

Key Policy in discussion	EMPLOYMENT – the Care Sector
Portfolio and or agency	Attorney-General’s Department, Health and Aged Care, Education, Skills and Employment
Date Issued	1 March 2022
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Executive Summary

As evidenced through the COVID-19 pandemic the low wage structure in care sectors is undermining the ability of providers to attract and retain staff, impacting quality and availability of care. One-off payments to some of these workers before an election may be an acknowledgement of the issues, but it is not the structural reform needed across the care sectors.

The care sectors are important to two of the drivers of economic growth - productivity and participation because the services they provide free other workers up from unpaid caring responsibilities, and allow them to work in more productive activities.

Higher wages and more secure employment conditions will address current and emerging skill shortages, and help address the systematic gender pay gap in Australia. Government cannot outsource its responsibility for poor wage outcomes in a sector it largely funds and regulates. Regulatory reform and increased funding are needed to address low wage growth, sector-wide undervaluation of women’s jobs and the job insecurity that is used to pin them in place.

Key Questions of concern that need to be addressed

- 1. Do you have policies to address the regulatory failures associated with continuing job insecurity and forecast low wages in care sectors?**
- 2. Will you join employers and unions in supporting the case before the Fair Work Commission to redress the historical undervaluation of wages in the aged care sector?**
- 3. The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of a viable early childhood education and child care sector. What plans do you have to support the ECEC sector through better pay and conditions for early childhood educators?**

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Authorised by the National Foundation for Australian Women, Canberra: President Ms Jane Madden.

Details about this policy

EMPLOYMENT REGULATION AND THE CARE SECTOR

Awards are a 'safety-net': they set wages for at a low base those who do not have agreements (section 134(1)(b)) of the FW Act). However the agreement stream itself is '[in precipitous decline](#)' (para 43). [Agreements are being terminated](#) at unprecedented rates--and [never worked well in the grant-dependent care sectors](#) (para 44-46). So care sector workers mainly receive the lower rates set by awards where their work is widely agreed to be undervalued.

Recent cases in childcare and aged care have shown that the equal remuneration [provisions of the Fair Work Act are unworkable](#) (paras 75-76). Commonwealth regulation around [wage theft](#) and [sham contracting](#) (p. 26) is also widely agreed to be inadequate. [Experience](#) supports expectation that recent changes to the Fair Work Act enabling employers to deem new employees to be casual will worsen the ongoing [shift to insecure employment across the economy](#). Adding to this, a [barely regulated gig economy is growing among home care workers](#) in aged and disability care.

All of these are regulatory failures, and all the failures fall most heavily on low paid and insecure workers, especially those delivering services. Many of these workers are women in the care sector. NFAW believes that the regulations driving low wages and insecure work need to be rectified.

AGED CARE

The Aged Care Royal Commission surprised no one when it described current aged care provision as "[a sad and shocking system that diminishes Australia as a nation](#)". In the name of choice and competition, governments have absolved themselves of responsibility for direct service provision, not provided adequate market stewardship, and grossly underfunded services – and then relied on consultants, Councils and Commissions to analyse what went wrong, so it could pick and choose and defer solutions.

Counting the Royal Commission, there have [been 20 high level reviews of the aged care system in the last 11 years](#), and the Treasurer has now announced yet another review by the Productivity Commission. No significant actions have resulted, but the operational problems with aged care are at least widely understood. Place numbers are capped, so that there are not enough places in either [home-based](#) or [residential care](#) to meet current need, much less to meet [projected future need](#). Marketised models adjust to underfunding of these places by naturalising [underfeeding](#) (pp 69-70) and [substandard care](#) (p. 72), [undervalued and insecure jobs](#) (p. 214), and in many cases [the exploitation and churning of temporary migrants](#). Current governance arrangements are, as the Royal Commission put it, [characterised by a lack of curiosity](#) (p. 187).

The 2021 Budget provided some [additional care places and some additional minutes of care](#). It virtually ignored how they would actually be delivered. Only [3.8%](#) of residential aged care facilities have staffing levels at or above the minimum staffing standards recommended by the Royal Commission. [Forty per cent](#) of carers are intending to leave the industry by 2024, mainly because of poor wages and stress associated with permanent understaffing.

This is widely understood. The [Royal Commission](#) (rec. 284), [providers, consumers, unions](#) and [think tanks](#) have all called for ‘wages in the aged care sector ... to be significantly increased because the work of aged care workers has been historically undervalued’. NFAW endorses this call.

Apart from an incentivising ‘retention bonus’ for nurses, there was nothing in the 2021 Budget to boost carers’ wages. The preferred approach was to develop an [advertising campaign](#) based on the joy of caring. When unions brought a work value case to the Fair Work Commission, the Aged Care Workforce Industry Council brokered a [stockholder statement](#) of support. The Government as ultimate employer has declined to participate. Instead, it proposed another band aid, a one-off pro rata retention bonus of up to \$800 for residential carers and \$600 for home-based carers.

[Most Australians agree](#) (p. 3) that the government should provide more funding for aged care. By 2030, if the government adopts the most ambitious Royal Commission recommendations, [additional yearly Budget costs could reach \\$15.5bn](#), about the size of this year’s election [pork barrel](#).

The Royal Commission proposed to pay for reform through some form of levy. [Analysis commissioned by NFAW](#) found that any cost to government of increased service delivery and wages in the broad care sector would be offset by an economic growth dividend from rising revenue from taxes on income and consumption, leaving a net impact on the deficit of less than \$3 billion.

- **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC)**

The [COVID-19 pandemic](#) has demonstrated the importance of a viable ECEC sector to support working families and children. Yet the sector is facing some serious workforce issues which threaten economic recovery if services are not adequately staffed and families cannot get the care they need.

Strategies for recruitment and retention are urgently needed to meet growing demand and maintain high quality services. The Australian Government’s [occupation projections](#) to November 2025 predict the ECEC sector will require around 26,000 additional Certificate III and IV trained educators, as well as more than 8,000 additional early childhood teachers to deliver preschool programs.

The ECEC sector has a predominantly female, low-paid workforce – many are in part-time, casual jobs and do not have economic security. Over a third of respondents working in ECEC reported to a 2021 [HESTA](#) survey that their household income was less than \$60,000 and almost one in five reported their household earned less than \$40,000. Almost one in five ECEC educators [HESTA surveyed](#) in 2019 and 2020 said they were considering leaving the sector within two years. Among the biggest issues were dissatisfaction with wages, feeling unappreciated by the community for their role as early educators and a lack of opportunities for promotion and growth.

