



Pre-Budget Submission of the Equality Rights Alliance
31 January 2020

This submission is endorsed in whole or in part by the following members of Equality Rights Alliance:

- 2020Women
- Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement
- Alevi Federation of Australia
- Australasian Council of Women and Policing
- Australian Baha'i Community – Office of Equality
- Australian Centre for Leadership for Women
- Australian Graduate Women
- Australian Federation of Medical Women
- Australian Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement
- Australian National Committee for UN Women
- Australian Women's Health Network
- CARE Australia
- Children by Choice
- COTA Australia
- FECCA Women's Committee
- Feminist Legal Clinic
- Fitted for Work
- Gender Equity Community of Practice
- Girl Guides Australia
- Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand
- Homebirth Australia
- Human Rights Law Centre
- Immigrant Women's Speakout Association NSW
- International Women's Development Agency
- JERA International
- Jessie Street National Women's Library
- Justice Connect
- Maternity Choices Australia
- Marie Stopes Australia
- Migrant Women's Lobby Group of South Australia
- Multicultural Women's Advocacy ACT
- National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence
- National Council of Churches of Australia Gender Commission
- National Council of Jewish Women of Australia
- National Council of Single Mothers and Their Children
- National Council of Women of Australia
- National Foundation for Australian Women
- NSW Council of Social Services
- National Union of Students (Women's Department)
- Older Women's Network NSW Inc
- Project Respect
- Public Health Association of Australia (Women's Special Interest Group)
- Reproductive Choice Australia
- Safe Motherhood For All Inc
- Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia
- Soroptimist International
- Sisters Inside
- Union of Australian Women
- United Nations Association of Australia Status of Women Network
- Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition
- VIEW Clubs of Australia
- Women in Adult and Vocational Education
- Women in Engineering Australia
- Women on Boards
- Women with Disabilities Australia
- Women's Equity Think Tank
- Women's Electoral Lobby
- Women's Environment Network Australia
- Women's Housing Ltd
- Women's Information Referral Exchange
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
- Women's Legal Services Australia
- Women's Property Initiatives
- Women Sport Australia
- Working Against Sexual Harassment
- YWCA Australia
- Zonta International Districts 22, 23 and 24

Equality Rights Alliance

Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) is Australia's largest network advocating for women's equality, women's leadership and recognition of women's diversity. We bring together 64 non-government organisations and social enterprises with a focus on the impact of policy or service delivery on women.

We are one of the six National Women's Alliances, funded by the Commonwealth Office for Women.

We thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. We have outlined 33 recommendations to advance gender equality across a number of areas covering gender aware policies and processes, housing affordability, income support and economic security, education, health, feminist foreign policy and women, peace and security.

The Sustainable Development Goals

Recommendation:

- 1. The Federal Budget must introduce publicly available reporting of Budget measures against each of the 17 Goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda.**

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda are a transformational roadmap for the planet, peace and prosperity which Australia has proudly endorsed in international arenas. The achievement of gender equality is included in the 2030 Agenda as goal 5 and is also an essential pre-condition of the remaining 16 goals. The 2030 Agenda is a shared vision for the world's governments *and* a point of unity for Australia's local, state, territory and federal governments. Consequently, it is vitally important that the Federal budget process should:

- Include consideration of the implementation of the goals into domestic policy through the proposed budget measures; and
- Provide for monitoring and reporting on the alignment of budgetary measures to the Sustainable Development Goals and their respective targets.

Gender Responsive Budgeting

Recommendation:

- 2. Investigate and consult on models of gender responsive budgeting for integration into the budget process.**

The Women's Economic Security Statement released by the Minister for Women in November 2018 is an excellent first step on the long road to bringing women into the public policy arena. The Statement contains positive steps towards improving economic outcomes for women and, hopefully, begins a process of ensuring that Federal policy makers are focusing on the needs of women. ERA supports the continuation of the Women's Economic Security Statement.

The next logical step in that process is the establishment of gender responsive budgeting at Federal level, a step to which Australia committed itself at the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York in 2019¹.

Gender Responsive Budgeting advances gender equality by:

- tracking government expenditure to improve accountability and transparency for the government's gender equality goals, in line with our SDG commitments;²
- recognising and making visible differential impacts across genders of all budgetary measures;
- comprehensively linking policies across areas through a gender equality lens to address policy incoherence and siloed approaches to gender equality;
- using this analysis to influence budgetary decision-making so as to limit the negative impacts on women of revenue or expenditure measures and identify measures to advance gender equality.

A gendered analysis of the Budget is required to implement the Government's gender equality commitments of increasing women's safety, strengthening women's economic security and supporting more women into leadership. Gender budgeting should "eradicate gender asymmetry in budgets"³ by covering expenditure and revenue measures. This process should include analysis of the investment required to achieve gender equality in Australia in order to translate gender equality goals into budgetary commitments.⁴ It is critical that gender analysis is incorporated into tax and transfer measures to identify and address the differential impacts of policy across genders, particularly those tax settings that exacerbate gender inequality.⁵

In line with our Goal 5 commitments under the 2030 Agenda, the Australian Government must commit to a process of gender budgeting throughout the budget cycle. That process must engage with civil society, be participatory and form part of a revitalised gender machinery within government. Without this process, the Budget risks embedding and exacerbating gender inequalities and remains an untapped opportunity to advance gender equality.

Machineries of Government for Women

Recommendations:

- 3. Increase funding to the Office for Women to ensure it can effectively carry out its mandate, in line with Australia's international commitments.**
- 4. Adequately fund the ABS to carry out the TUS survey at regular intervals**

¹ See paragraph 47 (kkk) of the CSW63 Agreed Conclusions ([E/CN.6/2019/L.3](#)):

"Take steps in the design, implementation and pursuit of fiscal policies and gender responsive-budgeting to promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by, inter alia, optimizing fiscal expenditures to extend social protection coverage, facilitating greater access to social protection and financial and business services, including credit for women, and promoting costing and cost-benefit calculation of the investments needed to ensure access to social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure, bearing in mind that such policies and budgeting play a critical role in reducing poverty and inequality and supporting inclusive growth".

