

Budget 2019 – Machineries of government for women

Machineries of Government Budget Overview

In these Gender Lens papers, NFAW has tabled a number of analyses showing that budgets are not, in practice, gender neutral, and that where they ignore gender differences, it is largely at the expense of women. Women’s experiences of ageing, employment, housing, social services and so on are in many respects systemically different from those of men, and the design and implementation of program funding should respond to these differences. Such a response depends on government will and on the collection and use of gender differentiated data. There is little evidence of either in the budget, even taking into account resourcing for the time use survey delivered through the 2018-19 MYEFO. Judging from the Budget alone, the work of Office for Women is still focused on small single-issue targeted programs.¹

WHY IS THIS AN ISSUE FOR WOMEN?

- When Government policies and programs are developed and managed in the absence of an informed and evidence-based gender analysis, they are at risk of delivering poor service, as is the case with effective marginal tax rates (<https://www.nfaw.org/page/a-gender-lens-budget> pp. 19-20 66ff), or actual harm as is the case with ParentsNext. <https://www.nfaw.org/page/election-policies-2018-19>
- Effective marginal tax rates have a significantly greater impact on women than on men, affecting both women’s workforce participation and the design of tax transfers. Gender insensitive tax policy cannot be simply written off with one-liners such as: “You don’t fill out pink forms and blue forms on your tax return.” <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/jun/08/pink-and-blue-forms-is-gender-based-tax-really-as-crazy-as-it-sounds>
- The Office for Women (OfW) in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) has responsibility for advising the Prime Minister and working with all government agencies to enhance the gender equality in their policy and program development and review, including the preparation and review of Budget initiatives.

¹ The lead entity for measure Fourth Action Plan (2019-22) to reduce violence against women and their children is the Department of Social Services

- Budget outcomes suggest that OfW requires reach and influence underpinned by high level political and bureaucratic backing. The economic expertise of OFW has been allowed to run down (https://nfaw.cdn.prismic.io/nfaw%2Fb8630cb5-60a1-4bd6-aa69-c38e68a8b2c4_gender+lens+on+the+budget+2017.pdf pp. 4-5). Since 2014 there has been no Women’s Budget Statement. Its publications mainly present gender-blind policies as policies for women.
- Evidence-based policy cannot be developed without gender-disaggregated data. To NFAW’s knowledge, agencies have not invested in extending their datasets to include gender, or often even using the gender-disaggregated data that they have –with the honourable exception of the data being collected by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). There has been no Time Use Survey to inform community service and employment policy since 2006.

BUDGET MEASURES

The following table sets out the priorities identified by NFAW and the relevant 2019 budget commitments.

| NFAW priorities | In 2019 budget? | Comment (if any) |
|--|-----------------|--|
| The Office for Women (OfW) should remain in Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C). | Yes | However, administered expenses for the Office for Women fall from \$4 975 000 in 2018-19 to \$3 482 000 in 2023. |
| Measures continue to be taken to strengthen the OfW’s economic capacity. | Not applicable | While not in itself a budget measure, OfW is pursuing a focus on capacity building in Treasury and in OfW itself and then other departments. This could increase the gender responsiveness of subsequent budgets. |
| More should be done to integrate gender budgeting into the broader budget cycle, including initial program design and post-implementation program reviews. | No | There is no indication in the budget papers that gender issues have been broadly integrated into budget planning or program reviews in any portfolios. References to women bear on individual programs that target women or (mainly) violence against women. |
| The prime minister acting through the secretary of PM&C should have responsibility for conduct of successful gender budgeting, and that the deputy secretary should chair a committee of agency deputy secretaries with operational responsibility for the implementation and | No | |

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| conduct of gender budgeting in each agency. | | |
| OfW have capacity to outpost gender trained officers to departments during budget planning to ensure gender is considered in developing savings/expenditure proposals | No | Conversely, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency appears to have been moved into PM&C, presumably in order to be overseen by OfW. This makes it all the more important that OfW build the specialist economic skills required to support the work of the Agency. |
| Agency collections of gender disaggregated program data be strengthened; used in budget analysis; and made publicly available. | No | The budget papers give no indication that gender-disaggregated analysis has been undertaken systemically in programs not specifically targeting women or (mainly) violence against women. |
| Budget publications enhance the transparency of budget outcomes, and in particular that budget data presenting projected changes to the real disposable incomes and the net tax thresholds of different household types, formerly contained in Appendix C of the Budget overview, should be reinstated. | No | |
| The Parliamentary Budget Office be required to develop a distributional impact statement of budget proposals with gender as well as income age regional analysis. | No | |
| Time-use data should be collected regularly in a dedicated survey. | Yes | \$10.4m made available in 2018-19 MYEFO. |