



Australian Gender Equality Council

working for balance

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Women must remain a priority in the 2022 Federal Election

As the major parties focus their election campaigns on winning over marginal seats, Australian women eagerly await each party's announcement on how they intend to address the urgent issues surrounding gender equality.

With 12.8 million women in Australia, making up just over 50% of Australia's population, the parties have so far said little about how they will address the issues affecting such a major group of voters.

Chair of the Australian Gender Equality Council (AGEC), Ms Coral Ross AM, is calling on the parties and candidates to announce how they will address the issues surrounding women including childcare, safety and respect for women, women's economic security and achieving parity in women's representation and leadership in Australia.

"Despite two years of demonstrating, lobbying, and providing evidence-based solutions to government, we are yet to see the development of a comprehensive National Gender Equality Strategy that addresses the complex systemic changes required to improve the lives of Australian women," Ms Ross said.

Today, AGEC announces its key priorities and recommendations for what it believes electoral candidates should be targeting to demonstrate their commitments to women as part of a new government.

Ms Ross said that the new government's first major priority, as part of a National Gender Equality Strategy, should be to introduce free universal childcare, which is now widely acknowledged as a key driver of women's workforce participation and economic growth.

"Women's economic security is significantly hampered because women undertake a disproportionate share of family and caring responsibilities and the cost of childcare is prohibitive for many women" Ms Ross said.

"The Grattan Institute estimates a universal subsidy set at 95% of childcare costs would cost Government \$12 billion but it would boost GDP by \$27 billion a year. Clearly, free universal childcare would produce a net positive benefit to the economy," she said.

AGEC's Election Priorities also seek urgent action on safety and respect for women.

One woman dies every 11 days in Australia and countless more are impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence.

Ms Ross says as well as the physical and mental effects this has on women, their children and communities, the economic impact of this violence is estimated at over \$26 billion each year.

“To address this, the next government needs to prioritise materially greater investment into short and long-term services that support victims as well as change programs including consent, addressing gender role stereotypes and offender support programs,” Ms Ross said.

“They should also commit to the adoption of all 55 recommendations of the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Respect @Work report,” she said.

Finally, women’s economic security and representation and leadership needs to be prioritised.

AGEC reports that the Total Remuneration Gender Pay Gap continues to remain stubbornly high at 22.8% and represents pay disparity in Australia’s largely gender segregated economy. So called ‘Women’s Work’ continues to be undervalued and underpaid in Australia.

The Gender Pension Gap is also increasing with women currently retiring with 23.4% less superannuation than men and the homelessness rate for women over 55 being the highest rate of increase of any age group.

In addition, while Australian women were the first in the world to allow women to stand for public office, today the World Economic Forum notes that Australia stands at 54th out of 155 countries for women’s political empowerment and has declined from 15th in the world in 2005 to 50th in the world today, on measures of gender equality.

Managing Director of AGEC and Director of the AIBE Centre for Gender Equality in the Workplace, Associate Professor Dr Terrance Fitzsimmons describes these statistics and the past government’s handling of these issues as totally unacceptable, damaging to the interests of women and severely undermines not only Australia’s moral standing in the world, but its ability to compete economically.

“The next government needs to commit to the development of a National Gender Equality Strategy as soon as possible to tackle what is a complex set of problems with entrenched gender stereotypes at the heart of the issue,” Dr Fitzsimmons said.

“They should take into consideration examples from leading gender equality nations, gender balance in all Budget expenditure and policy and program decisions, interventions to increase the proportion of women with relevant experience in key decision-making roles in Government and non-government organisations, and explicitly address the gender issues in the National School Curriculum,” he said.

AGEC is a national, non-government, not for profit organisation, representing over 500,000 women across 25 industry and community sectors, advocating and producing research 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. We operate on an entirely voluntary basis and rely on grassroots and in-kind funding. For more information on AGECE see our website 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)