Reasons for low pay in the ECEC sector cited by the [Australian Industry and Skills Committee](#) include: a high proportion of female workers, dependency of educators on modern awards that set minimum standards of pay and conditions and various funding models that operate in the sector. The sector has not had real wages growth. A five-year wage case was rejected by the Fair Work Commission in 2018. In [2021 the Fair Work Commission](#) agreed that minimum pay rates should be increased for early childhood teachers in early childhood services, employed under the Educational Services (Teachers) Award. This decision does not extend to all educators working in child care. The [OECD](#)’s

advice to governments is that the attrition of educators from the sector cannot be stopped unless governments pay early educators on par with educators in the primary school sector.

A key driver of child care costs are wages. [Governments pay around half the total cost of early childhood services](#), mainly through the child care subsidy from the Australian Government that helps families pay fees. State governments also contribute to the cost of preschool. Families pay the remainder of the fees, with many paying [more for early childhood services than they would for private schools](#).

Governments generally state that better remuneration is a matter for employers, whereas employers and unions argue governments need to contribute more funding to the sector before educators' wages can increase. Since child care services and families are supported by the Australian Government's child care subsidy, the remuneration of educators could improve with an increase in the hourly rate of child care subsidy. Without an increase, child care costs are likely to rise and wages will remain low.

Investing in ECEC has economic benefits for early childhood educators and working families. [Modelling commissioned by the NFAW](#) in 2019 indicates that an increase in government expenditure in care services, including aged care, disability care and ECEC, would deliver clear economic benefits for GDP by 2030 – GDP would be 1.64 per cent higher than it would have been otherwise. Additional employment and higher wages in the care sector directly support women's employment and incomes. Increased labour market participation boosts the whole economy, offsetting the cost to the Government of increased support for the care sector.

The NFAW calls on the Government to increase the hourly rate of child care subsidy and work with State and Territory Governments and employers to:

- address low pay, recruitment and retention issues in the ECEC sector
- support the ECEC workforce through short, medium and long-term workforce development strategies under a *funded* [National ECEC Workforce Strategy](#), agreed to by Australian, State and Territory governments, for professional development support for educators and services
- expand the ECEC workforce through an expansion of [JobTrainer](#), VET or higher education fee waivers, scholarships or incentives for women (and men) to undertake Certificate III training, diplomas or early childhood degrees
- stimulate the economy and women's workforce participation through increased support for the care sector.

Key Policy in discussion	Climate Change and Disaster Management
Portfolio and or agency	Gender and Disaster Australia
Date Issued	24 March 2022
Key author/s of this briefing paper:	Dr Debra Parkinson & Dr Catherine Orian Weiss
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Executive Summary

Climate change has a gender dimension. Our annual Gender Lens on the Budget analysis has exposed how flood, drought and fire have brought heightened health risks to women in particular, increased their exposure to violence and increased economic insecurity.

Women are more likely than men to suffer the adverse health consequences of extreme climate events, and women are disproportionately affected by climate change disasters. In Australia, disasters increase women's economic insecurity: women lose or forgo employment opportunities on taking up additional community and care responsibilities, as shown after the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, and the 2011 floods in Queensland and Victoria. The same pattern is already emerging as communities survey the aftermath of the 2022 floods.

Disasters also increase rates of gender-based violence, including from the 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires, a pattern replicated after the 2020 fires. Failure to take action on climate change and emissions abatement can exacerbate gender inequality and reduce women's ability to adapt.

Key Questions of concern that need to be addressed

- 1. Will your government analyse federal funding in disasters over the past term of the federal government, compensate women for what is owed as a result of unfair and unequal distribution of disaster funding, and establish a system to ensure gender parity in disaster funding in the future.**
 - 2. Will your government provide urgent and immediate emergency response in disaster to reconnect essential services of power, internet, water and clean-up, prioritising lone women and single parents**
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- 3. Will your government reserve a proportion of disaster recovery funds to reinstate child-care and school infrastructure following disasters as a priority to allow women more equitable access to continuing or new employment**
- 4. Will your government provide funding to embed the Gender and Emergency Management Guidelines into key emergency service organisations to allow a focus on family violence in government post-disaster support, e.g. streamline access to \$5,000 family violence payment**
- 5. Will your government fund the inclusion of family violence and gender specialists in disaster planning, response, recovery and reconstruction**
- 6. Will your government establish a national initiative for First Nations' women and men to lead fire management.**

Details about this policy

Introduction

Overall, women have less wealth than men. This economic inequality means that women are disproportionately affected by the economic losses associated with climate change and accompanying extreme weather events. Disaster resilience is largely predicated on social and financial circumstances prior to disaster events. Historic and entrenched gender discrimination leaves women at an economic disadvantage and more susceptible to adversity. The gender pay gap is persistent, despite the attention paid to it in recent years (NFAW, 2021).

The unequal division of unpaid work between women and men means that women are more likely to engage in unpaid caring work – for children (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019b), people with illness or disability (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019a), and the elderly – which reduces their ability to engage in paid work, contributing to women's poverty. This in turn makes women more vulnerable to the economic shocks created by climate change. Women's caring roles can also endanger them in disaster situations as they may be responsible for evacuating not only themselves but others.

The expectation that women are primary carers for children and elderly parents results in fewer hours of employment, career breaks for childbearing and raising, and lower retirement and superannuation balances. In 2018-2019, median superannuation balances for women at retirement were 23.4% lower than those for men (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2022b). Disasters, as we know so viscerally in Australia, are becoming more frequent and more damaging as climate change accelerates. The already lower superannuation balances for women will decrease further as childcare and education infrastructure is often destroyed in disasters, exponentially increasing the care burden on women.

Disasters compound existing vulnerabilities and specific cohorts of women face the greatest hardship, including single mothers, older women, rural women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, and First Nations women. In regional areas, a staggering 41% of women surveyed in a 2020 report asked for financial help from family or friends in the previous year (YWCA National Housing, 2020). An overwhelming 79.8% of one-parent families were headed by women in June 2021 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Half a million older Australian women are living in long-term income poverty and 34% of single women over 60 live in permanent income poverty (Li & Lee, 2020). Indeed, older women are one of the fastest-growing groups in the national homeless population (Li & Lee, 2020). The number of older women aged 55-74 seeking support from specialist homelessness services increased by 55% over the last decade, and most concerningly, the number of older women who were actually homeless increased by 31% from 2011 to 2016 (Li & Lee, 2020).

