

Portfolio Overviews & Recommendations

The National Foundation for Australian Women makes the following observations and recommendations.

Reporting tools: machinery of government

Since the last Budget, the Government has made important strides towards building the machinery of government structures and approach to advancing gender equality across government.

Importantly, the Government released [*Including Gender: An APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessments*](#), the process for gender responsive budgeting (GRB) and, on 7 March 2024, [*Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality*](#), the first national gender equality strategy for several decades. This Budget demonstrates that the Government has made progress in its approach to GRB.

Working for Women makes gender analysis a core budget practice. NFAW is very pleased the Government has placed intersectionality at the centre of its work. While there are massive data gaps and challenges relating to some groups in Australia, some of which the Government has provided funding to address in this Budget, NFAW expects to see continued focus on Budget impacts on particular groups and greater sophistication in reporting. The focus on First Nations Australians is particularly welcome and well developed.

The results of this work are beginning to be visible and certainly the gender analysis throughout the Budget Papers is an improvement over any time in the last two decades.

This is a good start, but much more remains to be done. In particular, NFAW is concerned that the *Working for Women* Strategy is not comprehensively funded, and a major uplift will be required across the Strategy to deliver real progress. NFAW will expect to see significantly increased funding across the Strategy in coming years and will be monitoring this closely.

The National Foundation for Australian Women is a feminist organisation, independent of party politics and working in partnership with other women's organisations. NFAW is dedicated to promoting and protecting the interests of Australian women, including intellectual, cultural, political, social, economic, legal, industrial and domestic spheres.

NFAW calls for the following:

- The Government should commit comprehensive funding to the implementation of *Working for Women*, rather than advancing a piecemeal set of small and inadequate initiatives.
- The Government should continue to build capacity to focus on particular groups and greater sophistication in reporting in Budget documents.
- The attitudes and stereotypes foundation in *Working for Women* underpins progress on all five gender equality priorities. It requires dedicated funding and should be separately reported and actioned.
- Government funding for OfW needs to be adequate and maintained over time.
- There should be separate and comprehensive reporting of funding allocated to OfW. Without this visibility, NFAW is concerned that the funding to gender equality work and GRB remains inadequate.
- Investment into development of sorely needed gender equality capacity across government be made visible.
- That Government review and increase the level of recurrent funding for the SDC and the AHRC more generally over the forward estimates and beyond.
- Funding for WGEA and the DFSVC should be adequate and maintained in real terms over the forward estimates and beyond.
- The WEET should be provided ongoing funding to review and update its recommendations and advise on their implementation.
- A demonstration of good faith in women's and gender equality organisations would be to adequately fund the important work of the National Women's Alliances.

Taxation

The Budget reflects the "Stage 3" tax cuts that been reshaped to apply more equitably across all income levels. High income earners receive a lower benefit than under the former plan, with lower income earners also receiving a tax cut.

This is the centrepiece of the cost of living measures in the Budget.

The restructured tax cuts will benefit women as they tend to be overrepresented in the lower income tax brackets, as a consequence of the gender pay gap and lower workforce participation rates. This links to [Priority Area 3 in Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality](#).

The Small Business \$20,000 instant tax write-off will be continued for businesses with a turnover of less than \$10 million.

The largest tax measure is in the Future Made in Australia initiative that will provide production tax credits to the Critical Minerals and Renewable Hydrogen industries from 2027-28.

NFAW calls for:

- The changes to personal income tax rates from 1 July 2024 are welcome, but they do not go far enough to address the gender bias in the Australian Taxation system.
- Base broadening measures that should be implemented include reducing negative gearing benefits; reducing the capital gains tax discount and redesigning taxation concessions in the superannuation system.
- Fraud and compliance programs implemented by the ATO must be designed with an understanding of coercive control and appropriate remedies must be incorporated in the design.

Superannuation

The primary superannuation measure in this budget is the introduction of superannuation on Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave. This links to [Priority Area 3 in Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality](#).

However the reform does not apply to Paid Parental Leave paid by employers, which is not required to be paid under [Regulation 12](#) of the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Regulations 2018.

