



Budget 2026–27

WOMEN'S BUDGET STATEMENT

Statement by

Senator the Honourable Katy Gallagher

Minister for Finance, Minister for Women, Minister for the Public Service,
Minister for Government Services of the Commonwealth of Australia

and

The Honourable Jim Chalmers MP

Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia

12 May 2026



Treasury acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.



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For the information of honourable members
on the occasion of the Budget 2026–27

12 May 2026

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Support and note on data

Support

This Statement includes information that may be distressing for some readers. It outlines the tragic impacts of violence against women, including sexual assault, as well as issues such as suicide and self-harm. The Government respectfully acknowledges and regrets the loss of those who have died, and the harm caused to those who are affected by violence, suicide or self-harm.

Help is available. Lifeline provides 24-hour support in Australia for those experiencing a personal crisis and can be contacted by calling 13 11 14 or visiting lifeline.org.au. 13YARN (13 92 76) is the 24-hour crisis support service for First Nations Australians. If you, or someone you know, is experiencing family, domestic or sexual violence, you can contact 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) or visit 1800respect.org.au for support. MensLine Australia (1300 789 978) offers free professional 24-hour telephone counselling support for men with concerns about mental health, relationships, anger management, family violence, stress, and suicidal thoughts.

Note about data

This Statement endeavours to include data and analysis to demonstrate the outcomes experienced by different groups of women, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, women with disability, women of different ages, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual or other sexually or gender diverse (LGBTQIA+) populations. There are, however, limitations to data in some cases, particularly small population or sample sizes. The Government is committed to ensuring data are available to help inform better outcomes for all Australians, noting that this needs to be culturally appropriate and protect the right to privacy.

This Statement uses unit record data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. The HILDA Project was initiated and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services and is managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (Melbourne Institute). The findings and views reported in this Statement, however, are those of the authors and should not be attributed to either Department of Social Services or the Melbourne Institute.

The majority of the data collected and reported in this Statement relate to sex, not gender. *Sex* is based upon the person's sex characteristics, such as their chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. *Gender* is a social and cultural concept. It is about social and cultural differences in identity, expression and experience as a man, woman or non-binary person. This Statement uses the terms *women* and *men* in reference to both sex and gender, but the terms *female* and *male* are used when presenting data collected on the basis of sex.

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Foreword

This is the Albanese Government's fifth Women's Budget Statement, reflecting our sustained commitment to making gender equality a core economic priority. Creating greater opportunity for the women of Australia is at the centre of the Albanese Government's economic agenda, because when everyone feels safe and valued, has choices and is able to participate fully in our economy and society, Australia is stronger, more productive and more resilient. Everyone stands to benefit from reforms that create fairer systems, structures and attitudes.

By placing gender equality at the centre of decision-making, the Government has driven meaningful progress, strengthened the foundations for lasting change, and developed the tools to navigate changing economic circumstances while protecting the hard-won gains for women. The Budget continues our focus on responsible economic and fiscal management, alongside targeted, structural investments that strengthen women's economic security and resilience and advance gender equality.

Over successive budgets, we have taken deliberate decisions to make and build on foundational reforms and investments in gender equality. This Women's Budget Statement reports on progress made since the first Women's Budget Statement and reflects the Government's continued efforts to advance gender equality across five priority areas: gender-based violence, unpaid and paid care, economic equality and security, health and leadership, representation and decision-making.

Reforms and investments made since 2022 are already improving the lives of women in Australia and will continue to do so into the future. Women's labour force participation reached a record high in 2025. The gender pay gap is at a historic low of 11.5 per cent and women's full-time average weekly ordinary time earnings have grown by \$291.60 per week since May 2022 – an 18.1 per cent increase. Australia has achieved its highest ever international ranking for gender equality of 13th – up from 43rd in 2022. These gains reflect deliberate choices to put gender equality at the centre of decision-making.

Despite this economic progress, men's violence against women remains a distressing and unacceptable reality. Every life lost or impacted by violence is a tragedy. Gender equality cannot be achieved while women continue to experience violence and abuse in their homes, workplaces, communities and online.

Ending violence against women and children remains a national priority and to date, the Government has invested over \$4.4 billion under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (the National Plan). Under the National Plan, more than 10,000 victim survivors have been provided with financial and other supports through the Leaving Violence Program in its first five months of operation, 496 additional frontline staff supporting victim survivors have been employed across Australia and \$985.7 million in funding has been provided to states and territories to support frontline service delivery.

There are no simple solutions, but the development of the second Action Plan under the National Plan is an opportunity to refocus our efforts. We need to better support women

and children who have experienced violence so they can recover. We need to work harder to prevent and address sexual violence. We need to activate more systems and services to intervene at the earliest opportunity, to disrupt violence and strengthen safety. The second Action Plan will guide a coordinated, whole-of-system response across governments, communities, employers, schools, health and justice systems, and frontline and prevention services, to identify high impact solutions to prevent and end violence and hold perpetrators to account.

In February 2026, the Government launched the first ever standalone First Nations-led national strategy to end violence, *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036*. This Plan recognises that lasting change must be driven by First Nations communities and is backed by \$218.3 million in new funding to invest in a national network of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations to deliver community-led specialist family, domestic and sexual violence services and extend the Leaving Violence Program Regional Trials to 2027.

The Government is also working to make sure its own systems are safe and cannot be weaponised to perpetrate violence and financial abuse. This Budget invests \$182.6 million to deliver a series of foundational investments to address known misuse of the Child Support Scheme. These reforms will make the Child Support Scheme safer and more effective for all families and will see more child support flow in full and on time to the children who need it. The reforms will better protect single parents from family and domestic violence and economic abuse and strengthen financial security for women. These measures respond to expert evidence and advocacy, including from women's safety experts. They build on the Government's broader work to embed safety by design in Commonwealth systems and close weaponisation loopholes through the ongoing audit of Australian Government systems to address systems abuse.

Properly valuing care work and removing structural barriers to women's labour force participation are key to gender equality and a more productive and resilient economy. Major care reforms are coming into full effect, including the final stage of the Paid Parental Leave expansion, which will see the scheme reach six months of leave for babies born or adopted from 1 July 2026. This Budget builds on earlier care investments, including laying the foundation for universal early childhood education and care through the \$4.7 billion investment into Cheaper Child Care, \$1 billion in the Building Early Education Fund and the Government's 3 Day Guarantee, which commenced on 5 January 2026. This is supported by a 15 per cent pay rise for early childhood educators and national actions to strengthen early childhood education and care safety and quality. These investments have supported around 80,000 more children enrolled in early childhood education and care and 52,000 more educators in the sector.

Since 2022, the Government has delivered significant workplace relations reforms that support higher wages and fairer workplace conditions for women. These include making gender equality an object of the *Fair Work Act 2009*, strengthening rights to request flexible work, introducing paid family and domestic violence leave and strengthening access to unpaid leave. The Government has supported minimum wage increases, backed fairer wages for women in historically undervalued sectors and invested \$21.3 billion toward

wage rises for aged care and child care workers, two industries where women exceed 85 per cent of the workforce.

Successive personal income tax cuts will put more money in people's pockets and are expected to boost women's labour supply by 900,000 hours when compared to 2023–24 tax settings. Building on these tax cuts, the Government will deliver a new \$250 Working Australians Tax Offset, which will provide a benefit for every working Australian taxpayer, including around 6.3 million women for 2027–28. Combined with the first three tax cuts already legislated and the \$1000 instant tax deduction, an average Australian female worker on \$68,343 will receive a combined benefit of up to \$2,494 per year from 2027–28 relative to 2023–24 tax settings. In addition to tax cuts, the Government has introduced significant superannuation reforms to improve retirement outcomes for women and close the retirement income gap, which include reform of the Low-Income Superannuation Tax Offset, payment of superannuation on Government-funded Paid Parental Leave, increases to the Superannuation Guarantee and ensuring super is paid on payday.

For too long, women's health policy wasn't taken seriously. The Government has changed that. The landmark 2025–26 Budget's women's health package strengthened Medicare to work better for women at every age and stage. Women have already benefitted from cheaper medicines, more choices and expanded access to women's health services. These systemic improvements are here to stay. They will continue to benefit many more women and have a lasting impact. 33 specialist clinics for endometriosis and pelvic pain are now open, more than 380,000 women have accessed new, cheaper contraceptives in the first year of their listing on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and 430,000 women have accessed new menopausal therapies, with a first ever national menopause awareness campaign to launch this year. Continuing investment in this Budget in bulk billing, Medicare Urgent Care Clinics and mental health support will continue the path we have set for better access to health care for women.

When women are involved in decision making and policy design, outcomes are better for everyone. The Albanese Government is led by a gender equal cabinet and the 48th Parliament is the most gender balanced on record, with women comprising 49.6 per cent of parliamentarians at its opening. For the fourth consecutive year, the Government has met its target for women to hold 50 per cent of all Australian Government board positions.

Advancing equality is ongoing work for the Government. Guided by *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality*, we will continue to build on progress made so far to deliver a gender equal Australia that benefits us all.

The Honourable Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister

The Honourable Jim Chalmers MP
Treasurer

Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Finance
Minister for Women
Minister for the Public Service
Minister for Government Services

Women's Budget Statement at a glance

Economic context

The 2026–27 Budget is delivered in a time of geopolitical uncertainty and a rapidly changing economic outlook. The conflict in the Middle East is severely disrupting global oil supplies, creating extreme global volatility and uncertainty and weighing heavily on the global economic outlook. Australia is not immune from the impacts of the conflict and the economic consequences will continue to be felt for some time. While the challenges in the economy are significant, the Australian economy's broad-based growth, resilient labour market and strong budget position mean that it is well-placed.

The Government has made gender equality a core economic imperative since its first Budget. Through significant structural reforms and sustained investments since 2022, the Government has strengthened the foundations for lasting change. The Government has supported labour force participation through Cheaper Child Care and more Paid Parental Leave and has boosted women's wages with pay rises for early childhood and aged care workers, stronger minimum wage and award wage settings, and important workplace reforms. At the same time, the Government has delivered record investment in women's health and strengthened the social safety net by increasing income supports and building more secure housing.

As a result, Australia enters this period of global uncertainty from a position of strength, equipped with the tools to navigate changing economic circumstances, including a resilient labour market with continued high participation by women and reforms that ensure growth and opportunity are shared more fairly across the economy.

In the 2026–27 Budget, the Government has made responsible decisions to strengthen the Budget, rebuild fiscal buffers, and reinvest spending to focus on the Government's priorities and help guarantee the continuity of funding for essential services. This work has been informed by gender analysis – the consideration of how policy options will affect women and men – to help the Government make decisions that support gender equality.

Priority areas

Gender-based violence

Building on investments and actions as part of the collective commitment to ending gender-based violence, with a focus on:

- embedding safety in government systems, including by strengthening the Child Support Scheme against weaponisation and making it safer and fairer
- addressing the disproportionately high rates of violence against First Nations women, children and families
- continuing to strengthen frontline services, including the frontline workforce and financial, legal and housing supports.

Unpaid and paid care

Addressing the unequal distribution of unpaid work and care and better valuing caring professions, through:

- encouraging shared care through expanded Paid Parental Leave
- strengthening supports for caregivers
- improving access to high-quality early childhood education and care
- backing fairer wages for the care sector.

Economic equality and security

Structural reforms to help women earn more, keep more of what they earn and achieve long term financial security, including:

- delivering significant workplace relations reforms and driving employer action on gender equality
- implementing tax cuts particularly benefitting part-time and lower income earners
- reforming superannuation to help women retire with more.

Health

Building on the women's health package, which is providing better access to health care and cheaper medicines:

- supporting greater primary care options for women, including more bulk billing clinics, and investing in public hospitals
- continuing to deliver even cheaper medicines
- continuing investment in culturally appropriate care and in mental health and wellbeing.

Leadership, representation and decision-making

The Government is leading by example by:

- strengthening gender equality in representation in Federal Parliament, in government leadership roles and the Australian Public Service
- amplifying diverse voices in decision-making, particularly First Nations women and girls
- restoring gender-responsive budgeting and enhancing the role of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to drive progress in the private sector
- showing global leadership on gender equality.

Gender-based violence

Key outcomes

The Government has invested over \$4.4 billion in initiatives to deliver the National Plan	The 500 Workers initiative has supported 35,000 people impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence
In its first five months, the Leaving Violence Program supported over 10,000 victim-survivors	The Government is investing \$182.6 million to prevent weaponisation of the Child Support Scheme

Everyone has a right to live free from fear and violence. Each year, women continue to be killed by men’s violence. The impacts of this loss are profound and enduring for all who know and love them. Every incidence of family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) has a devastating impact on individuals, families and communities. The impacts of violence can be immediate, enduring and intergenerational, with long-term health, wellbeing and economic consequences and an increased risk of re-victimisation. Ending gender-based violence requires sustained and coordinated effort at all levels of the community and government to prevent it from happening, hold perpetrators to account and support those who have experienced or are experiencing violence.

All Australian governments have made a collective commitment to ending gender-based violence under the National Plan. The National Plan is the framework for government efforts to break the cycle of violence across the four domains of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.

Since its launch in 2022, the Government has invested over \$4.4 billion in initiatives to deliver the National Plan. This includes funding for frontline services for victim-survivors, increasing accountability and consequences for perpetrators, and strengthening prevention efforts including education and awareness programs that work directly with men and boys.

This work is strengthened by the launch this year of the first dedicated standalone Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander plan for family safety – *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036* (Our Ways). Our Ways was developed in genuine partnership with community and reflects our shared commitment towards realising a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children live free from violence and experience healing and safety.

The Government has committed to develop the second Action Plan for the National Plan in 2026. It will be informed by broad consultation and reviews and inquiries that have been undertaken, such as the Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches. The first Action Plan for Our Ways will also be developed in 2026, co-designed by community. The action plans will complement other initiatives to embed safety across all stages of life, such as *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* and the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030*, as people affected by violence often deal with overlapping experiences and services and may also be living with the lasting impacts of past abuse. Consultations will be coordinated and connected so that people do not have to tell their story multiple times.

The 2026–27 Budget builds on the Government's significant investments in women's safety since 2022, with a focus on embedding safety in government systems and addressing the disproportionate rates of violence against First Nations women and children.

Addressing systems abuse to strengthen women's safety

Perpetrators of FDSV often exploit and manipulate government systems to control, threaten or harass victim-survivors as part of a broader pattern of coercive control. The Government is strengthening protections to ensure its own systems cannot be weaponised to undermine women's safety or financial security. This Budget focuses new investment on addressing vulnerabilities in the Child Support Scheme, while continuing to progress initiatives under the National Plan.