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's employment suggest what will increasingly happen as climate change causes similar disasters. Consider that during the COVID-19 pandemic, women assumed extra burdens of unpaid caring responsibilities and gave up study to greater extent than men (Wood et al., 2021). Women lost more jobs than men in the early months (8% compared to 4% for men) and were more likely to leave the labour force (Wood et al., 2021). Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, women have become more concentrated into casual work. In May-November 2020, 60% of new jobs created were casual, and women filled 62% of these casual roles (Pennington, 2021). Women were less likely to receive government support as JobKeeper excluded short-term casuals, and the worst affected industries are staffed mostly by casual and part-time women workers (Wood et al., 2021). Gender discrimination was an early feature of federal government recovery funding, which primarily supported the construction and energy sector. More funds went to this male-dominated sector than all other sectors combined, including hospitality, universities and tourism (Wood et al., 2021).

Women are less likely to afford housing that offers passive and active solar features, and is protected against the direct effects of climate change such as higher temperatures (e.g. with insulation, air conditioners) or damaged by flooding, cyclones, bushfires and other hazards. Mould from flooding, and asbestos after bushfires pose health risks, including to babies and children. Women's economic inequality means that they are more likely to live in volatile or high-risk areas where housing is cheaper to buy and to rent, such as bushfire or flood zones. In such areas, insurance is increasingly unaffordable so one disaster can financially destroy futures. After physical damage to housing through disaster events, women are less likely to have the financial resources to regain appropriate and safe housing, especially as rental options are reduced and the cost of renting soars. Women may also experience gender discrimination while seeking housing which may impact their ability to secure appropriate and safe housing (Li & Lee, 2020).

Problems with food supply are frequently part of disaster recovery. In the everyday, women are more likely than men to experience food insecurity, meaning that rising food prices caused by climate change will hit women (and their children) first and harder. A 2019 survey by Foodbank found that 27% of women in Australia compared to 18% of men experienced food insecurity in the year leading up to the survey. Women experiencing food insecurity were more likely than men to have raised children alone for an extended period of time or to have experienced domestic violence and (McCrinkle, 2019).

A litany of triggers, though not causes, of domestic violence in disasters has been identified: unsafe or insecure housing; substance abuse; stress, trauma, grief and loss; relationship problems; unemployment and economic pressures; complex bureaucratic processes regarding grants and insurance; reduced informal and formal supports; restricted movement and transport; a changed community and a different life course (Austin, 2016; Campbell & Jones, 2016; Parkinson & Zara, 2013). Economic savings are possible through the immediate re-establishment of essential services following a disaster to prevent disaster impacts compounding to homelessness, unemployment, family breakdown and domestic violence. Long-term disaster resilience research confirms that survivors' resilience is premised on the speedy reconnection of power, water, internet and the essential large-scale clean-up (Parkinson et al., 2022). People cannot be resilient without this efficient service-provision from government.

Evidence abounds of men's increased use of violence against women and children in and after disasters in Australia as well as other countries (Parkinson, 2022). Disasters from bushfires to floods and COVID play out the same way. The Australian Institute of Criminology surveyed 15,000 women in May 2020 about the previous 3 months, and two-thirds of women who experienced intimate partner physical or sexual violence said it had started or escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic (Boxall et al., 2020). Cultural acceptance of domestic violence (DV) condemns women. Australian ANROWS research shows attitudes that blame women and excuse men in violent situations. They write that, "too many Australians are willing to excuse violence as part of a 'normal' gender dynamic

in a relationship; and that 1 in 5 Australians believe DV is a normal reaction to stress". This is especially the case where insistence on 'heroic masculinity' silences women from speaking of the violence against them from fire-fighters, rescuers and 'good blokes' (Parkinson, 2019).

Qualitative research on farming families during droughts has found that women increased their paid work off farms and increased unpaid on-farm labour, volunteer work in the community, and spent significant energy monitoring their husbands' mental health. Women worked well past retirement age to the point of exhaustion (Alston, 2010). This research could indicate what will increasingly happen with climate change, particularly in rural areas.

The unprecedented nature of the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009, with the enormous loss of life and massive financial cost was followed by the 2019-20 Black Summer fires, unprecedented in the world in terms of the scale of loss of environment (Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report, 2020). Former fire-chiefs explained that we no longer know how to control the climate-change induced catastrophic bushfires.¹ There are examples of effectively addressing this impasse by involving Indigenous women and men who understand care for country and cool burning. A significant, Australia-wide investment in funding First Nations women and men to lead this is essential. Victor Steffensen said, "It's a huge movement in terms of women's involvement. ... in the landscapes, where the ecosystems are more connected to women's roles, women can burn those ecosystems. When you burn Country, it's really gentle" (Steffensen & O'Malley, 2022, p. 41). The *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report* notes the importance of restoring the role of Indigenous women in land management (Commonwealth of Australia, 2020).

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¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/nov/14/former-australian-fire-chiefs-say-coalition-doesnt-like-talking-about-climate-change>

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Key Policy in discussion

Housing and Homelessness

Key Minister and or agency

DEPT OF SOCIAL SERVICES, TREASURY

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Executive Summary

Women are amongst the most at risk in the housing system. Lower average incomes, time out of the workforce to care for children, and less savings and superannuation make it difficult for many women to achieve secure housing through the private housing market. Women and children are overrepresented in homelessness data and single older women are the fastest growing group of homeless people nationally. Single parent families face particular challenges. Most are headed by women and earn in the bottom 40% of incomes in Australia. There is a shortage of affordable housing for these families. Urgent action is needed. We need a national housing policy that sets a cross-tenure vision for housing access and affordability, that invests in social housing and addresses tax settings that are unduly stimulating housing markets.

Key Questions of concern that need to be addressed if elected:

1. What steps will your Government take to address the lack of social housing and access to secure and affordable rental and homeownership options for low income households, including income support recipients?
2. What steps will your Government take to address taxation settings that are stimulating the cost of housing in Australia, including negative gearing and capital gains tax discounts?

