

2021-2022

Federal Budget

*Budget measures to address
violence against women and
their children*

26th May 2021

AWAVA

Australian Women Against Violence Alliance

Table of Contents

2021-22 Budget Measures at a Glance	3
Budget Overview:	4
Women’s Safety:	5
Funding to respond to all forms of violence against women and their children	6
Diverse Communities	7
Safe, Affordable Social Housing for Women Escaping Violence	7
Violence Prevention Measures.....	8
Legal and Justice Measures	9
Family Law System	10
Respect@Work	11
Data Collection.....	12
Women’s Economic Security Package:.....	12
Superannuation.....	14
Continuation of Parents-Next and the Cashless Debit Card	14
Childcare and Aged Care	15

2021-22 Budget Measures at a Glance

NEW FUNDING
Safe Places Program
Implementing Respect@Work Report recommendations
Funding for the Second National Plan
Data collection including new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Personal Safety Survey
Pilot program supporting women on temporary visas experiencing family violence
National Online Safety Awareness campaign
Coordinated Enforcement and Support to Eliminate (CEASE) Domestic Violence Program trial
Strengthen disaster relief and recovery responses for women and children
Two-year trial program delivering financial assistance and support to women affected by FDV
Preventing and responding to violence against women and girls with disability
Perpetrator-focused services
Family and Federal Circuit Court matters and reform

CONTINUED FUNDING
Two-year National Partnership Agreement to expand frontline DFSV services
National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-25
Funding for the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA)
Funding for the eSafety Commissioner
Stop it at the Start Campaign
Women's Economic Security Package
Third Action Plan measures (ANROWS, Our Watch, 1800Respect, ABS Personal Safety Survey, NCAS)

GAPS AND CONCERNS
Lack of intersectional gender responsive budgeting
Continuation of Cashless Debit Card and Parents-Next
No national strategy for addressing housing and homelessness
No price regulation mechanism on childcare subsidy
No moves towards a reforming the national relationships and sexuality education curriculum
Lack of investment in women's health, including preventing and responding to violence in primary care
Superannuation not paid on Paid Parental Leave
"Two-tier" system on Pilot Program for Women on Temporary Visas

Budget Overview:

Throughout 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic, Australia experienced a spike in violence against women and heightened demand for frontline services supporting victim-survivors of abuse.¹ Rather than providing much needed additional support to women and specialist women's services, the 2020-21 Budget saw money funnelled into big businesses and men-dominated industries and the discontinuation of funding for vital programs. This gender-blind budgeting received significant criticism from women's rights advocates around Australia. Since then, 'violence against women', has been boosted on to the political agenda with renewed force. This is undoubtedly due to the courage and determination of victim-survivors and advocates around Australia who have refused to let women slip under the radar of yet another federal budget.

In response to community pressure, the government has certainly attempted to place women closer to the centre of this year's budget. With the much-welcomed return of the Women's Budget Statement came a total investment of \$3.4 billion into policies and programs affecting women, including \$1.1 billion into women's safety, \$1.9 billion into women's workforce participation and economic security and \$351.6 million into women's health.

The government has announced additional funding to the National Partnership Agreement and National Legal Assistance Partnership under the Women's Safety Package. Whilst it is unfortunate that this funding is only scheduled for two years—despite the critical need for long-term ongoing funding—this investment will initially increase the capacity of frontline women's and legal services who have been struggling with rising demand and limited resources since before the pandemic. Funding has been injected into violence prevention strategies, including the continuation of the *Stop it at the Start Campaign* and respectful relationships training. In addition, \$283 million will be devoted to reforming aspects of the Family Law System—a welcomed investment that we hope will improve women and children's safety, wellbeing and access to justice. Further, the government has committed to implementing recommendations from the *Respect@Work Report*, to assist in addressing sexual harassment in Australian workplaces and devoted \$80.6 million over five years to gendered violence data collection and analysis. Lastly, the focus on tailored service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, including women on temporary visas, and women with disability, is particularly welcomed and will ensure violence strategies are tailored to the specific and intersecting needs of diverse communities.

