its successful work on reducing the rate of pre-term birth from Western Australia to the rest of the country, supporting the health of pregnant women and their children. Pre-term birth is associated with a higher risk of perinatal mortality, long-term neurological disability (including cerebral palsy), admission to neonatal intensive care and severe morbidity.

The Commonwealth is providing \$1.8 million to fund an increase in the number of pathologists and radiologists available to undertake stillbirth autopsies and investigations, as part of implementing the **National Stillbirth Action and Implementation Plan**.

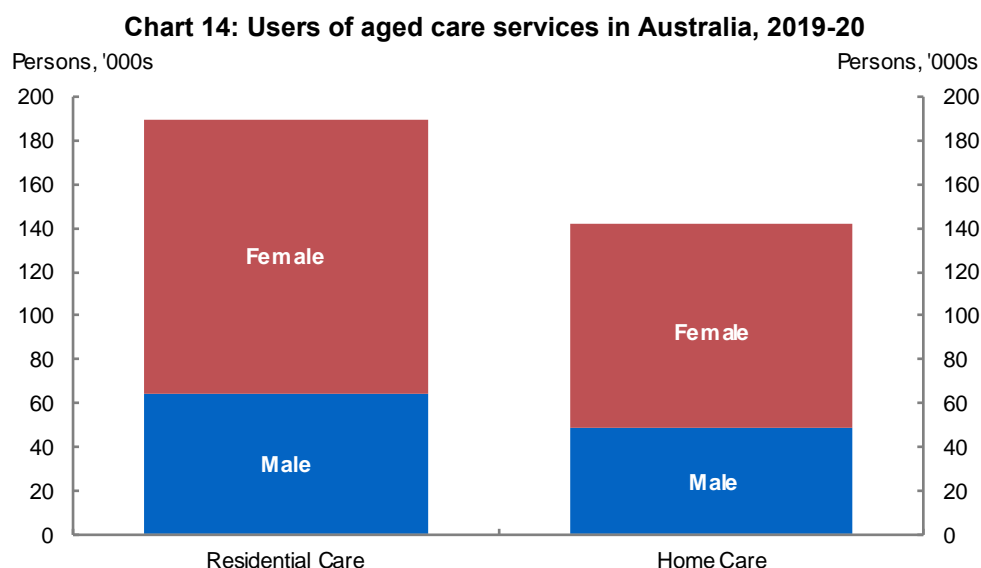
The Government is also supporting women who are at risk of having a child with a serious genetic disorder by adding new services to the **Medicare Benefits Schedule** to fund pre-implantation genetic testing at a cost of \$95.9 million.

The Government is **reforming gynaecology services funded by Medicare** to ensure women receive best practice health care, including improving access and safety associated with IUD insertions and diagnostic hysteroscopy, providing \$22.0 million. The reform will also mean that women are likely to face lower out of pocket costs for gynaecology items listed on the Medicare Benefits Schedule.

Healthy ageing

Australians are living longer, with life expectancy at birth now 84.9 years for women, 10 years higher than it was 50 years ago³⁴. More Australians are also wishing to stay in the own home as they age.

In 2018-19, more than 1.3 million people accessed aged care services in Australia. Because, on average, women live longer, women are more likely to receive aged care services – around two thirds of recipients of aged care services are women – and women generally receive these services for longer than men (Chart 14). Older women can also experience different health needs, with dementia the leading cause of death amongst women.



Source: GEN Aged Care Data, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Women make up the vast majority of the aged care workforce. 87 per cent of workers in residential care are women and 89 per cent of workers in home care or home support are women. As the population ages, the aged care workforce will need to grow to meet future demand for services.

Informal carers provide significant support to those in need within the context of an existing relationship, such as a family member a friend or a neighbour. It is estimated there are almost 2.8 million informal carers in Australia providing care to both older Australians and people living with disability. Of this cohort, around 906,000 carers are primary carers and more than 70 per cent of all primary carers are women, with the rate

³⁴ AIHW (2020) *Deaths in Australia*

of care higher in females than in males across all age groups other than for those aged 75 years or older.

Women with caring responsibilities are less likely to be in employment and across both aged and disability care, primary carers spend an average of 35.2 hours per week providing care. The opportunity cost from this reduced employment was estimated in 2020 at \$15.2 billion.