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3. Will your Government raise Commonwealth Rent Assistance rates to immediately support very low income households to access the rental sector, and increase JobSeeker rates to lift households out of poverty?
4. How will your Government address the needs of women who are at most risk in the housing system, including older women, women leaving family violence, and those heading single parent families?
5. Will your Government develop a national housing policy that sets a cross-tenure vision for housing access and affordability nationally and that addresses climate change resiliency?

Details about this policy

Secure, affordable housing is a [human right](#). Housing is also an essential [care infrastructure](#). Without secure housing, access to education and employment are disrupted and it is more difficult to age in place, including accessing Home Care Packages to support that. Women are amongst the most at risk in the housing system, with lower average incomes and less savings and superannuation, making it difficult for many to achieve secure housing through the private housing market.

Nationally, homelessness is [increasing faster amongst women compared to men](#) and [women and children aged under 10 are overrepresented amongst people seeking homelessness support](#).

Alarming, women account for 60% of clients accessing specialist homelessness services (despite being only [50.7% of the population](#)), while 17% of clients are children aged under 10 (despite being only [12.7% of the Australian population](#)).

Single older women are one of the fastest growing groups of homeless people nationally. The gendered pay gap, time out of the workforce to care for children, and little or no superannuation lead to poverty in later life and underpin this worrying statistic (as also flagged in the welfare briefing). [245,000 women aged 55 and over](#), and 430,000 women aged 45 years and over are at risk of homelessness. Women aged 45-55 have nearly [double the risk](#) of homelessness compared to men and older women who rent have more than two times the risk of homelessness compared to those with a mortgage.

Particular action is needed in the private rental sector. The [Productivity Commission](#) (2019) describes the private rental sector as a “driver of disadvantage” for low-income households, reporting that “a quarter of low-income households spend over half their income on rent, and 7 per cent spend over 75 per cent.” In 2017-19 “half of all private renter households with a reference person aged 65 and over” and 60 per cent “of private renter households with government pensions and allowances as their main source of income were in rental stress.” ([Productivity Commission 2019](#), p66). Data from the [Department of Social Services](#) shows that more women than men receive the Age Pension, Carer Allowance, Carer Payment and Parenting Payment.

Women are also at higher risk of losing their housing due to domestic violence, rates of which have [increased since COVID-19](#). In 2020 [1 in 3 women and girls experiencing family violence who approached specialist homelessness services needing accommodation were unable to be housed](#). Migrant and refugee women [are disproportionately affected by domestic family and sexual violence](#) and consequently are at greater risk of homelessness. The 2020-2021 [Women’s Budget Statement](#) notes that “in 2016-17, Indigenous women aged 15 and over were 34 times as likely to be hospitalized due to family violence as non-Indigenous women.” Housing support is vital for women leaving family violence.

Single parent families, the majority of which are headed by women (82.4%), face particular challenges. 38.4% of single parent households are in the [lowest income quintile](#) (Q1) and 31.2% in the second quintile (Q2). These families face real barriers accessing secure housing. [There is a national shortage of affordable and available rental housing for Q1 and Q2 households and in 2016, 4 in 5 Q1 households paid unaffordable levels of rent.](#) The rental market [does not generate housing affordable to Q1 households](#) and homeownership is out of reach. Consequently this group is overrepresented in homelessness data, representing [34% of clients \(91,700\) seeking homelessness support](#) despite being only [15.8% of families](#) in Australia.

Specialist Homelessness Services play a critical role in managing homelessness risks. However, to be sustainable, they must be [supported by affordable, suitable housing across the housing system](#) to enable women to prosper longer-term. Assistance and access to affordable and appropriate housing along the housing continuum - from crisis care to social housing, from the private rental sector through to home ownership – is essential to support the well-being of women and children and mitigate the risk of homelessness.

Key Policy in discussion	Integrity, Gender and the Just Use of Power
Portfolio and or agency	Multiple
Date Issued	21 March 2022
Key author/s of this briefing paper:	Dr Kathy McDermott and Sally Moyle
Chair, Social Policy Committee NFAW:	Prof. Helen Hodgson 0418 906 162 h.hodgson@tpg.com.au

Executive Summary

The annual **Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)** ranks countries by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and business people. Australia still ranks relatively highly on the [CPI](#), but our score has dropped from 85 out of 100 to 73 over the last decade, putting us below many comparator nations.

When governments prioritise their own and insider outcomes, it is very likely to be at the expense of women (among other outsider groups) and [noticed by women](#). We focus here on the need for a suite of transparency and accountability measures around women's access to Commonwealth resources and decision-making, including a meaningful ICAC. In our analysis we emphasise the gender responsive budgeting as a critical transparency measure that should be applied to the allocation of all Commonwealth resources.

We also focus on the Commonwealth's broader national accountability for women's access to decision-making in public life and the unfinished business of *Respect@Work* and *Setting the Standard* reports by the Australian Human Rights Commission. All of these go to the issue of integrity and the question of whether the government embodies the principles of equality, justice and fairness.

Key Questions of concern that need to be addressed

- 1. Will your government commit to introduce a substantive gender responsive budgeting approach across government and an independent Women's Budget Statement?**
- 2. How will your government progress the unfinished business of *Respect@Work* and *Setting the Standard* reports by the Australian Human Rights Commission?**

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3. **How will your government ensure Indigenous women's voices drive and determine policy that affects Indigenous women? Will your government work with Indigenous women to develop a separate national Action Plan to End Violence Against Indigenous Women?**
4. **What will your government do to ensure women are equally represented in your party, in Parliament and in leadership positions across society?**
5. **How will a federal Anti-Corruption Commission introduced by your government hold the government to account and prioritise the broader public interest?**

Details about this policy

1. ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

What Australia's dropping CPI ranking reflects is generally [soft corruption](#), which has 'the same ends as corrupt conduct — the securing of private advantage at the expense of the public interest and proper process ... but through entirely legal means, because it is always about clever exploitation of the rules rather than breaking them'. Public perception of soft corruption is [driven by reports](#) of grants programs that bend or ignore rules, political pork-barrelling, ongoing insider access to govt decision-making, cronyism and nepotism in appointments, and repeated failures of public accountability and transparency.