Economic insecurity limits victim-survivor's options for leaving abusive relationships and exposes women to unsafe and unfair working conditions.² Closing the gender pay gap is therefore vital for ensuring the safety of women around Australia. The \$1.9 billion investment into women's workforce participation and economic security is a significant improvement upon last year's budget. The various initiatives supporting women-dominated industries as well as women's education, skills and leadership building are welcomed but more investment is required. Additionally, AWAVA welcomes the removal of the \$450 threshold in superannuation arrangements and the data sharing of superannuation in separation proceedings as well as

¹ Boxall H., Morgan A. & Brown R. (2020) The prevalence of domestic violence among women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistical Bulletin no. 28. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. Available at: <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/sb/sb28>

² ANROWS (2016). Domestic violence and women's economic security: Building Australia's capacity for prevention and redress: Final report. Available at: <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/domestic-violence-and-womens-economic-security-building-australias-capacity-for-prevention-and-redress-final-report/>

efforts to improve the aged-care sector and increase access to childcare through the introduction of a childcare subsidy.

The \$351.6 million investment in women’s health is inadequate for the National Women’s Health Strategy (NWHS) (2020-2030). In particular, budget limitations will restrict the implementation of actions related to the NWHS Priority Area 5: Health impacts of violence against women and girls. It is unclear as to if/what funding will be dedicated to women’s specialist health services or to the Australian Women’s Health Network. While the budget does extend the temporary MBS item numbers for select telehealth services, these are only funded until late 2021 after which access remains uncertain. Given we are two years into an ambitious national women’s health strategy, action needs to be taken to ensure that key measures remain achievable, including a ‘decrease in deaths from physical violence on women’, ‘reduction in the rate of reproductive coercion’ and ‘increase in number of services available and women accessing these services’ by 2030.

Whilst the Government’s larger than usual investment in women is welcomed, several gaps remain in this year’s budget that may impede the efficacy of the proposed women’s safety and economic empowerment strategies. These gaps will be interrogated throughout this paper and stem mostly from a lack of intersectional gender-responsive budgeting and a failure of the government to address the structural challenges underpinning gendered violence. More investment is needed into the enablers of gender equality such as reducing the gender pay gap and the wealth gap, superannuation imbalances, more accessible childcare and systems to encourage more men to take parenting leave. Overall, this budget represents a starting point for stimulating further reform and investment towards ending violence against women in Australia.

Women’s Safety:

Women's Safety					
Payments (\$m)					
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Department of the Treasury	-	161.6	189.1	60.2	61.2
Department of Social Services	-	122.1	131.9	29.0	39.1
Attorney-General's Department	-	19.9	28.2	29.7	30.2
National Indigenous Australians Agency	-	12.8	10.9	2.3	-
Australian Communications and Media Authority	-	12.1	6.7	-	-
Department of Home Affairs	-	10.2	10.3	8.9	-
Services Australia	-	5.8	5.8	5.8	-
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications	-	4.4	-	-	-
Total — Payments	-	348.8	382.8	135.9	130.5
Related receipts (\$m)					
Australian Taxation Office	-
Department of Home Affairs	-
Total — Receipts	-

In this year’s budget, a total of \$1.1 billion was dedicated to addressing and preventing violence against women and their children. This is a significant improvement upon the 2020-21 budget, in which the

government's investment of only \$150 million into FDV services during COVID-19 left specialist women's services drastically under-resourced and victim-survivors with little to no support.³ This \$1.1 billion package consists of the following components:

Funding to respond to all forms of violence against women and their children

An allocation of \$507.3 million over four years from 2021-22 will directly support women and children experiencing violence. This includes:

- \$261.4 million over two years from 2021-22 to expand the National Partnership Agreement with the states and territories and increase funding of frontline FDSV support services
- \$164.8 million over three years from 2021-22 for a two-year trial program to provide financial support of up to \$5,000 to women fleeing a violent relationship
- \$29.3 million over three years from 2021-22 to support refugee women and other migrant women's safety and social economic inclusion
- \$26.0 million over four years to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children who have experienced or are experiencing family violence
- \$25.9 million over four years for a range of further measures to support women affected by FDSV including expanding the Safe Places program, further supporting Temporary Visa holders experiencing FDSV and addressing technology-facilitated abuse of women and children.