NFAW calls for the repeal of Regulation 12(1)(a) of the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Regulations 2018 to ensure that parents paid parental leave are entitled to the Superannuation Guarantee regardless of whether that amount is paid under the Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave Scheme or an employer based scheme.

Vocational education and training

Two key issues are identified in the 2024-25 Budget which could benefit women in undertaking vocational education and training (VET):

- attracting students to VET/TAFE through increasing delivery of strategic communications to increase the appeal of VET for students, parents and teachers, and extending community awareness of Fee-Free TAFE courses in areas of high skills needs ([Budget Paper No 2](#), p. 95, 2024)
- harmonisation of the VET and higher education sectors that will break down barriers between the two sectors ([2024-25 Education Portfolio Budget Statements](#), p. 14).

The end goal of the VET measures in the Budget is to increase the number of students in vocational education with a special emphasis on building and construction courses and courses relating to green energy.

Support for the Government's [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality](#) which outlines its vision of "an Australia where people are safe, treated with respect, have choices and have access to resources and equal outcomes no matter their gender" is implied in the Budget measures addressing VET. However, achieving gender equality requires that gender be explicitly considered in all policy areas.

NFAW calls for:

- The Government to take a broader view of VET rather than concentrating on specific industries or trades. While we appreciate the Government's position with regard to green energy and submarine construction, there are other industries and trades that also need support. The [2023 list of skills in shortage](#) includes technicians, human resources staff, truck drivers and community and personal service workers, as well as tradespeople.
- While we commend the Government's endeavours [to include data and analysis](#) to demonstrate the outcomes experienced by different groups of women, including First Nations women, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, women with disability, women of different ages, and LGBTIQ+ people, we recommend that the Government prioritise the collection and publication of data on women's participation in all areas of tertiary education and on student movements between sectors.
- Research to better understand how students use education to achieve personal and economic goals, and to identify different attitudes and patterns of behaviour among female and male students. A clear understanding of the choices students make, and the factors constraining those choices, will improve outcomes for individuals and the community.

Higher education

Measures outlined in the 2024-2025 Budget have significant implications for female students, particularly those undertaking courses with a practicum placement – nursing, teaching and social work. Limiting the indexation of student loans to either the Consumer Price Index or Wage Price Index (whichever is lower), and backdating the change to 1 June 2023, will ease financial stress on women on marginal tax rates. The development of a National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence will also have a more profound impact on female students than male students. Other changes to funding flagged to occur in 2026 may have significant implications for female academic staff.

The development of a National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence links to the Australian Government's [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality](#) Priority Area 1: Gender-Based Violence. Additional support for marginalised students and changes to the loan repayment schedule link to Priority Area 3: Economic Equality and Security.

NFAW calls for:

- The Department of Education and the Australian Bureau of Statistics to collect data on women's participation across all areas of tertiary education. Good policy depends on good data.
- More to be done to reduce the burden of loan repayments on all students starting with those courses where fees were increased as a result of the Job-Ready Graduates Package. We recognise that the intersection of loan repayments, tax and benefit payments represents a particular burden for women attempting to establish career and create families. The overall cost to our community in terms of lost productivity is unjustifiable.
- The Government to implement the recommendations of the Universities Accord final report that relate to equity of access as a priority.
- That Research Training Program (RTP) stipend rates be increased in recognition of the increased cost of living. The 2024-25 Budget makes no mention of financial support for postgraduate students.
- The expansion of Commonwealth Prac Payment be expanded to include students studying psychology and veterinary science. According to the [Australian Department of Health](#), in 2017, female psychologists comprised 78.9 per cent of the workforce. Similarly, the [Australian Veterinary Association Survey](#) in 2016 found that 80 per cent of veterinary science graduates were women. Both of these professions are in short supply and the courses require unpaid long prac placements.

