

2025 Election Platform

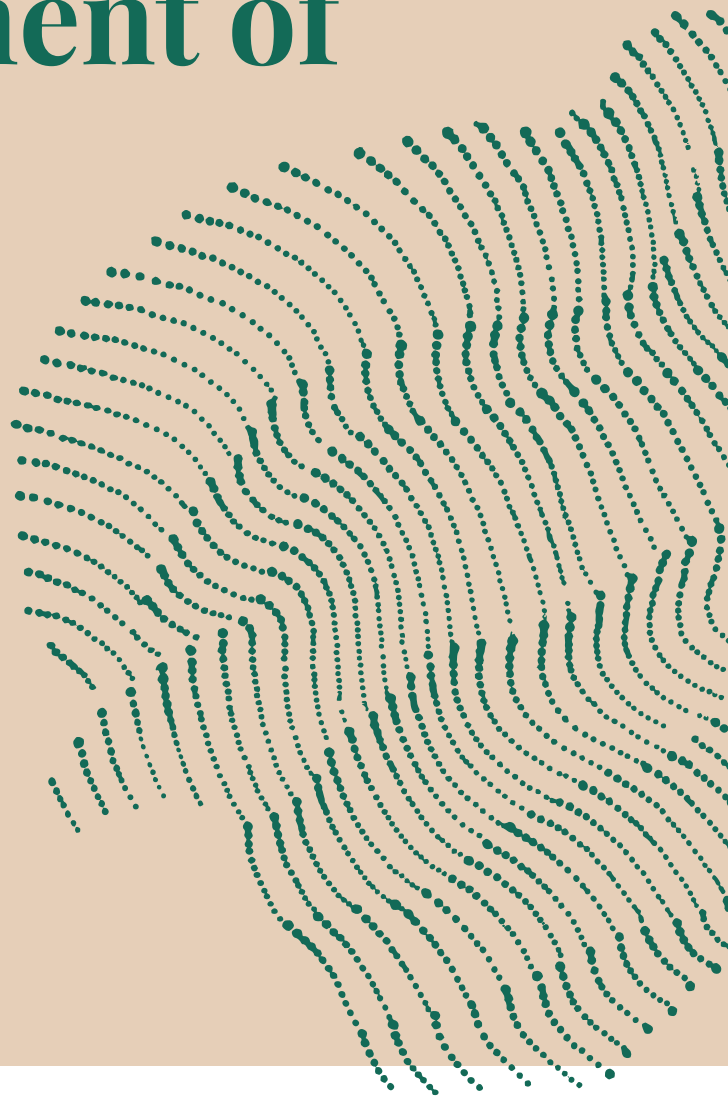


Working with
Women Alliance

wwwa.org.au

Acknowledgment of Country

The Working with Women Alliance acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and future, and we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging. We value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and knowledge.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

MAUREEN NAMPIJINPA HUDSON

Maureen Nampijinpa Hudson was born at Yuelamu (Mt Allan), 290 kilometres north west of Alice Springs, Northern Territory. Her language is Warlpiri. She started painting on canvas in the 1980s and paints now to teach her children and grandchildren about traditional bush life. Maureen depicts her father's stories of Fire Dreaming, Napa - Water Dreaming, Lightning Dreaming. And her mother's side as well, women's ceremonies.

"Ngajuku palangu ngulajulpa nyinaja yuwurrku-wardingi, kalarnalu wapaja mangarriki purdaju. Yawulyuju pirrjirdi nyayirni jiki, ngulaju yapangkaku manu walyangkaku kula canvas-riaku."

Translation:

"My parents lived in a traditional way, in the bush. We would hunt for bush tukka. Traditional ceremony was very strong. It was body or ground painting only, no canvas."



About Us

Proudly led by YWCA Canberra, the Working with Women Alliance (WWWA) represents two key portfolios: National Women's Safety (NWS) and National Women's Equality (NWE). The WWWA connects the critical areas of gender-based violence prevention and the advancement of women's economic equality and leadership, bridging these important policy fields for greater impact.

We work with members and stakeholders, including the Australian Government to provide expertise and advice on gender equality and women's safety.

