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Australian women have made many important gains over recent generations. Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit us, women’s workforce participation had reached a record high, and the gender pay gap was at a record low. As we navigate our way out of a health and economic crisis, it is critical that women play a central role in our recovery.

The Government recognises that increasing women’s workforce participation is an economic and social priority. That is why, in 2018, we released the inaugural Women’s Economic Security Statement with a focus on three key pillars – workforce participation, earning potential and economic independence.

The 2020 Women’s Economic Security Statement significantly expands on the 2018 document, with input from women across Australia. Since being appointed Minister for Women, I have held a series of national roundtables, which focused on women’s economic security and leadership, and women’s safety. These invaluable discussions helped us identify five key priority areas:

- repair and rebuild women’s workforce participation and further close the gender pay gap
- greater choice and flexibility for families to manage work and care
- support women as leaders and positive role models
- respond to the diverse needs of women
- support women to be safe at work and home.

In driving these priorities, gender-disaggregated data, analysis about gender impacts and the diverse experiences of women will inform our approach.

The 2020 Women’s Economic Security Statement comes at an unprecedented time for our country – and the world – as we deal with the impacts associated with COVID-19. Women have been significantly affected by this pandemic.
We have seen an increase in family and domestic violence and a concerning rise in online harassment and reports of image-based abuse. Industries in which women are heavily represented were hit hard, shining a spotlight on the predominance of women in vulnerable jobs and industries, such as tourism, hospitality and retail. Making up the majority of employees in essential services like health care and education, women have literally been on the front lines.

These challenges have exacerbated many of the issues identified in the 2018 Statement. It is now up to all of us to ensure we do not just restore the hard-earned gains achieved before COVID-19, but exceed them.

When women’s individual economic security improves, their participation in work and leadership has flow-on benefits for business, industry, and whole economies. The 2020 Women’s Economic Security Statement is building on initiatives in the Government’s overarching JobMaker Plan for an economic recovery that creates jobs, increases women’s work choices, addresses barriers to women working in the paid workplace, and ensures that women experiencing violence – including sexual harassment – can access support and enter and remain in paid work.

This government is working hard to lift women’s economic security, but government cannot do it alone. We must continue to work to remove barriers and create more opportunities to help women realise their potential for themselves and for Australia. To boost women’s economic security, address discrimination, reduce violence against women including sexual harassment, and narrow the gender pay gap, we need everyone to get on board: individuals, business, industry, community groups, and governments.

Together, we can create lasting change. And, in doing so, we must not settle for what is good enough. We must have the ambition to aim for what is best.

The 2020 Women’s Economic Security Statement is a vital step in creating more opportunities and choices for women, not just for the recovery from COVID-19, but for the generations ahead.

Senator the Hon Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Minister for Women
THE STATEMENT AT A GLANCE

Building on the first Women’s Economic Security Statement in 2018 and complementing a range of the Government’s JobMaker Plan initiatives, the 2020 Women’s Economic Security Statement (the 2020 Statement) has five priorities:

• **Repair and rebuild women’s workforce participation and further close the gender pay gap** (Chapter 1)
  Re-opening the Australian economy following COVID-19 restrictions presents opportunities to address barriers to women’s full participation in the economy and increase choice so that women can reach their full potential in the workforce.

• **Greater choice and flexibility for families to manage work and care** (Chapter 2)
  To increase women’s workforce participation, we need to focus on further closing the gender gap in unpaid work and care, and normalising flexible work for both women and men.

• **Support women as leaders and positive role models** (Chapter 3)
  The Government is working to advance women’s leadership by removing barriers to women’s progression in the workforce and changing expectations about men’s and women’s roles.

• **Respond to the diverse needs of women** (Chapter 4)
  Effective policy and programs targeted at boosting Australian women’s economic security must be informed by hearing and responding to their diverse lived experiences.

• **Supporting women to be safe at work and home** (Chapter 5)
  Whole-of-community approaches are required to ensure women are safe at home, at work, in the community and online. Women need to be safe at work and home to fully participate at work.
# Women’s Economic Security Statement 2020: At a Glance

Women’s economic security is a priority for the Government’s JobMaker Plan. It is good for individuals, families, businesses, society and the economy.

## Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repair and rebuild women’s workforce participation and further close the gender pay gap</th>
<th>Greater choice and flexibility for families to manage work and care</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government’s JobMaker Plan to respond to COVID-19, including JobKeeper, JobMaker Hiring Credit, Coronavirus Supplement, JobTrainer, Higher Education funding, wage subsidies for new apprentices, and Creative Economy Package</td>
<td>Early Childhood Education and Care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Women@Work (2020 measure)**  
- Expanding the Women’s Leadership and Development Program, including creating a new Women’s Job Creation priority area  
- Boosting existing priority areas, including to support women experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence to return to and retain work  
- Expanding proven projects, including the Academy for Enterprising Girls and Women Building Australia programs | **Temporary changes to the Paid Parental Leave work test in response to COVID-19 (2020 measure)** |
| Women in Aviation Initiative | **Changes to ParentsNext (2020 measure)** |
| Career Revive Initiative (2018 measure) | Women’s Leadership and Development Program projects, including funding for Beam Australia to promote flexible work |
| Mid-Career Checkpoint | **Increasing flexibility in the Parental Leave Pay system (2018 measure)** |
| **Boosting Female Founders Initiative (2018 and 2020 measure)** | **Extending access to Parental Leave Pay through changes to the work test (2018 measure)** |
| Australia’s Future Women in STEM (2020 measure) | **Reinstalling the ABS Time Use Survey (2018 measure)** |
| **Women in STEM Cadetship and Advanced Apprenticeships (2020 measure)** | Support for veterans and their families |
| Building Australia’s digital and cyber skills for women | |
| Curious Minds Program (2018 measure) | |
| More women in the computer science industry | |
| Supporting women in vocational education and training | |
| Continuing support for the Social and Community Services Sector | |
| Workplace Gender Equality Agency – measuring the gender pay gap (2018 measure) | |
| Scholarships for Women in Economics and Finance (2018 measure) | |
When women are supported to reach their full potential, their talents and skills benefit the whole population and help drive economic growth. This 2020 Women’s Economic Security Statement has five priorities, which build on the 2018 Statement and complement a range of other JobMaker Plan initiatives outlined in Chapter 1. Like its 2018 counterpart, the 2020 Statement recognises that women’s economic security is a long-term, multi-dimensional challenge. Gender-disaggregated data, analysis about gender impacts and the diverse experiences of women will inform our approach.

Support women as leaders and positive role models

- Expanding the Women’s Leadership and Development Program (2020 measure)
- Academy for Enterprising Girls (2018 and 2020 measure)
- Partnering with the private sector to support women in leadership through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency
  - Competitor Analysis Benchmark Reports
  - Gender Equality Scorecard
  - Employer of Choice Awards
  - Gender Equity Insights
- Target for Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards
- Celebrating inspirational women in our national stories
  - Women in Music Mentor Program
  - Screen Australia’s Gender Matters
  - Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support program
- Supporting elite athletes as role models
  - 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup
  - Women Leaders in Sport program
- Minister for Women’s national series of roundtables
- G20 EMPOWER network

Respond to the diverse needs of women

- Supporting women from different backgrounds (2020 measures)
  - Women@Work
  - Boosting Female Founders Initiative
  - Women in STEM initiatives
  - Changes to ParentsNext
- National Women’s Alliances
- Australian Women Against Violence Alliance
- Equality Rights Alliance
- Economic Security4Women
- Harmony Alliance
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Alliance
- National Rural Women’s Coalition
- Collaboration with Women With Disabilities Australia
- Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women’s Voices)
- Support for young people, including a New National Youth Policy Framework, Youth JobsPaTH and Transition to Work
- Support for older women, including the Skills Checkpoint for Older Workers and Restart Wage Subsidy

Supporting women to be safe at work and home

- Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022
- COVID-19 Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence response package
- Respect@Work, implementing key findings from AHRC report (2020 measure)
- Preventing Financial Abuse
  - A Guide to the Treatment of Relationship Debt
  - Tackling online harm
- Small Claims Property Pilot Program (2018 measure)
- Providing Specialist Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships (2018 measure)
- Improving the Visibility of Superannuation Assets in Family Law Proceedings (2018 measure)
- No Interest Loans Scheme (2018 measure)
- Early Release of Superannuation for Victims of Domestic and Family Violence (2018 measure)
- Providing Family Law Property Mediation (2018 measure)
- Ensure Victims of Family Violence are Protected from Direct Cross-examination by their Perpetrators (2018 measure)
ACHIEVEMENTS FOR WOMEN: HIGHLIGHTS

ACHIEVEMENTS SNAPSHOT

The 2020 Statement and associated package of measures builds on the Government’s record of support for women. The $240.4 million package over five years provides targeted support to create new opportunities for women. Since 2013, the Government has invested more than $1 billion in women’s safety, made significant investments in child care and paid parental leave, and has overseen the highest number of women into leadership positions on Australian Government boards. Pre-COVID-19, there had been a record high women’s workforce participation rate and a record low gender pay gap.

The Government is also delivering an additional $17.8 billion in tax relief to support the economic recovery, and to create jobs. Support is targeted to low- and middle-income earners, who will receive a tax cut of up to $2,745 for singles, and up to $5,490 for dual income families in 2020-21, compared with 2017-18 settings.

The 2020 Statement builds on the Government’s inaugural 2018 Statement, which provided $119 million over four years to increase women’s workforce participation, earning potential, and economic independence.¹

Key Statistics pre-COVID-19

Women’s workforce participation rate (ages 15+) was at a record high up from 58.7% in September 2013 to 61.5% in January 2020. Since September 2013, 1.5 million jobs have been created, 58.9% of which went to women. The gender pay gap was at a record low of 13.9% (November 2019).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s workforce participation rate</th>
<th>Since September 2013</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ages 15+)</td>
<td>1.5 million jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.7% in September 2013 to</td>
<td>have been created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.7%</td>
<td>58.9% of which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.5% in January 2020</td>
<td>went to women</td>
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<tr>
<td>There were more women working than</td>
<td>The gender pay gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ever before</td>
<td>was at a record low</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.2 million</td>
<td>of 13.9% (November</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2019)</td>
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Sources 2, 3
Before COVID-19, women’s employment was at a record high, with women taking on more than half the 1.5 million created jobs since September 2013. In November 2019, the gender pay gap was at a record low, having narrowed to 13.9 per cent – significantly lower than the 17.4 per cent gap in September 2013.

We have also reached record highs of women on Australian Government boards. On 30 June 2020, a record 48.5 per cent of Australian Government board positions were held by women and women held a record 36.9 per cent of Chair and Deputy Chair positions.

**OUR G20 WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION TARGET**

The 2014 G20 meeting in Brisbane saw leaders from G20 countries agree to reduce the gender participation gap between working-aged men and women (ages 15-64) by 25 per cent by 2025. For Australia, this meant decreasing the gap by three percentage points from 12.1 (the 2012 starting point) to 9.1 percentage points by 2025. By October 2019, Australia had surpassed its G20 Workforce Participation Target (‘the Brisbane goal’), reducing the participation gap between men and women (ages 15-64) by 25 per cent by 2025 (to 9.1 percentage points). In January 2020, the gap was 8.6 percentage points.

**Progress towards G20 workforce participation target**

Sources 8
SUPPORTING WOMEN’S SAFETY

The Government has contributed more than $1 billion to women’s safety. This includes $340 million towards the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-22. Very early in the pandemic, the Commonwealth Government committed $150 million for the COVID-19 Domestic and Family Violence Support Package. States and territories received $130 million under this package to provide additional targeted support relevant to their local communities. The further support provided to 1800RESPECT continues to ensure that 95 per cent of all contacts are answered, even under the increased pressure resulting from COVID-19.

INVESTING IN CHILD CARE

Since July 2018, the Government’s new Child Care Package provides the most support for families on low and middle incomes, and targets support to those spending the most hours working, training and studying. As a result of the Government’s record investment in early childhood education and care, over 70 per cent of families have out of pocket costs of less than $5 an hour for centre based child care and nearly a quarter are paying less than $2 per hour for centre based child care.
REPAIR AND REBUILD WOMEN’S WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION AND FURTHER CLOSE THE GENDER PAY GAP

PRIORITY SNAPSHOT

The Government’s COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan will rebuild Australia’s economy, create jobs and secure Australia’s future. It reflects the Government’s overarching objective to return Australians to work and boost prosperity as Australia emerges from the COVID-19 crisis.

The 2020-21 Budget provides $98 billion of response and recovery support, including $25 billion in further measures in response to the health and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and $74 billion under the JobMaker Plan. The Government’s five-year JobMaker Plan will boost economic growth, create jobs, invest in Australia’s future industries and skills, remove red tape, guarantee essential services and restore confidence in a stronger recovery.
PRIORITY SNAPSHOT CONTINUED

2020-21 Budget measures under the JobMaker Plan will support aggregate demand, help businesses to create jobs and are focused on returning Australians to work. The JobMaker Plan encompasses the 2020 Women’s Economic Security Statement alongside major initiatives including: more than $50 billion in tax relief to households and business over the forward estimates to create jobs; increasing the Government’s infrastructure investment pipeline by $10 billion over ten years; $4 billion for a JobMaker Hiring Credit to give businesses incentives to take on an additional employees that are aged 16 to 35 years; and $1.2 billion for new apprentices and trainees with a 50 per cent wage subsidy.

