

Budget 2020 – Impacts on young women

Impacts on young women - Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic is having particularly severe effects on young women in Australia. There is an urgent need for the experiences and needs of young women to be a focus of policy development regarding the crisis response and recovery.

While the 2020/21 Budget includes a focus on young people, particularly on young people's training/education and employment, it falls well short of providing the short- and medium-term measures needed to support young women's economic security, health and safety.

Issues of intergenerational equity are once again present in our understanding of the Budget. With a significant increase to national debt, and the implementation of tax cuts which will overwhelmingly benefit high-income earners, there is little investment in social infrastructure, climate action and other areas that create jobs and lay a foundation for our national future.

Many aspects of the budget impact on young women, including housing and homelessness, climate and environment, health, taxation, disability and social services policies. NFAW's analysis in this section focuses on six key areas: youth policy, employment, education and training, youth allowance and ABSTUDY, mental health and violence against young women.

Youth Policy

The Budget

The [Women's Economic Security Statement](#) highlights the current development of a new National Youth Policy Framework, which will include a focus on addressing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on young Australians. The framework will highlight the importance of education, skills development and meaningful employment opportunities to the economic security of young women.

There is no specific budget allocation for the National Youth Policy Framework.

The Minister for Youth points to a range of measures including in education, online safety reform, youth mental health and suicide prevention [and says](#) that they "build on [the Government's] existing and ongoing work in developing a whole-of-government National Youth Policy Framework to inform how policies and programs support young Australians and improve their lives".

Gender implications

Why is this an issue for women?

A federal Minister for Youth was appointed in 2019, after having no Minister to lead government policy for young people since 2013. The Government has not funded a national peak body for young people since 2013.

Coordinated government policy for young Australians, in combination with gendered budgeting, is needed to ensure that young women are not left behind. This is particularly crucial given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and recession on young women.

What are the 2020 Budget impacts on women?

The development of a National Youth Policy Framework is positive, however there is no specific funding commitment in this Budget to support implementation of the Framework after it is due to be completed in December.

Recommendations

1. Include a gender lens in the National Youth Policy Framework to ensure that young women's experiences and needs are addressed.
2. Commit to funding to support the whole-of-government National Youth Policy Framework and measures that will support structural change to issues effecting young women's education, economic security, employment, health and safety.
3. Fund a national peak body for young people to support national youth policy.

Employment

The Budget

Measures in the Budget to support young people's employment include:

- JobMaker Hiring Credit - Under this measure, the hiring credit will be available to eligible employers over 12 months from 7 October 2020 for each additional new job they create for an eligible employee. The credit is \$200 per week if the eligible employee is aged 16 to 29 years or \$100 per week if the eligible employee is aged 30 to 35 years. To be eligible, the employee will need to have worked for a minimum of 20 hours per week, averaged over a quarter, and received the JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance (other) or Parenting Payment for at least one month out of the three months prior to when they are hired (Budget Paper No 2 p. 162, 2020) (see JobMaker paper).
- Incentives to encourage young Australians to undertake seasonal work - \$16.3 million over three years from 2020-21 to incentivise seasonal participation in the agricultural industry by creating a temporary pathway for young people who are seeking to qualify as independent for the purposes of assessing Youth Allowance (student) and ABSTUDY payment eligibility. From 1 December 2020, those who earn at least \$15,000 in the agricultural industry between 30 November 2020 and 31 December 2021 would be automatically assessed as meeting independence requirements, provided their parents meet current parenting income testing requirements (Budget Paper No 2, p. 155, 2020).

- Under the Women's Economic Security Statement, \$47.9m over four years from 2020-21 to increase grants from the *Women's Leadership and Development Program* (Budget Paper No 2, p. 67, 2020). This includes [a new Women@Work priority area](#), with grant funding available to create employment opportunities for women. Priority will be given to scalable projects and to organisations that support vulnerable cohorts, including women from diverse backgrounds and young women at high risk of long-term unemployment.
- PaTH Business Placement Partnerships – national industry associations. The Government will provide \$11.9 million over three years from 2019-20 to establish Prepare, Trial Hire (PaTH) Business Placement Partnerships with selected industry associations that have a national footprint. This measure will develop and deliver industry-led employment pathways to help young people into work. It will also draw upon existing government funded employment programs, such as *Youth Jobs PaTH* program and the *National Work Experience Program*. Part of the costs of this measure will be met from existing resources of the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (Budget Paper No 2, p. 236, 2020).

For further analysis, see relevant employment sections of the Gender Lens on the Budget.

Gender implications

Why is this an issue for women?

Young women, at the beginning of their working lives, have been particularly impacted by the economic fallout of COVID-19. [The unemployment rate](#) (August 2020) for women aged 15 to 24 years (13.1 per cent) is lower than for young men in the same age group (15.6 per cent) but much higher than the whole of population rate (6.8 per cent). Given the concentration of young women in industries that continue to be affected by the economic recession caused by health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that this unemployment data continues to be closely monitored and informs policy responses.

Loss of income and unemployment for young women will have impacts throughout the life course, adding a further challenge to the existing disadvantages that women experience which effect their economic security at all stages of life.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, young women were already facing significant barriers to secure employment and financial security. [The casualisation of the workforce, high rates of under-employment and unemployment, increase in the gig economy and increasing unpaid internships](#) make it difficult for young people to find steady, secure employment with access to paid leave and superannuation. Young workers aged 15 to 24 years are [much more likely](#) to be casual workers than other age groups, and therefore not have access to leave entitlements and lack job security. Additionally, young women are disadvantaged by the [gender pay gap](#) from the beginning of their working lives.

What are the 2020 Budget impacts on women?

There is a need for an ongoing focus and strategy from Government on job creation, including pathways for young people to access secure employment. This Budget fails to invest in measures which would allow Government to directly stimulate employment (including for young people) for example through the public sector, care and service sectors. Additionally, measures are needed to address intersecting forms of discrimination that young women experience which

affect their access to and experience in employment including disability discrimination and racism.

The prevalence of sexual harassment, exploitation and assault of women participating in working holiday seasonal worker programs is [well known](#). A [2016 report](#) from the Fair Work Ombudsman on the wages and conditions of people working under the 417 Working Holiday Visa Program identified concerns about exploitation of visa holders including sexual harassment. In this context, it is apparent that the incentives to encourage young Australians to undertake seasonal work has not been developed with a gender lens and does not appear to include safeguards for women. Tying the participation in seasonal agricultural work to qualification for independence requirements for the purposes of assessing Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY creates a power dynamic that could be exploited, in the same way that visa status has been exploited and created dangerous conditions for female workers in the same industry.

The JobMaker Hiring Credit does not take into account women's caring responsibilities and is a short-term hiring program, which the [ILO has found](#) are only effective when they incorporate a substantial training element. The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVIC) [is concerned](#) that the incentive will place young people in temporary, insecure work that does not align with their areas of study and career aspirations. For more detailed analysis and recommendations, see section on JobMaker Hiring Credit in the Gender Lens on the Budget.

Similarly, the PaTH Business Placement Partnerships risks being ineffective as a short-term measure (noting that further details about program design are not yet available). The program will need a gender lens to ensure that it meets the needs and suits the circumstances of young women. The existing Youth Jobs PaTH program provides [a supplementary payment](#) to interns on top of their Youth Allowance or JobSeeker payment, but does not guarantee award rates for hours worked (between 30 to 50 hours for four to 12 weeks) in an internship.

Recommendations

1. Develop a long-term plan for youth employment as part of the National Youth Policy Framework, with an ongoing focus and strategy from government on job creation, including in female-dominated industries, and measures to address workforce gender segregation.

Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY independence

The Budget

Under the COVID-19 Response Package – recognising the impacts of COVID-19 for Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY independence measure, the Government will provide \$25 million over four years from 2020-21 to temporarily revise the independence test for those applying for Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY from 1 January 2021. Under the exemption, the six-month period between 25 March 2020 and 24 September 2020 will automatically be recognised as contributing to an applicant's independence test, regardless of whether they meet employment requirements (Budget Paper No 2, p. 152, 2020).

Gender implications

Why is this an issue for women?

Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY are important supports for young women wanting to access education and training. Supporting yourself through work is one of the available criteria for individuals to meet [independence tests](#) for these payments.

What are the 2020 Budget impacts on women?

This is a positive measure that responds to the high rates of unemployment experienced by young people during the pandemic, which could significantly hinder access to Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY and thus engagement in education and training.

Further monitoring and analysis will be needed, and consideration of whether the 24 September end date for the automatic recognition period needs to be re-assessed given the continued high youth unemployment rate and recession.

However, the Budget did not permanently increase rates of Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY. An April 2020 [Senate inquiry](#) recommended that reviews be undertaken into the adequacy of the Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY policy criteria and rates of payment, and that Youth Allowance be increased after the Coronavirus Supplement is phased out to ensure that all eligible recipients do not live in poverty.

Recommendations

1. Review the 'recognising the impacts of COVID-19' for Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY independence measure in light of the youth unemployment rate, and consider extending the automatic recognition period past 24 September 2020 in response to continued high youth unemployment.
2. Permanently increase the rate of Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY to support young people to meet their costs of living.

