WOMEN’S BUDGET STATEMENT 2018
This publication was written and printed on the land of the Ngunnawal People of the Canberra Region.

We pay our respect to elders past and present, and recognise them as the custodians of the land.
Budgets are about choices. The Budget is a map of the priorities of government.

This is the fifth Budget delivered by the Liberals, and the real question is – are Australian women any better off than they were five years ago?

In 2013, we were promised ‘rolled gold parental leave’. Instead, the Government tried to slash paid parental leave calling working mums ‘rorters’ and ‘double dippers’.

Improvements were promised to child care then delayed. Five years later, 279,000 families will lose out while child care costs continue to rise.

Family benefits and Medicare rebates have been frozen for years.

Funding to Community Legal Centres was cut by around $35 million and capital funding used for homelessness services was cut by $88 million in 2014. The Community Legal Centre cut was reversed but the housing cut was not.

Almost $2 billion worth of pay rises and support for workers in feminised industries was cut – now women’s penalty rates have been cut too.

The Government has reluctantly backed down from some of their harshest cuts, but things haven’t moved forward.

Women’s rights and wellbeing haven’t advanced over the last five budgets because there has been no concerted effort from this Government to deliver gender equality.

If Labor wins the next election, we must be ready from day one. That’s why Labor spent 2017 holding conversations with thousands of Australian women around the country and released Setting the Agenda: a National Strategy for Gender Equality, on International Women’s Day this year.

Labor will bring back the Women’s Budget Statement and put gender equality at the heart of our budgeting and policy development. We’ll make our budgets work for women.
If the only significant change our nation achieved in the next decade was true equality for the women of Australia: equality in pay, in opportunity and in leadership, then we would be the richest country in the world, rich in every sense of the word. That’s why delivering true equality for the women of Australia will be a national priority for a Shorten Labor Government.

Bill Shorten
Leader of the Opposition

The decisions made in federal budgets matter. You have to understand and be able to report on the different impacts of your decisions. That’s why having a Women’s Budget Statement is important.

Chris Bowen
Shadow Treasurer

Gender equality won’t come about by chance - we need concrete plans for real action. The Women’s Budget Statement is a critical means of holding government to account and ensuring that gender equality is placed at the very centre of government decision making.

Sharon Claydon
Chair, Status of Women Caucus Committee

Labor is the only Party supporting the advancement of women in Australia. We have taken significant steps to achieve this over the past 50 years and we’re building on our track record.

Emma Husar
Secretary, Status of Women Caucus Committee
CONTENTS

Taxation ................................................................. 7
Retirement Incomes ................................................. 12
Social Safety Net ....................................................... 19
Women and Work ...................................................... 23
Housing and Homelessness ....................................... 31
Health and Medicare ............................................... 35
Education and Training ............................................. 43
Violence Against Women .......................................... 49
First Nations Women ............................................... 55
Women’s Representation ......................................... 61
International Development ...................................... 64
Labor’s Plan ............................................................ 67
THE QUICK FACTS

• The 2018 Budget doesn’t contain a single measure that directly addresses women’s long-term and structural economic disadvantage.

• This budget locks in an $80 billion big business tax cut, but the Turnbull Government has refused to axe the unfair, discriminatory ‘tampon tax’, that costs Australian women $30 million a year.

• Failure to secure a National Housing and Homelessness Agreement with the states means federal funding for women’s refuges and homelessness services is in question from 1 July.

• Almost 100,000 families will be worse off because of changes to Family Tax Benefit Part A and 279,000 families will be worse off with the introduction of the Child Care Subsidy.

• Remote Indigenous housing has been cut by $1.5 billion, despite remote First Nations women being significantly over-represented as users of homelessness services.
In the Treasurer’s Budget Speech, there wasn’t a single mention of Australian women. There is nothing in the Budget that directly addresses women’s structural economic disadvantage.

The Government had promised a “significant” announcement on women’s economic security, but have released no details. After five years and five Budgets, this is too little, too late.

This is a Budget that prioritises big business tax cuts and will make ordinary Australians pay for them. The Government is persisting with its $80 billion tax giveaway for big business – including $17 billion for the big banks – but it refuses to axe the discriminatory, unfair “tampon tax” that costs Australian women $30 million a year.

The corporate tax giveaway will be paid for by locking in cuts to schools, TAFE, hospitals, family tax benefits, Energy Supplement, international aid, and remote housing.

Labor will support the new Income Tax Offset for low and middle income earners and the increase in the $87,000 bracket set to commence from 1 July 2018. We know middle class and working class people are struggling with the cost of living – this is overdue relief, but it doesn’t make up for the Turnbull Governments’ cost of living increases and cuts to penalty rates, which we know disproportionately impact women.
This is a Budget that prioritises big business tax cuts and will make ordinary Australians pay for them.

The Budget contains no mention of safe housing options for women and children escaping family violence. Failure to secure a funding deal with the states for the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement means women’s refuges and other specialist homelessness services don’t know whether they will receive Federal funding after 1 July.

In health, new listings on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme – including Ribociclib for breast cancer treatment – are welcome, but this is just ordinary business of government – the very least the Liberals can manage. There are positive measures on endometriosis and urogynaecological mesh. But a million dollar awareness campaign in no way makes up for $715 million cut from hospitals. The paltry – and already budgeted – rise in the Medicare rebate does little to fix soaring out-of-pocket costs for GP visits, which disproportionately impact women who are twice as likely to delay seeing the GP because of the cost.

A number of the Budget’s harshest measures were targeted at the most vulnerable women. Remote Indigenous housing has been cut by $1.5 billion, despite remote First Nations women being significantly over-represented as users of homelessness services. Another $140 million has been cut from the overseas aid Budget, impacting women throughout our region.

Labor welcomes a handful of small announcements by the Government including $4.5 million for a Women in STEM package and support for the FIFA 2023 Women’s World Cup Bid, but we are very disappointed that the Government has not backed Labor’s commitment to fund the ABS Time Use Survey or build a Reproductive Health Hub in Tasmania to ensure women don’t have to travel interstate to access abortion services.

Five years after the Liberals scrapped the women’s budget statement, and following repeated calls from Labor and the women’s sector to bring it back, the Government released three short fact sheets. This was window dressing on a Budget that forgot women. It’s not a statement of the impact of the Budget on women. It’s certainly not gender-responsive budgeting.

This is not a budget that works for women. After five years of Liberal Budgets, Australian women are worse off than they were in 2013. Australia needs a government that will make gender equality a priority.
Labor will back the personal income tax measures that begin on July 1 this year.

We will support the introduction of the Low and Middle Income Tax Offset, a tax offset worth up to $530 per year, and increasing the top threshold of the 32.5 per cent personal income tax bracket from $87,000 to $90,000.

The Low and Middle Income Tax Offset will provide tax relief to 10 million Australians, and the 32.5 per cent tax bracket top threshold change will provide tax relief to around 3 million people.

We know middle class and working class people are struggling with the cost of living – this is overdue relief, but it doesn’t make up for the Turnbull Government’s cost of living increases and cuts to penalty rates, which we know disproportionately impact women.

The Government is clinging onto negative gearing tax breaks, capital gains tax concessions and dividend imputation cash-backs that cost the budget billions each year – but they can’t find $30 million a year to remove the discriminatory and unfair tampon tax.
FAILURE TO AXE THE TAMPON TAX

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Labor called on the Turnbull Government to scrap the 10 per cent GST levied on sanitary products in this Budget and provided a clear saving to fund the policy.

Instead, the Government has again refused to abolish this discriminatory tax.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

The tampon tax is a tax on women – it should never have been imposed in the first place.

Australian women spend around $300 million on sanitary products each year – including $30 million a year in extra tax.

LABOR’S POSITION

Labor will end Australia’s unfair tax on tampons, sanitary pads and menstrual cups. A Labor Government will work with state and territory governments to scrap the tax as a priority upon coming to office.