In addition to these far-reaching initiatives, which are designed to benefit both women and men, the Government is also providing tailored support for women, including funding for Women@Work, Mid-Career Checkpoint, and Boosting Female Founders Initiative Expansion, among others. The Government is also supporting the care sector by providing ongoing funding and certainty for the social and community services sector.

KEY FACTS

When women are supported to reach their full potential, their talents and skills benefit the whole population and help drive economic growth. In 2018, KPMG modelling estimated that halving the gap between men’s and women’s workforce participation in Australia would produce an additional $60 billion in GDP by 2038, and cumulative living standards would increase by $140 billion.10 We must all work to remove barriers, create more opportunities for women, and remain focused on breaking down gender segregation, whether by industry, occupation or part-time status.
Key Statistics

Women are far more likely than men to work part-time

19.2% of employed men work part-time, compared to 45.8% of employed women

Australia’s workforce is highly segregated by gender

Out of 19 industries, just 9 have at least 40% men and women

Women earn less than men

Women’s average weekly full-time earnings in ordinary time are $253.60 per week less than men

Women do most of the unpaid work

Mothers spend 57 hours a week on unpaid housework and child care, while fathers spend 29 hours a week

Women earn less than men even in industries where women are overrepresented

Health care and social assistance
77.7% female workforce

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1,913 p/w</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,505 p/w</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
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Education and training
71.2% female workforce

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<tr>
<td>$1,987 p/w</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,744 p/w</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
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Sources 11, 12, 13, 14
Impacts of COVID-19

Although we had seen significant progress for Australian women’s economic security in the years before COVID-19, women have been significantly impacted by its fallout.

The women’s workforce participation rate (ages 15+) had risen from 58.7 per cent in September 2013 to 61.5 per cent in January 2020, but fell to 57.5 per cent in May 2020.15

Between February and May 2020, 482,000 women lost employment and the women’s unemployment rate rose by 2.0 percentage points to 6.9 per cent.16 As women were more likely to be part-time or casual workers and highly represented in hard-hit industries, their job losses were high early in the pandemic following the shutdown of non-essential services and trading restrictions.

Between February and May 2020, 162,000 women lost employment in accommodation and food services, making up 58.3 per cent of total employment lost in the industry.17 In the same period, 72,000 women lost employment in retail trade, making up 87.1 per cent of total employment lost in the industry.18 Young women have been hit particularly hard by COVID-19, accounting for one third of the total fall in women’s employment.19

The easing of restrictions in industries heavily filled by women (in states other than Victoria) has seen a recovery of women’s employment in many parts of the country. Since May:

- women’s employment has increased by 270,000 and the women’s workforce participation rate (ages 15+) increased by 2.4 percentage points to 60.0 per cent20
- 56.0 per cent of women’s jobs are back21
- 58.9 per cent of the jobs returning in the recovery are going to women22
- most of the jobs recovered have been part-time, reflecting that many of the jobs initially lost were part-time
- 87.7% of jobs recovered by women are part-time and 90.5% per cent of jobs recovered by men are part-time23
- 12.3% of jobs recovered by women are full-time and 9.5% of jobs recovered by men are full-time.24

While these early signs of recovery are encouraging, there is more work to do. Women’s employment is still 3.4 per cent lower than it was in February 2020, before the impact of COVID-19. The women’s workforce participation rate (ages 15+) is still 1.3 percentage points lower than it was in February 2020.25
### Impact of COVID-19 on Women’s Employment

#### Between February and May

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>482,000 women</strong></th>
<th>Women in <strong>hospitality and retail</strong> have experienced the highest job losses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lost employment</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>72,000 young women</strong></th>
<th>(1/3 of the total fall in women’s employment)</th>
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<tr>
<td>have lost employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>since February</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>800,000 women</strong></th>
<th>who want to work more hours</th>
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### However, women’s employment has started to recover

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>270,000 women</strong></th>
<th><strong>58.9%</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>have gained</td>
<td>of the jobs returning are going to women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Sources 26, 27**

This Statement is designed to help us emerge from COVID-19 with a stronger, more resilient and more competitive job-making and income-generating economy. To do so, we are addressing both the impacts of COVID-19 and the pre-COVID-19 barriers to women’s workforce participation.
THE COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN AND MAJOR GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT WOMEN’S ECONOMIC SECURITY

The Economic Recovery Plan for Australia is focused on growing the economy so Australia can create jobs, increase economic resilience, and create a more competitive and income-generating economy. As part of the JobMaker Plan, the 2020 Women’s Economic Security Statement includes a range of new measures to complement other JobMaker Plan initiatives and provides the targeted, tailored support women need in order to overcome barriers and succeed.

### Supporting women in jobs

**The JobKeeper Payment**, now extended until 28 March 2021, will continue to help keep many Australian women in jobs. Over 1.7 million female employees/business participants have been nominated by their employer for JobKeeper.

The Government’s **JobMaker Hiring Credit** will accelerate growth in employment during the recovery by incentivising businesses to take on additional employees that are young job seekers aged 16 to 35 years old. The JobMaker Hiring Credit is a key part of the Government’s JobMaker Plan, and will help young women access job opportunities and rebuild their connection to the labour force as the economy recovers. It is expected that around 450,000 positions for young Australians will be eligible to be supported through the JobMaker Hiring Credit at a cost of $4.0 billion from 2020-21 to 2022-23.

In this Budget, the Government is delivering an additional **$17.8 billion in personal income tax relief** to support the economic recovery, including an additional $12.5 billion over the next 12 months. Under the Government’s changes, individuals will benefit from bringing forward the tax cuts in Stage 2 of our Plan, as well as a one-off additional benefit from the low and middle income tax offset in 2020-21. Together these changes will provide low- and middle-income earners with a tax cut of up to $2,745 for singles, and up to $5,490 for dual income families in 2020-21, compared with 2017-18 settings.

**The Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment** is supporting workers in Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia and New South Wales. It is available for workers with no paid leave entitlements (or who have exhausted their paid leave entitlements), who need to isolate or quarantine because they have COVID-19, or are a close contact of a person with COVID-19, or have to care for someone who needs to isolate or quarantine. Casual employees, including many women (who make up 53.4 per cent of all casual employees and 62.2 per cent of part-time casual employees), will benefit from this payment.

### Restarting Australia’s creative economy

In recognition of the economic, social and national importance of the cultural and creative sector, the Government has provided around $700 million of additional, targeted support to the sector in response to the pandemic. On 25 June, the Government announced a comprehensive COVID-19 **Creative Economy Support Package** totalling $250 million to support artists and organisations to get back in business following the disruptions caused by COVID-19. This built on $27 million provided through the Relief and Recovery Fund for Indigenous visual arts, regional arts and the charity Support Act. A further $400 million over seven years was provided to boost the Location Incentive to attract international screen productions to Australia, and $22.9 million of additional funding has been provided to support Australia’s national cultural institutions against COVID-19 related revenue losses.
The 2020-21 Budget commits a further $25 billion in direct COVID-19 support and $74 billion in measures under the JobMaker Plan. This brings the Government’s overall response and recovery support to $507 billion since the onset of the pandemic, including $257 billion in direct economic support. The Government’s response continues to be temporary and well-targeted, use existing delivery mechanisms where possible, and proportionate to the shock and its impact on the economy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skilling and re-skilling women for jobs of the future</th>
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<tr>
<td>A key pillar of the JobMaker Plan is to strengthen Australia’s vocational education and training system so that it supports Australians with the skills they need to return to work and help Australia’s economy grow. In July this year, the Government announced the JobTrainer skills package, which will support job seekers, young people and apprentices to reskill, upskill and stay engaged in training during the pandemic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Government is partnering with participating states and territories to establish a $1 billion JobTrainer Fund (with $500 million from the Commonwealth Government) to rapidly provide up to 340,700 additional free or low-fee training places in areas of identified skills need for job seekers and young people, including school leavers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Jobs Hub has been established on the Department of Education, Skills and Employment’s website to connect job seekers and employers looking to hire. It also provides tools, connections to relevant websites and information to help job seekers find employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Government has established the Local Jobs Program in 25 Employment Regions. The Program will support Australia’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 by focussing on up-skilling, re-skilling and establishing employment pathways for job seekers. Employment Facilitators will chair Local Jobs and Skills Taskforces in 25 regions to develop Local Jobs Plans, which will identify the region’s employment priorities. This will include references to women’s workforce participation issues. A Local Recovery Fund will be available in each region for local stakeholders to develop projects in line with identified needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Government is investing an additional $1 billion in research. This funding will support Australian universities to continue their world-class research and protect research jobs as they adjust to the impact of COVID-19 on international student revenue. It will drive research as a platform for economic recovery and productivity gains, as well as long-term change towards more industry-engaged and prioritised innovation. Alongside the package, the Government is also committing $25.1 million for a new program commencing from 2021 to create pathways to STEM careers for up to 500 women through industry-sponsored advanced apprenticeship-style courses. Women will also benefit from the increase in university places from 2021 and the 50,000 higher education short courses that will be on offer in 2021.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Government is providing $2.8 billion for the Supporting Apprentices and Trainees wage subsidy, which will support around 90,000 small and medium businesses to keep 180,000 apprentices and trainees in work and training by paying half their wages. More than 14,000 women apprentices and trainees have benefited from this measure. The Government has also announced a further $1.23 billion to create the new Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements subsidy to encourage employers to take on up to 100,000 new apprentices and trainees. This support will help to prevent a future skills shortage and create opportunities for women.</td>
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The Government’s response is temporary and well-targeted, use existing delivery mechanisms where possible, and proportionate to the shock and its impact on the economy.
LOWER TAXES FOR HARD-WORKING AUSTRALIANS

The Government is delivering an additional $17.8 billion in personal income tax relief in the 2020-21 Budget to support the economic recovery, including $12.5 billion over the next 12 months. It builds on the $8.1 billion in tax relief that is being delivered for the 2020-21 income year under our already legislated Personal Income Tax Plan. Under the Government’s changes, individuals will benefit from bringing forward the tax cuts in Stage 2 of our Plan, as well as a one-off additional benefit from the low and middle income tax offset (LMITO) in 2020-21.

Bringing forward the second stage involves three components. First, the low income tax offset will increase from $445 to $700. Second, the top threshold of the 19 per cent bracket will increase from $37,000 to $45,000. Third, the top threshold of the 32.5 per cent bracket will increase from $90,000 to $120,000.

The Government will also deliver an additional one-off LMITO for the 2020-21 income year. This offset provides tax relief of up to $1,080 for low- and middle-income earners.

Together, the tax cuts will deliver up to $2,745 for singles, and up to $5,490 for dual income families, in 2020-21 when compared with 2017-18 settings.

The majority of the benefit for 2020-21 will go to those on incomes below $90,000.

By putting more money in their pockets, families will keep more of what they earn, allowing them to spend more on what they need. This keeps businesses operating and ensures employers can retain their staff. As sales increase, this will improve business confidence and encourage them to create more jobs and invest. This grows our economy now and in the future.

Cameo: Tax relief for hard-working Australians

Hannah works part-time as a paralegal at a small law firm. In the 2020-21 income year, Hannah earns $60,000.

Building on the Government’s legislated Personal Income Tax Plan, the tax relief provided in this Budget means Hannah will pay $2,160 less tax for 2020-21, compared with 2017-18 settings, paying a total of $9,987 tax in 2020-21.

Bianca teaches at a high school in Queensland, and her partner Elizabeth is a senior software engineer at a small firm. In the 2020-21 income year, Bianca and Elizabeth each earn $120,000.

Building on the Government’s legislated Personal Income Tax Plan, the tax relief provided in this Budget means Bianca and Elizabeth each pay $2,745 less tax and together pay $5,490 less tax for 2020-21, compared with 2017-18 settings. Bianca and Elizabeth each pay $31,687 in tax in 2020-21.
The JobMaker Hiring Credit

The Government’s JobMaker Hiring Credit will accelerate employment growth during the recovery by incentivising businesses to take on additional employees who are young job seekers. The JobMaker Hiring Credit will help young people, including young women, access job opportunities at a time when their employment has been particularly hard-hit.

The JobMaker Hiring Credit will be available to employers from 7 October 2020 for each new job they create over the next 12 months that hires an eligible young person between 16 and 35 years old. For up to 12 months from the date of employment of an eligible new hire, eligible employers will receive a fixed amount of $200 per week if they hire an eligible employee between 16 and 29 years old, or $100 per week if they hire an eligible employee between 30 and 35 years old.