For analysis and recommendations, see the social services sections of the Gender Lens on the Budget.

Education and training

The Budget

For further detail and analysis on Budget measures relating to school, vocational education and training and higher education, see relevant sections of the Gender Lens on the Budget.

Gender implications

Why is this an issue for women?

Despite high rates of participation in post-secondary education, young women continue to experience inequality in pay. Because of this, Australia's [highly gender segregated workforce, low remuneration in feminised industries](#), and increasing study costs are of great concern to young women when making decisions and participating in education and training.

The education and training sector is a significant employer of women. Recent reforms, particularly to the university sector, compound existing job insecurity and lack of access to career pathways.

What are the 2020 Budget impacts on women?

Education and training initiatives in the Budget fail to address structural issues which disadvantage women while studying and in pursuing post-education career pathways.

A gender lens, including a specific focus on young women, is necessary in education and training funding policy and planning. For example, the JobMaker Plan includes a measure to boost the wage subsidy for first year apprentices, without detail about how this Plan will avoid disproportionately benefiting men and increase pathways for young women to access apprenticeships and traineeships. Retention strategies, including measures to address discrimination in the workplace, are also important for young women wanting to complete apprenticeships in male dominated trades.

The [Women's Economic Security Statement](#) measure to provide \$25.1 million over five years from 2020-21 to establish a *Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Industry Cadetship* program to support 500 women working in STEM industries to complete an Advanced Diploma through a combination of study and work-integrated learning experiences is welcomed but is a small investment compared to investments under the JobMaker and JobTrainer which will disproportionately benefit men.

The Budget fails to address existing structural issues for young women in the university sector, including disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and recent Job Ready legislation contributes to rather than improves this situation. For those wanting to access university study or currently studying, study fees will substantially increase which [will disproportionately effect female students](#). For young women working in universities in all capacities including early career researchers, as well as postgraduate students employed in teaching and reaching and/or wanting to pursue an academic career, there are significant concerns about opportunities for secure employment and career progression.

Recommendations

1. Apply a gender lens to vocational education and training and higher education measures to ensure equitable access and participation by young women.
2. Job creation and improving job security in the education and training sector should be a key feature of the Government's COVID-19 response and recovery strategy.

For further recommendations, see the education and training section of the Gender Lens on the Budget.

Mental health

The Budget

For further detail and analysis on Budget measures relating to mental health, see the health section of the Gender Lens on the Budget.

Gender implications

Why is this an issue for women?

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, young women were already twice as likely as young men to be experiencing psychological distress (30 per cent compared to 16 per cent).

Data from the Monash Alfred Psychiatry research centre shows that the highest rate of suicidal thoughts among adults participating in data collection between 3 April and 3 May 2020 were among young women aged 18-24 with 37 per cent of women in this age group reporting suicidal thoughts, compared to 17 per cent of men. Research shows that young people are feeling anxious, uncertain and scared about the crisis, and young women report specific concerns around their education and the health of their family. Concerningly, there is evidence that these psychological responses to the crisis may last long after the immediate threat of COVID-19 passes.

What are the 2020 Budget impacts on women?

To support the mental health and wellbeing of young women, it is important that mental health initiatives target and engage them in ways that work for this cohort. While there are some positive measures in this Budget do not address the substantial concerns relating to young women's mental health. For example, the expansion of psychology sessions from 10 to 20 each calendar year (for two years) under the Better Access initiative is positive but does not address the high out of pocket costs incurred when accessing these services.

A gender lens should be applied to planning for other mental health measures in the Budget such as the \$45.7 million over four years to expand the *Individual Placement and Support* program under the Youth Employment Strategy to assist vulnerable young people with mental illness to participate in the workforce. Applying a gender lens and developing gender sensitive approaches will ensure that measures meet the needs of young women.

Accessibility of mental health services, including provision of timely and affordable access in regional and rural areas continues to be a concern for young people. Investments in digital mental health services and to the Mount Barker service in South Australia are positive, but a planned approach to workforce development and increasing availability of services in the regions is still required.

Recommendations

1. Given the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and impacts on young women, gender should be recognised and centred as a social determinant of mental health, and effective gender sensitive approaches to mental health should be developed in consultation with women's health organisations.

For further recommendations, see the health section of the Gender Lens on the Budget.

Violence against young women

The Budget

Under the Women's Economic Security Statement, the Government has provided \$2.1 million over three years from 2020-21 to establish a Respect@Work Council to assist in addressing sexual harassment in Australian workplaces (Budget Paper No 2, p. 67, 2020). Further detail in the

[Women's Economic Security Statement](#) shows that this announcement includes development of a dedicated online platform which will provide free, practical and accessible information and resources to help ensure workplaces are safe and free from sexual harassment; and national survey on workplace sexual harassment to be conducted in 2022.

Funding is also provided under the Expediting Family Law and Federal Circuit Court Matters measure including \$4.8 million in 2020-21 for the Family Violence and Cross Examination of Parties Scheme, which helps protect victims of family violence in family law proceedings; and \$1.8 million over four years from 2020-21 to implement Federal Family Violence Orders under the National Domestic Violence Order Scheme (Budget Paper No 2, p. 56, 2020).

The budget also includes \$150 million to support Australians at risk of domestic, family and sexual violence during the COVID-19 pandemic (Budget Paper No 2, p. 274, 2020). This funding package, [announced by the Prime Minister on 29 March](#); \$130 million has [been distributed](#) to states and territories and the remaining \$20 million spent on Commonwealth initiatives.

An undisclosed amount of funding has been provided over four years under the COVID-19 Response Package – additional funding for domestic and family violence support package. This funding is for 1800 RESPECT and to provide COVID-specific advertising over the Christmas period, and to meet increased demand (Budget Paper No 2, p. 151, 2020).

Gender implications

Why is this an issue for women?

In Australia, women aged 18 to 24 are at the highest risk of experiencing sexual violence compared to women in older age groups and men. Data from the [ABS Personal Safety Survey](#) found that approximately 1 in 20 women in this age group reported experiencing sexual assault in the last 12 months. [Research has shown](#) that 24 per cent of young women aged 18-24 have had a nude or sexual photo/video posted online or sent on without their consent.

Workplace sexual harassment is a significant issue for young people. 53 per cent of women aged 18-29 years, [have experienced](#) workplace sexual harassment. The national inquiry into sexual harassment in Australian workplaces found that young people aged between 18 and 29 were more likely than those in other age groups to have experienced sexual harassment in the last five years, and that young women were significantly more likely than young men to have been sexually harassed. These high rates are influenced by workplace power imbalances and the higher likelihood that young people are employed on a casual basis; experiences of sexual harassment by young women are compounded by their lower awareness of workplace rights and access to support.

What are the 2020 Budget impacts on women?

Violence against women remains a key concern for Australian women, with high prevalence prior to COVID-19, and [emerging data](#) and [service experiences](#) revealing an increase in the frequency and severity of domestic and family violence during the pandemic.

The establishment of the Respect@Work Council, development of a dedicated online platform, and national survey on workplace sexual harassment to be conducted in 2022 are welcome

announcements. These commitments support the fulfilment of recommendations 14, 48 and 2 from the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Respect@Work* national inquiry report.

However, sexual harassment is endemic and particularly so for young women. Further action is needed to address all recommendations from the *Respect@Work* report which would support primary prevention, legal and regulatory reform, improved responses by in workplaces, and much-needed support, advice and advocacy.

Recommendations

1. The Government should commit and take action to implement all of the remaining recommendations from the *Respect@Work: National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*

For further analysis and recommendations, see the reducing violence against women and their children section of the Gender Lens on the Budget.

Budget 2020 – Older Women

Older Women Budget Overview

This year's federal Budget contains some measures of direct benefit to older women, with net positive impact in some policy areas, but no improvement in other priority domains.

The measures of most interest and value to older women contained in the Budget include: an increase of 23,000 home care packages; additional health care and aged care funding to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic; the maintenance of supplementary payments in the Aged Pension for another year; and the move to change capital gains tax on Granny Flat arrangements within families.

Overall, however, the 2020 Budget is a missed opportunity to improve the lives of older women who face the greatest difficulties: single, older renters totally reliant on JobSeeker or pension payments; those who are homeless; a significant proportion of those on the long waiting list for home care packages; and those locked out of employment.

It is also another missed opportunity to begin resetting policy to disrupt the structural accumulation of poverty across the life course that reaches its peak with disastrous consequences for so many women in later life.

What are the particular issues for older women?

Poverty alleviation

- At retirement, single older women are more likely to rely on the age pension than single older men. Government pensions and allowances are the main source of income for 69.4 per cent of women over 65 not in the labour force, compared with 63 per cent of men. Women are less likely than men to have a superannuation pension or annuity as the main source of income over 65.¹
- In 2011, 34 per cent of single women over 60 were in permanent income poverty, compared to 27 per cent of single older men and 24 per cent of couples.²
- This is an outcome of combined factors across the life course including the persistent gender wage gap; breaks from the workforce or part time work for family care; and the compounding effect of lower wages and career breaks reflected in significant gender differentials in retirement savings such as superannuation.