Initial responses to [COVID showcased](#) how crises exacerbate existing inequalities, particularly in access to public services and financial resources. This may explain why Australian women are more [concerned than men](#) by soft corruption. Women were more likely to lose jobs and also more likely to be excluded from JobKeeper support; industry support for child care was first to be revoked; women had to [trade increased job insecurity for additional unpaid work](#) at home. As publicly funded caring services (child care, aged care, health care) [staffed largely by women](#) were stretched to breaking, [the 2020 Budget targeted recovery resources to male-dominated industries](#).

Budget decisions and budget winners and losers are not gender-neutral any more than tax is neutral. Tax rules will have [different impacts](#) on women and men, since they work different hours in paid and unpaid work and experience, on average, a 30% earnings gap. When the 2020 Budget [targeted massive tax relief](#) to the higher paid, it favoured male-dominated earners. When superannuation breaks advantage large accounts, they favour male-dominated earners. High effective marginal tax rates disadvantage women. When budget expenditure is withheld from public housing, social infrastructure and social services, women are disproportionately affected.

Women's Budget Statements show these gendered differentials across all public expenditure. NFAW, which since 2014 has prepared a [Gender Lens on the Budget](#), has long argued that the independent Parliamentary Budget Office should be funded to provide such analysis. The government document that went by the name of a WBS in the [2021 Budget](#) analysed the impact on women of only [0.14%](#) of outlays over a four-year period, selecting women-focused policies, rather than analysing the whole of the expenditure.

[Accountability mechanisms like the WBS are important where the withdrawal or allocation of resources affects different groups differently](#). Women are injured by the increased use of public monies to secure incumbent power through [electorally skewed multibillion dollar grants decisions](#) and election [pork barrels](#) while care industries remain underfunded and care work undervalued. Women are also injured when accountability bodies such as the [Audit Office](#) the [Australian Human rights Commission](#) and the [ABC](#) are attacked and defunded after raising integrity concerns. It is unsurprising that more women than men support a federal [Integrity Commission](#) (70% compared to 65%) -- their interests are more likely to suffer without it.

2. ADDRESSING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Public attention to gender equality and the ongoing scourge of gender-based violence has exploded over the last year. Matching this attention is the ongoing concern that the government does not fully comprehend the issues.

Two in three respondents in the latest [Essential poll](#) believe the government has shown more interest in protecting its political interests than the interests of women who have made rape and sexual assault allegations. The government has been seen to [prefer to protect senior Cabinet members](#) rather than to effectively respond to allegations of violence and harassment against them, and to minimise attention to these issues. The Government has run into trouble for seeming to minimise the issue, with the Prime Minister [lacerated](#) for his response to the 2021 March for Justice, for example.

There have been important landmark reports handed down in relation to [sexual harassment at work](#) and sexual violence in [Parliament House](#) and calls for a specific National Action Plan to end violence against [Indigenous women](#).

The Government's response has been seen as partial and fragmentary, while claiming to be comprehensive.

To many, it feels like little more than spin. For example, the government's response to the landmark [Respect@Work report](#) from the Australian Human Rights Commission was delivered in 2020 to Attorney General Porter where it sat unattended for over a year. When the government could no longer be seen to ignore it, its response was to divide the recommendations into stages and across various agencies and, arguably, to reduce the scope of the response at each step. The most important recommendations, to introduce a [positive obligation](#) on employers to deliver a safe workplace free from harassment and to provide the Australian Human Rights Commission with the powers to investigate breaches of that obligation directly and on its own motion, have been deferred and minimised.

It feels like the government has been dragged to the table to respond effectively to ongoing gender inequality and gender-based violence. The government response feels like it is too little, too late, and the [government is not able to comprehend](#) the experience of Australian women. Part of this may be because women are underrepresented in the government, discussed below.

3. ACCESS TO DECISION-MAKING AS LEGISLATORS AND CITIZENS

The more inclusive a government is, that is, the more representative it is of the wider community including women and minority groups, the more likely it is to make decisions in the broader interest. In 2021, Australia ranked a low [54th for political empowerment](#) on the Global Gender Gap Index (p. 103). As of [19 November 2021](#), women made up 26.7% of Liberal, 48.9% of Labor, 28.6% of National Party and 60% of Green parliamentarians.

Coalition women have been excluded from political participation on the [ground of merit-based decision-making](#) by mainly male political powerbrokers. Many of these are the same politicians who make non-merit appointments of cronies to rubber-stamp advisory bodies such as the [Covid](#)

[Commission](#), or bodies such as the [Administrative Appeals Tribunal](#) and the [Human Rights Commission](#).

The work of these inside appointees has real world implications for political outsiders such as victims of discrimination and recipients of social security and child support, mainly women, who are struggling with [an increasingly punitive and automated system](#).

Government outsiders find it more difficult to find out what is going on and to make themselves heard when they do.

Cabinet matters have generally been confidential, but this has been extended to [cabinet preparatory matters](#), to [‘national cabinet’ matters](#), to commercial-in confidence matters, to [on water matters](#), to an increasing range of [freedom of information](#) matters. The 2020–21 budget set a [new record](#) for items deemed not for publication. [Gag clauses have been attached to federal funds since the 1990s](#), silencing critical commentary by those contracted to oversee government programs. Governments are also using a [range of funding levers](#) around tax deductible status to silence non-government organisations.

Loss of transparency and accountability comes with a price. It costs outsider groups including women a role in decision-making and a standing in the decisions that are made. More broadly, it widens the gap between insiders and outsiders and undermines public trust in democracy.

Key Policy in discussion	Welfare Reform: A social compact
Portfolio and or agency	Social Services, Services Australia, Employment
Date Issued	11 March 2022

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Executive Summary

Women are over half of welfare recipients in Australia. Since the 1980's there have been many attempts at welfare reform and small-scale changes, however the system is designed to disincentivise people from applying for income support. The net effect has generally been to condemn women of all ages on income support to poverty – older unemployed women, homeless women, sole parents and their children, young women in precarious employment, female renters, women leaving domestic violence, and women with disabilities who can't access alternative payments.

Working-age women also face an ineffective and punitive employment service which encourages short-term employment solutions instead of creating viable career pathways. Gender bias in social security obscures the different ways women experience inequality. It does not recognise the value of unpaid care work but rather is based on a conventional view of 'productivity' as paid employment. Women's contributions in the unpaid care economy are not recognised or valued and full social participation is constrained.

Hostile welfare policies are driven by an ideology which sees supporting vulnerable populations as a liability to the bottom line, rather than a way to reduce poverty and uphold human rights. COVID disproportionately affected women negatively. However, the introduction of the Coronavirus Supplement shows the effect that adequate payments can have on the poverty rate, which effectively reduced poverty in Australia by an astounding 33%.