Contact for this Submission

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Federal Election 2025: Hidden People

Priority 1

Uphold and build on the reforms of the last three years that protect women and promote their economic participation

Priority 2

Housing and homelessness support for women and gender-diverse people

Priority 3

Economic security and fair wages for women

Priority 4

Access to affordable reproductive healthcare

Priority 5

Build and retain a sustainable workforce for domestic and family violence support services

Priority 6

Reform the Australian child support System

Priority 7

Targeted funding for sexual violence specialist services

Priority 8

Evidence-based payments for leaving violence urgently needed

Priority 9

Gender-affirming healthcare and LGBTIQ+ rights

Executive Summary

Gender inequality has far-reaching and lifelong consequences, shaping the economic security, safety, and well-being of people across Australia.

One in three Australians hold a negative bias about women's ability to participate fully economically, politically or in education. These biases shape how women move through the world and mean that many are at serious risk of violence, housing insecurity and poverty.

Gender-based violence, homelessness, and poverty are deeply connected, creating cycles of disadvantage that disproportionately affect women and gender-diverse people. Experiences of gender inequality increase the risk of poverty, limit opportunities to escape and recover from violence, contribute to housing insecurity and homelessness, and result in lower superannuation balances and reduced financial stability in retirement.

This election platform highlights the urgent need for policies that address these interlinked issues by prioritising economic security, housing stability, and the prevention of gender-based violence. Economic equality is not only a fundamental right but also a critical tool in reducing the prevalence and impact of gender-based violence. By ensuring access to secure employment, fair wages, financial independence, and safe, affordable housing, Australia can create pathways to long-term safety, stability, and equality for all.

The Working with Women Alliance supports the election platforms and advocacy calls from the National Women's Alliances to ensure that the Australian Government works for a better future for all women and gender-diverse people in Australia. We know that many of the issues we highlight in this platform are more pronounced for women with disabilities, migrant and refugee women, First Nations women and women in rural and remote parts of Australia. Policy responses must be designed with these women in mind.

This platform outlines key policy recommendations and commitments that will drive meaningful change, ensuring that no one is forced to choose between poverty and violence. Addressing these intersections is essential to building a fairer, safer, and more equitable Australia.



Priority 1: Uphold and build on the reforms of the last three years that protect women and promote their economic participation

This election platform recognises the impact of recent reform that has benefitted women and calls for continued commitment to existing policies that protect women and promote their economic participation.

Australia must continue to work toward commitments in national plans and programs including:

- National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032 (The National Plan).
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2023-2025.
- Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education.
- Leaving Violence Program.
- Crimes Amendment (Strengthening the Criminal Justice Response to Sexual Violence) Bill 2024.
- National Women’s Health Strategy 2020-2030.
- The 2025 Women’s Health Package.

The elected Government must also reaffirm commitment to gender equality by not rolling back:

- The abolishment of the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) activity test to guarantee three days of subsidised early childhood education each week.
- The prioritisation of housing provision for older women and women escaping violence through the Housing Australia Future Fund.
- Amendments to the Fair Work Act that reflect the Respect@work commitments
- Superannuation reform, including superannuation on paid parental leave and access to offenders’ superannuation for victims and survivors of childhood sexual abuse.
- Extension of paid parental leave to 26 weeks.

Priority 2: Housing and homelessness support for women and gender-diverse people

Australia's housing crisis: Women at the forefront

Women are the face of the housing crisis in Australia. Women typically earn less and are more likely to experience rental stress and housing insecurity. Increasingly, women are at serious risk of homelessness.

Young women are much less likely than young men to own homes, and when they do eventually buy, they face higher debts for longer.¹ Despite increased demand for public and community housing, social housing has been declining as a share of housing stock for three decades.²

It's no surprise then, that women are more likely to rely on Commonwealth Rent Assistance payments and three in five people in social housing are women.³ Women are the fastest growing cohort of people experiencing homelessness and two in three Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) clients are now women.⁴ Three in four single women retirees who rent privately, live in poverty.⁵

Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women. More than 7,000 women a year return to violent homes because there are no other affordable or safe options.⁶ Where women can leave, they face increased risks of homelessness, with single mothers experiencing homelessness and marginal housing at nearly four times the national average.⁷ In September 2024, nearly two in five SHS clients had experienced family and domestic violence.⁸

Recommendation 2.1:

- **Develop a gender-responsive action plan on housing that aligns with the commitments of the National Plan.**

Gender-based violence is a key driver of Australia's current housing crisis. Unaffordable, insecure and inaccessible housing are key barriers for leaving violence. The National Plan commits to improving access to short-term, medium and long-term housing for women and children experiencing violence and supporting women to stay in their own homes when they so choose. Additionally, women and gender-diverse people from marginalised communities are at greater risk of violence *and* homelessness; notably, women over the age of 55, migrant, refugee and culturally and linguistically diverse women, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women.