Housing affordability and eradication of homelessness

- In April 2020 the percentage of private rental listings on the national market affordable by a single person on the Age Pension was 0.8 per cent; and by a single person on JobSeeker payment was 0 per cent. This improved respectively to 1 per cent and 1.5 per cent with the COVID-19 supplements included.³
- Between the 2011 and 2016 Census, the numbers of women aged 55+ experiencing homelessness rose by over 30 per cent.⁴

Aged care affordability, availability, quality and safety

- 2 in 3 people receiving aged care services on 30 June 2019 were women (partly reflecting women's longer life expectancy), with more women than men in each type of aged care program.⁵

Elder abuse eradication

- Research finds that women are more often victims of elder abuse than men, and this is disproportionate to the number of older women in the community. Data collected by helplines in Australia indicates that approximately 70 per cent of elder abuse victims are women.⁶
 - Intergenerational abuse within the family is thought to be the most common form of elder abuse, significantly more highly reported intimate partner violence.

Employment opportunities and security, and reduction of unemployment incidence and duration

- One of the largest differences between male and female labour force participation rates is in the 60-64 age groups, with 51.8 per cent for women and 65.4 per cent for men.⁷
- Older women are the growing face of unemployment. The share of JobSeeker recipients aged 45 years and older increased from 44 to 56 per cent among females and from 34 to 45 per cent among males between 2007 and 2019. The share of recipients aged 60 and older also increased for both genders, with a larger rise among females.⁸
- While long-term receipt of JobSeeker payment has grown for all age groups, those aged 55 and above have grown to have the highest share of all recipients who have been on the payment for five years or more, closely followed by those aged 45 to 54. By June 2019, 33 per cent of women and 29 per cent of men on JobSeeker aged 55 and above had been on the payment for five or more years.⁹

Budget measures

The following table sets out priorities for older women and relevant 2020 Budget measures.

| Priorities | In 2020 Budget? | Comment |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Increase to Commonwealth Rent Assistance | No | (see Housing Section) Older women facing homelessness cannot afford private rents without a significant increase to the CRA. |
| Funding increases in social and community housing | Minimal impact | (see Housing Section) The National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation guarantee extension may support further building of affordable housing, but it is unlikely to meet the extent of need experienced by older women. |
| Significant funding required for aged care transformation | Partial, but net positive impact | (see Aged Care Section) Includes new funding to: implement the Serious Response Scheme; to create an independent assessment service for residential care; to extend the Business Improvement Fund to restructure residential care; and commitments to upskilling aged care workers in dementia and funding the Aged Care Workforce Industry Council. These are welcome, but only a first step to transform the sector. The final report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety will provide a platform for more significant change in 2021. |
| Funding for improving safety of residents and staff in residential aged care during the COVID-19 pandemic | Yes | (see Aged Care Section) \$746.3 million over four years from 2020-21 to support older Australians throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. |
| Funding to meet the shortfall in Home Care Packages | Partial, but net positive impact | (see Aged Care Section) 23,000 new packages at cost of \$1.6B, but no commitment to reduce the waiting times for packages. |
| Industry assistance packages targeted to the care industries | No | (see Machinery of Government Section) Older women are both significant users of care services and a significant component of the care workforce. |

| Priorities | In 2020 Budget? | Comment |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| Innovative measures to assist older women to regain and retain employment in the current economic crisis and beyond | No | (see JobMaker Section) There are no targeted Budget measures to assist older women into employment, despite the impact of the pandemic on the sectors where older women tend to be mostly employed and the pre-pandemic high and growing levels of unemployment experienced by older women. (Note however, the pre-existing Restart Program for workers over 50 remains in place.) |
| Permanent increase in JobSeeker rates | No | (see relevant Social Security sections) The JobSeeker rate without the COVID supplement places recipients <u>below the poverty line</u> . ¹⁰ Older women are living on JobSeeker for longer periods than other groups and are struggling to survive. |
| Funding to increase speed and impact of government initiatives to reduce elder abuse in COVID-19 context | Partial, but net positive | (see Housing Section) Capital gains tax (CGT) exemption will be provided for granny flat arrangements where there is a formal written agreement with an older Australian or an individual with a disability. The measure is designed to mitigate against the financial abuse of vulnerable Australians. This is a welcome response to an issue highlighted by the ALRC in Recommendation 6-2 its <u>landmark report of elder abuse in Australia</u> ¹¹ . But it is a disappointment that work under the <u>National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians [Elder Abuse] 2019-2023</u> ¹² was not fast tracked. Improving community awareness and furthering safeguards against elder abuse have become more urgent in the current pandemic and accompanying economic crisis. |

For Recommendations, see relevant Sections of this Gender Lens on the Budget 2020-2021.

References

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- ³ Anglicare Australia. (2020). Rental Affordability Snapshot: National Report April 2020. p9 <https://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/rental-affordability-snapshot-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=4>
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- ⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2019). GEN Aged Care Data: People using aged care, 30 June 2019. <https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/Topics/People-using-aged-care> Accessed 10 October 2020
- ⁶ Seniors Rights Victoria. Elder Abuse, Gender and Sexuality. p3 <https://seniorsrights.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Elder-Abuse-Gender-and-Sexuality.pdf> Accessed 10 October 2020
- ⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2019) Gender Indicators, Australia. Released 1 November 2019 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/gender-indicators-australia/latest-release#economic-security>
- ⁸ Parliamentary Budget Office. (2020). Jobseeker Payment. Understanding economic and policy trends affecting Commonwealth expenditure. Report No. 03/2020. Commonwealth of Australia 2020. p9
- ⁹ Ibid p17
- ¹⁰ Phillips, B., Gray, M., & Biddle, N. Winding Back JobKeeper and JobSeeker will push 740,000 Australians into poverty. *The Conversation*. 11 September 2020
- ¹¹ Australian Law Reform Commission. (2017). Elder Abuse – A National Legal Response, Final Report. Commonwealth of Australia 2017. p13
- ¹² Council of Attorneys-General. National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019-2023. <https://www.ag.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/National-plan-to-respond-to-the-abuse-of-older-australians-elder.pdf> Accessed 10 October 2020

Budget 2020 – Impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females

Impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females: Overview

There was little to no response to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females in the budget. Measures via the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and Minister for Indigenous Australians appear ad-hoc, and other measures such as tax cuts and superannuation membership reform will not reach the majority of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female population due to their young median age and their not yet participating in the workforce.

Lack of investment in community-controlled programs was clear. The \$46.5 million allocation for Closing the Gap in health equity is inadequate to meet targets, and does not provide infrastructure support for 550 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health clinics with over 1 million episodes of care per annum. Conversely, \$39 million was allocated to one mainstream charity for a sport program to encourage school attendance. Most other allocations are to the Government's own services, corporate entities or statutory authorities not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, despite little evidence for their effectiveness. Allocations are not adequate to address social determinants of health, multi-morbidities, holistic care, legal needs or diversity, to which government has made policy commitments.

Impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females

The Budget

Machinery of government for women

The lack of inclusion or naming of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or females by the Australian Government in the budget papers is obvious. This is despite Priority Reform One of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (to reduce inequities that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience in relation to others, devised by the Australian Government, focussing on *Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making* (Australian Government, 2020a). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition of Peaks (2020) advocated for and became partner

to the Australian Government for the 2020 refresh of the bi-partisan Closing the Gap targets, having been excluded in the mid-2000s when initial targets were developed. The Coalition of Peaks has been able to advocate only within the parameters governments have set, has not had a process of collaboration with communities supported, nor are articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2008) clearly supported. Neither the Closing the Gap budget measures nor the 2020 refresh make mention of recent processes for the Australian Government to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, including through the First Nations Constitutional Convention (2017) and its report, culminating in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* which outlines steps for governments to better engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Climate and energy

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have cultures, languages, identities, wellbeing and economies inextricably tied to Australia’s landscape, climate and natural resources and have done so since time immemorial. All measures in the budget about climate and energy have a bearing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females.

There is little detail within budget measures about how the rights of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been or will be upheld including in decision making; few allocations are to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and limited detail suggests exclusion thus far.

Through the *Murray-Darling Communities Investment Package* the Government has committed \$269.6 million over four years from 2020-21 for measures indicated in Table 1 below, and \$9.8 million per year ongoing. This is based on a 2020 independent assessor’s report which highlighted that whole-of-government responses are required for the health of the Murray-Darling basin (Sefton et al, 2020). However, items below relate to only a small number of governments and departments. While the independent assessment has many mentions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations and recommends funding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, no measures have been included directly in the budget. Funding is to Government’s own National Indigenous Australians Agency (see Table 1 below), and only for the short term. The allocation to the National Indigenous Australians Agency is for Indigenous River Rangers and no further funding or information is available about whether and how funds will go to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups.