To be eligible, the employee will have to have received the JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance (Other) or Parenting Payment for at least one of the previous three months at the time of hiring. Employers must demonstrate that they have increased their overall employment to receive the JobMaker Hiring Credit, while eligible employees will need to work for a minimum of 20 hours per week, averaged over a quarter.

Cameo: Incentivising businesses to hire with the JobMaker Hiring Credit

Belinda is 30 years old. She lost her arts administration job in April 2020 and was eligible to receive the JobSeeker Payment. Belinda wins a supervisory role at Kelsey’s Pet Supplies and is employed on 31 October 2020 in a 25-hour-a-week part-time position. Kelsey’s Pet Supplies can receive a $100 per week hiring credit for up to 12 months for Belinda’s position, provided their overall employment remains higher over this period.

Kelsey’s Pet Supplies expands its operations in the new year. In February 2021, Kelsey’s Pet Supplies hires Pip, an 18-year old receiving Youth Allowance (Other) since finishing secondary school in December 2020. Pip is an entry-level casual employee and needs to work at least 20 hours a week on average to attract the JobMaker Hiring Credit. Kelsey’s Pet Supplies can receive $200 per week for up to 12 months for Pip’s position.
TARGETED SUPPORT FOR WOMEN

As part of the JobMaker Plan, the Government is providing targeted support for women to help remove barriers, increase choice and reach their full potential. These measures will support more women into work, expand opportunities for business to draw on the best talent, and build the skills Australia needs for accelerated economic recovery and growth.

The Women’s Leadership and Development Program (WLDP)

WLDP supports innovative projects and has a proven track record of creating jobs for women and helping women overcome barriers.

Women@Work

As part of the JobMaker Plan, the Government is supporting women’s job creation through a new Women@Work priority area, which expands the Women’s Leadership and Development Program (WLDP).

Grant funding will be available under the new Women’s Job Creation priority area for projects that will create employment opportunities for women. Priority will be given to scalable projects and to organisations that support vulnerable cohorts, including women from diverse backgrounds and young women at high risk of long-term unemployment.

An additional $47.9 million is being provided to expand the WLDP to help women retain employment and build career pathways with an emphasis on male-dominated industries. It will also support women experiencing family and domestic violence to take up job opportunities now and into the future.

As part of Women@Work, additional funding is also being provided for two programs – the Academy for Enterprising Girls and Women Building Australia – to work in partnership with the Government to provide valuable and inspiring support for women and girls during and beyond COVID-19.

Case Study

WLDP – Community Hubs Australia

Under the WLDP, Community Hubs Australia received $409,600 over 2017-18 to 2019-20 to provide support to enable culturally and linguistically diverse women to attend English and skills training programs in their hub. Community Hubs are based in schools across Australia connecting families with each other, with their local community, and with services.

So far, the project has delivered encouraging outcomes, such as employing 328 women (137 of whom are participants – for many, this is their first job in Australia), and has seen an improvement in many participants’ English language and communication skills, as well as increased confidence in seeking work.
Supporting women in male-dominated industries

The segregated nature of many of Australia’s industries and occupations is a key driver of the gender pay gap. Initiatives that support women into male-dominated industries, such as construction, will help address that gap.

Case Study

WLDP - Women Building Australia Program delivered by Master Builders Australia (MBA)

The Government provides funding to MBA to support more women into building and construction. Funding has been provided for Women Building Australia, which is aimed at recruiting, retaining and supporting women to enter and remain in this male-dominated industry.

Women Building Australia consists of the National Mentoring Program and a National Career Expo Program. The Mentoring Program gives women in the building and construction industry access to support, encouragement and advice from experienced individuals through virtual or face-to-face mentoring relationships. The Career Expos provide women with support and advice about the range of careers available in the industry.

Funding provided to MBA followed a successful 12-month pilot program, which reinforced the importance of supporting women starting their careers in construction, as well as helping them navigate the daily challenges of working in a male-dominated industry. Participants reported improved confidence, self-awareness, clearer career direction, better communication skills, listening skills, feedback skills, more assertive communication and enhanced management skills.

As part of Women@Work, the Government is providing additional funding for Women Building Australia to work in partnership with the Government to encourage and facilitate ongoing opportunities for women to work in the industry.
The proportion of women in the air and space transport industry in Australia is slowly rising, with women representing 40 per cent of the industry in November 2019. The proportion of women in leadership positions, however, is low and the gender pay gap is significantly higher than the national average. To close the gender pay gap further and increase women’s workforce participation, women need to be supported to enter a greater array of professions in higher numbers.

Case Study
Women in the Aviation Industry Initiative

Announced by the Deputy Prime Minister last year, the Women in the Aviation Industry Initiative provides $4 million over four years for a range of careers events and outreach to students, working to address women’s low uptake of aviation careers. The program launch followed the announcement of the naming of the Western Sydney Airport after Australian aviation pioneer Nancy Bird Walton.

The initiative has supported seminars and activities conducted by industry bodies, representation at major secondary and tertiary careers events, the development of industry-specific online resources, outreach to parents and students, and a mentoring program for 20 female students conducted in western Sydney earlier this year. Career promotion emphasises the breadth of aviation careers, such as engineering and air traffic control. Many of the students considering career options may be looking to enter the aviation workforce in three to five years’ time after obtaining trade or degree qualifications.
SUPPORT FOR WOMEN RESTARTING THEIR CAREERS

The Career Revive pilot started in July 2019 and aims to increase women’s workforce participation by helping businesses attract and retain women returning to work after a career break. Thirty medium to large regional businesses across diverse industries and locations will be involved in the initiative over three years. The business improvement consultant for the initiative, KPMG, is working with each business to develop a tailored action plan, which includes advice on how to set up a program for women looking to return to work.

Case Study
Regional Australia Bank

The Regional Australia Bank, a customer-owned bank, has been providing services to regional Australians for more than 45 years. Participating in Career Revive has helped the bank, with its strong branch presence throughout regional NSW, to elevate women’s workforce participation as a strategic business priority by developing a program that provides practical support and training to women re-entering the workforce.

The organisation examined gaps in its current and future workforce, and considered areas of the business that were best suited to support, retrain and retain skilled women from the local community. It then undertook a dedicated design workshop to develop a supported returner program.

‘The Regional Australia Bank is keen to create employment opportunities for women who have been out of the workforce for an extended period,’ said Michelle Hyde, senior manager of Regional Australia Bank’s human resources.
Mid-Career Checkpoint

The Government is investing $75 million to support up to 40,000 Australians looking to return to the workforce. The program will support women as they step back into the workforce, as well as women who have returned to the workforce for up to 18 months and are now at a point where they are ready to step up their career, but need a little extra advice to do so. While Mid-Career Checkpoint targets women between 30 and 45 years old, it is open to all working-aged Australians.

All Mid-Career Checkpoint participants receive an introductory skills assessment, which considers the participants’ employment goals, skills and qualifications. Following an introductory assessment, all participants work with their providers to develop a tailored Skills, Training and Employment (STEP) plan, which includes recommended training options and geographically relevant employment information tailored to the participants’ employment goals. Participants can access individual or group coaching sessions to help bolster skills and confidence in resume writing, interview preparation, digital literacy, and how to negotiate flexible working arrangements. The support provided depends on the circumstances and needs of each participant.

The Mid-Career Checkpoint pilot launched on 1 July 2020 in New South Wales and Queensland. The pilot will run to 31 December 2020, and is being delivered by two providers. Interest in the program continues to build, before it will be rolled out nationally in 2021.

Support for women start-ups

Consultations on the Boosting Female Founders Initiative have found that the core challenges for women founders establishing and growing their startups were access to capital, funding and supportive networks. These are particular challenges for women founders located in rural and regional areas, Indigenous businesses, first-generation migrants and refugees, and people with disability. This is consistent with OECD data (including for Australia) that indicates women use bank loans as a source of financing at much lower rates than men, and instead rely on personal savings and spousal funds. To provide support for women’s start-up businesses, the Government established the Boosting Female Founders Initiative, which was launched through the 2018 Statement. Round 1 launched in early 2020 and the Initiative is now being expanded under the 2020 Statement.

Research from Boston Consulting Group and Mass Challenge showed that start-ups founded and co-founded by women perform better over time, and generated 10 per cent more in cumulative revenue over a five-year period than their male counterparts. In terms of how effectively companies turn a dollar of investment into a dollar of revenue, start-ups founded and co-founded by women are significantly better financial investments. For every dollar of funding, these start-ups generated 78 cents, while male-founded start-ups generated 31 cents.
Boosting Female Founders Initiative – Expansion

The Government is providing $35.9 million in additional funding to expand the Boosting Female Founders Initiative.

Expanding Boosting Female Founders will provide women founders of start-ups with additional grant funding to overcome barriers to accessing finance and to grow their start-ups. It will also give these entrepreneurs access to expert mentoring and advice, with targeted support on a co-contribution basis.

Expanding the Initiative will improve women’s earning potential and relieve the financial constraints faced by women entrepreneurs, including as a result of the economic impacts of COVID-19. Additional funding will stimulate investment in new ideas, increase jobs and support the development of Australian innovations. This expansion also provides additional support to women founders from cohorts who traditionally find it difficult to access finance and support.

Case study

Leah, Candace and Jasmine – Wulla Designs

Wulla Designs is an Aboriginal business partnership of three Antakirinya Matu-Yankunytjatjara Aboriginal artists: Leah, Candace and Jasmine. Wulla Designs manufactures clothing, artwork and hand-painted items for consumers and corporate markets, and also designs clothing, unique blankets and AFL-themed paintings.

The artists were supported through the New Business Assistance with the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) to develop their idea into a successful business, including with small business training and mentoring for establishing their business. Wulla Designs relies heavily on trading at markets in Port Augusta and surrounding regional areas, and also works closely with local businesses to offer its range of products. With the help of their NEIS Mentor, the artists applied for a grant to purchase art supplies.

‘Our mentor has been fantastic. He helps us to stay focused and always encourages us to aim for the stars.’
SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN STEM

Women are a minority in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, workplaces and senior leadership positions, making up only 17 per cent of the STEM qualified population, and are now facing COVID-19 challenges. Addressing the barriers to equal representation in STEM – and supporting women to enter, reenter, or remain and progress in the STEM workforce – is integral to supporting Australia’s economic recovery. Recognising this, support for women in STEM is a key feature of this 2020 Statement, which builds and expands on the support provided for STEM study and careers in 2018.

Extending and expanding measures to support women in STEM

Australia’s Future Women in STEM

The Government is providing an additional $14.5 million in funding for a range of measures to help girls and women gain the skills and capabilities they need to access high-skilled jobs and succeed in a post-COVID-19 environment. Importantly, these measures will also continue to address imbalances in women’s representation in STEM, change structural and cultural biases, and provide economic benefit by way of greater workforce participation.

The Government is providing additional funding for the Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship Grants Program (WISE). To date, WISE has provided $7.97 million to 46 organisations, supporting a range of projects that have increased girls’ and women’s participation in STEM and entrepreneurship. An additional $10 million is being provided over 2022-23 to 2023-24 to expand the WISE program, with a focus on targeted sectors and upscaling initiatives evaluated as successful. The Women in STEM Ambassador role is also being extended over 2022-23 to 2023-24 to encourage women and girls to study and work in STEM.

The Girls in STEM Toolkit (GiST) was launched in September 2019 and provides free, online resources to support students to prepare for and engage in jobs of the future, including support for teachers and families to engage with girls about opportunities in STEM. The Government is committing an additional $900,000 over 2020-21 to 2023-24 to expand the GiST to reach more girls, educators and families across Australia, providing role models, inspiration and tools.

These programs will ensure we continue to drive and implement recommendations of the Advancing Women in STEM strategy and 2020 Action Plan and Women in STEM Decadal Plan to ensure real change by 2030.
Women in STEM Cadetship and Advanced Apprenticeships

The Government is committing $25.1 million for the Women in STEM Cadetships and Advanced Apprenticeships to create STEM career pathways for up to 500 women through industry-sponsored advanced apprenticeship-style courses, starting in 2021. Employers and universities will collaborate to provide programs that combine study and work in STEM fields. This four-year program will help more women gain career experience and earn a salary while studying towards an industry-relevant, higher education Advanced Diploma in a STEM field, directly boosting women’s participation in STEM-related learning and work.

Building Australia’s digital and cyber skills for women

Supporting the use of – and access to – technology, as well as increasing digital literacy, gives women the opportunity to fully participate in the economy and society. Ensuring that women are equipped to use technology confidently will enable them to live, learn and work in a digital society.

The Government is providing a range of supports to assist women to develop the skills needed for now and the future. The Curious Minds program, a 2018 Statement measure, is encouraging girls – particularly those who have limited opportunities because of where they live or their socio-economic background – to develop STEM skills.

The Government is also investing $2.5 million to expand the development of an industry-led digital skills training platform. Jobs requiring digital skills are not only higher paying on average but were also more resilient to COVID-19. The Digital Skills Finder Platform helps Australian workers, job seekers and small business owners impacted by COVID-19 – especially those significantly impacted, like women – to upskill and reskill throughout Australia’s recovery period.