Labour relations

NFAW welcomes the Australian Government's measures to support vulnerable workers, noting that the [2024-25 Budget](#) supports a range of recent legislative changes to the *Fair Work Act 2004* that provide new protections for workers. The recent legislative changes to criminalise intentional wage theft, introduce minimum standards for gig economy workers, provide a right to disconnect outside of work and other changes will particularly support low paid women working in certain industries that have higher risks of wage theft, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds. The changes will also help many women better balance their work and family obligations.

NFAW calls for the Government to continue to explore measures to support vulnerable women workers, particularly those working in low paid, precarious roles including those in labour hire jobs. While a positive step, the scale of the issue of exploitation and underpayment in industries such as cleaning, hospitality and others where women find employment means that strong action to stamp out such practices is critical.

NFAW also calls for the Government to provide a clear pathway for meeting its commitments arising from the Fair Work Commission decisions in relation to wage rises in the aged care, early childhood education and care, and community services sectors.

Social services

Prior to retirement women face a gender pay gap, broken work histories, have lower superannuation, have a greater incidence of single parent households and an increasing incidence of homelessness. Women are the majority of Age Pension, Carer Payment, Youth Allowance, Austudy, Parenting Payment and Rent Assistance recipients.

The Government's Working for Women: Gender Equality Strategy prioritises economic security for women and the importance of valuing the contribution of unpaid care in Australia, and the Budget contains some modest initiatives to address these issues.

While a significant proportion of the JobSeeker population are young, single and not on income support for long, this is not representative of the majority of recipients. There is a significant subgroup of women over 50 who are long term recipients. For many older women, particularly those on income support for a number of years, the current allowance will support them until they reach Age Pension age. For single women, this compounds their financial and housing stress.

Mature age women are the largest group by age and gender of JobSeeker recipients.

One of the drivers of poverty for people on the Age Pension is that often older women JobSeeker recipients have been forced to run down any income or assets they may have had.

Labour supply decisions for sole parents and for partners in low-income households, usually the woman, are especially highly sensitive to changes in the tax and welfare system.

NFAW calls for:

- Social security payments to be increased to above the poverty line and indexed to an appropriate indexation regime.
- The Social Security Act to make applying an intersectional gender lens mandatory.
- Increasing the age of the youngest child to 16 years for Parenting Payment Single.
- Substantially increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance and indexing it to an appropriate indexation regime.
- Introducing a Carer's Supplement Payment and transitional arrangements to the Age Pension.
- Providing women facing domestic and family violence with a revamped Crisis Payment.
- Ensuring that Services Australia staff receive professional development and training for the treatment of vulnerable clients.

Employment services

Australia spends over \$9.5 billion dollars on its employment services, which is less than 50 per cent of the OECD average. The House of Representatives Select Committee investigating employment services found that full marketisation had failed. This package is the first suite of changes with further changes to follow after the next range of consultations. The initiatives include the digital platform, moderations to mutual obligations, compliance and a new complaints process. The changes are incremental and represent a very modest first step.

Working for Women lists as a future priority (see Priority No. 3), building the capabilities of employment services to help women overcome barriers to work and break cycles of disadvantage, and ensuring employment services systems (such as Workforce Australia and Disability Employment Services) can support women's economic participation. This is the first modest round of changes to employment services. Further consultations are to be undertaken this year.

NFAW calls for the Government to:

- create a watchdog to monitor employment services
- incentivise providers to reach out to women experiencing disadvantage and sustain their engagement
- reframe the current one-way notion of mutual obligation as mutual accountability, to foster reciprocity
- focus on advancing women's aspirations and strengthening their capabilities and opportunities
- provide flexibility for providers to respond to the distinctive needs of individual circumstances and of different groups of women
- appoint organisations with the expertise and capacity to engage their community
- preference organisations that co-locate with early learning and care centres or family and community hubs, to enable easy linkages to complementary supports
- involve women and providers in co-design of the next iteration
- ensure employment services trials include gender equity and access as part of any evaluation criteria
- establish local and national governance structures to enable women, and employers, providers, government and local communities to report on their experiences, monitor system performance against goals and identify opportunities for improvements, and
- commission regional communities of practice, supported by continuous improvement mechanisms, where providers share learnings and use data to drive improvements.

