

<b>Key Policy</b>	<b>MIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN</b>
<b>Portfolio and or agency</b>	<b>Multi Agency</b>
<b>Date Issued</b>	<b>20 May 2023</b>

### Key Portfolio Issues

Overall, the Budget provided measures towards the inclusion of migrant and refugee communities and especially the safety of migrant and refugee women on temporary visas. It is important to note that some of these measures will come with further changes yet to be seen. Despite acknowledging the specific needs and vulnerabilities that migrant and refugee women on temporary visas experience in Australia, these small-scale changes do not provide long-term security or pathways to escape violence to all.

### Budget Measures

#### Women's Safety

Payments (\$m)

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Department of the Treasury	-	91.5	79.1	-	-
Federal Court of Australia	-	10.3	7.7	7.8	7.8
Department of Social Services	-	8.0	19.1	13.5	9.5
Attorney-General's Department	-	5.6	5.8	5.6	5.6
Department of Home Affairs	-	5.1	2.0	1.4	1.5
Australian Law Reform Commission	-	1.7	-	-	-
<b>Total – Payments</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>122.3</b>	<b>113.6</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>24.4</b>

Source: Commonwealth of Australia (2023), [Budget Paper No.2](#), p. 88

The new Women's Safety Budget measure in the 2023-24 Budget includes:

- \$10.0 million over 4 years from 2023-24 to expand the family violence within the *Migration Regulations 1994* and support visa holders experiencing domestic and family violence, including secondary applicants for permanent visa holders subclasses, offshore temporary Partner visa applicants and Prospective Marriage visa holders.
- \$24.3 million over 4 years from 2023-24 to pilot and additional referral pathway for the *Support for Trafficked People Program* and restructure the program to better meet the needs of victim-survivors, while increasing ongoing funding to address current and projected demand.

Budget papers also note that \$38.2 million will be allocated to extend the current Escaping Violence Payment (EVP) and Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot (TVP) to January 2025, noting that the cost of this proposal would be met from within the existing resourcing of the Department of Social Services.

### Anti-Slavery Commissioner – establishment

Payments (\$m)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Attorney-General's Department	-	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0

Source: Commonwealth of Australia (2023), [Budget Paper No.2](#), p. 60

The Government will provide \$8.0 million over 4 years from 2023-34 to establish an Anti-Slavery Commissioner to work across government, industry and civil society, to support compliance with the *Modern Slavery Act 2018*, to improve transparency in supply chains and help fight modern slavery in Australia and abroad.

This measure delivers on the Government's election commitment as published in the *Plan for a Better Future* and builds on the 2022-23 October Budget measure titled *Tackling Modern Slavery*.

### Visa and Migration System

Payments (\$m)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Department of Home Affairs	73.4	165.8	27.9	12.3	15.3
Department of Social Services	3.5	95.6	178.7	166.9	145.4
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations	0.4	2.9	3.0	1.7	0.8
Department of Health and Aged Care	0.1	2.1	3.9	3.5	2.9
Services Australia	0.1	1.6	3.1	2.2	1.2
National Disability Insurance Agency	-	14.7	27.7	31.7	33.3
Department of Education	-	-	-	-	-
Department of the Treasury	..	..	..	..	..
<b>Total – Payments</b>	<b>77.5</b>	<b>282.6</b>	<b>244.3</b>	<b>218.3</b>	<b>198.9</b>
<i>Related receipts (\$m)</i>					
<i>Department of Education</i>	-	-	..	..	..
<i>Australian Taxation Office</i>	..	..	..	..	..
<i>Department of Home Affairs</i>	..	..	..	..	..
<b>Total – Receipts</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>..</b>

Source: Commonwealth of Australia (2023), [Budget Paper No.2](#), p. 161

The Government will provide \$125.8 million over 4 years from 2023-24 to continue implementing outcomes from the Jobs and Skills Summit to strengthen the migration system in order to ease critical skills shortages across the economy and build a more productive workforce. Funding includes:

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- \$75.8 million over two years from 2023-24 to extend the current surge in visa processing resources to ensure the timeliness of visa processing and improve existing visa processing systems.
- \$50.0 million over 4 years from 2023-24 for additional enforcement and compliance activities to maintain the integrity of the migration system. Funding from 2025-26 will be held in the Contingency Reserve, pending an evaluation of the effectiveness of the activities.

This component builds on the 2022-23 October Budget measure titled *Outcomes of the Jobs and Skills Summit*.

In addition, the Government will return funding of \$163.2 million over two years from 2022-23 to the Department of Home Affairs to continue its visa processing capabilities, recognising the cancellation of the *Global Digital Platform*, associated with the 2016-17 Budget savings measured titled *Reforming the Visa Migration Framework*, by the former Government.

The Government will also provide a permanent visa pathway for a Temporary Protection (subclass 785) visa (TPV) and Safe Haven Enterprise (subclass 790) visa (SHEV) holders who held or applied for a TPV or SHEV before 14 February 2023.

The pathway to permanent residency is estimated to increase payments for government services and benefits by \$732.5 million over 5 years from 2022-23.

The work cap for international student visa holders will be reinstated at 48 hours per fortnight from 1 July 2023 or for international students working in the Aged Care sector from 31 December 2023 (see **Education – higher education**).