**Table 1: Environmental care
Murray-Darling Communities Investment Package**

Payments (\$m)

| | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Murray-Darling Basin Authority | 17.3 | 32.3 | 2.4 | 2.4 |
| Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment | 13.3 | 52.8 | 5.2 | 12.9 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 0.5 | 3.6 | - | - |
| Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications | - | - | - | - |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|
| Department of the Treasury | -43.6 | 30.7 | 29.7 | 23.6 |
| Total — Payments | -12.5 | 119.5 | 37.3 | 38.8 |

Source: 2020 Budget Paper No. 2, p. 52.

The 2020-21 budget does not clearly itemise any funds directly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations for climate and energy. A mention of ‘expanded Indigenous engagement in park management’ is made as part of an overall \$28.3 million over four years allocated for marine parks, although no detail is available on whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations will be funded (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 53).

No mention is made of budget measures for the Torres Strait Islanders, who have been described as becoming the world’s first climate refugees with sea levels rising and encroaching on communities (Banister, 2020; Steffen, Hunter, & Hughes, 2014).

While allocations for energy developments are in the budget, including \$459 million for the CSIRO, \$1 billion research funding for universities and \$1.9 billion to support low emissions and renewable technologies, no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are named as recipients or partners.

Funding of five gas basins in Queensland and the Northern Territory was announced despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations having the very recent experience of mining destroying a culturally significant site with no reparation (Borschmann, 2020). The Minister for Energy and Emissions claimed that “more gas at a lower price will support jobs in Australia’s manufacturing sector” (Taylor, 2020); however no analysis is included of economic contributions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Housing

Table 2 below identifies \$150 million in total over three years to its corporate entity Indigenous Business Australia for the *Indigenous Home Ownership Program*. The Prime Minister indicated this was for 360 new housing construction loans for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in regional areas (Frydenberg, 2020). This will not meet need including to address overcrowding and government housing in disrepair (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019) and fails to deliver for the larger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations who live in urban centres (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2018).

Table 2: Equity Injection to the Indigenous Home Ownership Program

| Receipts (\$m) | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Indigenous Business Australia | 0.8 | 3.0 | 4.3 | 4.6 |

Source: 2020 Budget Paper No. 2, p. 12.

While the Australian Government claims this equity injection will provide “an immediate, targeted fiscal stimulus to regional Australia by injecting liquidity into the financial and construction sector and generating positive flow-on effects for regional businesses” (2020 Budget Paper No. 2, p. 12), there is no evidence this will be among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses or people. Evidence indicates such developments are generally to the contrary (Denny-Smith, Williams, & Loosemore, 2020).

The \$100 million already allocated to Queensland Government in 2020-21 for *Funding for Remote Indigenous Housing in Queensland* is part of the Queensland Government taking full responsibility for housing in the future (p. 147). It is, however, unlikely to meet need.

Minimal discussion on affordable housing in infrastructure spending occurred in the budget except in relation to rebuilding public housing damaged in 2015 by tropical cyclones and the \$17.5 million *National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements*, in a location where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are a greater proportion of the community than the rest of Australia (ABS, 2018) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females may be likely to benefit.

The COVID-19 Response Package includes \$51.4 million to renew essential services for water, electricity and sewerage in the Commonwealth national park jurisdiction of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, and Mutitjulu Community – just one of dozens of remote communities who require such support (Easteal, 2016).

Overall, support for housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females is poor.

Social services

Many of the Department of Social Services payment measures are relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females. One potentially relevant budget measure is \$45.7 million over four years for the *Individual Placement and Support Program* under the Youth Employment Strategy to increase workforce participation of young people with mental illness (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 103). However, mainstream organisations tend to have low levels of participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Davy, Harfield, McArthur, Munn, & Brown, 2016); staff have not completed training or developed skills in cultural safety (Fitzpatrick, Haswell, Williams, Meyer, & Jackson Pulver, 2019); and racism is frequent in mainstream government services (Kelaher, Ferdinand, and Paradies, 2014). These concerns will limit uptake by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, and effectiveness in program delivery.

Most other social services measures are ill-defined and do not indicate at all the extent to which they will reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females such as \$35 million over four years for the *Safer Communities Fund* (Budget Paper No 2, p. 111) and \$28 million over two years for the *Stronger communities Programme* (Budget Paper No 2, p. 128).

The allocation of \$37.3million in the COVID-19 recovery period “to promote Australian values, identity and social cohesion” (Budget Paper No 2, p. 112) is particularly concerning given the mainstreaming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into general population services (Parliament of Australia, 2005) has not produced successful outcomes (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2018), and no discussion has occurred to form a national identity that includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognises sovereignty and the detrimental impacts of colonisation (First Nations Constitutional Convention, 2017).

The Cashless Debit Card, however, continues to be supported, which has been overwhelmingly biased in use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with no evidence for its effectiveness and contrary evidence of detrimental impacts and lack of support by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders having been found (Bielefeld, 2018).

National Redress Scheme funding allocations for institutional child abuse have been made but not publicly released, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females thought to be over-represented as claimants, and reach being limited (Kimberley Legal Service, n.d.).

The two \$250 payments for eligible recipients including those on age and disability pensions as part of the COVID-19 Response Package fall short of meeting need and will do little to reduce socio-economic disadvantage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience.

Education and training

The \$458.3 million over two years to extend the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (2020 Budget Paper No 3, p. 3) and undertake the related National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection in early 2022 are relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females but only in universal ways and not targeted to need. This lack of targeting to need disadvantages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people given they have historically had less access to mainstream services, with mainstream services biased away from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and producing more experiences of racism (Carson, Dunbar, Chenhall, and Bailie, 2007).

The National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection is no exception and such data collections fail to ascertain needs or protective factors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (Thurber et al, 2020). Rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in early childhood education are increasing, but are still less than others – in 2018, 86.4% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander four year-olds compared to 91.3% for non-Indigenous children – indicating that resourcing has not been adequate to meet need or to invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of engaging families (Australian Government, 2020b).

Table 3 below indicates student support funds to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people via the Australian Government’s National Indigenous Australians Agency. Amounts are small, not targeted, not sustained over time and not directed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

Table 3: Students Support Package

| Payments (\$m) | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Department of Education, Skills and Employment | 16.6 | 25.0 | 42.0 | 44.0 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | 1.3 | 3.8 | 2.6 | - |
| Total — Payments | 17.9 | 28.8 | 44.6 | 44.0 |

Source: 2020 Budget Paper No. 2, p. 81.

This Student Support Package includes the highly controversial \$39.8 million over four years for the Clontarf Foundation to expand and extend its existing program. This is despite its 122 outlets and 9000 students participating in a sport program reporting moderate success and not delivering education as such (Clontarf Foundation, 2020). This amount is almost equal to the \$46.5 million provided to the 550 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health clinics with their evidence of success with over 1 million episodes of care per annum (NACCHO, 2020). Clontarf is not governed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and overwhelmingly targets young males (Clontarf Foundation, 2020).

The Vocational Education and Training system reforms and \$263 million allocation to improve quality make no mention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, although the 2019 Expert Review of Australia’s VET System noted that improving accessibility for Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander people was a 'main issue' for the sector (Joyce, 2019, p. 27). This was not addressed directly in the budget.

The budget provides some measures in response to the recommendations of an independent review resulting in the National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy report (Halsey, 2018), which named better enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from rural and remote areas to access Commonwealth-supported tertiary education places, given few tertiary institutions have or meet target numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Universities Australia, 2020). To this end \$17.1 million over four years was allocated in the July Economic and Fiscal Update, including \$0.5 million in capital funding and \$13.9 million per year ongoing.

In addition, \$7.1 million was allocated over four years for the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A, p. 232). HEPPP aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, but underwent major reallocations in early- to mid-2020 with some universities' funding already halved; this, in addition to some coursework fees increasing (Patty, 2020), may overall serve to further exclude Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The budget highlighted funding from existing programs being consolidated to establish the *Indigenous, Regional and Low SES Attainment Fund* (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A, p. 234), in an attempt to encourage universities to improve higher education attainment among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The \$48.8 million allocated over four years and \$20.9 million per year ongoing for partnerships between regional universities, other higher education providers and local for research (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A, p. 232) show commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities but belie the fact that the majority of the population are in urban areas, have low higher education participation, do not address reasons for low participation nor are enough to address inequity.

There is insufficient detail to understand how the \$800 million over four years for a *National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund* (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A, p. 233) will increase partnerships between universities and industry and whether this will assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to gain skills and experience.

Research allocations have a history of excluding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and organisations (Nakata, 2007). There is no mention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to \$12.5 million over three years offset by redirecting existing 2019-20 Australian Research Council National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) funding into funding specifically allocated to addressing Australia's history, society and culture (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A, p. 234).

Employment

In terms of employment in research, the Department of Education Skills and Employment *JobMaker Plan – Research package* mentions investment in improving eResearch platforms including Indigenous e-research although no details are provided (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 79). No detail is provided on inclusion of Indigenous peoples or priorities in the \$1.0 billion allocated through the Research Support Program for universities – to date capacity and outputs

are minimal including consistently underperforming and not meeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff or student targets (Universities Australia, 2020).