To offset the loss of revenue to the states, GST will be applied consistently to 12 natural therapies that are sometimes GST free, such as iridology and aromatherapy. Applying the GST to these therapies will bring their GST treatment into line with bipartisan policy to remove private health insurance rebate from them because a review by the Chief Medical Officer and the National Health and Medical Research Council has said the therapeutic value of these treatments is unproven.
COMPANY TAX CUTS

GOVERNMENT POLICY

This Budget locks in the Government’s decision to pass an $80 billion tax giveaway to big business – including a $17 billion tax break for the banks.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

The economics of a corporate tax cut just doesn't stack up. In a confidential survey made public last month, only 7 per cent of firms said they would hire more staff if given a company tax cut. Just 4 per cent said they would increase wages.

Instead of creating jobs or boosting wages for Australian workers, big company tax cuts will reward overseas shareholders and executive bonuses.

LABOR’S POSITION

Labor does not support the Government’s $80 billion tax handout for big business.

“ This Budget locks in the Government’s decision to pass an $80 billion tax giveaway to big business - including a $17 billion tax break for the banks. ”
In this Budget, the Government has once again failed to act on unfair tax concessions that are blowing a hole in the Budget and disproportionately benefit high income men.

Tax concessions for the wealthy disproportionately benefit men, who make up the majority of high income earners.

Men claimed $2.7 billion more in negative gearing deductions than women in 2015-16. In that year, 115,000 more men than women benefited from the current negative gearing arrangements.

Labor will make the tax system fairer by: reforming negative gearing and capital gains tax concessions, closing down a concession that gives cash refunds for excess dividend imputation credits, and closing loopholes on discretionary trusts.
INCOME TAX CUTS

GOVERNMENT POLICY

1. On 1 July 2018:
   a. A new Low and Middle Income Tax Offset providing an offset of up to $530 will be provided to those earning up to $125,333;
   b. The top threshold of the 32.5% personal income tax bracket will be increased from $87,000 to $90,000.

2. On 1 July 2022:
   a. The Low Income Tax Offset will be increased from $445 to $645;
   b. The 19 per cent personal income tax bracket will be increased from $37,000 to $41,000;
   c. The top threshold of the 32.5% personal income tax bracket will be increased from $90,000 to $120,000.

3. On 1 July 2024:
   a. The top threshold of the 32.5% personal income tax bracket will be increased to $200,000;
   b. The 37% tax bracket will be abolished.

The Government is currently insisting that all the tax changes be legislated together, but they are unable or unwilling to provide the year on year costs of changes to tax thresholds.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

It is difficult to clarify the precise effect of these tax changes on women as the Government has not provided detailed gender analysis.

We know middle class and working class people are struggling with the cost of living. The Low Income Tax Offset is overdue relief, but it doesn't make up for the Turnbull Government's cost of living increases and cuts to penalty rates, which we know disproportionately impact women.

The Turnbull government claims tax cuts in Tuesday's budget are targeted at low and middle income earners, but independent modelling shows they will provide the most benefit to the highest earning Australians once they are fully implemented by 2027.

LABOR’S POSITION

Labor will support the new Income Tax Offset for low and middle income earners and the increase in the $87,000 bracket set to commence from 1 July 2018. We will have more to say about the rest of the plan in the Leader’s Budget Reply, including how we can help low and middle income workers and ensure a fair taxation system. The Government is not releasing details of the cuts commencing 1 July 2022 and we need more details on this, including what the scheme costs.
Australia’s pensioners are some of the biggest losers in this Budget. The Turnbull Government is keeping unfair zombie cuts that hurt pensioners in the Budget, including axing the energy supplement and increasing the pension age to 70.

Australian women already face an insecure retirement. Women retire with about half the superannuation men do, exposing them to greater risk of poverty, housing stress and homelessness in retirement.

The Government’s promise to fix the crisis they’ve created in aged care was a cruel hoax – the extra places don’t make a dent in the growing waiting list.
INCREASING THE PENSION AGE

GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Turnbull Government still wants to increase the pension age to 70 by 2035, as confirmed in this Budget. This would give Australia an older pension age than the US, UK, Canada and New Zealand.

This policy has been rejected by the Parliament – continuing to keep it in the Budget is a fairytale.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

Increasing the pension age will mean that around 8.4 million Australian workers will have to stay in work until they’re 70, affecting people currently in their late 40s. Women who work in physically demanding, feminised industries will be among the worst hit by this change. Expecting a nurse, an aged carer, a cleaner or an early educator to have to work until they are 70 is cruel.

LABOR’S POSITION

Labor has been fighting this unfair change for years and will continue to oppose an increase in the pension age to 70.
The Liberals have now tried three times to cut the Energy Supplement.

The Energy Supplement is paid at $14 a fortnight for single pensioners, $8.80 for single people on Newstart.

The Energy Supplement provides vital assistance to households to meet spiralling energy costs.

If Malcolm Turnbull gets his way, anyone who started receiving the Energy Supplement from 20 September 2016 onwards, as well as any new payment recipients, will no longer receive this payment.

The Energy Supplement is paid on a large number of income support payments, including those that are received disproportionately by women.

These include: Carer Payment, Parenting Payment, Partner Allowance, Widow Allowance, Widow B Pension, Wife Pension and Youth Allowance.

Overall, 2 million low income people will be impacted by the government’s cuts to the Energy Supplement.

Labor has opposed this cruel cut, and will continue to fight strongly against it.
The Pension Supplement reduces to a ‘basic’ rate once a pensioner has been overseas for more than 6 weeks. The Government plans to cease payment of the Supplement entirely once a Pensioner has been out of Australia for more than 6 weeks.

Pensioners who move overseas indefinitely would lose the Pension Supplement entirely from the day of their departure.

The Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils has argued that “many Australians from migrant backgrounds are obliged to travel overseas to fulfil caring responsibilities for elderly family members. In particular for older CALD Australians, this takes the form of accompanying elderly siblings and relatives in their final stages of life...it is cruel to place a time limit on this, especially a time limit as short as 6 weeks because it means that elderly CALD Australians will need to make decisions about abandoning unwell or dying family members for fear of losing significant income support.”

Women are significantly more likely to take up family caring responsibilities than men. As a result, it is more likely that older women will be placed in this difficult situation.

Labor opposes this cut and this policy.
This Budget was the Government’s opportunity to address the critical shortage of supply of home care packages and invest in older Australians who choose to age in their own homes. It is providing only 14,000 places over four years even though the home care waiting list has 105,000 people on it. Over the last six months the demand increased by 20,000 places, so 3,500 extra places a year is completely inadequate to meet this need.

To make matters worse, the Government’s Budget did not include one extra dollar for Australia’s aged care system.

As at 30 June 2017, of the more than 74,000 older Australian receiving a home care package around 67 per cent were women.

There are now close to 105,000 vulnerable older Australians, many with dementia or high care needs, who are waiting for home care.

The Turnbull Government has cut billions from aged care, seriously impacting on the quality of care older Australians receive.

Labor continues to call on the Turnbull Government to address the home care package waiting list which is a crisis of its own making.
This Budget does little to address the structural disadvantage women face in Australia's retirement income system, particularly the difficulties faced by low to middle income women.

The Government has repeatedly failed to deliver policies that will meaningfully improve women's retirement incomes. Many of the policies they claim will help women are either backflips on their own cuts or have a questionable impact on women.

The Government's 2016 Low Income Superannuation Tax Offset was just a new name for Labor's Low Income Superannuation Contribution – which the Abbott Government had cancelled in the 2014 Budget.

The majority of people likely to benefit from the Government's 2015 catch up contributions policy are men. Most women do not make any additional voluntary contributions to their super – let alone hit the contributions cap. In 2017-18 it is expected that two thirds of the people making pre-tax contributions that meet or exceed the cap will be men.