The key lesson for Australia from the pandemic is that the structural changes needed for genuine welfare reform are readily achievable, but will only be supported when the government embraces a gender-driven approach that maximises women's agency and safety.

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Authorised by the National Foundation for Australian Women, Canberra: President Ms Jane Madden.

Key Questions of concern that need to be addressed

1. If elected, will your Government support an increase in the JobSeeker rate, by how much, and how will you ensure that the rate is regularly reviewed to reflect increases in the cost of living?
2. If elected, what steps will your Government take to address the lack of social housing for people on welfare and affordable housing for other low income households?
3. What steps will your Government take to improve jobseeker services, which are currently provided by disconnected and outsourced services? Will you change the model to incentivise outcomes that meet client needs instead of compliance activities?
4. There is a wealth of data on how women are disadvantaged under the current system. What steps will your Government take to apply a gender responsive and needs based approach to welfare reform?

Details about this policy

Little attention has been paid to how social security and welfare systems and structures are embedded with gender inequalities, exacerbating poverty for women. Structural gender bias is currently hidden by 'neutral' social security and welfare policy. It obscures the different ways women experience inequality, including on the basis of race, disability, class, age, sexuality and/or geographic location. It fails to acknowledge the social and economic contributions of unpaid work, particularly caring work, [which is predominantly done by women](#).

Women are more likely to live in poverty than men, [with 20 per cent of all women living in poverty compared to 17 per cent of men](#). Women also spend more years living in poverty compared to men. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the [latest data released by the Department of Social Services \(June 2021\)](#) shows that women make up 58% of all payment recipients in Australia.

Single parent families, [83 per cent of whom are female-headed](#), remain the family type who are most impoverished. With the transfer of thousands of single parents to the Newstart Allowance annually since 2007, [poverty has risen for sole parent families from 47 per cent to 66 per cent](#) between 2009 and 2014.

Many single parents have left domestic and family violence, which remains a key driver of poverty. At least [one in six women have experienced intimate partner violence](#). Of these, [over half have left their partner](#) and are often reliant on welfare while rebuilding their life. Women experiencing abuse also often experience – unsurprisingly – [financial stress, disability, unemployment, poor physical and mental health, and low quality of life](#). Experiences of domestic and family violence often continue long after separation, and can disrupt [financial security, employment](#) and [secure housing](#). Many women and children leaving violence are reliant on the JobSeeker Allowance, [which fails to provide the financial support and independence necessary to achieve economic security post-separation](#).

There has been an [alarming increase in older women's experience of poverty](#). After single parent households, older women are both the poorest household type and the most likely to be dependent on income support. For older women, a lifetime of reduced financial security due to

the gender pay gap, interrupted employment, little or no Superannuation and relationship breakdown is being [worsened by the change in the Age Pension eligibility from 60 to 65 years](#) and the increasing number who are reliant on JobSeeker. People aged 55 – 64 are [the age group most reliant on JobSeeker](#), and the age group that remains on the payment longest.

Women comprise the largest providers of [unpaid care](#) in Australia. The [unpaid care economy](#) is largely [hidden](#) due to the lack of recognition and economic valuation. Care for the elderly, people with a disability, and children overwhelmingly falls to women by default, with women often juggling [multiple unpaid caring roles](#). Unpaid caring roles can hinder formal economic recognition, particularly among [First Nations Australians](#).

When gender is overlaid with other identities, disadvantage and marginalisation for women is magnified. This is particularly true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, with [approximately 80 per cent of households earning below the national average](#); women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD) or recently arrived in Australia, who [have difficulty accessing services](#) and are [often banned from accessing welfare for up to 4 years](#); women with disabilities, who experience [higher rates of poverty and lower rates of employment](#) and with [reduced participation in the NDIS](#); and women who identify as LGBTIQ+, who experience [higher levels of disadvantage](#) and may be [discriminated against in employment opportunities](#). Highly vulnerable women are also more likely to be placed on compulsory programs that limit agency, such as the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) or ParentsNext. Both [ParentsNext](#) and [the CDC](#) have been flagged as potentially in breach of human rights.

In Australia, welfare is a legislated entitlement. However, the focus of addressing the needs of vulnerable people as a societal value and human rights obligation has shifted to a narrow focus on fiscal savings through the provision of one size fits all services, often through outsourcing or privatisation. [Australia is the only OECD country to outsource the entire delivery of publicly funded employment services](#), through private jobactive providers.

The Senate's Education and Employment References Committee's report, [Jobactive: failing those it is intended to serve](#) found that the current jobactive program was failing multiple constituent groups such as people with a disability, those with tertiary qualifications, women, and those over the age of 50. These are the same groups that have been hit the hardest by the pandemic's effect on the job market, and therefore are more likely to be engaging with jobactive providers.

Employment services need a major conceptual and structural shift to a whole of person care model. In addition, the program must be taken out of the hands of private companies. Current incentive schemes do not prioritise the job seeker's wellbeing or long-term employment goals, and this is exacerbated when nestled in a for-profit business model [with a focus on compliance and low-paid employment](#) over creating a viable career trajectory. Compliance systems should be based on re-engagement, not penalties that cause severe financial difficulties or limit access to services as occurs in ParentsNext or income management. In fact, [the compliance framework has been shown to be so counter-productive for those most marginalised from the employment market](#) that it should be removed completely, or limited only to those people who are truly 'job ready.'

All income support payments should be adequate to pay for life's essentials. [These payments should be adjusted for inflation using a viable metric](#), rather than utilising two distinct adjustment systems – one for pensions, which maintains its value, and another for allowances, which does not – which has resulted in unemployment-related payments falling below the poverty line. People with extra costs, including the costs of a disability, the costs of care, and the extra costs of caring for a child alone, should receive supplementary payments in addition to any entitlement they may have to the common income support payment.

The adequacy of allowance payments needs to be addressed urgently. It should be followed by formal welfare reform to overhaul our social security system to make it fit for purpose. The reforms must support women who are performing unpaid work that contributes to the social good by [supporting a healthy economy](#), as well as health, wellbeing, and community engagement. Family violence victim-survivors [require adequate and secure financial support](#) to rebuild their lives and care for their children, [without a punitive compliance framework that reproduces or facilitates abuse tactics](#). An appropriate family violence payment must be part of the government's family violence plan.