Specialist women's services draw on client-centred, trauma-informed and intersectional frameworks to support women's recovery from violence and implement greater gender equality throughout the community.⁴ These services are key to achieving women's safety and the above investments will marginally increase their capacity to support women escaping various forms of violence and abuse. AWAVA agrees with the statements of other women's advocacy groups, including Fair Agenda, that this investment, (representing less than \$1 per day for every woman seeking crisis accommodation), is not enough to adequately tackle the problem of gendered violence in Australia.⁵ However, this funding is a good starting point for the work ahead and AWAVA is heartened by Senator The Hon Anne Ruston's comments regarding the Women's Safety Package as a "down payment on the next National Plan which will commence in mid-2022, with further investment to follow after consultations including the National Women's Safety Summit to be held in July this year".⁶ AWAVA is looking forward to the July National Women's Safety summit and to ensuring that this funding supports best practice frameworks and the unique role of specialist women's services in ending violence against women.

³ Kennedy, Else. (2020). 'The Worst Year': Domestic Violence Soars in Australia during COVID-19.' *The Guardian*. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/dec/01/the-worst-year-domestic-violence-soars-in-australia-during-covid-19>

⁴ For more information see: <https://awava.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/SWS-Brochure-web-version.pdf>.

⁵ Fair Agenda. (2021). Media Resource: Women's safety funding needed in the federal budget. Available at: <https://www.fairagenda.org/media>.

⁶ Senator the Hon Anne Ruston. (2021). Media Releases: Budget Delivering for Australian Women. Ministers for the Department of Social Services. Available at: <https://ministers.dss.gov.au/media-releases/7016>.

Diverse Communities

AWAVA is pleased to see funding directed specifically into measures that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, including women on temporary visas, and women with disability.

AWAVA welcomes the announcement of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council as well as funding to culturally sensitive front-line services and the Personal Safety Survey for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Despite this, the Change the Record Coalition highlights that the “budget delivers less than a quarter of the funding needed for the 14 family violence legal prevention services to provide crucial front-line services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women”.⁷ Hence, AWAVA calls for additional funding into gender-based violence services specifically led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as well as further reforms to tackle institutional racism and foster Indigenous self-determination.

Women with disability experience significantly higher levels of all forms of violence and increased barriers to accessing support and justice. As a result, AWAVA welcomes the \$9.3 million (over three years) investment into implementing the recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission. Nevertheless, it is concerning to see the introduction of independent assessments in planned changes to the NDIS. According to WWDA, these measures adopt a gender-blind approach and are set to disproportionately disadvantage and lower the NDIS participation rates of women with disability.⁸

Lastly, the \$29.3 million investment into migrant and refugee women’s safety and \$10.3 million devoted to extending the pilot program supporting women on temporary visa’s experiencing violence, will provide some support to victim-survivors who cannot access services because of their visa status. AWAVA is concerned however, that the Pilot Program is characterized by a “two-tier system”, that provides \$2000 less financial support to women on temporary visas compared to other victim-survivors of violence.⁹ Additionally, the changes to social security accessibility announced in this year’s budget mean that migrant women will have to wait up to four years before they are eligible for social security payments, ultimately increasing their vulnerability to violence.¹⁰

Safe, Affordable Social Housing for Women Escaping Violence

Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness in Australia. The demand for affordable housing is further exacerbated by the gender pay gap that often leaves women in violent relationships with

⁷ National Foundation for Australian Women. (2021) Budget 2021 – Reducing violence against women and their children. Available at: <https://nfaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Violence-against-women.pdf>

⁸ Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA). 2021. WWDA Responds to the Inquiry into Independent Assessments. Available at: <https://wwda.org.au/2021/03/wwda-responds-to-the-inquiry-into-independent-assessments/>

⁹ For more information see: <https://mailchi.mp/5e7358b1db60/media-release-federal-budget-2021-22?e=41f0f9419b&fbclid=IwAR1TmirB16rlorHISRUEu6WIZAhOjXcyAIMVQdaNiSylnKCej6th42hrttE>.