Strengthening the Child Support Scheme against weaponisation

The Child Support Scheme supports around 1 million children each year to receive financial support from both their parents after separation. However, some parents deliberately weaponise the scheme and use it to perpetrate abuse, including by underpaying, not paying, threatening to stop paying their child support, or by deliberately minimising or under-reporting income to minimise their child support obligations. The Child Support Scheme can also be weaponised to inflict other forms of harm on victim-survivors, including by perpetrators using the system to harass and intimidate victim-survivors, or gain access to sensitive information.

As of 31 March 2026, in the government collection system, known as Agency Collect, there was \$2.0 billion in debt across 229,235 paying parents, with an average debt of \$8,699. These figures do not account for outstanding debt among parents who manage payment and collection of child support between themselves, known as Private Collect. The Government does not monitor compliance of these arrangements, but research shows that parents in Private Collect often experience abuse, coercion and under or non-payment of child support. Non-payment of child support can have significant financial and safety impacts on children and parents, particularly women who make up the majority (83 per cent) of recipient parents.

In this Budget, the Government is taking action by investing \$182.6 million to strengthen the Child Support System against weaponisation and make it safer and more effective for all parents and children in the system. This builds on operational changes underway in Services Australia and the Australian Taxation Office to address financial abuse and support customers experiencing FDSV in the child support and tax systems. It also responds to recommendations made by the Commonwealth Ombudsman and Tax Ombudsman in 2025, such as educating staff to help them to better identify, escalate and manage financial abuse risks.

Budget highlights: Making the Child Support Scheme safer and more effective

The Government is providing \$182.6 million over four years from 2026–27 and \$19.6 million ongoing from 2030–31 to address issues of weaponisation, financial abuse and non-compliance in the Child Support Scheme. In this Budget, the Government is acting to:

- make it easier to move from Private Collect to Agency Collect – where there are greater protections and supports – by improving Private Collect safeguards and implementing a new online collection arrangement tool to help parents make informed decisions about the best collection method for them
- provide powers to the Registrar within Services Australia to stop vexatious or harassing behaviour in the Child Support Scheme and protect parents' safety by removing mandatory information exchanges
- improve communication to parents on the Maintenance Action Test requirements and exemptions so that more people can satisfy the requirement and access higher rates of family payments
- increase the accuracy of child support assessments by improving tax lodgement enforcement, extending Single Touch Payroll data sharing to improve income accuracy, and strengthening international maintenance arrangements which account for \$469 million of the total \$2.0 billion of debts
- ensure parents pay what they owe by making legislative and systems changes to increase the rate of employer withholdings as a payment method for all employees where appropriate. increase the use of departure prohibition orders to require more parents with child support debts over \$10,000 to enter payment arrangements before they are able to travel overseas.

This initial reform package will make the scheme safer and more effective for children and their parents, reducing opportunities for weaponisation and strengthening protections for the 478,665 women receiving child support and around 1 million children in the Child Support Scheme.

Preventing financial abuse in government systems

The Government commenced an ongoing audit of Australian Government systems in September 2024 to identify and address weaponisation by perpetrators. The audit is informed by previous reviews, including by the Commonwealth Ombudsman, the Tax Ombudsman, and an inquiry into financial abuse by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services.

In response to the early findings of the systems audit, in 2025 the Government committed to close loopholes used to commit financial abuse in the tax and corporate, superannuation and social security systems. This was supported by investment in the 2025–26 MYEFO, which includes taking steps to:

- prevent perpetrators from using the tax and corporate systems to create debts as a form of coercive control and make perpetrators accountable for these debts if they do
- look at how to stop perpetrators of FDSV from receiving their victims' superannuation after death
- look at making perpetrators liable for social security debts incurred by a victim-survivor due to coercion or financial abuse.

The Government has now consulted on options to prevent perpetrators of FDSV from accessing their victims' superannuation death benefits and using company directorships to create tax and corporate debts as a form of coercive control (known as coerced directorships).

Through amendments to the *Social Security Act 1991* in effect from December 2025, the Government has provided Services Australia extended powers to waive social security debts incurred as a result of FDSV, responding to calls from the FDSV sector and recommendations of the 2024 parliamentary inquiry into financial abuse.

The Government is also embedding safety-by-design principles into new and existing Commonwealth systems to remove opportunities for abuse or misuse and respond proactively to evolving threats. This includes action by the Digital Transformation Agency to ensure that Commonwealth agencies embed safety by design when planning and building public-facing digital Government systems, and efforts by Services Australia to stop perpetrators weaponising its products, services and systems, and to enhance supports for victim-survivors of FDSV.

Budget highlight: Uplifting business registers to better protect victim-survivors of financial abuse

Business Registers Stabilisation and Uplift (Completion of Tranche 2)

The Government will provide greater protections against financial abuse perpetrated through coerced directorships.

Women are a key group affected by coerced directorships, which often involve a victim-survivor being coerced or fraudulently appointed as a straw director of a company. Under this arrangement, the perpetrator controls corporate decision-making and can retain profits, assets and other benefits of the company, while leaving the victim-survivor liable for corporate misconduct the perpetrator engages in and debts they accrue.

Director appointment confirmation as part of Director ID linking will make it more difficult for directors to be registered without their knowledge or consent. This measure will also protect the privacy of directors by providing the option for them to use an alternate address on the Companies Register.

This measure will link the Australian Taxation Office's Director ID regime with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission's Companies Register, verify the identity of applicants seeking an Australian Business Number, and reduce the public availability of directors' personal addresses.

This measure was informed by consultation on options to reduce the prevalence and impact of coerced directorships. Further measures will be explored to close other financial abuse loopholes.

Addressing violence against First Nations women, children and families

First Nations people have long demonstrated strength, resilience and cultural authority in keeping communities safe and strong. Violence against First Nations people occurs despite these strengths, shaped by a history of dispossession, inequality, marginalisation, racism and the impact of policies which have resulted in profound inequity for First Nations people. First Nations women represent about 3 per cent of the adult female population of Australia yet comprise an average of 16 per cent of adult female homicide victims each year since 1989–90.¹ Higher rates of violence against First Nations women reflect the impact of combined gender and racial inequalities, including limited access to culturally safe support.

1 H Miles and S Bricknell, '[Homicide in Australia 2022–23: Statistical Report 46](#)', *Australian Institute of Criminology*, 2024.

The Government has maintained a focus on actions to better support First Nations communities. The launch of Our Ways on 10 February 2026 established a long-term policy reform agenda to address the unacceptably high levels of family violence experienced by First Nations women and children. Our Ways sets a new pathway for change and responds to long-term community calls for further action to address violence against First Nations women. It outlines a pathway towards safety, healing and recovery that is led by First Nations people, grounded in lived experience and culture, and strengthened by the deep relationships with kin, Country and community. At the same time, it calls governments into genuine partnership that is transparent, accountable, and focused on real and sustainable change. It sets a shared vision for First Nations communities where women, children and families are safe, connected to culture, and supported by systems that respect self-determination, community leadership and voice.

Budget highlights: Support for *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036*

Our Ways is a plan that was developed in partnership and led by the Our Ways Steering Committee, which included First Nations representatives working in partnership with Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

To support Our Ways, the Government has committed \$218.3 million over five years from 2025–26 for a package of initial actions. This includes funding for a national network of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to deliver FDSV services to women, children and communities. Evidence shows ACCOs provide community-led, culturally safe services that are tailored to local needs, leading to higher engagement and better outcomes for First Nations people than mainstream services.

The package also includes funding for a one-year extension to the Leaving Violence Payment regional trial and the new National Peak Body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety, Our Ways Strong Together. Launched in March 2026 by the Government and the Coalition of Peaks, Our Ways Strong Together will amplify the voices of community-controlled organisations and play an important role in shaping policies and programs. The Government has committed \$15.5 million over five years from 2025–26 to support the peak body's establishment and growth.

Strengthening frontline services

Frontline services, including financial, legal and housing supports, are critical to help victim-survivors escape violence, reduce the recurrence of violence, and enable recovery and healing. In times of crisis, victim-survivors must be able to access support when and where they need it.

Since June 2022 the Government has invested \$934.8 million to strengthen the frontline workforce, in partnership with states and territories. Workforce capacity supports earlier intervention, sustained engagement and improved safety planning. This helps women leave violent situations sooner and recover faster. The Government funded 500 new jobs to support victim-survivors of FDSV, employing 555 new workers as of 30 April 2026 (496 full-time equivalent workers). Additional frontline and community sector workers strengthen the ability of states and territories to deliver timely, specialist and trauma-informed support, including crisis responses, safety planning and case management.

Budget highlight: Additional funding for 500 workers

The Government has announced an additional \$61.2 million for the 500 Workers Initiative, increasing total funding to \$291.7 million. This will support capacity and reduce the risk of delayed responses, unmet need, and poorer safety outcomes for victim-survivors, particularly in areas of higher need. The additional funding will ensure the workers hired under the 500 workers commitment will receive suitable remuneration and help attract further workers to the sector.

Since 2022–23, more than 35,000 people impacted by FDSV have been supported under the initiative and 233 organisations have received funding.

Earlier Government investments have also supported workforce capability, such as the DV-alert, Lessons in Disaster, and Recognising and Responding to Sexual Violence in Adults training courses. A total of 1,200 DV-Alert training sessions have been delivered to 17,950 individual clients, including frontline workers, from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2025. Lessons in Disaster training has been delivered to over 700 first responders and service providers. These programs have high participation rates and strengthen early identification and referral pathways across health, community and allied services.

National services and programs serve a critical function as avenues for assistance. More Australians than ever are identifying signs of violence and contacting services such as 1800RESPECT for help.

MYEFO highlight: 1800RESPECT funding boost

1800RESPECT is a critical national service that provides counselling, information and referral services for people affected by FDSV. It delivers frontline, trauma-informed support through multiple channels to all Australians, regardless of gender or background.

To continue the critical service delivery, the Government committed additional funding of \$41.8 million over two years from 2025–26.

During last financial year, 1800RESPECT received over 342,000 calls, video calls, online chats and texts – an 11 per cent increase from the previous year.

1800RESPECT is dedicated to providing a safe, accessible and trauma-informed service. The service has ongoing improvement processes in place and was recently independently evaluated.

The Leaving Violence Program (LVP) commenced on 1 July 2025 and supports eligible victim-survivors leaving violent intimate partner relationships. Eligible victim-survivors can receive up to \$5,000 in financial support, including up to \$1,500 in cash and the remaining funds in goods and services. The program also includes up to 12 weeks of support including safety planning, risk assessment and referrals. In the first five months of operation the LVP supported over 10,000 victim-survivors.

The LVP extends eligibility regardless of visa status, gender or sexuality, and includes risk assessment, safety planning and referrals. The LVP program has two service delivery models – the national program and regional trials. The LVP regional trials are delivered by First Nations-led organisations. As part of the *Our Ways* initial actions, the Government announced an additional \$32.5 million in 2026–27 for a one-year extension to the LVP regional trials to provide choice and financial support to First Nations women and children to leave violent situations.

The LVP builds on the earlier Escaping Violence Payment (EVP) and related pilots. From October 2021 to 30 June 2025, more than 100,000 victim-survivors were supported through the EVP.

MYEFO highlight: Support for Trafficked People Program Additional Referral Pathway

The Government has extended the Support for Trafficked People Program Additional Referral Pathway (ARP) through to 30 June 2027.

The ARP ensures victim-survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery can access case-managed support, including legal and migration advice, financial assistance, medical treatment and safe accommodation, without needing to engage with law enforcement. By providing a confidential, community-based entry point through trusted service providers, the ARP removes a significant barrier to seeking help and enables earlier access to trauma-informed support.

Since the ARP commenced in July 2024, referrals to the Support for Trafficked People Program have increased by 60 per cent.

Housing for women in crisis

Access to safe and secure accommodation is fundamental to the immediate safety and wellbeing of women and children experiencing FDSV. Along with financial supports, crisis and transitional housing provides short- to medium-term safety and stability during high-risk periods. The Government is increasing crisis and transitional housing through a range of complementary initiatives.

The Government is delivering over \$1.2 billion in crisis and transitional accommodation programs. This includes a \$1 billion commitment under the Housing Australia Future Fund – Crisis and Transitional stream (HAFF CT), which provides capital works funding to deliver housing options for women and children experiencing FDSV and young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Across the country, 47 housing projects totalling \$321.2 million in grant funding are underway, which is projected to deliver 541 dwellings. Remaining HAFF CT grant funding is expected to be approved by the end of 2025–26, supporting hundreds of additional women, children and young people.

The HAFF CT program builds on other significant Government investment including the Crisis and Transitional Accommodation Program (CTAP) and the Safe Places program. In the 2022–23 Budget, the Government committed \$100 million through CTAP, which is delivering additional crisis and transitional housing options for women and children experiencing FDSV and older women at risk of homelessness. As of 14 April 2026, 30 dwellings have been completed, with a further 226 dwellings expected once all projects are delivered.

The Safe Places program funds capital works to renovate, construct or purchase emergency accommodation for women and children experiencing FDSV. Through the 2022–23 Budget \$100 million in additional funding was provided through the Safe Places Inclusion Round, which is delivering 838 safe places and supporting up to 7,490 women and children each year.

Budget highlight: Supporting young people into community housing

In this Budget, the Government will invest \$59.4 million over four years to provide states and territories with funding to supplement rental income for community housing providers supporting young people. This will support stable housing for over 4,000 young people aged 16 to 24 who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. This measure will help overcome the distinct barriers young people face to accessing stable and secure community housing, including limited income, additional support needs and lack of rental history.

Young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness who are unable to live at home are frequently more likely to be either victims of gender-based violence or have left home because of gender-based violence. They require stable and sustainable housing to heal and recover.

Girls and young women represent 66 per cent of Specialist Homelessness Services clients aged 16 to 24 presenting on their own. Increasing access to community housing support will improve long-term housing, economic, education and employment, safety and wellbeing outcomes for young women.

Increasing legal supports and justice responses

Legal supports and justice responses protect victim-survivors, hold perpetrators accountable and help shift the social and structural conditions that allow violence to continue. The Government has made significant legislative reforms to family law and increased funding for frontline legal services through the \$3.9 billion National Access to Justice Partnership, which includes \$800 million for community legal centres.

MYEFO highlight: Lighthouse Project

In the 2025–26 MYEFO, the Government committed \$33.8 million in 2026–27 and 2027–28 to support the continuation of Lighthouse and culturally responsive supports for First Nations Australians in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia.

Lighthouse is a fundamental shift in the way the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia identifies and manages risks to family safety. The program involves screening parenting matters for family safety risks when filed in the court, triaging matters and assisting at-risk parties with safety planning and service referrals. Between the commencement of the project on 28 November 2022 and 30 June 2025, 24,193 individual parties completed the risk screening. Culturally responsive supports, including Indigenous Family Liaison Officers and Specialist Indigenous Lists, ensure First Nations women and children engaging with the family law system receive appropriately tailored support.