The measure in this Budget to help protect low superannuation balances from undue erosion should have a positive impact on women's superannuation balances.

The average superannuation balance at retirement is around $157,000 for women and $270,000 for men – the gender gap in superannuation is approximately 42 per cent. Women's retirement incomes suffer because of gender pay inequity, time out of paid employment caring for children and other family members, and because they are over-represented in part-time and casual work.

The increased casualisation of work is making building retirement savings even more difficult for low income women who may work a number of casual jobs, none of which meet the threshold for employer superannuation contributions to be made.

Labor's Setting the Agenda Strategy reflects the need to implement policies to address the gender gap in superannuation balances and improve women's retirement incomes.
The Government has provided $22 million over five years to protect the rights of older Australians and address the issue of elder abuse.

Labor has always supported the right of older people to live with dignity, free from all forms of abuse and that’s why we welcome the Government’s investment to protect older Australians.

The mistreatment of older Australians is simply not acceptable and Labor continues to stand ready to work with governments at all levels to stamp out elder abuse.
Over the past five years, the Government has repeatedly attempted to slash income support payments and demonise vulnerable recipients.

This Budget clings onto many of the unfair cuts that the Government has been unable to pass through the Parliament. Cuts that impact Newstart recipients, families and people studying to get back into the workforce remain in the Budget.
NEWSTART
INDEPENDENT REVIEW

GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Government has continually tried to cut Newstart and demonise recipients of the payment. This Budget continues the Government’s attempts to scrap the Energy Supplement despite their failure to pass the measure through the Parliament. If Labor hadn’t stood up for vulnerable Australians, all new recipients of Newstart would have had their income cut by another $8.80 a fortnight. The Liberals refuse to acknowledge that Newstart is too low.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

Almost half of Newstart recipients are women. All Newstart recipients struggle with poverty on a day to day basis. If the Government succeeds in their plan to scrap the Energy Supplement, the situation will worsen. Food insecurity continues to be a major problem in Australia. A recent report by Foodbank, *Rumbling Tummies: Child Hunger in Australia* found that in the last 12 months, 21 per cent of Australian households with children under the age of 15 have experienced food insecurity in the last twelve months. The report also found that 44 per cent of children in single parent households had experienced food insecurity in the last 12 months.

LABOR’S POSITION

The rate of Newstart is too low, Labor acknowledges that. There’s no doubt that it’s incredibly difficult for anyone to live on the current rate of Newstart – it is so low it’s acting as a barrier to people finding work.

A Shorten Labor Government will hold an independent ‘root and branch’ review in to welfare payments including Newstart, and will continue to oppose the plan to axe the Energy Supplement of $8.80 a fortnight.
The Education Entry Payment is an annual payment of $208 to assist certain social security recipients with the costs of education.

The Government is trying to reduce the payment for those studying less than 76 per cent of a full time study load. These recipients will be at least $52 a year worse off, and could lose the payment entirely.

The Pensioner Education Supplement is a fortnightly payment to assist with the ongoing costs of study. Currently, full time students receive $62.40 per fortnight ($1622.40 p/a) and part time students receive $31.20 per fortnight ($811.20 p/a).

The Government is trying to reduce the payment for pensioners studying part time and will not pay the supplement in fortnights when no study has occurred.

Recipients are overwhelmingly women studying so that they can re-enter the workforce, usually at the conclusion of caring responsibilities.

Around 80 per cent of recipients of the Pensioner Education Supplement are women, and 43 per cent also receive Parenting Payment Single.

The majority of Education Entry Payment recipients receive either Parenting Payment (Single), the Carer Payment of the Disability Support Pension. Roughly 94 per cent of Parenting Payment (Single) recipients are women, 69 per cent of Carer Payment recipients are women.

The National Council of Single Mothers and their Children told a Senate Committee that single mothers will be severely impacted by cuts to payments for part-time study, with most unable to study full-time due to parenting responsibilities.

Labor has opposed the changes to education supplements and campaigned to defend the payments so women can rebuild their skills and find secure employment.
The Government wants to cut Family Tax Benefit Part A payments for some families.

These changes mean that families with an annual income over $94,316 will be worse off.

The median private income for families with a youngest child under fives is approximately $106,000 each year, or $120,000 each year for families where the youngest child is between five and 14.

This means that median income families will be hit by these changes.

For a family with two children in high school, FTB A currently reduces to zero at an annual household income of around $114,000. Under this change, the new cut off point would be just below $105,000. A family with a household income of $105,000 per annum would be around $1,944 worse off each year.

According to the Department of Social Services, around 24,900 families will lose access to FTB A entirely as a result of this change, and 71,800 families would experience a reduction in the amount of FTB A. In total, almost 100,000 families would be worse off.

Labor opposes this change.
Since the Liberal Party took government in 2013, Australia has slipped from 13th place on the Global Gender Gap Index of economic participation and opportunity down to 42nd place.

Women still face a gender pay gap of 22.4 per cent on the basis of total full time earnings. During peak earning years, the gap widens to 30 per cent. This means that, on average, women’s lifetime earnings are less than two thirds that of men.

Women’s careers are disproportionately affected by pregnancy and care work. Australia has no way of recognising the economic value of this unpaid labour.

Female dominated industries – particularly those centred on care work – pay lower wages. Women are more likely to be award-reliant, underemployed or be casual workers in insecure jobs.

And as more and more cases emerge of unpaid superannuation entitlements, underpayment of wages and stripping of legal entitlements, it’s clear that protecting women’s rights at work is crucial to advancing gender equality.
Australian women are disproportionately affected by the 2017 Fair Work Commission decision to cut penalty rates in the retail, hospitality and pharmacy industries. From 1 July this year, penalty rates will be cut again, further reducing workers’ take home pay. Now even more women are facing reduced wages, as penalty rates under the highly feminised Hair and Beauty Award are also under review.

Malcolm Turnbull supports cuts to penalty rates. The Government has blocked Labor's attempts in the Parliament to stop cuts to penalty rates.

Women are disproportionately impacted by cuts to penalty rates as they are more likely to work in affected industries, part-time, be employed under an award and work weekends.

Women are more likely than men to be employed in the hospitality, retail, fast food, and pharmacy industries, and they make up more than half of the Sunday retail, accommodation and food services workforces.

ABS statistics show 59.4 per cent of the Sunday retail workforce are women, as are 53.7 per cent of the Sunday accommodation and food services workforce.

As a result of the Turnbull Government’s failure to support Labor’s legislation to protect penalty rates, low-paid workers who had Sunday and public holiday penalty rates cut earned up to $1,378 less over the 2017-18 financial year. This is based on a comparison of what a worker could have earned had they received the 3.3 per cent increase in minimum and award wages, but not had their Sunday and public holiday penalty rates cut.

Labor stands by its legislation introduced last year to stop cuts to women’s take-home pay now and into the future.
Protecting women’s rights at work is crucial to advancing gender equality. The Fair Work Commission has stated that women are disproportionately represented among the low paid so an increase in minimum wages is likely to promote gender pay equity. Women are more likely to be award reliant and to be in casual work in insecure jobs. WGEA data shows the gender pay gap is smaller when wages are set by collective bargaining, rather than by individual agreements.

The Turnbull Government has argued against a decent increase to the minimum wage, legislated to stop workers and employers agreeing to limit labour hire, voted against Labor proposals to make big business liable for underpayment of workers along the supply chain, and encouraged employers to terminate enterprise agreements – undermining collective bargaining.

Protecting women’s rights at work is crucial to advancing gender equality. The Fair Work Commission has stated that women are disproportionately represented among the low paid so an increase in minimum wages is likely to promote gender pay equity.

Women are more likely to be award reliant and to be in casual work in insecure jobs.