² Indicator 5.C.1 of SDGs is *Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment*

³ Cecelia Ng, *Gender Responsive & Participatory Budgeting: Imperatives for Equitable Expenditure* (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2015) 2

⁴ Sharp in Ng, 6

⁵ The Senate Standing Committee on Economics Report "A Husband is Not A Retirement Plan" recommended that the issue of effective marginal tax rates for second earners be referred to the Productivity Commission, noting the significance of women's workforce participation.

The Office for Women (OfW) has the responsibility of being the central coordinating point for gender equality and women's policy with all government agencies, and for advising the Prime Minister on the achieving gender equality through policy and program development. The OfW fulfils Australia's commitments under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).⁶ In the 2019-20 budget, administered expenses for the OfW fall from \$4,975,00 in 2018-2019 to \$3,482,000 in 2023,⁷ marking a regression on Australia's international commitments to advance gender equality and constituting a real constraint of the capacity of the OfW to achieve the Australian Government's priorities for women.

ERA welcomes the reinstatement of the Time Use Survey (TUS) as part of the Women's Economic Security Statement 2018. This measure is long overdue and will provide critical data to inform evidence-based policy on women's participation in employment, among other fields, and can contribute toward monitoring SDG Target 5.4.⁸ The TUS will be a useful tool for long-term policy-making provided that data collection is systematic and regular, so that changes and trends can be captured and responded to. Previously, the TUS in Australia has been conducted in 1992, 1997, and 2006. Japan conducts a TUS every 5 years, while New Zealand conducts the TUS at an interval on 8-10 years.⁹ The ABS must be suitably resourced to ensure it can be conducted at regular intervals into the future.

Women's Economic Wellbeing

Recommendations:

- 5. Urgently increase Newstart and associated payments to address and alleviate poverty.**
- 6. Investigate an independent commission to set income support rates.**
- 7. Restore access to the Parenting Payment – Single for single parents who have a dependent child of up to and including 16 years old.**

Women are the primary performers of unpaid work in Australia – both within households and in the broader volunteering community. They also perform the majority of unpaid work which is for the benefit of others.¹⁰ Their role in the Australian economy is vital, but the inequitable gendered distribution of unpaid work comes at a significant cost to women's economic security. The social security system plays a critical role in ensuring that women with unpaid caring responsibilities are protected from poverty and economic insecurity. Women are the majority of income support recipients¹¹ and tend to require income support payments for longer periods.¹² Working-age women in receipt of income support also draw a larger proportion of their income from income support payments.¹³ But decreases in the real value of Newstart and associated payments and changes to the Single Parenting Payment have conspired to undermine this security net for unpaid carers,

⁶ 1979, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women – Part II*, (Art.22); 1995, A/RES/50/42, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, Para. 348

⁷ National Foundation for Australian Women, 'Machineries of government for women', in *A Gender Lens on the Budget*, (Canberra, 2019).

⁸ SDG Target 5.4: "Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate", United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goal 5*, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5> (accessed 19 December 2019)

⁹ International Labour Organization and United Nations Development Programme, *Time-use surveys and statistics in Asia and the Pacific*, (Geneva, 2018).

¹⁰ Lyn Craig and Abigail Powell, "Shares of Housework Between Mothers, Fathers and Young People: Routine and Non-routine Housework, Doing Housework for Oneself and Others," *Social Indicators Research*, 136. No. 10 (2016)

¹¹ data.gov.au, "DSS Demographics June 2018," *Australian Government data.gov.au*. June 2018 <https://data.gov.au/dataset/ds-dga-cff2ae8a-55e4-47db-a66d-e177fe0ac6a0/distribution/dist-dga-57c91779-cce6-4ec4-b94f-50464ca55a77/details?q> (accessed 14/11/18)

¹² Roger Wilkins, *The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 15* (Melbourne: Melbourne Institute Applied Economic & Social Research, 2017). 41

¹³ Ibid.

while the imposition of onerous conditionality, excessive waiting periods and punitive approaches to social security affect women's access to the safety net and breach women's rights to social security.

We support the call by ACOSS to increase Newstart, Youth Allowance and related payments for single people by at least \$75 a week.¹⁴ According to ACOSS and UNSW, 3.05 million people in Australia (13.2% of the population) are living in poverty.¹⁵ Women make up 49.3% of people in receipt of Newstart and are more likely to be in receipt of Newstart for longer periods, making up 52% of people in receipt of Newstart for 2-5 years and 54% of people in receipt for 5+ years. This is reflected in the fact that women experience poverty for longer periods.¹⁶ Women also make up 66% of part-rate recipients of Newstart and make up 65% of the one fifth of Newstart recipients reporting employment earnings. This shows that Newstart is a crucial supplement for the low income, part-time and casual work that women are over-represented in.¹⁷ A significant proportion of the women on Newstart have disclosed disabilities or long term health conditions, and face additional challenges to entering the workforce, whilst having increased cost of living expenses. Forty percent of the 686,000 on Newstart have only a partial capacity to work because of illness or disability¹⁸.

It is estimated that a \$75 a week increase to Newstart and Youth Allowance would cost the Budget approximately \$3.3 billion.¹⁹ In the long-term, the Government should investigate Anglicare Australia's proposal for an "arms-length commission or tribunal— much like the Fair Pay or Remuneration commissions – that could properly consider the cost of living people on pensions and allowances, and set them accordingly."²⁰

While Newstart can provide support to some women performing unpaid care work, the National Council of Single Mothers and their Children points out that Newstart is not a payment that is structured for sole parent families.²¹ The single parenting payment recognises the care work of single parenting and the competing demands of paid work and unpaid work single parents navigate. Women comprise 94.8% of people in receipt of the single parenting payment.²²

Recommendations:

- 8. Extend and fund the Superannuation Guarantee to the statutory Paid Parental Leave scheme.**
- 9. Investigate mechanisms and reform to achieve greater gender balance in the uptake of PPL as part of a broader review of PPL.**

Paid parental leave should be strengthened to ensure the superannuation guarantee is included in, at least, the government statutory scheme. As Women in Super highlight "it is unfair and discriminatory in modern Australia that the one type of leave directed predominantly at women does not include superannuation guarantee payments."²³ The failure to include superannuation guarantee for paid parent leave has flow-on impacts on the relative economic disadvantage of older women.²⁴ In 2017-2018, the median superannuation

¹⁴ ACOSS, "Myth Busting Newstart," 2018 <http://www.acoss.org.au/raisetherate/> (accessed 15/11/18)

¹⁵ ACOSS and UNSW Sydney, *Poverty in Australia 2018*. (Sydney, 2018). 12

¹⁶ Australian Government, "Indicator 1.2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age" *Sustainable Development Goals Data*. 17 July 2018, <https://www.sdgdata.gov.au/goals/no-poverty/1.2.1> (accessed 24/10/18)

¹⁷ 2018 data on Newstart commissioned from Department of Social Services by ERA.