Recognising the need to ensure older Australians are treated with respect, care and dignity and have access to quality care as they age, the Government established the *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety* in October 2018. The Royal Commission received more than 10,500 submissions and heard from more than 640 witnesses. The Final Report was tabled on 1 March 2021, with the Commissioners making 148 recommendations across all aspects of the Australian Government-funded aged care system.

To assist Australians to plan for a healthy, independent and longer life, the Government launched the Life Checks website in January 2019. Life Checks is targeted at people aged 45-64 and 65+ and encourages them to consider their health, finances, work and social life in the context of planning for their future. On completion of the Life Checks, people are provided information and resources to help them better prepare for the future. Since its inception, 197,000 users have completed a Life Checks.

New initiatives

In response to the **Final Report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety**, the Government has committed to record funding with an additional \$17.7 billion over five years to transform the aged care system to ensure it delivers high-quality services for older Australians and their families, now and into the future. This will deliver a generational change to aged care.

To support older Australians to remain at home for longer, this Budget invests \$6.5 billion for the release of **80,000 additional Home Care Packages**. The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission will receive additional resources to manage compliance and ensure quality care services. Funding of \$798.3 million will also support informal carers of older Australians, including through increased access to respite services, and more-targeted assistance for carers of people with dementia.

Reforms to aged care will be underpinned by a new values-based Aged Care Act as well as new institutional governance arrangements.

To improve the quality, sustainability and safety of residential aged care, from 2020-21 the Government is investing \$7.8 billion to implement a new funding model and introduce a new Government Basic Daily Fee supplement of \$10 per resident per day. In introducing the new model, the Government is supporting provider transition and encouraging better care by increasing funding to support an average of 200 minutes of care time per resident per day. From 1 July 2022, residential care providers will be required to report and publish care staffing minutes on the MyAgedCare website.

The Government is providing \$630.2 million to **improve access to high-quality aged care services** for those in regional, rural and remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and special needs groups.

The reforms announced in the Budget include \$942.0 million to support older Australians to access safe and quality care, and \$652.1 million to skill the aged care workforce for the future. An additional 33,800 training places through JobTrainer will enable existing and new care workers to improve their qualifications. Support for the aged care workforce will include financial support for registered nurses, of which 86 per cent are women.

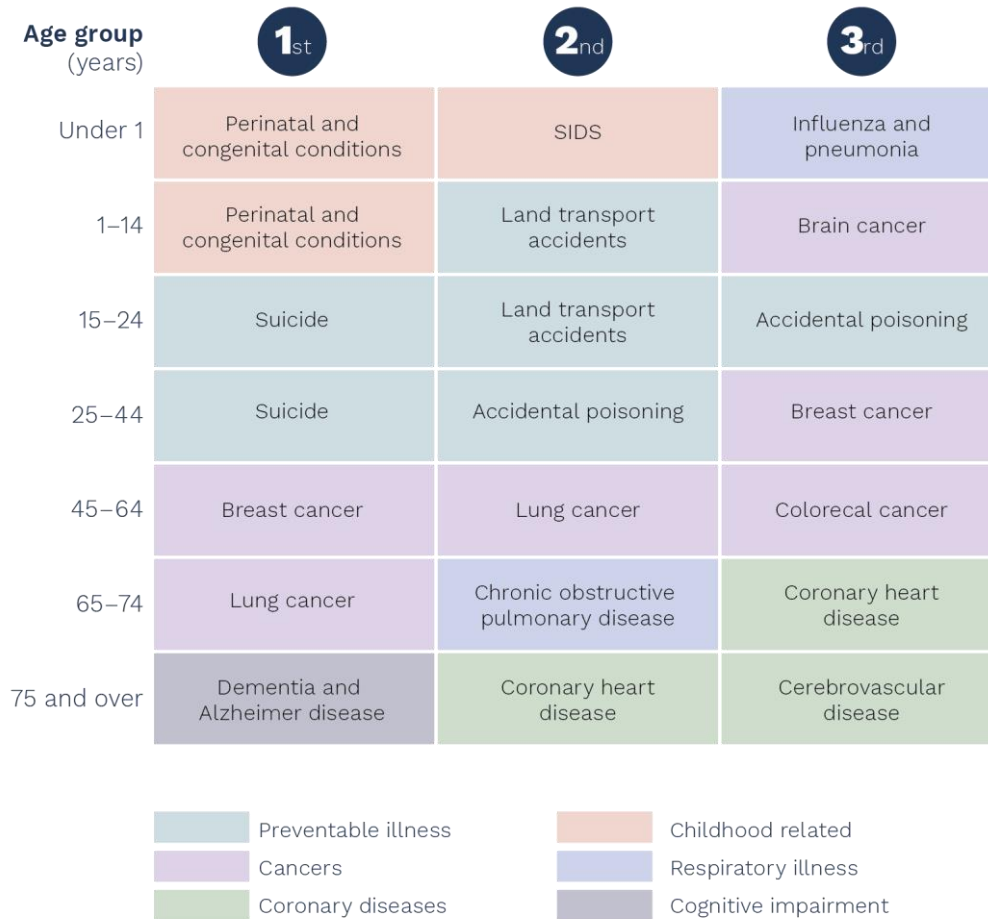
Chronic conditions and preventative health

