



GENDER LENS ON THE 2024 BUDGET

Key policy in discussion	Housing
Portfolio and or agency	Treasury and Social Services
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Key Portfolio Issues

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.

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.

Budget Measures

Social housing and associated services

Bilateral agreements under the [National Housing and Homelessness Agreement](#) (NHHA), including the one-year extension, will expire on 30 June 2024. From 2024-25 support to social housing and homelessness services will be under the new **National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness** (NASHH), subject to the states signing the five-year, \$9.3 billion agreement ([Budget Paper 3](#), p.62). The Budget increased funding to \$1.8 billion per year from 2024 ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.74); this increase seems to reflect inflation rather than the demand in sector, which would require a more significant investment.

Social and affordable housing delivery is further supported through associated services including:

- \$290.1 million dedicated to energy performance upgrades of social housing dwellings ([Budget Paper 3](#), p.93). This measure is to be co-funded with the states and will deliver cost-savings to tenants in social housing ([Budget Paper 3](#), p.93).
- \$2.0 million over three years from 2024–25 to the community housing sector, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled housing organisations, to **build financial capability** ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.75).

National Partnership Payments

The Budget allocates \$798 million to the **National Partnership payments** including \$44.2 million to the **Homebuilder program**, not identified in the 2023-24 forecast ([Budget Paper 3](#), p.62). In 2023–24, \$1.0 billion was allocated to the support of infrastructure that would enable new housing through the **Housing Support Program – Priority Works Stream** ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.74). In this Budget, an additional \$450 million has been allocated to **Priority Works Streams 1 and 2**.

In addition, National Partnership payments also support housing for Indigenous Australians including \$100 million for **Remote Indigenous housing** ([Budget Paper 3](#), p.62) delivered through the Housing Australia Future Fund; **Northern Territory Remote Housing** has been allocated \$163 million in 2024-24 and funding for **Improving housing and essential services on Northern Territory Homelands** has been continued under this Budget allocating \$40 million annually until June 2027 (([Budget Paper 2](#), p.161). The **social impact investments** trial which aims to help **people at risk of homelessness** remains unchanged with the allocation of \$1.3 million in 2024-25 ([Budget Paper 3](#), p.65).

Support for Renters

Commonwealth Rent Assistance: A modest increase of 10 per cent is proposed to the maximum rate, at a cost of \$1.9 billion over five years from 2023-24. This is in addition to the 15 per cent increase announced in 2023-24 ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.167). It is estimated that this will benefit around one million households ([Budget Paper 1](#), p.160).

Build-to-rent (BTR) housing: A lower foreign investment fee for the purchase of established Build to Rent property, on the condition that the property continues to be operated as a build to rent development, is introduced in this Budget ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.75). Measures announced in 2023-24 Budget that continue to support the development of build-to-rent include the reduction of the withholding tax rate for newly constructed BTR developments on eligible fund payments from managed investment trusts from 30 to 15 per cent (since 1 July 2024) ([Budget Paper 1](#), p.154) as well as the increased capital works tax deduction (depreciation) rate from 2.5 to 4 per cent per year (BP1, p.154).

Purpose-built student accommodation: Budget indicates that the Government will implement caps on international student enrolment at universities, and require that universities deliver purpose-built student accommodation “should they wish to increase their international student enrolments above their initial allocation.” (PBSA) ([Budget Paper 1](#), p.151).

Housing Australia

[Housing Australia](#) administers the **National Housing Accord** and the **Housing Australia Future Fund** (HAFF) to increase the supply of, and private investment into, social and affordable housing. Through these initiatives, the Budget supports the delivery of new social and affordable dwellings through additional concessional financing of up to \$1.9 billion for **community housing providers** and other charities ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.75). To support the delivery of 1.2 million homes, incentive payments under the **New Homes Bonus** have been committed to the value of \$3 billion (([Budget Paper 1](#), p.150). These are not payable until 2028-29 (([Budget Paper 1](#), p.158).

The [National Housing Infrastructure Facility](#) (NHIF) supports new housing supply through the financing of infrastructure and the delivery of funding to develop new social or affordable housing projects. The Budget targets \$700 million concessional loans and grants toward the delivery of “crisis and transitional accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic violence” ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.75). An additional \$30 million is allocated for **veterans** at risk of or experiencing homelessness ([Budget Paper 1](#), p.152).

The community housing sector is further assisted by the NHIF through the **Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator**. This Budget has increased “the cap on the Government’s guarantee of Housing Australia’s liabilities by \$2.5 billion to \$10.0 billion, with an associated increase in the line of credit that supports the Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator of \$3.0 billion to \$4.0 billion” ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.74)

Access to home ownership: The Australian Government provides a guarantee of up to 15 per cent of property purchase price for up to 50,000 eligible households to support access to home ownership ([Budget Paper 1](#), p.160). Three programs have been continued from the 2023-24 Budget: **First Home Guarantee**, **Regional First Home Buyer** and **Family Home Guarantee Scheme**, which continues to support single parents. The **Help to Buy** Scheme was introduced by the Government in late 2023. Under the Scheme, up to 40,000 eligible households are assisted to enter home ownership with a [2 per cent deposit](#) through a shared equity option with the government providing “an equity contribution of up to 40 per cent of the purchase price for new homes and 30 per cent for existing homes” without the requirement to pay Lenders Mortgage Insurance ([Budget Paper 1](#), p.154)

Northern Territory Remote Communities

Budget allocations to remote Northern Territory communities are designed to reduce overcrowding, increase investment and housing quality and speed up the delivery of housing in remote communities in response to the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#). New Budget allocations from 2024-25 include:

- \$698.4 million over four years to be matched by the Northern Territory Government, dedicated to reducing overcrowding ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.161)
- \$1.0 million over two years to improve housing delivery and management through the development of a sustainable Community-Controlled Housing Model ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.161)
- \$120.0 million over three years for the repairs and maintenance of existing and essential infrastructure ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.161).

