



Australian Gender Equality Council
working for balance

MEDIA RELEASE (for immediate release)

The Australian Gender Equality Council says the Federal budget is mixed and fails to deliver on the intent of achieving gender equality in a generation

The Federal Government budget confirmed funding for several gender equality initiatives in gender-based violence, under-paid care workers, paid parental leave and women's health.

But there is little for front-line services, no real increase in job-seeker which is below the poverty line at 43 per cent of the minimum wage, and a complete miss on the provision of universal free early childhood education.

Of great concern to AGECC, there remains no allocation of funding to address the root causes of gender inequality, gender role stereotypes and the division of domestic labour.

"Despite the ambitions outlined and raised expectations created by the launch of the Federal Government's "Working for Women: A strategy for Gender Equality" in March, this year's Federal Budget which aims to create a "Future Made in Australia" falls short of being a serious budget aimed at ending gender inequality within a generation," said AGECC MD Associate Professor Dr Terrance Fitzsimmons.

Notwithstanding, AGECC is pleased the Government has committed:

- \$1.1 billion over four years from 2024-25 and \$623 million per year from 2028-29 to extend paid superannuation to include Commonwealth paid parental leave.
- To fund pay increases for aged care and early childhood workers in line with Fair Work Commission processes.
- \$1.6 billion over 11 years to provide paid work placements for teaching, nursing, midwifery and social work students.
- \$925 million over five years to establish the Leaving Violence Program
- Adapting the Stage 3 Tax Cuts to address gendered outcomes.
- To support gender procurement processes, so women-owned and led businesses will be able to self-nominate via the Voluntary Commonwealth Supplier Registration process through AusTender.
- \$55.6 million over four years for the Building Women's Careers program to advance women in key male dominated industries, including construction, clean energy, advanced manufacturing and digital technology.
- \$38.2 million over eight years to support a thriving, skilled and diverse STEM workforce.
- To the ongoing delivery of the Working for Women National Strategy.

AGECC is particularly pleased to see the Government has continued producing a Women's Budget Statement, and has addressed the undervaluing of women's work, especially in care industries. We

are also pleased to see the commitment to VET training for women and the funding of superannuation contributions on the Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave scheme.

AGEC is gratified at the commitment to drive change through procurement systems and access to Government procurement opportunities. And we welcome the \$777.4 million investment over five years in a new Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program. We are also pleased at the on-going commitment to Gender Responsive budgeting, but would like to see money allocated for this work.

However, despite the added emphasis on women's domestic and family violence, there is little allocated for frontline services, a predominantly female workforce of professionals who are supporting victims in a national crisis of gendered violence. Also, the Government has missed the opportunity of providing universal free early childhood education and has not addressed the Child Care Subsidy Activity Test.

"We know that providing universal free childcare will increase gross GDP by allowing more women to work, uplift productivity, give children the best start in life and will support families with cost-of-living pressures," said AGECE Chair Coral Ross AM.

We are disappointed that the budget does not address the women living in poverty in Australia. Job-Seeker payments sit below the poverty line at around just 43 per cent of minimum wage, trapping the most vulnerable Australians in poverty, of which a disproportionately large number are women.

Finally, we are deeply concerned at the lack of appropriate funding to the National Women's Alliances, which seems to have only increased by inflation despite the new work-loads imposed on the Alliances by the National Strategy for Gender Equality.

"It seems ironic to increase the workload of the Alliances, who largely comprise of female staff, without adequately compensating them for the increased workload. This is especially the case given the overarching intent of the National Gender Equality Strategy," said Dr Fitzsimmons

We strongly urge the Government to make these priorities for future policy and budgets.

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About the Australian Gender Equality Council (AGECE)

AGECE 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 AGECC see our website www.agecc.org.au

Member Organisations of the Australian Gender Equality Council

National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC)

Australian Federation of Business & Professional Women (AFBPW)

Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA)

Australian Women Lawyers (AWL)

Financial Services Institute of Australasia (FINSIA)

Women in Super (WIS)

Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA)

Women in Digital (WID)

Women and Leadership Australia (WLA)

Transport Women Australia (TWA)

Women in Aviation Australian Chapter (WAI)

Women in Banking and Finance (WIBF)

National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC)

National Association of Women in Operations (NAWO)

Women in Technology (WIT)

Economic Security for Women (eS4W)

Older Women's Network (OWN)

Women for Election Australia (WFEA)

Engineers Australia

Tradeswomen Australia (TWA)

Women in Automotive (WinA)

Elevate Her Australia (EHA)

Australasian Women in Emergencies Network (AWEN)