Chronic conditions are the leading cause of illness, disability and death in Australia. They place a significant burden on individuals, families and carers, the community and the health system. 23 per cent of Australian women have more than one chronic condition compared with 18 per cent of men.³⁵

The Government has a number of initiatives targeting the leading chronic conditions effecting women, including programs related to cancer and cardiovascular disease. In addition, the Government is also focused on delivering programs with preventative health benefits, with programs to reduce smoking and improve healthy eating and physical exercise important for women's health. A large proportion of the burden of disease in Australia is preventable. Increasing primary and secondary prevention along with early detection of factors greatly affect the development of chronic conditions.

35 AIHW (2020) *Chronic conditions and multimorbidity*.

Leading causes of death for females, by age group, 2017



Source: AIHW 2019

Cardiovascular disease

Some aspects of cardiovascular disease risk factors, prevention, presentation, treatment, management and outcomes are unique to women, and these gender differences are increasingly being recognised. Cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death and illness among Australian women.³⁶ In 2017–18, an estimated 510,000 Australian women had cardiovascular disease, 206,000 women had coronary heart disease and

36 www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/a09eedb7-2a0d-43c1-a511-e424fca70635/aihw-cdk-10.pdf.aspx?inline=true.

37,000 women had experienced heart failure.³⁷ In 2016, cardiovascular disease accounted for three in 10 of all female deaths.³⁸

In support of the Government's commitment to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease and stroke on individuals, families and communities, the Government funded the development of the *National Strategic Action Plan for Heart Disease and Stroke*.

The Action Plan will contain guidance and direction around key goals and priorities for heart disease and stroke. The Government has funded \$4.0 million to achieve and support the goals and priorities of the Action Plan, including to develop initiatives designed to enable early detection for those at risk of heart disease and stroke and funding to a number of organisations to design and deliver recovery support services for Australians with heart disease and stroke.

Cervical and breast cancer

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable and treatable forms of cancer with preventative and early treatment strategies being highly cost-effective. Since the commencement of the National Cervical Screening Program in 1991, there has been a 50 per cent reduction in cervical cancer incidence and mortality in Australia. Recent modelling suggests that between the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination and the recent changes to the Screening Program, Australia is on track to eliminate cervical cancer by 2028 (Box 4).

Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting Australian women – one in seven women develop breast cancer in their lifetime. In 2020, it was estimated that around 19,800 new cases of breast cancer would be diagnosed in Australian women and of these, around 12,000 (61 per cent) would occur in women aged 50-74.

Detection of breast cancer at an early stage allows access to diagnostic and treatment services and can increase treatment options, which will reduce illness and death. The national breast cancer screening program, BreastScreen Australia, provides free two-yearly screening mammograms to women 40 and over, and actively targets women aged 50-74. Over 1.8 million women participated in the program in 2017-18. Breast cancer mortality has decreased since BreastScreen Australia began – from 74 deaths per 100,000 women aged 50-74 in 1991 to less than 40 deaths per 100,000 in 2018.

