



## AUSTRALIAN GENDER EQUALITY COUNCIL

*working for balance*

### **MEDIA RELEASE (for release 31 March 2022)**

#### **Morrison once again stunningly silent in addressing the needs of women in this year's budget**

Despite more than two years of Australian women and women's advocacy groups speaking out, how is it that the Morrison Government continues to get it so wrong in addressing the systemic issues surrounding women in this country?

With the handing down of the Federal Budget 2022-23 on Tuesday night, Josh Frydenberg touted women as one of this budget's winners with its promise of \$2.1 billion in measures to improve the safety, health and economic security of women 'as part of its plan for a stronger future.'

Chair of the Australian Gender Equality Council (AGEC), Ms Coral Ross AM, couldn't disagree more with the government's approach.

"In terms of gender equality, women's safety, leadership and economic security, this budget is not only underwhelming but retrograde and misleading. Much of what was announced was a repeat of last year's budget" Ms Ross said.

Ms Ross said that while there was \$2.1 billion worth of measures announced in the Women's Budget Statement (WBS), this represents a drop on last year's statement that amounted to \$3.4 billion - a decrease of \$1.3 billion in funding.

"This budget has once again shown a deliberate lack of vision and care for Australian women, by presenting a budget full of one-off payments that won't affect long term issues and one full of previous announcements," she said.

"The Budget is entirely silent on the single most significant opportunity - universal childcare – which is acknowledged by economists as a key structural change that will not only benefit women but the whole economy."

"While AGEC is happy to see the changes to the government's Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme to allow single parents to take all 20 weeks, we are disappointed for fathers.

"Without systemic change and programs to breakdown gender stereotypes, combining the payment to allow families to choose how they divide up parental leave, will only lead to women taking all 20 weeks leave - guaranteeing no significant improvement for women and making it more difficult for men to take leave," Ms Ross said.

"The government has also failed to include any superannuation payment on this Parental Leave Pay, which means the superannuation gap between men and women at retirement will continue to widen.

“We are pleased that \$18.5m over four years has been allocated for Workplace Gender Equality Agency to implement recommendations from review of WGEA Act plus money for WGE Excellence Awards” she said.

In terms of Women’s Safety, the government also announced \$54.6 million over the next five years toward the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes program, which will focus on giving women technology to check if people who’ve experienced domestic violence are being tracked.

“While any funding is great, this amount is definitely tokenistic and misses the point,” Ms Ross said.

“For Australia to achieve real outcomes-based change for women, the Federal Government needs to take a holistic, integrated strategic approach to the issues affecting Australian women, while at the same time providing significant and long-term funding to the sector.

“To do this, the Government must commit to not only establishing a comprehensive National Strategy that supports victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment but also long-term programs to eliminate gender stereotypes, and promote respect for women and girls including the adoption of all 55 recommendations of the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Respect @Work report. And while the Government says it supports all 28 recommendations of Set the Standard there is nothing in the budget to implement them.

“They must stop nibbling at the edges of the problem and make a genuine and manifest commitment to equality of women’s political representation and leadership and women’s economic security.”

“Now is the time for real change, the time to establish a robust and sustainable framework within government for achieving true gender equality and safety for women. The Government needs a Gender Equality Strategy, ” Ms Ross said.

AGEC is a national not-for-profit organisation representing over 500,000 women in the workplace, and was formed to respond to the unacceptably slow pace of change towards gender equality in Australia.

AGEC stands ready to assist and advise the government on implementing a comprehensive gender equality strategy and program of policies.

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## **About the Australian Gender Equality Council (AGEC)**

AGEC is a non-government, not for profit organisation – a peak body across a wide range of industry and community sectors advocating for gender equality. We use an evidence-based approach to highlight the facts, the benefits of change, and to ensure initiatives achieve long-term, sustainable change. We have a strong social media and online presence that focuses on building awareness across the community of the need for change with messages that connect with everyone. Our members include Engineers Australia, FINSIA, Women in Aviation, the National Rural Women's Coalition, Women in Construction, Women in Banking & Finance, Australian Women Lawyers, Women in Technology and many others. We operate on an entirely voluntary basis and rely on grassroots and in-kind funding. For more information on AGEC see our website [www.agec.org.au](http://www.agec.org.au)

## **Member Organisations of the Australian Gender Equality Council**

Australasian Women in Emergencies Network (AWEN)  
Australian Federation of Business & Professional Women (AFBPW)  
Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA)  
Australian Women Lawyers (AWL)  
Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA)  
Economic Security for Women (eS4W)  
Elevate Her Australia (EHA)  
Engineers Australia  
Financial Services Institute of Australasia (FINSIA)  
National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) Women in Super (WIS)  
National Association of Women in Operations (NAWO)  
National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC)  
Older Women's Network (OWN)  
Tradeswomen Australia (TWA)  
Transport Women Australia (TWA)  
Women and Leadership Australia (WLA)  
Women for Election Australia (WFEA)  
Women in Automotive (WinA)  
Women in Aviation Australian Chapter (WAI)  
Women in Banking and Finance (WIBF)  
Women in Digital (WID)  
Women in Gaming & Hospitality (WGA)  
Women in Super (WIS)  
Women in Technology (WIT)