WGEA data shows the gender pay gap is smaller when wages are set by collective bargaining, rather than by individual agreements.

Labor has committed to measures to address job insecurity, including: an objective test for determining when a worker is casual; a national labour hire licensing scheme; and cracking down on sham independent contracting. Labor will also improve the balance in bargaining to improve wages including by preventing companies from terminating enterprise agreements, and preventing companies from entering into sham enterprise agreements.
Back in 2014, the Government committed to the G20 women’s workforce participation target to close the gender gap in workforce participation rates by 25 per cent by 2025.

Despite the Government’s claims that boosting women’s workforce participation was a top priority, it took them three years to release their Workforce Participation Strategy. The strategy was panned as ‘a very lacklustre document’ by the National Foundation for Australian Women.

This Budget promises a mystery sum of money ‘to build women’s economic security’ but the government doesn’t have any detail to release about its package.

You can’t say women’s workforce participation is a priority when you still don’t have any policies to announce in your fifth Budget.

Labor is committed to reduce the gap in women’s workforce participation by 25 per cent by 2025. But simply aiming to get more women in the workforce isn’t enough if they are under-employed or stuck in casualised, undervalued roles. Labor will also take a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to tackling gender pay inequity.
In March 2018, the Turnbull Government back-flipped on years of refusal and said it would legislate for five days unpaid family violence leave. This commitment falls far short of the call for 10 days paid leave.

According to the ACTU, leaving an abusive relationship and finding a new, safe place to live costs, on average $18,280 and takes 141 hours. Yet the Turnbull Government has granted only 40 hours leave, for which women will need to surrender their pay.

Paid domestic violence leave would allow women to attend court appearances, look for new places to live, and access the support of a counsellor, all while keeping their job and their economic independence. Paid leave will reduce the financial compulsion which often keeps victims “trapped” within violent family relationships.

Labor has committed to include 10 days paid domestic violence leave in the National Employment Standards.
FAILURE TO VALUE UNPAID WORK

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Women’s organisations have repeatedly called on the Turnbull Government to fund the ABS Time Use Survey in this Budget, but their request has been ignored.

The Time Use Survey is a detailed data collection that records the activities Australians take part in each day, including the amount of time they spend doing unpaid work such as caring for children or other family members, and doing housework.

Australia’s last Time Use Survey was conducted in 2006 – before the introduction of the iPhone.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

Women do three quarters of unpaid child care, two thirds of housework, and 70 per cent of caring for elderly or disabled family members and friends.

The last time the Australian Bureau of Statistics calculated the value of that unpaid work, it was worth $261 billion – almost half Australia’s GDP that year.

But this major contribution women make to the Australian economy is not included in the Federal Budget because we have no way of calculating its value.

LABOR’S POSITION

Labor will provide $15.2 million in funding to the Australian Bureau of Statistics to conduct the Time Use Survey in 2020 and 2027.

This will allow us to place a monetary value on women’s unpaid caring work, acknowledge its economic importance, and better shape public policy.
The Liberals have shown little regard for the economic security and employment conditions of women working in care sectors, starting back in the 2014 Budget when they:

- Dumped Labor’s $1.5 billion Workforce Compact and Supplement to support aged care workers; and
- Axed a $300 million fund to give pay rises to undervalued child care workers.

Labor has consistently called for a comprehensive aged care workforce strategy to address training, staffing levels and an ageing workforce. Late last year, the Turnbull Government finally announced a Workforce Taskforce – but didn’t include a single worker representative on the body.

The “care sectors” of the Australian workforce are overwhelmingly dominated by women.

- 87 per cent of the aged care workforce are women;
- 97 per cent of early childhood educators are women;
- 70 per cent of disability workers are women.

Labor is committed to addressing the systematic undervaluing of workers in traditionally female-dominated care industries. We need to make sure our industrial relations system is equipped to address pay inequity. Labor will take measurable action to address the gender pay gap and will report regularly on Australia’s progress through an annual statement to Parliament.
CUTS TO THE APS – HUMAN SERVICES

GOVERNMENT POLICY

In this year’s Budget the Government has axed a further 1,280 staff from the Department of Human Services, on top of cutting 1,200 jobs last year.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

Over 70 per cent of the Department of Human Services staff are women, one of the highest rates in the Australian Public Service. The staff cuts will fall disproportionately on women and will impact their ability to support themselves and their families.

LABOR’S POSITION

Labor is concerned about the impact these changes will have on Centrelink users and the pressure this will place on the existing workforce, many of whom are women.
The 2018 Budget is testament to the Coalition’s abject failure on housing affordability and homelessness. Rental stress and homelessness rates are rising while home ownership for young Australians has collapsed, but the Budget virtually ignores Australia’s housing and homelessness crisis.

Housing is a women’s issue. Women make up more than 60 per cent of single Commonwealth Rent Assistance recipients and public housing residents. The majority of people accessing specialist homelessness services are women. Every day, 172 Australian women seek shelter through homelessness services and are turned away.

Family violence is one of the major causes of housing stress and homelessness – 2 out of 5 people seeking homelessness assistance are doing so because of domestic violence. Older single women are increasingly vulnerable to housing stress and homelessness after a lifetime of economic disadvantage.
Federal funding for public housing, women’s refuges, crisis accommodation and specialist homelessness services supporting women and children escaping family violence was set to be delivered through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA).

A year later, however, the Government has failed to secure a funding deal with the states for the NHHA, putting funding for essential housing services at risk from 1 July 2018.

Women are most at risk from the Government’s failure to reach agreement with the states on the NHHA, as they make up the majority of public housing tenants and people approaching specialist homelessness services that will receive NHHA funds.

Women’s refuges around the country don’t know whether they will continue to receive Federal funding after 1 July.

Following a long period of short-term funding extensions, disruption and uncertainty for homelessness services under the Coalition, Labor welcomed the Government’s announcement of the NHHA in 2017, even though the funding was too low. The Government needs to act to secure a funding deal with the states.
The Government has no coherent or credible housing strategy. Since 2013, the Liberals have scrapped the homelessness reduction target, axed $88 million in capital funding for homelessness services, and failed to provide any real increase in funding to refuges.

The ‘housing affordability package’ contained in the Turnbull Government’s 2017-18 Budget has failed to deliver any improvements.

In this Budget, the Government has once again failed to act on changes to negative gearing and capital gains tax that would support housing affordability. Any housing affordability package that does not deal with negative gearing and capital gains tax reform is a sham.

More women are experiencing housing stress and homelessness under this Government. 2015-16 saw a 17.5 per cent increase in older women seeking help from homelessness services – twice the rate of growth in the general population.

Unaffordable housing disproportionately impacts women, due to average lower incomes amongst women. The generous tax concessions for property investors that the Government is refusing to reform disproportionately benefit men, with around two thirds of negative gearing deductions in 2015-16 claimed by men.

Labor has a comprehensive plan to tackle the housing affordability crisis, which will increase supply, remove unfair distortions in the tax system and improve affordability.

Labor will work cooperatively with the states to drive better outcomes to reduce homelessness and housing disadvantage for women in Australia.
The Government has not reversed its $44 million a year cut to capital funding that was used for safe housing options for women and children fleeing domestic violence.

These short-sighted cuts have resulted in a growing unmet need for short-term and emergency accommodation, especially for women escaping family and domestic violence.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare research reveals that domestic and family violence is the number one reason Australian women come to homelessness services for help.

Of the 114,757 people that sought assistance in 2016-17 from specialist providers, 40 per cent reported that they were experiencing domestic and family violence, an increase of 38 per cent from 2015-16. More than three-quarters (77 per cent) of those seeking housing assistance due to family and domestic violence were women.

Two-thirds of the unmet requests for housing assistance are made by women – predominantly when seeking crisis and short-term accommodation as a result of domestic violence.