Recommendation 2.2:

- **Reform tax and welfare policies to address gender disparities in housing affordability.**

A review of the tax and transfer system is needed to address economic drivers of the housing crisis in Australia. Tax concessions, such as negative gearing and the capital gains tax discount, incentivise the use of housing as an investment and disproportionately impact women, particularly older women, by limiting housing affordability and security. For every dollar of benefit from negative gearing that women receive, men receive more than two dollars, for every dollar of benefit from the capital gains tax discount that women receive, men get more than \$1.50.⁹ As well as contributing to inequality, these concessions cost the Australian Government around \$20 billion per year. This revenue could, and should, instead be spent on social housing.

Recommendation 2.3:

- **Sustainably fund services to support women at risk and LGBTIQ+ people.**

Funding for SHS is not currently tied to demand, which means the sector cannot expand to meet growing demand or increased complexity. Two in three of the people turned away by homelessness services are women.¹⁰ The strain on the system is evident, with 83% of services unable to answer phone calls, 74% unable to respond to urgent emails, and almost 40% of services forced to close their doors during business hours.¹¹ This means many individuals in need are not even accounted for in the unmet demand. Funding a trauma-informed, sustainable specialist homelessness sector means addressing workforce issues including burnout, funding uncertainty and staff-turnover to ensure continuity and improved wellbeing for both clients and staff.

Priority 3: Economic security and fair wages for women

Women more likely to in poverty in Australia

Australia is one of the richest countries in the world, yet women continue to live in poverty. In fact, women are more likely than men to be living in poverty in Australia.¹²

Despite being more likely to engage in higher education, women are concentrated in low-paid, insecure industries. On average, women in Australia earn only 78c for every dollar that men earn.¹³ This adds up to a yearly difference of more than \$28,000.

Women would need to work an extra 44 days each year to match the earnings of men. For women with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse or migrant and refugee women, rural and regional women, older women or for First Nations women, this gap is even more pronounced.

Non-discretionary costs like food, housing and electricity make up a larger proportion of women's incomes, so the dramatic increases in costs of living over the last five years have had a more significant impact on women's lives. This impact is especially high for single parents, given that one in three sole parent households live in poverty.¹⁴ The effect of price rises on older women has also been substantial, given they are likely to retire, on average with \$50,000 less superannuation than men.¹⁵

For women and gender-diverse people leaving violence, the financial burden can be overwhelming. Research suggests the average cost to escape violence is \$18,000, a significant challenge, particularly for those who are already more likely to face economic disadvantage.¹⁶

Recommendation 3.1:

- Increase income support payments to at least \$82 per day.

Throughout their lives, women are more likely than men to be dependent on income support and government payments to make ends meet.¹⁷ Current rates of income support payments leave people unable to afford rent, food, sufficient heating and cooling and transport. To ensure adequate support, payments should be increased and adjusted in line with living costs. Disability and Illness and Single Income Family supplements should be established and benchmarked to the additional costs incurred by people with disabilities and single parents. Raising rates of Commonwealth Rent Assistance will also mean that older women are less likely to live in poverty as they struggle to afford rising rents. Increasing Jobseeker payments to at least \$82 would cost

approximately \$9.5 billion each year, a fraction of the revenue the Australian Government loses through the capital gains tax discount.

