

# Election 2019 – Older women

## WHAT ARE THE PARTICULAR ISSUES FOR OLDER WOMEN?

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- Between the 2011 and 2016 Census, the numbers of women aged 55+ experiencing homelessness rose by 31%. Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare indicate a 10.8% annual average increase of women aged 55+ assisted by specialist homelessness services between 2011-12 and 2017-18.
- Census 2016 recorded that of the over 100,000 people homeless on census night, 49,017 were women.
- Sixty-one per cent of individuals receiving homelessness services are women. (AIHW, Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2017-18, cat. no. HOU 299).
- **Commonwealth rent allowance:** increasing numbers of older women cannot afford private rent and face homelessness. The Commonwealth rent allowance, the only specific financial assistance available to female age pensioners, was not increased in the Budget. Virtually no properties on the commercial rental market can be afforded by older women aged pensioners without assets.
- Social or public housing has long waiting lists—60,000 in NSW alone. Waiting time is up to ten years. Public housing estates have been allowed to deteriorate and are often unsafe for older women.
- **Commonwealth support for community housing providers:** housing from community housing providers is the only option for poor older women. These providers manage only a fraction of the number of units needed by otherwise homeless older women. Needs far outstrip supply.
- **Commonwealth policy to reduce Elder Abuse:** national data still being collected but probably one in ten older people are abused. More older women than older men are affected.
- The Commonwealth is the main funder of residential aged care and home-based care. Older women are the majority receivers of both forms of aged care.
  - Most aged care residences are understaffed. The aged care workforce is undertrained, especially in relation to dementia. Care staff are undertrained. Providers are not required to employ trained nurses. GPs are reluctant to visit residences because of absence of qualified staff and inadequate Medicare payments.
  - The current shortfall in at home care packages exceed 100,000. Waiting time after assessment can be up to three years.

## ELECTION COMMITMENTS

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

See related papers on franking credits, aged care and health.

NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
Realistic increases to commonwealth rent allowance.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS
No announcements relating to Commonwealth Rent Assistance.	CRA will be maintained at current levels. There is a slight increase in the total Budget from last financial year (\$4.4 billion) to the next one (\$4.6 billion) reflecting increased numbers and CPI indexation.	Increase Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) by <u>30%</u> and review CRA structure to look at setting rates by location in line with average rental costs and sharers rules.
NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
Funding support to ensure a rapid increase in social and community housing.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS
<p>Labor will develop and implement a plan to reduce homelessness through the Council of Australian Governments. Labor's plan will consider the gendered drivers of homelessness.</p> <p>The NHHA is the principle source of Commonwealth funding for social housing and homelessness services. <u>The ALP has referenced plans to improve the NHHA and to establish an \$88 million Safe housing Fund with a focus on women and children escaping domestic and family violence.</u> The detail around improving the NHHA is focussed on increasing the accountability and utility of the agreement <u>but there are no specific plans to increase its funding envelope.</u> Although not specifically tied to the NHHA (which is direct investment in social housing), the announcement that <u>250 000 affordable homes will be built through a program similar to the National Rental Affordability Scheme constitutes a \$6.6 billion capital investment in affordable housing.</u></p>	<p>The NHHA is the principle source of Commonwealth funding for social housing and homelessness services. There are no funding increases to the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA). \$1.5 billion has been allocated to the Agreement for 19-20. This maintains long-standing funding levels for this Agreement. These are the funding levels which have overseen burgeoning waiting lists across the country and continual increases in unmet need in specialist homelessness services. See below for detail of the \$78.4 million in funding for domestic and family violence housing (administered outside of NHHA). There is capital funding outside of the NHHA of <u>\$30 million to provide over 100 new social housing dwellings in Greater Hobart</u> in partnership with community housing providers (as part of the \$529.9 million it will provide to Hobart City Deal projects over 11 years from 2018-19).</p>	<p>The NHHA is the principle source of Commonwealth funding for social housing and homelessness services. While not specifically referencing the NHHA, there is a plan to build <u>500 000 public and community houses through a National Housing Trust.</u>The Greens are proposing to deliver <u>10 year funding agreements for homelessness services and to increase funding</u> for homelessness services to \$500 million through the NHHA.</p>

NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
Immediate steps to upgrade the training of aged care workforce and introduction of patient/nurse ratios.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS
No targeted increases until after the Royal Commission, but a \$1 billion commitment to TAFE, including waiving upfront fees for 100,000 TAFE students and supporting a 150,000 growth in apprenticeships. Some of this extra skills funding may assist care workers to attain basic qualifications. No commitment on patient nurse ratios.	\$34m to create a centre to train aged-care providers. In addition, some of the extra skills funding may assist care workers to attain basic qualifications. No commitment to patient nurse ratios.	Greens will review the Aged Care Funding Instrument which measures the level of care each resident needs and informs the allocation of Government subsidies to residential aged care providers.  The Greens will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support a full and independent review of ACFI, alongside a true cost of care study. and commit an initial investment of \$3 billion to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase hours of care provided to each resident in residential aged care to four hours and eighteen minutes per day</li> </ul> </li> <li>• require staff-to-resident ratios that ensure an adequate level of care including a minimum of one registered nurse rostered 24/7</li> <li>• increase pay for aged care workers by 15%</li> </ul>
NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
Adequate new funding to meet the current shortfall in at home care packages.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS
No current commitment.	10,000 new places, leaving over 100,000 shortfall.	Provide funding for an additional 50,000 level 3 and 4 Home Care Packages over three years at a cost of \$5.491 b.
NFAW RECOMMENDATION		
Funding of community education programs focused on identifying, reporting and protecting elder abuse cases.		
PARTY COMMITMENTS		
ALP	LNP	GREENS
No current commitment.	\$18m for a national elder abuse hotline.	Guarantee a human rights based approach to aged care, and Introduce mandatory reporting on the use of chemical and physical restraints in aged care facilities, with a plan to end the use of restraints.

OTHER ELECTION COMMITMENTS		
Commitment	Party	Comments
\$10m for a 'seniors connected' program to help older Australians deal with loneliness.	LNP	Endorsed.

<b>The Greens will:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish a cap on the percentage of the funding given to service providers that can be used for administration rather than direct resident care.</li></ul>	Greens Endorsed.
	Choose an item.

Authorised by Kate Gunn, Sydney.