¹⁰ Harmony Alliance. (2021). Media Release: Focus on migrant and refugee women’s safety is welcome, but changes to social security access are deeply concerning. Available at: <https://mailchi.mp/5e7358b1db60/media-release-federal-budget-2021-22?e=41f0f9419b>

high levels of financial insecurity. Despite this, in last year budget, decisions were made to cut \$41.3 million from homelessness services and infrastructure funding was directed into constructing major roads and the home renovation subsidy rather than increasing Australia's social housing stock.

This year, AWAVA welcomes the \$124 million devoted to the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, however this funding has been "maintained rather than increased". In addition, whilst the \$12.6 million over three years for the Safe Places Projects is commendable, overall, more funding is needed to address the chronic under-supply of emergency accommodation for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence. It is also unfortunate that this budget did not enact long-standing sector calls for the development of a national strategy to address the structural contributors to Australia's housing crisis, including the financialization of housing and affordability stress affecting low-income renters.¹¹

AWAVA does recognise the potential of the Family Home Guarantee Policy in assisting single parents (including women and children escaping violence) to purchase a home with a minimum deposit of 2 per cent as long as this does not place women in further debt. This policy, however, does not go far enough to address systemic issues, including the shortage of social housing, the gender pay gap and affordable rentals. As a result, it fails to fully empower women to leave abusive environments.

Violence Prevention Measures

Funding of \$92.4 million will be provided over four years to support programs aimed at the prevention of FDSV, to support education on consent and respectful relationships and to improve training outcomes for those who may encounter FDSV. This includes:

- \$24.4 million over two years to extend the *Stop it at the Start* prevention campaign
- \$23.2 million over two years to address online harm to Australians, and inform the community of support available as part of the Government's online safety reforms
- \$10.7 million over four years for additional education resources for young Australians about respectful relationships
- \$34.1 million over four years from 2021-22 for a range of further measures aimed at the prevention of FDSV, including programs aimed at working with those at risk of committing FDSV, preventing and responding to FDSV against women with a disability and supporting better FDSV responses for diverse communities.

Primary prevention strategies promote women's independence and decision making, confront gendered stereotypes and challenge violence condoning attitudes, ultimately resulting in more positive, equitable and respectful relationships. In last year's budget, funding for the RespectMatters Program, an education initiative designed to support the respectful relationships education curriculum and increase student safety and wellbeing, was cut in half.

Whilst this year saw an increase in violence prevention funding, \$92.4 million over four years is not enough to adequately implement effective primary prevention strategies at an organisational, institutional and structural level. Further, more funding must be directed into improving the Good Society website. This includes meaningfully engaging with experts to eliminate contradictions within the website that only work

¹¹ Mission Australia. (2021). Mission Australia's response to Federal Budget 2021-22. Available at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/news-blog/news-media/mission-australia-s-response-to-federal-budget-2021-22>

to “confuse the issue of consent” and “exacerbate problematic attitudes towards sexual violence”.¹² Lastly, AWAVA welcomes extra investment into the *Stop it at the Start Campaign* and recommend that this funding be used to include the voices and experiences of women from diverse communities, including women with disability.¹³ It is unfortunate that no solid budget commitments were devoted to making Australia’s national relationships and sexuality education curriculum mandatory for all schools and concerning that no moves were made to introduce a positive duty on employers in the Sex Discrimination Act.¹⁴ Nevertheless, whilst more investment in primary prevention is required, AWAVA welcomes the significant increase in funding towards violence prevention, as an essential first step towards ending violence against women.