Recommendation 3.2:

- **Implement recommendations from the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce.**

The Women's Economic Equality Taskforce offers comprehensive recommendations for improving economic equality in Australia, including leveraging government purchasing powers to incentivise equitable employment practices. These recommendations include improving the wages, security and safety of workers in the care economy, most of whom are women as well as incentivising men to take paid parental leave and improving the affordability and accessibility of early childhood education. WEET have also recommended additional investment in employment programs run for and by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women.¹⁸

Recommendation 3.3:

- **Improve wages and working conditions in the care economy.**

The care industry is drastically underfunded and simultaneously overrepresented by women, who comprise 76% of the health care and social assistance industry.¹⁹ WEET has recommended policies that improve working conditions in the care industry through increased wages, improved security and safety of work and recognition of the Care and Support Economy as critical to our society.²⁰ The Australian Government should continue supporting the Fair Work Commission's decisions on the Aged Care Work Case,²¹ in furthering award wage increases and providing additional funding through existing arrangements and exploring new grant opportunities. While funding wage increases for the early childhood education and care workforce²² is a positive step, worker retention payments should extend beyond the current two-year limit, ensuring long-term support aligns with modern award rates and associated costs.

Priority 4: Access to affordable reproductive healthcare

Access to quality healthcare is a human right

Systemic gender bias in healthcare continues to shape women's quality of life, economic security and health. For example, one in four women have chosen not to discuss menopause symptoms with their doctor because they didn't think anything could be done.²³ Abortion care is only included in the curriculum of half of Australia's medical schools and is often non-compulsory.²⁴ Three in five women report that costs limit their contraceptive choices.²⁵ More than half of women report that their mental and emotional health is impacted by barriers to accessing contraception.²⁶

Women and gender-diverse people experience debilitating reproductive conditions that impact their ability to participate in the workforce and maintain economic security and independence. For people living with endometriosis, polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), persistent pelvic pain (PPP), pre-menstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD), or menopause, seeking healthcare is expensive. The impact of reproductive health issues is amplified for marginalised demographics who already experience discrimination and consequentially, poorer health outcomes.

Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) and intrauterine devices (IUDs) are the most effective form of contraception, particularly for managing health conditions such as endometriosis, menopause, and PCOS.²⁷ Insertion of these devices can cost more than \$500, with additional fees for pre-screening and post-procedure appointments. If general anaesthesia is used, costs increase to more than \$900.²⁸

Economic inequality is further amplified when pain or symptoms of reproductive health issues interrupt people's ability to work. For example, two in five middle-aged women in Australia experiencing symptoms of menopause are forced to take extended leave from work.²⁹ Nearly half of women who experience pelvic pain require time off work to manage their pain.³⁰ One in three women with endometriosis have had to change jobs, with many forced to forgo promotions or switch careers due to their symptoms. Women who experience severe menstrual pain lose approximately nine days of productivity a year.³¹

For people in regional and rural areas, healthcare, particularly abortions, are expensive and inaccessible. Overcrowding of local services and long wait times can mean the difference between low-cost medical abortions and high-cost surgical abortions. In remote areas, conscientious objectors can result in delayed access to services, or significant additional costs for travel.

The National Women's Health Strategy outlines key health issues facing women and girls and the importance of investing in awareness and education, health interventions,

service delivery and research. However, the success of the strategy is compromised without an actionable, measurable plan to generate better reproductive health outcomes. The 2025 commitments to women's healthcare investment provides much needed funding for reproductive healthcare and PBS listings of essential treatments.³² However, the reality is that women's reproductive health has long been neglected and reform in this policy area should remain a key priority.

Recommendation 4.1:

- **Ensure universal free access to contraception.**

IUDs and LARCs are highly effective as contraceptives and for treating reproductive health conditions. The women's healthcare investment takes important steps towards achieving universal access by increasing Medicare payments to doctors and nurse practitioners for IUD and implant procedures.³³ However, comprehensive coverage must also include all aspects of the process, including anaesthesia and pre- and post-procedure screenings. The Australian Government should also continue to expand the PBS listing to include more contraceptive options, improving accessibility and affordability for all.

Recommendation 4.2:

- **Improve and secure access to reproductive healthcare for marginalised people, particularly in rural and remote areas.**

The expansion of endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics and increased support for menopause and perimenopause is welcome, along with the new Medicare rebates for menopause health assessments, designed to help women experiencing menopause and perimenopause get appropriate care.

Abortion is a healthcare service that is time-sensitive, and immediate accessibility and affordability are imperative. More funding is needed to support public abortion services, with a priority for regional and remote clinics. Additionally, reform of treatment guidelines is needed to ensure national service consistency and allow provision of medical abortions by nurses, midwives and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander healthcare workers.