The Government has committed \$16.3 million over three years to incentivise seasonal participation in the agricultural industry, by creating a temporary pathway for young people who are seeking to qualify as independent for the purposes of assessing Youth Allowance (student) and ABSTUDY payment eligibility (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 155). No evidence base has been established for this decision-making or its viability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females.

Some JobKeeper wage subsidy measures stimulated by COVID-19 may meet needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, however given their different demographic profile (younger median age, earlier age at death) to the mainstream Australian population for whom the measures have been designed, parts of the package are not equitably relevant such as early access to superannuation and business-related payments. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander small businesses have reported not meeting eligibility criteria and struggling to complete JobKeeper administration (Syron, 2020).

There are issues about the risk of long-term unemployment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, who already experience higher unemployment rates and for longer than other women in Australia (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2018).

Tax cuts will not reach the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whose median age is 23, with one third under 15 – not yet working age (ABS, 2018).

Most of the items in the *JobMaker Plan – Second Women’s Economic Security Package* (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 62) have relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females – not, however in a universal targeted way to meet need.

A total of \$231.0 million has been allocated including \$90.3 million over three years for relaxing the Paid Parental Leave concessional work test arrangements in response to COVID-19, meaning parents with births and adoptions between 22 March 2020 and 31 March 2021 would qualify if they had worked in 10 of the last 20 months, instead of 10 of the last 13 months. Given Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females have higher rates of unemployment and underemployment around age at childbirth (ABS, 2016), they are not likely to benefit equitably.

The *Women’s Leadership and Development Program*, to receive \$47.9 million over four years, reports few details on culturally-responsive programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

The \$2.1 million over three years allocated to establish a Respect@Work Council to address sexual harassment in Australian workplaces is not accompanied by funds to address racism, which is a frequent experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females at work (Bargallie, 2020), as well as when accessing services and support, with major detrimental impacts on health and wellbeing (Kelaheer et al, 2014).

The \$25.1 million over five years for *Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Industry Cadetship* program and \$14.5 million over four years allocated for *Women in STEM Ambassador Program*, *Women in STEM Entrepreneurship Grants Program* and the *Girls in STEM Toolkit* require Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-oriented

strategies to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females. These, however, have not been identified.

The \$24.7 million over four years for *ParentsNext* may have minimal impact – no evaluation has indicated its effectiveness with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (see *ParentsNext* section).

Health

After the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition of Peaks fought for the Australian Government to include them as a partner in the refresh of the bi-partisan Closing the Gap targets to reduce health inequity, an allocation of \$46.5 million over four years has been made (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 146). The Minister for Indigenous Australians described this as being for building capacity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health organisations (Wyatt, 2020). The Convener of the Coalition of Peaks, Ms Pat Turner AM, indicated it was to begin Priority Reform Two but that governments must also make their contribution to meet the 16 targets (NACCHO and Coalition of Peaks, 2020). Allocations in the 2020-21 budget will do little to achieve other Closing the Gap priority reform areas, particularly social determinants of health, no to replace cuts by former Prime Minister Abbott (Holland, 2018).

There is little investment in social determinants of health, or infrastructure development among the 550 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health clinics, according to NACCHO Chairperson Ms Donella Mills. NACCHO estimate that \$900 million is required to address infrastructure development needs of the 550 clinics and 410 000 clients across urban, regional and remote locations (McInerney, 2020).

As indicated in Table 4 below, the Government will provide \$10.1 million over four years from 2020-21 (and \$2.6 million per year ongoing) to the Productivity Commission for its reporting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service delivery and an improved dashboard for measuring Closing the Gap progress.

Table 4: Closing the Gap reporting

| Payments (\$m) | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Productivity Commission | 1.2 | 2.9 | 3.5 | 2.6 |
| National Indigenous Australians Agency | - | - | - | - |
| Total — Payments | 1.2 | 2.9 | 3.5 | 2.6 |

Source: Budget 2020-21 Budget Measures Budget Paper No. 2 2020-21, p. 146.

Few areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females' health are specifically targeted in the 2020-21 budget. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is one of the few areas apart from COVID-19 named; the National Disability Insurance Agency and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission will receive \$798.8 million over four years – described as 'additional funding' (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 156) to support an estimated 500 000 people. However, the NDIS is under-accessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared to others (People With Disability Australia, 2019) and has been difficult to access and administer by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations (Griffis, 2020).

COVID19

In the July 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update, through the *COVID-19 Response Package — support for Indigenous and remote communities*, the Government provided \$19.8 million over two years for three Commonwealth wholly-owned Indigenous subsidiaries that had been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Funding in 2020-21 will support the Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia, and Queensland with the cost of implementing COVID-19 related travel restrictions to remote communities. These costs will be met from the existing resources of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and negotiations with jurisdictions are not yet final (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A, p. 268).

Crisis relief and targeted support for organisations, artists and arts workers will mean \$27.0 million over two years from 2019-20 for Regional Arts Australia, Support Act and Indigenous Art Centres and Fairs (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A, p. 215).

National Parks services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners of jointly managed National Parks will receive \$12 million over two years from 2019-20 Fairs (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A, p. 215) to maintain service levels and provide temporary support for tourism – important parts of community economic and cultural life including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females across the lifespan.

The *Remote Point of Care Testing Program* in regional and remote Indigenous communities throughout Australia has been supported with \$4 million (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 96).

The doubling of Medicare funded psychological services from 10 to 20 through the *Better Access Initiative* (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 96) is unlikely to be of significant use to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females given the lack of training service providers have had in culturally safe care (Fitzpatrick et al, 2019).

Child and family care

Improved administration to the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) was mentioned in the July 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update to better ensure families' childcare entitlements reflect their circumstances including changing relationship status and occurrences of children at risk of serious abuse or neglect (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A p. 235). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented in reports to child welfare systems (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2016) however, these and other funds allocated (\$40.1 million over three years to continue *Children and Parenting Support Services — Additional Services* (Budget Paper No 2, p. 153) without evaluation specifically from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are not sufficient to address inequity or meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females' and families' needs (McInerney, 2020).

Funds to address family violence are minimal. The COVID-19 Response Package funding for domestic and family violence support of \$150 million announced in the July 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A, p. 274) is still being negotiated and is not specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families' needs. Recent cuts to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence services have not been rectified despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women being more likely than others to be hospitalised for family violence (Andrews, 2020).

A range of family support programs announced in the July 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update will be funded through 3 100 grants managed by the Department of Social Services at a cost of \$64.2 million (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A, p. 274) with no guaranteed flow to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community services.

Legal

While \$6.2 million over four years was allocated to assist the states and territories in the July 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update for administering the National Legal Assistance Partnership (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A, p. 211), there has been no reinstatement of the Indigenous Legal Assistance Program cut in 2019. Through the NLAP Legal Aid Commissions (LACs), Community Legal Centres (CLCs), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services compete for funding, with inadequate increases to meet increasing demand. A very small allocation in comparison to need of \$2.6 million in 2020-21 was made for the Family Violence and Cross Examination of Parties Scheme, to protect victims of family violence in family law proceedings (2020 Budget Paper No 2, Appendix A, p. 211).

On the other hand, a further \$450 million is provided for law enforcement, with record funding for the Australian Defence Force (Frydenberg, 2020).

Cultural heritage

The Government will provide \$10.1 million over four years from within existing National Indigenous Australians Agency resources to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) to facilitate the return of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage material held in overseas collections to traditional owners and custodians (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 149). AIATSIS has identified over 100,000 items overseas; funding will be used to build relationships with overseas institutions and private holders, maintain a database of material and support repatriation.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure development to meet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females' needs is minimal with allocations ad hoc and directed to only a few locations such as Perth city. This is only a partial allocation through the Infrastructure Investment Program of \$2 million for preliminary design of a cultural centre (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 142). This site selection over others is not explained.

Gender implications

Why is this an issue for women?

Many budget allocations are relevant to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females require universal services and equitable access to resources as do other females in Australia. However, because of social, health and economic inequities experienced as a result of being colonised by British forces only within the last three to six generations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females also require recovery support to overcome burdens and multi-morbidities from colonial violence, systematic social exclusion and intergenerational poverty, with care that matches current demographic profile and needs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females are 50.1% of the 798 400 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, who overall are 3.3% of the Australian population (ABS, 2018).

This minority population is over-represented in socio-economic disadvantage and preventable health conditions, with a higher mortality rate and younger age at death (ABS, 2018).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female population is also diverse, and no one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity or response to issues is feasible or appropriate (Jackson Pulver, Williams, and Fitzpatrick, 2019).

These points, in addition to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people having a younger median age of 23 compared to 37 in the general Australian population (ABS, 2018) indicate where government expenditure is required.

With a young population, prevention is key. The 2020-21 budget does not allocate expenditure expressly for prevention or name it for a national preventive health strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Allocations are not adequate to address social determinants of health, multi-morbidities, holistic care or legal needs of females, to which government has committed in policies.