Legal and Justice Measures

Funding of \$320.1 million over four years will be provided to further support services that assist vulnerable women and children to engage with the legal system, increase access to Children's Contact Services and support the development of improvements in the legal system in dealing with FDSV. This includes:

- \$129.0 million over four years from 2021-22 for additional legal assistance funding for women's legal centres under the National Legal Assistance Partnership
- \$101.4 million over four years from 2021-22 (with \$29.5 million per year ongoing) to increase access to Children's Contact Services, which help separated parents who would otherwise be unable to safely manage contact arrangements for their children, including through the establishment of an additional 20 Children's Contact Services.
- \$85.0 million over three years from 2022-23 to continue and enhance funding towards existing Family Advisory Support Services and to extend services to new locations to provide support for people affected by FDSV who have a family law issue
- \$4.7 million over two years from 2021-22 to support national discussions with the states and territories on a joint program of work to strengthen the justice response to sexual assault, sexual harassment and coercive control.

Specialist women’s legal services play a crucial role in responding to and preventing gendered violence. Even prior to COVID-19, frontline legal services were struggling to meet rising demand. Now, following the pandemic, these services have reached breaking point, with many unable to answer up to 50 per cent of the calls they receive for help.¹⁵ In last year’s budget, the government continued its commitment to funding

¹² Gillespie, Eden. (2021). ‘Calls for confusing sex ed site to be reviewed’. SBS The Feed. Available at: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/the-feed/calls-for-confusing-sex-ed-site-to-be-reviewed>.

¹³ For more information see: <https://wwda.org.au/publication/letter-to-the-minister-for-families-and-social-services-raising-concerns-with-the-stop-it-at-the-start-website/>.

¹⁴ This relationships and sexuality education must support age-appropriate content related to public vs private body parts, enthusiastic consent, digital cultures and health literacy, LGBTQI+ health, body positivity and sexual abuse prevention.

¹⁵ SBS News. (2021). ‘Almost 1,500 calls a month to Australia’s domestic violence support line have been going un-answered’. Available at: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/almost-1-500-calls-a-month-to-australia-s-domestic-violence-support-line-have-been-going-unanswered>.

to the National Legal Assistance Partnership, however offered no additional support to these services despite the increased burden initiated by the pandemic.

This year's budget has sought to rectify this, and as a result, AWAVA welcomes the additional \$320.1 million devoted to legal support services over four years. Under this, the Attorney-General's Department will receive critical additional funding to administer the National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-25 (NLAP) in conjunction with the Treasury and the National Indigenous Australians Agency. The NLAP supports frontline legal assistance services delivered by Legal Aid Commissions, Community Legal Centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and specialist Domestic Violence Units/Health Justice Partnerships. In addition, existing and new Children's Contact Services will receive an increase in funding from around \$18 million to \$35 million annually.¹⁶ It is critical that these services meet appropriate standards where staff are properly trained by family violence experts in risk assessment for family violence and sexual assault cases. This increased funding will boost the capacity of specialist children's and women's legal services, reduce waiting times and support thousands of women and children to access the legal advice they need to better enable them to live safely.

Family Law System

The Government will provide \$123.8 million over four years to support the reform of the family law system and improve access and safety for children and families. Funding includes:

- \$60.8 million over four years from 2021-22 (and \$1.7 million per year ongoing) to reform family law case management processes to improve outcomes and better meet the needs of families by delivering a safe, child centred, accessible and efficient system
- \$29.0 million over four years from 2021-22 (and \$8.5 million per year ongoing) to improve information sharing between the family law and the family violence and child protection systems, to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families interacting with the family law system, including managing risk to family safety
- \$26.9 million over four years from 2021-22 (and \$6.8 million per year ongoing) to improve access to legal assistance for family law matters in South Australia and to increase judicial and court resources in the South Australian family law registry
- \$6.3 million in 2021-22 to the Family Violence and Cross Examination of Parties Scheme to continue to protect victims of family violence in family law proceedings.
- \$0.9 million over four years from 2021-22 to support the Family Law Council (and \$0.2 million per year ongoing) to advise the Attorney-General on the operation of the *Family Law Act 1975* and other matters relating to family law.

