



Working with
Women Alliance

48TH PARLIAMENT PRIORITIES FOR AUSTRALIAN WOMEN

Government Brief

Prepared by the
Working With Women Alliance

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Acknowledgement 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 Us

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.



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Working with Women Alliance



Executive Summary: Working with Women Alliance Priorities for Ministerial Partnership



Australia is in the grip of a gender-based violence crisis, with widening gaps in economic security, healthcare access, housing stability, and leadership opportunities for women. The Working with Women Alliance (WwwA) welcomes the Government's commitments across safety, care, housing, and economic equality - and stands ready to partner with Ministers and agencies to deliver meaningful, measurable change.

The WwwA brings together two intersecting national portfolios—Women's Safety and Women's Equality. Through our expert membership, we provide independent, evidence-based advice and stakeholder coordination to support the successful implementation of your government's agenda.

Priority Areas for Ministerial Collaboration

Ending Gender-Based Violence

With at least 19 women killed by violence already in 2025, urgent and sustained action is required. We support strengthened responses to sexual violence, targeted perpetrator accountability reforms, an increase to the Leaving Violence Payment, and the establishment of a youth-targeted text-based support service through 1800RESPECT.

Valuing Paid and Unpaid Care

Women continue to perform the majority of care in both paid and unpaid roles. We support the Government's commitments to expand parental leave and early education access, and recommend superannuation reform and long-term investment in the care economy—particularly for rural and regional communities.

Advancing Economic Equality

Women remain overrepresented in poverty and homelessness and retire with significantly less super. We endorse the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce recommendations, and support the development of a gender-responsive housing strategy and an increase to income support payments.

Delivering Accessible, Inclusive Healthcare

Out-of-pocket costs and workforce gaps are limiting access to reproductive and gendered healthcare. We recommend universal access to free contraception, workplace reproductive health leave, expanded menopause and pelvic pain services, and targeted regional health equity investment.

Strengthening Representation and Leadership

Only 6% of ASX300 CEOs are women. We support the Commonwealth Prac Payment, HECS-HELP reform, and targeted VET interventions to address gender segregation and support women's leadership across industries and sectors.

The Working with Women Alliance is committed to constructive partnership with Ministers, portfolio agencies, and key stakeholders. We offer deep policy expertise and sector coordination to support implementation of the Working for Women Strategy and the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that no woman, child, or gender-diverse person is left behind.

Key Themes and Opportunities

Ending Gender-Based Violence

Your identified priorities

- Reinforce National Partnership Agreements
- Expand responses to high-risk and serial perpetrators of domestic and family violence
- Strengthen child-centric, trauma-informed support services
- Innovative approaches to addressing perpetrator violence
- Legislate universal mobile coverage across Australia



Possible reform options

- HECS-HELP Debt Forgiveness Scheme for Social Work and Human Services graduates
- National rollout of the Wisdom in Practice program
- Additional funding for sexual violence specialist services
- Mandate reporting on fund utilisation and impact
- Increase the Leaving Violence Payment
- Rapid review of actual and projected funding needs for frontline services
- Implement recommendations from the inquiry into financial services regulatory framework in relation to financial abuse
- Mandate the use of alternative reports in intelligence gathering and prosecutions
- Youth focused text-based service for intimate partner violence

The Problem:

Australia is in the midst of a national crisis, as announced by the Government in 2024. Since then, gender-based violence has not only persisted, but escalated. In the first half of 2025 alone, at least 19 women have been killed by violence. These deaths, and the many more instances of abuse that go unreported or unrecognised, demand urgent and coordinated action.

This is not a marginal issue, but a reflection of deep-rooted gender inequality intersecting with systemic failures. One in six women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner.¹ More than one in three girls report experiencing child sexual abuse.² Almost three in four young women have experienced technology-facilitated abuse.³ One woman is killed by an intimate partner nearly every week.⁴ Women and children are continually left unsafe.

