

Budget 2020 – Climate Change and Energy

Disaster Risk Reduction, Management and Recovery Overview

The 2020-21 Budget fails to respond to the importance of gender in relation to disaster preparedness and management. In spite of rhetoric, COVID-19¹ is not recognised or treated as a gendered disaster in the 2020-21 Budget. There is a lack of significant structural investment in sectors such as health and care services required to enable risk reduction and resilience against future pandemics.

The Budget fails to address the gendered impacts of disasters, including increased violence and economic insecurity. There is a focus on masculine military and technological approaches to managing disasters, and on shovel-ready recovery projects where economic benefits will flow to men, exacerbating gender inequality. The Budget fails to enable communities, women and other marginalised groups experiencing marginalisation to lead and take an active role in risk management and recovery, following the [UN Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction](#).

Disaster Risk Reduction, Management and Recovery

The Budget

Disaster and Emergency management

The 2020-21 Budget allocates funding to strengthening the capacity of military to respond and manage disasters and emergencies. The Defence portfolio includes a set of measures to strengthen the capacity of the Australian Defence Force to support the response and management of COVID-19 and other disasters, including \$80.7 million for in 2020-21 to assist with the COVID-19 response.

COVID-19 Response Package — Australian Defence Force deployment

Payments (\$m)

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Department of Defence	80.7	-	-	-

Source: 2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 70.

¹ This chapter is not intended to focus on the COVID-19 disaster management and recovery given this is a focus of the 2020-21 Gender Lens more broadly.

Disaster Risk Reduction

In spite of 2019 being marked by drought and unprecedented bushfire disasters, there is no additional funding to the Disaster Risk Reduction National Partnership Agreement, although funding is maintained at the levels allocated in the 2019-20 Budget of \$20.9 million per year for the next four years.

The Budget includes a significant additional investment of \$254.6 million over four years to the Bureau of Meteorology, including \$225.6 million over three years from 2021-22, and a commitment to \$143.7 million per year from 2024-25, to enable the Bureau to respond to concurrent weather emergency events during times of natural disaster.

Disaster Recovery

Additional expenditure on disaster recovery is positive. The Government has committed \$155.6 million over four years for a package of measures to support farmers and communities in drought. This includes:

- \$50.0 million in Commonwealth funding in 2020-21 to extend the On farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme, through National Partnership Agreements with states and territories
- \$19.6 million in 2021-22 to extend the drought function of the National Drought and North Queensland Flood Response and Recovery Agency for a further year to continue coordination and community engagement for the Government's response and recovery activities in relation to the drought
- \$86.0 million over four years from 2020-21 through the Future Drought Fund to establish eight Drought Resilience and Adoption Hubs that support networks of researchers, farmers, agricultural business and community groups to enhance drought resilience practice, tools and technology. This is part of the \$100 million commitment per year delivered under the Future Drought Fund, and builds on the support provided in the July 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update measure titled Drought Response, Resilience and Preparedness plan — further support for farmers and communities in drought (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p.p.8).

Gender implications

Why is this an issue for women?

- Disasters are gendered. In Australia, disasters reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes within families and communities, with women contributing to unpaid community support work, caring for children and family, while men lead physical disaster management roles.
- Response and recovery is a period in which cisheteronormative gender roles are amplified, where women are more likely to take on increased caring responsibilities created by the disaster, and men are celebrated for heroic and strong frontline responses.
- As a result of increasing unpaid care, disasters increase women's economic insecurity where women lose or forgo employment opportunities on taking up additional community and care responsibilities. Evidence shows this pattern has recurred in the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, and the 2011 floods in Queensland and Victoria.

- There is a strong Australian body of evidence that disasters increase rates of gender-based violence, including from the 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires.
- Disasters can also be an opportunity to transform gender roles and inequality. Disaster recovery can be an opportunity for social and normative change, and for promoting gender equality as communities and lives are rebuilt.

What are the 2020 Budget impacts on women?

There is no intersectional gender lens on investment in disaster risk reduction, management or recovery in the 2020 Budget, or consideration of language, cultural safety and accessibility barriers for women during disasters, or expenditure for this purpose.

Disaster and Emergency Management

Disaster and Emergency Management expenditure is focused on the Defence portfolio. Military-led disaster management can enable a masculinist command and response approach to disaster leadership, and reinforce gender roles and norms which are amplified in disaster contexts. The 2012 AHRC review of the Australian Defence Force found strong masculine stereotypes within the armed forces and ‘othering of women’. While representation of women is increasing, the Australian Defence Force is currently comprised of 18.6 per cent women. Without inclusion of gender specialists and recognition of the role of gender in disasters, funding allocations to support military approaches to disaster management risk reinforcing rigid gender norms which emerge during disasters, and the flow on impacts for women’s increased economic insecurity and increased rates of gender-based violence.

Disaster Risk Reduction

Expenditure to support the Bureau of Meteorology is positive but will not enable gender-responsive disaster risk reduction. In comparison with \$254.7 million over four years invested in the Bureau, funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Disaster Risk Reduction, which is targeted at state, regional and local resilience, remains static at \$83.6 million over four years. The balance and technical emphasis of risk reduction expenditure lacks an equal focus on building the capacity of communities and women with diverse lived experiences to take an active role in shaping response to disaster risk, and which can reduce the gendered impact of disasters.

In addition, the lack of any additional expenditure on services preventing and responding to domestic and family violence fails to conceive of addressing gender-based violence as part of disaster preparedness.

Disaster Recovery

Disaster recovery measures are focused on shovel-ready infrastructure projects and the disproportionately small focus on strengthening care industries undermines women’s economic security in recovery. \$86.0 million under the Future Drought Fund partnership with States and Territories is committed to establishing eight Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs targeted at researchers, farmers and agricultural businesses, where men make up 65.6 per cent of the workforce, and community groups to enhance drought resilient practice and tools. This is positive, but there is a need for appropriate consultation and involvement of women in the Hubs in order to ensure women and gender issues are included, and that the benefits of this funding measure are gender equitable.

The majority of the Supporting Regional Australia expenditure, \$207.7m, is allocated to shovel-ready infrastructure and capital works under the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications. Employment benefits under the measure will flow to male-dominated industries without any balancing measures to ensure equitable outcomes for women's economic security and recovery. By comparison, only \$50.0 million is directed toward tourism-related job retention and creation, an important [industry of employment](#) for women in which they just over half of employees.

Collectively, the balance of 2020 Budget does not contain a gender lens which would capitalise on the opportunity to progress gender equality as part of recovery.

Recommendations

NFAW recommends that Government:

- Increase funding to gender aware disaster risk reduction initiatives that involve communities and marginalised groups, including women, in disaster planning and preparedness, including funding to support the implementation of the [Gender and Emergency Guidelines](#);
- Increase overall funding to care services such as aged care and child care, to ensure greater capacity in community infrastructure and less reliance on women's unpaid care during disasters;
- Support disaster recovery measures which are informed by intersectional gender analysis and consultation across portfolios, and which promote women's economic security and gender equality; and
- Increase funding to domestic and family services as a preparedness measure.

References

Alston, M. (2017). 'Gender outcomes in post-disaster sites: Public policy and resource distribution', in *Climate Change and Gender in Rich Countries: Work, Public Policy and Action*, ed. M. Griffin Cohen, Oxon, New York: Routledge.