Reforming the family law system is long overdue. As a result, AWAVA welcomes increased funding in this year's budget that will ensure women feel safe, supported and more willing to access justice. Nevertheless, this funding only addresses the tip of the iceberg, and more resourcing is needed to address structural shortcomings and discrimination within the justice system. While increased judicial and court resources to the South Australian Family Law Registry are welcomed, the 2021-22 budget does not fund the appointment

¹⁶ Family and Relationships Services Australia (FRSA). (2021). FRSA Bulletin No. 7. Available at: <https://frsa.org.au/frsa-bulletin-no-7-2021/>.

of additional, adequately trained Family Law Judges at a national level. Without increased Judicial resources in Courts dealing with family law, (including extra Registrars, family consultants, children’s advocates, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officers and Multicultural Liaison Officers), this budget fails to adequately address the overburdened system that currently places increased strain on women and dissuades many victim-survivors from accessing justice.¹⁷

Secondly, although welcomed, this funding contradicts the federal government’s decision to merge the specialist, standalone Family Court of Australia with the “equally overburdened and under-resourced Federal Circuit Court”. This move will increase delays in the family court system and reduce the level of expertise in family violence matters that is essential to ensuring women and children are safe, supported and empowered through family court processes. Lastly, although AWAVA welcomes the ban on the direct cross-examination of victim-survivors of family violence, urgent law reform is needed in other areas to centre the safety of victim-survivors. This includes reforming measures such as the assumption of shared parental responsibility and actively addressing the disproportionately high rates of child removal experienced by Indigenous women and women with disability.¹⁸ Ultimately, AWAVA hopes that this funding will instigate further reforms to the family law and legal aid system and bolster a system-wide strategy to end violence against women and their children.

Respect@Work

The Government will provide further funding over four years to implement its response to the Respect@Work Report. Funding includes:

- \$9.3 million over four years from 2021-22 to support the implementation of the Government’s response to the *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report*; including for the *Respect@Work* Council Secretariat
- \$6.0 million over four years from 2021-22 to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency and the Australian Public Service Commission to strengthen reporting on sexual harassment prevalence, prevention and response
- funding for additional legal assistance for specialist lawyers with workplace and discrimination law expertise.

Published in 2020, the Respect@Work Report highlighted the pervasiveness of sexual assault and harassment in Australian workforces and offered a comprehensive list of recommendations for addressing this issue. AWAVA is pleased to see the government’s commitment to implementing the recommendations

¹⁷ AWAVA. 2020. Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Australia’s Family Law System. Available at: https://awava.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Final-AWAVA-submission-Joint-Select-Family-Law_31Jan2020.pdf.

¹⁸ For more information see https://wwda.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Position_Statement_4_-_Sexual_and_Reproductive_Rights_FINAL_WEB.pdf and http://natsiwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/NATSIWA_Domestic-Violence-and-Gender-Inequality-Senate-Inquiry_Submission-20160331.pdf and <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/family-matters/issue-92/violence-abuse-and-limits-shared-parental-responsibility>.

set out in this Report. We hope to see this funding assist in the development of a systemic plan for building the safety and economic security of women in all workplaces.

Data Collection

Funding of \$80.6 million over five years will also be provided to improve data collection and to further enhance research capability into FDSV to better support the development of future policy responses including the development of the next National Plan to reduce Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia. This includes:

- \$31.6 million over five years from 2021-22 for a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survey on safety and violence.
- \$30.0 million for Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety and the Australian Bureau of Statistics to continue collecting evidence and data on FDSV.
- \$11.6 million over four years from 2021-22 for the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to expand its online services relating to FDSV.
- \$7.4 million over four years from 2021-22 to enhance performance monitoring and establish an evaluation framework for the new National Plan.

AWAVA is pleased to see the government's commitment to boosting data and analysis of violence against women, especially the expansion of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to encompass FDSV. This funding will assist the sector to continue to build the evidence base for policy and practice and allow for improved monitoring and evaluation of women's safety strategies. We hope that this will ensure policy efforts to end violence against women are intersectional, community-based, trauma informed and client-centred.