Too often, those escaping violence are left to shoulder the cost of safety. More than 7,000 women return to violent homes⁵ because they have no access to safe or affordable alternatives. Frontline services, essential for safety and long-term recovery, are stretched beyond capacity and unable to meet escalating demand.

Commitments:

This Government wants to deliver programs that prevent violence, taking a zero-tolerance approach to perpetrators who exploit systems to cause harm. We welcome the Government's commitments to:

- Invest \$8.6 million in the Innovative Perpetrator Response program.
- Spend \$366.9 million to extend the National Partnership Agreement.
- Fund \$82.4 million to strengthen responses to high-risk and serial perpetrators of domestic and family violence.
- Invest \$81.3 million in strengthening child-centric, trauma-informed support services.
- Spend \$6 million on innovative approaches to addressing perpetrator violence.
- Legislate universal mobile coverage across Australia, requiring basic voice and SMS coverage nationwide.

Recommendations:

To build on the foundation provided by the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032, we recommend this Government:

- Implement a **HECS-HELP Debt Forgiveness Scheme** for Social Work and Human Services Graduates to attract and retain skilled professionals in the sector, furthering the already committed 20% off all student loans debt.
- Fund a **national rollout of the Wisdom in Practice program**, equipping frontline workers with the expertise to support survivors effectively.
- Allocate \$228.6 million for **sexual violence specialist services**, focusing on trauma-informed programs and interventions for children and young people.
- Mandate **reporting on fund utilisation and impact** through the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission to ensure the funds the incoming Government has committed are used effectively and transparently.
- **Increase the Leaving Violence Payment** to \$7,000 with targeted eligibility criteria.
- **Conduct a rapid review** to assess the actual and projected funding needs for domestic and sexual violence services to ensure they can meet demand.
- **Implement recommendations from the Parliamentary Inquiry into Financial Services Regulatory Framework** in relation to financial abuse.
- Mandate the use of **alternative reports in intelligence gathering and prosecutions**, ensuring that repeat offenders can be identified and reports contribute to crime mapping and law enforcement efforts.
- Develop a **National Youth-Based Text Service** for Intimate Partner Violence in Australia

We look forward to working with the Government to end violence against women.

Unpaid and Paid Care

Your identified priorities

- Extend paid parental leave to 26 weeks
- Superannuation on Government paid parental leave
- Abolish the Childcare Subsidy activity test
- 160 early learning centres in rural and regional Australia
- Protect the right to request to work from home
- Work towards a universal early childhood education system
- Boost the Young Carer Bursary Program



Possible reform options

- Support the Fair Work Commission to increase minimum wages, especially in female-dominated industries
- Expand retention payments
- Superannuation payments and pension top-ups
- Permanently expand access to the Young Carer Bursary Program
- Maintain progress towards the actions outlined in the National Carer Strategy

The Problem:

Australia's care industry is the backbone of society, and women are at the centre. Every day, millions of women provide the care that allows families and communities to function. Women represent over 70% of a sector that is one of the lowest-paid and most insecure parts of the economy.⁶

This vital work, whether it be raising children, supporting ageing parents, or working in early childhood education, aged care or disability, remains overwhelmingly undervalued and unequally distributed. Women, on average, perform 32 hours of unpaid care each week, nine more than men.⁷ These patterns are not accidental; they are the result of deeply embedded social and economic structures. They reinforce the idea that care is "women's work", and they carry significant long-term consequences for women's economic security. Nearly 36% of women who want to work or work more hours are held back by caring responsibilities.⁸

Commitments:

The Government has already established a strong platform for workplace reforms and investments in early education and care.

We welcome the Government's commitments to:

- Extend paid parental leave to 26 weeks.
- Extend the superannuation guarantee to those receiving Government paid parental leave.
- Abolish the Childcare Subsidy activity test to guarantee three days of subsidised childcare for all families earning up to \$530,000.
- Build 160 early learning centres in rural and regional Australia.