Articles in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are not identifiable in the budget. Recent processes for the Australian Government to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, including through the First Nations Constitutional Convention are not drawn on or resourced.

Discriminatory measures such as the Cashless Debit Card are, however, in the budget.

The 2020-21 budget does not clearly itemise any funds directly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations for climate and energy management or caring for Country.

No mention is made of measures to reduce the climate change impact already occurring with rising sea levels in the Torres Straits.

Research funding for universities including for renewable technologies makes no mention of inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

Funds for housing are allocated to a government entity and are not sufficient to meet need or reinforce rights to community control.

Higher education engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is promoted, yet universities are not considered culturally safe places; they have also experienced funding cuts and a major crisis from COVID-19-related drops in enrolments.

Recent funding cuts to family and legal services have not been rectified but demand by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females has grown during COVID-19.

The reality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females is that all domains of the budget have an impact, and unless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women see themselves named in the budget, are likely to instead have been excluded.

What are the 2020 Budget impacts on women?

The net impact of the 2020-21 budget will be negative because:

- Investments have been made inequitably into mainstream organisations' services that do not demonstrate evidence for effectiveness with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people commensurate with evidence for effectiveness that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations are able to demonstrate.
- The budget fails to provide targeted initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females who have a different demographic profile to other females in Australia.
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a younger median age than the general population, with a higher birth rate, earlier age at death, poorer socio-economic status, more involvement in the criminal justice and child welfare systems, histories of child removal and Stolen Generations and a population more evenly spread across urban, regional and remote locations.
- Prevention initiatives have not been invested in.
 - Prevention is required given one third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are under 15 and those in early childhood make up the largest proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.
- Few, if any, initiatives relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have been funded despite Australian governments' own policies and frameworks indicating 'culture is at the centre' and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are to be holistic in accordance with cultural protocols.
- The budget has not responded to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females including increasing demand for services including legal assistance and health care.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services have been largely excluded from budget decision making.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services have been largely excluded from COVID-19 recovery responses in their local areas.

- Mainstream services that receive the majority of funding in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are set up to fail because their staff have little cultural knowledge or cultural safety training.
 - Workforce training is still underdeveloped to support the mainstream workforce to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
 - Mainstream agencies have persistently demonstrated their inability to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students or service users.

The net result is that mainstream services set up to fail by trying to meet needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services are overlooked and further disenfranchised.

Recommendations

1. Government should constructively engage with the Coalition of Peaks to determine COVID-19 recovery responses and funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
2. Government should reorient funding away from mainstream services that are unable to demonstrate culturally-responsive evaluations and evidence for effectiveness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and allocate it to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations who can demonstrate effectiveness.

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Budget 2020 – Migrant and Refugee Women

Migrant and Refugee Women Overview

Budget 2020 includes a number of measures that will have specific implications for Australia’s migrant and refugee women, who make up just under 4 million of the Australian population or one third of the Australian female population, according to the 2016 Census. In particular, these include the changes to the English language program, the family/partner migration stream and the humanitarian program, as well as the extension of the migrant and refugee youth programs. Further—noting the universal measures that will likely have impact on migrant and refugee women as a significant population cohort—the Women’s Economic Security Statement seeks to address the diverse needs of women, including women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Of significant concern is the lack of measures to support safety and wellbeing (including financial wellbeing) of women on temporary visas.

2020 Budget impacts on migrant and refugee women

The Budget

Women’s Economic Security Statement

The National Women’s Alliances, including the national migrant and refugee women’s alliance, will continue to be funded as part of the \$47.9 million over four years allocated to the Women’s Leadership and Development Program Advocacy Grant Scheme (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p.67). The Second Women’s Economic Security Statement, which announced the funding, recognises that women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds face particular challenges with regard to economic participation and financial security. The effectiveness of the measures in addressing the needs of, and achieving positive change for, migrant and refugee women will require tailored and dedicated responses to the specific needs and considerations.

Family visas

In response to a likely slowdown in visa approvals and applications from overseas, the government budget proposed a shift in the balance of Australia’s intake towards more family migration, in particular partner visas (2020 Budget paper No. 1, Statement 2: Economic Outlook). The planning levels for partner visas increased from 39,799 in 2019-20 to 72,300 in 2020-21.

Onshore visa applicants and partner visa applicants where the relevant sponsor resides in a designated regional area are also to be prioritised for the 2020-21 Migration Program.

The Government will apply the family sponsorship framework to Partner visas. This will mandate character checks and the sharing of personal information as part of a mandatory sponsorship application, and subject the sponsor to enforceable sponsorship obligations. Accordingly, the government announced the introduction of English language requirement for partner visas, and an additional \$420 charge to cover additional background checks over and on top of the \$7715 partner visa fee.

Humanitarian Program

The Government will set a ceiling on the Humanitarian Program of 13,750 places; allow flexibility in places between offshore and onshore categories in response to COVID-19 travel restrictions; reform the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP); and develop a reform program for settlement services and the Community Sponsorship Program. Over four years from 2020 21, this measure will result in an overall reduction in expenditure of \$958.3 million and revenue reduction of \$47.0 million (2020 Budget Paper No 2, pp 108-9).

Social Cohesion

The Government will provide \$62.8 million over five years from 2019 20 to strengthen Australia's social cohesion and community resilience in the COVID 19 recovery period (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p. 112). As part of these measures, the Government is reforming the AMEP to improve English language outcomes for migrants. This includes removing the 510 hour cap on class hours and time limits on the free tuition, as well as making the program more flexible to enable better access.

Youth

The Government is providing \$12.7 million over two years to Home Affairs to improve integration outcomes for humanitarian entrants through the existing Youth Transition Support and Youth Hub programs.

Employment

From the beginning of the pandemic, the government resisted enabling temporary visa holders to access Jobkeeper and Jobseeker; wavering only briefly to allow certain categories of Special Category Visa holders (NZ citizens). This budget held no good news for temporary migrants on this front with no extension of Jobkeeper or JobSeeker to temporary migrants. The government advised most temporary visa holders with work rights to access their Australian superannuation to help support themselves -- if they have any superannuation and in the unlikely event that it will be sufficient to enable them to survive for very long. Many in this group have had little time to build superannuation accounts. In addition, many temporary visa holders have also been victims of wage theft and most of those victims who try to get their wages and superannuation back are not successful. The Prime Minister has advised temporary migrants to "go home" if they could not support themselves (Gibson and Moran 2020). However, for many temporary visa holders, this was not a feasible option as countries around the world closed their borders, even to their own citizens.

Gender implications

Why is this an issue for migrant and refugee women?

Fluency in spoken and written English are critical skills for effective settlement in Australia, including gaining employment. Removal of the timeframes placed around accessing AMEP alleviates particular barriers to women. Women often delay learning English in order to support our partners and children in settling into a new country, and miss out on this key opportunity. Women make up the majority of AMEP clients compared to men, comprising as many as 72% in the Family/Partner stream.

The move to introduce an English language requirement for Partner visa applicants has been criticised on the ground that it could push vulnerable women onto temporary visas, rendering them even more helpless. The requirement however has the potential to encourage women to take up AMEP classes—and to facilitate their partners' and families' support in this regard—as long as the implementation is undertaken in an enabling and not a punitive way. Enabling implementation would need to include a flexible framework allowing for a variety of ways to demonstrate efforts towards acquiring English language proficiency and providing for exceptions on compassionate grounds.

Increase in the Family stream and prioritisation of onshore applicants will likely benefit a significant number of women onshore who have been awaiting outcome of their permanent partner visa applications.

Similarly, shifting the Humanitarian Program intake onshore will likely benefit women in the process of their status determination. The capping of the offshore intake will, however, suspend the women at risk program—allowing women escaping gender-based crimes to find safety in Australia—which had been set at 20 per cent of the Humanitarian Program.

Temporary migrants have been left behind in the raft of support measures that have been announced in response to COVID-19. This lack of support has seen many temporary migrants like international students forced to queue for hours for free food packages from local councils. Universities offering support saw their financial support programs exhausted within days because of excess demand.

What are the 2020 Budget impacts on migrant and refugee women?

The 2020 Budget response is inadequate in providing reliable support in view of the COVID-19 pandemic to many migrant women, particularly those experiencing income loss and/or family and domestic violence while on temporary visas. This has significant ramifications for the wellbeing of migrant and refugee women, as the loss of individual or family income and ineligibility for income support payments increases their risk of experiencing poverty, homelessness, mental health issues, as well as family and domestic violence.

Further, the need remains for a systematic and coordinated approach to prioritise the safety of women on temporary visas and their children in situations of violence, regardless of their migration status, by addressing structural barriers to accessing social security and seeking safety.

Recommendations

1. NFAW recommends that migrant women be included in economic support and recovery packages in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, regardless of their visa status.
2. Access to ongoing income support, crisis payments, healthcare (including mental health), crisis accommodation and safe housing, should be made available to all women experiencing family and domestic violence regardless of their visa status.

