



GENDER LENS ON THE 2024 BUDGET

Key policy in discussion	Labour relations
Portfolio and or agency	Employment and workplace relations
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Key Portfolio Issues

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.

Budget Measures – Support for Vulnerable Workers

The Government has provided additional funding for the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) of \$20.5 million over four years to support the employer advisory services as well as provide additional supports for small business to comply with their legal obligations. This includes funding to support new resources to help small businesses comply with the new ‘right to disconnect’ laws. There is also funding for the FWO to monitor large corporate employers’ compliance with workplace laws and guiding remediation of employees’ wages and other entitlements where underpayments have occurred.

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.

As outlined in the ‘Superannuation’ paper, the Fair Entitlements Guarantee Recovery Program will be refocused to ensure that unpaid superannuation guarantee charge amounts owed by liquidated or bankrupt employers are pursued.

There is also a small funding amount (\$2.0 million) in 2024-25 to establish a project office, led by the Victorian Government, to undertake scoping work for a harmonised national labour hire regulation scheme. Given the risks of wage theft and unscrupulous employer practices in labour hire, a national scheme will progress a recommendation from the [Migrant Workers’ Taskforce](#) to better protect vulnerable workers in key industries with high proportions of women workers, such as cleaning and hospitality.

Workplace Relations

Payments (\$m)

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations	-	13.2	27.4	29.1	29.2
Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman	-	8.6	6.3	8.1	8.3
Department of the Treasury	-	2.0	-	-	-
Australian Taxation Office	-	1.1	6.7	15.5	21.2
Total – Payments	-	24.9	40.3	52.6	58.7
<i>Related receipts (\$m)</i>					
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations	-	2.4	5.0	9.4	13.3
Australian Taxation Office	-	2.3	12.3	22.3	26.2
Office of the Fair Work Ombudsman	-	-2.4	-5.4	-3.9	-3.9
Total – Receipts	-	2.3	12.0	27.9	35.6

Budget paper no.2, Part 2: Payment measures, p. 95

Wages and the Gender Pay Gap

As outlined in the Early Childhood Education and Care paper, the [2024-25 Budget](#) also includes a commitment to improve wages for workers in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and aged care, pending the conclusion of Fair Work Commission processes (\$30 million over two years for IT and payment services, see [Budget Paper No.2, p. 86](#)). This commitment stems from Fair Work Commission decisions, including the [recent Aged Care Stage 3 decision](#), which provide significant wage rises for historically undervalued female-dominated jobs in these industries, noting the gendered nature of assumptions that have been traditionally used to underpin wage rates.

NFAW also notes some progress in narrowing the gender pay gap over the past 12 months due to annual award wage increases and enterprise bargaining outcomes in female dominated industries. NFAW commends the Government’s action to measure and highlight issues around the gender pay gap, as well as 2023 legislative changes which enables the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to publish reporting organisations’ gender pay data for the first time.

Gender implications of the budget measures

NFAW welcomes measures that support lower paid women workers or those who are vulnerable at work due to their industry, occupation or conditions of work. Steps to support the FWO to provide support to more vulnerable workers is commendable, while noting that the scale of underpayment and workplace exploitation issues is significant and requires a whole of government approach including from agencies such as the Australian Taxation Office, among others.

As indicated in the Early Childhood Education and Care paper, little detail has been provided on the Government's commitment to support wage increases for ECEC educators and aged care workers and falls short of a commitment to fully fund wage increases arising from future FWC decisions. The NFAW is disappointed that the government has not provided a clear and transparent pathway for covering the supplements to the wages that will be required to address the pay equity gap in aged care, ECEC and community services.

Recommendations

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.