Recommendations:

To build on the foundation provided by the National Carer Strategy 2024-2034, we recommend this Government:

- Continue supporting the **Fair Work Commission** in their decision to increase minimum wages and minimum award rates for female dominated sectors as outlined in the gender-based undervaluation priority review.
- **Expand worker retention payments** for early childhood education and care providers beyond the current two-year limit.
- **Introduce superannuation payments and pension top-ups** for those taking time out of the workforce to provide care, beyond paying superannuation on paid parental leave.
- Legislate the **superannuation guarantee for employee paid parental leave**.
- Sustain the \$19.8 million boost to the **Young Carer Bursary Program** as an ongoing and indexed practice, and permanently expand access to the program for a greater number of young people.

We look forward to working with the Government to recognise, value and empower carers in all capacities.

Economic Equality and Security

Your identified priorities

- Superannuation on Government paid parental leave
- Access to offenders' superannuation for victims of childhood sexual abuse
- Housing for older women and women escaping violence
- Assess the removal of the Child Support Maintenance Income Test from FTB-A
- 30,000 social and affordable housing properties, including 4,000 homes allocated to women escaping violence and older women at risk of homelessness
- 4,000 new and refurbished social homes
- \$575 million to expand affordable rental homes
- \$9.3 million to states and territories to combat homelessness
- \$1 billion for crisis and transitional accommodation for women and children experiencing violence or at risk of homelessness

- \$6.2 million for homelessness research and advocacy
- Make perpetrators liable for debts incurred by victim-survivors
- Prevent perpetrators from using tax and corporate systems to accrue debts
- Cutting HECS debts by 20% and lowering student loan repayments



Possible reform options

- Gender-responsive housing and homelessness plan
- Increase income support payments to at least \$82 per day
- Implement WEET's recommendations
- Enforce mandatory annual tax return requirements
- Expand the Fair Work Commission to address workplace sexual harassment
- Review the cost of university degrees to ensure women do not accrue disproportionate amounts of HECS debt

The Problem:

Australia is one of the richest countries in the world, yet women continue to live in poverty. Women earn, on average, 78 cents for every dollar earned by men⁹ – a gap that equates to more than \$28,000 per year. When compounded over time, this earnings gap means that women retire with, on average, \$50,000 less superannuation than men.¹⁰

Cost of living pressures have a more significant impact on women's lives. This impact is especially high for single parents, given that one in three single parent households live in poverty¹¹, and women's earnings fall by 55% on average in the five years after becoming a parent¹², while men's earnings remain unchanged.

Australia's housing crisis, as this Government has acknowledged, remains a major concern. Women are the fastest growing cohort of people experiencing homelessness, now accounting for more than 60% of Specialist Homelessness Services clients¹³. Older women and single women renters are particularly vulnerable, with three in four single women retirees who rent privately living in poverty¹⁴.

Domestic and family violence remains the leading cause of homelessness for women.

Commitments:

The Government has indicated that building a stronger economy to benefit all Australians is a core part of their agenda.

We welcome the Government's commitments to:

- Improve access to offenders' superannuation for victims of childhood sexual abuse.
- Prioritise housing for older women and women escaping violence.
- Regularly index social security payments.

- Assess the removal of the Child Support Maintenance Income Test from FTB Part A.
- Build 30,000 social and affordable housing properties, including 4,000 homes allocated to women escaping violence and older women at risk of homelessness.
- Invest \$2 billion through the Social Housing Accelerator for 4,000 new and refurbished social homes.
- Spend \$575 million through the National Housing Infrastructure Facility to expand affordable rental homes.
- Provide \$9.3 million to states and territories to combat homelessness.
- Invest \$1 billion for crisis and transitional accommodation for women and children experiencing violence or at risk of homelessness.
- Fund \$6.2 million for homelessness research and advocacy.
- Make perpetrators liable for debts incurred by victim-survivors because of coercive control.
- Prevent perpetrators from using tax and corporate systems to accrue debts as a form of coercive control.