Paid parental leave

NFAW has welcomed the Australian Government's significant investment in Paid Parental Leave (PPL) as a significant means of supporting gender equality in Australia. The Budget's PPL measures add weight to the government's policy platform outlined in [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality](#) ("national gender equality strategy") released in March 2024, in particular, the inclusion of superannuation on Commonwealth-funded PPL from July 2025.

This announcement builds on the *Paid Parental Leave Act 2010* amendments, introduced in 2023 as a significant step towards a good practice PPL scheme that values care and supports carers throughout their life course.

The Budget also funded a 2023 commitment to extend parental leave by another two weeks, towards the ultimate goal of 26 weeks by 2026.

While this is a significant step forward, there are several policy mechanisms that the government could implement to achieve international best practice for PPL. To further strengthen this crucial progress, NFAW recommends the Government prioritise legislating a 'use it or lose it amendment', as a means of encouraging men and women to equitably participate in work and family life. This move would be further supported through more holistic integration with the Fair Work Act, and commitment to the [International Labour Organisation Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 \(ILO 183\)](#).

NFAW calls for:

- Fathers and partners to be actively encouraged to access the scheme through effective and targeted campaigns, and in particular, by legislating and increasing the 'use it or lose it' period.
- A Government commitment to working towards the international best practice of 52 weeks, as recommended by the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce's [final report to Government](#).
- An increase in the rate of pay either to wage replacement or the average weekly ordinary time earnings, whichever is the lesser.
- The formal ratification of the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).
- The amendment of the NES to provide that a person who has been employed for 10 out of the preceding 13 months has the right to return to work at the same or an equivalent position as the position they held before going on leave.
- The regular review the legislation to assess progress towards the objectives of the Act.

Early childhood education and care

The NFAW welcomes the Australian Government's greater focus on a range of systemic issues affecting women in the [Women's Budget Statement 2024-25](#) and the [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality](#). These include achieving a better balance for women between paid and unpaid care through better access to affordable and accessible early childhood education and care (ECEC) and addressing the low pay and status of workers in the care economy (92 per cent in ECEC being female). However, the ECEC measures announced in the 2024-25 Budget are modest, with little detail provided on how they will address current workforce shortages or address the affordability and accessibility of ECEC for families.

To strengthen and improve ECEC across Australia and women's workforce participation, the NFAW calls for:

- more accessible and affordable ECEC across Australia for all families and, in particular, for low income families, First Nations families, migrant families and children with additional needs (in particular, those with a disability)
- relaxation (or preferably abolition) of the Child Care Subsidy activity test, with children's entitlement to 30 hours of ECEC, or at least three days per week, irrespective of their parents' work/study/volunteering activity
- tangible, funded measures to address ECEC workforce supply and retention, including better pay, status and working conditions
- a clearer commitment by Government to fully fund the ECEC wage increases that are likely to arise from FWC processes and decisions
- more cooperation and coordination between Australian Government, state and territory governments and local governments for better planning, monitoring and regulation of the ECEC sector and families' out of pocket ECEC costs
- reducing complexity for families in navigating the ECEC system and funding, through improving information via government websites, Centrelink, ECEC services and outreach support services.

We acknowledge that in this Budget the Australian Government was not able to consider the recommendations of the Productivity Commission [Inquiry into ECEC](#) as the Commission has yet to provide its final report in June 2024. The NFAW made submissions to the Inquiry in [April 2023](#) and [February 2024](#), including recommendations listed above. It will be important for the Government to consider and respond to the Commission's recommendations alongside those of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) [Childcare Inquiry](#). Both reports require serious consideration by all levels of government as the provision of quality, affordable and accessible ECEC and improvements to pay, status and working conditions in the care economy are key issues for women's economic security, as well as Australia's economic prosperity.

Schools

NFAW welcomes the Australian Government's Statements of Intent for funding schools in Western Australia and the Northern Territory to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard. NFAW also welcomes the government's investment in a National Teacher Resource hub to support teachers.