Women's Economic Security Package:

Women's Economic Security Package					
Payments (\$m)					
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Services Australia	0.2	13.5	2.4	2.3	-
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet	-	6.4	10.7	10.2	14.2
Attorney-General's Department	-	2.4	4.9	-	-
Federal Court of Australia	-	1.2	2.3	-	-
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources	-	0.8	4.1	8.1	12.7
Department of Education, Skills and Employment	-20.9	-6.2	507.4	624.4	626.6
Total — Payments	-20.7	18.1	531.8	645.1	653.5

Economic insecurity puts women at higher risk of violence. Without financial stability, victim-survivors have limited options for leaving an abusive relationship and are more exposed to homelessness, unsafe households and working conditions.¹⁹ Overall, the government will provide \$1.8 billion over five years, a significant improvement upon last year's budget, to improve women's workforce participation and economic security, including:

- \$1.7 billion over five years from 2020-21 (and \$671.2 million per year ongoing) to assist families by reducing out of pocket costs and supporting parental choice through increasing the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) rate by 30 percentage points for the second child and subsequent children aged five years and under in care, up to a maximum CCS rate of 95 per cent for these children, commencing on 11 July 2022; and removing the CCS annual cap of \$10,560 per child per year commencing on 1 July 2022
- \$42.4 million over seven years from 2021-22 to establish the Boosting the Next Generation of Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Program by co-funding scholarships for women in STEM in partnership with industry
- \$38.3 million over five years from 2021-22 to increase grant funding available through the *Women's Leadership and Development Program*
- \$13.9million over four years from 2021-22 to establish an Early-Stage Social Enterprise Foundation focused on providing capacity building and financial support for early-stage social enterprises that improve the safety and economic security of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- \$12.2 million over two years from 2021-22 to fund an additional round of the *National Careers Institute Partnership Grants* program to support projects that facilitate career opportunities and career pathways for women
- \$10.7 million over two years from 2021-22 to extend the family law small claims property pilot and Legal Aid Commission family law property mediation trial for settlement of property of less than \$500,000 following a relationship breakdown
- \$2.6 million over three years from 2021-22 to expand the *Career Revive* program to support more medium to large regional businesses attract and retain women returning to work after a career break
- \$0.6 million over three years from 2021-22 for the Women in STEM Ambassador to develop an evaluation toolkit to support standardised evaluation planning and reporting tools for the STEM sector in the evaluation of STEM gender equity initiatives. Funding for this will be met from within the existing resources of the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.
- expanding the *Mid-Career Checkpoint Program* to Victoria, beyond existing pilots in Queensland and New South Wales, and expanding eligibility to include people who have been absent from work due to caring responsibilities for six months or more and existing workers at risk of unemployment, primarily targeting women-dominated, COVID-19 affected industries. Training grants of up to \$3,000 will also be available to support skills and training needs to increase employability and support career advancement. Funding for this will be met from within the existing resources of the Department of Education, Skills, and Employment.
- \$15.6 million in 2021-22 to increase all wage subsidies to \$10,000 for eligible participants in jobactive, Transition to Work, and ParentsNext to incentivise employers to hire eligible disadvantaged job seekers.

¹⁹ Cortis, N & Bullen, J (2016), 'Domestic violence and women's economic security: Building Australia's capacity for prevention and redress: Final report', ANROWS, Sydney. Available at: <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/domestic-violence-and-womens-economic-security-building-australias-capacity-for-prevention-and-redress-final-report/>.

This will align with wage subsidies commencing under the New Employment Services Model measure from 1 July 2022.

COVID-19 undoubtedly stimulated a 'pink recession' with women more likely than men to lose their jobs and experience financial hardship as a result of the pandemic.²⁰ Despite this, the 2020-21 budget funnelled investment into men-dominated industries whilst women fleeing domestic and family violence were told to withdraw up to \$10,000 from their superannuation accounts. Not only did this policy have long-term financial ramifications for women (who already retire with around 42 per cent less super than men) but it also placed women and children at greater risk of continued physical abuse and financial extortion.²¹