¹⁸ Henriques-Gomes, L., 24 October 2019, *Government underreported sick and disabled people on Newstart by 80,000*, *The Guardian* (accessed 18/11/20) <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/oct/24/government-underreported-sick-and-disabled-people-on-newstart-by-80000>

¹⁹ Deloitte Access Economics and ACOSS, *Analysis of the impact of raising benefit rates* (Melbourne, 2018). ii

²⁰ Anglicare Australia, "Adequate Income Position Statement" June 2016 <http://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/adequate-income-position-statement---plain-logo.pdf?sfvrsn=4> (accessed 23.11.18)

²¹ National Council of Single Mothers and their Children, "A Small Investment for a Significant Gain – Budget Submission" 2016 <http://www.ncsmc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Budget-Submission-2016.pdf> (accessed 6.11.18)

²² data.gov.au, "DSS Demographics June 2018"

²³ Women in Super, "2018-19 Pre-Budget Submission" *Women in Super Submissions and Discussion Papers*, 14 December 2017, <https://clarety-wis.s3.amazonaws.com/userimages/WIS%20Submissions/Women%20in%20Super%202018-19%20Pre-Budget%20Submission.pdf> (accessed 18.10.18)

²⁴ Cerise, Somali, et al., 2009. *Accumulating poverty? Women's experiences of inequality over the lifecycle*. Sydney: Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).

balance for older women aged 55-64 was \$118,556, in comparison with \$183,000 for men of the same age.²⁵ For older women aged The Productivity Commission's 2009 report into Paid Parental Leave recommended the eventual inclusion of superannuation into PPL and the 2013 Australian Human Rights Commission report *Investing in Care* offered the extension of the superannuation guarantee to PPL as an option for reform.²⁶

Further, a broader review of PPL is required to investigate how greater gender balance in paid parental leave could be achieved. According to data from HILDA, unpaid work distribution in heterosexual couples is shared *relatively* equally, prior to having a first child.²⁷ Following the birth of a first child, the prime load of unpaid care shifts to the female partner. PPL is therefore a critical opportunity to redistribute unpaid caring responsibilities across genders and establish a more equal distribution of unpaid care within the family unit. Currently, co-parents in Australia who do take Dad and Partner Pay leave are taking an average of just over 12 days leave.²⁸ In Iceland, "the introduction of specific periods for each parent has led to a substantial increase of fathers taking parental leave from around 3% to 34% in 2008 in terms of days." We must shift PPL from being a maternity/primary carer entitlement only and transition PPL to a sharable family entitlement with incentives to encourage men to take a significant part of the total leave entitlement.²⁹ There is increasing evidence indicating that equitable sharing of parental leave contributes to increasing women's workforce participation, one of the Commonwealth's priorities for women, including from OECD countries Sweden and Germany.³⁰

Recommendations:

10. Investigate increasing equal pay data transparency measures through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA).
11. Increase funding to WGEA to expand and strengthen the disaggregation and intersectional data collection.

The Inquiry into Gender-based Occupational Segregation recommended an investigation of the recent introduction of gender pay gap transparency measures in Britain.³¹ Under the British regulations, companies with 250 or more employees must publish their gender pay gap information, including gendered information on bonuses. Similar public reporting of gender pay gap information is occurring in Belgium, Austria and Germany.³² Australia already has a comprehensive infrastructure for reporting gender pay data through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) which compares favorably against these international models, and companies with over 100 employees are required to report to WGEA through robust processes. However, these data are aggregated by sector and industry before being made publicly available, meaning that gender pay gap information for individual companies is not transparent. Emerging research from the UK indicates

²⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), (2019). 4125.0 – Gender Indicators, Australia, Nov 2019, <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4125.0~Nov%202019~Main%20Features~Economic%20Security~4> (accessed 20/01/2020).

²⁶ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Investing in Care: Recognising and valuing those who care Volume 1-Research Report* (Sydney, 2013), 15.

²⁷ Inga Lass, "Who is doing what on the homefront?" *Pursuit UniMelb*. 31 July 2018 <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/who-is-doing-what-on-the-homefront> (accessed 18/10.18)

²⁸ Bill Martin, Marian Baird, Michelle Brady, Barbara Broadway, Belinda Hewitt, Guyonne Kalb, Lyndall Strazdins, Wojtek Tomaszewski, Maria Zadoroznyj, Janeen Baxter, Rachael Chen, Meraiah Foley, Duncan McVicar, Gillian Whitehouse, Ning Xiang, *PPL Evaluation: Final Report* (Brisbane: Institute for Social Science Research, 2014), 130

²⁹ Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Towards gender balanced parental leave – Australian and international trends Insight Paper* (Sydney: Australian Government, 2017).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee, *Gender segregation in the workplace and its impact on women's economic equality* (Canberra: Parliament House, 2017), 11.

³² Workplace Gender Equality Agency, "International Gender Reporting Schemes," <https://www.wgea.gov.au/international-gender-reporting-schemes> (accessed 18.10.18)

that the increased profile and attention to gender pay gaps as a result of the newfound transparency at the company level, narrows the gender pay gap.³³

Data collected by WGEA provides a comprehensive and detailed picture of the gender pay gap. However, there is no further disaggregation on other axes of economic inequality discrimination. The collection of information on race and disability would enable this and would facilitate more targeted action on pay gaps experienced by women experiencing multiple and intersecting disadvantage. The ABS Gender Indicators should also publish intersectional, disaggregated data.

Recommendations:

- 12. Implement financial capability programs in schools that take gender into account and ensure respectful relationships education in schools includes education about healthy financial relationships.³⁴**
- 13. Fund a national awareness campaign about financial abuse.**

Women's Information and Referral Exchange's (WIRE's) 2007 research on women's financial literacy found that "women's relationship with money is driven by personal life experience. Unless financial information documents and understands this, it will not readily affect this relationship. Fundamentally, gender is pivotal in all areas of providing financial information, programs and products."³⁵ The relationship between money and gender is complex and affects women in different ways, depending on their lived experiences and the different structural barriers they encounter. Financial capability programs and policies should consider the structural barriers that impact on women's financial wellbeing, not just focus on literacy.