The Government has committed \$83.3 million to the McGrath Foundation to support the recruitment, training and employment of breast care nurses. By 2022-23, the Foundation will employ 102 Commonwealth-funded breast care nurses across Australia to work

37 www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/a09eedb7-2a0d-43c1-a511-e424fca70635/aihw-cdk-10.pdf.aspx?inline=true.

38 www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/a09eedb7-2a0d-43c1-a511-e424fca70635/aihw-cdk-10.pdf.aspx?inline=true.

within multidisciplinary teams coordinating care from diagnosis to treatment, free of charge.

Box 4: Australia is leading the fight against cervical cancer

In 2017, the Australia Government updated the cervical cancer screening program, replacing two yearly pap tests with five-yearly Cervical Screening Tests. Australia is one of the first countries in the world to use this test for screening purposes.

The new test checks specifically for Human Papillomavirus (HPV), which causes the vast majority of cervical cancers, and is far more accurate and cost-effective than the Pap test. Health modelling has shown that introduction of this test into the Program will further reduce cervical cancer deaths by up to 30 per cent.

Australia was the first country to introduce an HPV vaccine onto its National Immunisation Program. The National Immunisation Program commenced in 2007 for girls aged 12-13 and was expanded in 2013 to also include boys to help stop transmission of the virus. In July 2017, a catch-up program was introduced enabling people up to the age of 19 years to access HPV vaccination.

HPV vaccination under the National Immunisation Program has been credited with dramatically reducing the incidence of HPV infection and disease in Australia. One study found a 92 per cent reduction (from 9 per cent to 0.7 per cent) in the presentation of genital warts in women aged 15-20 years who attended a network of sexual health clinics. High grade cervical abnormalities have also declined, with detection rates declining between 2006 and 2016 by 70 per cent in women aged 20 years or younger and 47 per cent in women aged 20-24 years.

Smoking

Tobacco use remains a leading cause of preventable death and disability and was estimated to kill almost 9,000 Australian women in 2015. Rates of daily smoking among women aged 18 years and over in Australia have declined from 18.3 per cent in 2001 to 10.4 per cent in 2019. This compares to a decline for men from 21.8 per cent in 2001 to 12.8 per cent in 2019.

The Government will continue its successful measures to prevent and reduce the rates of smoking among women, including increases in Tobacco Excise and equivalent customs duty; comprehensive Smoke-Free Laws and policies, education programs and campaigns, Plain Packaging of tobacco products, labelling tobacco products with larger Graphic Health Warnings; Prohibiting Tobacco Advertising and promotion; providing support for smokers to quit, and measures to minimise the illicit tobacco trade.

Healthy living and physical activity

Low levels of physical activity are a major risk factor for chronic conditions. According to 2017–18 data, only 41 per cent of Australian women were sufficiently physically active, compared to 51 per cent of men, and 60 per cent of Australian women are overweight or obese, compared to 75 per cent of men. Physical activity is affected by individual, social, economic and structural factors. For example, whether someone is physically active will be affected by where someone lives, their level of income, and the access to places that promote physical activity, such as green spaces, community sport and gyms. Further, perceptions of a lack of safety in the community can often prevent girls and women being physically active.

In February 2016 the Government launched the Girls Make Your Move campaign, inspiring and empowering young women to be more active regardless of ethnicity, size or ability. The campaign was in response to research that demonstrated that young women are twice as likely as boys to be inactive. An independent evaluation of the campaign showed that it had encouraged young women to be more physically active, and to view sport and physical activity more positively. The campaign reached 83 per cent of girls aged 12–19 years and 64 per cent of girls did something as a result, such as talking about doing more physical activity, or looking up information.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Government is committing \$13.2 billion to guarantee the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). At December 2019, 37 per cent of NDIS participants were women, and 62 per cent were men. The NDIS is not only providing much needed support for Australians with a permanent and significant disability, it is improving outcomes for their carers and families. A greater share of caring work is typically undertaken by women with more than double the number of women providing primary care to a person with disability in 2018. Women are likely to be benefiting significantly from the NDIS and its early childhood early intervention (ECEI) gateway which supports children under seven years who have a developmental delay or disability.