### COVID-19 Response

Payments (\$m)

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Department of the Treasury	142.6	142.6	-	-	-
Services Australia	14.9	7.4	0.3	0.3	0.3
Department of Veterans' Affairs	4.6	3.5	-	-	-
Australian Digital Health Agency	2.9	-	-	-	-
Department of Health and Aged Care	nfp	nfp	nfp	nfp	-
Total – Payments	165.0	153.5	0.3	0.3	0.3

Source: Commonwealth of Australia (2023), [Budget Paper No.2](#), p. 127

The Government will provide additional funding over 5 years from 2022-23 to expand the COVID-19 vaccine strategy and provide Australians with COVID-19 treatments. Funding includes:

- \$4.7 million in 2023-24 to partner with culturally and linguistically diverse communities to boost COVID-19 vaccination rates.

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## Strengthening Medicare

Payments (\$m)	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Services Australia	0.5	78.5	40.2	22.2	22.1
Department of Health and Aged Care	0.2	988.9	1,265.4	1,162.2	1,182.7
Australian Digital Health Agency	-	320.0	341.1	124.9	125.2
Department of Veterans' Affairs	-	7.1	10.2	9.7	9.4
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	-	4.6	4.7	-	-
Office of the Australian Information Commissioner	-	2.4	2.4	-	-
National Disability Insurance Agency	-	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1
Department of Social Services	-	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
<b>Total – Payments</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>1,402.8</b>	<b>1,665.4</b>	<b>1,320.5</b>	<b>1,340.9</b>
<i>Related receipts (\$m)</i>					
<i>Australian Digital Health Agency</i>	-	32.3	32.3	32.3	32.3

Source: Commonwealth of Australia (2023), [Budget Paper No.2](#), p. 147

The Government will provide \$5.7 billion over 5 years from 2022–23 as an initial investment to provide better access and more affordable care for patients in response to the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report. This investment will improve the quality and accessibility of multidisciplinary primary care, modernise Australia’s digital health infrastructure, improve the financial sustainability of general practices, grow and upskill Australia’s health workforce, and ease the pressure on hospitals.

Funding to support greater access to primary care services includes: \$143.9 million over two years from 2023–24 to improve access to primary care after hours programs, including \$15.3 million to establish a PHN Multicultural Access Program to support multicultural communities to access primary care services.

- **Adult Migrant English Program – improved delivery model**

The Government will introduce an improved delivery model for the *Adult Migrant English Program* from 1 January 2025 within existing funding, to improve English language, employment, and settlement outcomes for migrants by providing flexible tuition options, introducing a national curriculum, supporting professional development for teachers, and enhancing client support and performance management.

This measure builds on the 2022-23 October Budget measure titled *Improving the Adult Migrant English Program*.

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## **Background: current circumstances of migrant and refugee women**

[Migrant and refugee women](#) are more likely to experience domestic and family violence (DFV) and experience further barriers to safety in Australia than the broader population. Currently, no national disaggregated data is available that enables a good understanding of the experiences and needs of migrant and refugee women experiencing or at risk of DFV in Australia.

The intersection of visa status directly impacts the ability to access safety in Australia. Women on temporary visas in Australia have reported higher rates of DFV, however, [only a small part of this cohort](#) can access DFV services and support in Australia.

Many migrant and refugee women who experience DFV fear being deported to their home countries and face additional harms such as stigma, isolation, discrimination or financial hardships. This results in women not disclosing DFV or not disclosing its full extent and nature.

For those women on temporary visas who can access the safety that the family provisions provide, there are significant gaps in coverage and implementation of the provisions. For example, DFV is only recognised if a current or former intimate partner perpetrates it. This limitation fails to recognise the specificities and diversity of migrant and refugee women who can also face violence from other family members.

A significant difference in support available to women on temporary visas is the significantly lower emergency payment under the [Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot \(TVP\)](#). This emergency payment allows women on temporary visas to access up to \$3,000 while women who hold permanent residency or citizenship can access \$5,000.

Despite these two extended measures having assisted a [number of women](#) on temporary visas in Australia, the extension of the TVP has missed an opportunity for review and improvement. While the expansion of visa holders under the *Migration Regulations 1994* to secondary applicants has been welcomed by the sector, it fails to protect many women on temporary visas in Australia.

## **Gender implications of the Budget**

The lack of a gender lens in the Australian migration system prevents necessary policy reform that directly affects the system's equity. It is important to consider how some policies have a gendered impact.

In the 2023-24 migration planning levels, it is envisaged that about 70 per cent of the total Migration Program outcomes will be [Skill Stream places](#). It is known that the majority of primary applicants on [temporary skilled visas are young men](#). The decision to continue with a similar structure in terms of visa streams without complementary reform to reduce systemic disadvantage risks continued exclusion of migrant and refugee women. Due to caring responsibilities, gender norms and discrimination, migrant and refugee women face limitations to their career development. Similarly, limited access to English language and education prevents migrant and refugee women from accessing this Stream as primary applicants.

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This gendered impact of the Australian migration system has two direct results: first, migrant and refugee women are at significant risk of [underemployment and deskilling](#); and second, it leaves migrant and refugee women as dependents on their partners' migration outcomes. This has a big impact on migrant and refugee women's safety, as visa status is often used as a tool of abuse by perpetrators of DFV.

### **Recommendations**

NFAW recommends the Government:

Embed a gender lens in the Australian migration system to ensure equity and access.

Develop data collection and research that reflects diverse experiences and barriers to migrant and refugee women's safety, health and economic participation.

Level the current Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot (TVP) payment to the Escaping Violence Payment (EVP).

Expand the access to family violence provision within the *Migration Regulations 1994* to all women on temporary visas.

Develop culturally appropriate training to equip and support women's safety services to assist migrant and refugee women suffering or at risk of DFV.