NFAW also welcomes extended funding for the *Together for Humanity* programme along with funding for the *Schools Anti- Bullying Collective* and the youth engagement strategy *Engage!*

However, schooling is central to individual development, as well as essential for the community at large and economic development. It needs to be seen as integral to the government's [Future Made in Australia](#) as the government seeks to meet the changing demands on Australian society for the next 50 years.

Full funding for all government schools is essential to lessen inequality not only in schooling but in the general community. Lack of resourcing continues to place a heavy burden on the largely feminised workforce as they struggle to meet the needs of all students in their care.

In March 2024 the Australian Government released [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality](#). It identified gender gaps in education (p.66). In Year 3 NAPLAN test results girls are significantly higher than boys in literacy domains but boys outperform girls in numeracy.

The National Teacher Resource Hub offers teachers evidence-based curriculum support in such areas. However, it is disappointing to note that the Inclusion Support Program does not extend to schooling (See Early Childhood Education and Care).

NFAW calls for:

- All government schools in all states be funded to the 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard.
- The Inclusion Support Program be extended to all schools and not apply only to Childcare and Early Education Centres.

Health

- Health is not a major focus of the 2024-25 Budget. Albeit numerous, the majority of health measures are modest, business as usual or continuation of existing programs.
- A number of health measures will be of assistance to women and children and further a gender equitable health system. Some are aimed at improved access – such as additional mental health services and urgent care clinics - and cost of living relief – in particular the prescription medicine co-payment indexation freeze.
- Other initiatives aimed directly at women and girls are welcome but modest.

- Careful monitoring and ongoing evaluation will be required to measure the extent to which these commitments deliver on gender equality as promised.
- Contrary to the statement in [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality](#) that “[t]o achieve gender equality, the health system needs to respond to the needs of women, men and gender diverse people”, the Budget does not include a comprehensive policy or broad programmatic approach aimed at addressing gender based disparity in the health system.
- However, the vocal commitment to advancing gender equality and initiatives such as a gender audit of MBS rebates signal the potential for more comprehensive policy ahead; a potential which needs to be closely tracked and encouraged.

NFAW calls upon the Government to develop and publish a comprehensive reform program to address the “socioeconomic factors and gender bias in the health system [which] often put [women and girls] at a disadvantage” as identified in its budget materials. This program should include a focus on the additional barriers facing First Nations women as well as women with disability, women from CALD backgrounds and other groups of women for whom specific consideration is needed.

This reform program should include:

- A comprehensive gender audit of MBS items in expansion of the continuing MBS review
- A coherent preventive health approach which takes account of gendered differences
- Digital reforms to allow the automatic tracking of prescription drug out of pocket costs so as to ensure access to the PBS safety net for all who are entitled to it
- Dedicated resources from the MRFF for research on issues related to women’s health and initiatives needed to drive gender equality
- Expanded access to abortion services – medical and pharmaceutical – including the requirement that all publicly funded hospitals provide access to abortion care.

Progress against this reform program should be tracked and publicised together with careful monitoring and evaluation of the extent to which announced measures deliver anticipated improvements in gender equity.

Aged care

- The 24-25 Budget measures are important to women in continuing the work of previous budgets on reforming the aged care economy to deal with the impact of gendered population ageing.
- The commitment to further wage increases and workforce development for aged care workers aligns with the Government's 2024 [Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality](#), though how this will be funded is not yet clear.

- This budget does not address needed aged care funding reforms to ensure the sustainability of the sector.

NFAW calls for:

- Sufficient funding in future budgets to meet the growing demands of an ageing population, which disproportionately affects women both as recipients and providers of care. Funding has increased over recent years, but the sector is still seen to be underfunded.
- Further funding to increase the number of available Home Care Packages to address continuing wait list issues. This should be targeted to address areas of challenge to improve equity and availability, such as service provision and recruitment in rural and remote areas.
- A continued focus on enhancing job security, benefits, and career progression for part-time aged care workers. Wage increases will help elevate the desirability of work in the sector, but the predominance of part-time roles for female workers will impact their financial stability and career growth.
- Sustainable funding for the sector in terms of aged care workers' wage increases but also fees and service charges, taking into account the recommendations of the Aged Care Taskforce final report to support the long-term viability of the sector.