These initiatives also build on other Government supports, such as the Career Transition Assistance, which is providing separate, additional funding of $41.7 million until 30 June 2022 to allow a greater number of mature-aged job seekers to increase their digital literacy, identify transferable skills and find job opportunities.

More women in the computer science industry

The Government is also providing $20 million to the University of Adelaide to establish a Centre for Augmented Reasoning. The Centre will develop machine learning technologies that allow people and machines to collaborate more effectively, creating 30 new positions with a focus on addressing the gender imbalance in the computer science industry. As part of this investment, the initiative will focus on attracting Australian women into the industry by offering four-year PhD scholarships of $40,000 per annum.
The Women in STEM Ambassador

Since her appointment as inaugural Ambassador in 2018, Professor Lisa Harvey-Smith has played a central role in the Government’s efforts to encourage girls and women to study and work in STEM. With her passion for advancing women and girls in STEM, Professor Harvey-Smith plays a strong part in helping shape a strategic approach to how the Government, as well as the broader sector, can increase gender equity in STEM. This includes bringing together industry, organisations and educational providers to drive implementation of the recommendations of the Women in STEM Decadal Plan and the Government’s Advancing Women in STEM strategy.

Her commitment has been recognised by the Minister for Science the Hon Karen Andrews MP, who noted that ‘Professor Harvey-Smith has driven social and cultural change and established herself as a public authority on STEM equity issues.’ In September 2020, the Government announced Professor Harvey-Smith will continue in her role for an additional two years.

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Vocational education and training (VET) is a valuable pathway for women that opens doors to a range of career opportunities and offers employment outcomes in many high-paying industries. In 2019, almost half (45.8 per cent) of the total 4.2 million VET students were women. 

Apprenticeships and traineeships are an important pathway into the workforce. As at 31 March 2020, over 66,000 women were in both trade and non-trade apprenticeships, representing around 24.4 per cent of all Australian apprentices. There are significant opportunities for women leaving school, re-entering the workforce or reskilling for a new career to take up an Australian apprenticeship. They provide a nationally recognised qualification and on-the-job training, and are available in more than 500 occupations across Australia, in traditional trades, as well as a diverse range of emerging careers in most sectors of business and industry.

With women’s participation in VET and trade apprenticeships steadily increasing, the VET sector plays a key role in supporting women to develop new skills, as well as reskilling and upskilling into growth sectors in the post-COVID-19 labour market. It is critical that women have the skills both for the jobs available now and for entering and re-entering the workforce across all stages of their working lives.
The Government is committed to supporting greater participation and outcomes for women in VET through its $585 million Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow package, which delivers systemic reforms to strengthen the quality, accessibility and relevance of the VET system, as well as establishing new services that will support VET as a first-choice pathway for women. It will also ensure women are informed and supported to access industry-relevant qualifications and training for careers across a range of existing and emerging occupations.

A key focus of the Government’s JobMaker Plan is to strengthen Australia’s VET system so that it can deliver for students and employers, and equip Australians with relevant skills for emerging jobs. As part of the JobTrainer skills package, the Government is partnering with participating states and territories to establish a $1 billion JobTrainer Fund (with up to $500 million from the Commonwealth Government) to rapidly provide up to 340,700 additional free or low-fee training places in areas of identified skills need for job seekers and young people, including school leavers. The JobTrainer Fund will play an important role in ensuring that women can reskill and upskill to take on the jobs that emerge beyond the pandemic.

To access JobTrainer funding, all states and territories were required to sign the Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform. This agreement, signed by all jurisdictions, sets out immediate reforms to improve VET quality and relevance, as well as an approach and priorities for developing a new National Skills Agreement (to replace the National Agreement on Skills and Workforce Development). The Government’s priorities include adopting a new funding model linked to efficient pricing and required skills. Developing the new funding model will be informed by recently established National Skills Commission’s skills forecasting, data and analytical expertise.

To meet the critical skills needs created by COVID-19, the Government has also established the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) Emergency Response Sub-Committee, in partnership with states and territories, to deliver fast and agile processes for industry-led development of national training products. The sub-committee has commissioned and approved training products to support rapid upskilling in essential services, including critical skill sets in infection control for customer-facing workers in retail, hospitality, and other COVID-19 impacted industries; entry into care roles skill sets to support the aged care and disability care sectors; and seven new training packages in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector. These new courses will support displaced female workers to secure new employment opportunities in growth sectors, as well as providing women with critical skills to remain employed in sectors with high female participation, such as retail, hospitality and small business.
Case study

Women in Australian Apprenticeships

Rebecca Hudson, a finalist for the Trainee of the Year award at the 2019 Australian Training Awards, was 41 when she started as a mature-age apprentice. After spending several years working in management roles in human resources, Rebecca wanted a change. She decided to start training as a crane operator, going on to complete a Certificate III in Mobile Crane Operations. Rebecca has been a fantastic role model not only for VET students across Australia, but also for her three young children as she thrives, grows and adapts in a male-dominated field.

While working at South32, Rebecca completed a Certificate III in Mobile Crane Operations, and then entered the Heavy Lift Industry with BHP. Although this was an amazing opportunity, it wasn’t quite where she wanted to be. She started researching where her crane knowledge and experience could be utilised, while learning in a field that complemented her career progression. She is now working at Alcoa of Australia Limited, where she training to be a refinery operator. She’s also learning about operating an alumina mine, participating in inspections, maintaining equipment, reporting potential mechanical problems and utilising her crane experience to scope jobs and conduct lifts during repairs. Not only can she keep learning, her skills are now more transferable across the industry.

National Careers Institute

Access to authoritative and accurate career information and support, irrespective of age or career stage, is vitally important so that people can make informed decisions about their education, training and career pathways. In a changing labour market, people of all ages need to have access to information and support to find a job, or to start study or training. The National Careers Institute provides that access, empowering women to navigate the economic environment by connecting them to information and support to find the right job or study options.

The National Careers Institute’s YourCareer.gov.au is a gateway to information about learning and training, getting job-ready, career ideas and other resources. YourCareer offers a personalised search through hundreds of jobs and study options, where women can select what is important to them, whether it be working outdoors, a particular industry of interest or preferred hours of work.

The National Careers Institute continues to raise the profile of VET for women, both through the Australian VET Alumni promotion, which features on YourCareer.gov.au, and through its work with the VET Information Strategy partners, including Supporting and Linking Tradeswomen (SALT). SALT promotes VET qualifications and career pathways to young women and their career influencers to shift perceptions and help more women understand the benefits of VET.
SUPPORT FOR JOBSEEKERS

jobactive

The Government’s employment service, jobactive, has an outcomes-focused approach and offers a mix of incentives, services and obligations to help job seekers find work. As at 31 August 2020, there were 698,685 female participants in jobactive (48.1 per cent of job seekers). The scale of the economic challenges posed by COVID-19 is unprecedented. The Government is closely monitoring developments and is acting to ensure that job seekers can access support.

To date, those actions include:

- providing funding to allow a greater number of mature-aged job seekers to access the Career Transition Assistance to increase their digital literacy, identify transferable skills and find job opportunities (outlined in Chapter 4)
- changes to streamline job seeker registration and referral processes with Services Australia and adapting program settings and requirements, such as mutual obligation requirements
- providing access to tools and support through online employment services to assist the most job-ready job seekers self-manage their requirements.

Launch into Work

The Government has committed $3.25 million annually to 2022 for the Launch into Work program, which trials pre-employment projects that support job seekers to increase their skills, experience and confidence, and move into sustainable employment.

Primarily focused on creating long-term employment pathways for women, projects are co-designed with employers and include targeted training, work experience and mentoring to prepare job seekers for specific roles within the business.

As of 31 August 2020, 38 Launch into Work projects have been completed, with 429 commencements resulting in 348 job seekers (81 per cent) securing employment as a direct result of this participation in the project. Women accounted for 82 per cent of project commencements and 84 per cent of total employment outcomes.

Building Women’s Foundation Skills

Ensuring job seekers have the foundation language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills they need to secure a job is a key part of the Government’s plan to get Australians back into work. A lack of basic LLN skills can pose a significant barrier for women entering work or training.
The Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program is the Government’s primary program for helping eligible job seekers to improve their LLN skills and successfully engage with work or other training opportunities. The Government will invest an additional $49.5 million over two years in the SEE program, on top of the $184.1 million already being provided to fund an estimated additional 14,485 places. In 2019–20, 67 per cent of clients (15,444) assisted in the SEE program were women.

The Foundational Skills for Your Future Program, which started in April 2020, is aimed at addressing the gap in assistance for Australians who are employed but whose LLN and digital literacy skills are low and may result in them being locked into insecure employment, with limited capacity for advancement and successful engagement in further training.

CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR THE SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR

The Government will maintain its support for wage equity for low paid workers – mostly women – in the social and community services sector. For the past nine years, this has been achieved through the Social and Community Services Pay Equity Special Account (SACS). SACS was introduced in 2012 to support a Fair Work Australia decision to increase the wages of these low-paid workers. With the SACS Special Account ending on 30 June 2021, the Government is increasing ongoing base funding for grant programs, which had received the supplementation through the Social and Community Services Pay Equity Special Account from July 2021, to ensure full wage costs continue to be met for eligible workers in the social and community services sector. This funding provides certainty for organisations that deliver Government-funded grant programs and their many thousands of workers.

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN RETIREMENT

Australia’s retirement system is based on a means-tested age pension; compulsory superannuation; and voluntary savings, including home ownership and voluntary superannuation contributions. These ensure all Australians have some income support in old age, and encourage individuals to make provisions during their working lives to support their retirement needs.

To help address the gap between men’s and women’s average superannuation balance, the Government has introduced a range of measures that ensure the superannuation system delivers the highest retirement incomes for women and all Australians.
- Introducing the Low Income Superannuation Tax Offset, which reduces the tax on superannuation contributions for low-income earners, a high proportion of whom are women.
- Increasing the number of people who can claim a tax offset for spouse contributions to superannuation by increasing the income test threshold for the recipient spouse.
- Enabling individuals with balances below $500,000 to ‘catch up’ on their retirement savings by accessing unused portions of their concessional contributions cap on a rolling five year basis, which benefits women who have taken time out of the workforce, or those with lower balances.
- Providing up to $500 per year through the Government’s co-contribution scheme to low or middle-income earners who make after-tax superannuation contributions. Women make up a majority of the beneficiaries of these contributions.
- Facilitating contribution splitting, which allows people to help their spouse accumulate their own superannuation by ‘splitting’ up to 85 per cent of their concessional contributions in a year, and broadens superannuation to individuals outside the workforce, a majority of whom are women.
- Enacting the Protecting Your Super Package, which sees superannuation members reunited with low balance and inactive accounts, bans exit fees and caps certain fees on low balance accounts.

The Government supports efforts to improve retirement incomes for women, and commissioned an independent review into the retirement income system on 27 September 2019. It is currently considering the review’s findings.

The care and wellbeing of older Australians remains a priority. As part of its COVID-19 economic support package, the Government provided two separate $750 payments to income support recipients and eligible concession cardholders. To continue providing enhanced support as the economy recovers, the Government will provide two additional $250 Economic Support Payments to the same cohort of social security, veterans, other income support recipients and eligible concession cardholders that received the second of these payments in July 2020. The first additional payment will be paid from 30 November 2020 and the second will occur in early 2021. Around half of those who benefit are pensioners.

**Ecstra Foundation**

The Government is further building Australian women’s skills by investing an additional $10 million in the Ecstra Foundation to support initiatives that lift women’s financial capabilities. The Ecstra Foundation was established in 2018 as a grant-making, not-for-profit organisation committed to building the financial wellbeing of all Australians within a fair financial system.
COLLECTING AND USING GENDER-DISAGGREGATED DATA
TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF AUSTRALIANS

Gender-disaggregated data is available from a range of different sources. For example, many of the ABS regular data releases have breakdowns by gender, including monthly labour force outcomes. This data provides important information about economic and social differences between women and men over time, and helps us understand the rates of employment and workforce participation, as well as occupational and industry segregation.

ABS also produces Gender Indicators, an annual compendium publication bringing together existing data from ABS and other official data partners to compare outcomes for women and men in one publication. The release identifies outcomes for men and women across six domains in more than 150 tables and associated commentary: economic security, education, health, work and family balance, safety and justice, and democracy, governance and citizenship.

In 2020 and 2021, Gender Indicators will be revised and enhanced, with a focus on meeting contemporary needs, including:

- additional articles that take a closer look at important topics, such as COVID-19 impacts on women and men
- incorporating new data sources to enhance the analysis of gender equality in Australia
- using the new ABS website to produce infographics on sex-disaggregated data.

The Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources also prepares the annual STEM Equity Monitor, a national data report on girls’ and women’s participation in STEM. The STEM Equity Monitor, launched in 2020, is an interactive tool presenting the current state of STEM gender equity in Australia. It brings together data from across Government into one place, showing data of girls’ and women’s engagement with STEM from schooling, through to higher education, graduate outcomes and in the workforce.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) is an Australian Government statutory agency charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces in accordance with the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (the Act). The Agency’s vision is for women and men to be equally represented, valued and rewarded in the workplace. Under the Act, non-public sector employers with 100 or more employees must submit a report annually to WGEA against six gender equality indicators.

WGEA helps improve gender equality in Australian workplaces, including by promoting flexible working arrangements and employer-funded paid parental leave for women and men, and the need for more women in leadership positions, with advice and practical tools for employers. It also administers the annual workplace gender reporting requirements for larger private sector entities and universities. This reporting includes gender equality indicators in
Australian workplaces, such as:
- availability of flexible working provisions for employees
- working arrangements that support employees with family or caring responsibilities
- provision of employer-funded paid parental leave.

As announced in the 2018 Statement, the Government provided $8 million to upgrade WGEA’s reporting and data management system. WGEA is currently building a new, easy-to-use online reporting system for employers. As part of the build and implementation, it is piloting one section of the new system ahead of the next reporting cycle in 2021. Once complete in April 2021, the system will also enable voluntary reporting and streamline the reporting process, reducing reporting time and cost.

Case study
Gender Equity Insights series

In partnership with the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC), WGEA uncovers new insights about gender pay gaps and gender equality issues in Australian workplaces. Every year since 2016, BCEC has produced an annual report using WGEA’s longitudinal dataset to explore and analyse trends and identify policies and practices that work to address gender inequality in the workplace.

Data collected over six years has revealed critical actions organisations can take to address pay equity, achieve a more gender-balanced workforce and, ultimately, improve performance, productivity and profitability. These include:

- **Conduct a gender pay gap analysis.** The series has highlighted that the gender pay gap remains a persistent and concerning feature of the Australian labour market. Although women are progressing into management and leadership roles, the data shows that systemic gender pay gaps persist and are wider in senior leadership.

- **Take action to address the gender pay gap.** Measuring the gender pay gap is not enough—organisations must act on their identified pay gap ‘hot spots’ to make a positive difference. The 2018 report highlighted the importance of accountability in closing gender pay gaps. It showed that actions to correct pay gaps were three times more effective when the results were reported to the executive or Board. It also showed that employers who conducted a pay gap analysis and took action on the results closed managerial gender pay gaps by an average of 5 percentage points.
The Fair Work Ombudsman provides best practice guides on a range of issues, including gender pay equity. The best practice guide explains:

- gender pay equity
- why gender pay inequity happens
- the benefits of gender pay equity
- how to achieve gender pay equity.

There is also a checklist to assist best-practice employers, as well as specific information for employers about minimum legal obligations. These guides give employers the tools to ensure that gender-based pay discrimination is not part of their remuneration system.
While more women are now in work than ever before, they are still undertaking most of the unpaid domestic and care work – a key factor in the workforce participation gap. Access to affordable child care, parental leave pay and flexible work arrangements all give families greater choice about how to manage work and care.

That is why the Government has provided record levels of funding for child care and supported the child care sector through the worst of COVID-19. Flexible work is also crucial and needs to be more readily available for women and men. The Government’s reinstated Time Use Survey, run by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, will help develop a more targeted, national understanding of how decisions about employment, families and unpaid work are made.
Key Statistics

There are more mothers working than ever before. The proportion of mothers who are active in the workforce has increased from 46.1% in 1996 to 53.4% in 2016.

In two parent households, most fathers work full-time and many mothers work part-time.

- **37% of employed mothers** with children under 12 years old work part-time, compared to **5% of employed fathers**.

Women still undertake most of a household’s unpaid domestic and care work:

- **Fathers spend 46 hours a week on paid work**, 16 hours a week on housework, and 13 hours a week on child care.

- **Mothers spend 20 hours a week on paid work**, 30 hours a week on housework, and 27 hours a week on child care.

Women spend more time doing unpaid work even when they work full-time.

- **19.0% of women who work full-time** spend more than 14 hours a week on unpaid domestic work, compared to **7.7% of men who work full-time**.

  (this does not include unpaid care work)

Sources 36, 37, 38

IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Before COVID-19, women’s ability to participate in paid work was already constrained by undertaking the majority of their households’ unpaid domestic and caring work. With children learning at home and other social distancing restrictions, COVID-19 created additional unpaid work that, as initial reports show, has tended to fall to women. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey for July 2020 found that 80 per cent of women reported doing most of the unpaid domestic work in their household compared to 39 per cent of men. Women are more than three times as likely to report they did most of the unpaid caring work (38 per cent compared to 11 per cent).39
TARGETED SUPPORT

Access to affordable early learning and child care, parental leave pay and flexible work arrangements all give families greater choice about how to manage work and care.

Child care policy

Through the Child Care Package, the Government is investing record funding in 2020-21 into child care to provide more support to families. This investment will increase over the next few years to around $10 billion per year. Since the Package’s introduction in July 2018, and prior to COVID-19, female workforce participation had risen. Further, out of pocket child care costs for families are down 3.2 per cent.

The centrepiece of the Child Care Package is the Child Care Subsidy (CCS), which targets financial assistance to low and middle income families to help cover the cost of child care. It also incentivises workforce participation, with the total number of subsidised hours of care increasing according to hours spent working, studying or training. The success of the Package in supporting increased activity, especially amongst women, is clear. The proportion of women receiving CCS and reporting more than 48 hours of activity a fortnight rose from 56 per cent prior to the introduction of the Child Care Package to 63 per cent in November 2019 – a seven percentage point increase (Parent Survey).

Underpinning the Package is the Child Care Safety Net which gives the most vulnerable children a strong start in life, through supporting access to quality early childhood education and care, while also supporting parents to work.

An independent evaluation of the Child Care Package is being undertaken by a consortium led by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS). The evaluation will assess the impact of the Package on families, providers and child care services.

Supporting the early childhood education and care sector and families

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the Government has provided a range of support to the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector and the one million Australian families who depend on it.

On 2 April 2020, the Government announced the $1.9 billion ECEC Relief Package. From 6 April to July 2020, this effectively provided families with access to free child care, thereby supporting their workforce participation, while ensuring 99 per cent of around 13,400 ECEC services remained open and viable.
From 13 July 2020, the CCS and the Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS) resumed, along with extra support for families and ECEC services. This included a $708 million ECEC Transition Package. As part of this, until 27 September 2020, eligible providers were able to receive a 25 per cent Transition Payment on the condition they offered an Employment Guarantee and froze fees. Families with reduced hours of activity because of COVID-19 were eligible to access up to 100 hours of subsidised child care per fortnight and those with reduced incomes were able to receive a higher subsidy.

As COVID-19 resurged in Victoria, the Government announced a range of additional support targeting the needs of Victorian families and ECEC services.

On 20 September 2020, the Government announced the $305.6 million ECEC Recovery Package. The Recovery Package sees Victorian ECEC services eligible, until 31 January 2021, for a 25 per cent Recovery Payment (40 per cent for outside of school hours care). Nationally, until 4 April 2021, the activity test relaxation has been extended and additional support for families experiencing temporary financial hardship remain available. Throughout Australia services at risk of imminent closure can apply for additional support through the Community Child Care Fund special circumstances program.

The Relief, Transition and Recovery Packages have succeeded in supporting the ECEC sector and the families, especially women, who depend on them as they now return to the level of work, study and training they were doing prior to COVID-19. Outside of Victoria, the number of attendance hours continues to rise with attendance levels at centre based day care at 108 per cent of pre-COVID levels.

**Improving access to and flexibility of the Paid Parental Leave scheme**

The Government has introduced a range of measures to improve access to the Paid Parental Leave scheme (PPL) and provide more flexibility for Australian working mothers and fathers. Recent amendments to the *Paid Parental Leave Act 2010* started on 1 July 2020. The changes (a 2018 Statement measure) allow the primary carers of newborn or recently adopted children to use an initial continuous 12-week period of Parental Leave Pay before taking up the remaining six weeks flexibly at any time during the two years following the birth or adoption of a child.

From 1 January 2020, working parents, particularly those in irregular employment, benefited from an increase in the permissible break between each work day allowed under the work test (increased from 8 to 12 weeks). The Government has also made the scheme fairer for mothers working hazardous jobs, such as in mining and construction, by enabling them to move their work test period if they have to stop work early. The work test period will end the day the mother stopped work rather than the day before the child’s birth.
ARRANGEMENTS FOR PPL IN RESPONSE TO THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Temporary changes to the PPL work test

The Government is providing an extra $130.4 million for PPL to support families whose employment has been impacted by COVID-19. Under normal circumstances, to qualify for PPL, the primary carer must have worked at least 10 of the 13 months before the expected birth or adoption of their child and worked at least 330 hours during that period. Pending the passage of legislation expected in November 2020, the Government is temporarily extending the work test period from 13 to 20 months.

This will make it possible for most individuals with a genuine pre-COVID-19 work history, who would otherwise fail the work test due to loss of employment or a reduction in work hours, to access Parental Leave Pay and Dad and Partner Pay. The extended PPL work test is limited to births and adoptions that occur between 22 March 2020 and 31 March 2021. As a result, an additional 9,000 individuals will gain eligibility to Parental Leave Pay and 3,500 to Dad and Partner Pay.

PPL amendments allow a period that an employee is in receipt of the JobKeeper Payment to count as qualifying work for the purposes of the work test. These amendments ensure working parents, who have a continuing connection to their employer through JobKeeper, do not miss out on PPL payments.

The Government has also expanded the list of permissible circumstances in which a PPL recipient can return to work early without forfeiting any of their entitlement. This now includes emergency services workers, health professionals and other essential workers returning to work in response to a state, territory or national emergency. Without this measure, many women could have lost their eligibility for PPL payments.

Support for disadvantaged job seekers

The Government has invested $403 million into the national ParentsNext program over four years from 2020-21. ParentsNext is a pre-employment program that supports parents to plan and prepare for employment by the time their youngest child reaches school age. Between 1 July 2018 and 31 August 2020, more than 133,000 parents were supported through ParentsNext, over 56,000 parents started education and over 27,000 parents gained employment. On 31 August 2020, 95 per cent of participants were women, 20 per cent were Indigenous Australians, 19 per cent were from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and 19 per cent were under 25 years.
Changes to ParentsNext from 1 July 2021

This measure invests an additional $24.7 million and introduces changes to the program to simplify eligibility criteria, better direct support to those most in need, and extends access to financial assistance to all participants. It is anticipated that these changes will also benefit a significant number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Parents will be in a better position to move into employment when they are ready and as jobs are recovered or created in the labour market. This will provide assistance to approximately 235,000 parents.

Case Study
Rita, ParentsNext participant, NSW

When Rita started ParentsNext more than 12 months ago, she was adjusting to life as a single parent. At the time, she was given support to develop her vocational skills. Rita had always aspired to work in the hair and beauty industry – but had never had the chance. Rita enrolled in, and successfully completed, a Certificate III in Hairdressing and a Certificate III in Beauty Therapy, great steps towards her dream job. Her ParentsNext provider suggested she start her own business and enrolled her in information sessions that would help her business planning.

Rita now runs her own successful hair and beauty business from home. She has worked very hard to get to where she is today and continues to be supported by her ParentsNext provider to grow and expand her business by creating pamphlets, a web page and business cards. She is hoping these promotions will help her grow her client base so she can fulfill her ultimate goal of opening her own store.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

COVID-19 has shown that flexibility can work for both employers and employees. Access to flexible working arrangements is important for parents who need to balance work and family life. With men twice as likely as women to have requests for flexible work hours rejected, it is clear that flexible work has to become more readily available for both men and women. Enabling men to work flexibly supports a more equitable share of domestic work and caring responsibilities, and helps families make choices that are right for them. Although more women work flexibly, women report that access to flexible work arrangements remains a barrier to increasing their hours.
Flexible work is important for businesses too. Providing flexible work practices is linked to improved organisational agility, enhanced employee attraction and retention, improved staff wellbeing and greater workplace diversity.⁴²

**Case Study**

**Beam Australia’s Flexible Work Playbook**

Beam provides practical tools to enable flexible work, including an online marketplace that increases women’s workforce participation. With support from the Australian Government, Beam’s Flexible Work Playbook can be accessed by businesses, human resource managers and individuals. The Playbook aims to increase access to flexible workplaces by sharing practical guidance on how to implement flexible work. Through research and consulting over 600 organisations, Beam identified seven ‘flex enablers’ that businesses must tackle to create a flexible work environment that can drive greater job creation and workforce participation. The Playbook walks users through these enablers with expert advice and ready-to-use tools, including role design, conversation guides, interactive work design tools, case studies, and human resource and management practices.