Police are often the first responders to FDSV. Respectful, trauma-informed policing is essential to improving safety and reducing repeat violence. The Government is extending the roll out of national training to an additional 6,100 police members. This will ensure more frontline police are upskilled to a nationally consistent baseline in responding to FDSV.

Acknowledging the links between gender-based violence and the family law system, the Government implemented significant reforms to the *Family Law Act 1975*, which came into effect on 10 June 2025. The reforms enable family law courts to consider the economic impact of family violence and the housing needs of children when determining how property is divided in court orders.

Budget highlight: Sustaining the Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties Scheme

Within the family law system, access to justice is particularly critical in matters involving allegations of FDSV, where power imbalances and safety risks may affect parties' ability to participate effectively in legal proceedings.

The Government has implemented a statutory ban preventing victim-survivors of FDSV having to personally cross-examine or be directly cross-examined by perpetrators in family law proceedings. This is known as the Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties Scheme, which funds state and territory legal aid commissions to provide legal representation to self-represented litigants in matters before the Family Law Courts where the ban applies.

The ban has widespread support for the protections it affords victim-survivors. Since 2019, the Scheme has provided essential legal representation to approximately 8,400 individuals in family law matters involving FDSV. The prevalence of FDSV in family court matters means that demand for this scheme is exceeding current funding. Funding of \$11.7 million in the 2026–27 Budget will support the continued operation of the Scheme.

Strengthening the health care system to respond to FDSV

Supporting the health care system to identify and respond effectively to FDSV is critical to prevention and early intervention. Health services are often the first, most trusted, or sometimes the only point of contact for victim-survivors and their families. Many women experiencing FDSV disclose violence to health care providers, often indirectly, because health services are accessible and built on ongoing and trusted relationships. This positions the health care system as a vital gateway for early identification, safe response and connection to support.

MYEFO highlights: Health care responses to FDSV

In the 2025–26 MYEFO the Government committed \$58.2 million over two years to extend the Supporting Primary Care and Supporting Recovery pilots, which support victim-survivors to access and receive health care.

The Supporting Primary Care Pilot aims to improve the ability of the primary care workforce to recognise and respond to FDSV, increase referrals to specialist services, enhance collaboration between health and support sectors, and ensure equitable, effective support for victim-survivors.

The Supporting Recovery Pilot is trialling a new model of trauma-informed mental health recovery for women and children who have experienced FDSV. It gives victim-survivors and their families access to care coordination from local care teams and trauma-informed mental health care delivered by mental health services.

Prevention and early intervention

If we are to reduce and end violence, we must ensure we are focused on preventing it, including by addressing harmful societal attitudes and stereotypes towards women, engaging men and boys, and supporting children who have experienced violence to heal and recover.

The Primary Prevention Activities Program delivered by Our Watch supports capability building and nationally consistent approaches to primary prevention across community, education and workplace settings. Over the last 12 months, Our Watch has engaged with more than 370 frontline and community organisations to integrate primary prevention into organisational practice, service delivery and planning.

Education and awareness campaigns are essential to prevent attitudes and behaviours that lead to gender-based violence and to combat increasing negative rhetoric about women online. The Government has invested \$77.6 million to give all Australian students access to age-appropriate consent and respectful relationships education. Awareness campaigns include Stop it at the Start, Consent Can't Wait, and the Teach Us Consent – Promoting Consent Initiative. The Consent Can't Wait and Stop it at the Start campaigns were able to engage the community across multiple media settings and the Teach Us Consent program has reached more than 5.9 million people.

Gender analysis in practice: Technology-facilitated gender-based violence

Technology can be used to perpetrate FDSV, including coercive control, cyberstalking and deepfake images and videos. The Government is committed to protecting women and children online through a number of reforms.

Since 9 March 2026, the Age-Restricted Material Codes limit Australians under the age of 18 from accessing adult material, including pornography. Evidence shows that the viewing of harmful content can be a driver towards FDSV through shaping negative attitudes towards gender, promoting harmful sexual behaviours and increasing misogynistic views.

The Government has enacted reforms to address technology-facilitated abuse that disproportionately impacts women. The *Privacy and Other Legislation Amendments Act 2024* outlaws the malicious release of personal data online, or 'doxing'. The *Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Act 2024* strengthens existing offences and creates new offences prohibiting the creation and nonconsensual sharing of sexual material online, including material created or altered using technology (sexual deepfakes).

Further reforms will support action against technology-facilitated abuse. The Government has committed to legislating a digital duty of care, which will place the responsibility on digital platforms to take reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable online harms and perform due diligence to make their platforms safer. It will focus on restricting access to content that is illegal or harmful to young people, as well as minimise the risk of harm from features such as artificial intelligence and algorithms.

Under a duty of care framework, platforms will be obligated to put in place systems and processes that prevent their services being used to cause harm. Additionally, there will be new bespoke powers introduced enabling the eSafety Commissioner to issue notices to remove nudify apps and websites.

One of the prevention objectives of the National Plan is to support men who use violence, or are at risk of using violence, to engage them in behaviour change programs and reduce harmful attitudes towards women. The Government continues to invest in initiatives that work with men who use violence to take accountability and change their behaviour, and initiatives that work with boys and young men to develop safe and healthy relationships. The Healthy Masculinities Trial and Evaluation (Healthy MaTE), an activity under the First Action Plan, encourages healthy expressions of masculinity among school-aged boys and young men. The Government is providing \$861,000 to extend the activity by 12 months through to 30 June 2027.

MYEFO highlights: Investing in perpetrator responses

In the 2025–26 MYEFO, the Government provided additional funding to the No to Violence – Men's Referral Service (\$3.9 million) and Innovative Perpetrator Responses (\$8.6 million).

No to Violence delivers the National Perpetrator Intervention and Referral Service. The funding allows the organisation to support men through the Men's Referrals and Brief Intervention Services and deliver frontline worker training.

In 2024–25, the Men's Referral Service responded to over 10,500 inbound calls and webchats from people seeking support related to men's use of FDSV. Over 900 men engaged with the Brief Intervention Service, which provides multi-session telephone counselling support and referral options to men as they begin the behaviour change journey. Training was also delivered to over 500 practitioners and counsellors working directly with men using FDSV.

The Innovative Perpetrator Responses funding boost will support jurisdictions to expand or enhance perpetrator responses. The projects are tailored and culturally appropriate, to improve engagement and effectiveness. As at 30 November 2025, 21 projects have been approved. Of these 21 projects:

- 13 focus on First Nations people who use or are at risk of using violence
- Nine focus on adolescents or young people who use or are at risk of using violence
- Four focus on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people who use or are at risk of using violence.

Service delivery has commenced for eight trials engaging 387 clients.

Ensuring workplaces and institutions are safe for women

Everyone has the right to safe and respectful workplaces and learning environments. FDSV does not just impact women's safety and wellbeing – it can often impact their employment and economic security.

In 2022, the Government passed the *Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Act 2022* to implement the outstanding recommendations from the *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report*. The Act introduced a positive duty on employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate unlawful sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, as far as possible. In 2024–25, 99.2 per cent of relevant employers under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* had a policy or strategy to prevent sexual harassment or discrimination. Of the 68 relevant employers who did not, 61 per cent indicated it was under development.²

Budget highlight: Independent inquiry into military sexual violence in the Australian Defence Force

The Government is providing \$16.6 million over two years to conduct an independent inquiry into military sexual violence in the Australian Defence Force. The *Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide* found that sexual violence remains a systemic issue for the Australian Defence Force and is linked to suicide and suicidality. Military sexual violence disproportionately affects women and can greatly impact their experience of military service.

Experiences of FDSV in educational settings can result in multidimensional impacts, affecting women's wellbeing, learning and long-term outcomes. Significant progress has been made to implement the *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence* (National Code) to make universities and colleges safer for all who study, work and live in them. The National Code commenced on 1 January 2026 for all Australian universities. It establishes national, mandatory standards to prevent and respond to gender-based violence across the higher education sector, including in student accommodation. The Higher Education Gender-Based Violence Regulator has been established within the Department of Education to support effective oversight of gender-based violence regulatory arrangements in the higher education sector.

² WGEA (Workplace Gender Equality Agency) '[WGEA Gender Equality Scorecard | Latest results employer reporting](#)', WGEA, 2025.

Unpaid and paid care

Key outcomes

<p>More than 1 million families have benefitted from the \$4.7 billion invested into Cheaper Child Care</p>	<p>35,000 Carer Payments recipients can benefit from changes introduced to increase eligibility thresholds</p>
<p>In 2024–25, men were 33% of new Paid Parental Leave recipients</p>	<p>\$21.3 billion to support fair remuneration in the care economy</p>

Over the last 40 years, women’s participation in the labour force has steadily increased and attitudes toward gendered caring roles have become more balanced. Despite this progress, women in Australia continue to carry the bulk of caring responsibilities, both unpaid and paid. Unpaid caring responsibilities and access to paid care remain barriers to women entering the labour force or working their preferred number of hours, which can undermine women’s lifelong economic security.

Valuing care – both paid and unpaid – is a key focus of *Working for Women* because care is critical to our community and our economy. In line with the ambitions of *Working for Women*, the Government is committed to addressing the unequal distribution of unpaid work and care and closing the gender pay gap. This includes supporting families to better balance employment and caring responsibilities with flexibility at work and in care supports. Improving choices for women also requires improving the accessibility, affordability and quality of paid care, while properly recognising the value of this highly feminised work will improve women’s economic equality.

The Government has made substantial investments to support the sharing and valuing of care. The Paid Parental Leave (PPL) Scheme has been expanded to be longer and more flexible, accessible and gender-equitable, sending a clear signal that caring responsibilities should be shared by both parents. The Government is also working to build a universal Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system, improving affordability and access. The Government is also supporting fair remuneration across the care economy, where women are overrepresented, and has provided \$3.6 billion to support a wage increase for the ECEC workforce and committed \$17.7 billion to lift wages for aged care workers.

Unpaid care

Better measuring unpaid care

Care work performed by women is vital to Australia's community, family and social life, as it sustains households, supports children and older people, strengthens social bonds and underpins the wellbeing and functioning of society. The value of unpaid care labour is not captured by traditional economic measures, which means its socio-economic value to the Australian economy is not always visible and recognised. When unpaid labour is fully accounted for, including care and domestic labour, women and men make an almost equal economic contribution.³ Recognising and measuring unpaid work supports better informed policy decisions and highlights the extent to which unpaid care supports productivity and overall wellbeing.

To strengthen understanding of unpaid care, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) was funded by the Government in 2024 to estimate the total hours women spent on this and its monetary value. In the September quarter of 2024, the estimated value of unpaid care provided by men was around half that of women, with unpaid care valued at \$202.9 billion for women compared with \$105.5 billion for men.

Encouraging shared care

Gender stereotypes and expectations contribute to the imbalance in caring responsibilities in families and can limit women's choice about whether and how to participate in paid work. Some women have greater caring responsibilities that stem from cultural, religious or community expectations and values. The unequal share of unpaid care that women perform, particularly in child rearing, contributes to gender inequality in labour force participation, lifetime earnings and retirement incomes, undermining women's long-term economic security (see *Chapter 3: Economic Equality and Security* for further detail). Achieving gender equality requires a more even distribution of caring responsibilities, with gender-neutral parental leave settings encouraging men's role in caring, creating supportive workplace norms and maximising choices for families.

The Government's PPL scheme is a minimum entitlement designed to complement employer-funded leave. The Government is expanding the PPL scheme to 26 weeks from 1 July 2026, supporting the needs of working families, providing greater security and flexibility and empowering the full and equal participation of women in the labour force. The expanded scheme encourages a more equal sharing of care through extending reserved leave weeks for each parent and increasing the amount of leave that parents can take together. Under the Government's reforms to PPL, the scheme can offer eligible families with a child born or adopted from 1 July 2026 up to \$14,000 more in paid leave than they

³ L Risse, 'By how much is "women's work" undervalued in the economy?', *Economic Record*, vol. 101, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-4932.70012>.

would have been eligible for in May 2022. This increase also reflects legislated increases to the National Minimum Wage which underpins the PPL rate.

Women accounted for 67.3 per cent of PPL recipients in 2024–25. Treasury analysis of the HILDA survey data demonstrates a gradual change over time in attitudes toward shared responsibility between fathers and mothers in paid work and caregiving. People reported more supportive attitudes towards shared caregiving and working mothers, including greater agreement that fathers should be as involved as mothers, that care and housework should be shared equally, and greater acceptance of mothers working. Recent reforms build on emerging workplace and social shifts by strengthening incentives for shared care, while normalising men's participation in caring leave and signalling clear expectations to employers. The introduction of superannuation contributions on PPL from July 2025, with payments commencing from July 2026, further reinforces its status as a standard workplace entitlement, consistent with annual and personal leave. Chapter 3 outlines the impacts of this reform on women's retirement and economic security.

Cameos: How the Paid Parental Leave scheme can provide a minimum entitlement for parents

Gabby and Jamie are both employed when their first child is born in April 2024. Under their employer arrangements, they were entitled to up to 18 weeks of paid parental leave for the primary caregiver and eight weeks of leave for the secondary caregiver.

Alongside this, at this time they could access the Australian Government's PPL scheme which then provided 20 weeks of paid leave, equivalent to \$17,655 that could be shared flexibly between parents. Their employer-funded leave built on top of this government-funded baseline – providing access to a total of 46 weeks of paid parental leave across both parents.

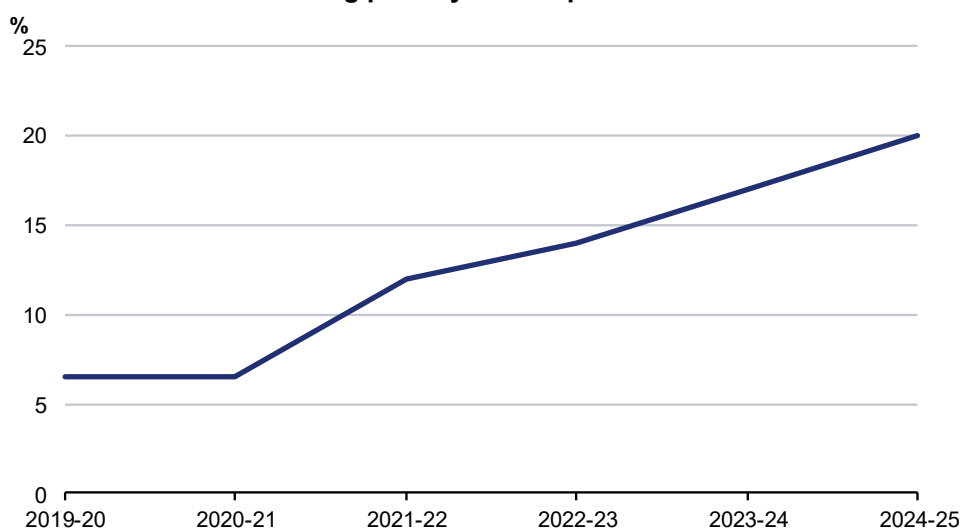
When Gabby and Jamie have their second child on 20 March 2027, the expanded PPL scheme introduced in 2026 provides 26 weeks of paid leave (worth \$27,931), plus a 12 per cent superannuation contribution. This includes four weeks reserved for each parent on a 'use it or lose it' basis, with up to four weeks taken concurrently – up from two weeks per parent in 2024. Combined with improvements to their employer arrangements, including an additional ten weeks for a secondary caregiver, Gabby and Jamie can access a total of 62 weeks of paid parental leave across both parents.

