

Key Policy in discussion	INFRASTRUCTURE, URBAN AND REGIONAL
Portfolio and/or agency	Infrastructure and Transport; Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.
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Key Portfolio Issues

The announcement of the 90 day review of the [Infrastructure Investment Program](#) meant that modest infrastructure expenditure could be anticipated for the 2023-24 Budget. The Government has indicated publicly it is committed to the \$120b already forecast for investments in the pipeline, and identifies the review as prioritising projects based on their contribution to economic growth and productivity.

Infrastructure investment in this budget consists of replenishing the Major Projects Business Case fund, investing in a new National Urban Policy (no details but perhaps a rehashing of an earlier Labor Government in [2011](#)), and programs for urban planning and road safety.

A contribution of \$3.4b to the costs of infrastructure for the Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games is one of the more significant investments for the 2023-24 budget for the portfolio. It is joined by investment in urban infrastructure in Macquarie Point in Hobart, including the controversial development of an AFL stadium, as well as matched funding for a stadium upgrade in Launceston.

Budget Measures

- **Olympics Infrastructure**

This measure provides for \$3.4b over 10 years for the Brisbane Arena (\$2.5b) and support for new or renovated facilities under the (Queensland Government's) Minor Venues Program (\$935.0m).

2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games – venue infrastructure

Payments (\$m)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Department of the Treasury	-	36.0	107.9	348.4	583.8
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	-	-	-	-	-
Total – Payments	-	36.0	107.9	348.4	583.8

Source: Commonwealth of Australia, [2023-24 Budget Paper No 2](#), p. 171

- **Urban Development**

This measure establishes the new Thriving Suburbs Program as well as the Urban Precincts and Partnership Program. It also funds a new unit within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, focusing on a new National urban policy and cities.

It also provides funding for sports stadiums in Tasmania (Hobart and Launceston) and related “urban renewal” infrastructure.

National Approach for Sustainable Urban Development

Payments (\$m)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Department of the Treasury	-	20.0	45.0	80.0	100.0
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	-9.3	16.4	144.1	177.7	53.6
Total – Payments	-9.3	36.4	189.1	257.7	153.6

Source: Commonwealth of Australia. 2023-24 Budget Paper No 2, p. 172

- **Transport**

This measure replaces the National Road Safety Plan with a new program – the National Road Safety Action Action Grants Program.

Supporting Transport Priorities

Payments (\$m)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	9.9	49.1	32.2	42.3	12.1

Source: Commonwealth of Australia. 2023-24 Budget Paper No 2, p. 184 (partial table)

- **Closing the Gap - Infrastructure**

This measure provides \$492.7 million over 5 years. The measure includes specific allocation (\$150.0m) through the National Water Grid Fund to improve water security for First Nations in regional and remote Australia and a one-off payment this year of \$111.7 million to fast-track new housing in remote communities. Funding to improve the housing stock at Wreck Bay village, in Jervis Bay (\$68.4m to 2032) is also identified together with \$10.0m each year, for two years, to renovate and upgrade Aboriginal Hostels.

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Closing the Gap – further investment

Payments (\$m)

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Department of the Treasury	-	-	-	-	-
Services Australia	0.1	0.3	-0.1	-	-
Aboriginal Hostels Limited	-	10.0	10.0	-	-
Department of Education	-	0.3	-	-	-
Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	-	-	-	-	-
National Indigenous Australians Agency	-8.0	144.3	30.0	-14.0	-43.1
Department of Social Services	-14.6	-8.9	9.8	10.9	0.5
Total – Payments	-22.5	146.0	49.7	-3.2	-42.6

Source: Commonwealth of Australia. 2023-24 Budget Paper No 2, page 190

Background: current circumstances of women in this portfolio

Women and men use infrastructure differently and can have different needs for infrastructure compared to men. Men are more likely to be [passengers on inter-city](#) high speed rail than women. Women are more likely to drive shorter road trips on roads, often “chained” trips between home, shops, schools and work or use local public transport. As women bear the primary burden of care for children and elders in Australian society this means they are more likely to travel with passengers, including those with differing mobility capacity or accompanied by luggage or goods. Men drive longer trips, to work or for their employment and are less frequent users of public transport. Infrastructure that does not take into account women’s different needs and use of infrastructure fails to share equitably the benefits from infrastructure investment and can further exacerbate gender inequality. For example, investments in road safety need to invest in all elements of road use so that drivers, passengers, pedestrians and cyclists are all made more safe.

Similarly urban planning in Australia has failed to adequately consider the needs of women for [accessibility and safety](#). Australian cities are not designed for women’s [travel and leisure needs](#) or to meet, or to provide necessary [child care infrastructure and services](#).

Gender implications of these budget measures

The new National Road Safety Action Grants Program will target First Nations safety for the first time and continue the inclusion of vulnerable users and appears to move away from the strongly engineering focused solutions selection criteria in the [previous program](#).

However noting the differential road use patterns, between differently aged women and men, it is not clear the grants program will address gender disparities. There is no specific focus on gender disaggregation of road safety, for example women as a vulnerable group due to comprising the largest group as pedestrians as they age, and men as roadworkers and drivers/motor-cyclists during their youth and working age.

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The augmentation to the *Major Projects Business Case*, with its list of road and high speed rail infrastructure will again prima facie benefit men, given their anticipated higher levels of patronage based on international experience.

The \$299m over two years for the [Thriving Suburbs Program](#), together with the \$150m for the new [Precincts and Partnerships Program](#) appear to be taking a programmatic approach to fill gaps in what was an ad-hoc approach in the City deals program initiated by the Turnbull government. The establishment of the Cities and Suburbs Unit and a Ministerial advisory forum for urban policy, with the reported emphasis on liveability and inclusion have potential to improve urban infrastructure for women. There are no program guidelines for the Thriving Suburbs or Precincts and Partnerships Programs yet available.

The investment in Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) represents a more than doubling of the annual budget for repairs (as reported at the Senate Estimates hearings in November 2022 - see Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee Senate Estimates Hansard, 22 November 2022 at page 8). However noting the pressure of [overcrowding and homelessness](#) in First Nations communities, the one year partnership with Northern Territory Government to accelerate building of new remote housing is not sufficient to alleviate the current housing pressures. Further it is surprising that occupancy averages at Aboriginal hostels are not higher than 76 per cent. It is notable that Aboriginal Hostels do not report occupancy rates on a sex/gender disaggregated basis in their annual report.

Recommendations

The Infrastructure Investment Program and the Major Projects Business Case should include a gender lens when prioritising infrastructure investment and conducting a cost-benefit analysis.

The guidelines for the Thriving Suburbs and the Precincts and Partnerships Programs should specifically reference the needs of women. The Cities and Suburbs Unit should ensure that a gender lens is incorporated in the work it will do.

The terms of reference for the new Ministerial advisory forum for urban policy should include livability for women and at least one appointee to the forum should have experience in urban planning for women.

A gender lens analysis of the AHL services and housing infrastructure, with a focus on care and women's leadership as outlined in the [Wiyi Yangi U Thani Summit Communique 2023](#) is recommended.

Disaggregated patronage levels by gender should be included in the AHL annual report.

A differentiated gender lens analysis (accounting for Indigeneity, age and road use patterns) could better reveal the differential needs for women in road safety and inform road safety investments and grant programs.

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