A Shorten Labor Government will provide $88 million over two years for a new Safe Housing Fund to increase transitional housing options for women and children escaping domestic and family violence, young people exiting out-of-home care, and older women on low incomes who are at risk of homelessness.
This Budget persists with $715 million in cuts to hospitals and includes $1 billion in new health cuts.

New listings on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme – including Ribociclib for breast cancer treatment – are welcome, but this is just ordinary business of government – the very least the Liberals can manage.

The Government has made a small commitment to endometriosis awareness, but failed to fund perinatal mental health or prevention and treatment of eating disorders.

Six years of funding freezes for Medicare and millions ripped out of hospital funding are still disproportionately impacting women’s access to healthcare.

Women visit the GP twice as often as men and are also more likely to attend a specialist, but cost factors are more likely to limit a woman’s access to health care.
Four years ago the Government froze indexation of Medicare rebates – a GP Tax by stealth that continues to force up out-of-pocket costs to see a doctor.

The freeze remains in place for specialist procedures and allied health services for another year, and for some GP and other services for another two years.

Labor welcomes new Medicare investments in 3D breast imaging and a new PBS listing for the breast cancer drug Ribociclib - but these do not compensate for the damage done by the Government's freeze.

Women are more likely than men to delay seeing a doctor because of cost, meaning the Government’s rebate freeze is having a particularly severe impact on women's health.

In 2015-16, Australian women and girls claimed over 220 million Medicare services, an average of 18 Medicare services each. By comparison, men and boys claimed 13 Medicare services each.

The failure to immediately drop the freeze will continue to increase the cost of vital services for women and families.

The longer the freeze stays in place, the higher those barriers will become. Under the Turnbull government, average out-of-pocket costs have skyrocketed to $38 for a GP visit and more than $87 for a specialist consultation.

At the last election, Labor promised to immediately axe the rebate freeze from July 2017.

Instead the Government chose a slow reversal that will continue to burden Australian patients for years to come. The Government’s policy means another $2.2 billion will be ripped out of Medicare in the coming years, on top of the billions already cut.
CUTS TO HOSPITAL FUNDING

GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Government is ripping $715 million from Commonwealth hospital funding between 2017 and 2020.

Now it is trying to lock in an inadequate funding deal with the states for the five years from 2020.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

When women cannot afford basic health care – because of the Government’s Medicare rebate freeze - they are likely to become sicker and eventually present to a public hospital emergency department.

But emergency departments are already struggling with rising demand. Patients are being left in emergency departments for longer. Only 66 per cent of patients across Australia are seen within the recommended 30 minutes.

Under the Turnbull Government, elective surgery waiting times are the worst they’ve been since records began. And more than half of all public hospital doctors are working unsafe hours that put them at significant risk of fatigue.

LABOR’S POSITION

Public hospitals will always be better off under Labor than the Liberals. At the last election, Labor promised an extra $2 billion in hospital funding.

That’s because Labor believes in public health. We are the party of Medicare and we will always guard against the Americanisation of our world-class health system.
The Government has announced a completely underwhelming private health insurance reform plan.

Devised in large part by the private health insurers themselves, it's a plan that does very little to get soaring costs under control or to improve quality and value for money.

The average cost of private health insurance has gone up more than $1000 a year since the Liberals came to power.

The Government has given the green-light to five rounds of annual increases well above the inflation rate.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows women bear the brunt of unaffordable private health insurance.

In 2015-16, nearly 60 per cent of women had private health insurance cover, compared to 56 per cent of men.

Labor has a real plan to bring soaring private health insurance costs under control.

A Shorten Labor government would cap premium price increases at 2 per cent for two years.

This would save the average policy holder $340, putting consumers ahead of insurer profits for the first time in decades.

Labor will also ask the Productivity Commission to undertake a wide-ranging review of the entire industry to recommend structural reforms that would bring down costs and improve quality over the long-term.
Since Hobart’s last private reproductive health clinic closed, Tasmanian women have been unable to access abortion services within their home state.

The Turnbull Government has ignored calls to ensure Tasmanian women can access essential reproductive health services and to conduct an urgent national review of the availability of sexual and reproductive health services across the country.

Following the closure of Tasmania’s last private clinic, women have been forced to travel interstate to access surgical services. Melbourne clinics have reported a noticeable rise in the number of Tasmanian women travelling to receive health care, drastically increasing the emotional and financial burden.

All Australian women should be able to access safe and affordable abortion services if they choose to do so.

Labor will invest $1 million to build a Reproductive Health Hub in Hobart. The Hub will provide surgical terminations as part of the public hospital system, and federal and state Labor will contribute to its ongoing costs under the usual Commonwealth-state arrangements. This commitment will ensure Tasmanian women no longer have to travel interstate or pay huge out-of-pocket fees to access surgical abortions.
DEMENTIA

GOVERNMENT POLICY

In this Budget, the Turnbull Government has failed to introduce any new investment for research or care to support Australians with dementia.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

Dementia is not a normal part of growing old – it is a serious and terminal condition that is impacting on and taking the lives of more and more Australians. Women account for 64.4 per cent of all dementia deaths.

Dementia is now the leading cause of death for women in Australia.

ABS data released last year confirms that 8,447 women lost their lives to dementia in 2016, surpassing heart disease for the first time ever.

LABOR’S POSITION

Labor’s leader Bill Shorten has highlighted the need for Australia to be a world leader in the way we care for Australians living with dementia.
PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH

GOVERNMENT POLICY

In 2015 the Liberals stopped all Federal funding to the $85 million National Perinatal Depression Initiative. Once again in this Budget, the Turnbull Government has failed to invest in support for the mental health of expecting and new parents.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

One in five Australian women will suffer from anxiety and depression during pregnancy and after birth, yet many do not seek help in the early stages.

Around 100,000 expecting and new parents in Australia struggle with perinatal depression or anxiety each year. This includes around 70,000 women.

LABOR’S POSITION

Labor introduced the National Perinatal Depression Initiative in 2008.
BROKEN PROMISES ON EATING DISORDERS

GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Government has once again failed to commit to one of their own personal priorities— a specific plan for treatment for Australians who have eating disorders.

The Minister for Health, Greg Hunt says he strongly believes “we need to do more to support and offer appropriate treatment to people with an eating disorder”, but there is nothing in the Budget specifically dedicated to improving strategies around prevention, early-intervention and treatment of body dissatisfaction and eating disorders.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

Over one million Australians suffer with an eating disorder. Nearly two thirds of Australians experiencing an eating disorder are women and girls.

Around 15 per cent of Australian women in their lifetime will experience an eating disorder and even more will experience body dissatisfaction. Body image is consistently ranked in the top three concerns for 15 to 19 year olds in Mission Australia’s Annual Youth Survey, particularly for young women.

LABOR’S POSITION

Labor knows more needs to be done and that challenges remain across prevention, early-intervention and treatment.

Labor will support the establishment of evidence-based care for any Australian with or at risk of developing an eating disorder. Labor will focus on how health providers can better deliver early intervention initiatives, appropriate treatment, as well as enabling sustainable recovery.
This Budget persists with billions of dollars of deep cuts across schools, TAFE and universities and leaves families in limbo after failing to guarantee funding for kindergarten and preschool.

Labor knows the key to building a more equitable society is a high-quality, affordable education system from early education to lifelong learning.

The Liberals are cutting $17 billion from schools to pay for their $17 billion giveaway for the big banks.
The Government’s changes to child care payments take effect from 2 July this year and will reduce access to early education for families by introducing complex new income and activity tests to qualify for the subsidy. These changes will leave 279,000 families worse off – mostly low and middle income earners.

Those earning less than $65,710 will see their access to child care cut in half to only 12 hours a week. Families earning more than $65,710 with a stay at home parent will receive no support.