Advancing employer-funded parental leave

Working for Women recognises employers and workplaces play a key role in shaping how parents and carers balance their work and caring responsibilities. Employer-funded paid parental leave is a common entitlement, with 67 per cent of employers with more than 100 employees offering it, and some employers are also offering universal parental leave models that provide the same entitlement to any new parent. The majority of employers also pay superannuation on parental leave. In 2024–25, men accounted for 20 per cent of

employees taking primary carer’s parental leave – the highest proportion recorded and more than three times the share five years earlier (Chart 1). The pace and scale of this increase signals a broad cultural shift in both workplace practices and social norms around caring responsibilities. Workplace arrangements both reflect and reinforce this shift, helping to normalise gender-equal divisions of paid and unpaid work in workplaces long-structured around gendered roles.

Chart 1: Share of men taking primary carer’s parental leave since 2020



Source: WGEA Gender Equality Scorecard 2024–25.

The Government is also ensuring employer-funded paid parental leave protections are now enshrined in legislation for grieving parents experiencing the stillbirth or death of a child. The *Fair Work Amendment (Baby Priya’s) Act 2025* commenced on 7 November 2025, introducing a new principle that, unless employers and employees have expressly agreed otherwise, employer-funded parental leave must not be refused or cancelled in these circumstances. This brings employer-funded leave in line with Government PPL entitlements, and unpaid parental leave provisions. It provides clarity for parents and employers, recognising parents should have certainty about their entitlements in these tragic circumstances. It also takes potentially fraught judgement calls away from managers.

For families seeking flexibility, both flexible work and flexible care arrangements are essential. The Government’s Secure Jobs, Better Pay reforms in 2022 empowered the Fair Work Commission to consider gender equality in exercising its powers and strengthened the right to request flexible work (see *Chapter 3: Economic equality and security* for further detail). *Good flex, bad flex: Designing flexibility for gender equality* from the Working for Women Research Partnership shows that well-designed flexibility (‘good flex’) offers genuine choice, security and autonomy and supports labour force participation, retention, productivity and better use of skills. However, poorly designed flexibility (‘bad flex’) is employer-controlled, insecure and unpredictable and often tied to reduced hours or casual

work. An actionable insights report will be delivered later this year, which will guide policy reform, support inclusive industry practice, and enable community-led solutions.

Supporting caregivers

Many Australians face competing demands on their time as they care for family members, a challenge that will intensify as the country ages. These pressures disproportionately affect women, who do most of the informal caring for children, people with disability and older Australians. Almost three-quarters (74 per cent) of people aged 25 to 64 who provide informal care to the elderly are women. These caring responsibilities can limit a carer's ability to engage in paid work. Two-thirds of people who provide informal care for the elderly are not engaged in paid work, and when they do work, most work part time. The Government can support individuals in their caring roles, including through wellbeing and financial supports, while improving carers' ability to participate in the labour force when they choose.

For older Australians who require assistance, care is provided by a combination of formal services and informal support provided by family and friends, who are mainly women. When access to formal care is limited or delayed, the share of care taken on by informal carers often increases, which can affect their labour force participation, hours worked and wellbeing. Investments in formal care at home can play a key role in alleviating pressures on informal carers.

Budget highlights: Strengthening the Support at Home program

Over successive Budgets, the Government has invested \$5.7 billion in the Support at Home program – which commenced on 1 November 2025 – to expand availability and quality of care packages and reduce wait times. This includes \$4.3 billion to establish the Support at Home program, including to shorten assessment wait times, provide more tailored support, allow for home modifications and provide access to assistive technology.

In the 2026–27 Budget, the Government is providing:

- \$1.0 billion to change the treatment of personal care services such as showering, dressing and continence care to make these services free of charge, alongside clinical care
- \$389.9 million to implement Support at Home program refinements, including to assessments, hardship applications and the end-of-life pathway, and to bring forward the release of Support at Home program places in 2026–27.

Further strengthening the program helps aged care users, two thirds of whom are women. It will also support caring responsibilities in families and the community, which are primarily carried by women who make up approximately 70 per cent of primary carers of older people and 86 per cent of aged care workers.

The Government is providing carers with more flexibility to balance work and study with their caring responsibilities through changes to the participation rules for the Carer Payment. From 20 March 2025, Carer Payment recipients have been able to work for up to 100 hours over a four-week period instead of the original 25 hours per week. Travel time and study are now excluded from these hours, leaving more time for work. From December 2025, around 35,000 Carer Payments recipients can benefit from changes introduced to increase eligibility thresholds. Women account for around 70 per cent of Carer Payment Recipients, and about 80 per cent of Carer payments recipients with earnings are women.

The Government has introduced changes to improve access to education and training and provide support while caring responsibilities continue. The Parent Pathways service is part of the Government's commitment to increase labour force participation for women. Almost 27,000 parents and carers – 97 per cent of them women – have engaged with the service in its first year. Parent Pathways provides eligible parents and carers of children under six years of age with personalised pre-employment supports such as ECEC, and training programs to achieve their education, employment and career goals. The program is entirely voluntary and delivered flexibly in person, online or over the phone, replacing the compulsory ParentsNext program.

Budget highlight – Children and Family Support program

The Government is investing \$171.7 million to establish a single national program to support children, young people and their families. This includes the new Children and Family Support program which will deliver better outcomes for up to 270,000 children and families currently supported each year by government-funded family programs and services by:

- directing investment toward flexible, evidence-informed prevention and early intervention activities, such as parenting programs
- increasing the number of services delivered by ACCOs
- strengthening collaboration with service providers and communities.

Gender analysis in practice – Children and Family Support Program

The Children and Family Support program will promote gender equality by strengthening child and family services to better respond to the needs of children and their carers. It will also enhance inclusivity and accessibility for all caregivers involved in a child's life, including fathers and other male caregivers.

Strengthening supports for carers of children better supports women, who are often the primary caregivers, while also actively encouraging and enabling fathers to participate in support programs. Greater involvement by fathers in a child's upbringing is an important contributor to children's development and allows mothers to pursue their preferred balance of caring.

Paid care**Improving access to high-quality early childhood education and care**

Caring for children remains the primary reason that women who want to work are not available to start a job. Improving ECEC access and quality is therefore important to enable mothers to enter the labour force or increase their hours of work when they want to. Increased opportunities to participate in the labour force also give women greater choice in occupations that match their skills and, in turn, supports productivity across the economy. Child care was the main barrier for 43 per cent of women who wanted to work more hours or enter employment but were unavailable to do so in 2024–25. By comparison, this share was much lower for men.⁴

Access to ECEC shapes women's job choices, with 15 per cent of women, compared to fewer than five per cent of men, identifying financial assistance with ECEC costs, and around one quarter of women, compared with around one in ten men, citing the ability to work schedules aligned with school hours as very important incentives to work.⁵

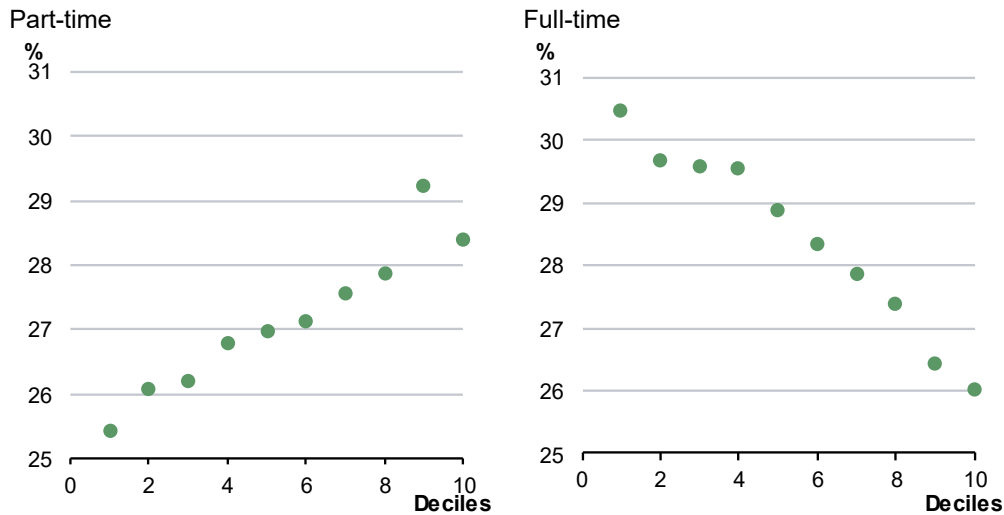
Difficulty accessing ECEC is associated with more women working part time. Treasury analysis found that within a neighbourhood, greater driving time to the nearest ECEC centre is associated with higher part-time labour force participation among women and lower full-time participation (Chart 2). Women being significantly more likely to work part time than men has long-term consequences. Around one third of the gender pay gap is attributable to time out of the workforce and interruptions to full-time employment associated with caring.⁶

4 ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) '[Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia](#)', ABS, 2025.

5 ABS '[Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia](#)', ABS, 2025.

6 KPMG, Diversity Council Australia and WGEA, '[She's Price\(d\)less: The economics of the gender pay gap](#)', KPMG, Diversity Council Australia and WGEA, 2022.

Chart 2: Part-time and full-time female labour force participation rate by deciles of driving time to nearest ECEC centre



Source: Treasury analysis of Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority data (Q2 2024); ABS Census 2021.

Narrowing the gap between women and men in part-time and flexible work is a key indicator of gender equality under the *Working for Women* strategy. Improving access to affordable, safe and high-quality ECEC is central to achieving this goal. It gives parents confidence that their children are well-cared for and enables parents to choose their preferred balance between work and care, while supporting child development. Research has also shown that attending high-quality ECEC can lead to better educational, employment and health outcomes later in life, especially for children experiencing disadvantage.

The Government is committed to building a universal ECEC system that is accessible and affordable for every family. Since commencing in 2023, more than 1 million families have benefitted from the \$4.7 billion invested into Cheaper Child Care to reduce out-of-pocket ECEC costs for families. Further, since 5 January 2026, every Child Care Subsidy-eligible family has been entitled to at least 72 hours of subsidised ECEC per fortnight, equivalent to three days a week, through the Government's new 3 Day Guarantee. Families caring for a First Nations child are entitled to 100 hours of subsidised care per fortnight. This change entitles more than 100,000 families to additional hours of subsidised care in 2026–27, providing a stable entitlement that will deliver longstanding benefits. The 3 Day Guarantee provides more certainty for women with unpredictable working patterns, for example if they work seasonally or periodically. Improving affordability and certainty of access benefits low-income families and single-parent households, the majority of which are women. In the first week of February 2026, almost 20,000 more single parent families were entitled to three days of subsidised care per week, compared to the same period in 2025.

The Building Early Education Fund is a \$1 billion commitment to improve accessibility of ECEC in areas of need, with \$500 million in targeted capital grant funding already committed. This fund targets areas that are under-served or have relative socioeconomic disadvantage, with 28 projects approved so far, including projects in outer suburbs and regional areas, with more to be added in the future.

The Government is strengthening safety and quality in ECEC, working with the states and territories to strengthen regulation and accelerate nationwide law reforms to keep children safe. These changes address recommendations from the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority's *Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the National Quality Framework 2023*, the *Early Childhood Education and Care Regulation in NSW Independent Review 2025* and the *Victorian Rapid Child Safety Review 2025*. In parallel, the Government is committed to consulting on the establishment of an Early Education and Care Commission to support the delivery of quality universal ECEC.

MYEFO highlight: Strengthening safety and quality in the ECEC sector

The Government committed \$188.5 million over four years from 2025–26 to improve safety and quality in the ECEC sector. This includes a National Educator Register, stronger regulatory coordination and data-sharing, supporting the workforce to complete mandatory child safety training, a national assessment of CCTV in services, and better transparency for parents about the quality and safety of services through upgrades to the Starting Blocks website.

The Government is also investing \$39.3 million to address gaps in the Working with Children Checks (WWCC) process and implement the National Continuous Checking Capability to provide all jurisdictions near-real time information on the suitability of WWCC holders across the country.

Fairer pay and conditions in the care and support economy

The Australian economy is increasingly reliant on paid care, with growing demand for care and support services identified as a major economic transition. This shift reflects the increasing formalisation of care as women's labour force participation rises. Access to formal ECEC and aged care is critical to enabling carers to remain in paid work and easing pressure on those supporting both children and ageing parents.

The care and support sector is Australia's largest employer. It has increased from eight per cent of employment in 1984 to 16 per cent today, employing 2.4 million people. Beyond its size, it plays a vital role in the economy by strengthening human capital and enabling greater labour force participation, particularly among women and older Australians. Many of its benefits, such as improved quality of life and better access to services, are poorly captured in traditional productivity measures, contributing to persistent undervaluation and wage disparity with other industries. The contribution of

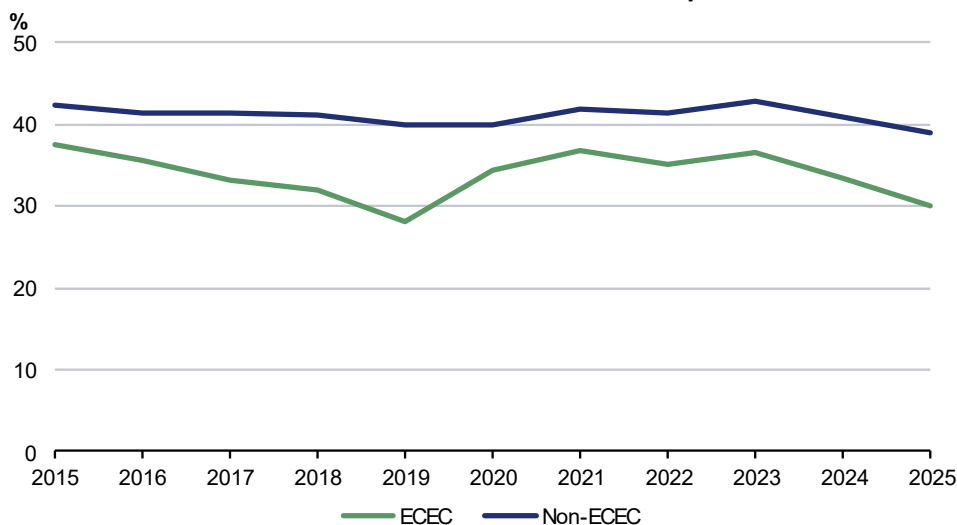
the care sector is overwhelmingly powered by women and its undervaluation impacts women’s economic security through their working life and into retirement.