Recommendations:

To build on this foundation, we recommend this Government:

- Develop an **official gender-responsive housing and homelessness plan**, to ensure the significant investments allocated to housing and homelessness services deliver maximum impact for women and gender-diverse people.
- **Increase income support payments to at least \$82 per day**, complementing this Government's commitment to regular indexation of social security payments.
- Continue **implementing the full list of recommendations of the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce (WEET)**.
- Close child support compliance loopholes through **enforcing mandatory annual tax return requirements**, along with the already agreed upon assessment of delinking child support from family payment assessments.
- **Expand the Fair Work Commission** to address workplace sexual harassment for stronger employer accountability.

We look forward to working with the Government to build an economy defined by good jobs, fair wages and equality for women and gender-diverse people.

Health

Your identified priorities

- Investing \$790 million to deliver better healthcare for women
- Improving reproductive and menopausal health
- Yaz and Yasmin contraceptives on the PBS
- Subsidise hormone therapies for menopause
- Bulk-billed insertion and removal of IUDs and implants
- Eight Centres of Training Excellence to train GPs and nurses on long acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs)
- More menopause and perimenopause training for health professionals
- National clinical guidelines for menopause and perimenopause
- 11 new endometriosis and pelvis pain clinics across the country
- Investing \$16.7 million to open a further eight perinatal mental health clinics across the country



Possible reform options

- Universal free access to contraception
- Expanded access to reproductive healthcare for rural, regional and remote people
- Reproductive health leave as a universal workplace entitlement
- National data collection and reporting on women's health outcomes
- Continue with the National Women's Health Strategy

The Problem:

Despite important gains made by this Government, there are still too many women and gender-diverse people who face systemic barriers to accessing the healthcare they need. Cost remains a major obstacle to receiving reproductive healthcare, with three in five women reporting that financial pressures limit their contraceptive choices, and more than half saying their mental and emotional health is affected by these barriers.¹⁵ Essential treatments, such as long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) and intrauterine devices (IUDs), remain expensive, often exceeding \$500.

Reproductive health conditions, including endometriosis, persistent pelvic pain and menopause, continue to disrupt women's participation in the workforce and undermine their economic security. One in four (25%) menopausal women experiencing debilitating symptoms causing long term absences from work or forcing early retirement.¹⁶ Nearly half of women living with pelvic pain require time off to manage their health¹⁷, and many women with endometriosis report having to change jobs or forgo promotions due to their symptoms.¹⁸ Timely and affordable access to reproductive healthcare remains out of reach for many living in regional and remote areas, worsening geographic inequalities in health outcomes.

Commitments:

We welcome the Government's commitments to:

- Invest \$790 million to deliver better healthcare for women.
- Adding new contraceptives listing to the PBS.
- Subsidise hormone therapies for menopause.
- Boost Medicare payments for bulk-billed insertion and removal of IUDs and implants.
- Open eight Centres of Training Excellence to improve healthcare professionals' training in IUD and implant insertion.
- Funding for additional menopause and perimenopause training for health professionals.
- Develop national clinical guidelines for menopause and perimenopause.
- Deliver 11 new endometriosis and pelvis pain clinics across the country.

Recommendations:

To build on the foundation provided by the National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030, we recommend this Government:

- Introduce universal free access to contraception to remove cost barriers to reproductive healthcare by expanding PBS listings to include more contraceptive options.
- Improve access to reproductive healthcare for marginalised people, starting with placing some of the 11 new endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics in regional and remote areas.
- Support the introduction of reproductive health leave as a universal workplace entitlement.
- Strengthen national data collection and reporting on women's health outcomes to better inform service delivery and policy development.

We look forward to working with the Government to deliver on affordable and accessible healthcare.