Equal Access to Housing for Women

Recommendations:

- 14. Develop a gender-responsive national housing strategy which includes ambitious goals to reduce homelessness and increase affordable housing stock.** It must include actions and measurable targets to create additional permanent social and affordable housing options for women in each State and Territory, and particularly for single women – to complement the NHHA. To this end, **the recommendations from the Retiring into Poverty report to address older women's housing insecurity should be adopted.** Specifically, a Seniors Housing Gateway Program must be established and the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged Program must be expanded.³⁶ All housing needs to have a minimum level of accessibility features in order to accommodate the age spectrum of women who require it, including single women, young mothers and senior women. Finally, further research must be undertaken to obtain data on the housing needs of women in their diversity.
- 15. Ensure services that are appropriately specialised, competent, inclusive, accessible and culturally safe are resourced to meet the needs of women experiencing domestic and family violence and their children.**

³³ Morten Bennedsen, Elena Simitz, Margarita Tsoutsoura and Daniel Wolfenzon, "Research; Gender Pay Gaps Shrink When Companies Are Required to Disclose Them," *Harvard Business Review* 23 January 2019, <https://hbr.org/2019/01/research-gender-pay-gaps-shrink-when-companies-are-required-to-disclose-them> (24.1.19)

³⁴ Cara Gleeson, Sarah Kearney, Loksee Leung and Joanna Brislane, *Respectful Relationships Education in Schools* (Melbourne: Our WATCH, 2015)

³⁵ Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE), *Women's Financial Literacy Research Report* (Melbourne, 2007)

³⁶ Mercy Foundation, Women's Property Initiatives, Dr Maree Petersen, Shelter South Australia, Micah Projects Inc, Housing for the Aged Action Group, YWCA Canberra, Dr Selina Tually, Gloria Sutherland, Midland Women's Health Care Place, Women's Housing Company, Equality Rights Alliance, *Retiring into Poverty – A National Plan for Change Increasing Housing Security for Older Women* (Canberra, 2018).

- a) All agreements (bilateral or overarching) that address homelessness need to be progressively amended to include the requirement not only that State/Territory strategies include measures to support women and children escaping violence but also that funding spent under these strategies goes to services with specialist capability to address the gendered dynamics of violence and homelessness³⁷ (i.e. specialist women’s services and/or generalist services with documented specialist capability.)
- b) Adequate and sustainable funding is needed to meet demand for homelessness services, while ensuring that funding goes to services that are appropriately specialised, competent, accessible and culturally safe for the full range of diverse groups of women and children who need them.
- c) There must be increased transparency of the NHHA to include clear tracking of funding to all specialist homelessness services.

16. Undertake tax reforms to curb negative gearing, such as limiting negative gearing to income from investment, and reduce the capital gains tax exemption. Revenue generated from reform of the capital gains tax exemption and negative gearing should be redirected to housing support systems for low-income households.

17. Reform housing assistance. Currently individualised housing assistance, such as Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA), is “standardised rather than tailored to individual preferences and need.”³⁸ A diversity of housing assistance measures should be available according to need, rather than where income is sourced. The base rate and indexation of CRA should also be examined and reformed with a view to addressing the fact that over 40% of recipients remain in housing stress despite receiving the payment.

The high levels of need for women’s housing are reflected in the use and demand for housing assistance and support. For example, the typical social housing tenant is a woman. In public housing she is an older woman over 55 and living alone; in State Owned and Managed Indigenous Housing, she is a woman aged 25-54 with dependent children, and in community housing, she is a woman over 45 and living alone.³⁹ Moreover, housing support systems are ill-equipped to meet this (gendered) demand. As a result, the under-resourcing of housing safety nets disproportionately impacts women and undermines the Australian Government’s gender equality objectives.⁴⁰ For example, of the people in receipt of the maximum rate of CRA, 47.5% are single women (25% single men and 27.4% couples). Of the people who remain in housing stress *after* receiving CRA, 50% are single women (30.3% single men and 19.6% couples).⁴¹ Further, women aged 15+ make up 63% of people assisted by specialist homelessness services, and 70% of unassisted requests for homelessness services.⁴²

Current government policy on gender-based violence also notes the significant connections between housing affordability and domestic and family violence. The Third Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children commits the government to strengthen safe and appropriate accommodation options for women and their children by addressing the immediate, medium-term and long-term accommodation needs of women escaping violence and increasing the stock of affordable, accessible

³⁷ Australian Women Against Violence Alliance, *The Unique Role of Specialist Women’s Services in Ending Violence Against Women* (Canberra, 2016).

³⁸ Keith Jacobs, Kath Hulse, Wendy Stone and Ilan Wiesel, *Individualised Housing Assistance: findings and policy options* (Melbourne: AHURI, 2016), 1.

³⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, “Social housing tenants,” *Housing Assistance in Australia 2017*, 13 July 2017, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/housing-assistance-in-australia-2017/contents/social-housing-tenants> (accessed 11.04.18).

⁴⁰ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, *Concluding Observations on the eight periodic review of Australia CEDAW/C/AUS/8* (Geneva, 2018).

⁴¹ 2018 data on Commonwealth Rent Assistance commissioned from Department of Social Services by ERA.

⁴² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, “Specialist homelessness services annual report 2016-17 – Data Tables National” *Data*, 12 February 2018, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-2016-17/data> (accessed 10.10.18)

and social housing and enabling women and their children to stay in their own homes. The Third Action Plan also includes actions to assess the effectiveness of Victoria's Individual Flexible Support Packages for further broader rollout.⁴³

Tax and funding policy is currently skewed towards ownership and investment while the social housing and rent assistance systems are under pressure. A reprioritisation and redirection of federal housing funding is needed. While estimates vary, the Parliamentary Budget Office posits that the budget impact of negative gearing is *at least* \$2 billion.⁴⁴ Compare this to the \$1.5 billion allocated to the NHHA annually. The gendered implications of this resource distribution point to the inequities at the heart of housing policy: "the typical negatively-gearred investor is male, aged in his mid-to-late forties; employed full-time and has a tax assessable income of \$91 000"⁴⁵ and, as previously mentioned, the typical social housing tenant is a low-income woman.

