



**BUDGET**  
2009-10

**WOMEN**

The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP  
Minister for the Status of Women

## *A message from the Minister for the Status of Women*



The 2009-10 Women's Budget Statement takes the theme *Supporting Women in a Time of Economic Challenge*.

Economies across the world are experiencing one of the most significant economic downturns since the Great Depression.

Improving women's economic and social outcomes is important to developing a stronger and more robust economy.

Australian women contribute to the nation in many ways, through their work in the labour market, their leadership in and support for their communities, and in their caring roles. Although women's paid and unpaid work has been integral to our nation's wealth, it is still too often unrecognised and unrewarded.

The 2009-10 Budget contains great news for Australian women. In particular, younger women of working age, older women, carers and women with disability all share in key Budget measures that will improve their lives now and into the future. The 2009-10 Budget will strongly support women in contributing to Australia's economic and social future.

The historic introduction of a government funded paid parental leave scheme will help families find a better balance between paid work and caring responsibilities. It will allow mothers to spend time with their newborn babies and remain connected to the labour market.

Increased payments and significant structural reforms to the pension system will be of particular benefit to women, because more women than men in Australia retire with few accumulated savings and therefore rely on the age pension.

This year's Women's Budget Statement reflects a more rigorous and informative women's budget process. Australia took a lead in evaluating how policies and programs impact on women and men differently with the launch, in 1987, of the first Women's Budget Statement. Analysing the effects of policies on population groups helps to ensure social and economic policy is well targeted and delivered equitably.

These are changing and challenging times. We must work together - men and women - if we are to progress equality and build prosperity. Women's and men's roles in the family, workplace, society and the economy have changed in recent decades. It is important that the Government's policies to support families keep pace with those changes. This Budget delivers a great step forward in meeting today's challenges and preparing for our future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tanya Plibersek". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed over a light grey, grid-like background.

**Tanya Plibersek**  
**Minister for the Status of Women**

## THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

### *The state of the economy*

The global economy is experiencing the worst recession since the Great Depression, which has dragged the Australian economy into recession. This contraction is expected to be milder than almost any other advanced economy and an economic recovery is expected to gather pace from early 2010. The downturn will impact significantly on women's and men's jobs, with employment contracting over 2009-10 and gradually growing in late 2010.

This Budget supports jobs now, and invests in the future, to ensure the economy is well placed to make the most of the global recovery and to improve women's and men's economic prosperity.

### *Women in the economy*

On average women who work full-time earn 17 per cent less than men.<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that an average 25 year old woman starting work today will earn \$900,000 less than an equivalent 25 year old man over her working life.<sup>2</sup> This also means that women have lower retirement savings.

Women benefit most from policies that support a balance between employment and family responsibilities. Policies that make it easier to balance paid work and family responsibilities support women's aspirations for a career, their contribution to overall productivity and participation and the community's need for informal care.

Employment in Australia is heavily segregated on the basis of sex. Men are more likely to be employed in construction, mining and most areas of manufacturing. Women are more likely to be employed in health, education and segments of manufacturing such as textile, clothing and footwear.<sup>3</sup>

<b><i>Australia's labour force at a glance (%)</i></b>	
Women's labour force participation rate in Apr 2009	58.8
Indigenous women's labour force participation (in 2007)	47.9
Men's labour force participation rate in Apr 2009	72.2
Women as a proportion of the total labour force in Apr 2009	45.6
Men as a proportion of the total labour force in Apr 2009	54.4
Women in employment working full-time in Apr 2009	55.2
Men in employment working full-time in Apr 2009	84.4
Proportion of the part-time workforce that are women in Apr 2009	70.7
Gender pay gap in Nov 2008	17.0
Small business operators who were women in Jun 2006	32
One-parent families headed by women	85.1
Primary carers who are women	71.3

The global recession will affect specific industries differently. Retail and manufacturing are likely to be more affected than public sector industries such as health and education.<sup>4</sup>

Supporting jobs across the economy is an important goal of the Government. As an example, the retail sector has been a beneficiary of the Government's stimulus efforts.

Women are more likely to hold part-time and casual employment than men. Almost 71 per cent of part-time employees are women.<sup>5</sup> The global recession may mean that women have access to fewer hours of work.

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The 2009-10 Budget has been developed in the context of initiatives already announced by the Government to address the effects of the global recession.