Leadership, Representation and Decision-making

Your identified priorities

- Embed gender responsive budgeting in government decision making processes
- Procurement compliance rules in relation to WGEA reporting requirements
- Establish a volunteer register for women-owned and led businesses
- 100,000 fee-free TAFE places
- Commonwealth Prac Payment
- 20 per cent deduction to student debt

- Raise the HECS-HELP repayment threshold
- Lower the rate of HECS-HELP repayments
- Close the gender pay gap
- Promote flexible work arrangements
- Legislated positive duty on employers to protect workers and customers from sexual harassment and assault
- Targets for women apprentices on major government construction and ICT projects
- Support for women and girls in sport



Possible reform options

- Develop targeted interventions within the VET sector
- Increase incentives for a gender-balanced workforce within the care sector
- Strengthen rigorous compliance mechanisms in relation to WGEA reporting requirements
- Investigate ways to track employment data for other marginalised groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities and culturally and racially marginalised people
- Develop tracking mechanisms for VET outcomes
- Introduce respectful relationship education in primary, secondary and tertiary education
- Introduce comprehensive sexuality education for all secondary schools

The Problem:

This Government has maintained a clear understanding that when women are left out of the decision-making process, policies and services will not fully meet the needs of the community.

However, Australia continues to face entrenched gender stereotypes that limit women's leadership, representation and decision-making. According to WGEA, occupational gender segregation has remained persistent over the last two decades, with sectors such as construction and transport recording a decline in female participation.¹⁹ Education and training systems often reinforce outdated assumptions about skills and work, shaping career aspirations and locking women into lower-paid and less secure sectors of the economy. Not surprisingly, one in three Australians still hold a negative bias about women's ability to fully participate economically, politically, or in education.²⁰

Leadership representation continues to lag. Only 6% on CEO roles in Australia's top 300 firms are held by women.²¹ Women are overrepresented in part-time and casual work, yet only 7% of manager roles and 3% of CEO positions accommodate part-time arrangements.²² At the current rate of progress, it is estimated that an equal share of women in CEO positions is still nearly 80 years away.²³

Commitments:

In light of recent policy initiatives aimed to address the persistent patterns of gender segregation, we welcome the Government's commitments to:

- Establish a volunteer register for women-owned and led businesses tendering for government work.
- Secure 100,000 fee-free TAFE places each year.
- Continue the Commonwealth Prac Payment.
- Legislate a universal 20 per cent deduction to student debt.
- Raise the HECS-HELP repayment threshold to \$67,000.
- Lower the rate of HECS-HELP repayments.
- Continue working with employers to close the gender pay gap.
- Maintain support for the efforts of WGEA, particularly in the development and reporting of gender targets for organisations with more than 500 employees.
- Support flexible work arrangements in the public service and in other sectors through the Right to Disconnect legislation.

Recommendations:

To build on this foundation, we recommend this Government:

- Develop **targeted interventions within the VET sector** to disrupt gendered educational pathways, ensuring that women's high participation and completion rates translate to improved economic outcomes.
- Establish **robust mechanisms to monitor and address economic and social disparities** that persist even in feminised fields (such as the care sector) focusing on pay equity and gender-balanced workforce incentives.
- **Investigate ways to track employment data for other marginalised groups** including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities and culturally and racially marginalised people.
- Develop **tracking mechanisms for TAFE outcomes** that are more robust than completion and non-completion of qualifications to monitor and evaluate the impact of the promised 100,000 fee-free TAFE places.
- Engage in **respectful relationship education initiatives in primary, secondary and tertiary education.**

We look forward to working with the Government to close leadership and representation gender gaps.

Closing Statement

The Working with Women Alliance looks forward to working with the 48th Parliament to advance policies that improve the lives of women across Australia. Together, we can ensure that every woman, no matter her background or circumstances, has the safety, opportunity, and respect she deserves.

Thank you for your commitment and drive to make Australia the best it can be.



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