Women make up 91 per cent of the ECEC workforce and 86 per cent of the aged care workforces. Gender segregation across industries is a key driver of the gender pay gap, with female-dominated industries and jobs attracting lower wages.

The Government’s support for the ECEC workforce through the Worker Retention Payment (WRP) has delivered a ten per cent wage increase from December 2024, on top of the national award rate, with a further five per cent increase applied from December 2025. As of March 2026, more than 211,000 ECEC workers have benefited from increased wages.

The aim of the WRP is to retain experienced and qualified early childhood educators and teachers to improve labour supply across the sector. Workers in ECEC occupations have been historically less likely to leave their jobs than workers in non-ECEC occupations, meaning the outflow rate in ECEC is lower. Chart 3 shows that since the increase of ECEC award wages in July 2024 and the additional ten per cent WRP in December 2024, the outflow rates in ECEC occupations have fallen twice as much as the outflow rates in non-ECEC occupations.

Chart 3: Outflow rates from ECEC and non-ECEC occupations



Source: Treasury analysis of ABS Longitudinal Labour Force Survey Data.

The WRP is also delivering improved affordability for families through its associated fee growth cap. In its first year of implementation, fee growth for participating services was around half the rate of non-participating services. Improved affordability supports access to ECEC and enables greater labour force participation for parents and carers, particularly women.

MYEFO highlight: ECEC Worker Retention Payment – additional supports

The Government has provided \$157 million over two years from 2025–26 to change eligibility for the WRP to allow participation in the program in cases where providers limit fee growth for ECEC services to no more than 8.6 per cent over a two-year period to 7 August 2026. Previously, services exceeding 4.4 per cent fee growth in the first year were ineligible for the program in the second year.

This is expected to allow more services (about 2.1 per cent) to qualify, and eligible services will receive funding backdated to December 2024.

The Government values the important contribution that care workforces bring to the economy. Over successive Budgets, the Government has invested \$17.7 billion to support the Fair Work Commission's decisions under the Aged Care Work Value Case, including a 15 per cent award wage increase which commenced 30 June 2023. Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) analysis found the most significant contributor to the gender pay gap reduction in 2023–24 was an increase in the wages of low paid workers, particularly in residential aged care.

The Government has continued to support the Fair Work Commission's Gender Undervaluation – Priority Awards Review (the Review), which seeks to remedy potential historical undervaluation in awards used in certain female-dominated industries, through participating in the proceedings and making submissions. The Review has occurred in the context of the Government's 2022 Secure Jobs, Better Pay reforms, which placed gender equality at the heart of the workplace relations system and strengthened the Fair Work Commission's ability to consider gender equality in exercising its powers. The Review is expected to be finalised this year.

The Fair Work Commission found historical gender undervaluation occurred for the five awards considered and determined wage increases for occupations covered by the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners and Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Services Award 2020*, *Children's Services Award 2010*, *Health Professionals and Support Services Award 2020* and *Pharmacy Industry Award 2020*, with further decisions to come. The Fair Work Commission identified priority awards to review by considering modern awards that covered large, female-dominated occupations in female-dominated industries. The selected occupations were also identified as being significantly reliant upon award rates of pay-for-pay setting. Addressing historical gender-based undervaluation is a step towards pay equity in the awards system.

Along with making the care sector more attractive by supporting fairer remuneration, the Government is also strengthening the workforce pipeline, including by addressing financial disincentives for students pursuing care and support qualifications. Since 1 July 2025, the Commonwealth Prac Payment has provided a weekly payment (currently \$338.60 per week) to eligible students undertaking mandatory placements in teaching, nursing, midwifery or social work courses. The payment supports around 68,000 higher education and 5,000 vocational education and training students per year. In 2024, women made up around 87 per cent of nursing, 99 per cent of midwifery, 76 per cent of initial teacher education, and 84 per cent of social work enrolments in Commonwealth Prac Payment eligible courses. Many of these students also combine full-time or part-time study with paid work, and some also have caring and parental responsibilities. The payment supports eligible students in their studies, making it easier to complete course requirements, graduate and take up critical roles in the education, health and safety of our communities.

Economic equality and security

Key outcomes

Women's labour force participation currently at 63%⁷	Lowest gender pay gap on record at 11.5%⁸
Since May 2022, women's full-time average weekly ordinary time earnings have grown by \$291.60 per week	Tax benefit of up to \$2,494 per year from 2027–28 for an Australian woman on \$68,343, relative to 2023–24 settings

Women's economic equality and security is a core economic imperative for the Government. Over the past four years, the Government has delivered tax cuts to improve women's labour force participation, Cheaper Child Care, wage increases in highly feminised sectors, expanded PPL, stronger workplace equality laws, improved income supports, and more secure housing. In recent years, women's economic equality and security have improved on key indicators, with higher labour force participation and the gender pay gap narrowing. Despite this, women's participation remains lower than men's, and women are significantly more likely to work part-time and experience underemployment. In the 2026–27 Budget, the Government continues to progress structural reforms that advance gender equality and address barriers for women so they can earn more, keep more of what they earn and achieve long-term financial security.

More Australian women are participating in the labour force than ever before. Women's labour force participation rate reached a record high in 2025, though still lagged behind men's participation.⁹ Increasing women's participation over the past five decades has supported labour supply in the Australian economy. Treasury analysis shows that women's increases fully offset the downward pressure on total hours worked per person from other factors, such as an ageing population. This highlights the economic benefits of gender equality for all Australians.

Gains in women's labour force participation have contributed to Australia's economic growth and productivity by expanding the pool of skilled labour and enabling a more efficient allocation of talent. However, we know many women want to work more, with

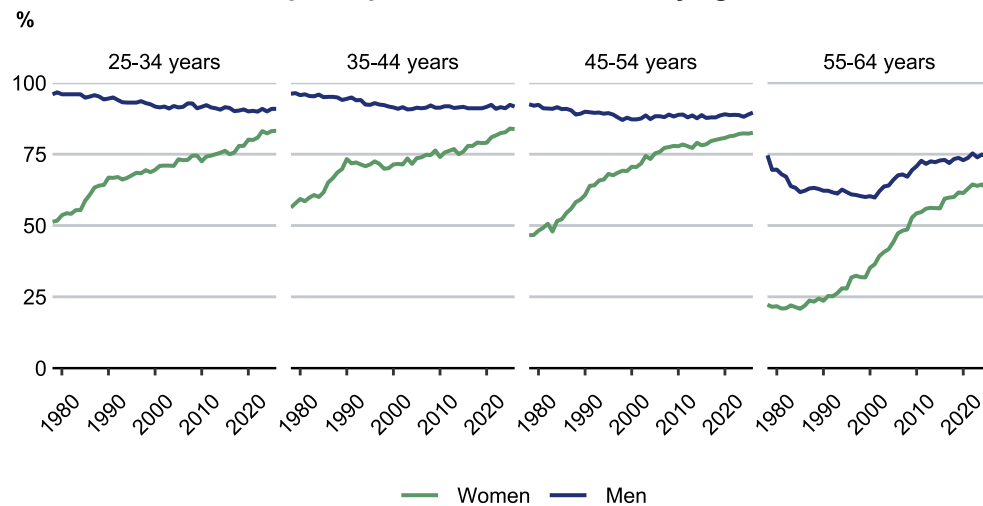
7 ABS, '[Labour Force, Australia, March 2026](#)', ABS, 2026; seasonally adjusted.

8 ABS, '[Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 2025](#)', ABS, 2025; seasonally adjusted, ordinary time earnings.

9 ABS, '[Labour Force, Australia, March 2026](#)', ABS, 2026; seasonally adjusted.

7.4 per cent of employed women currently underemployed, meaning they are seeking additional hours of work.¹⁰ Chart 4 shows the participation of working-age women has increased substantially in the past four decades, though it still notably lags men. As noted in Chapter 2, women in Australia are more likely than men to be engaged in part-time employment (43 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men).¹¹ Treasury analysis has found that while typically an individual is more likely to be employed when their partner is also employed, this is not the case for women in couples with young children. This likely reflects the concentration of child care responsibilities with women, reducing mothers' ability to participate in full-time employment. Gender inequality may continue to constrain the full and efficient use of human capital, with women remaining less engaged in the labour market relative to men. This has economy-wide impacts and implications for women's long-term economic security.

Chart 4: Labour force participation rates over time, by age and sex



Source: ABS Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, March 2026.

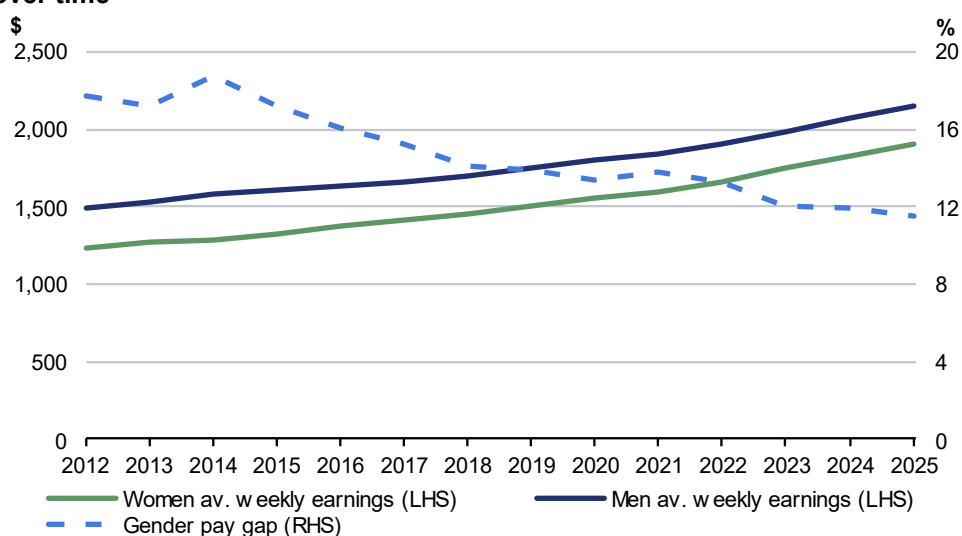
¹⁰ ABS, 'Labour Force, Australia, March 2026', ABS 2026; seasonally adjusted; underemployment ratio (proportion of employed), females, seasonally adjusted.

¹¹ ABS, 'Labour Force, Australia, March 2026', ABS 2026; seasonally adjusted, part time share of total employed.

Helping women earn more

Despite recent progress, women continue to earn less than men. The national gender pay gap, as measured by the difference in full-time average weekly ordinary time earnings, was 11.5 per cent in November 2025, its lowest level on record.¹² Since May 2022, the gap has narrowed by 2.6 percentage points and women’s full-time average weekly ordinary earnings have grown by \$291.60 per week (an 18.1 per cent increase, see Chart 5).¹³

Chart 5: Full-time average weekly ordinary time earnings gender pay gap over time



Source: ABS Average Weekly Earnings November 2025.

WGEA data shows that the total remuneration gender pay gap for private sector employers with 100 or more employees is 21.1 per cent. WGEA’s data shows how additional payments above base salary (including superannuation, bonuses and overtime) contribute significantly to the gender pay gap. When these payments are accounted for, it amounts to a pay gap of \$28,356 over one year.

Using government administrative data rather than employer survey data, new research from Jobs and Skills Australia provides a detailed intersectional analysis of the gender pay gap in Australia.¹⁴ The research found First Nations women experience the highest gender pay gaps, almost 10 percentage points higher than the national average. The research found

12 ABS, ‘Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 2025’, ABS, 2025; seasonally adjusted, ordinary time earnings.

13 ABS, ‘Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 2025’, ABS, 2025; seasonally adjusted, ordinary time earnings.

14 Jobs and Skills Australia, *New Perspectives on Old Problems: Gendered Jobs, Work and Pay: Gender Economic Equality Study Paper 1*, JSA, Australian Government, 2025.

gender pay gaps also vary by age, peaking among workers aged 40 to 54 years at 29.6 per cent. While gaps have narrowed across most age groups over time, outcomes for women aged 55 years and over have worsened, reflecting the cumulative effects of inequality over working life.

The persistence of the gender pay gap reflects a combination of structural and behavioural factors, including entrenched gender segregation, discrimination and bias in pay and hiring, limited workplace flexibility, career interruptions due to unpaid caring responsibilities and reduced opportunities for progression. Addressing these structural barriers requires combined efforts from employers, individuals, communities and governments. The Government is addressing these drivers through a coordinated package of reforms.

Employer action to reduce gender pay gaps

The Government is taking action to reduce the gender pay gap by requiring Commonwealth public sector and private sector employers to be transparent about their individual gender pay gaps and make progress on gender equality targets. All relevant employers are also required to report on actions to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination.

The *Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Act 2025* represents a world-first shift from transparency to accountability. Moving beyond reporting pay gaps and workforce data, the reform is designed to accelerate progress on gender equality by requiring large employers to set, pursue and demonstrate measurable improvements against key gender equality indicators. Since 1 April 2026, large employers (500 or more employees) have been required to select three gender equality targets and be held accountable for achieving or improving on them over a three-year period. If an employer fails to comply with their reporting requirements, they may be publicly named as non-compliant by WGEA. Relevant employers who do not meet their compliance requirements will not receive a certificate of compliance and may not be eligible to tender for Australian Government contracts.

Strengthening workplace protections and pay

Since 2022, the Government has delivered substantial workplace relations reforms and legislative changes, including the *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Act 2022*, the *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes) Act 2023*, and the *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes No. 2) Act 2024*, and the *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Protecting Worker Entitlements) Act 2023*. These reforms have strengthened wage setting institutions and worker protections, including by making gender equality an object of the *Fair Work Act 2009*, strengthening rights to request flexible work, introducing paid family and domestic violence leave and strengthening access to unpaid leave. The majority of award reliant workers are women, representing 61.6 per cent of the 2.7 million employees covered by modern awards. This highlights how important the modern award settings are to women's take-home pay and economic security.

The Government's workplace relations reforms have supported wage increases for women and made possible the Fair Work Commission's Gender-based Undervaluation Priority Awards review. The Government has also delivered pay increases in the female-dominated sectors of ECEC and aged care (see *Chapter 2: Unpaid and Paid Care* for further detail). Since 2022, through the past four Fair Work Commission Annual Wage Reviews, the Government has backed award wage increases in its submissions and highlighted that women are disproportionately award-reliant. Across these reviews, the National Minimum Wage has increased by more than \$175 per week, or \$9,120 per year. In addition, the *Fair Work Amendment (Protecting Penalty and Overtime Rates) Act 2025* commenced in 2025, protecting penalty and overtime rates in modern awards and strengthening the safety net.