Superannuation

The government abandoned the 'early release of superannuation' policy in March 2021 and has since announced the removal of the \$450 threshold in superannuation arrangements in the 2021-22 budget. AWAVA welcomes these actions. The removal of the \$450 threshold in superannuation will allow employees to receive employer-paid superannuation regardless of their monthly earnings. This will provide some benefit towards the long-term financial security of around 300,000 part-time workers, the majority of whom are women. This budget has also introduced a reform that will make superannuation visible in separation proceedings. This will ensure victim-survivors "who have struggled for far too long to gain access to their partner's super balance during separation proceedings" receive greater financial security when leaving a violent relationship.²² Although AWAVA is disappointed that no movements were made to ensure superannuation is paid during parental leave (a vital policy that would ensure "women don't fall behind men on super just because they have taken time out to raise the kids"), these reforms represent a creditable step towards ensuring the economic security and therefore long-term safety of women around Australia.²³

Continuation of Parents-Next and the Cashless Debit Card

It is disappointing to see the continuation of ParentsNext and the Cashless Debit Card in this year's budget. Both programs have unintended negative consequences for women and victim-survivors of violence and AWAVA's previous input regarding both can be found [here](#) and [here](#). AWAVA recommends abolishing the mandatory Cashless Debit Card scheme and ensuring stronger and more effective exemptions for women experiencing violence from welfare-to-work requirements such as Parents-Next. These welfare-to-work requirements must be reformed to be less punitive and more practical for parents.

²⁰ Boyle, Jacqueline, Rhonda Garad, Helena Teede. (2020). 'There's a fundamental need to reverse the 'pink recession''. Monash University. Available at: <https://lens.monash.edu/@medicine-health/2020/12/14/1381848/theres-a-fundamental-need-to-reverse-the-pink-recession#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20women%20unemployed%20rose%20by%20almost%2050%25%20over,cent%2C%20compared%20with%2041%25.>

²¹ Doron, Matthew. (2021). 'Government dumps plan to allow domestic violence victims to withdraw superannuation'. Available at: [https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-22/government-dumps-domestic-violence-victims-superannuation-plan/13268294.](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-22/government-dumps-domestic-violence-victims-superannuation-plan/13268294)

²² Scheerlinck, Eva. (2021). 'Govt urged to press ahead with measure to make super assets visible in family court proceedings'. Mirage. Available at: [https://www.miragenews.com/govt-urged-to-press-ahead-with-measure-to-make-532669/.](https://www.miragenews.com/govt-urged-to-press-ahead-with-measure-to-make-532669/)

²³ Women in super. (2020). 'Why it is so important to receive super while on parental leave'. Available at: [https://www.womeninsuper.com.au/content/why-is-it-so-important-to-receive-super-while-on-parental-leave/gjktnp.](https://www.womeninsuper.com.au/content/why-is-it-so-important-to-receive-super-while-on-parental-leave/gjktnp)

Childcare and Aged Care

Lastly, AWAVA welcomes the injection of funding into women-dominated industries such as childcare and aged-care as a means of supporting women's workforce participation. However, the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recommended \$10 billion per year to reform Australia's aged care system, including improving the safety of women in aged care and supporting the workforce predominantly staffed by women. AWAVA is therefore concerned that the proposed \$3.5 billion per year will not be enough to adequately reform this sector.

Additionally, several issues with the newly introduced Childcare Subsidy may work to impede, rather than support women's economic empowerment. Firstly, the interaction of the subsidy with the family tax benefit and personal income tax system means that the more money women earn, the less they will receive in childcare benefits. This acts as a major dis-incentive to women to increase their workforce participation, pushing them to cut back on work hours to avoid receiving major financial penalties. Secondly, the subsidy has no price regulation mechanism to prevent childcare services from continuing to increase fees, therefore potentially eliminating the benefits of the subsidy for working parents. Thirdly, the strict eligibility criteria of the subsidy mean that families will only benefit if they have more than one child in the system under the age of five. In addition to addressing these shortcomings, AWAVA recommends expanding the eligibility for the childcare subsidy to all women on temporary visas experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence as well as improving access to respite services for women who have child(ren) with a disability or additional family caring responsibilities. Ultimately, AWAVA welcomes the childcare subsidy as a first step to enhancing the financial empowerment and security of women, however, more work is needed to tackle structural contributors to the gender pay gap that will, in turn, ensure the long-term safety of all women in Australia.