A gender-responsive approach to housing and homelessness policy in Australia is needed to engage effectively with the structural disadvantages experienced by women generally as well as the particular situations of different groups of women facing housing insecurity and unaffordability. A gender-responsive housing policy acknowledges and addresses the gendered drivers of women's experience of violence and homelessness. Such an approach needs to focus on preventing homelessness that results from domestic and family violence and support victims/survivors through specialist services. A gender-responsive strategy would be founded on the principles of visibility, capability and accountability. Visibility ensures that women in their diversity are named and included. Capability ensures that housing systems are *adequately resourced* to meet the housing needs of women in their diversity. And accountability would ensure that such a policy includes gender indicators in the performance framework. Australia should seek guidance from Canada's National Housing Strategy, which has quarantined 25% of its funding for projects and services that directly address the needs of women and their families.⁴⁶

National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation

Recommendation:

18. Determine and implement the public subsidy and/or direct government investment required to generate social and affordable housing through the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation.

ERA welcomes the formation of the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation, recognising the bond aggregator as a critical measure to increase housing supply. It is vital that the bond aggregator is understood as part of an overall housing affordability response to generate supply. The Senate's 2015 majority report into housing affordability made it clear that housing supply bonds are complementary and must fit into a broader housing strategy and not replace existing government funding for social housing.⁴⁷ In order to generate housing for people on the lowest incomes and in the greatest housing need, the bond aggregator must be underpinned by additional resources to cover the financing gap.⁴⁸ The public subsidy or direct government investment required to bridge this funding gap could take a number of forms "including through examining the levels of direct subsidy needed for affordable low-income rental housing, along with the use of affordable housing targets, planning mechanisms, tax settings" as canvassed in the Affordable

⁴³ Department of Social Services, *Third Action Plan 2016-19 of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2016).

⁴⁴ Tarek Dale, "Budget impacts of negative gearing," *Parliamentary Library*, Parliament of Australia, 4 August 2015, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2015/August/Budget-impact-negative-gearing (accessed 11.04.18)

⁴⁵ Alan Duncan, Helen Hodgson, John Minas, Rachel Ong and Richard Seymour, *The income tax treatment of housing assets: an assessment of proposed reform options – Evidence Summary* (Melbourne: AHURI, 2018), 1

⁴⁶ Government of Canada, *Canada's National Housing Strategy* (Ottawa, 2018), p.11

⁴⁷ Senate Economics References Committee, *Out of Reach? The Australian housing affordability challenge* (Canberra: Parliament House, 2015), 405-408.

⁴⁸ Judith Yates, *Overview- Housing Australia* (Melbourne: Committee for Economic Development Australia, 2017), 29

Housing Working Group's reporting on complementary measures.⁴⁹ Direct government investment in the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation is required.

Funding must be allocated for specialist community housing providers with expertise in the housing needs of women in their diversity. Funding must also be made available to build stock in rural and remote areas. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare there are approximately 815 community housing organisations (mainstream and Indigenous). We estimate that approximately 7 gender specialist and women specific community housing organisations in Australia provide long-term housing.⁵⁰ With the Bond Aggregator, the community housing sector is projected to continue its expansion. Women's housing agencies are critical in meeting women's housing needs.

Education

Gendered Research and Data

Recommendation:

- 19. Funded research into the education and training related status of and issues confronting Australian women and girls in all their diversity be conducted to redress ballooning knowledge gaps as a matter of urgency.**

Australia is perceived nationally and internationally as a high achiever in education, with adult literacy scores in Australia among the highest in the OECD.⁵¹ However, recent OECD figures show a decline in status.⁵² Given that the increase in numbers of girls finishing Year 12 and women enrolled in university study exceeds that of boys and men, little or no attention has been directed to gender issues in education across all sectors since early 2000's. However, for example, as advised by OECD⁵³ despite increasing overall attainment, 'socioeconomic status still has a big impact on learning, which in turn affects people's earnings and lifestyle.' The over-reliance on broad-based statistics with little attention to disaggregated data obscures both inequities and the many gender issues that are prevalent in education in contemporary Australia, in each and all sectors. A gender lens on education is required to highlight and address issues associated with intersectionality that confront girls and women in all their diversity. For example, the paucity of research & data available for education in relation to women and girls with disability remains a significant gap.⁵⁴

Although Australia was once a leader internationally, to our national shame there are no current overarching national policies that focus on gender in education in Australia. Policies have become selective, such as the current focus on STEM, without deeper consideration of longer-term implications. This dearth in policies for women and girls impacts not only on policy *per se* but also impacts negatively on research, including research funding.

Vocational Education and Training

Recommendations:

- 20. Government funding for vocational education and training must be increased, with targeted funding to provide courses, gender appropriate curriculum, and support mechanisms for women and girls undertaking skill qualifications and access courses.**

⁴⁹ Affordable Housing Working Group, *Supporting the Implementation of an affordable housing bond aggregator* (Canberra: Council on Federal Financial Relations, 2017), 2

⁵⁰ Based on desk research by ERA from State and Territory Government websites

⁵¹ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education Policy Outlook 2018: Putting Student Learning at the Centre* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018), p.178

⁵² Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*. (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018)

⁵³ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education Policy Outlook 2018: Putting Student Learning at the Centre*

⁵⁴ [Women with Disabilities Australia \(WWDA\), Submission to CRPD 13th Session. Day of general discussion on the right to education for persons with disabilities. \(2015\)](#)

The increasing cost of VET courses resulting from marketisation is causing problems in terms of participation, as some VET courses will cost more than university courses, without necessarily leading to the same monetary returns through employment. VET and adult education should be accessible to all students without leading to high levels of debt. VET providers including TAFE, which has traditionally provided programs to meet the specific needs of disadvantaged groups, including women,⁵⁵ have increasingly cut access and Certificate I and II courses. It is these entry level courses that can provide the initial skills and confidence needed to enter the workforce or to progress to an industry-recognised qualification or to higher education. There is evidence to suggest that these funding cuts and the concomitant increases in fees disproportionately impact women. Research into the Victorian VET system in 2012 found that funding cuts were disproportionately targeted at courses with high female enrolment. Gendered analysis of the Commonwealth changes to employer subsidies for apprentices and trainees in 2011 and 2013 also indicates a disproportionate impact on women-dominated industries.⁵⁶

A national plan around quality vocational education and training must be developed and funded, with inclusion of a national body responsible for equity in VET, with implications for the support of women and girls accessing a wider range of career options and training. It is noted that no relevant women's organization was included in the recently instigated expert panel on VET, and which constituted an important oversight.