Many of those workers who are likely to fall through the cracks and lose support for early education and child care, are:

- Casual workers;
- Shift workers;
- Seasonal workers.

These are jobs that many women in low income families rely on.

For families where a mother might do a couple of shifts a month to earn some extra money support is no longer guaranteed.

Labor opposed these changes in parliament because of concerns about the impact of the changes on low income families, particularly women.

While Labor wants to see more women back in the workforce, the truth is that for some families, including many on low incomes, this package will reduce their child care support. That won’t help them get more work, or get back into the workforce, and it means hundreds of thousands of children who would benefit from early childhood education will miss out or have their hours reduced.
The Liberals have once again refused to properly fund the nation’s preschools in the budget, meaning federal support for preschools will end in 2019, leaving 350,000 children and their families in limbo.

Year after year the Turnbull Government only begrudgingly rolls over one year of stop-gap funding to preschools, creating massive uncertainty not only for families but right across the sector.

Without ongoing federal funding for preschool, hours will be cut, fees will rise, and families will have to decide whether to pay higher out of pocket costs, or withdraw their child from preschool and stay home. This will likely make it more difficult for women – who still bear the majority of child care responsibilities in Australia – to balance work and family.

Labor has called on the Government to provide certainty for preschool funding. Labor has a proud legacy in early education. In government, Labor signed the first national preschools agreement which guaranteed universal access to preschool for 4 year olds.
CUTS TO OUR SCHOOLS

GOVERNMENT POLICY

The Liberals have ripped $17 billion from schools funding, hitting public schools hardest.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

The Liberals’ school cuts mean fewer teachers, less one-on-one attention for our children, and less help with the basics like reading, writing, and maths.

Women continue to enter teaching at more than double the rate for men. Women make up around 80 per cent of teachers in primary schools and 60 per cent of teachers in secondary schools.

Cutting $17 billion out of school funding will mean fewer jobs for teachers and will directly impact on a larger number of women than men.

LABOR’S POSITION

Labor will restore fair, needs-based funding and replace the full $17 billion the Liberals have cut from our schools.
CUTS TO OUR SKILLS, TAFE AND APPRENTICESHIPS

GOVERNMENT POLICY

The vocational education and training system is in crisis. Since the Coalition came to office there are over 140,000 fewer apprentices and trainees in Australia.

The Government has failed to address issues of apprenticeship decline, low quality training and the rorting of the VET FEE-HELP scheme. The government has also cut more than $3 billion to funding and refused to take leadership of the struggling system.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

During the Government’s term in office the proportion of women in apprenticeships and traineeships has fallen from 43 per cent in 2012 down to 35 per cent in 2016. Australia has one of the worst gender trade apprentice gaps in the OECD.

The Government has no policy in place to narrow the growing gender gap in apprenticeships and traineeships rates and has failed to support quality training and education in the care sectors.

LABOR’S POSITION

Labor will return the funding cut from TAFE and skills in the 2017 budget and will provide guaranteed funding for VET.

Labor is committed to ensuring that TAFE sits at the centre of the education and training system and will guarantee at least two thirds of vocational education and training funding goes to TAFE. We have also committed $100 million to a Building TAFE for the Future Fund to restore TAFE campuses.
CUTS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

GOVERNMENT POLICY

As part of a package of $2.2 billion in cuts to higher education at 2017 MYEFO, the Government proposes to lower the repayment thresholds for HELP scheme (Higher Education Loan Program) debts with repayments to start when individuals earn $45,000. It would also change indexation arrangements for repayment thresholds and introduce a new lifetime borrowing limit for HELP.

This mirrors a similar policy change proposed in last year’s Budget to lower the repayment threshold to $42,000, which was not supported by a majority of the Senate (and was opposed by Labor).

IMPACT ON WOMEN

The NTEU and ACTU’s analysis shows that 60 per cent of all Australians with an outstanding HELP debt are women and two thirds of people who will be impacted by these changes will be women.

Because of Labor’s reforms when we were last in government, more women are accessing higher education than ever before. However, pay inequity and time spent out of the workforce because of caring responsibilities, mean women are often slower at repaying their HELP debts and accumulate more interest – ultimately paying a higher cost for their degrees.

Labor opposes lowering of the repayment threshold to $45,000 and think the current repayment rate is right.
Domestic violence and women’s groups have attacked the 2018 Budget as ‘bitterly disappointing’. There is barely any new money for frontline services and no mention of safe housing for families escaping violence.

One in six Australian women will experience intimate-partner violence in her life time. The situation is worse for First Nations women who are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised because of domestic violence than non-Indigenous women.

Under the Liberals, funding for family and domestic violence services has failed to keep up with rising demand and more needs to be done to drive a nationally coordinated response.
CROSS-EXAMINATION REFORM

Under current Australian family law, an alleged perpetrator of domestic violence can directly cross examine their victim in court. This process has been described as “court sanctioned abuse” in a submission from Women’s Legal Services Australia.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Following calls from Labor and the sector to end the practice of cross-examination of victims of family violence by their abusers, last year the Government finally committed to amend the Family Law Act 1975.

There is still no sign of when the Bill will be tabled and the law actually changed.

The Government’s proposal will stop alleged perpetrators cross-examining their victims, but it is unclear about who would be able to ask questions in place of the alleged abuser. The Government has refused to fund legal aid to allow both parties to be professionally represented. Labor is concerned that it could be a lay person without ethical obligations to the court or the alleged victim.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

Forty five per cent of women who settled before trial have said that the prospect of being personally cross-examined by their abuser was a significant factor in their decision to settle.

If victims fear facing their abuser in court they may not pursue all that they may be entitled to, making it harder for them to re-establish their lives.

Without funding for both parties to be legally represented, the cross examination process could still negatively impact women, who may be questioned by someone appointed by the alleged perpetrator, as opposed to an independent representative from Legal Aid.

LABOR’S POSITION

To protect victims and survivors from being cross-examined by alleged perpetrators, Labor has committed $43.2 million in funding to legal aid to ensure both parties can access legal representation.
FAILURE TO CRIMINALISE NON-CONSENSUAL SHARING OF INTIMATE IMAGES

The Turnbull government has continued to drag its feet and delay criminalising image-based abuse (previously referred to as “revenge porn”), instead proposing a civil penalty regime. Conflating image-based abuse with attitudes to pornography misunderstands the nature of image-based abuse. It is not pornography. It is a form of coercive control.

The Government has provided additional funding for the eSafety Commissioner to administer a new civil penalties regime to combat the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and continue the Women’s Safety Package, but this doesn’t go far enough.

Women are more likely than men to be victims of non-consensual sharing of intimate images. The effect on women is significant given that 1 in 10 Australians have had a nude or semi-nude image distributed online or sent onto others without their permission.

The Government’s failure to criminalise the non-consensual sharing of intimate images sends the wrong message to Australian women that it is not a serious form of abuse.

The absence of a specific criminal offence for image based abuse sends a message to victims, perpetrators and police alike; that the sharing intimate images without consent is not a crime.

Labor welcomes moves to confer additional powers on the eSafety Commissioner, but by failing to introduce criminal provisions, the Government is leaving Australian women with a patchwork of law across various jurisdictions.

Labor’s clear and long-standing position has been that the non-consensual sharing of intimate images should be a criminal offence.

Labor members have introduced a Private Members Bills to the Parliament to criminalise non-consensual sharing of intimate images throughout Australia.
Established in 2010, 1800RESPECT is the National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service.

**GOVERNMENT POLICY**

Calls to 1800RESPECT have increased almost 600 per cent since the service opened, so funding for specialised trauma counsellors must keep up.

The Government will provide $11.5 million to 1800RESPECT, but is unclear whether this is new funding or reflects changes announced to the service in August last year. Labor is also concerned about how the funding is directed. A recent Senate Inquiry into the service revealed only half of the funding for the program had found its way to the frontline service providers, with the rest being retained by the head contractor.