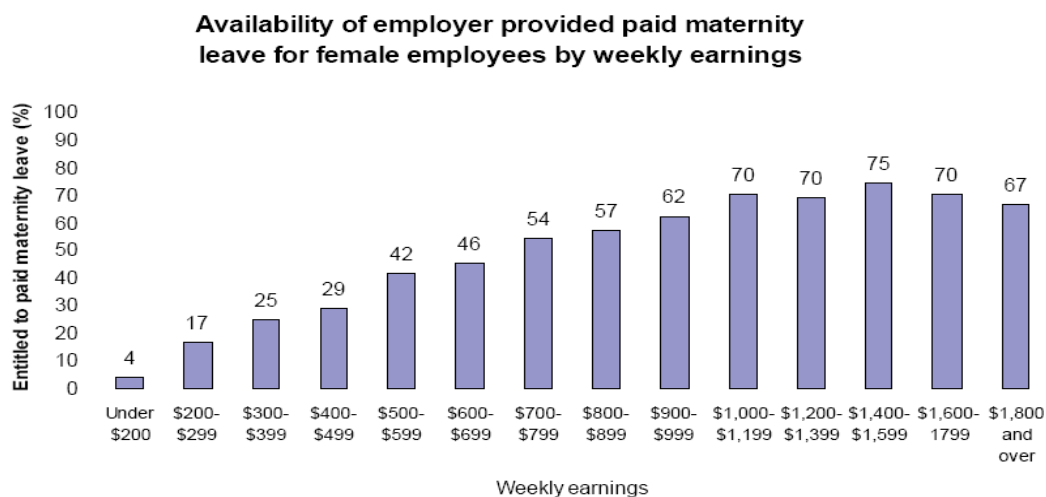
The Government has introduced two economic stimulus packages, of which women were significant beneficiaries, including as recipients of approximately 68 per cent of lump sum payments under the first stimulus package. This package provided immediate relief to low and middle income families and down payments on long term pension reform. The second economic stimulus package, announced in February 2009, provided \$42 billion for the *Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan*. The plan provided a balance between immediate economic stimulus and long term investment in economic and jobs growth.

## PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

The Government will provide \$731 million over five years for a comprehensive paid parental leave scheme. Paid parental leave will help parents spend time with their children, leading to improved health and wellbeing for parents and children. It will promote women's continued engagement in the workforce, which is of vital importance to women in securing their long term economic outcomes. Paid parental leave is also important to building equality between women and men. The Government-funded paid parental leave scheme will apply to births and adoptions after 1 January 2011.

The Productivity Commission found that access to employer-funded parental leave in Australia is highly uneven. In 2007, approximately half of employed women were eligible for paid parental leave as part of arrangements negotiated with their employers. However, less than one quarter of women on very low wages, compared with three quarters of women on high wages, had access to paid parental leave. Comparatively high rates of paid parental leave are reached at gross wages of around \$73,000-\$93,000. The industries with the lowest level of access to paid parental leave are female dominated, highly casualised and low skilled. Women in these jobs are more likely to return to work early and this scheme will directly support these women and their families.<sup>6</sup>

### Women in lower paid jobs have less access to employer provided paid maternity leave



ABS, Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia, August 2008, Cat No 6310.0

The Productivity Commission also reports that in 2007, 74 per cent of female full-time employees had access to paid parental leave, compared with only 32 per cent of female part-time employees. Paid paternity leave was available to 58 per cent of male full-time workers compared with 12 per cent of male part-time workers.<sup>7</sup>

Paid parental leave will be available to self-employed parents, contractors and casual workers, many of whom currently have no access to employer-provided paid parental leave entitlements.

The scheme provides 18 weeks' leave paid at the federal minimum wage (currently \$543.78) which can be shared between both parents.

To be eligible for the scheme, the primary carer (usually the mother) must be in paid work and have:

- been engaged in work continuously with one or more employers for at least 10 of the 13 months before the expected date of birth or adoption; and
- undertaken at least 330 hours of paid work in the 10 month period (an average of around one day of work each week).

An income test of \$150,000 will apply based on the primary carer's adjusted taxable income in the previous financial year.

Employers will be responsible for making the parental leave payments on behalf of the Government to employees who have 12 months' continuous service with the employer. The Government will provide employers with funds in advance of their payment to the employee as part of the usual payroll cycle. Parents who already access employer-funded paid parental leave will be able to access the Government's scheme in addition to, or in conjunction with, these existing arrangements.