Early Childhood Education

Recommendation:

21. Recognise the professionalism of early childhood education teachers in terms of qualifications, pay and conditions.

Early Childhood Education must be recognised as an integral part of the formal education sectors, highlighting the need for high quality and accessible care and early learning opportunities. It, like the VET sector, has been subjected to marketisation and lack of regulation, with variable quality of pre-school education. It is important that every child, irrespective of their parents' work circumstances receive access to at least two days (24 hours) of subsidised early learning a week.

Early Childhood Education is of considerable concern to women, both those working and those not currently in the workforce, and availability of quality accessible care can make the difference between women being able to access employment or not.

Australia's lack of investment in the development and ongoing professional support of the early childhood workforce, largely female, continues to be of considerable concern in terms of quality educational programs delivered for children and the need to put early childhood education on par with primary school education in terms of pay and conditions.

Higher Education

Recommendation:

22. Reverse cuts to the HEPPP program made in the 2017-2018 budget and changes to the HELP program.

The Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) funding, which supports outreach programs for students from low Socio-Economic Status (SES) and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, has been cut. At present the majority of undergraduate (58%) and almost half of

⁵⁵ Veronica Volkoff, Kira Clarke and Anne Walstab, *Impact of TAFE Inclusiveness strategies* ([Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2008](#))

⁵⁶ Sally Thompson, "Women, work and poor pay," *Australian TAFE Teacher*, 49, No. 3, (2015):24

postgraduate students (48.6%) are women.⁵⁷ Research suggests that the majority of mature-age students are women and they are more likely to gain entrance to university through alternate pathways.⁵⁸ Consequently, they may need more support than students entering directly from school. Cuts to HEPPP funding are likely to reduce support services to disadvantaged students, including mature-age students, with adverse effects on retention and completion rates.

Changes to the repayment of HELP debts also discriminate against women graduates who, in general are paid less than male graduates.⁵⁹ The impact of these cuts has fallen disproportionately on women, both university staff and students. Many junior academic staff also have ongoing HECS debts. Jericho argues that women graduates are more vulnerable to changes to the HELP program as they are more likely than men to be the second income earner in a family and are more likely to be paid less than the median taxable income.⁶⁰ Increases in the cost of university degrees may have the effect of deterring women students. Research undertaken in the UK indicates that women students are more debt averse than students on the whole.⁶¹ Some women may delay enrolling in the hope that university study will become more affordable in future, or be deterred altogether. It is likely this will disproportionately impact women from low SES backgrounds, rural women

Health

23. **Fund a Women's Health Working Group, coordinated through COAG and with diverse civil society representation, to cost the 2020-2030 Women's Health Strategy and develop an implementation and evaluation plan for all States and Territories.**
24. **Fund an independent, civil society women's health peak body that is representative including rural, regional and remote representation.**
25. **Allocate additional funding for gender- and trauma-sensitive research into women's and girls' mental health, as aligned to the research priorities in the 2020-30 National Women's Health Strategy.**
26. **Allocate Commonwealth funding to monitor and evaluate the National Strategic Approach to Maternity Services (*Woman-centred care: Strategic directions for Australian maternity services*) at a national level.**

ERA welcomes the 2020-2030 National Women's Health Strategy released in 2019. The National Women's Health Strategy must be costed, and adequately supported and funded. The \$52.2 million in funding which was announced by the Commonwealth in 2019 is welcome, but will be inadequate to deliver the strategy over 10 years.

One of the key priority areas of the 2020-30 Strategy is Mental Health. The Commonwealth has announced \$200 million investment through the NHRMC and the Medical Research Future Fund which is aligned to the priorities of the Strategy, and which will include research into treatment for depression and anxiety in young people. This investment is welcome, yet it's crucial that there is investment in research on mental health with

⁵⁷Department of Education and Training, *Selected Higher Education Statistics: 2017 First half year student data summary tables* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2017)

⁵⁸Cathy Stone & Sarah O'Shea *Transformations and self-discovery: Stories of women returning to education* (Illinois: Common Ground Publishing, 2012)

⁵⁹Australian Bureau of Statistics, "4125.0 - Gender Indicators Australia," 25 September 2018, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4125.0>. (accessed 18.10.18)

⁶⁰Greg Jericho, "Why the coalition's university changes are just a great big new income tax," *The Guardian*, 4 May 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/au> (accessed 18.10.18)

⁶¹Nigel Kettle, Joan Whitehead & John Raffan, "Worried women, complacent men? Gendered responses to differential student funding in higher education," *Oxford Review of Education*, 34, No. 1 (2008): 111

a specific gender and trauma-sensitive lens. The recently formed Women's Mental Health Alliance identifies gender as a social determinant of mental health and draws attention to the connection of gendered violence with mental health⁶². The Alliance calls for investment in research focused specifically on women's mental health, including research that incorporates data from other policy areas including family and sexual violence, as well as income support, employment, housing and homeless and disaster impacts and response⁶³.

Further, funding for an independent, civil society women's health peak body must be restored following the defunding of the Australian Women's Health Network in 2016.

ERA welcomes the recently released national strategy for maternity services, and the centering of women in maternity care as outlined in *Woman-centred care: Strategic directions for Australian maternity services*. The strategy lays out a detailed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEF), which includes monitoring and evaluation in both individual jurisdictions, as well as through the use of national data sets collected through the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), however it remains unclear how evaluation will be funded. The MEF will be crucial to the effectiveness of the strategy and must be funded accordingly. With the AIHW collecting and publishing key data sets on maternity indicators and services, the AIHW is well-placed to conduct monitoring and evaluation of the strategy at a national level.

Access to Justice

Recommendations

27. **An urgent investment by the Commonwealth Government of \$120 million a year for civil and family law legal assistance.**
28. **Implement Women's Legal Services Australia's updated 5-step plan for safety first in family law**

In 2014 the Productivity Commission identified the legal assistance system was in crisis and recommended an urgent additional investment of \$200 million per annum for civil and family law legal assistance, including \$120 million of Commonwealth government funding.⁶⁴ This must be implemented.