Reducing violence against women

Arguably the most anticipated federal budget investments for 24-25 financial year were in family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV). Following [28 violent deaths of women](#) in the first quarter of the year – a rate of one woman murdered every four days – Australian women and their allies took to the streets in mass protests calling on the Federal Government to do more to end men’s violence against women. Timed ahead of a special meeting of National Cabinet focussing exclusively on FDSV, protests called for increased investment into the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children. With the [Australian Institute of Criminology](#) reporting a 28 per cent increase in intimate partner homicide over the last 12 months, the Prime Minister identified gendered violence as a “national crisis”, raising expectations of significant budgetary investment.

On 1 May 2024 following a National Cabinet meeting, the [Federal Government announced a pre-budget FDSV financial support package](#) of \$925.3 million over five years, with the majority of investment continuing and expanding two pilot programs - the Escaping Violence Program (EVP) and the Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot. While these investments were welcomed as a good start to supporting victim-survivors, both the quantum allocated and the manner of procurement – small payments of \$5,000 directly to victim-survivors via cash and vouchers - was criticised by service providers, who expected to

see a demand-based boost to specialist service provision, whole of system improvements and justice investments.

The Budget itself, released two weeks later, has not greatly added to the pre-budget announcements. While there are welcome innovations in online safety and the security of women on university campuses, very little further investment has been made to support the FDSV sector.

NFAW calls for:

- Government commitment to funding DFV response services to meet demand
- Delivery of the LVP be expanded and fully funded to be embedded within DFV support services to enable delivery that is timely and culturally safe
- Full implementation of the recommendations of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Senate Committee – Current and proposed sexual consent laws in Australia
- The stand-alone First Nations National Plan to be prioritised with identified investment to address the disproportionately high rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

National Legal Assistance Partnership

- The Government has provided additional funding of \$44.1 million in 2024–25 to support the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, including one-year indexation supplementation to the funding for Legal Aid Commissions, Community Legal Centres and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, and additional funding to reduce community legal sector pay disparity.
- Legal assistance services are a vital part of the safety net for women experiencing disadvantage or financial insecurity, particularly for victim-survivors of domestic, family, and sexual violence.
- Access to legal assistance supports women to navigate legal systems and drives women's financial independence and safety.
- Unmet demand for legal assistance services from women is high and increasing, particularly for victim-survivors of gendered violence, however there was no additional funding in the Budget to increase frontline legal service delivery.
- Due to the current NLAP expiring in June 2025, lack of adequate indexation supplementation to the funding under the NLAP, and legislated increases to wages and superannuation, the community legal sector is now planning to start reducing services which means more women in crisis will be turned away.
- The community legal sector is a female-dominated workforce and while the Women's Budget Statement recognises this, the additional funding is not adequate

to address pay disparity between women working in the community legal sector and Legal Aid Commissions.

NFAW calls for:

- Urgent investment in the legal assistance sector to ensure Legal Aid Commissions, Community Legal Centres, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services can meet the unmet legal needs of women, particularly women experiencing financial disadvantage and women in crisis who are at risk of, or experiencing, domestic, family, and sexual violence.
- A commitment to ongoing legal assistance funding beyond June 2025.
- At least 4 per cent indexation on all funding streams under the NLAP, including programs dedicated to addressing gender-based violence.
- Additional funding to adequately address the pay disparity for women working in the community legal sector compared to Legal Aid Commissions.
- Recognition in the Women's Budget Statement of the value of legal assistance services in supporting women's economic independence and financial security, including through the provision of legal assistance to women experiencing financial disadvantage with social security, child support, family law property disputes, employment and discrimination law, tenancy law and debts.