Migrant women are particularly vulnerable to workplace exploitation as they may face intersecting impacts of discrimination and racism, and limited access to secure employment. Additionally, reliance on temporary visas and language barriers can make it difficult to speak out or seek help. Without targeted and culturally appropriate supports, existing systems can unintentionally exclude those most in need. In this Budget, the Government is providing funding to ensure migrant workers know their rights.

Budget highlight: Extension of the Protecting Migrant Workers – Information and Education program

The Government is providing \$27 million over two years from 2026–27 to extend the Protecting Migrant Workers – Information and Education grants program. These grants support targeted information and education activities to provide migrant workers with accurate and appropriate information about workplace safeguards, protections and compliance measures related to migration laws. This will especially assist migrant women, who are overrepresented in insecure work, to report allegations of worker exploitation without fear of reprisals.

Gender analysis in practice: Banning non-compete clauses for low- and middle-income earners

Non-compete clauses are contractual agreements that limit an employees' ability to join competing firms or start competing businesses of their own after leaving a job. The Government will ban non-compete clauses for low- and middle-income employees earning below the Fair Work Act's high-income threshold (currently indexed to \$183,100 in 2025–26).

Around one-in-five employers use non-compete clauses, with high prevalence in female-dominated sectors such as health care, education, ECEC, and disability support. Evidence from unions, community legal centres and academic research shows these clauses are often poorly understood, restrict career progression and suppress wages, with women overrepresented among affected low- and middle-income employees.

Banning non-compete clauses for low- and middle-income employees will reduce unfair restraints on labour mobility and support access to better job opportunities and pay. By enabling employees to move more freely between jobs and strengthen their bargaining power, it is expected to particularly benefit women in lower paid industries.

Promoting a more gender balanced workforce

The Government is working to reduce workforce gender segregation to support economic equality for women and economic growth for all Australians. Addressing workforce gender segregation has clear benefits for labour market efficiency and productivity. Removing barriers to entry in male-dominated occupations broadens the range of jobs available to women, enabling them to find roles that best match their skills and preferences. It also helps address skills shortages in occupations critical to key Government priorities, such as civil engineers, software programmers and construction managers. Skills shortages are more prevalent in gender-skewed occupations where at least 80 per cent of the workforce is a single gender. In 2025, 48 per cent of these male gender-skewed occupations were in shortage and 33 per cent of these female gender-skewed occupations were in shortage, compared with only 18 per cent of less gender-skewed occupations.¹⁵

Treasury analysis shows that while occupational gender segregation has decreased in the past five decades as women have increasingly entered the paid workforce and higher-skilled occupations, occupational gender segregation in Australia persists. Despite some improvement in individual roles, around 70 per cent of occupations did not change their level of gender segregation between 2006 and 2021, and around four in five workers are in

¹⁵ Jobs and Skills Australia, 'Occupational Skills List: Additional Insights Report', *JSA, Australian Government*, 2025.

gender-segregated occupations.¹⁶ Social norms and stigma about what jobs are appropriate for men and women contribute to educational segregation, leading to occupational segregation. In addition, unpaid care responsibilities may prevent women from entering jobs with inflexible working conditions, high time demands or that are further from home, limiting their career options or progression over time. These types of jobs may also limit choices for men to take on more active caring roles.

As well as lifting wages in female-dominated sectors, the Government is addressing workforce gender segregation by supporting more women to pursue careers in high demand industries. The Australian Skills Guarantee leverages major government procurement to increase women's participation in construction and ICT by setting workforce targets on projects worth more than \$10 million. The Government also funds grant programs like the Building Women's Careers Program, and the Future Made in Australia agenda, which is supporting safe, secure and inclusive jobs, underpinned by the Community Benefit Principles.

MYEFO highlight: Advancing gender equality in gender segregated industries

The Government is taking action to level the playing field for women in Australian workplaces. In the 2025–2026 MYEFO, the Government committed \$28.5 million to extend the Advancing Gender Equality in Gender Segregated Industries grant program to 2027–28. This builds on the \$16.4 million committed in the 2024–25 MYEFO to establish the program. This grant program identifies actions that deliver tangible outcomes in gender segregated industries, especially in relation to safe and dignified amenities, flexible work and inclusive workplace cultures.

The Government is also investing \$285.6 million over five years from 2025–26 and \$35.9 million per year ongoing for improvements to the employment services system and to support future reform. Investing in the employment services system will help participating women overcome barriers to work, break cycles of entrenched disadvantage and support sustained participation in the labour market.

Helping women keep more of what they earn

Tax reforms

The Government's tax cuts are making it easier for women to work more and keep more of what they earn.

¹⁶ Jobs and Skills Australia, 'New Perspectives on Old Problems: Gendered Jobs, Work and Pay: Gender Economic Equality Study Paper 1', *JSA, Australian Government*, 2025.

Budget highlight: A new Working Australians Tax Offset

The Government is introducing a new Working Australians Tax Offset (WATO) for all working Australian taxpayers. The WATO will provide a permanent annual tax offset of up to \$250 from the 2027–28 income year, increasing the effective tax-free threshold for workers by nearly \$1,800, up to \$24,985 (for workers eligible for the low income tax offset). This is the largest permanent increase in the effective tax-free threshold since 2012–13 and will benefit around 6.3 million women for 2027–28.

The new WATO is in addition to the first round of tax cuts that was rolled out from 1 July 2024 and two further tax cuts coming into effect over the next two years. The tax cuts reward participation, encouraging Australians, particularly part-time and lower income earners – who are more likely to be women – to take on more hours of work. This builds on the Government's already legislated tax cuts, which are expected to increase total hours worked by 1.3 million hours per week, equivalent to more than 30,000 full time jobs compared to 2023–24 tax settings. This increase is mostly driven by women, who are expected to increase their labour supply by 900,000 hours compared to 2023–24 tax settings.

The Government has also announced that from the 2026–27 income year, Australian workers will be able to claim an instant tax deduction of up to \$1,000 for work-related expenses. For 2026–27, 6.2 million people (42 per cent of taxpayers) are expected to benefit from the proposal. Around 54 per cent of those expected to benefit are women, who are expected to benefit by around \$200 a year on average.

Budget highlight: Medicare levy low-income thresholds

Since 2022, the Government has increased the Medicare levy low-income thresholds by a total of 16.5 per cent, providing tax relief for low-income women. In the Budget, the Government is raising the thresholds by a further 2.9 per cent, from 1 July 2025, at a cost of \$450 million over five years from 2025–26. Of those who benefit from the increase, women are estimated to make up around 58 per cent (approximately 650,000 women). The average benefit of this increase in the thresholds is \$90 a year for both men and women.

For an average Australian female worker on \$68,343, the combined benefit of the Government's tax cuts and instant tax deduction could be up to \$2,494 per year from 2027–28 relative to 2023–24 tax settings. A woman working part-time earning \$30,000 per year and with no work-related expenses (but able to claim the \$1,000 instant tax deduction from 2026–27) will receive an increase in disposable income of \$1,281 from 2027–28, compared to 2023–24 tax settings.

Supporting single parents in the Child Support Scheme

Children in single parent households, which are mostly headed by women, face a significantly higher risk of poverty. Currently 33 per cent of single parent families with children live in poverty, more than three times the rate for couple families. For many of these families, receiving child support from the other parent is critical to meeting day-to-day costs. A significant number of single parents do not receive the child support they are entitled to due to non-payment by former partners, exacerbating financial pressure and economic insecurity. The Government is making the Child Support Scheme safer and more effective to ensure more women and children receive the child support they are owed, on time and in full (see *Chapter 1: Gender-based violence* for further detail).

Helping women build long-term financial security

The Government is working to strengthen women's long-term financial security and improve intergenerational equity, with a particular focus on superannuation and housing. Reforms to superannuation are helping close the gap in retirement incomes by boosting balances across women's working lives. Recognising the link between women's long-term financial security and their access to housing, the Government is supporting pathways to home ownership and increasing support for women in the rental market, including those at greater risk of housing stress.

Ensuring women retire with more

Women approaching retirement have 25.7 per cent less superannuation than men, placing women at greater risk of poverty, housing stress and homelessness.¹⁷ As superannuation is calculated as a percentage of labour income, persistent gender gaps in pay and lower labour force participation compound over time to produce this gender gap in superannuation balances.

A key priority under *Working for Women*, since 2022 the Government has delivered superannuation reforms that will improve women's retirement outcomes and narrow the retirement income gender gap. The Government will begin making Superannuation Guarantee equivalent payments to recipients of government-funded PPL from July 2026 (based on eligibility from 1 July 2025) to ensure superannuation continues to accrue during time out of the labour force caring for children. Treasury modelling suggests this change, on the full partnered entitlement of 22 weeks, could increase a median woman's superannuation balance by around \$4,250 at retirement. Employers will also be required to pay Superannuation Guarantee contributions at the same time as salary and wages, benefiting lower paid, casual and insecure workers who are more likely to miss out when payments are delayed.

¹⁷ ATO (Australian Tax Office), '[Snapshot of Taxation statistics 2022–23](#)', ATO, 2025.

MYEFO highlight: Low-Income Superannuation Tax Offset

From 1 July 2027, the Government is boosting the LISTO to provide greater support for low-income workers and help women build their retirement savings. LISTO ensures eligible low-income workers receive a fair tax concession on their superannuation contributions compared to the tax rate on their take-home pay and improves equity between low- and high-income earners. Without LISTO, many low-income workers would receive little or no concessional tax benefit on their contributions.

The LISTO income threshold will increase from \$37,000 to \$45,000, aligning with the top of the second personal income tax bracket. The maximum annual payment will rise to \$810, reflecting the increase in the Superannuation Guarantee rate to 12 per cent. These changes were estimated in the 2025–26 MYEFO to result in an increase to administered payments of \$435 million over the five years from 2024–25.

These changes restore the original policy intent of LISTO, recognising that while tax and superannuation settings have evolved, LISTO thresholds and caps have not.

As a result of these changes, in 2027–28 more than 770,000 additional Australians will become eligible and around 490,000 will receive a higher payment. In total, 1.3 million Australians will benefit, including around 750,000 women (60 per cent of projected beneficiaries), bringing the total number of LISTO recipients to 3.1 million. This change has a potential benefit at retirement of around \$15,000, depending on an individual's income over their career.

Cameo: How the Government's superannuation reforms impact women's long-term economic security

Due to this Government's changes to the superannuation system, a 30-year-old woman who works part time for ten years with a starting salary of \$37,700, has two children and receives superannuation on PPL could have a \$28,000 increase in their superannuation balance at retirement, in today's dollars, once the reforms are implemented.

This factors in the increases to the Superannuation Guarantee rate that occurred under this Government, superannuation payments on PPL, the legislation for payday super and the reforms to LISTO.

Women's housing security

Access to stable and affordable housing is a key enabler of women's safety and economic security. Women are more vulnerable to housing stress, are more at risk of losing access to stable housing, and more likely to experience homelessness due to family and domestic violence. Further detail on crisis accommodation and housing responses for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence is provided in Chapter 1.

Recent Government investments are helping more Australians buy a home and strengthen pathways into longer-term housing. The Government's Help to Buy Scheme launched in December 2025 and is already helping make home ownership more accessible. As of 31 March 2026, women make up 55 per cent of participants in the scheme. Since May 2022, the Government has helped more than 121,000 women achieve home ownership through the 5% Deposit Scheme, including over 4,000 single women with dependent children (as of 20 April 2026).

For renters, the Government has delivered consecutive increases to Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA). Maximum CRA rates have risen by more than 50 per cent since 2022, providing meaningful support to women experiencing rental stress. Single women households, who make up around 52 per cent of households eligible for the maximum CRA rate, particularly benefit from these changes.

Health

Key outcomes

One year since the landmark \$792.9 million women's health package, delivering its promise of more choice, lower costs and better care for Australian women	First new contraceptive pill added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme in 30 years
Women saved more than \$647 million across 138.7 million prescriptions from the Government's co-payment reductions (1 January 2023 to 31 March 2026)	From 30 July 2023 to 30 April 2026, 55% of presentations to Medicare Urgent Care Clinics were women

Health systems and practices have not generally been built with women in mind and as a result, women and girls in Australia have been disadvantaged in their interactions with the health system, often experiencing longer time frames for diagnoses and treatment, and paying more. The *National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030* highlighted the health inequalities that exist for women, such as access to services, health literacy and stigma. Systemic issues in health care delivery mean women have suffered poorer outcomes such as delayed diagnosis, overprescribing and having their symptoms dismissed or not properly investigated.

The Government has invested more than \$27.8 billion in Strengthening Medicare and improving access to primary care for all Australians, with many of these changes benefiting women. Importantly, there has been a focus on modernising the health system to better respond to women's specific health needs. The landmark \$792.9 million women's health package in the 2025–26 Budget is delivering more choice, lower costs and better care for Australian women and girls. A network of 33 Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain Clinics is delivering much-needed care and has expanded to also provide perimenopause and menopause support. More than 100,000 women have received a new menopause and perimenopause health assessment and new Medicare items are supporting longer specialised gynaecological consultations. Financial incentives to bulk bill the insertion or removal of long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs) are making them more affordable for women.

The package is improving choice and access to cheaper scripts for new contraceptives, menopausal hormone therapies and endometriosis treatment, alongside additional patient savings from 60-day dispensing and the Government's reduction in the Pharmaceutical

Benefits Scheme (PBS) general patient co-payment to \$25 from 1 January 2026. This focus on improving the health system and making medicines cheaper, coupled with targeted women's health investments, is continuing to improve women's lives across Australia. Further investments will support these gains and ensure the system continues to support better health outcomes for women and girls.

Medicare working better for women at every age and stage

Affordability and accessibility remain significant barriers to health care for many women in Australia which is why the Government is strengthening the Medicare system to ensure it can better meet women's specific health needs. Significant investment in primary care directly benefits women, due to the specific health needs they experience across their lifetime as well as women's longer life expectancy and higher rates of chronic illness.

Gender analysis in practice: Securing Medicare Urgent Care Clinics as a permanent feature of the health system

In the 2026–27 Budget the Government is providing ongoing funding for 137 Medicare Urgent Care Clinics (UCCs) Australia-wide, with all planned to be in operation by 30 June 2026. Medicare UCCs ease the pressure on hospitals and give families access to a healthcare professional when they have an urgent, but not life-threatening, need for care.

The Government's investment in the ongoing operation of UCCs is likely to have a greater positive impact for women, increasing free access to a service they are more likely to use.

Since the Government established the Medicare UCCs, there have been almost 3 million presentations. Gender disaggregated data shows, of those who reported their sex, 55 per cent of patients were women.

Medicare UCCs are welcoming, accessible, and safe spaces for Australians seeking urgent care.