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Budget 2020 – Women with Disability

Women with Disability Overview

The 2020 budget offered a historic opportunity to build a flourishing future for the 2 million women and girls with disability in Australia and support them to lead fulfilling lives in a post-pandemic world, but it was a missed opportunity. There are some welcome announcements to expand the NDIS such as an additional \$3.9 billion to be made available for its rollout to enable more Australians with disability to transition into the Scheme and access supports. Also welcome was the provision of \$798.8 million over four years to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to support the continued administration of the NDIS, to improve the quality and safety of supports provided to NDIS participants and to improve the regulation of NDIS providers.

That said, for the majority of women and girls with disability in Australia who are not currently participants of the NDIS, the budget offers little hope. It does not deliver for women with disability to secure meaningful and accessible employment and provides no adequate safety net to keep them out of poverty. Women with disability do not need 'incentives' or 'motivation' to take up paid employment. What they do need are targeted measures and a fit-for-purpose jobs plan as well as the elimination of discrimination and negative stereotypes from both a gender and disability perspective which compound their exclusion from participation in economic and social life.

The NDIS

The Budget

To support the continued implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), the Government has committed to an additional \$3.9 billion to the NDIS and is providing an additional \$798.8 million over four years to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (bp 2, p 1 - 30).

National Disability Insurance Scheme

| Payments (\$m) | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| National Disability Insurance Scheme Launch Transition Agency | 255.4 | 191.6 | 142.1 | - |
| NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission | 28.6 | 23.2 | 20.1 | 21.1 |
| Total — Payments | 284.0 | 214.8 | 162.1 | 21.1 |
| <i>Related receipts (\$m)</i> | | | | |
| <i>National Disability Insurance Scheme Launch Transition Agency</i> | -35.2 | -40.1 | -41.4 | - |

Source: 2020 Budget Paper No. 2, p. 156.

Gender implications and impacts

The \$3.9 billion in funding to the NDIS is a necessary measure to support the expansion of the NDIS beyond the 10 per cent of people with disability who are currently participants as well as the 38 per cent of women with disability who are current participants (NDIS, 2020, p 3). For women and girls with disability, any measure to expand the NDIS, and therefore to improve participation is very welcome.

However, to be effective, this funding must include measures to address the gender disparity in participation if it is to address the inequalities faced by women and girls with disability, compared to men and boys. This is particularly important for more marginalized groups of women with disability, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with disability who currently receive lower amounts of funding on average through the NDIS than the gender disability population.

The lack of detail on how this funding will be allocated has left disability advocates concerned that the extra funding will be funneled toward reforms of the scheme, such as for example mandatory independent assessments, which may restrict access to some participants, especially women with disability who are victim-survivors of gender-based violence. Without a detailed breakdown of how the \$3.9 billion funding will be allocated, it is not clear if the increased funding simply reflects the previously projected costs of the scheme as it rolls out.

We should also note that “those with mild to moderate core activity restrictions due to their disability are in the 90 per cent of people with disabilities who are not eligible for NDIS support packages” (NFAW Gender Lens, 2019, p 2). These people are also not likely to be on the Disability Support Pension and for women with disability in particular, they are also “likely to have higher costs of living than non-disabled women” (ibid.).

It is essential that the extra funding for the *NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission* is used to support the Commission to take a more proactive role in ensuring quality and safeguarding for NDIS participants. In the recent inquiry into the Commission following the death of Adelaide woman with disability Ann Marie Smith, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission was found to have fined and banned just one disability provider, despite receiving over 8000 complaints (Harris, 2020).

Recommendations

NFAW recommends that:

1. The government urgently develop a NDIS Gender Strategy, in consultation with women with disability and their representative organisations, based on the recognition that the percentage of female participants has remained at 37 per cent or lower since the Scheme's inception.
2. In order to ensure the quality of services and the safety of participants, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission implement more effective oversight mechanisms, including the expansion of commission staff and the implementation of well qualified and experienced Commission officers undertaking random, unannounced 'spot checks' of NDIS participants, particularly those in group homes, and other institutional and congregate care settings and environments.
3. The government commit to resourcing for the development and implementation of the National Disability Strategy 2020-2030.

Economic security, social security and income support for women with disability

The Budget

To support women with disability to gain employment and to ensure that they receive the social and income supports they need, the Government has announced a few initiatives. These include the provision of \$143.7 million over four years from 2020-21 to provide targeted support to people who have lost their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employment Services

Payments (\$m)

| | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Services Australia | 17.6 | 24.9 | -2.5 | -2.8 |
| Department of Social Services | 0.4 | -54.0 | -122.5 | -138.1 |
| Department of Education, Skills and Employment | -293.5 | -210.7 | -128.2 | -17.6 |
| Total — Payments | -275.5 | -239.8 | -253.2 | -158.4 |

Source: 2020 Budget Paper No. 2, p. 74.

The Government is also providing \$2.6 billion over three years from 2020-21 to provide two separate \$250 economic support payments, to be made from November 2020 and early 2021 to eligible recipients of the Disability and Age Pensions and the Carer payment.

COVID-19 Response Package — further economic support payments

| Payments (\$m) | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Department of Social Services | 2,377.6 | 43.3 | 2.1 | - |
| Department of Veterans' Affairs | 113.2 | - | - | - |
| Services Australia | 21.1 | - | 1.1 | - |
| Total — Payments | 2,511.9 | 43.3 | 3.1 | - |

Source: 2020 Budget Paper No. 2, p. 151.

Gender implications and impacts

Although there is an acute lack of gender-disaggregated data in Australia on the economic position of women with disability, available data shows that Australians with disability are more likely to be unemployed (10 per cent compared with 5 per cent for those without disability) and face significantly longer periods of unemployment than people without disability (ABS, 2015). Compared with other OECD countries, Australia has one of the lowest employment participation rates for people with disability (PWC, 2011). Only 9 percent of people with disability report they have the same employment opportunities as other people (Australian NGO CRPD Shadow Report Coordinating Committee, 2019).

There is very little in this budget to assist women with disability, who as the evidence suggests, face greater discrimination in the open employment market to secure meaningful employment. We know that despite “a greater proportion of women with disabilities (compared to men with disabilities) having post school qualifications, they are half as likely to have full time work as their male counterparts and twice as likely to have part time work” (NFAW 2019, p. 3).

Women with disability in Australia are significantly disadvantaged in employment in relation to access to jobs, in regard to remuneration for the work they perform, and in the types of jobs they gain. Working-age women with disability who are in the labour force have lower incomes from employment; are more concentrated than other women and men in precarious, informal, subsistence and vulnerable employment, and are much more likely to be in lower paid jobs than men with disability (Frohman, 2014). Women with disability have a much higher rate of part-time employment (56 per cent of women with disability who are employed) than men with disability (22 per cent of men with disability who are employed) (DPOA, 2018). Systemic discrimination in regard to economic participation remains a key driver of inequality for women with disability.

While the Government has announced \$143.7 million over four years to 21 to provide targeted support to people who have lost their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not clear if this resourcing is fit for purpose. Some of this resourcing is for refocusing existing employment services programs and streamlining the delivery of employment services, however it isn't clear if this will improve participant choice and control or incentives for providers to place jobseekers in employment.

Currently, the Disability Employment Services (DES) system supports approximately 160,000 disabled jobseekers and this represents a tiny fraction of women with disability seeking employment. An “evaluation of the DES model has previously found that one in ten DES participants find a job” (PWDA, 2019). Research has also found that DES has made no difference

to employment outcomes for women with disability. Many women with disability also describe experiencing direct and indirect discrimination by DES providers (WWDA, 2020)

There is also very little in this budget to provide women with disability with a safety net. Two top-up supplements of \$250 were announced for people living on the government pensions, including the Disability Support Pension (DSP) Carers Payment and Aged Pension. While these two \$250 payments are welcome, they ignore ongoing calls from the disability sector to raise the base rate of the DSP and other pensions.

It must be recognised that women with disability throughout Australia bear a disproportionate burden of poverty, systemic discrimination and are amongst the most socio-economically disadvantaged in society. Women with disability have far fewer opportunities, lower status and less power and influence than men with disability (and non-disabled women), and far less chance of realising substantive enjoyment of rights, such as freedom to act and to be recognised as autonomous, fully capable adults, to participate fully in economic, social and political development, and to make decisions concerning their circumstances and conditions (Frohman, 2014).

Poverty is a major structural barrier for gaining employment for women with disability. It is virtually impossible to be 'work ready' for anyone when living in poverty. Forty-five per cent of people with a disability in Australia live in poverty (PWC, 2011); 11.2 per cent experience deep and persistent disadvantage, more than twice that of the national prevalence (AIHW, 2017). This rate is significantly higher for Indigenous people with disability. Sixty-one per cent of people with disability cannot afford to cover their basic needs on their current income (Australian NGO CRPD Shadow Report Coordinating Committee, 2019). Currently in Australia, the median gross weekly personal income of people with disability is half that of people without disability (DSS, 2016).