Adequate, sustainable funding is required for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled legal services such as Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services; community legal centres, including specialist women's legal services; and Legal Aid Commissions.

Safety First in Family Law

The 2017 Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs (SPLA) final report into how to better support and protect people affected by family violence in the family law system and the 2019 Australian Law Reform Commission's Review of the Family Law System acknowledge the chronic lack of funding for the family law system and the need for immediate additional investment. This includes funding for additional judges, family consultants, legal assistance services (including family violence and trauma informed culturally safe lawyer assisted dispute resolution), and specialist family violence support services.

⁶² Women's Mental Health Alliance, *Statement from the Women's Mental Health Alliance*, 27 November 2019, [https://womenshealthvic.com.au/resources/WHV_Publications/Position-Paper_2019.11.27_Womens-Mental-Health-Alliance-Statement_\(Fulltext\).pdf](https://womenshealthvic.com.au/resources/WHV_Publications/Position-Paper_2019.11.27_Womens-Mental-Health-Alliance-Statement_(Fulltext).pdf), (accessed 19 December 2019).

⁶³ Ibid, see also Maury, Susan, and Squire, Sarah, 'The mental health impacts of sexualization, family violence and assault', *Women's Policy Action Tank*, 8 August 2019, <http://www.powertopersuade.org.au/blog/the-mental-health-impacts-of-sexualisation-family-violence-and-assault/8/8/2019>, (accessed 19 December 2019).

⁶⁴ Productivity Commission, *Access to Justice Arrangements*, Inquiry Report No 72, Canberra, 2014, Recommendation 21.4.

Nearly 70 percent of matters lodged in the family courts involve allegations of family violence. The system is not set up to deal with this.

Women's Legal Services Australia's Safety First in Family Law Plan⁶⁵ can be implemented right now and is based on research evidence and key recommendations from previous family law inquiries.

The five-step plan calls for the Government to:

1. Strengthen family violence response in the family law system
2. Provide effective legal help for the most disadvantaged
3. Ensure family law professionals have real understanding of family violence
4. Increase access to safe dispute resolution models
5. Overcome the gaps between the family law, family violence and child protection systems

Feminist Foreign Policy

Recommendations

29. **Increase the ODA budget to a minimum of 0.7% of GNI by 2030 in line with Australia's commitment under the 2030 Agenda.**
30. **Resource DFAT to achieve the 80% target on gender equality by:**
 - a. **Continuing to prioritise projects which have gender equality as their principle objective, and strengthening the mainstreaming of gender equality across all areas of the international development program**
 - b. **Prioritising hands-on technical gender expertise for all DFAT investments throughout the lifecycle of a project**
 - c. **Prioritising technical gender training for in-country partners, especially where DFAT works with only one supplier (e.g. local government agencies)**
31. **Increase funding for WROs with new and addition funding in the ODA program, investing in long-term, flexible funding that supports core operations of WROs**
32. **Allocate new and additional funding in the ODA program to climate change prevention, adaptation and mitigation, and replenish Australia's contributions to the Green Climate Fund**

There has been increased focus in recent years on the concept of a feminist foreign policy, after Sweden launched its feminist foreign policy in 2014.⁶⁶ The Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy describes feminist foreign policy as "a framework which elevates the everyday lived experience of marginalized communities to the forefront and provides a broader and deeper analysis of global issues."⁶⁷ ERA's recommendations would support Australia to continue its leadership on gender equality in international development and move towards the practice of a Feminist Foreign Policy approach.

DFAT's ability to enact Australia's international gender equality commitments has been impeded by significant cuts to Official Development Assistance over the past several years. Australia's current contributions have been cut by over a quarter since 2014 and are at a record low, amounting to just 0.21%

⁶⁵ Women's Legal Services Australia, 5 step plan for safety first in family law, 2019, accessed on 16 January 2020 at: http://www.wlsa.org.au/uploads/campaign-resources/Safety_First_in_Family_Law_Plan.pdf

⁶⁶ Government Offices of Sweden. *Handbook: Sweden's feminist foreign policy*. (Stockholm: 2014)

⁶⁷ Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy. "Feminist Foreign Policy," 2016, <https://centreforfeministforeignpolicy.org/feminist-foreign-policy/> (accessed 21.11.18)

of Gross National Income (GNI) and projected to continue to fall to 0.19% of GNI by 2021-22.⁶⁸ In contrast, by 2022, for every dollar spent on ODA, Australia will spend \$11 on defence and divert an additional \$3.8 billion (the equivalent of the annual aid budget) towards arms manufacturers.⁶⁹ A diminished overall aid budget reduces Australia's ability to contribute to gender equality and the advancement of the rights of women and girls.

The 2014 aid performance framework committed that “[m]ore than 80 per cent of investments, regardless of their objectives, will effectively address gender issues in their implementation.”⁷⁰ Though this target has not yet been met, there is evidence to show that it has been successful in supporting greater technical capacity for gender analysis within DFAT, and ensuring that new investments are designed with gender considerations in mind.⁷¹ Meeting this target will require the Commonwealth to continue to prioritise aid investments which have gender equality as a principle or significant objective, and prioritising hands-on technical gender expertise for all DFAT investments, supported by technical gender training for in-country partners.

Targeted investments in programs that contribute to women's rights are critical, and have been recognized as such by the Commonwealth in international women's rights forums including the Commission on the Status of Women. One area of underinvestment is in women's rights organisations (WROs). WROs focus on women-led solutions that are firmly rooted in local communities, contexts and needs. They tackle the day to day issues that affect women's lives and are expert at providing programmes that are appropriate to women's needs. WROs continue to face financial unsustainability and current funding trends often constrain the ability of these organisations to access funding. Flexible long-term core funding is vital for sustaining the long-term movement building work that underpins progress towards gender equality.⁷² In Australia, support for women's equality organisations and institutions represented only 1.24% (29 USD million) of total sector-allocable aid in 2017, constituting a drop from \$64 USD million in 2015-16.⁷³