Legal assistance for women on temporary visas

- The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-32 recognises the unique impacts of family violence on migrant women, and that migrant women face structural barriers other women do not, such as the impact ending a relationship has on their visa status and eligibility for social security.
- Women on temporary visas or no visa in Australia need access to legal assistance and support services to ensure they can safely leave violent relationships and remain in Australia.
- The Government has recognised the value of the Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot by extending it to 30 June 2025 and providing ongoing funding for legal assistance for temporary visa holders leaving a violent relationship.
- The legal assistance component of the Pilot includes funding for seven Women's Legal Services, Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre, and Legal Aid NSW.
- Collectively, the seven Women's Legal Services provided legal assistance and support services to over 700 women on a temporary visa or no visa in 2021-22 under the Pilot.
- The funding provided in this Budget is adequate for legal assistance services to continue to provide the same level of service delivery to women on temporary visas as provided in previous years.

- However, the lack of a significant increase in funding means there will not be an increase in legal services available to women on temporary visas experiencing violence and this also puts additional pressure on a female-dominated and under-resourced workforce.

NFAW calls for the provision of additional funding for legal assistance services to support women on temporary visas experiencing domestic and family violence.

Future Made in Australia and climate change

This program is one of the centrepieces of the Budget, with an estimated outlay of \$22.7 billion over the next decade. The initiative is built around a National Interest Framework that identifies key industries and sectors that are critical to transitioning to a net zero economy, or that are critical to economic resilience but are vulnerable to supply chain disruptions.

Gender impact analysis is relevant in this program to ensure that the industries that are supported are committed to supporting gender equality, and that the outputs from the Government investment address areas where women experience disadvantage.

There are also measures to assist natural disaster responses and drought relief, but there are relatively few measures to improve community resilience to climate change.

NFAW supports the principles underlying the Future Made in Australia program, noting that the benefits to the Australian community through supporting the transition to net zero justify the cost.

NFAW calls for:

- Gender impact analysis of the Future Made In Australia program to include an analysis of the effects on aspects of the program that extend beyond employment to include necessary services, including ECEC, health and education in remote and regional centres, allowing women to balance work and care.
- When establishing conditions of employment in the sector, there be specific attention paid to the effect of rosters on women balancing work and care, and the safety and wellbeing of women working on site.
- All community consultation processes in respect of approvals for renewable energy projects be designed in a way that facilitates engagement by women and other underrepresented sectors of the community.
- The structure of the Critical Minerals Tax Offset be developed to ensure that only expenditure directly related to the production process is taken into consideration in the calculation of the offset.

- The Government delivery of a large-scale home energy upgrades program for low-income households, including expanded upgrades of social housing, and policy and budgetary measures to introduce minimum rental standards across all states and territories.

Housing

Budget 2024-25 supports modest improvements to women's housing security through small increases to Commonwealth Rent Assistance, some additional funding for crisis accommodation, and support for housing construction. However, it falls short of the sorts of bold, structural changes that are needed to ensure that all women are able to access affordable, secure, appropriate housing.

Repeating the previous Budget, a key message this year is a government focused on market responses to housing poverty, despite the clear failure of market reliance in recent decades. A commitment to lift the lowest income households out of poverty through building secure social housing is needed to address the shortfall of over 200,000 affordable homes nationally.

NFAW calls for:

- Bold leadership to champion a national approach to housing that commits to ensure that all people in Australia have access to affordable, secure, appropriate housing across the life course
- Government commitment to directly funding sufficient social housing units to address the current waitlist and projected need, ensuring that the lowest income households can access affordable housing and that women leaving domestic and family violence have secure housing alternatives beyond the crisis sector
- JobSeeker and Commonwealth Rent Assistance Rates to be raised to lift these households out of poverty
- New social and affordable housing and associated communities to be designed to withstand climate stresses, including urban heat
- Taxation settings that stimulate the cost of housing in Australia to be wound back, including negative gearing and capital gains tax discounts
- Where housing development attracts a tax benefit recipients to provide social benefit in the form of secure, affordable housing.

The Government makes important investment in housing research, however, there is little evidence of this research being translated into evidence informed policy. There is need for a national housing plan that is grounded in established research evidence.

