

Budget 2019 – Young women

Young Women Budget Overview

It is apparent that the particular experiences and views of young women have not been included in the development of the Budget, pointing to the need to reinstate key mechanisms for young people's voices and experiences to be part of national policy-making, including a Minister for Youth. The 2019 budget does not make any progress towards national youth policy and does not reinstate funding for a national peak body for young Australians.

The Budget raises issues of intergenerational equity which have been prominent in Australian policy and budget debates over recent years, and leave these unresolved, pointing to the need for intergenerational analysis in the development of budgets to ensure equity.

Individual Budget measures are examined in the Budget Measures table below, but overall the Budget does not deliver in key areas that affect young women including a failure to raise Newstart and Youth Allowance in real terms and address the pressing issue of youth homelessness. Some positive commitments have been made in the area of mental health.

WHAT ARE THE PARTICULAR ISSUES FOR YOUNG WOMEN?

There are a wide range of issues that currently affect Australian young women. These include (but are not limited to):

- The casualisation of the workforce, high rates of under-employment, increase in the gig economy and increasing unpaid internships make it difficult for young people to find steady, secure employment with access to paid leave and superannuation.¹ The youth unemployment rate is currently 12.6% overall and 12.3% for young women aged 15-24, compared to an unemployment rate of 5.1% for the total population.²
- A higher proportion of males than females reported feeling confident or very confident in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after finishing school in a recent study by Mission Australia.³
- Despite high rates of participation in post-secondary education, young women continue to experience inequity in pay. For example, the gender pay gap is apparent even at graduation -

¹ Brotherhood of St Laurence, March 2017), *Generation Stalled: Young, underemployed and living precariously in Australia*.

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³ Mission Australia, 2018, *Gender gaps: Findings from the Youth Survey 2018*.

the average gap for recent graduates is 9.4% favouring men; the gender pay gap for some study areas is substantially higher.⁴

- In Australia, women aged 18 to 24 are at the highest risk of experiencing sexual violence compared to women in older age groups and men. Data from the 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey found that approximately 1 in 20 women in this age group reported experiencing sexual assault in the last 12 months.⁵ Research has shown that 24% of young women aged 18-24 have had a nude or sexual photo/video posted online or sent on without their consent.⁶
- Young women also have the highest rate of assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services, with domestic, family and sexual violence cited as the main reasons for needing help.⁷
- One in four young people are at risk of serious mental illness, and the risk is greater in Indigenous groups and young women.⁸ Twice as many females than males were likely to report high levels of concern over coping with stress and mental health in a recent study by Mission Australia.⁹

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 introduction of mechanisms to support national youth policy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Minister for Youth 	Not applicable	Appointment of a Minister for Youth is not a budgetary measure.
The introduction of mechanisms to support national youth policy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for a national peak body for young people 	No	The Government has not committed to funding a national peak body for young people in the 2019-20 Budget. The national peak, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, last received funding in 2013.
Other budget measures		
Measure	Comment	
Welfare support for young women	The Budget does not provide for raising Newstart, Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY or Commonwealth Rent Assistance in real terms.	

⁴ WGEA, 2017, *Gender Equity Insights 2017: Inside Australia's Gender Pay Gap*; WGEA, 2018, *Higher education enrolments and graduate labour market statistics*.

⁵ Australia Bureau of Statistics, *Personal Safety Australia*, 2017.

⁶ Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 2017, 'Image-based abuse: Prevalence & pathways', <https://www.esafety.gov.au/image-based-abuse/about/research/prevalence-pathways>

⁷ Homelessness Australia, 2016, <https://www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/sites/homelessnessaus/files/2017-07/Young%20People.pdf>

⁸ Mission Australia and Black Dog Institute, 2017, *Youth mental health report: Youth survey 2012-16*.

⁹ Mission Australia, 2018, *Gender gaps: Findings from the Youth Survey 2018*.

