

# Budget 2019 – Migrant and refugee women

## Migrant and Refugee Women Budget Overview

Measured against the priorities for migrant and refugee women (identified based on the priorities of the *Harmony Alliance: Migrant and Refugee Women for Change*), the 2019 Budget includes a number of measures that could potentially be beneficial for Australia's women from migrant and refugee backgrounds. These measures, some of which are further examined in the Budget Measures table below, are primarily targeted at migrant and refugee populations, while there are other measures supporting Australian women more generally, without further disaggregation. However, migrant and refugee women remain largely invisible in this Budget.

## WHY IS THIS AN ISSUE FOR WOMEN?

- A lack of policies that promote equality and inclusion of migrant and refugee women in Australia's economic, social, cultural, civil and political life significantly reduces these women's capacity to participate and contribute, and leaves them and their families vulnerable to short term shocks that could leave them further dependent on assistance in the long-run.
- **Safety:** Migrant and refugee women experience greater barriers to accessing support services for family, domestic or sexual violence, including: limited eligibility; isolation; community pressures; financial dependence; lack of knowledge of rights and available services; language barriers; fear of deportation; and fear of removal of children or perpetrator.
- **Employment:** Migrant and refugee women continue to lag behind their peers in labour force participation and unemployment rates, and are underrepresented in management positions. They face dual barriers to employment based on both cultural and gender norms. These include, but are not limited to: unconscious bias and discrimination; language and educational barriers; caring responsibilities; visa restrictions; gender and cultural expectations.
- **Health:** Migrant and refugee women face particular barriers to accessing health services, including limited knowledge of the health system, limited trust in health service providers, and language and cultural differences, further exacerbated by variable eligibility for non-citizens to access Medicare and private health insurance. They may experience greater vulnerability due to social stigmatisation of various women's health-related topics, and are at increased risk of poorer health and wellbeing due to pre-migration experiences, including exposure to trauma, and post-settlement experiences.
- **Justice:** The justice system is a particularly alienating and intimidating institution for migrant and refugee women, who may have little understanding of Australia's processes, a distrust of institutions, low levels of English, and lived through traumatic experiences.

## 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)
<p><b>Measures to enable migrant and refugee women experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence to seek and receive help, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ expanding eligibility to access to violence services</li> <li>○ funding specialist services</li> <li>○ ensuring the migration program does not facilitate violence against women</li> <li>○ tackling dowry abuse</li> </ul>	Partial	<p>The women’s safety package of \$328.0 million is a welcome investment, including the funding for prevention activities, frontline services, training for health workers, and safe places for women fleeing domestic violence. However, these measures must be accompanied by a clear strategy to help women on temporary visas to seek and receive support. Unless there are specific measures to address this significant gap, the eligibility of access to safety services for women on temporary visas remains a problem.</p>
<p><b>Measures to improve the employment outcomes of migrant and refugee women, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ improving employment services</li> <li>○ supporting women to learn English</li> <li>○ providing affordable and appropriate childcare</li> <li>○ helping women navigate the qualifications recognition process.</li> </ul>	Partial	<p>Measures that can potentially address some aspects of this priority include \$7.3 million as part of Social Cohesion Package to assist newly arrived migrants to integrate into Australian society, and \$22.6 million as part of Building Social Cohesion for Newly Arrived Migrants to expand and extend the National Community Hubs Program and establish the National Youth Hubs Program.</p> <p>The expansion of the National Community Hubs Program is a welcome measure, as the Community Hubs predominantly engage migrant and refugee women who may otherwise be disconnected from the community and connect them with organisations that provide health, education, and settlement support. These measures can potentially address the needs around supporting women to learn English, and navigate other services and supports.</p> <p>While there are no specific measures to enhance employment outcomes of migrant and refugee women, the investment in the vocational education and training, and the foundational skills training may potentially address some of the gaps in this regard.</p>
<p><b>Measures to support migrant and refugee women to access and navigate the healthcare system in order to achieve equal health outcomes, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ improving access to information</li> </ul>	Partial	<p>There are no specific measures to address inequalities in health access, experience and outcomes for migrant and refugee women. Some of the gaps with regard to access to health and health system information can potentially be addressed through the expansion of the National Community Hubs Program by supporting migrant and refugee women to better understand and navigate the healthcare system.</p> <p>The additional investments for the identification of breast cancer and perinatal mental health, as well as the Strengthening Primary Care</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ fixing gaps in the funding system</li> <li>○ ensuring access to interpreters.</li> </ul>		<p>package to enhance the care to high-need patients are welcomed, in the hope that the initiatives improve outcomes for all women, including those from migrant and refugee backgrounds.</p>
<p><b>Take measures to provide equal access to justice for migrant and refugee women, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ supporting justice institutions to be more accessible</li> <li>○ ensuring access to affordable and independent legal services, irrespective of visa status.</li> </ul>	No	<p>There has been no additional investment to support access to justice particularly for women on temporary visas.</p>
<b>Other budget measures</b>		
<b>Measure</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Comment</b></span>		
Jobs and small business – Better targeting of support for refugees		<p>Newly arrived refugees would only be required to enter into <i>jobactive</i> services once they have been receiving income support for 12 months, rather than the current requirement of six months. This will improve the sequencing of settlement services allowing refugees to focus on settlement and language learning during their first 12 months after arrival. Individuals will be able to participate in <i>jobactive</i> on a voluntary basis anytime from arrival.</p>
Migration program – Improving economic outcomes for secondary skilled migrants		<p><i>Skilled Migration Points Test</i> will be adjusted to award additional points to primary applicants when their partner has competent English but does not meet the existing requirements for skilled partner points (i.e. English, under 45 years old, skilled occupation). With secondary skilled migrants being predominantly women, this measure must be accompanied by adequate supports for the cohort.</p>