The Australian Government should uphold its commitment of \$25.1 million to establish eight centres of training excellence to strengthen healthcare professionals' skills and confidence in providing care. Women's health modules should also be made compulsory for medical degrees, including units in reproductive health conditions, menopause and

abortion. This education should spotlight demographics that are marginalised and who are more likely to experience poor health. This will ensure *all* doctors are able to diagnose, treat and support women and gender-diverse people requiring care.

Recommendation 4.3:

- **Support reproductive leave as a universal entitlement.**

The Health Services Union predicts reproductive leave would cost \$920 million annually – a fraction of the \$26.55 billion a year spent on lost productivity.³⁴ Reproductive leave would cover IVF, severe menstrual pain, endometriosis, vasectomies, menopause, gender transitioning therapies and abortion, among other health issues. Universal access to this leave would result in greater economic stability for women, and allow them to treat painful, sometimes debilitating conditions without leaving the workforce.

Priority 5: Build and retain a sustainable workforce for domestic and family violence support services

Sustainable workforce for specialist services: A critical investment in women's safety

The demand for specialist services supporting women experiencing domestic, family, and sexual violence has never been greater. Yet, Australia faces a critical workforce shortage in the social services sector, jeopardizing the ability of frontline organizations to provide life-saving support. Without a pipeline of skilled professionals, the safety and well-being of women and children are at risk.

The social services sector is grappling with a severe workforce shortage, putting essential services at risk. High turnover rates and burnout are rampant, driven by low wages and the demanding nature of the work. Without targeted financial incentives, fewer students are choosing careers in social work and human services, creating a long-term pipeline issue that directly impacts the availability and quality of support services.

Retention is just as critical as recruitment. Specialist services require experienced professionals who possess the skills to navigate complex trauma, crisis intervention, and risk assessment. However, the ongoing cycle of high turnover leads to inconsistent care, increasing strain on the remaining workforce and exacerbating burnout. This instability undermines the effectiveness of frontline services and diminishes the support available to women and children experiencing violence.

Investing in workforce sustainability brings both economic and social benefits. By alleviating the financial burden on graduates, a HECS-HELP debt forgiveness scheme would incentivise long-term commitment to the sector, fostering a more stable workforce. A pipeline of dedicated, skilled professionals means stronger support services, reduced reliance on emergency responses, and better long-term outcomes for those escaping violence.

Addressing this workforce crisis is also fundamental to achieving the objectives of The National Plan. Without significant investment in the people who deliver frontline services, the sector will struggle to meet growing demand, leaving women and children without the safety and support they need.

A HECS-HELP debt forgiveness scheme provides a clear, targeted solution to these challenges. It is a practical, cost-effective strategy to attract new graduates into the sector and encourage them to stay. This policy recognises the crucial role that social workers and human services professionals play in protecting vulnerable women and children and ensuring their long-term safety and wellbeing.

Recommendation 5.1:

- **Implement a HECS-HELP Debt Forgiveness Scheme for Social Work and Human Services Graduates.**

The Australian Government should invest \$57.1 million over five years to establish a HECS-HELP debt forgiveness program for graduates who commit to at least four years in the social services sector. This initiative will help attract and retain skilled professionals, ensuring a sustainable workforce capable of delivering vital frontline services to women and children experiencing domestic, family, and sexual violence.

Recommendation 5.2:

- **Fund a national rollout of the Wisdom in Practice program.**

The *Wisdom in Practice* (WiP)³⁵ program has demonstrated its effectiveness in embedding lived experience into the professional development of frontline family violence workers through a structured reverse mentoring model.³⁶ Given its success in

Victoria, a coordinated national rollout of the program is recommended to ensure a consistent, survivor-informed approach to workforce development across Australia.

A national pilot of the program would require \$700,000, covering program delivery, mentor support, participant training, administration, and evaluation. This estimate accounts for the cost of mentor payments, professional development for practitioners, training resources, facilitation, and coordination across multiple jurisdictions.