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**Provided by Beam Australia, September 2020. This indicates that by not employing productive workers in flexible roles, we are wasting talent and missing out on economic benefits. As women represent 60.0 per cent of domestic graduates but only 17.1 per cent of CEOs,⁴³ there is a significant opportunity to engage senior women in flexible roles, by leveraging flexible work.**
MEASURING AND VALUING UNPAID WORK

The Time Use Survey

The 2018 Statement included funding to reinstate the ABS Time Use Survey, which collects comprehensive data on how Australians use their time. Results from the survey were last published in 2008, and a lot has changed since then. Work has begun on the enhanced Time Use Survey, with an online pilot survey currently being trialled. The results will be used by governments, researchers and community groups to better understand how Australians live, as well as the time pressures they experience. Decisions about employment, families, child care and volunteering can be more informed by analysing data from this survey. The information provided will help shape policies and services. This investment will also lead to a more in-depth understanding of the interplay between women’s lives at work and at home.

SUPPORT FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) supports those who serve or have served in the defence of our nation and commemorates their service and sacrifice. DVA also provides specific support for women veterans, as well as the family members of veterans. A range of programs are provided, including:

- the Partner Service Pension
- the Family Support Package to provide support (child care, counselling and home help) to contemporary veterans and their families who are adjusting to or managing challenging circumstances arising from their service, and
- Veterans’ Home Care Program, where families can access respite from their caring responsibilities.

In May 2020, the DVA Family and Domestic Violence Strategy 2020-25 was released to help veterans and their families affected by family and domestic violence. The Strategy includes information such as how to seek support and referrals to services.
THREE

SUPPORT WOMEN AS LEADERS AND POSITIVE ROLE MODELS

PRIORITY SNAPSHOT

Gender-balanced leadership leads to improved decision-making and performance. The Government itself is nearing its target for women to hold 50 per cent of Australian Government board positions, with a record 48.5 per cent held by women on 30 June 2020. It is also partnering with the private sector to communicate the benefits of diverse leadership and investing in projects that support women as leaders. The Australian Institute of Company Directors reported that, on 31 July 2020, the percentage of women on ASX 200 boards was 31.3 per cent. Despite these recent gains, women remain underrepresented as leaders, highlighting the challenges that this Statement is designed to help address.
Key Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Statistics</th>
<th>The Senate</th>
<th>House of Reps</th>
<th>Government Boards</th>
<th>ASX200 Directors</th>
<th>Australian CEOs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Economic Security Statement - 2020</td>
<td>51.3% Women</td>
<td>31.1% Women</td>
<td>48.5% Women</td>
<td>31.5% Women</td>
<td>17.1% Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
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</table>

**The Senate**

- 51.3% Women
- 48.7% Men

**House of Reps**

- 31.1% Women
- 68.9% Men

**Government Boards**

- 48.5% Women
- 51.5% Men

**ASX200 Directors**

- 31.5% Women
- 68.5% Men

**Australian CEOs**

- 17.1% Women
- 82.9% Men

The market value of the average Australian company increases by $78.5 million when the representation of women on their board increases by 10 percentage points or more.

**Sources**

44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49

TARGETED SUPPORT

The Government is committed to supporting more women into positions of leadership in the public and private sectors by:

- investing in projects that support women’s leadership under the Women’s Leadership and Development Program
- supporting women’s leadership in the private sector by researching and communicating the benefits of diverse leadership through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency
- supporting women’s leadership in the public sector through its gender balance targets for Australian Government board positions.

INVESTING IN WOMEN LEADERS THROUGH THE WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (WLDP)

The Government provides practical support to women through the projects grants stream of the WLDP. The WLDP aims to improve outcomes for women across six key focus areas: women’s job creation, women’s leadership, women’s economic security, women’s workforce participation, women’s safety and international engagement. The WLDP ensures there is a stream of continued investment in boosting job outcomes for women and girls.
including women and girls in regional, rural and remote communities, culturally and linguistically diverse women and girls, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls, and women and girls with disability.

The 2020 Statement builds on this continued investment and the investments of the 2018 Statement with an additional $47.9 million for WLDP in 2020-21 to 2023-24. Grants funded under the WLDP will have a particular focus on supporting women post-COVID-19.

**Academy for Enterprising Girls**

Under the 2018 Statement, the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia received $3.6 million in funding under the WLDP to deliver the Academy for Enterprising Girls. Participants take part in the Academy’s national workshop program and online eLearning platform to learn the tools they need to become Australia’s next generation of entrepreneurs.

Launched in October 2019, the Academy has already delivered a nation-wide workshop program, extensive digital resources, virtual school holiday programs and ten eLearning modules. As at 29 September 2020, the digital platform had 16,764 users.

To support the development of the next generation of Australian businesswomen and Australia’s recovery from COVID-19, the Government is investing a further $5 million in the Academy. The Academy will work in partnership with the Government to support Australian girls to develop innovative and inspiring business ideas, such as Ariba Omar’s ‘Resifire’ app, which provides relatable information during bushfires. Ariba’s inspiring work saw her go on to win the 2020 New South Wales Riverina Young Volunteer of the Year Award. The additional funding will also enable the expansion of the Academy to Australian women between the ages of 18 and 24 years, targeting women whose employment opportunities have been limited as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
PARTNERING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO SUPPORT WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The Government provides practical and ongoing support to women into leadership positions in the private sector through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) and the Women’s Leadership and Development Program. Australia is also participating in the new G20 EMPOWER network to promote more women into private sector leadership positions.

COMMUNICATING THE BENEFITS OF BALANCED LEADERSHIP

WGEA promotes and improves gender equality in Australian workplaces by providing businesses with industry-specific advice to set and achieve gender balance targets. WGEA also undertakes wide-ranging research including the benefits of gender-balanced leadership in the Australian context. Every year, WGEA provides compliant reporting employers with an individualised Competitor Analysis Benchmark Report. These reports detail an organisation’s performance across the six reported gender equality indicators, including the gender balance of their workforce and leadership cohort. Businesses can access the data by industry and organisation size to identify areas to focus on by developing informed strategies and measuring performance over time.

WGEA also publishes an annual Gender Equity Insights report in collaboration with Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre. This year’s report established a strong, convincing causal relationship that quantified the value of improved gender balance to ASX-listed companies. Among other things, this ground-breaking study found the market value of the average ASX listed company increases by $78.5 million when the representation of women on their board increases by 10 percentage points or more. This world-first research comes at a critical time when businesses are looking to a post COVID-19 world, with the research indicating that having gender diversity in leadership could have the potential to help companies navigate through the crisis. WGEA also produces an annual Gender Equality Scorecard and awards Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citations.

TOWARDS 50 PER CENT: GENDER BALANCE ON AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT BOARDS AND IN THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE

It is important for government policies to be informed and developed by people who represent the wider Australian population. While women are over-represented in the Australian Public Service, they become under-represented as leadership positions
become more senior.51 On 1 July 2016, the Government committed to a gender diversity target of women holding 50 per cent of Australian Government board positions overall, and women and men each holding at least 40 per cent of positions at the individual board level.

To monitor progress, the Government publishes an annual Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Report. The latest report shows women held 48.5 per cent of Australian Government board positions on 30 June 2020.52 This is the highest result since reporting began in 2009. Other gender balance indicators have also improved over the past 12 months. As at 30 June 2020, women held a record 36.9 per cent of Chair and Deputy Chair positions, up 1.9 percentage points from 30 June 2019. The percentage of external nominations who were women has also risen from 34.4 per cent in 2018-19 to 49.2 per cent in 2019-20.53

CELEBRATING INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN IN OUR NATIONAL STORIES

Women make significant contributions to Australia’s arts and culture. The Government supports women in the arts through a number of targeted programs and initiatives. The Women in Music Mentor Program is providing $2 million over four years for a national mentoring and training program for women working in the Australian music industry. It aims to empower women in navigating career and leadership pathways, while developing their business and corporate engagement skills.

Screen Australia’s Gender Matters is a suite of actions that address gender inequality in the screen production industry, ensuring Australian stories reflect Australian society. Within four years of its launch in 2015, Screen Australia announced that in 2019 it had exceeded its long-term Gender Matters KPI, with 56 per cent of projects receiving production funding having at least half of the key creative roles occupied by women (based on a three-year average). Artbank provides direct support to Australian contemporary artists by acquiring their works for use in its rental scheme. In 2019-20, Artbank purchased works by 33 women (equivalent to 59 per cent of total acquisitions for the year).

The Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support program provides over $21 million per year to support the operations of around 85 remote Indigenous-owned and governed art centres, as well as a number of other organisations at the heart of Australia’s world-renowned Indigenous visual art movement. In 2018-19, 71 per cent of artists and 61 per cent of arts workers supported by the program were women. An additional $7 million from the Relief and Recovery Fund was provided in response to COVID-19.
SUPPORTING ELITE ATHLETES AS ROLE MODELS

Supporting elite athletes as role models

The full-time gender pay gap in Sports and Recreation Activities sits at 30.6%.
Women receive just 8% of commercial sponsorships for Australian sport, and 7% of broadcasting coverage.

National sporting organisation CEOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources 54, 55

Before COVID-19, we saw the emergence of many new women’s leagues, as well as improved pay and conditions for women in many sports and record crowds turning out to support women athletes. Since the 2018 Statement, the Matildas have qualified for the Tokyo Olympics, and Australia and New Zealand were announced as joint hosts for the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup.

Despite these successes, women receive just eight per cent of the commercial sponsorships for Australian sport, and seven per cent of broadcasting coverage. Even while Australia’s elite sportspeople are influential role models, many girls don’t feel represented and nearly 50 per cent stop playing sport by the age of 17.

Hosting the FIFA Women’s World Cup 2023 will not only strengthen Australia’s reputation as a world leader in supporting women in sport and help our sporting industries recover from COVID-19, it will inspire many girls and women.

As codes reopen following COVID-19, the Government also provides support for the Women Leaders in Sport Program to ensure elite sporting women are given development opportunities to reach their leadership potential in the sports industry. This initiative ensures Australia’s elite sportswomen can play a role in inspiring and modelling leadership to Australian women and girls.

Minister for Women’s National Series of Roundtables

To deliver targeted, meaningful support to women, it is critical that we engage with the community. The Minister for Women’s national series of roundtables enables her to hear directly from Australian women about issues affecting them on women’s economic security, safety and leadership. Insights from these roundtables have shaped this 2020 Statement and will continue to inform policy and program design.
FOUR

RESPOND TO THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF WOMEN

PRIORITY SNAPSHOT

The 2020 Women’s Economic Security Statement is about supporting all women in Australia. In conjunction with other parts of the Government’s JobMaker Plan, the measures in this package support women from diverse backgrounds to overcome barriers and strengthen their economic security.

In hearing and responding to the diverse experiences of Australian women, the Government recognises that policy responses must be tailored to their different needs and circumstances.

Using gender-disaggregated data and considering gender impact analysis is crucial as we recover from COVID-19 and respond to its impacts on specific groups, including women.
**Key Statistics**

Women experiencing multiple disadvantage have lower workforce participation rates than the national average for Australian women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Participation Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All women (ages 15+)</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally and linguistically diverse women</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural and regional women (ages 15+)</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women with disability (ages 15-64)</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workforce participation rates are pre-COVID-19

Sources 58, 59, 60, 61, 62

**TARGETED SUPPORT FOR WOMEN**

The focus of the initiatives in the 2020 Statement will make a difference to the outcomes for many different women. For example, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mother at risk of long-term unemployment will be able to get pre-employment support to help her prepare for work through the ParentsNext program. From here, she might seek additional support from Women@Work, the Boosting Female Founders Initiative or the range of women in STEM initiatives. The measures included in the 2020 Statement will further support her through programs that provide mentoring and peer support, as well as to access leadership opportunities.

**NATIONAL WOMEN’S ALLIANCES**

The Government funds six National Women’s Alliances to bring forward the voices of Australian women, particularly women from marginalised and disadvantaged groups. The Alliances have attended the Minister for Women’s national series of roundtables and meet regularly with the Office for Women. Together, the six Alliances represent over 180 women’s organisations: Australian Women Against Violence Alliance; Equality Rights Alliance; Economic Security4Women; Harmony Alliance; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Alliance; and the National Rural Women’s Coalition.
The Government has also provided funding to Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) to enhance the representation of women and girls with disabilities. This included hosting a workshop with the six Alliances to facilitate ongoing collaboration with the four Disability Alliances (WWDA, First People’s Disability Network, National Ethnic Disability Alliance and People with Disability Australia).

RURAL, REMOTE AND REGIONAL WOMEN

COVID-19 saw many Australians turn to remote work options for the first time – but that was nothing new for many women in rural, remote and regional Australia. For them, COVID-19 presents new opportunities for telework and online entrepreneurship, and the Government is committed to supporting rural and regional women to take advantage of this shift.

Women business founders in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia generally experience greater disadvantage because they do not have access to the same development opportunities, networks, mentors or finance than women founders in metropolitan areas. Time, travel and connectivity challenges present further impacts. With one third of Australian women living in rural and regional communities, it is vital that support can be accessed from anywhere.