Eligible families can choose whether to participate in the scheme depending on their individual circumstances. Families electing to participate in the scheme will not receive the Baby Bonus (except in multiple birth cases) or Family Tax Benefit B during the 18 week paid parental leave period.

Parents not eligible for paid parental leave will continue to receive, if eligible, the current forms of family assistance (including the Baby Bonus). A review, commencing two years after the implementation will consider the introduction of a paternity leave component and employer-funded superannuation contributions for paid parental leave recipients.

*Paid parental leave is also important to building equality between women and men.*

## SECURE AND SUSTAINABLE PENSIONS REFORM

Women remain disproportionately reliant on Australia's pension system, largely as a result of their broken work patterns due to responsibilities for care of children and other family members. Women are the majority of pensioners in Australia - 57.4 per cent of all age pensioners and 71.8 per cent of single age pensioners are women. Women are nearly two-thirds of carer payment recipients and 43.8 per cent of those on the Disability Support Pension (DSP). An increasing proportion of entrants onto DSP are women, currently representing 48.6 per cent of new entrants.<sup>8</sup>

Welfare recipient (proportion by sex), 2008*		
Pension or allowance type	Female (%)	Male (%)
Age Pension	57	43
Disability Support Pension	44	56
Carer Payment	68	32
Wife Pension	100	0
Widow B Pension	100	0
Bereavement Allowance	83	17
DVA Service Pension	47	53
DVA Income Support Supplement	100	0
Total	56	44

\* Pension customer numbers derived from Centrelink administrative database, fortnight ending 5 December 2008. DVA customer data is at 2 January 2009 and will be published in the upcoming DVA Pensioner Summary Statistics series. Data extracted from J Harmer, *Pension review report 27 February 2009*, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra, 2009.

It is therefore vital for women's economic futures that these pensions deliver an adequate standard of living.

The Government is delivering on its commitment to reform the pension system. Australia's 3.3 million age pensioners, disability support pensioners, carers, wife pensioners and veteran income support recipients will benefit from the Government's \$14.2 billion pension reform package. Starting on 20 September 2009, pensioners on the full rate will receive an increase of \$32.49 a week for singles, and \$10.14 a week for pensioner couples (combined). This will bring the single rate of pension from 60 per cent up to two thirds of the combined couple rate. It will increase the maximum base rate of the single pension from 25 per cent to 27.7 per cent of the Male Total Average Weekly Earnings, an increase of more than 10 per cent. These increases provide significant additional financial support for older women who comprise almost three quarters of single age pensioners.

To simplify payments, a number of existing supplements and allowances will be integrated into a new Pension Supplement. The Supplement will replace the GST supplement, pharmaceutical allowance, utilities allowance and the

internet/telephone allowance. The Supplement will be indexed by the Consumer Price Index and will be paid fortnightly in the first instance and, from July 2010, pensioners may choose to receive some of the Supplement quarterly. This will give pensioners greater flexibility over the way that they receive payments and manage their finances.

To provide additional assistance to carers, the Government will introduce a new annual Carer Supplement of \$600 each year for Carer Payment recipients. These new supplements will cost \$1.8 billion over five years, providing ongoing financial certainty for carers (predominantly women), which the previous "one off" lump sum payments did not.

To ensure that pensions better reflect the cost of living increases faced by pensioners, a new Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index will be developed. It

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will be specifically designed to reflect changes in the cost of living experienced by pensioner and beneficiary households. The base pension will be increased by whichever is the greater, this index or the CPI. Wages benchmarking through the Male Total Average Weekly Earnings will continue.

To ensure that the package is affordable and sustainable over the longer term, it includes measures to better target pension payments, including tightening the income test. A transitional safety net will apply.

Age and service pensioners will be able to keep more of the money they earn through part-time work under a new Work Bonus. From 20 September only half of the first \$500 of employment income earned per fortnight will be assessed under the income test. The Work Bonus will not be available to pensioners paid under transitional arrangements.