The funding breakdown includes:

- **Mentor Payments and Support:** Remuneration for victim-survivor advocates (VSAs) to acknowledge their expertise and lived experience, alongside access to support services as per the DFSV Commission Lived Experience Council rates and recommendations.
- **Program Facilitation and Administration:** Fixed costs for staffing, participant coordination, training materials, and technological infrastructure to enable seamless program delivery.
- **Evaluation and Continuous Improvement:** Resources for ongoing monitoring, feedback collection, and assessment of program outcomes to refine the delivery model and ensure long-term effectiveness.

The program should be expanded to executive and senior leadership levels to ensure survivor perspectives inform organisational culture, policies and decision-making across the sector.³⁷ A national approach to the WiP program will drive workforce capability, cultural change, and improved responses to family violence.

Priority 6: Reform the child support system

Child support as a mechanism of financial abuse: The need for systemic reform

The Australian child support system, designed to ensure financial stability for children of separated parents, is frequently weaponised as a tool of financial abuse against single mothers. The *Blackbox Report* highlights how the system enables economic control and manipulation, disproportionately impacting women.³⁸ Financial abuse occurs through withheld payments, systemic loopholes, and coerced debt imposition, necessitating urgent reform.

One critical flaw is the linkage between child support and Family Tax Benefit Part A (FTBA) through the Maintenance Income Test (MIT). The MIT reduces FTBA by 50 cents per dollar of child support received above a modest threshold, even if payments are not

received. This allows the non-primary carer- to manipulate payments, creating economic instability for women and children.

Non-resident parents often exploit income reporting loopholes to minimise child support obligations. Strategies include underreporting earnings, using business structures to obscure income, and avoiding tax returns.³⁹ These tactics deprive children of financial support and place undue burden on mothers.

Child support arrears and government debt recovery processes further entrench financial abuse. Retrospective adjustments can lead to Family Tax Benefit overpayments being clawed back from mothers, even when child support remains unpaid. This penalises women while allowing non-compliant payers to escape consequences.⁴⁰

Recommendation 6.1:

- **Delink child support from family payments.**

Abolishing the Maintenance Income Test will prevent financial abuse by ex-partners, increase income for the poorest families, and simplify the system for single mothers and their children.

Recommendation 6.2:

- **Mandate annual tax returns and close loopholes.**

Requiring both parents to file annual tax returns and eliminating indefinite provisional income will strengthen compliance, ensure fair child support contributions, and restore trust in the system.

Implementing these reforms would protect women from economic coercion and uphold children's right to financial stability. The Australian Government must act decisively to prevent the continued weaponisation of child support and ensure the system fulfils its intended purpose—supporting children and their primary caregivers.

Priority 7: Targeted funding for sexual violence specialist services

Sexual violence: Our national crisis

Recent data from the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) indicates that sexual violence in Australia has reached alarming levels. The AIC's *Sexual Offending in Australia 2021–22* report reveals a sexual offending rate of 40.11 per 100,000 individuals aged 10 years and over, with over 90% of offenders being male.⁴¹ This underscores the urgent need for enhanced support services, particularly for children and young people who are disproportionately affected.

To address this crisis, the Australian Government must allocate \$228.6 million over five years through the National Partnership Agreement for specifically designated sexual violence services targeting children and young people. Such an investment would bolster trauma-informed programs, strengthen crisis response teams, and support long-term therapeutic interventions, ensuring that young survivors receive the comprehensive care they need.

This proposed allocation represents a significant increase in the current National Partnership Agreement, which stands at \$700 million. By directing additional resources to specialist services, the Australian Government can enhance the capacity of existing programs and facilitate the development of new initiatives tailored to the unique needs of young survivors.

The National Plan emphasises the importance of coordinated efforts between federal, state, and territory governments to prevent and address violence. Aligning with The National Plan, this approach aims to create a cohesive and effective response to sexual violence across Australia.⁴²

Continuous evaluation of the National Partnership Agreement is essential. It is imperative that states and territories are mandated to report on the utilisation and impact of these funds through the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission. Regular reporting will ensure transparency, accountability, and the effective use of resources, enabling adjustments to maximize the positive outcomes for survivors.

More funding is necessary to eradicate gender-based violence within a generation. This proposed investment signifies a decisive step towards this goal, reflecting a national commitment to safeguarding the well-being of children and young people across Australia.