The 2020 Statement contains a number of new measures that can support rural and regional entrepreneurs, including expansion of the Boosting Female Founders Initiative, which provides more generous funding for regionally-located applicants or Indigenous businesses. The Government has provided $12.8 million to expand the Rural Financial Counselling Service to allow small regional businesses impacted by COVID-19 and other crises, such as drought and bushfire, to access financial counselling services and related support. This initiative runs until 30 June 2021 and will benefit rural women who run small businesses.

The Government is also providing funding to projects supporting women in agriculture, such as sustainable pastoral development in the Ànangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara pastoral areas, involving a comprehensive on-the-job training program for Ànangu people on all aspects of managing livestock, maintaining infrastructure and monitoring condition of country; and the Regenerative Agriculture Project, which increases farmers’ awareness, knowledge and adoption of land management.
Case Study

**National Rural Women’s Coalition Muster**

The National Rural Women’s Coalition (NRWC), one of the Alliances, developed the unique RRR Women’s Canberra Muster leadership program over the last five years. Each year, a selected cohort of RRR women muster in Canberra to be inspired, learn, network, grow their leadership skills and volunteer a project of their design.

The muster boosts rural women’s economic security by building leadership capacity, with professional facilitators leading a group-learning process of examining the knowledge, skills and capacities for leading effectively. Participants have the opportunity to increase capacity and confidence inside a boardroom, and are introduced to experienced leaders from diverse backgrounds. This muster provides participants with an invaluable opportunity to increase leadership skills.

**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women play pivotal leadership roles in their families, communities and in public life. They are central to the development, growth and diversity of the Australian economy. Improving the outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls is critical to Australia’s pursuit of gender equality.

On 30 July 2020, the Prime Minister announced the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which centres on four key priority reforms that will transform the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The National Agreement also establishes 16 socioeconomic targets to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including education, employment, health and wellbeing, justice, safety, housing, land and waters, and languages.
The Government has supported Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Ms June Oscar AO, to deliver the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women’s Voices) national consultation project to elevate the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls. The Commissioner has engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls across the country since early 2018 to better understand their strengths, challenges and aspirations, and identify elements that can effect positive change in their personal, cultural and socioeconomic security.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are more likely to have experienced workplace sexual harassment than people who are non-Indigenous, with the 2018 National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian workplaces finding that 53 per cent of Indigenous Australians compared to 33 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians had experienced workplace sexual harassment across the last five years. The new Respect@Work Council, outlined in Chapter 5, will help create better working conditions for all Australian women.

**YOUNG WOMEN**

Young women (ages 15-24) have experienced significant employment impacts as a result of COVID-19, with the unemployment rate for young women rising to 16.3 per cent in July 2020, before falling to 13.1 per cent in August. The Government is supporting young women through COVID-19 with a range of programs to get them back into work. This includes through 2020 Statement measures: additional funding for the Girls in STEM Toolkit and the Women in STEM Cadetship and Advanced Apprenticeships.

The Government’s Youth Taskforce was established in 2019 to scope and develop options to better coordinate youth policy and programs across government. It is developing a new National Youth Policy Framework, which will be informed by consultations with young people and include a focus on addressing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on young Australians. The framework will highlight the importance of education, skills development and meaningful employment opportunities to the economic security of young women.

**Youth Jobs PaTH**

Youth Jobs PaTH is a flexible approach to youth employment that supports young people and employers through three elements: Prepare (training), Trial (internships) and Hire (wage subsidies). With Employability Skills Training, young people gain the skills and understanding to get and keep a job, while employers receive incentives to trial young job seekers through internships (for 4 to 12 weeks), as well as wage subsidies (of up to $10,000) to hire new employees. As at 30 September 2020, 42,394 young female jobactive participants (aged 15 to 24) have participated in PaTH and, of these, 25,649 have been placed in a job.
Case study

Catherine – Red Wagon Workplace Solutions

Catherine had been looking for work since her previous role had finished. Meanwhile, Susan Sadler, the director of Red Wagon Workplace Solutions, was looking for a good employee to fill a marketing/administration assistant role. This is where South Australia’s Employer liaison officer Sharon Clarke came in.

Sharon explained the benefits of a Youth Jobs PaTH internship to Susan so as to trial a candidate for the job who would receive on-the-job training. Susan was put in touch with jobactive provider MatchWorks and, after explaining the type of person who would be the best fit for the internship, she was presented with a shortlist of potential interns.

Catherine was chosen for a six-week internship, where she received valuable experience in customer service, social media management and customer relationship management.

Susan was thrilled with the support she received from MatchWorks and the department’s employer liaison officer because she found the perfect candidate. In fact, she was so impressed with Catherine’s work she offered her the role. ‘Catherine has proved to be an energetic, bright and forward-thinking professional who has already improved customer engagement in the short time she’s been with the business,’ Susan said.

Transition to Work

The Transition to Work (TtW) service provides intensive assistance to young people (ages 15-24) who have disengaged from work and study and are at risk of long-term welfare dependence, including young women. The Government is providing $729.8 million for the service from 2020-21 to 2023-24.

TtW is a demand-driven program, currently servicing over 34,000 young people (up from around 19,000 in March 2020). As at 31 August 2020, there were 16,630 young women in TtW. As Australia continues its recovery from COVID-19, it is important to give extra support to prepare more disadvantaged young people, particularly women, for future opportunities in the labour market.
WOMEN WITH DISABILITY

Women with disability have a considerably lower rate of workforce participation compared to men with disability. They often face many compounding challenges in relation to finding employment, including discrimination. The Government understands that, without the full contribution of women with disability to the economy, Australia is missing out on considerable talent.

The Minister for Women has provided funding to Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) to enhance the representation of women and girls with disabilities.

The Government’s Disability Employment Services network helps women with disability, injury or health condition get ready to look for, find and keep a job. The Government continues to ensure its mainstream employment services feature a range of interventions, activities, and complementary programs to help job seekers with disability, including women.

To promote a more inclusive society that supports people with disability to be independent, the Disability Royal Commission was established in April 2019 in response to community concerns about neglect, abuse and exploitation of people with disability. The Royal Commission is considering how the specific experiences of people with disability are multilayered and influenced by their age, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, intersex status, ethnic origin or race, including the particular situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culturally and linguistically diverse people. A final report is due to be delivered to the Government in 2022.

CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CALD) WOMEN

Australia is a nation built on migration and the Government is committed to ensuring that women from CALD backgrounds can thrive. Women from CALD backgrounds face particular challenges when it comes to economic participation and financial security. For recent migrants, lower English proficiency, lack of local work experience, limited understanding of Australian workplace culture, as well as limited recognition of skills and qualifications gained overseas, can present challenges to workforce participation.

To engage and support migrant women with young children the Government funds the National Community Hubs Program. The Hubs act as a gateway to services, including vocational services, to help women access support they may otherwise miss. The Government has also invested over $1 million in board scholarships for women through the Australian Institute of Company Directors, including specific initiatives that will support the engagement of CALD women.
Case Study

Harmony Alliance Financial Literacy Resources

Financial literacy is a critical building block of economic security. It refers to our understanding, competency and responsibility regarding finances. For CALD women, it can be difficult to find accessible resources due to cultural or language barriers. Improving women’s financial literacy skills helps them work through difficult times.

The Harmony Alliance has been funded by the Government to develop a free online financial literacy module for CALD women.

The resources cover key financial literacy skills, including:
- understanding the process of earning an income
- identifying basic financial services and products, how and when to access them
- making informed decisions about managing personal finances
- recognising women’s rights relating to financial decisions in relationships and what to do if something goes wrong.

The Harmony Alliance has been funded through the MUSTER (Mutual Understanding, Support, Tolerance, Engagement and Respect) grant program.

OLDER WOMEN

To help the economy recover from COVID-19, it is important to use the skills and experiences of older workers by helping them stay in the workforce. While older women have higher employment rates than younger women, it is often more difficult for them to find employment when they do become unemployed. Many of the financial issues women face in retirement are a cumulative result of a lifetime of lower income, time out of the workforce, part-time work and less economic opportunity.

The Government has provided significant support for older Australians who wish to stay engaged or re-engage with the workforce, including through:
- introducing the Skills Checkpoint for Older Workers to help people assess their current skills
- the Restart Wage Subsidy, which offers up to $10,000 for hiring someone aged 50 years and over to ensure that employers continue to receive financial incentives to hire comparatively disadvantaged job seekers
- working with industry, by way of a Collaborative Partnership on Mature Age Employment, to drive cultural change in hiring practices, combat age discrimination in workplaces and equip managers and business owners to work with an ageing workforce, and
• increasing the amount that can be earned under the Pension Work Bonus to $300 per fortnight and extending eligibility to the self-employed.

The Government is providing $59.3 million in funding to reinforce meal delivery services to support senior Australians at home, and it has also provided $10 million for the Community Visitors Scheme to support older Australians in aged care who may be experiencing social isolation due to visitor restrictions.

Even before COVID-19, older women were increasingly at risk of homelessness and housing stress due to lower lifetime incomes, less access to financial assets (like superannuation) and relationship breakdown. The Age Discrimination Commissioner, the Hon Dr Kay Patterson AO, is currently focusing on older women at risk of homelessness. Recognising the importance of safe, affordable and sustainable housing to health and wellbeing, $129 million of the Government’s National Housing and Homelessness Agreement funding is being dedicated to homelessness services, with the states and territories to match that funding. This will provide support to women who find themselves facing homelessness.

Another good example of communities, organisations and governments working together to provide older women with better access to information and support services is the Lady Musgrave Trust guide for older women, which details support services for women without shelter or at risk of becoming homeless. Because safety is a fundamental requirement of economic security, the Government has focused on the wellbeing of older Australians by launching a Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety in October 2018. The Commission’s final report will be provided by February 2021.

Career Transition Assistance

The Government has committed $41.7 million across 2019-20 to 2021-22 for the Career Transition Assistance (CTA) program. Women’s participation includes almost 51 per cent of unique CTA commencements. The funding makes it easier for mature-age job seekers and volunteers to access training to increase digital literacy, find job opportunities and identify transferable skills. CTA also gives mature-age job seekers targeted assistance focusing on their skills to help build their confidence and self-esteem. Assisting mature-age job seekers with handling setbacks when applying for jobs online and developing their digital skills helps them remain motivated and resilient.

Since the program was launched nationally on 1 July 2019, as at 31 August 2020, approximately 5,000 mature-age job seekers have been referred to CTA. During COVID-19, delivery of CTA has moved online. Online delivery is especially convenient and flexible for participants with caring responsibilities. Digital delivery has the added benefit of helping prepare mature-age workers for the everyday realities of working in a post-COVID-19 workplace, such as teleconferencing and online virtual meetings.
Women have a right to live and work free from violence and harassment. Violence against women takes many forms and has a direct impact on women’s capacity to participate fully in society and the economy. Ending violence against women is everyone’s responsibility: governments at all levels, workplaces, schools and universities, sporting institutions, the community as a whole and individuals.

Women’s economic and employment circumstances can influence their choices and options to take action to address a violent and abusive relationship. Women’s experiences of violence, whether at home, online or in the community, can also have an impact on their workforce participation and economic security. Preventing and addressing sexual harassment in the workplace is central to boosting women’s workforce participation. This is why the Government is investing in Respect@Work initiatives.
### Key Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 4 in 5 <strong>Australian women</strong> and over half of <strong>Australian men</strong> over the age of 15</td>
<td>have been sexually harassed at some point in their lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 in 2 <strong>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers</strong></td>
<td>have been sexually harassed at work in the last five years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 in 2 workers who identified as <strong>LGBTI</strong></td>
<td>have been sexually harassed at work in the last five years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 2 in 5 workers with disability</td>
<td>have been sexually harassed at work in the last five years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 in 4 women</td>
<td>have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a current or previous partner since the age of 15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indigenous women</strong></td>
<td>are 32 times as likely to be hospitalised due to family violence as non-Indigenous women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 in 6 women</td>
<td>will experience financial abuse in their lifetime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
<td>cost the Australian economy <strong>$3.5 billion annually</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence against women and their children</td>
<td>costs the economy <strong>$26 billion annually</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94%</td>
<td>of female victims experience violence from a male perpetrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indigenous women</strong></td>
<td>are 32 times as likely to be hospitalised due to family violence as non-Indigenous women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76
TARGETED SUPPORT

Since 2013, the Government has invested over $1 billion in preventing and responding to violence against women and their children. This includes a record $340 million contribution to the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

The Government recognises that preventing and addressing violence against women requires a long-term, comprehensive strategy. In March 2020, the Council of Australian Governments committed to develop a new National Plan to commence when the current plan finishes in 2022. The next National Plan will be informed by the 2020 House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs’ inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence, as well as targeted stakeholder consultations.