**IMPACT ON WOMEN**

1800RESPECT provides counselling to almost 60,000 Australians each year – the vast majority of clients are women.

With increased awareness and reporting on domestic violence, a larger number of women are coming forward to seek support for trauma.

**LABOR’S POSITION**

1800RESPECT was founded by Labor as part of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children (2010-2022). In government, Labor would carefully consider the recommendations of the Senate Inquiry, to make sure victims and survivors are receiving high-quality, evidence-based service.
While Labor welcomes the Government’s decision to maintain funding for the DV Alert program, first funded in 2007, we believe continuous evaluation of the program is integral to its effectiveness.

Frontline service workers are often in the most opportune position to recognise and respond to victims of family and domestic violence, who are mostly women.

Without the knowledge of how to recognise the signs of family and domestic violence and confidence to refer the victim to the appropriate service, frontline service workers may miss the opportunity to intervene to effectively stop violence against women and their children.

Labor recognises the importance of training frontline service workers, and continuous evaluation of that training. Evaluation of the DV-alert program has not been carried out since 2012.

Labor believes it is important that the national training program reflect the most useful and up-to-date information available.
In this Budget, the Government has again refused to establish a Royal Commission into violence and abuse against people with disability.

People with disability, their families and advocates have been urging the Government to act. We need a Royal Commission to bring about systemic change to ensure that this horrific abuse never happens again.

UN research has found that women and girls with disabilities are often at greater risk, both within and outside the home, of violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation.

A Labor Government will establish a Royal Commission into violence and abuse against people with disability.
This Budget shows the Government is not committed to Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage. The Turnbull Government has slashed $1.5 billion in support for remote Indigenous housing and employment, and the Government has done nothing to reverse the $500 million in cuts it made to the Indigenous Affairs Portfolio in 2014.

Australia is failing to deal with declining outcomes for First Nations women across a range of areas.
This Budget slashes $1.5 billion in support for remote Indigenous housing over the next four years. Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia have all had their funding slashed under the National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing.

The Turnbull Government lacks any credible plan to deal with the unacceptably high number of First Nations people experiencing poor housing conditions, homelessness, and over-crowding in remote communities – a crisis that disproportionately affects First Nations women.

Poor quality housing, overcrowding and lack of housing supply in remote communities is a major contributor to homelessness, and other forms of disadvantage, for First Nations women.

Data from the 2016 Census reveals that First Nations women residing in remote communities are significantly over-represented in both the national homeless population, and as users of specialist homelessness services.

While First Nations people make up 3.3 per cent of the Australian population, they made up 25 per cent of the clients accessing specialist homelessness services in 2016-17. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimates that of the 64,644 First Nations people who sought specialist help for homelessness in 2016-17, 61 per cent were women.

A Shorten Labor Government will develop and implement a national plan to reduce homelessness through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).
In this Budget, the Government has again failed to recognise the need for a national set of justice targets.

Governments across Australia spend more on keeping First Nations women in prisons, than on keeping them out of prison. The Red Cross estimates that prison costs $292 per prisoner per day. Justice reinvestment needs to be a central part of the logic to address the over-incarceration of First Nations women.

Welfare recipients who don't pay court-imposed fines will also have a minimum 15 per cent of their welfare payments withheld until the fines are repaid.

First Nations women represent two per cent of the Australian population but make up 34 per cent of the female prison population. Women’s imprisonment rates have soared much faster than men’s in recent decades.

The overwhelming majority of First Nations women in prison are survivors of physical or sexual violence. Around 80 per cent are mothers.

Three Social Justice Commissioner reports have noted that the interests of First Nations women in the criminal justice system are not being served by programs designed for women generally or for First Nations men.

First Nations women are often carrying the bulk of household debts, and the use of the welfare system to further punish them, creates greater risk of their imprisonment.

Labor committed that the first meeting of COAG convened under a Shorten Labor Government will consider priorities for justice targets for inclusion in the Closing the Gap framework. At the 2016 election, Labor outlined a strong plan to crack down on unpaid fines and reduce unnecessary incarceration by reforming the fine recovery process.
FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION LEGAL SERVICES

Free legal services are vital for women who experience domestic and family violence. Nationally, approximately 90 per cent of Family Violence Prevention Legal Service clients are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

The 2018 Budget offers no new funding for specialised, culturally safe frontline services such as Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLSs), despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experiencing family violence at vastly disproportionate rates.

The Government has underfunded legal assistance services since coming to office in 2014. FVPLSs were dumped from the Attorney-General’s Department into Prime Minister and Cabinet in 2014 and left adrift. FVPLSs have since had to compete for tenders through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) for short-term funding arrangements and core funding under this strategy has been frozen at 2013-2014 levels, with no CPI increase.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised from family violence and 10 times more likely to die of violent assault than other women.

Properly funding legal assistance services helps save lives. Domestic violence in Australia is at epidemic levels, and the shopfront services and helplines provided by FVPLSs are often the only place domestic violence victims can seek help discreetly.

It is estimated that the national annual cost of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children will reach $2.2 billion by 2021-2022, not including the costs of flow-on impacts on their children.

LABOR’S POSITION

While in office, Labor worked to improve access to justice for all Australians, including by providing an additional $33.5 million to Community Legal Centres in the 2013 Budget.

Labor recognises that more stability is needed for the sector and long-term funding needs to be considered.
There is currently $162 million in federal funding aimed at supporting the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in specific gendered education programs; of this approximately a third is directed at programs targeting First Nations girls and young women. In contrast, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys receive 64 per cent of federal government education grants. There has only been a 17 per cent increase in female education specific expenditure since the last financial year.

Under the Liberal’s current level of investment, First Nations girls and young women are receiving significantly fewer opportunities to be mentored and supported in their schooling and life aspirations. First Nations teenage fertility rates are approximately four times higher than the general population; disengagement from the education system is a significant risk factor.

At the 2016 election, Labor committed to support the work of the Stars Foundation to empower First Nations girls and young women at risk of disengaging from education. Labor’s support would have provided 7,155 student places through programs in the Northern Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and Victoria.
The CDP is a remote employment program introduced by the Government in July 2015. It disproportionately impacts First Nations people as 83.3 per cent of participants are First Nations people. The Government has continued to claim that it is creating sustainable employment in remote areas, despite hundreds of Senate Inquiry participants stating that the program is ineffective and highly discriminatory. The Budget announcement of 6000 wage subsidy places will not assist the 30,000 First Nations people suffering under the program.

The Senate Inquiry received evidence from witnesses of the detrimental impacts on women in remote towns who have a limited number of work activities from which to choose compared to men, therefore limiting their ability to develop employable work skills.

When parents and young people lose income through severe penalties if they don’t meet the program’s requirements, Grandmothers are often relied upon to provide food and money.

Labor supports a remote employment and community development program with an emphasis on local control and decision making, including local governance arrangements and community plans.
Women’s groups and advocacy organisations have been starved of funding and support for five years under Liberal Governments.

The National Women’s Alliances have faced year-on-year real funding cuts. Meanwhile, already sparse funding for women’s leadership and development grants has been used to outsource departmental work.
Following years of lobbying by Labor and the women’s sector, Labor welcomes the re-establishment of the Harmony Alliance representing the voices of migrant and refugee women.

However, Labor is concerned that funding for the six National Women’s Alliances remains frozen.

The Government-commissioned KPMG review of the Alliances said: “A lack of funding was... identified as a barrier that limits Alliances’ abilities to effectively engage and communicate with members and the wider public.”

The National Women’s Alliances bring together a wide range of women and women’s organisations to make sure that women’s issues and a diversity of voices are represented in policy making.

Freezing funding to these organisations reduces awareness of issues affecting women in a Government where women are already poorly represented.