A Research report from the Brotherhood of St Lawrence states the case well:

“The crisis triggered by COVID-19 has severely tested the effectiveness of our social security system. The raft of temporary emergency measures introduced since March illustrates the need for ongoing reinvestment and renovation, both to improve the resilience of the system and to build its capacity to provide protection against new economic risks and system-wide shocks, such as those predicted as climate change accelerates” ([Thornton et al, 2020, p. 5](#)).

Australia needs a new social compact. NFAW proposes the establishment of an independent social security commission, reporting to Parliament, with a legislated requirement to undertake gender analysis. Such a commission should be advised by a panel of people with lived experience of the system, and embrace a human rights approach to the social safety net.

Key Policy in discussion

TAXATION

Portfolio and or agency

TREASURY

Date Issued

8 Feb 2022

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Executive Summary

The stage three tax cuts should not proceed. They are regressive, with benefits flowing to high income earners. Inequality is growing post COVID with clear differences between people with secure jobs that can be performed remotely and others working part time or casually in a face to face role; such as retail or aged care workers, who are predominantly female workers.

Australia is a low tax country. There is a clear need for additional funds to increase spending on child care and aged care, as well as to assist businesses and individuals in the economic recovery from the COVID pandemic. Tax reform, beyond tinkering with tax rates is vital to provide the level of, and equitable access to, services that Australian deserve.

Governments have done little to address the high Effective Marginal Tax Rates (EMTRs) which continue to make it financially unviable for thousands of Australian women to increase their hours of work to full time participation rates.

Key Questions of concern that need to be addressed

We note that both parties are committed to retaining the stage 3 tax cuts.

1. What measures are proposed, other than an annual extension of the Low and Middle Income Earners Tax Offset (LMITO), to ensure that the benefits of tax cuts flow through to lower income earners?
 2. If tax offsets are used to provide tax benefits to lower income earners, will a delivery mechanism be implemented to allow the offset to be distributed through payroll instead of when tax returns are lodged?
 3. If elected, will they commit to genuine tax reform and prioritisation of expenditure, in order to fund services that are in urgent need of additional resourcing, including the aged care and child care sectors and workforces?
-

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Authorised by the National Foundation for Australian Women, Canberra: President Ms Jane Madden.

4. How will your government ensure that tax and transfer settings will no longer be a disincentive to women working extra days of work, but instead reward and improve women’s full time workforce participation rate, contributing to higher GDP?

5. Instead of treating the delivery of care as an expenditure burden that necessitates higher taxes, will your government acknowledge that adequately resourcing care services (childcare, aged care, disability care) is an investment in the productivity and participation rates of our workforce, and thereby largely pays for itself in terms of long-term fiscal strategy?

Details about this policy

According to MYEFO ([Treasury, 2021a](#)), in 2021-22 tax receipts are estimated to be 22.3% of GDP, rising to 24.9% in 2031-32. The Government has set a cap of 23.9% on the tax to GDP ratio, which is well below the OECD average of 33.5% (OECD Stats, 2021). This limits the capacity of the Government to fund programs and services for the Australian community, including the provision of aged care, child care and health services. The Australian Government’s largest source of tax revenue is income tax, comprised of personal income and corporate tax, followed by taxes on goods and services.

The taxation system is gendered through the relationship between marginal tax rates and earnings; the effect of means tested benefits, particularly Family Tax Benefits and Child Care Subsidy; and the reliance on taxes to adequately fund services that are used more heavily by women, including health, education and aged care services. Income tax rates are gender neutral: but the effect of the gender pay gap means that tax rates and brackets affect women differently from their male counterparts. According to the most recently published tax statistics, women are still overrepresented at the lowest tax bracket, and underrepresented at the highest tax bracket:

Taxable income range	Male	Female	Total	Female %
\$18,200 or less	1,180,403	1,510,256	2,690,659	56%
\$120,000 or more	1,040,966	400,481	1,441,447	28%

Taxation statistics 2018–19: Table 3 Individuals www.data.gov.au

The stage 3 tax cuts are targeted at individuals earning more than \$120,000 per annum, therefore men will gain more benefit from these tax cuts than women. These tax cuts will also add to the growing inequality experienced Post COVID between those with secure well paid jobs and those in casual and part time work, the majority of whom are women.

Earlier stages of the tax cuts compensated low and middle income earners by providing a tax offset (LMITO) for individuals earning less than \$126,000 that would have been removed when the stage 3 tax cuts resulted in a reduction in the middle income tax rates. As the second stage of the tax cuts was brought forward to reduce tax rates for higher income earners, the LMITO was also extended for a year. This timing mismatch needs to be resolved permanently, not on an ad-hoc basis each year.

Furthermore, the LMITO also is only payable annually when income tax returns are lodged, whereas many low income earners need the tax reduction to be paid in their pay packet to keep up with increasing costs of living. The deferral of the payment is based on being able to calculate entitlement accurately. It should now be technically possible to distribute the offset through payroll as single touch payroll provides real time data regarding changes in income.

The second effect of the marginal tax rate system is the interaction of tax and welfare payments to create high effective marginal tax rates (EMTRs), which are a financial disincentive to workforce

participation. The LMITO is bad tax design, as it is a disincentive against low-income workers increasing their workforce participation: it increases the effective marginal tax rates of low-middle income workers. The Henry Review has recommended that offsets should be incorporated into marginal tax rates ([Treasury, 2010: Recommendation 5](#)).

Effective marginal tax rates combine the effects of tax payable on workforce income with the means-tested tapering of welfare payments. This is a particular workforce disincentive to the second income earner in a household with children as family tax benefits and child care subsidies are reduced as the family income increases. It is also relevant where tax offsets are withdrawn based on earned income.

Calls for tax reform, such as from the OECD, have pushed for a broadening of the tax base beyond personal income tax. While commentators often point towards expanding consumption tax, when a gender lens is applied, an increase in GST has a larger negative impact on women ([Hodgson and Sadig, 2017](#)). Re-examination of wealth taxes and the tax concessions granted to high income earners and asset holders, for example the Capital Gains Tax discount, must be considered as part of overall tax reform ([Treasury, 2010](#)).