The Government is providing more than $2 billion through the National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-25 (NLAP). 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. Under the NLAP, people experiencing or at risk of family violence are a national priority client group for legal assistance services.
## Domestic and Family Violence Support

The Government has provided $150 million to specifically respond to domestic violence during COVID-19. This package was designed to bolster family, domestic and sexual violence supports during the pandemic. $130 million has been provided to state and territory governments to invest in specialist services to ensure the safety of women and children most at risk of violence during the pandemic. This includes services that consider the needs of particularly vulnerable cohorts.

The funding is supporting crisis accommodation, frontline services, counselling and outreach, men’s behaviour change programs and other perpetrator interventions as well as assisting services to respond to the unique challenges in regional, rural and remote locations. The remaining $20 million has been directed to boost capacity for national programs like 1800RESPECT, MensLine Australia and the Men’s Referral Service. 1800RESPECT continues to ensure that 95% of contacts are answered, even under the increased pressure resulting from COVID-19. The Government has also funded the Help is Here campaign to make it easier for people affected by family, domestic and sexual violence to know where to find help. The Government has extended this campaign to 30 January 2021.

## Working with States and Territories’ Women’s Safety Ministers

Minister for Women and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, and Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, have co-chaired five Women’s Safety Ministers’ meetings in 2020 with a specific focus on monitoring and responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on violence against women and their children.

## Funding for frontline legal services and family law courts

$63.3 million has been provided for frontline legal services to support Australians impacted by COVID-19. Of this, $49.8 million is for additional frontline legal assistance services, such as legal advice or representation, with 40 per cent to be used for matters involving domestic violence, and $13.5 million for IT costs to support the sector’s transition to delivering assistance virtually and online.

$2.5 million is being provided over two years to support specialised ‘COVID-19 Lists’, which have been developed by the family law courts to manage the acute workload pressures arising from the pandemic. The COVID-19 Lists are Registrar-led and characterised by quick and effective response times, with applications assessed and listed within 72 business hours.

## Keeping women safe online

$10 million has been provided to boost efforts in keeping Australians safe when online including a focus on improving women’s safety online during COVID-19 by assisting the Office of the eSafety Commissioner and frontline workers to protect women and their families from technology-facilitated abuse.

## Supporting health and wellbeing

The National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan, launched by Government in May 2020, responds to the increased pressures communities are experiencing as a result of the pandemic. The Plan recognises the significant impact domestic, family and sexual violence has, and will continue to have, on people’s wellbeing.

The Government is committed to building the wellbeing of Australian women. On 18 September 2020, the Commonwealth announced the extension of Medicare-subsidised telehealth for a further six months.
Women’s Leadership and Development Program – Women’s safety priority area

The expanded WLDP, a key 2020 Statement initiative, will provide funding to boost existing priority areas, including women’s safety. In particular, grant funding will support women who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence to participate at work. Grant funding will be provided to projects that support women and employers to deal with the impacts of family, domestic and sexual violence on women’s participation in the workforce. Emphasis will be given to supporting women who have had time out of the workforce or who have never been in the workforce as a result of domestic, family or sexual violence.

SUPPORTING WOMEN TO BE SAFE AT WORK

Workplace sexual harassment is a barrier to women’s workforce participation, particularly in male-dominated industries. The landmark report from the Australian Human Rights Commission, Respect@Work: National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces considered the nature, prevalence and drivers of sexual harassment and the measures required to improve how Australian workplaces prevent and respond to sexual harassment.

The report, tabled on 5 March 2020, found that workplace sexual harassment had a profound impact on individuals and undermined workplace productivity, imposing a significant economic cost to Australian society. It recommended a range of practical actions to address sexual harassment in the workplace. Some of the recommendations in the report raise very complex issues across the various legal and regulatory frameworks for sexual harassment in Australian workplaces.

Progressing the key initiatives outlined in the Women@Work measure as a priority demonstrates the Government’s commitment to addressing sexual harassment in the workplace while it takes the time to give the report’s remaining recommendations the detailed consideration they deserve. In particular, the establishment of the Respect@Work Council will provide a forum to facilitate discussion and consideration of the more complex proposals contained in the report.

Sexual harassment is not a women’s issue, it is a societal issue. All of us can help address sexual harassment, including governments, employers and industry groups.
Women@Work – Respect@Work

To further support women’s participation in the workforce, the Women@Work measure provides $2.1 million in funding to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in Australian workplaces, in line with recommendations from Respect@Work report.

The Respect@Work Council (the Council), will be established to improve coordination, consistency and clarity in addressing sexual harassment in workplaces, while avoiding duplication, ambiguity and undue burden on victims and employers. The Council will bring together existing leaders to promote safer workplaces and high level advice to the Australian Government. It will also oversee the development of a package of training and education resources on the nature, drivers and impacts of sexual harassment in addition to the rights and responsibilities of employees and employers. The Council will work with relevant stakeholders to tailor these resources to specific workplaces.

A dedicated online platform will provide free, practical and accessible information and resources to help ensure workplaces are safe and free from sexual harassment. The measure will also facilitate a national survey, to be conducted in 2022, which will provide data on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces and facilitate monitoring of the impact of implemented measures.

PREVENTING FINANCIAL ABUSE

The Government recognises that financial abuse is a form of domestic and family violence. Perpetrators may take away a victim’s access to money, manipulate their finances, or use their money without consent. In the aftermath of an abusive and controlling relationship, women often face further economic disadvantage and financial hardship. When separating from a violent partner, for example, women may accept a division of property that is less than they may be entitled to in order to escape further violence.

Changes to the customer ID and verification rule announced by AUSTRAC in May 2020 have given bank staff the flexibility needed to use alternative methods to verify a customer’s identity for those experiencing family and domestic violence, making it easier for women to secure financial independence.

As part of the Fourth Action Plan, the Office for Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is delivering financial abuse prevention resources. The Government is working with stakeholders and experts across a range of sectors, including finance and banking, primary prevention and frontline services, to design and deliver new initiatives to prevent financial abuse.
A guide to the treatment of relationship debt

As part of the focus on preventing financial abuse under the Fourth Action Plan, the Commonwealth’s Attorney-General’s Department is developing a plain English, user-friendly information guide to explain how relationship debt is treated by family law courts in property settlement disputes. The guide will provide practical information for separating couples. The guide will assist women to achieve economic independence following separation, including empowering them to avoid unfairly assuming sole responsibility for relationship debts. The guide will clearly explain how debts are treated by the family law courts, including what an indemnity is and its practical effect, as well as outlining options to resolve matters as early as possible and without going to court.

Combating family violence, and the associated negative financial implications, is critical to enabling women to achieve their full potential in the workforce and ensure their economic security. Ending violence against women and their children, including controlling behaviours like financial abuse, is everyone’s business and we all have a role to play.

TACKLING ONLINE HARM

The Government established the Office of the eSafety Commissioner to provide a leadership role in online safety and to help Australians have safer, more positive experiences online. The role of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner has grown and now provides an important safety net for all Australians experiencing online harms. Tackling online harms for all women will improve physical and mental health and encourage greater participation and gender equality in online spaces and across society more broadly.

Case Study
Support for women to be safe online

While anyone can have negative experiences online, we know that women are experiencing these at higher levels than men. Bullying and abuse, harassment, cyber stalking and image-based abuse aimed at women are all too common. Traffic to eSafety Women’s online information and advice about technology-facilitated abuse has seen peaks over recent months, coinciding with the implementation and relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions.

eSafety is currently developing a social media self-defence training pilot to address the specific needs of women who are obliged to maintain an online presence in their professional lives and who are most likely to be subject to high rates of sustained, vicious, personal and sexualised abuse. It will provide in-depth training, tailored to specific professional groups, and will provide skills and resources (including reporting pathways) to help them deal with online abuse.
In 2020, the Government is developing a new Online Safety Act as a priority to improve Australia’s online safety regulatory framework. Legislative proposals include an adult cyber abuse scheme that will provide a pathway for victims of online abuse to have abusive material removed from the internet. The proposal aims to provide a safeguard for serious instances of online harassment and humiliation, cyberstalking, including threats to cause harm, or online abuse experienced as part of domestic and family violence. Extensive public consultation to discuss the legislative proposals continue to inform the development of the legislation.

SUPPORTING WOMEN’S ECONOMIC RECOVERY FOLLOWING SEPARATION OR DIVORCE

The 2018 Statement recognised that many women find it difficult to re-establish their lives after separation or divorce, and included a number of measures to help reduce emotional and financial stress, including improving the visibility of superannuation assets in family law proceedings, providing family law property mediation, establishing a new Small Claims Property pilot program, and services and perpetrator intervention programs.

Case Study

Health Justice Partnership – WA Women’s Resource and Engagement Network

Situations of family violence are often characterised by financial abuse, and women frequently face economic disadvantage and financial hardship as a result of abusive and controlling relationships. Health Justice Partnerships (HJPs) combine the provision of healthcare with other legal and social supports for women experiencing family violence, including financial services.

Ms J had suffered significant violence at the hands of her partner when she was referred to the Women’s Resource and Engagement Network (WREN) HJP in Western Australia. Ms J was also struggling financially with numerous bills and debts raised in her name by her partner. Appointments were made for Ms J with the WREN Health Justice Partnership solicitor and financial support service. Through this support service, Ms J was able to obtain advice surrounding budgeting, emergency relief information and negotiating payment plans with debt collectors and banks. This resulted in Ms J accessing the assistance she needed to help regain control of her finances. Ms J was also able to receive assistance through the Welfare Rights and Advocacy Service to contest a government debt that was raised due to having to live with significant family violence. The submission was successful, with a decision by the agency not to pursue criminal charges.
ADDITIONAL FAMILY LAW SUPPORT

Introducing new Federal Family Violence Orders

The introduction of new Federal Family Violence Orders (FFVOs) will provide women with additional protections from family violence and safeguard the wellbeing of children. Readily accessible and criminally enforceable orders for family violence will enhance women’s ability to fully engage in the workforce without fearing for their own or their children’s safety. Criminally enforceable FFVOs will also limit the need for vulnerable families to interact with multiple courts to address their legal needs in the COVID-19 context and beyond – which is more economically viable for women than navigating multiple courts.

Additional resourcing for family law matters

Increased funding for the Federal Circuit Court as part of the 2020-21 Budget includes $12.8 million over the forward estimates in additional resourcing for family law matters. The funding will support the appointment of an additional family law judge as well as registrars. This will assist to reduce the length of time that families spend within the family law system and ensure that vulnerable litigants, including those affected by family violence, are able to resolve their disputes in a timely manner.

Continued funding for the Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties Scheme

Women escaping family violence may settle family law disputes for less than they are entitled to in order to avoid being directly cross-examined by their ex-partner in court. This is why the Government introduced a ban on direct cross-examination in specific and serious circumstances to protect victims from re-traumatisation. This includes where there are convictions, charges or final family violence orders in place between the parties. The Government has provided additional funding to the Family Violence and Cross-Examination of Parties Scheme which ensures Legal Aid Commissions can provide legal representation in cases when the ban on direct cross-examination applies. Access to legal representation means that victims of family violence will be encouraged to pursue fairer, faster and safer outcomes in family law matters, without fear of experiencing further trauma by being directly cross-examined by their perpetrators.
SAFE ACCOMMODATION AND HOUSING

Women and children need safe accommodation to be free from violence. In 2018–19, more than 116,000 people were assisted by specialist homelessness services due to family or domestic violence. The Government recognises the importance of safe, affordable and sustainable housing for health and wellbeing. The Government supports housing and homelessness services through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA), which identifies priority cohorts for delivery of housing and homelessness services. Funding is targeted to those who need it most, including women and children who are escaping domestic and family violence, as well as older Australians, many of whom are women. This year $129 million of NHHA funding is being dedicated to homelessness services, with the states and territories to match that funding.

Under the Fourth Action Plan, the Government is further supporting women and children experiencing family and domestic violence through the $60 million Safe Places Emergency Accommodation program to provide new or expanded emergency accommodation facilities. On 28 September 2020, the Government announced Safe Places funding would go to 40 projects in remote, regional and metropolitan regions, which include building, renovating, repurposing and purchasing buildings to create safe emergency accommodation, providing an option for women and children should they need to leave an unsafe situation. These 40 projects are estimated to provide around an additional 700 safe places and assist about 6,000 people per year.
APPENDIX A

SOURCES

7. Figures do not equate due to rounding. The Brisbane goal relates to the participation rate for working-age people, ages 15 to 64 years. This differs to the participation rate for people ages 15 years and older.
8. Figures do not equate due to rounding. The Brisbane goal relates to the participation rate for working-age people, ages 15 to 64 years. This differs to the participation rate for people ages 15 years and older.


Abouzahr et al., ‘Why Women-Owned Startups Are a Better Bet’.


Provided by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.


HILDA data pooled from 2002 to 2015 (Waves 2 to 15), cited in ‘Work and family’, AIFS, ABS, 2016 Census, TableBuilder.


Workplace Gender Equality Agency, ‘Women in leadership’.


CALD and regional and rural women participation rates are a 12 month average of original data.


ABS, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15.


ABS, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018.


ABS, Personal Safety, Australia, 2016


AHRC, Respect@Work, 69.
