

Budget 2019 – Women with disabilities

Women With Disabilities Budget Overview

Measured against the priorities for women with disabilities that we have identified, the 2019 budget does not address the needs of the 90% of women with disabilities who are not eligible for the NDIS. There is some optimism that the extra funds made available from the underspend in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will improve the situation for participants.

It is welcome to see that the underspend is no longer to be diverted into other spending, although unsettling that the government relies on positive budget figures to secure NDIS funding rather than setting up the NDIS Savings Fund (2016-17 measure). Positive outcomes for people who are NDIS participants are dependent on having plans that can be implemented. This has to be addressed structurally at the Agency level. Improving the price structure for service providers with the freed-up funds is good, although it may not be enough.

There is little in the budget for women with disabilities who are not eligible for the NDIS. Estimates of numbers on Newstart indicate that about 50% were people with disabilities. This increase in numbers has largely been brought about through the changes to DSP eligibility criteria introduced in 2012. Although the energy supplement of \$75 (single) and \$125 (couple) (bp.2. p.175) has been extended to Newstart recipients post-budget, this does not offset the poverty that women with disabilities experience on this payment.

A positive measure is the allocation of funding for the Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disabilities. The \$527.9 million allocated over 5 years is at a realistic level, and sets at a 5-year time frame for this complex Royal Commission to run. It is also pleasing that the government will provide \$148.8M over 3 years to DSS, NDIS and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, to provide counselling services and other supports in connection with people's participation in the Royal Commission (bp.2. p.70). We want women to have equitable access to these funds.

Also welcome are measures under the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children to allocate \$13.4M to address DFV experienced by vulnerable groups, although the amount itself is miniscule. Welcome also is \$4M to address technology facilitated abuse experienced by women with intellectual disabilities.

Individual Budget measures are examined in the Budget Measures table below, but overall women with disabilities will have to work hard to ensure they get equitable access to any mental health measures, apprenticeships, or emergency housing. There is no evidence of specific funding in the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children to keep women safe in institutional settings.

WHAT ARE THE PARTICULAR ISSUES FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES?

Poverty & Economic Security:

- Forty-five percent of people with disabilities live in or near relative povertyⁱ. This is 2.5 times the poverty rate of non-disabled people and double the OECD average (22%).
- Those with mild to moderate core activity restrictions due to their disability are in the 90% of people with disabilities who are not eligible for NDIS support packages. They are increasingly likely to be on Newstart Allowance rather than the Disability Support Pension. At the same time they are still likely to have higher costs of living than non-disabled women.

The budget has not alleviated poverty stress for people on the lowest third of income levels. The tax cuts in contrast will deliver disproportionate benefits to people in higher income brackets.

The Royal Commission:

- Government should commit itself to fully fund and support the Royal Commission into violence, abuse and neglect of people with disabilities, and to take a gendered approach to recognise the impact of gender and disability discrimination on women's self-confidence and self-esteem, in turn affecting their ability to bring their grievances to the commissioners. The Royal Commission should be allowed to run over full election cycle at a minimum.

It is positive that \$527.9M has been allocated to the conduct of the Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disabilities. A further \$148.8M over 3 years is allocated to DSS, NDIS and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, to provide counselling services and other supports in connection with people's participation in the Royal Commission (bp.2. p.70). This is welcome funding.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

- Women with disabilities are only 38% of participants in the NDIS. The agency needs to show leadership in employment of people with disabilities, including at all levels achieved by meeting a quota of 51% for employment of people with disabilitiesⁱⁱ (this is not to include people who are the primary carers of people with disabilities). There needs to be a requirement for training of employees in human rights (in particular CRPD and CEDAW), the social model of disability, and the impact of violence abuse and neglect on functioning and activities of daily living (ADLs). Changes must be made to implement functional assessments in planning and review, in order to move away from reliance on diagnoses, so that outcomes are closer to a social model that is rights based.
- Intersectionality also needs to be better acknowledged in assessment and review, as the percentage of people with disabilities with two or more disabilities is high. Estimates of the number of people with cognitive impairment who have a dual disability with a psychiatric disorder varies from 9% to 39%.^{iiiiv}

It is welcome to see that the underspend is no longer to be diverted into other spending, although unsettling that the government relies on positive budget figures to secure NDIS funding rather than setting up the NDIS Savings Fund (2016-17 measure). Positive outcomes for people who are NDIS participants are dependent on having plans that can be implemented. This has to be addressed structurally at the Agency level. Improving the price structure for service providers with the freed-up funds is good, although it may not be enough.

