

## Minister's Foreword

The Australian Government has been working hard to improve the lives of Australian women and their families, since taking office in December 2007.

While many women are doing well and enjoy the benefits of the enormous effort over the generations, it is clear that challenges remain.

*Women in Australia 2009*, the fifth in the series, provides a useful statistical summary of these challenges. This document provides useful information on women's economic outcomes, education and training, health, housing and leadership.

*Women in Australia 2009* reiterates that women spend less time in the paid workforce, are more likely to work fewer hours and more likely to have interrupted career patterns due to caring responsibilities, in comparison to men.

*Women in Australia 2009* is designed to be a reference for people interested in gender equality, and to underpin future policies, programs and projects that will help women achieve an equal place in society.

The Government is working to address these challenges through the following three key priority areas:

- improving women's economic outcomes and financial independence;
- ensuring women's voices are heard at all levels of decision-making; and,
- reducing violence against women.

Greater equality economically and socially between women and men will be good for the whole community.

I hope that organisations and individuals interested in improving gender equality find *Women in Australia 2009* a valuable resource.

Yours sincerely

**The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP**  
**Minister for the Status of Women**