The Government has invested an additional \$25 billion for public hospitals, including as part of the implementation of the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA), to reach a record \$220.3 billion in total funding. In 2023–24, there were 6.6 million hospitalisations for women, representing 52 per cent of total hospitalisations. This record investment will support timely, high-quality care for women, including during pregnancy and childbirth, emergencies and for complex or chronic health needs.

The Government is delivering its \$7.9 billion package to boost bulk billing rates announced in the 2025–26 Budget. By 2030, this investment is expected to result in 9 out of 10 general practitioner services being bulk billed and an additional 18 million services being bulk billed each year. This is estimated to save patients \$859 million per year by the end of 2028–29. In the first three months of the Bulk Billing Practice Incentive Program, the bulk

billing rate for standard general practitioner consultations services reached 81.4 per cent, an increase of 4.3 percentage points compared with the same period 12 months earlier.

The Government is further supporting affordability with the establishment of up to six fully bulk billed general practices in the Central Coast, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and the Hunter region, areas with historically low bulk billing rates. This builds on the Government's investment to strengthen primary care and boost access to bulk billing in the Australian Capital Territory, with three new bulk billing general practice clinics operational by 30 June 2026.

The new Ministerial Expert Panel on Women's Health will focus on conditions and system challenges where women experience poorer outcomes, with particular emphasis on inequities in prevention, diagnosis, treatment, research and care delivery.

Budget highlights: Supporting free health care options

Investing in the public hospital system

A strong hospital system benefits all women, particularly those who need to access emergency and acute care. The Government is investing \$25 billion over five years from 2026–27 in additional funding for state and territory hospitals to reach a record \$220.3 billion. The renewed National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA) will ensure Australians receive safe and high-quality care in public hospitals. First Nations health will also be strengthened through the NHRA, with investment to support a new dedicated schedule focused on First Nations-led health reform.

Medicare UCCs

The Government is securing the future of Medicare UCCs with \$1.8 billion over five years from 2025–26 and an ongoing funding commitment. This will assure enduring access to free urgent health care for all Australians across the 137 clinics nationwide. Providing free services to a majority of women patients will support the health outcomes of women and girls.

More Medicare bulk billing practices

The Government is providing targeted funding to improve access to free health care and increase bulk billing rates in the Central Coast, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and the Hunter regions. This will have a positive impact on women due to their higher care demands and higher usage of general practitioner services.

Sexual and reproductive health

Investment in sexual and reproductive health is part of making Medicare work better for women and was a priority in the *National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030*. The Senate inquiry into universal access to reproductive healthcare recommended support through Medicare for contraceptive administration services, including the insertion and removal of LARCs.

Despite their efficacy, Australian women have a comparatively low uptake of LARCs. The Government is making it easier for women in Australia to access and afford LARCs. Centres of Training Excellence are being established in each state and territory to provide LARC services and train health professionals. Four LARC item fees in the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) have had their fees increased and four new items added for nurse practitioners to claim. Additional financial incentives have also been added when a general practitioner or nurse practitioner bulk bills a LARC insertion or removal. There has been a 19.4 percentage point increase in the bulk billing rate for LARC insertion items since the fee items were increased. The 2026–27 Budget will further improve choice and access to LARCs by extending the incentives to participating midwives.

The Government has also announced it will undertake a trial of pharmacist supplied contraceptives and antibiotics for uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs) at the PBS concessional rate, in accordance with state and territory regulations. The trial, from January 2027, is expected to involve around 250,000 female concession card holders aged 18 to 55 years. It will test whether access to affordable and timely treatment for uncomplicated UTIs and certain hormonal contraception can be done safely and effectively through a time-limited, independently-evaluated pharmacy model.

The Government has supported greater choice of contraceptives for women through its landmark women's health package. Some of the most common contraceptive pills, Yaz® and Yasmin®, were listed on the PBS on 1 March 2025, the first new contraceptive pills listed on the PBS in more than 30 years. A total of 13 new oral contraceptive options have been listed since 1 March 2025. More than 850,000 prescriptions for newly PBS-listed contraceptives were dispensed from 1 March 2025 to 31 March 2026, helping almost 380,000 women and saving them more than \$36 million.

Budget highlights: Sexual and reproductive health

Improving accessibility of LARC services

The Government is providing \$2.7 million over four years from 2026–27 (and \$0.3 million per year ongoing) for the listing of new items on the MBS for participating midwives to provide LARC services. This includes an associated bulk billing loading item and contraceptive attendance item. It is expected to build on greater access, including for regional and rural women, and deliver 4,600 patient services annually.

Subsidising cervical cancer treatment

The Government is assisting with the cost of treatments for cervical cancer by expanding the listing of pembrolizumab (Keytruda®) on the PBS from 1 April 2026. Keytruda® is an immunotherapy that works with the body's immune system to help detect and fight cancer cells and reduce the risk of the cancer returning. In 2025, 946 new cases of cervical cancer were diagnosed in Australia. Without the PBS subsidy, patients could pay more than \$15,400 per script.

MYEFO highlight: Sexual and reproductive health***Registered Nurse Prescribing***

The Government is investing \$12.7 million over four years from 2025–26 for necessary enabling changes that support designated registered nurse practitioners to prescribe PBS listed medicines. This important reform strengthens the health system, empowers registered nurses to work to their full scope of practice and supports timely access to medicines for women.

Endometriosis treatment and support

The Government is taking active steps to address the significant burden that endometriosis places on at least one in seven girls and women by improving awareness and understanding of endometriosis, speeding up diagnosis, developing better treatment options and providing specialist support in primary care.

The Government has invested \$39.9 million from 2022–23 to 2027–28 to establish 33 Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain Clinics and expand their scope to provide perimenopause and menopause care in all clinics from July 2026. The 2026–27 Budget includes further funding for these clinics to ensure women and girls get the care they need, close to home.

Relugolix with estradiol and with norethisterone acetate (Ryeqo®) has been listed on the PBS from 1 May 2025 to help treat endometriosis. This has helped more than 8,500 women and saved patients more than \$7.5 million. Women are also benefitting from new Medicare items put in place from 1 July 2025 for longer consultation times and higher rebates for specialised gynaecological consultations. These are targeted at managing conditions such as endometriosis, pelvic pain, polycystic ovarian syndrome and adenomyosis. These items have been claimed more than 19,000 times since their introduction, with the MBS paying \$2.9 million in benefits to support thousands of Australian women with access to longer consultations with their specialists.

Supporting women experiencing menopause

The Government continues to support women experiencing perimenopause and menopause, including through access to cheaper medicines on the PBS. Along with improving quality of life, access to these medications supports women to stay in the workforce who may otherwise reduce hours or retire early due to unmanaged symptoms. More than 2.1 million prescriptions have been delivered for PBS-listed menopausal hormone therapies estradiol (Estrogel®), progesterone (Prometrium®) and estradiol and progesterone (Estrogel® Pro) from 1 March 2025. These listings have helped more than 430,000 women and saved patients more than \$70 million.

A \$1.5 million investment over two years from 2026–27 is delivering training to health professionals on perimenopause and menopause. As of 6 March 2026, there were more than 12,000 enrolments in the Managing Menopause course with more than 4,500 completions. The Government is also delivering a first ever national perimenopause and menopause awareness campaign this year to help increase awareness of symptoms and treatment options and support women to have informed discussion with their doctor or health professional.

On 1 July 2025, the Government introduced a new MBS item for menopause and perimenopause health assessments to ensure women can get the care and support they need from their general practitioner. As at 31 March 2026, more than 100,000 women have received this new health assessment.

Maternal health

Maternal care is a core part of the health system, a key factor in women and children's health outcomes and was identified as a priority in the *National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030*. It identified the need to increase access to services, including increased early access to antenatal services by First Nations women.

During pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period, women interact frequently with the health system. Some women receive continuity of care from the same provider throughout the maternity period, while others experience more fragmented care across multiple providers. Regular antenatal care in the first trimester is associated with positive maternal and child health outcomes and allows for early identification and treatment of potential health issues for both the mother and baby. Importantly, early access to antenatal care is rising, with 69.3 per cent of First Nations women, and 77.4 per cent of non-Indigenous women receiving care in the first trimester.

Budget highlights: Maternal health

Digital and telephone support

Under the Thriving Kids initiative, the Government is providing \$85.5 million over five years from 2026–27 to expand the 1800MEDICARE service to support families and carers from preconception to eight years of age with health, development and behavioural concerns.

Qualified call handlers including midwives and child health nurses will support callers with information, guidance and service navigation to national and local supports. Digital pathways will supplement the phone service with resources, advice and connection to care through a website and app.

National Maternity Data and System Monitoring

The Government is committing \$13.7 million over four years (and \$3.6 million per year ongoing) to continue monitoring and reporting on pregnancy and birth outcomes through the National Maternity Data Development Project. This will enable better targeted policies and services and contribute to reducing gender-based health disparities.

Reducing stillbirth through research and education

The Government is extending investments to improve the understanding of the causes of stillbirth, provide support to grieving families and continue stillbirth education and awareness activities with \$13.1 million over three years from 2025–26.

MYEFO highlights: Maternal health

The Government has continued funding for several maternal care and support programs, including:

- \$8.9 million over four years from 2025–26 (and \$2.7 million per year ongoing) for the National Breastfeeding Helpline. The helpline and LiveChat service provides advice to mothers and families, 24 hours a day, providing a convenient alternative to traditional face-to-face appointments.
- \$6.9 million over two years for the National Preterm Birth Prevention Program. This will continue to lower the rate of preterm and early-term birth and enable these improvements to be embedded into clinical practice.
- \$6.2 million over two years from 2026–27 to the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood to continue delivery of donor human milk banks for vulnerable preterm babies in neonatal intensive care units.
- \$4.1 million over three years from 2026–27 (and \$1.3 million per year ongoing) to Red Nose Australia to continue the Hospital to Home Program. This addresses a critical gap in post-hospital support following pregnancy and infant loss.
- \$2.7 million over two years for three grants that deliver evidence-based bereavement care for women and families from higher-risk population groups who have experienced stillbirth or miscarriage.

Ensuring coordinated and culturally appropriate care

Everyone has unique health needs, which can be complex, with cultural factors a barrier to health equity for some women and girls. Acknowledging and responding to the unique needs of different population groups was a key element in improving health outcomes identified in the *National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030*, with priority populations recognised and targeted interventions identified to improve health outcomes.

First Nation women's and girls' health outcomes are strongly shaped by cultural determinants. Access to services that are targeted and culturally safe is important to addressing their significantly poorer health outcomes compared with non-Indigenous women.

Women from CALD backgrounds often face language and cultural barriers when accessing health information and services, particularly mental and sexual health care. These barriers can delay care and worsen health outcomes, highlighting the importance of inclusive, accessible and culturally appropriate health services. The Government is supporting programs delivering specialist health care to cultural groups, along with investing in the workforce.

Budget highlight: Enhancing health care access for culturally and linguistically diverse women

Bicultural health educators in multicultural communities

The Government is providing \$10.8 million over two years from 2026–27 to continue the Health in My Language (HiML) program for two years, which provides multicultural communities with opportunities to have culturally safe health conversations with trained bilingual health educators, in person and in their own languages. Initially a vaccine literacy program, HiML now includes women’s sexual and reproductive health.

Budget highlights: Ensuring coordinated and culturally appropriate First Nations health care

Culturally safe maternity care

Birthing on Country received \$44.4 million over four years from 2025–26 to continue a model of maternity care that supports decision making, cultural safety and continuity of care for First Nations women throughout pregnancy, birth and the postnatal period. Birthing on Country has been associated with a 50 per cent reduction in preterm birth, improved healthy birthweight outcomes and substantially lower rates of child protection involvement. The workforce is also predominantly First Nations women.

Improved health infrastructure

The Government is investing a further \$144.1 million over two years from 2026–27 to continue to improve health infrastructure across Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Services (ACCHS), building on more than 100 projects already delivered or underway. Improving ACCHS infrastructure ensures First Nations people have better access to culturally safe primary care in fit for purpose facilities closer to home.

Extension of the First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program

An additional \$2.7 million over three years from 2025–26 for the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) will continue to deliver the First Nations Health Worker Traineeship program. The program will increase the supply of health workers and practitioners nationally and address health workforce shortages in rural, regional and remote Australia.

MYEFO highlight: Ensuring coordinated and culturally appropriate First Nations health care

Closing the Gap – further investments

The Government has provided \$103.1 million over four years from 2025–26 to repurpose funding from the Australian Family Partnership program to a First Nations led maternal model of care delivered through 15 ACCHS. The new, culturally safe models will focus on care during pregnancy, birth and postnatal periods.

Women's wellbeing and mental health

More than two in five Australians aged 16 to 85 years have experienced a mental health disorder in their lifetime. Women are more likely to live with anxiety and are two times more likely than men to experience an eating disorder. Mental health was identified as its own priority area in the *National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030* given its prevalence as a health issue.

The Government is creating better access to free, public mental health care, including by increasing the number of free Medicare Mental Health Centres. The Medicare Mental Health Check In service launched in January 2026 and this will provide women across Australia access to free telehealth counselling from home. The flexibility and convenience of this service provides women the opportunity to seek help earlier at no cost.

There has also been specific investment in mental health programs and services around the critical life stages and transitions for women that are known to bring additional risk factors and impact health outcomes, such as adolescence, during and after pregnancy, and menopause. Perinatal depression and anxiety affect one in five mothers and one in ten fathers. The National Perinatal Mental Health Check program is being extended to 30 June 2027 to enable the Centre of Perinatal Excellence to continue providing digital perinatal mental health screening to public antenatal and postnatal health services. More women will be screened for mental illness in the perinatal period to enable earlier support.

The Government recognises the need for a diverse and highly skilled workforce to improve access and equity in mental health care. Ensuring the mental health workforce is appropriately skilled, well distributed and supported is a key priority for the Government and the focus of the *National Mental Health Workforce Strategy 2022–2032*.

Consistent with the actions under the *National Mental Health Workforce Strategy 2022–32*, the Government is making substantial investments to address critical shortages, enhance training pathways and strengthen capabilities across the mental health workforce. The Government has already committed \$83.9 million to expand training places and internship opportunities for key mental health professions including psychologists, psychiatrists, general practitioners and peer workers.

Budget highlights: Women’s wellbeing and mental health

Extending mental health supports

The Government is providing \$277.5 million in 2026–27 to extend the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement to 30 June 2027 to maintain continuity of supports across Australia. This includes:

- \$78 million for Medicare Mental Health Centres. More than 57 per cent of clients who have accessed support and services from the centres have been women
- \$4.9 million to extend the work to achieve universal perinatal mental health screening across public antenatal and postnatal care settings
- \$4.4 million to extend supports for people with eating disorders and their families.

An additional \$0.6 million in 2026–27 will support a national platform which brings together information and resources that establish standards for the prevention and treatment of eating disorders.