## SUPPORTING WOMEN'S PAID AND UNPAID WORK

Women's work is both paid and unpaid. Between 1992 and 2006, women's workforce participation increased from 48 to 55 per cent.<sup>9</sup> Women now represent 45.6 per cent of all employed people.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, women continue to provide the largest amount of informal care and household work. On average, women spend over 33 hours a week on household work<sup>11</sup> and make up 71 per cent of primary carers of people who are frail, aged or have disabilities.<sup>12</sup> Women are more likely to take time out of the workforce to care for children. Women also make up over 90 per cent of parenting payment recipients.<sup>13</sup>

The Australian labour market is highly segregated by sex, with men more likely to be employed in manufacturing and construction industries and women dominating the service industries.<sup>14</sup> Women outnumber men in casual employment both in total and across all workforce age categories.<sup>15</sup> Casual and part-time work, along with the gender pay gap and broken employment due to unpaid caring responsibilities, reduce women's lifetime earnings and retirement savings. NATSEM estimates that if current earning patterns continue, the average 25 year old male would earn \$2.4 million over the next 40 years while the average 25 year old female would earn \$1.5 million.<sup>16</sup>

More than half the students in higher education and just under half the enrolments in vocational education and training are women.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Improved participation requirements for parents***

The majority of parents and other carers of children who receive parenting payments are women. In December 2008, 95 per cent of Parenting Payment Single recipients and 92 per cent of Parenting Payment Partnered recipients were women.<sup>18</sup>

It is important for parents and other carers (for example, foster or kinship carers) on working age income support payments to be involved in determining their pathways into work and to have access to education, training, child care and services to address barriers to participation. Changes to participation requirements that allow principal carer parents to meet participation requirements by combining study, voluntary work and paid work will provide parents with more flexible opportunities to gain skills and qualifications.

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Following recommendations from the Government's *Participation Taskforce Review*, the Government is taking significant steps to respond to the needs of single parents. From 1 July 2010, foster and kinship carers with principal responsibilities for children will have greater opportunities to gain skills needed to find work, including:

- allowing principal carer parents to meet participation requirements by combining part-time study, voluntary work with vocational value and part-time paid work;
- supporting principal carer parents who want to start their own business to participate in self-employment programs, including the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS);
- confirming that principal carer parents will be exempt from part-time participation requirements during Christmas and New Year in recognition that child care is very difficult to obtain;
- introducing a 12 month exemption for grandparents and other relatives who are entering into kinship care arrangements recognised through a court order or case plan;
- improving the ability of parents experiencing domestic violence to obtain exemptions from participation requirements and allowing greater discretion for exemptions to be extended beyond the existing 16 weeks; and
- allowing principal carer parents who work during school term more flexible arrangements over the long school holidays, if they are temporarily not employed but are likely to resume employment once the school term recommences.

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The Government is providing \$26.8 million to improve arrangements for parents with participation requirements that will allow them to more effectively balance family and caring responsibilities with their participation requirements. From 1 July 2009, the Government's reformed employment services – Job Services Australia – will fold seven programs into a one stop shop that will provide personalised support for job seekers. These measures complement the Government's productivity and education agendas and will create greater opportunities for parents to gain additional skills.

### ***Retaining the incentive for workforce participation***

Parenting Payment Single recipients will be exempt from change to the income test taper changes that will apply to other pensioners. The income tests applying to age, disability support pensions and Carer Payment are being tightened from 40 cents in the dollar to 50 cents in the dollar. In light of the importance of ensuring women do not face barriers when they return to work, this reform will not apply to single parents.

### ***Training Supplement***

As part of the Government's Jobs and Training Compact, the Budget provides \$83 million to help eligible job seekers on income support through a temporary Training Supplement. This provides an ongoing supplement of \$41.60 per fortnight to eligible low skilled job seekers on Newstart Allowance or Parenting Payment who are undertaking approved training at Certificate II to Certificate IV level.

It is estimated that over 500,000 low skilled job seekers will take up this measure over the period from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2011. This commitment builds on the

Government's suite of measures to help the unemployed skill up or re-skill to improve their job prospects when the economy recovers. It includes:

- a \$1,158 bonus to sign up to training (\$950 Training and Learning Bonus plus \$208 Education Entry Payment); and
- a place to study (711,000 Productivity Places including 319,000 available for job seekers).

Together these measures will provide people on Newstart and Parenting Payment, undertaking a 12 month course, with the equivalent of an additional \$43 a week in financial assistance.