Recommendation 7.1

- **Increased funding for sexual violence services targeting children and young people.** The Australian Government should allocate \$228.6 million over five years through the National Partnership Agreement to support trauma-informed programs, crisis response teams, and long-term therapeutic interventions to ensure children and young survivors receive comprehensive care.

Recommendation 7.2

- **Mandatory reporting on fund utilisation and impact.** States and territories should be required to report on the use and impact of allocated funds through the Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Commission. Regular reporting will enhance transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and that necessary adjustments can be made to improve survivor outcomes.

Priority 8: Evidence-based payments for leaving violence urgently needed

The Australian Government's Leaving Violence Program (LVP) currently provides up to \$5,000 in financial assistance to support victim-survivors of intimate partner violence in escaping unsafe situations. Given the rising cost of living and increasing financial barriers to leaving violent relationships, there is strong justification for increasing the payment to \$7,000.

The new LVP initiative, announced in May 2024, has committed \$925 million over five years. Raising the payment to \$7,000 represents a 40% increase per recipient. Assuming similar demand levels, the cost of maintaining the program at the higher payment rate would require an additional \$370 million over five years, bringing the total program cost to approximately \$1.3 billion. If demand increases due to greater accessibility and awareness, further investment may be required. Increasing the payment would align with the actual costs of establishing a new, safe household, which include rent, bond payments, furniture, utilities, and essential items. The 2023 LVP evaluation found that

92% of recipients reported reduced financial stress due to the payment, and 51% indicated they could not have left their relationship without it.⁴³

Increasing the payment would:

- Improve financial security for survivors, reducing the likelihood of return to abusive situations.
- Enhance long-term stability by covering essential costs associated with transitioning to independent living.
- Decrease reliance on emergency services and crisis housing, leading to long-term savings for government support services.

Recommendation 8.1:

- **Increase the Leaving Violence Payment to \$7,000 with targeted eligibility criteria. Raising the payment amount will better reflect the actual financial costs associated with escaping violent relationships. However, to ensure financial sustainability and impact, eligibility criteria should be refined to prioritise those facing the most severe financial hardship. This targeted approach will help maximise the program's effectiveness while managing increased demand.**

Priority 9: Gender-affirming healthcare and LGBTIQ+ rights

Transgender people deserve equal rights

Globally, transgender and gender-diverse people are experiencing discrimination and hatred. This hatred is enabled by systemic bias and a lack of access to supportive, affirming healthcare. The number of transgender and gender-diverse people seeking gender affirming care is rising.⁴⁴ Yet, restrictive policies and inadequate training create obstacles to timely, affirming and appropriate treatment.

Despite strong evidence supporting gender affirming care as safe and effective, medical professionals in Australia often lack the training and social understanding necessary to provide such care.⁴⁵ For example, three in four endocrinologists lack confidence in initiating gender affirming hormone therapy, and almost none have received formal training in transgender medicine during medical school.⁴⁶

With only a select few competent and able to prescribe the necessary care, those seeking face long waitlists, with some clinics closed to new patients due to overwhelming demand.⁴⁷ Barriers such as high cost,⁴⁸ lack of Medicare coverage,⁴⁹ and limited access in rural and remote areas⁵⁰ mean that some people are without timely or accessible care. In response, some transgender and gender-diverse people resort to risky self-prescribed hormone treatments.⁵¹

Lack of access to essential healthcare and support contributes to experiences of mental and social distress.⁵² Experiencing prior stigma or discrimination in healthcare settings, along with being treated disrespectfully by healthcare staff, can discourage transgender and gender-diverse people from seeking healthcare of any kind.⁵³

Timely access to gender affirming treatment, supported by trained healthcare providers and inclusive policies, is critical for improving quality of life and ensuring dignity for transgender and gender-diverse Australians. The Australian Government must provide leadership and guidance to ensure that transgender and gender-diverse people are supported to thrive in Australia.