Labor has committed to end the funding freeze to boost funding to the Alliances.
The Women’s Leadership and Development Strategy (WLDS) Grants were designed to provide funding to community organisations and women’s groups to undertake projects and advocacy to advance women’s rights and wellbeing.

Since 2013, grants funding has been stagnant and the pool of available grants has decreased by 10 per cent this year as funding was diverted to the new Harmony Alliance.

The WLDS Grants are the main source of Federal funding for community groups working to promote gender equality. But funding from the pool has been used to pay for Office of Women consultancies and contracts and in 2016-17, around 65 per cent of project grants were directed to employer and industry lobby groups such as the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Master Builders Australia and the Australian Mines and Metals Association. Women’s groups are missing out on funding under the Turnbull Government.

Labor will ensure the Women’s Leadership and Development Strategy Grants are used effectively to benefit Australian women.
The Government has already slashed $11 billion from the aid program and has cut another $140 million in this Budget. By the year 2021, our aid budget will be just 19 cents for every $100 of GNI – an all-time low.

Around the world, women are more likely to experience poverty than men. Women in developing countries are more vulnerable than men to the effects of climate change. In protracted crises, women are more likely to encounter problems with food security and be affected by chronic hunger than men. This all happens because globally women still lack access to economic resources, political power and face gender-based discrimination.
CUTS TO FOREIGN AID

GOVERNMENT POLICY

At a time when Australia’s influence and standing in our region is already diminishing, Australia’s record low level of overseas development assistance has plunged even further as the Turnbull Government makes additional cuts to our aid budget.

Having already slashed $11 billion from the aid program since 2013, the Turnbull Government has announced cuts to aid funding in each of the next four years totalling more than $140 million.

This is the weakest level of development assistance in our history, with spending on foreign aid dropping to just 19 cents for every $100 of national income on foreign aid over the forward estimates.

Over the next decade this will get even worse, with the Turnbull Government’s budget figures forecasting a fall to 0.16 per cent of national income.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

Australian aid cuts affect women and children more than men in developing countries in our region, with women already experiencing greater inequality.

LABOR’S POSITION

Labor continues to oppose slashing funding and believes the aid program should provide expanded opportunities for women across the world. We are committed to meeting our international obligations, including through delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Development Goal 5 seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Our overseas aid program plays a critical role in our active efforts to fulfil this goal, and eliminate discrimination against women.

A Shorten Labor Government will contribute more to international development assistance than the current Government. And we will ensure more of it gets to the people who it is meant to be assisting.
In 2012 Labor made a landmark decision to double aid funding for family planning services in developing countries to over $50 million annually by 2016. Since then, this funding has been relentlessly cut by the Liberals.

Figures provided by DFAT show a reduction in funding from $46 million in 2013-14, when Labor was last in government, to just $32 million last year.

As a result of the Trump Administration’s imposition of the “Global Gag Rule” in 2017, $2.2 billion in global health funding is now in jeopardy.

Australia’s commitment at the FP2020 2017 summit of $33.5 million over four years falls drastically short of the gap. The announcement of $9.5 million towards SPRINT was simply repackaging of earlier commitments.

Over 70 million women living in our region do not have access to family planning and reproductive health services.

The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper makes no mention of family planning as a development priority. The Turnbull Government’s inaction on reproductive rights is costing women in our region.

Labor knows that family planning is critical to addressing poverty and improving the lives of women and their children. We are committed to honouring Australia’s responsibility to do more for women in developing countries.
Choices on taxes, spending and savings are not gender neutral. Budgets impact women and men differently, because the positions of women and men in the Australian economy and society are different.

Labor is committed to bringing back the Women’s Budget Statement in government. But gender equality can’t just be a focus once a year at the Federal Budget.

That’s why Labor is committed to establishing a framework for gender responsive policy and decision making in government.

Labor will:

- Place the Office for Women at the centre of a new program of gender responsive policy making.
- Introduce gender impact assessment on all new policy development to assess how policies will impact on women of multiple backgrounds.
- Introduce gender responsive budgeting processes and examine how the allocation of public resources affects gender inequality.
- Work with government departments to set and report on gender indicators across portfolio areas.
- Report on progress against gender equality indicators through an annual update to Parliament.
SETTING THE AGENDA

In 2017, Labor’s Status of Women Caucus Committee held the Setting the Agenda national conversation on gender equality.

We heard from thousands of women around Australia who attended community meetings, took part in an online survey, made a submission or whose views were represented by members of women’s organisations.

From the consultations, Labor released our draft national strategy for gender equality. Setting the Agenda sets out Labor’s priorities to tackle gender inequality in government. It is a framework for sustained, enduring action based on extensive consultations, national and international evidence and advocacy.

Labor’s proposed national gender equality strategy will commit Australian governments to action in five priority areas where work is needed to break down the barriers to gender equality:

1. Violence against women
2. Economic security and independence
3. Family and care responsibilities
4. Leadership and representation
5. Health and wellbeing

To drive change, Labor is committed to setting targets. Targets work. They commit us to a goal, let us track our progress and hold us accountable.

Targets work. They commit us to a goal, let us track our progress and hold us accountable.

Labor’s full suite of gender equality policies and updated gender equality strategy will be released throughout 2018 and in the lead up to the next election.
• Set a target within the first year of a Labor government to reduce family and domestic violence.

• Provide $43 million to reform the court system so victims of violence cannot be cross-examined by perpetrators.

• Provide $88 million for a new Safe Housing Fund to increase transitional housing options for women and children escaping domestic and family violence, young people exiting out-of-home care and older women who are at risk of homelessness.

• Criminalise the non-consensual sharing of intimate images and introduce protections against digital surveillance.

• Establish a Royal Commission into violence and abuse against people with disabilities.

• Take national leadership to ensure universities and residential colleges are providing a safe environment for their students, free of sexual assault and harassment.
• Add 10 days paid domestic violence leave to the National Employment Standards.
• Take measurable action to close the gender pay gap and report regularly on Australia’s progress through an annual statement to Parliament.
• Address the systematic undervaluation of work in traditionally female-dominated industries.
• Support the G20 target to reduce the gender gap in workforce participation by 25 per cent by 2025.
• Remove the “tampon tax”.
• Restore cuts to penalty rates, which disproportionately impact women on low incomes.
• Implement gender-equitable procurement practices.
• Provide $15.2 million to restore the Time Use Survey.
• Work with the APSC and CPSU to promote more flexible working arrangements for women and men across the APS.
• Meet the 50:50 target for representation of women on government boards within the first term of government and in each portfolio.
• Set a 40 per cent by 2025 gender diversity target for Chair and Deputy Chair positions on government boards.
• Set a target for 50 per cent representation of women in senior public service roles by 2025.
• Devise a national women’s health policy that addresses women’s health needs throughout their life-cycle and acknowledges the social determinants of health.
• Invest $20 million in the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Research Institute for a Breast Cancer Metasis and Dormancy Research Initiative.
• Provide $12 million towards Ovarian Cancer Australia’s National Action Plan for Ovarian Cancer Research, potentially preventing 2500 cases of breast cancer and 800 cases of ovarian cancer.
• Fund BRCA gene testing so women can find out and act if they are at a significantly heightened risk or breast and ovarian cancer.
• Provide $1 million to build a Tasmanian reproductive health hub to ensure Tasmanian women don’t need to travel interstate to have a surgical abortion.
• Boost funding to the National Women’s Alliances to restore Liberal Government funding freezes.
• Reconvene a Ministerial Council on Gender Equality.
CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

@AustralianLabor
#BudgetAndWomen

Setting the agenda
A National Strategy for Gender Equality

Labor

Authorised N. Carroll, ALP, 5/9 Sydney Avenue, Barton ACT
Printed by Elect Printing, 112 Wollongong St, Fyshwick ACT