### ***Nurse practitioner workforce expansion***

The Government will provide \$59.7 million over four years to expand the role of nurse practitioners, including by providing appropriate access to Medicare Benefits Schedule and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme support from November 2010. This measure will provide for the development of a long term and sustainable model for nurse practitioners, helping to improve the flexibility and capacity of Australia's health workforce. Expanding the role of nurse practitioners is an effective way to address the challenges of Australia's health workforce, particularly in regional and remote areas.

### ***Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) repayment reduction for education and nursing graduates***

The Government will provide \$83 million to reduce the compulsory HELP debt repayments for education and nursing graduates working in these professions. HELP debts will be reduced by up to \$1,536 (indexed annually) for each year in which the graduates work in these professions, for up to a maximum of 260 weeks of eligible employment. This will encourage students to enter and remain employed in the teaching and nursing professions.

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### ***Textile, clothing and footwear (TCF) Building Innovative Capability Package***

In its 2003 review of the textile, clothing and footwear (TCF) industry the Productivity Commission identified that women accounted for more than 55 per cent of the TCF workforce and that the majority of those women were from non-English speaking backgrounds and likely to be married. This reduced their mobility and ability to be employed elsewhere. The TCF industry also comprises thousands of outworkers, the majority of whom are women from a non-English speaking background.<sup>19</sup> The TCF Building Innovative Capability Package delivers \$185 million over the 2010-11 to 2014-15 program years and will provide support to this female dominated industry. The Package will increase the focus of the TCF industry assistance on innovation, while retaining entitlement-based assistance for the clothing and household textile products industries.

### ***Child care***

The Government will invest \$12.8 billion to support 800,000 families to access affordable and high quality child care. The Government will invest \$2.5 million in 2009-10 to provide a child care estimator to help families make informed decisions about child care. The Child Care Tax Rebate will provide \$4.4 billion over four years to assist working families with their out of pocket child care costs. The Child Care Benefit will deliver \$8.4 billion over four years to reduce child care fees.

The Government will also provide \$9.3 million over four years for an additional 250 Outside School Hours Care places for teenagers with disability or serious medical conditions. This builds on a highly successful program that is delivering targeted developmental, social and recreational activities for young people with disability. This program supports parents and carers who want to return to work, extend their working hours, or stay working.

### ***Simpler rules for separated families***

Rules about child support obligations and eligibility for separated parents will be made simpler and more consistent. From 1 July 2010, separated parents will only have to seek one determination recognising their level of care for their children that will then be used by both the child support and family assistance systems. The changes will also make it easier for separated parents to notify changes in their care arrangements.

### ***Additional funding for the Child Support Program***

The Government will provide the Child Support Program with an additional \$223.2 million to reduce the growth in child support debt and maintain customer service standards, such as telephone response times.

### ***Recruitment and retention of women in Defence***

Over the next ten years Defence will provide \$15 million to improve the recruitment and retention of women in the Australian Defence Force. The *Australian Defence Force Recruitment of Women Strategy* will improve awareness of the career options

available and better prepare candidates for the physical and mental challenges they will encounter.

This includes:

- expanding the current Physical Employment Standards project to identify the inherent physical requirements of the various Australian Defence Force employment categories;
- developing coaching and mentoring programs to assist Defence personnel and their managers to balance the demands of service life with personal and family interests; and
- investigating strategies in the areas of career management, flexible working arrangements, training and professional development, work and family balance and support to improve retention.

### ***Education and training***

These reforms sit alongside the Government's investment for a world-class education system. The 2009-10 Budget will provide \$5.7 billion over four years for higher education and innovation.

The 2009-10 Budget will also deliver on:

- the Education Revolution to give Australian children the best possible start in life to:
  - drive equity and excellence in schools across Australia;
  - match education and training to people's ambitions; and
  - give Australians access to a world class tertiary education and research system.
- a better system of matching people, skills and jobs; and
- fair and productive workplaces.

In total, the Government has increased education spending by around 50 per cent in real terms over the current five year period compared to the previous one.

## OTHER INITIATIVES IMPORTANT TO WOMEN

The following initiatives are expected to benefit many women. For more details on each of them, see the Budget page at Treasury's website, [www.treasury.gov.au](http://www.treasury.gov.au), or the Budget sections of the relevant department's website.

### ***Providing more choice in maternity care***

The Government will provide \$120.5 million to improve choice and access to maternity services for pregnant women and new mothers.