The Budget has continued support to a number of programs outlined in the 2023-24 Budget to improve the broader housing outcomes in remote Northern Territory communities such as:

- \$30 million for the *Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment – Children and schooling implementation plan* which includes provision of housing for teachers in remote and very remote schools ([Budget Paper 3](#), p.48).
- Joint funding with the Northern Territory Government of \$20.0 million under the [Remote Housing Northern Territory Federation Funding Agreement](#) to deliver an additional 49 remote homes, which, when combined with the 157 proposed under the agreement expand the delivery to 206 remote homes ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.161).

Housing Research and Training and industry

The Budget is providing \$19.7 million over six years from 2024–25 to housing research to support the delivery of social and affordable housing through the release of Commonwealth land and inform the development of robust housing policy and programs ([Budget Paper 2](#), p.74)

This is further assisted by the renewed five-year funding from 2024-25 of the [Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute](#) to the value of \$20.8 million (([Budget Paper 1](#), p.158).

Funding continued from earlier budgets that support the development of **evidence-based housing policy** include:

- \$2.3 million for Treasury from 2023-24 (([Budget Paper 1](#), p.162)
- \$15.2 million for the National Housing Supply and Affordability Council from 2022-23 to 2026-27 (([Budget Paper 1](#), p.162).

The Government is investing \$88.8 million in the Budget to **train 20,000 more construction workers** through TAFEs and industry registered training organisations to help build more homes more quickly (([Budget Paper 2](#), p.75). In addition, the Budget allocates \$1.8 million over two years from 2024–25 for the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to **assess the skills of migrants** who may be able to contribute to the residential construction industry (([Budget Paper 2](#), p.75). The Department received some of this funding in advance of the budget (([Budget Paper 2](#), p.75). To further support housing supply, the Government is delivering \$6.2 million over two years from 2024–25 to peak employer associations to support residential builders becoming accredited under the Work Health and Safety Accreditation Scheme (([Budget Paper 2](#), p.75).

Gender implications of this Budget measure

Housing insecurity and homelessness amongst women is increasing in Australia.

- The 2021 Census showed a 10 per cent increase in the number of women who are homelessness, compared to a 2 percent increase in the number of men who are homeless since 2016. Homelessness amongst younger women aged 18-24 “increased from 68 out of every 10,000 in 2016 up to 70 out of every 10,000 in 2021”.
- Single parent families are at especially high risk of housing insecurity and homelessness. The [Anglicare 2024 Rental Affordability Snapshot](#) found that on the snapshot weekend only 1.8 per cent of rental listings nationally were affordable to a single parent on the minimum wage, 0.1 per cent were affordable to a parent with two young children receiving the Parenting Payment Single, and 0.0 per cent (21 houses) nationally were affordable to a single JobSeeker recipient with a child aged over 14.
- Single parent families, 83 per cent of which are headed by single mothers, are overrepresented amongst those seeking homelessness support, representing 35 per cent of clients, despite being only 15.9 per cent of the population.

Budget 2024-25 does little to stem these crises. It fails to guarantee a liveable income for women that rely on income support payments and it fails to ensure the housing that is affordable for very low-income households.

Nationally there are structural challenges affecting housing supply, including shortfalls in the construction sector workforce. Commitments to encourage new housing supply through addressing infrastructure needs and boosting the construction workforce may support the national housing target that was set in 2023-24. Supply side measures that are the focus of this Budget (like supporting the construction workforce and infrastructure development) are likely to be more sustainable in supporting new housing supply than demand side measures in previous budgets (such as Home Builder, which over stimulated housing construction).

However, it is well established that addressing market supply is *not sufficient* to address the housing affordability problems that affect low and very low-income households. In 2021 there was a [national shortfall of 255,000 rental homes affordable to very-low income households](#) (in the bottom 20 per cent of incomes). This is an increase from 212,000 in 2016 and is caused by an ongoing failure of the market to deliver housing that is affordable to this group. As a consequence, in 2021, [82% of very-low income households nationally](#) were paying unaffordable rents. The supply of housing that is affordable to very-low income households can only be resolved through direct government investment in affordable, social housing.

Social housing commitments: Despite growing need for housing that is affordable to the lowest income households, the Government makes no new commitment build social housing. Housing insecurity and homelessness can be rapidly resolved through a proactive commitment to direct funding of sufficient social housing to meet the needs of low-income households before they experience housing crisis. Building more social housing would also support the many women and children leaving situations of family and domestic violence and who are currently becoming stuck in bottlenecks in insecure crisis and transitional housing due to a lack of affordable, secure housing alternatives.

The increase to **Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)** is welcomed and it is pleasing to see recognition that households that receive CRA need more support to access Australia's expensive housing market. Single women households (including those that are single parents) make up 51 households of households that are eligible for the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance ([Women's Budget Statement 2024-25](#), p.48) and so stand to benefit from this measure. However, increases in the recent Budgets will not lift these households out of poverty or make them competitive in increasingly expensive housing markets across the country. When households struggle to afford rent, they cut back on essential items including food, education and healthcare with consequences for health and wellbeing.

The high cost of housing drives risk of **homelessness**. 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 mitigate the risk of homelessness.

Recommendations

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.