Foreign policy

- Australia will spend \$4.96 billion on Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) in FY2024-25, a modest increase of \$193.1 million on the previous year.
- Despite identifying gender equality as a foreign policy priority and holding important commitments to mainstream gender in the development program, the fact remains there is no new money for dedicated gender equality programs in this budget.
- Neither is there new funding for the Government's commitment to a First Nations approach to foreign policy. This pre-election commitment has been supported by the appointment of the inaugural Ambassador for First Nations People and an Office for First Nations International Engagement, with a forthcoming strategy. But budget measures to build on these activities across foreign policy are lacking.
- As Julia Gillard [said](#), "budgets are about choices, and you show what you value through the choices you make". By spending 11 times as much on Defence as it spends on international development cooperation, this budget demonstrates that the Australian Government values militarisation – prioritising state security over human security, which exacerbates insecurity for women. By spending 18 times as much on the fuel tax credit subsidy as it allocates to regional climate finance, the Australian Government is actively undermining global efforts to mitigate climate change and our own, and our neighbours' ability to adapt.
- In a world of poly-crisis and a growing global anti-rights movement, the forthcoming International Gender Strategy must commit to significant increases in spending on gender equality, human rights, and First Nations rights in order to hold the line against backlash and advance human rights for all.

NFAW calls for:

- Official Development Assistance (ODA) to be set on a strategic and reliable trajectory for growth with the view to reaching 0.7 per cent ODA/GNI by 2029-30.
- An increase to the Gender Equality Fund of \$35 million per year to \$100 million in FY2024-25, and set it on a trajectory to reach \$200 million per year over the forward estimates.
- An increase to the central disability allocation to \$20 million in FY2024-25 and ongoing.
- An increase to the Inclusion and Equality Fund by \$11.5 million per year to a total of \$15 million per year.
- The re-establishment of Australia's ambition in climate justice internationally, allocating funding in next year's budget to meet the existing commitment of \$3 billion in the period to 2025, and committing at least \$4 billion in new and additional climate finance annually from 2025 to meet our fair share.
- The dedication of \$100 million in FY2024-25 to contribute Australia's share towards the vast humanitarian needs in Gaza.

- The commitment of at least 5 per cent of ODA to be delivered through women's rights organisations (CRS Sector Code 15170), prioritising core, flexible and multi-year funding mechanisms.
- The allocation of \$80 million per year to the new Civil Society Partnerships Fund to support core funding of local, constituency-led civil society organisations and safeguard civic space.
- The International Gender Strategy to embed and define feminist approach to advancing gender equality which is human-rights based, informed by intersectional feminist analysis and grounded in First Nations values and worldviews.

Migrant and refugee women

In the Women's Budget Statement the Government recognises the importance of embedding an intersectional lens to policy and program development, and as such recognises the limited data available and the impact this can have on sound decision-making. The Statement provides a commitment to ensure data is available to help inform better outcomes for everyone in Australia.

The Government recognises there is an important gap in the representation of migrant and refugee women – as well as First Nations Women and women with disabilities – in decision-making roles to achieve gender equality in Australia. The Government will introduce a new legislative requirement for businesses with 500 or more employees to commit to gender equality targets through reporting to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. However, there is no relevant investment in the Budget to boost migrant and refugee women's representation in leadership roles.

The Budget highlighted the empowerment of migrant and refugee women through an investment of \$15.0 million over three years from 2024-25 for information and education activities and an investment of \$3.8 million over four years from 2024-25 to continue conversational English language classes in Community Hubs. While these investments will engage and positively impact migrant and refugee women, it is important to note that they do not specifically target women.

The Women's Budget Statement recognises that migrant and refugee women are overrepresented in paid care work which is undervalued, low paid and insecure. It also recognises that workforce participation for migrant and refugee women is significantly lower than for migrant and refugee men and Australian-born women.

NFAW calls for:

- Evaluation of the needs of the National Communities Hubs Program and the provision of adequate and ongoing funding.
- The inclusion of specific measures in future budgets to boost migrant and refugee women's economic participation, leadership and representation such as the creation of specialist service providers.