Mental health	The Government has committed funding in the area of mental health, including initiatives that will benefit young people such as: funding for headspace youth mental health services, Indigenous suicide prevention initiatives, incorporating international best practice into an Australian framework to improve mental health outcomes for young people, and the establishment of a Youth Services Hub in Victoria.
Violence against women	It is positive to see investment in the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women, including primary prevention measures and funding to assist women who experience violence. However, further significant funding is required to address the overwhelming prevalence of violence against women, and in particular the high rates of violence experienced by young women.
Homelessness and housing	The Budget did not make any funding commitments to address the high rates of youth homelessness or improve the accessibility of affordable housing.
Skills package – vocational education and training and apprenticeships	It is positive to see investment in Vocational Education and Training, however the measures announced in the Budget are insufficient to repair the broken VET sector, and much more significant reform is still required. The provision of funding to boost new apprenticeships will need to be carefully considered to ensure women and girls also benefit from the program, which is often heavily focused on male-dominated trades.

NFAW is dedicated to promoting and protecting the interests of Australian women, including intellectual, cultural, political, social, economic, legal, industrial and domestic spheres, and ensuring that the aims and ideals of the women's movement and its collective wisdom are handed on to new generations of women. NFAW is a feminist organisation, independent of party politics. This position paper is one of a set of position papers developed by NFAW's Social Policy Committee which summarise 2019 Budget measures of importance to women in Australia.

Election 2019 – Young women

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- A higher proportion of males than females reported feeling confident or very confident in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after finishing school in a recent study by Mission Australia.³
- Despite high rates of participation in post-secondary education, young women continue to experience inequity in pay. For example, the gender pay gap is apparent even at graduation - the average gap for recent graduates is 9.4% favouring men; the gender pay gap for some study areas is substantially higher.⁴
- In Australia, women aged 18 to 24 are at the highest risk of experiencing sexual violence compared to women in older age groups and men. Data from the 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey found that approximately 1 in 20 women in this age group reported experiencing sexual assault in the last 12 months.⁵ Research has shown that 24% of young women aged 18-24 have had a nude or sexual photo/video posted online or sent on without their consent.⁶
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⁶ Office of the eSafety Commissioner, 2017, 'Image-based abuse: Prevalence & pathways', <https://www.esafety.gov.au/image-based-abuse/about/research/prevalence-pathways>

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⁸ Mission Australia and Black Dog Institute, 2017, *Youth mental health report: Youth survey 2012-16*.

⁹ Mission Australia, 2018, *Gender gaps: Findings from the Youth Survey 2018*.

ELECTION COMMITMENTS

The table below sets out how fully parties' current election commitments address NFAW recommendations: **Full implementation** **Partial implementation** **No or negative response**

NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
The appointment of a Minister for Youth.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS
The ALP will appoint a Federal Minister for Young Australians and Youth Affairs	The Liberal Government has not had a Minister for Youth since 2013.	The Australian Greens will establish a Federal Minister for Youth.
NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
Funding for a national peak body for young people.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS
The ALP will restore funding to the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC), providing \$600,000 annually for 4 years. Additionally, Labor has committed \$3 million for projects conducted in partnership with youth stakeholders, including building a youth worker community of practice, creating opportunities for direct representation of young people, and other activities.	The Liberal Government did not commit to funding a national peak body for young people in the 2019-20 Budget. The national peak, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, last received funding in 2013.	The Australian Greens will reinstate funding for the national youth peak organisation, the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC), at \$2 million per annum.

OTHER ELECTION COMMITMENTS		
Commitment	Party	Comments
Youth policy – The Greens will reinstate funding for National Youth Week, and give 16 and 17 year olds the right to vote	Greens	<p>National Youth Week is an annual celebration of young people. Funding for the celebration was cut in 2015, along with the National Youth Awards.</p> <p>Extending the vote to 16- and 17-year olds acknowledges that young people are contributing members of society with a right to have a say on the way that the country is governed. It provides an avenue for young people to have their voice heard on key issues affecting them and that they care about.</p>

Authorised by Kate Gunn, Sydney.