Housing initiatives:

- There is a need for funding to be made available for a further increase in supply of social and public housing to be matched by states and territories through national housing programs. All housing should be accessible and sustainable in design to minimise heating/cooling costs. All new Class 1A (private) dwellings should have minimum levels of accessibility as outlined in the National Dialogue on Universal Housing Design.^{vi}

Under Specific Purpose Payments (bp.3. p.49), there is \$1.6B allocated per annum to 2023 for the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, \$114.9M per annum under National Partnerships Payments to fund affordable housing services. The concern is that accessible housing is not mandated under the Building Construction Code, so that women with disabilities may not benefit from any NHHA builds.

Employment:

- People with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as the non-disabled (10% versus 5%^{vii}). Women with disabilities face greater discrimination in the open employment market. Despite a greater proportion of women with disabilities (compared to men with disabilities) having post school qualifications, they are half as likely to have full time work as their male counterparts and twice as likely to have part time work.
- The NDIA needs to reinforce and amplify its employment goal-setting to focus on support for people with disabilities to find and keep a job and have the expectation of a career pathway.

The new Job Active services model is to provide digital services for some job-seekers, and a more targeted mutual obligation framework. The budget includes \$249.8M over 4 years for a pilot program (bp.2. p.165) targeting 95,000 jobseekers. It will not commence nationally until July 2022. Historically, women with disabilities have not accessed these services and have had lower success rates when they have use them. This parallels their experiences when accessing Disability Employment Services.

The government will provide \$67M over 5 years to support Australian Disability Enterprises to transition to a new wage assessment model. Women with disabilities are about 50% of the 20,000 people using ADEs for employment. This is not new money. The ADE reforms are good but do not change the basic structure of businesses to empower and build capacity of employees.

Social Welfare:

- The current debt recovery process has unfairly impacted on women with disabilities who have to juggle caring responsibility with job-search obligations. Thirty-two percent of women with disabilities have a primary carer role.^{viii} There is a need for review of the social security system to look at the fairness of the definitions in impairment tables for eligibility to the DSP.

The budget has allocated \$280M for 10,000 home care packages (ACOSS MR 2 April). This will only go a small way to addressing the backlog of 100,000 aged care packages.

There is \$460M for mental health initiatives. Women with disabilities may benefit if they get equitable access to the programs.

The budget has allocated \$23.6M over 4 years to various organisations to deliver diversity and inclusion programs using sport and physical activity. This may provide opportunities for some women with disabilities

Violence against Women:

- Violence against women with disabilities is an urgent and largely unaddressed issue. The National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women needs to cover all settings in which violence experienced by women with disabilities occurs.

The budget allocates \$328M over 4 years for the 4th Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children (bp.2. p.176). This includes \$75.4M for emergency accommodation. It is essential that all emergency accommodation built is fully accessible. The Plan will provide \$13.4 million for a range of DFV support services to assist vulnerable women. This is a small amount of money over 4 years for a diverse range of vulnerable groups of which women with disabilities comprise the largest subgroup.

A welcome small measure is the allocation of \$4M to the Australian Communications and Media Authority to identify, report on and support victims of Technology Facilitated abuse including, specifically, women with intellectual disabilities, to protect themselves online (bp.2. p.177).

Emergency Accommodation (Women’s Refuges):

- Funding agreements for Emergency Accommodation should mandate the building of accommodation that meets the accessibility standards necessary to accommodate women with disabilities escaping domestic violence.

Under the National Plan, approximately \$60M of the \$75.4M for emergency accommodation must be matched by the states for builds in local government areas, etc. This funding was announced several weeks prior to the budget. Grant eligibility criteria are under development. It is essential that women’s services operate the emergency accommodation facilities and that they are fully accessible.