The new arrangements will allow eligible midwives working in collaboration with doctors to provide certain services subsidised by the Medicare Benefits Schedule and prescribe certain medications subsidised under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

The Government will also provide assistance for a professional indemnity insurance scheme for eligible midwives. To ensure that Australia maintains its strong record of safety and quality in maternity care, a safety and quality framework, including professional guidance and an advanced midwifery credentialing framework, will be developed.

The existing National Pregnancy Telephone Counselling Helpline will be expanded and improved to deliver a new 24 hour, seven days a week telephone helpline and information service to provide women, their partners and families with greater access to maternity information and support before and after the birth.

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The measure will assist women in rural and remote areas by expanding the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program to provide integrated outreach maternity service teams for women in under-served areas. The expanded teams will have obstetricians and/or registered midwives, registered maternal and child health nurses and/or allied health professionals such as dietitians and Aboriginal Health Workers. Further, funding will be provided for additional training for both midwives and general practitioners to expand the maternity workforce, particularly in rural and remote Australia.

The package will be implemented progressively from 1 July 2009 with new Medicare arrangements for midwives from 1 November 2010.

These arrangements are subject to agreement with States and Territories on a National Maternity Services Plan. State and Territory Governments will be asked to make complementary commitments and investments particularly around the provision of birthing centres and rural maternity units.

This reform sits alongside \$3.2 billion to expand and modernise public hospital improving cancer facilities, research facilities and \$134 million for a new Rural Health Workforce Strategy.

### ***Breast cancer treatment***

Breast cancer is the second most common cause of cancer-related death in women in Australia. The lifetime risk of women developing breast cancer before age 75 years is one in 11.<sup>20</sup>

The Government will provide \$168 million over four years from 2009-10 to continue funding for the Herceptin® program. The program provides free access to Herceptin® for patients affected by late-stage metastatic breast cancer. This is in addition to \$120 million over five years to replace BreastScreen Australia's older equipment with state of the art digital mammography equipment.

### ***The National Plan To Reduce Violence Against Women And Their Children***

Nearly one in three Australian women suffers physical violence in their lifetime and almost one in five experiences sexual violence.<sup>21</sup> The scope of the problem and its impacts on society are vast.

In May 2008, the Government established an 11 member National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children to advise on the development of an evidence-based plan of action. The Council conducted significant research, consulted over 2,000 Australians and developed five documents, including *Time for Action: the National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009-2021*.

The Government supports the direction of *Time for Action* and has agreed to immediately progress 18 of the 20 priority recommendations at an initial investment of \$42 million. The Government will refer *Time for Action* to the Council of Australian Governments so that all governments can collaborate to develop a nationally agreed plan to reduce violence against women in 2010.

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The Government will immediately provide an initial \$42 million including:

- \$12.5 million for a new telephone and online crisis service;
- \$23 million for primary prevention activities including respectful relationships programs social marketing; and
- \$3 million to support research on perpetrator treatment and the greater harmonisation of federal and State and Territory laws.

The Government is also progressing law reform through the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General, including a national scheme for the registration of domestic and family violence orders.

### ***Legal assistance services***

Commonwealth funding for legal assistance programs over the next four years will be maintained and indexed for inflation.

On 9 May 2009, the Government also announced \$20 million in additional one off funding in 2008-09 for legal assistance programs with a particular focus on enhancing coverage of services that promote early intervention and alternative dispute resolution. The Government's one off funding in legal aid services includes:

- \$10.1 million to fund Commonwealth legal aid services;
- \$4 million for Community Legal Centres; and
- \$6.2 million for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS).

Women are increasingly representing themselves in family law cases as they reach the funding limit for legal aid.<sup>22</sup> It is anticipated that increased funding to the Community Legal Centres and Commonwealth legal aid services will enable these services to provide more support to women especially in family law cases where there has been domestic violence or abuse. The additional funding for legal aid commissions will address immediate pressures on service delivery and support measures such as improved mediation conferencing services, upgraded IT and video-conferencing equipment, and tailored training opportunities with a particular focus on mediation skills and family violence identification and management. The additional funding for Community Legal Centres will help disadvantaged Australians who require assistance in areas such as consumer protection, mortgage and tenancy issues, welfare rights, family and homelessness issues.