The NDIS has provided more carers and families of people with disability with the opportunity to participate in the workforce. As of 30 June 2020, there were 159,796 young people aged 0 to 14 in the NDIS and 8,197 children receiving initial supports in the ECEI gateway. As at 30 June 2020, there were \$3.9 billion of committed supports for young people. According to the National Disability Insurance Agency's survey of family/carer outcomes (to 30 June 2020), the number of mothers of children in the NDIS aged 0 to 14 with a paid job has increased by more than eight per cent and the number of mothers working thirty hours or more has increased by more than ten per cent over the last three years.

For families and carers of people aged 15-24 in the scheme there has been an increase in the percentage who would agree that their family member with disability gets the support they need from around 40 per cent before entering the scheme to up to 70.5 per cent for families who have been in the NDIS for three years. For families and carers of people aged 25 and over, after joining the NDIS there was an increase in the number of families who would agree that the services received helped them plan for the future. The NDIS is giving families and carers peace of mind that their loved ones have the support they need, now and as they age.

Women also make up the majority of the disability support workforce, with a female to male ratio of 2.3 females to every male disability support worker in 2018.

New initiatives

The Government is committed to helping women with chronic conditions access the best care and medicines available.

To improve the early detection of breast cancers, the Government is also extending expiring funding for the **BreastScreen Australia Expansion** National Partnership Agreement, which invites women aged 70-74 to undertake mammograms to screen for breast cancer, at a cost of \$67.6 million.

To support Australian women living with cancers, the Government is providing funding to a variety of specialist organisations to deliver high quality services, including \$32.8 million to fund **cervical screening services** for Victorian residents, and the development of policy advice, education and research to support the National Cervical Screening Program.

To help women recover from the physical effects of breast cancer treatments, breast surgery or congenital deformities, the Government is making autologous fat grafting treatments available through Medicare at a cost of \$11.3 million.

\$6.6 million will be provided to the **Breast Cancer Network Australia** to operate accessible outreach services including for regional and remote communities. \$3.0 million will be provided to the **McGrath Foundation** to support women with breast cancer through recruiting, training and employing additional breast care nurses, while \$1.0 million will be provided to **Ovarian Cancer Australia** for the extension of the Ovarian Cancer Case Management Pilot.

By investing in new and amended **PBS Listings**, the Government is guaranteeing women have access the vital medicines they need. The Government will amend the listing of Kisqali® (ribociclib), to be used in combination with Fulvestrant Sandoz® (fulvestrant), to treat women with unresectable advanced or metastatic breast cancer. Without the PBS subsidy, around 1,600 women might pay more than \$50,000 per course of treatment. Instead they will now pay \$41.30 per script or \$6.60 with a concession card.

Fulvestrant Sandoz® (fulvestrant) is also being made available on the PBS for the first time as monotherapy for those women in need of this targeted treatment on its own. Without the PBS listing, over 100 women with advanced breast cancer may pay more than \$7,900 per course of treatment.

Supporting mental health

Good mental health is essential to overall well-being. There are a number of critical life points experienced by women and girls, such as puberty, pregnancy, motherhood and menopause that can result in poor mental health. It is estimated that one in five women in Australia will experience depression and one in three will experience anxiety during their lifetime. Women also experience eating disorders at higher rates than men. It has also been estimated that one in five women experience depression or anxiety during pregnancy and the first year following the birth of their child (referred to as the perinatal period).³⁹

In the 2019-20 Budget, the Government announced \$43.9 million in funding for a new Perinatal Mental Health and Wellbeing Program. The Program aims to improve the range of services to support the mental health and wellbeing of expecting parents affected by or at risk of perinatal mental illness, or experiencing grief after miscarriage, stillbirth or infant death. The Perinatal Mental Health and Wellbeing Program commenced in January 2021, and currently provides funding to Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia, Red Nose, and the Parent-Infant Research Institute.

In addition, \$36.0 million for the National Perinatal Mental Health Check will run over three years from 2020-21, and provide \$16.0 million for awareness and national data collection, including the rollout of the Centre of Perinatal Excellence's (COPE) digital perinatal mental health screening tool, iCOPE, to Australian public maternity hospitals. \$20.0 million under this initiative will be provided to support states and territories to implement the iCOPE screening tool and to improve their electronic capture of perinatal mental health data.

Eating disorders are estimated to affect approximately nine per cent of the Australian population and the rate is increasing, with females comprising around 64 per cent of people with an eating disorder. Approximately 15 per cent of Australian women experience an eating disorder during their lifetime.