These changes support the *National Women’s Health Strategy 2020–2030*, which identified mental health as a top priority.

MYEFO highlights: Women's wellbeing and mental health

Perinatal Mental Health Centres

The Government committed \$13 million over four years from 2025–26 to establish an additional eight Perinatal Mental Health Centres. This will expand the network to 20 nationally. Delivered by Gidget Foundation Australia, the Centres provide free perinatal specific psychological support to new and expectant parents, acknowledging their additional mental health needs during this stage. Each Centre is expected to provide support to approximately 780 parents each year, addressing demand and increasing access and support for new and expectant parents during the perinatal period and the first year postpartum.

Universal perinatal mental health screening

\$0.6 million over one year from 2026–27 will be provided to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to continue work to develop a national perinatal minimum data set. Current data collection across jurisdictions is fragmented and inconsistent. A national data set will highlight disparities in screening prevalence across regions and priority population groups and enable links between early screening and outcomes to be identified. It will provide a more complete national picture of the factors influencing the mental health of mothers and their partners during the perinatal period to support work to improve mental health outcomes.

Support for people with eating disorders

\$26 million over three years from 2025–26 will support the needs of people with eating disorders and their carers, including innovative and evidence-based models of care to best address the needs of people with eating disorders in their community-based settings and upskilling the mental health workforce in evidence-based eating disorder interventions.

This includes \$2.2 million over two years from 2026–27 to the National Eating Disorders Collaboration to continue supporting a national platform which brings together information and resources that establish standards for the prevention and treatment of eating disorders.

Leadership, representation and decision-making

Key outcomes

Australia ranked 13th out of 148 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2025 Global Gender Gap Report, up from 43rd in 2022	12 of 23 Cabinet positions are held by women
Between 2009 and 2025, women's representation on Australian Government boards increased from 33.4% to 54.3%	In 2024–25, Australia invested \$2.6 billion in development and humanitarian assistance programs that target gender equality

For generations, women's under-representation in leadership and decision-making roles has contributed to persistent gender gaps across workplaces, the economy and the community. The Government has sought to embed women's representation in leadership and decision-making roles through structural, cultural and accountability reforms. This includes restoring gender-responsive budgeting, strengthening targets for gender balance and transparency on Australian Government boards, enhancing the role of the WGEA and the Office for Women and placing gender equality at the centre of international engagement.

Recent years have seen significant improvements in women's representation in the public sphere, with a number of significant appointments to senior leadership roles and representation in Federal Parliament reaching gender parity. On the global stage, Australia is increasingly recognised as a leader on gender equality, with the World Economic Forum's 2025 Global Gender Gap Index ranking Australia 13th out of 148 countries. This is Australia's highest position since the Index began and reflects the impact of the renewed national focus on gender equality and sustained reform.

However, women's under-representation persists, particularly in the private sector and for First Nations women and CALD women. Continued action is required to ensure women of all backgrounds are represented in leadership and decision-making and to address intersecting impacts of discrimination and racism.

Women in leadership roles

Women's representation in leadership and decision-making roles is critical to achieving gender equality and delivering better outcomes for communities. While women have historically been under-represented in leadership roles in Australia, recent progress demonstrates the impact of sustained action and accountability. Continued effort is required to embed these gains across all sectors and ensure women's voices shape decisions at every level.

In the Government's second term, the Federal Cabinet has the most women representatives in Australia's history, with 12 women and 11 men holding Cabinet positions. The 48th Parliament is also the most gender balanced on record, with women comprising 49.6 per cent of parliamentarians at the opening of parliament. This is an increase of 5.1 percentage points since the opening of the 47th Parliament and a substantial rise from 26.1 per cent in 2004.

2026 marks 15 years of reporting on gender balance on Australian Government boards. Over this time, women's representation has increased by over 20 per cent, from 33.4 per cent in 2009 to 54.3 per cent in 2025. For the fourth consecutive year, the Government has achieved the target for women to hold at least 50 per cent of all Australian Government board positions. Furthermore, over the last few years, several women have been appointed to key leadership positions across Government, becoming the first women to hold these roles.

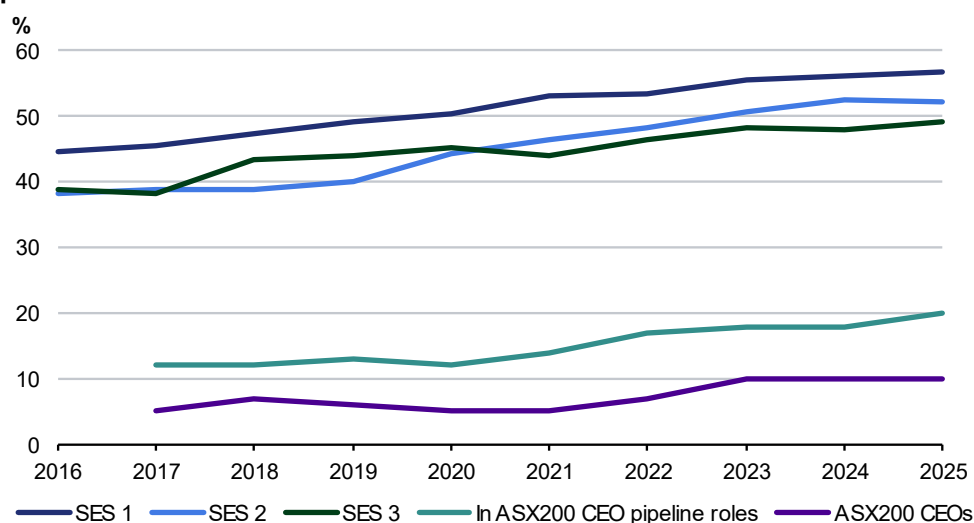
The firsts: Women appointed to Australia's most senior public sector leadership roles

- Ms Krissy Barrett APM, beginning her term in October 2025 as Australian Federal Police Commissioner
- Ms Michele Bullock, appointed in July 2023 as Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia
- Ms Sarah Court, beginning her term in June 2026 as Chair of the Australian Securities and Investments Commission
- Lieutenant General Susan Coyle AM CSC DSM, beginning her term in July 2026 as Chief of Army
- Dr Ruth Higgins SC, beginning her term in June 2026 as the Solicitor-General
- Ms Kathy Klugman, appointed in October 2025 as the Director-General of the Office of National Intelligence
- The Honourable Justice Debra Mortimer, appointed in March 2023 as Chief Justice of the Federal Court of Australia

- Ms Meghan Quinn PSM, beginning her term in May 2026 as the Secretary of the Department of Defence
- Ms Jenny Wilkinson PSM, appointed in June 2025 as the Secretary to the Treasury
- Ms Danielle Wood, beginning her term in November 2023 as Chair of the Productivity Commission.

Increased representation in government leadership roles is also reflected in the Australian Public Service (APS), where women’s representation in senior executive roles (SES) has increased steadily over the past two decades (Chart 6). Meanwhile, progress in the private sector has been slower. In 2025, women made up ten per cent of ASX200 Chief Executive Officers (CEO), up from around three per cent in 2006 – meaningful progress over two decades but from a very low base. This reflects women’s underrepresentation in CEO pipeline roles, such as Managing Director, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer. With men holding 80 per cent of these positions, these trends highlight the importance of actively building the leadership pipeline by supporting women at all levels, as well as the need to diversify what roles are considered part of the pipeline.

Chart 6: Proportion of women in leadership positions across the APS and private sector



Source: Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) 2025; Chief Executive Women (CEW) 2025.

The Government is using data, transparency and accountability to drive progress in the private sector. As detailed in Chapter 3, the Government is spurring action from larger employers through reforms to the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*. Moving beyond requirements to report pay gaps and workforce data, large employers must now set, pursue and demonstrate measurable improvements against key gender equality targets. In 2025, the Government announced it would strengthen compliance with procurement rules to make sure the Government only works with companies that meet WGEA requirements.

Every year, Australians are recognised for their outstanding service and contributions through the Australian honours system. Gender balance was achieved for the first time in the Order of Australia in the King's Birthday 2023 Honours List. However, women made up only 27 per cent of Order of Australia awards in the Australia Day 2026 Honours List. The inequity in women's representation in the Order of Australia is because women are nominated at lower rates than men, which is further compounded by the longstanding backlog in the consideration of Order of Australia nominations. The Government continues to identify and implement practical measures to increase nominations for women and people from diverse backgrounds.

Gender analysis in practice: Future direction of the Australian Space Agency

Katherine Bennell-Pegg – the first professional astronaut to represent Australia – was named 2026 Australian of the Year, but there is still significant work to do to lift gender equality in the space sector. Australia's space and associated industries are highly gender-segregated, with a predominately male workforce. The lack of representation of women in the space industry is further compounded by a lack of intersectional diversity and significant under-representation of First Nations people.

As the local space sector continues to grow, the Australian Space Agency is working to improve women's representation in the sector and across the skills pipeline, leading whole-of-government space policy and international space partnerships.

The Australian Space Agency will progress gender equality through recruitment and procurement processes, capability uplift in critical technologies, the design of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) outreach activities through the Australian Space Discovery Centre, and the engagements of Ms Bennell-Pegg.

Amplifying diverse voices in decision-making

It is critical that diverse women's voices inform government decision-making to ensure programs and policies respond to women's needs. The Government continues to fund and work collaboratively with the five National Women's Alliances, ensuring policy development is informed by their expertise and the diverse lived experience of the women they represent. The Alliances provide advice to the Government across the priority areas of *Working for Women*, elevating the voices of First Nations women, migrant, refugee and CALD women, women with disability, and women in rural, regional and remote Australia. The work of the Alliances includes targeted policy deep dives, participation in relevant inquiries and roundtables, and the development of discussion papers and submissions on matters of strategic importance to support the Government's gender equality agenda.

Uplifting First Nations women and girls and learning from them is essential to advancing gender equality, achieving the aims of *Working for Women* and implementing the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*. First Nations women are central to the strength, protection and revitalisation of communities, families and cultures, yet they experience gender inequality that intersects uniquely with racism and ongoing injustice.

The Government has provided \$3 million in seed funding to assist in the establishment of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Institute for First Nations Gender Justice as the national vehicle for elevating First Nations women's voices and leadership. Released in March 2026, the *Wiyi Yani U Thangani Institute's Strategic Plan 2026–30* outlines how the Institute will amplify First Nations research practices and centre peacebuilding work led by women and girls to strengthen the social and economic fabric of First Nations peoples and Country. The vision set out in the Strategic Plan and the *Change Agenda for First Nations Gender Justice* provides a First Nations gender lens the Government will continue to apply to realise major frameworks for gender equality and family safety, including Our Ways (see *Chapter 1: Gender-based violence* for further detail).

In March 2025, the Government established the five-year Working for Women Research Partnership, bringing together academics and stakeholders to strengthen the evidence base for driving economic equality. The Partnership focuses on producing inclusive, nationally representative data to inform targeted action, with particular emphasis on the experiences of groups often underrepresented in research and policy, including First Nations women, migrant women, LGBTQIA+ people and women with disability. The Partnership's research agenda, published in October 2025, supports priorities such as increasing labour force participation and driving inclusive growth. In April 2026, initial findings were released, examining women's experiences of workplace flexibility. It found that 'good' flexible work delivers choice, security and opportunity, while 'bad' flexible work reinforces insecurity and inequality by increasing uncertainty and restricting choice. First Nations women additionally face racism and limited recognition of their caring responsibilities, while good quality flexible work is particularly critical for women with disability and women in regional and remote Australia to engage fully in work (see *Chapter 2: Unpaid and paid care* for further detail).

Progressing gender equality through government systems

Gender responsive budgeting was reintroduced in the 2022–23 October Budget to put gender equality at the centre of budget decision-making. Since the 2023–24 MYEFO, gender analysis has applied to all Cabinet submissions and new policy proposals. The maturity of gender responsive budgeting and APS capability in gender analysis continues to grow. *Including Gender: An APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment* (the Guide) was updated in December 2025 to target efforts to proposals with the greatest impact on gender equality. The revised Guide also helps policymakers take an intersectional approach to gender analysis to consider the diversity of people's experiences and how policies may impact people differently.

In the 2026–27 Budget, the Government has made disciplined decisions on the long-term sustainability of payments and services to strengthen the Budget, rebuild fiscal buffers and reinvest spending to focus on the Government's top priorities, and help guarantee the continuity of funding for essential services. These decisions were informed by gender analysis to highlight the gendered impacts of proposals and help the Government make informed decisions about policies.

Gender analysis in practice: Tax Expenditures and Insights Statement

The Tax Expenditures and Insights Statement (TEIS) is an annual Treasury publication that provides transparency about the impact of features of Australia's tax system on individuals, households and businesses. It provides estimates of revenue foregone from tax expenditures such as concessions and commonly used features of the tax system, such as deductions. The TEIS includes quantitative distributional analysis using disaggregated data and shows how the benefit of large tax expenditures is distributed across income, age and gender groups.

The Government is bringing greater transparency around tax concessions and gender. The 2025–26 TEIS included a new section providing distributional analysis of large tax expenditures and deductions by gender for the first time. Although previous TEIS publications have included some distributional analysis by gender for selected tax expenditures and features of the tax system, the new section consolidates this information, enhances transparency and highlights distributional analysis by gender.

These changes support more efficient use of public resources by clarifying who benefits from major tax concessions and how those benefits are distributed across genders. This contributes directly to the goals of *Working for Women* by strengthening the Government's capacity to assess how existing tax settings affect women's labour force participation, income and economic security.

Global leadership on gender equality

Australia is a global leader on gender equality. In 2024–25, Australia invested \$2.6 billion in development and humanitarian assistance programs that targeted gender equality. In the same year, 81 per cent of Australia's development investments were implemented in a way that effectively supports gender equality (against a target of 80 per cent) and 95 per cent of eligible new investments valued at \$3 million or more had a gender equality objective.

Under South Africa's 2025 G20 Presidency, Australia actively promoted women's economic empowerment, including through participation in the G20 Empowerment of Women Working Group. At the 2025 G20 Leaders' Summit in Johannesburg, Australia supported the Brisbane–eThekweni Goal, building on the original Brisbane Goal established under Australia's 2014 G20 Presidency, to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation by 25 per cent. Australia was among half of G20 members to meet the original Brisbane Goal and welcomed its extension to 2030, encouraging all members to accelerate progress towards closing gender gaps.

Australia also reinforced its commitment to gender equality on the global stage at the 70th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, held in March 2026. This year's priority theme focused on strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, as a critical foundation for safe, fair and inclusive societies. The Commission on the Status of Women is the world's leading forum for advancing gender equality, bringing together governments, experts and civil society. Australia's participation ensures our policies are informed by global best practice and emerging challenges.



Budget

2026–27

WOMEN'S BUDGET STATEMENT