As part of the 2009-10 Budget, \$7.56 million will be provided to ensure Indigenous legal services provided in the Northern Territory can respond to high levels of need. Indigenous women have been less likely to access mainstream legal aid services in metropolitan areas. Increased funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) will mean that more culturally appropriate services are available in remote, rural and urban areas.

### ***Closing the Gap***

The Government will provide \$1.3 billion to continue driving its national reform agenda to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Initiatives include the following.

- \$310 million to support jobs and economic participation by Indigenous Australians, including through infrastructure and arts initiatives, and support for students and job seekers.
- \$900 million to address disadvantage in remote Australia, including providing support for women and children in the Northern Territory, improving health services, and continuing funding for the National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force. This includes supporting 22 established safe houses and providing \$9.1 million in operational funding for eight newly established crèches, capital and operational funding for a ninth crèche, and capital funding to upgrade two existing crèches.
- \$99 million to provide support to improve the relationship with Indigenous people including through an Indigenous Healing Foundation and funding for Link-up services to help members of the Stolen Generations find and reunite with their families and communities.

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This is in addition to the Australian Government's \$3.6 billion investment through the Council of Australian Governments National Partnerships in housing, health and employment. The Australian Government is also working to redesign income management in consultation with Indigenous communities so that it is consistent with the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

### ***The environment***

The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) will be the Government's major driver that guarantees emissions reductions. Every cent of revenue from the Scheme will be used to transition Australian households and businesses to a low pollution future. The Government's Climate Change Action Fund, announced in the CPRS White Paper, is being augmented with an additional \$300 million. The Fund will smooth the transition to a low-pollution economy by providing \$2.75 billion in support for businesses, industry, community organisations, workers and regions. Households and families will also be assisted, with the Household Assistance Package providing a package of direct cash assistance and tax offsets to a range of low and middle income households.

Women are likely to be significant beneficiaries of support for low income families as lone mother families and single women pensioners are a significant proportion of

low income households.<sup>23</sup> Further, women commonly express more concern for the environment than men and put this concern into action in the household sphere.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Migration Program and international development***

#### ***Woman at Risk Visa***

Within Australia's migration program, the base target for the Woman at Risk category within the 2009–10 Humanitarian Program has been increased from 10.5 per cent to 12 per cent of the Refugee component. The Visa recognises the priority given by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the protection of women in particularly vulnerable situations.

Since its inception in 1989, around 9,500 visas have been granted under the Woman at Risk category. The Woman at Risk component of the Humanitarian Program provides for the resettlement of vulnerable refugee women and their accompanying dependents who do not have the effective protection of a male family member.

#### ***International aid***

The Budget includes several initiatives relating to the Australian international development assistance program. The aid program has an ongoing focus on gender equality and on helping marginalised and disadvantaged groups. The United Nations estimates that women constitute 70 per cent of the 1.3 billion people living in absolute poverty across the world.<sup>25</sup>

The 2009-10 *Budget Policy Statement on Aid* reiterates the Government's commitment to fair development that is accessible and available to all. This is a goal in itself, but a fairer society, particularly to the extent that women have the opportunity to fully participate in society, also advances development.

The Government will provide \$464.3 million over four years, with \$38.7 million in 2009-10, to support increases in food production globally and strengthen the ability of countries in the Asia-Pacific region and Africa to address food insecurity. This measure will support vulnerable people to better withstand increases in food prices brought about from natural and economic shocks and will likely have a beneficial flow on effect for women.

Improving maternal and child health will also remain a priority, including through increasing access to family planning services, increased numbers of skilled birth attendants and the use of health performance incentives to ensure services reach vulnerable groups. Following a review, the Government has revised family planning guidelines for the development assistance program to support the same range of family planning services for women in developing countries as are supported for women in Australia, subject to the national laws in partner countries. Australia will also provide additional funding of up to \$15 million over four years through United Nations agencies, bilateral programs and Australian NGOs for family planning and reproductive health activities to help reduce maternal deaths.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Average Weekly Earnings Australia November 2008*, Cat. no 6302.0, average weekly ordinary time earnings of full-time employees, seasonally adjusted data.
- <sup>2</sup> AMP.NATSEM, 'She works hard for the money: Australian women and the gender divide', AMP.NATSEM *Income and Wealth Report*, Issue 22, April 2009, NATSEM, Canberra, 2009.
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