On 1 November 2019, the Government introduced the first dedicated Medicare services for patients with eating disorders, supported by funding of \$110.7 million. There are now 64 items numbers that enable patients with anorexia nervosa and patients with other eating disorders to access up to 40 psychological and 20 dietetic services per year. A further investment of \$70.2 million is being provided to support Australians with eating disorders, including \$63.0 million to establish six new community-based residential eating disorder treatment centres (in SA, NSW, VIC, TAS, WA and the ACT),

39 Gidget Foundation, Perinatal Depression & Anxiety Australia (PANDA), Peach Tree Perinatal Wellness, and Perinatal Wellbeing Centre, *The Cost of Perinatal Depression in Australia, 2019*, Report prepared by PwC Consulting.

and provide additional funding for the centre currently being constructed on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland (Wandi Nerida).

Since January 2020, more than \$500 million has been invested in mental health services, support and suicide prevention programs, including funding to boost the capacity of key digital mental health services such as Lifeline, and specific groups such as The Butterfly Foundation, Eating Disorders Families Australia and Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia; and changes to the Medicare Benefits Schedule to implement telehealth and double the number of Medicare-funded psychological services through the Better Access Initiative.

Under the Government's \$76.0 million Supporting the Mental Health of Australians Affected by Bushfires package, specific projects have been funded which focus on providing community supports for women, such as funding Women Together Learning, to hold a Resilience and Community Connections Through Art Workshop.

Headspace is the Government's flagship program for provision of services to young people aged 12-25 experiencing, or at risk of, mild to moderate mental illness. The network of headspace services provide holistic care in four key areas: mental health, related physical health, substance misuse, and social and vocational support. There are currently more than 130 headspace services operating nationwide, with the network to expand to 153 services by 2022. In 2019-20, 62 per cent of headspace services were delivered in the community and 78 per cent of headspace services were provided to young women.

New initiatives

The Government is committed to undertaking significant structural reform of the mental health and suicide prevention system to improve the wellbeing of Australians living with mental illness and affected by suicide. The \$2.3 billion package in this Budget is a first step to responding to recommendations from the Productivity Commission and the National Suicide Prevention Adviser. With this commitment to Australians' mental health, the Government is laying the foundations for systemic, whole-of-government reform to deliver preventative, compassionate and effective care. These reforms will be especially beneficial for Australian women, who experience a higher proportion of mental or behavioural conditions, such as anxiety, than men.

An additional investment of \$47.4 million is being made to build on the **National Perinatal Mental Health Check Initiative** to achieve universal perinatal mental health screening across public antenatal and postnatal care settings. This will help all expectant mothers, fathers and second parents to access screening services that support improved mental health outcomes.

The Government will invest to improve access to in-person community based, multidisciplinary adult mental health services. This includes \$487.2 million to establish a network of specialist **Adult Mental Health Centres**, including a central intake and assessment phone service. These Centres will be opened in partnership with states and territories. For young Australians aged 12 to 25, \$278.6 million is being made available to enhance and expand **headspace centres** across the country. And for children under 12 years, the Government will invest \$46.6 million to support parents and early intervention, and \$54.2 million to establish **child mental health and wellbeing hubs** with the states and territories.

A further \$111.4 million is being provided to **expand the Better Access Program** helping more people access psychiatrists, psychologists and general practitioners through Medicare, including new sessions for patients' family members and carers, and additional provisions for group therapy sessions. And to ensure more Australians can quickly access appropriate care, \$111.2 million is being provided to expand and improve high-quality, free and low-cost **digital mental health** services.

To deliver **better treatment services for people living with eating disorders** and their families, the Government is making an additional \$26.9 million available to a range of coordinated care providers from early intervention through to recovery services.

To achieve its commitment of working towards zero suicides, the Government is **expanding the services available to Australians experiencing suicidal distress and their loved ones**. Through a National Agreement with states and territories, the Government will provide \$158.6 million to ensure that every Australian discharged from hospital following a suicide attempt is offered at least three months follow up care. A further \$22.0 million will be provided for postvention support for the family and friends of people who die by suicide. A **National Suicide Prevention Office** will also be established as a central point of coordination for a national approach.