Questions of “budget repair” tend to fixate on cutting government services or raising taxes (or a combination of both) as the recipe to reduce government debt. This approach overlooks the fact that fiscal sustainability depends on the debt-to-GDP ratio, not the level of debt itself. A short-sighted fixation on “budget repair” overlooks the value of investing in policies to boost higher participation and productivity as long-term source of economic growth and generator of tax revenue, leading to boosted GDP. This can be delivered by supporting women’s higher workforce participation, including expanding the provision of care services. We note that according to the Intergenerational Report aged care spending is expected to nearly double as a share of the economy by 2060-61 ([Treasury, 2021b](#)); and [economic modelling](#) presented in the NFAW 2020 Gender Lens on the Budget Report shows the benefits of increased funding in the care sector.

MEDIA BRIEFING: GENDER LENS ON THE ELECTION:

Key Policy in discussion	Superannuation
Portfolio and or agency	Treasury and Office for Women
Date Issued	8 Feb 2022
Key author/s of this briefing paper:	Helen Hodgson 0418 906 162
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Executive Summary

Women have lower superannuation balances, on average, than their male counterparts. This reflects the gender pay gap, which results in lower lifetime earnings by women. This is compounded by the interrupted, casual and part time work patterns of many women during their child-rearing years. Both issues must be addressed. Addressing pay rates for the caring professions and addressing bias and discrimination in hiring will help to close the gender pay gap. Carer credits should be paid to top up the superannuation of people who have left the paid labour market to care for children, elderly parents and other family members.

Key Questions of concern that need to be addressed

- 1.** If elected, will your government pay superannuation guarantee on Commonwealth Parental Leave Pay, and ensure that employers are required to pay superannuation guarantee on paid parental leave?
- 2.** Do you support a system of carer credits and government contributions to support superannuation for people who are not in the paid labour market due to caring responsibilities?
- 3.** In August 2021 the National Cabinet agreed to develop a Framework for Measuring Progress of Women's Economic Security. What is the progress on that initiative, and if elected will you progress that process?
- 4.** If elected, would your government support work value cases before the Commission seeking increases in wages for care workers?
- 5.** What steps would your government take to reduce the gender pay gap by addressing gender bias and discrimination in the workforce?

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Authorised by the National Foundation for Australian Women, Canberra: President Ms Jane Madden.

Details about this policy

It is well understood that women have lower superannuation balances than their male counterparts, and that this difference emerges early in the working career. Data extracted from the ATO tax statistics shows the gap in June 2019 between male and female superannuation balances remains at about 80% as follows ([ASFA, 2021](#)):

Age	Mean (Average) Balance			Median (Mid-point) Balance		
	Females	Males	%	Females	Males	%
All over 15	128,068	162,275	79	45,118	57,883	78
30-34	42,240	51,175	82	32,904	38,764	85
60-64	289,179	359,870	80	137,051	178,808	77

It is also worth noting the significant difference between the mean and median balance at each age, which shows that a small number of people have substantially higher superannuation balances than most of the population, with the mean balance around double the median balance by retirement age.

The primary reason for the gender superannuation gap is the gender pay gap: as long as superannuation guarantee payments are based on wages, the gap will persist. The gender pay gap is attributable to a number of causes, including lower wages in feminised industries, discrimination and bias in hiring decisions and the effects of unpaid caring ([WGFA, 2021](#)). Women commonly experience interrupted working histories, punctuated by periods out of the workforce and part time work to enable them to care for children, aging parents and other family members. This has been modelled by the Retirement Income Review in 2020, setting out the differences in retirement superannuation balances for people with different working patterns. Notably the gender superannuation gap is 17.4% for full-time workers without any other factors taken into account. Including part-time workers increases the gap to 32.6%; and a mother with two children who works part-time experiences a gap of 44.7% at retirement ([Treasury, 2020](#): Tables 3B-1 and 3B-2).

Almost half (45.1%) of all employed women are in part-time work, which have surged during the post COVID recovery ([Australia Institute, 2021](#)). Casual workers earn less than full time workers for comparable hours with a 45% earnings gap between part time workers employed on a casual basis and permanent part time workers. We note that men who experience interrupted, casual and part-time work also have lower superannuation balances, and they will also benefit from proposals to address the gap. Addressing the superannuation consequences of a reduction in working hours will remove one of the barriers to a more equal division of parental leave.

Forthcoming briefings in this series will discuss other measures to address the imbalance in women’s employment conditions, including the need to increase job security and affordable childcare measures.

The superannuation system is individualised, with spouses treated as separate individuals. It is tempting to say that resources will be pooled in retirement so the effect of the gender superannuation gap is limited to single women, and couples are at less risk of poverty than single retirees. What this argument fails to account for is that women are more likely than men to be single when they enter retirement, whether they have never married, through divorce or through the death of a partner.

We note the legislation that has been introduced to remove the exemption for workers earning less than \$450 per month. We also note that on 6th August National Cabinet agreed on a Nationally Consistent Framework for Measuring Progress of Women’s Economic Security. This framework will “provide a roadmap for the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments to highlight their

existing measures, identify gaps and plan future investments to improve women's economic security" (Media Release, 6 August). There have been no announcements since August.

Other policy reforms to address the superannuation gap fall into two main areas:

Firstly, the gender pay gap needs to be reduced. This can be done by reviewing the pay rates for workers in feminised industries such as aged care and nursing to reflect the value of care, and by continuing to work with employers to address bias and discrimination in workplaces.

Secondly the role of carers needs to be recognised by "carer credits" during periods when a person is out of the workforce. Superannuation guarantee should be payable on parental leave, both Commonwealth Parental Leave Pay and paid parental leave offered by employers, which is not included in "ordinary time earnings" subject to the superannuation guarantee. This should be based on normal pay rates. Where there is no paid leave entitlement, carers should be entitled to a carer credit paid by the Government and not based on a co-contribution arrangement. In addition to parents on unpaid leave in accordance with the Fair Work Act, people entitled to a carer credit should also be entitled to a superannuation contribution. This credit could extend to a refund of the contributions tax ([KPMG, 2021](#))

Existing measures that should be reviewed as not fit for purpose include:

- the five year Concessional Contributions catch-up measure that can only be utilised where a worker has the resources to contribute more than the concessional cap (currently \$27,500) in a year, excluding most parents; and
- the tax offset for partners making contributions into superannuation for a low income spouse is insufficient incentive, with a maximum of \$540 on a \$3,000 contribution.