Recommendation 9.1:

- **Fund comprehensive gender-affirming healthcare, including training for medical professionals.**

The Australian Government should support medical schools and existing medical practices or specialists to provide affirming, evidence-based care. Gender affirming hormones and related healthcare should be subsidised under Medicare to remove financial barriers, particularly for young people, people on low-incomes, and those living in rural and remote areas. Programs like AusPATH need to be expanded to increase the number of trained GPs and specialists who can prescribe gender affirming hormones to reduce wait times, as well as implementing telehealth options to improve access in underserved areas.⁵⁴

Recognising the need for a review of the current guidelines surrounding gender affirming care, we support the National Health and Medical Research Council's comprehensive review of the Australian Standards of Care and Treatment Guidelines for Trans and Gender-Diverse Children and Adolescents. It is our hope that the subsequent development of new national guidelines, informed by lived experience, public consultation, and best practices, are protective of transgender and gender-diverse people's rights and wellbeing. Reactionary and restrictive policies are harmful, as is seen in current domestic and global trends concerning access to puberty blockers and gender affirming care.⁵⁵ The lack of national guidelines has led to inconsistencies across states, with some requiring surgery to change gender markers on birth certificates while others do not.⁵⁶

Recommendation 9.2:

- **Improve data collection and reporting on gender-based violence affecting LGBTIQ+ communities.**

Transgender and gender-diverse people experience particularly high rates of domestic, family and sexual violence.⁵⁷ Despite consensus for improving the national evidence base to better prevent and respond to gender-based violence, there is still an absence of funded research about the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people, reflecting the low priority given to keeping them safe. The Australian Government must commit to regular collection and publication of data on gender-based violence affecting LGBTIQ+ people to inform policy and program development.

The Australian Government must also provide guidance for researchers on accurately and meaningfully capturing demographic data to include transgender and gender-diverse people in health research. Programs such as Trans Health Research should be supported to develop such guidelines.⁵⁸

Endnotes

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Recommendations

Priority 1: Uphold and build on the reforms of the last three years that protect women and promote their economic participation

Priority 2: Housing and homelessness support for women and gender-diverse people

- 2.1** Develop a gender-responsive action plan on housing that aligns with the commitments of the National Plan.
- 2.2** Reform tax and welfare policies to address gender disparities in housing affordability.
- 2.3** Sustainably fund services to support women at risk and LGBTIQ+ people.

Priority 3: Economic security and fair wages for women

- 3.1** Increase income support payments to at least \$82 per day.
- 3.2** Implement recommendations from the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce.
- 3.3** Improve wages and working conditions in the care economy.

Priority 4: Access to affordable reproductive healthcare

- 4.1** Ensure universal free access to contraception.
- 4.2** Improve and secure access to reproductive healthcare for marginalised people, particularly in rural and remote areas.
- 4.3** Support reproductive leave as a universal entitlement.

Priority 5: Build and retain a sustainable workforce for domestic and family violence support services

- 5.1** Implement a HECS-HELP Debt Forgiveness Scheme for social work and human services graduates.
- 5.2** Fund a national rollout of the Wisdom in Practice program.

Recommendations

Priority 6: Reform the Australian child support system

- 6.1 Delink child support from family payments.
- 6.2 Mandate annual tax returns and close loopholes.

Priority 7: Targeted funding for sexual violence specialist services

- 7.1 Increased funding for sexual violence services targeting children and young people. The Australian Government should allocate \$228.6 million over five years through the National Partnership Agreement to support trauma-informed programs, crisis response teams, and long-term therapeutic interventions to ensure children and young survivors receive comprehensive care.
- 7.2 Mandatory reporting on fund utilisation and impact. States and territories should be required to report on the use and impact of allocated funds through the Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Commission. Regular reporting will enhance transparency, accountability, and effectiveness, ensuring that resources are used efficiently and that necessary adjustments can be made to improve survivor outcomes.

Priority 8: Evidence-based payments for leaving violence urgently needed

- 8.1 Increase the Leaving Violence Payment to \$7,000 with targeted eligibility criteria. Raising the payment amount will better reflect the actual financial costs associated with escaping violent relationships. However, to ensure financial sustainability and impact, eligibility criteria should be refined to prioritise those facing the most severe financial hardship. This targeted approach will help maximise the program's effectiveness while managing increased demand.

Priority 9: Gender-affirming healthcare and LGBTIQ+ rights

- 9.1 Fund comprehensive gender-affirming healthcare, including training for medical professionals.

Working with Women Alliance



2025

• Election

Platform