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)
A review of the social service system be undertaken and recommendations acted on, including the raising of the Newstart Allowance by \$75 per week, and including the veracity of the impairment tables to assess eligibility for the Disability Support Pension.	No	No increase to Newstart, 50% of whom are people with disabilities Nothing to address the decreasing numbers of people deemed ineligible for the DSP and thence relegated to Newstart. No funding for review of the welfare/social services system. The expansion of the Cashless Debit Card system in 2020 to 22,500 more people is likely to affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women disproportionately and detrimentally (DSS PP P.23) Reporting of income when it is received rather than when earned may improve burden of reporting for women with disabilities on Newstart (DSS Pp.23). Reduction of reporting errors will save \$2.1B over 4 years. The one-off payment of \$75 (single) and \$125 (couple) was extended to Newstart recipients on the day following the Budget.
An impact analysis of all policies and programs be undertaken to ensure that they account for the intersection of a range of attributes, primarily gender, but also disability, race, culture, and rurality.	No	No mention of the disproportionate cost of disability for some groups of women, including in rural areas. The Budget has committed \$14.1M for a Social Impact Investment trial (DSS PP p.24) but this is narrow in scope and does not apply to disability policy and outcomes
The scope of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children include all settings where women with disabilities experience violence, abuse and neglect.	Partial	Funding for the 4 th Action Plan of the National Plan has been announced previously. The \$328 million is insufficient to enable supports for legal services and women’s services to meet the needs of women, including women with disabilities, including \$263.5M to fund prevention strategies and frontline services initiatives. The only gendered information in the Budget relates to the funding for men’s behaviour change. The amount for that is separate to the National Plan and is still inadequate. The scope of the National Plan has not been formally changed to include women in institutional settings

The Royal Commission into the abuse, violence and neglect of people with disabilities be gender aware, adequately resourced, and have an allowable time frame beyond a single election cycle.	Yes	<p>The \$527.9M earmarked for the Royal Commission over 5 years is a significant amount and establishes a realistic timeframe, Funding support services of \$148.8M to assist and provide counselling for women with disabilities to appear as witnesses is also good recognition of the challenges.</p> <p>However, there is nothing to indicate that the support money will be allocated in a way that does not penalise women.</p>
National Disability Insurance Agency	Partial	<p>The underspend in money allocated to the NDIS was partly addressed pre-budget with the allocation of \$800M approx. to increase service provision rates</p> <p>The underspend in people’s plans is not addressed. The staffing level freeze is also not addressed.</p> <p>The current underspend accounts for approximately one quarter of the projected 2018-19 surplus.</p>
Other budget measures		
Measure Comment		
Education: funding for apprenticeship program		The projected 80,000 apprenticeship places are unlikely to assist women with disabilities, being targetted to stereotypically male trade areas.
Housing:		\$78.4M under the National Plan to provide safe places (refuges) for people escaping violence. This is not new money, and a high proportion (\$60M) is tied to matching by states and territories. It does not embed the need for refuges to be run by women’s services (DSS PP p.25)
National Disability Strategy		No funding for development or implementation of the National Disability Strategy 2020-2030
Leadership for women		No funding for leadership initiatives targeting women with disabilities who remain unrepresented on government advisory boards, in leadership positions, and as politicians at any level of government.
Mental Health:		Funding for Mental Health Services of \$360M is welcome but inadequate. There is no recognition of dual disability with mental health condition in addition to a primary disability
National Centre for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse: \$22.5M to 2024-25 (DSS PP p.25)		The initiative is good but the amount probably inadequate.
Money for Carers: \$84.3M for planned and emergency respite services, including young carers		Unclear what is meant by respite services, since carer respite has been not been recognised under the NDIS. To be rolled out through an enhanced Carer Gateway, commencing July 2019.

¹ Price Waterhouse Coopers, Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) (2011) *Disability expectations: Investing in a better life, a stronger Australia*; accessed online at: <https://www.pwc.com.au/industry/government/assets/disability-in-australia.pdf>.

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- ⁱⁱ People With Disabilities Australia, Federal Election 2019, <https://pwd.org.au/federal-election-2019/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ State Government of Victoria, Department of Human Services, *Intellectual Disability*, 2015
- ^{iv} National Association for persons with Developmental disabilities and mental health needs, *information on dual diagnosis*, <http://thenadd.org/resources/information-on-dual-diagnosis-2/>
- ^v Mind Australia, *Mind Australia's approach to working with people who have a dual disability*,
- ^{vi} Department of Social Services, *National Dialogue on Universal Housing Design – Strategic Plan, 2010*, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/national_dialogue_strategic_plan.pdf ,
- ^{vii} Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers 2015*, Cat. No. 4430.0, Summary of Findings, 2015
- ^{viii} Ibid.