Furthermore, women and girls with disability continue to face ongoing cost increases because of the COVID-19 pandemic and need long-term support to meet these costs. One-off payments may cover a specialist appointment or groceries for a week, but will *not* give women and girls with disability the support and security they need to meet the ongoing increase in the cost of basics like food, medical supplies and transport. There are many women with disability who have no or minimal opportunities to engage in paid work throughout their adult life, and reflecting Australia's obligations to safeguard and promote an adequate standard of living and social protection for people with disability, a government provided, broad based, adequate financial safety net is essential if economic security for women with disability is to be enhanced. In the budget, the government has failed to commit to a permanent, adequate Jobseeker rate leaving millions in uncertainty as the payment is due to return to its pre-COVID level at the end of the year.

In a report released by the Australian National University in August 2020, it was detailed that the COVID-19 supplement to JobSeeker lifted over 2 million people out of poverty (Phillips, Gray, Biddle, 2020). Cutting social security payments back to the base rate will inevitably increase the economic disadvantage of women and girls with disability. As Government pensions are the main source of personal income for 42 per cent of people with disability of working age (AIHW, 2017), it is disheartening to see that the Australian Government has not provided any permanent increase to the rate of support pensions, including DSP and the JobSeeker payment.

It is also concerning that extra funding has been committed to continue the Cashless Debit Card (CDC) on an ongoing basis in regions the card was being trialled in. The Cashless Debit Card has been found to adversely affect the rights of disabled women and girls to security, privacy, family, equality and non-discrimination under the CRPD (Bielefeld & Beupert, 2019, p. 115).

The continuation of the CDC will particularly harm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, who make up 78 per cent of the card’s participants (ACOSS, 2018). The blanket approach of the card stigmatises and harms people getting income support, with the people on the lowest incomes – overwhelmingly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – now finding that their social security payment does not go as far as it once did because they no longer have the option to pay for all outgoings in cash. Compulsory income management fails to consider additional costs disabled women and girls may face and denies people access to items they need at an affordable price (ACOSS 2018; Bielefeld & Beupert, 2019, pp. 116-117).

Recommendations

NFAW recommends that the government should:

- commit to the development and implementation of a National Jobs Plan for people with disability and strengthen employment goal setting in NDIS planning and review by using a life-course approach
- commit to permanently increasing the rate of social security payments including the DSP, JobSeeker, Youth Allowance and ABStudy to above the poverty line, given that Government pensions are the main source of personal income for 42 percent of people with disability of working age and given that more than 45 percent of people with a disability live in poverty, and
- commit to abandoning the use of the Cashless Debit Card and invest in community-led, therapeutic initiatives that recognise and tackle income inequality.

Healthcare for women with disability

The Budget

The budget provides some healthcare initiatives that will support women and girls with disability. Amongst these, the key take-aways for women and girls with disability include:

- \$44.9 million over four years from 2020-21 (and \$3.9 million per year ongoing) to support Australia’s Thalidomide survivors.

Support for Australia’s Thalidomide Survivors

| • Payments (\$m) | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Department of Health | 19.9 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 3.8 |
| Services Australia | 2.3 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.1 |
| Total — Payments | 22.2 | 4.3 | 4.1 | 3.9 |

Source: 2020 Budget Paper No. 2, p. 80.

- The provision of \$100.8 million over two years from 2020-21 to provide up to 10 additional psychological therapy sessions.

COVID-19 Response Package — supporting mental health

| Payments (\$m) | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Department of Health | 43.9 | 54.4 | 1.8 | - |
| Services Australia | 0.3 | 0.4 | - | - |
| Total — Payments | 44.2 | 54.8 | 1.8 | - |

Source: 2020 Budget Paper No. 2, p. 96.

- The provision of \$111.6 million for the extension of temporary COVID-19 telehealth services

COVID-19 Response Package — guaranteeing Medicare and access to medicines — extension

| Payments (\$m) | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 | 2023-24 |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Department of Health | 1,024.0 | - | - | - |
| Services Australia | 11.1 | .. | .. | .. |
| Department of Veterans' Affairs | 5.0 | - | - | - |
| Total — Payments | 1,040.1 | .. | .. | .. |
| <i>Related receipts (\$m)</i> | | | | |
| <i>Department of Health</i> | - | - | - | - |
| <i>Services Australia</i> | - | .. | .. | .. |
| <i>Total — Receipts</i> | - | .. | .. | .. |

Source: 2020 Budget Paper No. 2, p. 95.

Gender implications and impacts

Overall the budget has been a mixed bag for addressing the healthcare needs for women with disability and the lack of commitment to funding the National Women's Health Strategy is a significant concern. Further, while the package to support thalidomide survivors is welcome, advocates have warned that it falls short of meeting their needs.

Similarly while the extension of Medicare subsidised mental health sessions to twenty sessions per year is welcome, these may still be insufficient to address the needs of women and girls with disability. For example, those who have experienced complex trauma; and/or have communication impairments; and/or who may require accommodations (such as interpreters, support persons etc). Further, should a woman or girl with disability not be able to find a bulk-billing clinician, there is still a gap and they may have to pay out of pocket.

The funding for mental health services also does not seem to be adequate to address the specific experiences of women and girls with disability. For example, there is no recognition in this budget of the co-existence of mental health conditions in addition to having a disability nor the recognition of multiple disabilities including psycho-social disabilities.

While some of these mental health measures will improve access to care, it is concerning that the budget was not used to resource and implement the structural and systemic mental health reforms proposed by the Productivity Commission in June 2020. Given the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’s concluding observations on the combined second and third reports of Australia (UNCRPD, 2019)— which identified “significantly poorer health and access to information and to adequate, affordable and accessible health services and equipment” particularly for those with psych-social disability (UN CRPD, 2019, p. 11) -- the mental health measures in the budget seem to be scratching the surface of need.

Across Australia, the transition to telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic was welcomed by many people with disability and has increased their accessibility to some forms of healthcare for people who have mobility limitations or are isolating due to chronic health conditions. While the \$111.6 million for the temporary extension of telehealth services is welcome, the lack of commitment for extending telehealth services beyond the COVID-19 pandemic will have a significant impact on women and girls with disability.

Recommendations

NFAW recommends that the government

- commit to fully funding telehealth post the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the needs of people with disability
- commit to funding mental health services and treatments that meet the specific needs of women and girls with disability, and
- fund evidence based health promotion programs to combat poor health outcomes of women with disability, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with intellectual disability.

Young women with disability

The Budget

Overall, many of the measures impacting women with disability will potentially have a significant impact on young women with disability. In particular, it is hoped that the expansion of the NDIS and additional funding for mental health services will support the well-being of young women with disability into the future.

However, the specific measures in the 2020 Federal Budget that are aimed at young people as a whole largely omit the specific needs of young women with disability. In a \$4 billion measure to tackle youth unemployment for instance, the government is providing businesses up to \$200 a week to hire young Australians who are either school leavers, or who had previously been receiving JobSeeker (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p 152). In addition, funding has been allocated to cover half the wages of 100,000 new apprenticeships and traineeships (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p 77). While these measures are welcome, they lack the nuanced approach that is needed overcome the discrimination and barriers young people with disability face in securing employment.

Furthermore, the budget significantly lacked an overarching approach to include and retain students with disability in higher education and instead supported measures that will make it more difficult for students with disability to obtain qualifications. While not explicitly stated, the budget funding plan for 2020-2021 allows universities to increase the cost of studying female-dominated subjects in Humanities and Arts and to cut access to Higher Education Loan Payments (HELP) from students who fail half of their first year subjects. While \$38.2 million has been committed to support an additional 76,000 disadvantaged young Australians to complete Year 12 and move into work, training or further study through the Smith Family's Learning for Life program (2020 Budget Paper No 2, p 81); this program does not extend to supporting students beyond Year 12, throughout their time at university or TAFE.

Gender implications and impacts

The lack of support for students with disability in higher education in this year's Federal Budget is disappointing. Students with disability in higher education have lower rates of success than their non-disabled peers and are more likely to defer or drop out of courses due to personal illness, personal circumstances (Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training, 2020) and/or experiences of discrimination. Statistically, this is reflected in the 15-65 years age group, where only 17 per cent of people with disability have a bachelor degree or higher, compared to 30 per cent for individuals without disability (ibid).

Acknowledging that studying at university is already difficult for students with disability; it is inevitable that increasing the cost of female dominated courses and cutting loan support for students who fail their first-year units will drastically decrease the number of young women with disability who graduate from TAFE and university. In turn, it is concerning that these measures will also restrict future employment opportunities to young women with disability who already face gendered and disability-based discrimination when trying to secure employment.

As the federal budget funded programs to support young people into employment also fail to provide any incentives to employers to provide opportunities to disadvantaged and disabled young people; it is almost certain that young women with disability will be excluded from the budget's provisions.

Recommendations

NFAW recommends that the government:

1. work with children and young people with disability and their representative organisations to develop a plan to support young people with disability into employment and to overcome the barriers young people with disability face in securing and maintaining employment, and
2. commit to investment in a National Inclusive Education Plan to support participation on an equal basis.

We note that important recommendations relating to increased government expenditure in the care sectors are made in the Budget Overview section.

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