The Pacific has been highlighted as a priority region for engagement in the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper.⁷⁴ There is now significant evidence to show that climate change is not gender-neutral, with women experiencing a greater share of adverse consequences as a result of climate change impacts.⁷⁵ These patterns are impacting on the Pacific region where climate change is shown to exacerbate existing gender inequalities.⁷⁶ In 2018, the Commonwealth adopted the Boe Declaration on Regional Security as part of the Pacific Islands Forum which affirms climate change as the single greatest threat to livelihoods, security and people in the Pacific.⁷⁷ The Boe Declaration has not yet been integrated into Australian foreign policy and

⁶⁸ Australian Council for International Development, *ACFID 2019-20 Federal Budget Analysis* (Canberra: ACFID, 2019)

⁶⁹ ACFID, IWDA & CARE, *Mixed Results and Skewed Priorities: Gender equality, development, defence and the Australian Budget 2018-2019* (2018); CARE & IWDA, *From Rhetoric to Reality: Towards a Feminist Foreign Policy – Gender equality and foreign policy in the Australian Government Budget 2019-2020* (2019)

⁷⁰ DFAT, *Making Performance Count: Enhancing the Accountability and Effectiveness of Australian Aid*, (Canberra: Australian Government, 2014)

⁷¹ DFAT, *Performance of Australian Aid 2017–18*, (Canberra: Australian Government, 2019).

⁷² Srilatha Batliwala, *Women Moving Mountains: The Collective Impact of the Dutch MDG3 Fund* (Ontario: Association for Women's Rights in Development, 2013).

⁷³ As reported to the OECD Creditor Reporting System, purpose code. Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), “QWIDS Query Wizard for International Development Statistics,” *OECD*, <https://stats.oecd.org/qwids/#?x=1&y=6&f=2:262,4:1,7:1,9:85,3:280,5:3,8:85&q=2:262+4:1+7:1+9:85+3:51,301,280+5:3+8:85+1:2,3+6:2012,2013,2014,2015,2016,2017> (accessed 21.11.18), and OECD, *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment – OECD*. (OCED: 2019), see also Australian NGO Beijing+25 Caucus, *Working Together for Equality: NGO Beijing+25 Review 2019*, Australia, October 2019

⁷⁴ Commonwealth of Australia. *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, 2017. ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

⁷⁵ Rao, Nitya. 'Climate crisis could reverse progress in achieving gender equality', 4 December 2019, *The Conversation* <https://theconversation.com/climate-crisis-could-reverse-progress-in-achieving-gender-equality-127787>, accessed 19 December 2019.

⁷⁶ Alston, Margaret. (2013) 'Gender and Climate Change in Australia and the Pacific', in M. Alston & K. Whittenbury (eds), *Research, Action and Policy: Addressing the Gendered Impacts of Climate Change*, Dordrecht: Springer.

⁷⁷ Pacific Islands Forum (2018). *Boe Declaration on Regional Security*, Suva: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

aid commitments, and the Government has announced that it will not replenish its contribution to the Green Climate Fund.⁷⁸ There is also a need for greater gender analysis within existing climate change programs. In a 2018 evaluation of 26 of Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) climate change investments, a mere 23% demonstrated evidence of gender-related outcomes.⁷⁹ The Australian government must allocate new and additional funding for gender sensitive climate change mitigation and adaptation in its ODA budgeting and replenish its contribution to the Green Climate Fund.

Women, Peace and Security

Recommendations:

33. Ensure adequate resourcing for implementation of the second Women, Peace and Security (WPS) National Action Plan (NAP), including civil society participation.

With consideration given to the following options:

- core funding for a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) platform/WPS Coalition to: share knowledge; provide technical advice to governments; monitor, and evaluate NAP commitments in particular and WPS commitments more broadly (e.g. shadow reporting etc.); raise awareness on WPS issues/NAP; serve as a convening body that brings diverse CSOs to discuss WPS issues (roundtables/annual dialogues/regular reflections etc.).
- increase resources allocated to the Office for Women for their role in coordinating the work of government NAP stakeholders and engagement with CSOs.
- commit to a fee for service model for advice provided to individual government NAP stakeholders by CSOs or CSO platform/WPS Coalition.
- co-design a resourced Civil Society-Government engagement strategy that recognises the need for a range of approaches to engage with diverse civil society actors and groups (e.g. but not limited to annual dialogues, communities of practice, webinars, website, teleconference meetings etc.).⁸⁰

Australia's first National Action Plan (NAP) was released in 2012⁸¹ and we are now awaiting the release of the second NAP.

The Independent Interim Review of the first Australian National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (NAP) found the NAP to be relevant and consistent with approaches adopted by other UN Member States. With respect to its implementation, however, the Review found gaps and challenges with the level of institutionalization, awareness, funding and resource allocation across implementing agencies. While the Australian Government was noted to value the role of civil society in implementing the women peace and security agenda, opportunities for formal engagement were limited, with engagement from civil society limited by access to resources.⁸²

The 2020-21 budget therefore provides an opportunity to ensure that the second Australian NAP is adequately resourced to address the gaps and challenges identified by the Review of the first Australian NAP.

⁷⁸ World Resources Institute, Waslander, and Amerasinge 2019; World Resources Institute, Waslander, and Vallejos 2018

⁷⁹ Gayfer, Julian, Kari Sann, Brian Dawson, and Tracey McMartin, *Investing in the Future: Evaluation of Australia's Climate Change Assistance* (Canberra; DFAT, 2018), see also IWDA, *Taking a gender sensitive approach to climate change prevention, mitigation and adaptation*, (Melbourne: IWDA, 2019)

⁸⁰ See more information on key stakeholders in this area at the Australian Women, Peace and Security Coalition <http://wpscoalition.org/>

⁸¹ Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), "Member States," <http://www.peacewomen.org/member-states> (accessed 3.12.18)

⁸² Humanitarian Advisory Group, *Independent Interim Review of the Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2018* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2016)

Previously, the government's contribution has been to fund Annual Civil Society Dialogues and Reports (since 2013). Funding the Annual Civil Society Dialogues and Reports has been a positive foundation for the engagement of government with civil society once a year. However, reduced funding has affected the ability to build broader and more inclusive participation in the Annual Dialogues. There is a lack of core resourcing for the WPS Coalition to carry out its role in organising the Dialogues, sustaining ongoing engagement with members and other civil society organisation (CSO) partners, and in representing civil society on NAP governance bodies, which is a fundamental challenge. These activities are maintained on behalf of civil society by individual volunteers and in-kind contributions from CSOs.