



Chief Executive Women

Women leaders enabling women leaders



Pre-Budget Submission 2023-2024



Leveraging women's
participation and
leadership for economic
prosperity and wellbeing

A Message from our President

Putting women's leadership and workforce participation at the forefront of the nation's economic plan will help drive productivity and ensure Australia's economic prosperity.

Empowering women and focusing on creating a truly inclusive nation is critical for our country, as we face an increasingly uncertain economic and geopolitical climate.

Women leaders from all walks of life stand ready to partner with the Australian Government to help restore Australia as a world leader on gender equality to drive performance.

Susan Lloyd-Hurwitz
President, CEW



Executive Summary

CEW members, as business and community leaders, stand ready to work with the Government to drive towards:

- Diverse women leaders at every decision-making table
- Women's workforce participation enabled across all sectors
- Women are economically secure and free from violence across their life course
- Workplace flexibility for both men and women to work and care for family

This document sets out Immediate Actions and Reforms that CEW is advocating for under the following six categories.

In summary, CEW calls on the Government to:

1. Embed a gender lens and gender responsive budgeting
2. Invest in well-paid, secure jobs in care sectors
3. Strengthen women's economic security throughout their life course by increasing Jobseeker and expanding superannuation for carers
4. Make access to quality early childhood education and care universal
5. Expand the Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave scheme to promote shared care
6. Make workplaces safe from sexual harassment

It includes CEW recommendations which have been previously advocated for and not yet addressed:

- Invest in well-paid, secure jobs in care sectors through delivering an immediate interim 10% wage supplement for early childhood educators;
- Increase Jobseeker and Parenting Payment Single payments to at least pension levels and index future payments; and
- Extend the superannuation guarantee to the Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave Scheme to help reduce the superannuation gap between men and women in retirement.



Unlocking women's workforce participation and leadership

Recent years have demonstrated how vital Australia's social infrastructure is to a strong economy and society. The care sector, largely powered by women, has been an important safety net for the economy, but this sector has been widely undervalued and underpaid.

The National Skills Commission estimates the need for 1.2 million additional workers across the economy by [2026](#). 87% of projected jobs growth will be in female dominated industries, including health and [early childhood](#). CEW and Impact Economics and Policy research [Addressing Australia's Critical Skill Shortages: Unlocking Women's Economic Participation](#), demonstrates that women are an untapped workforce who can play a critical role in meeting these labour shortages.

- Engaging women in paid work at the same rate as men could unlock an additional one million full-time skilled workers in [Australia](#).

The economics of household budgets has changed in recent decades but the narrative about the value of women's work has not. The necessity of women's economic participation and contribution must be recognised and enabled.

Once a leader on gender equality, in 2022 Australia trails behind many of its peer nations in the [Global Gender Gap Index](#) ranking 43rd in the world. Whilst Australia is ranked equal 1st in the world for women's education, we rank 38th when it comes to [economic participation and opportunity](#). Inequality is even greater for First Nations women, women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, women with disability and people of marginalised genders who experience multiple, diverse, and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage.

At this rate of change it could take 100 years to achieve gender balance in CEO roles

100
YEARS



Recommendations

Gender equality boosts productivity. The return on investment in women and social infrastructure will be significant.

- Deloitte's recent report '[Breaking The Norm](#)' found that more flexible ideas around gender norms could lead to an additional \$128 billion each year for Australia's economy and 461,000 additional full-time employees.
- By just increasing women's working hours by 2%, [\\$11 billion](#) would be added to Australia's GDP.
- The ACTU reports that [\\$111 billion](#) can be generated every year by cutting gender inequality at work by half.



1. Embed a gender lens and gender responsive budgeting

Immediate action

- Build on the Women's Budget Statement by implementing gender responsive budgeting and gender impact analysis for policy
- Implement the 2021 Workforce Gender Equality Agency review recommendations after their progression in Parliament.

Reform:

- Set targets for government procurement processes to prioritise organisations with gender balanced leadership
- Strengthen corporate reporting requirements
- Under the gender equality strategy, explore embedding gender equality institutionally through legislation, including for gender pay gap reporting and government gender responsive budgeting.

Without a systematic process in place to understand the differential impact of policy decisions on women and men, policies can often produce unintended outcomes if intersectional factors like race, gender, disability and sexuality are not considered.

Recommendations

2. Invest in well-paid, secure jobs in care sectors

Immediate action

- To address critical workforce shortages and retention challenges in the early childhood sector in preparation for changes to the Child Care Subsidy, deliver an immediate interim 10% wage supplement for educators applied for the next 2-3 years until new funding and industrial instruments are in place from the Productivity Commission inquiry and Fair Work Act changes, as recommended by Thrive By Five and the Centre for Policy Development.

Reform:

- Invest in secure, well-paid, professional jobs in health, education and the care industries
- Invest in wages in care sectors beyond aged care, with urgent action taken in early childhood sectors.

Greater provision of government-funded care services has been estimated to increase labour supply by over 2% - 70% of whom would be women. When combined with higher wage growth in the care sectors this has been estimated to contribute to [1.64% greater GDP in 2030](#).

3. Strengthen women's economic security throughout their life course by increasing Jobseeker and expanding superannuation for carers

Immediate action

- Extend the superannuation guarantee to the Commonwealth PPL Scheme to help reduce the superannuation gap between men and women in retirement.
- Support women out of poverty and into work by increasing JobSeeker and Parenting Payment Single payment rates to be consistent with pension levels and index these payments going forward.
- Prioritise women's housing and homelessness, particularly for older women who are increasingly at risk of [housing stress and homelessness](#).

Reform:

- Explore extending superannuation guarantee payments to time spent out of the workforce for caring responsibilities, such as a caring credits model as discussed by the Australian [Human Rights Commission](#)
- Review the taxation and transfer systems with a gender and equity lens to address high Effective Marginal Tax Rates (EMTRs) experienced by women and explore options to value care, such as [KPMG's Carers' Income Tax Offset model](#)

On average women retire with 47% less superannuation than men.

For every dollar of cash payments made to low-income households, [GDP is boosted](#) 60c-\$1.

Recommendations



4. Make access to quality early childhood education and care universal

Immediate action

- Remove the Child Care Subsidy Activity Test
- Deliver an immediate interim 10% wage supplement for educators for the next 2-3 years (see recommendation 2)

Reform:

- Build towards universal, free access for all children to quality, flexible ECEC; at the minimum three days of ECEC from when families need it, until [children start school](#)
- Support an ECEC equal remuneration case being brought to the Fair Work Commission
- Ensure the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy addresses: low wages, working conditions, a sustainable workforce strategy for new educators, and investment in supply of government funded and not-for profit services in identified 'childcare deserts'

The CCS Activity Test is contributing to at least 126,000 children from the poorest households [missing out](#) on early childhood education.

5. Expanded Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme to promote shared care

Immediate action

- Include a 'use it or lose it' provision in the 26 week Commonwealth PPL scheme to encourage parents to share the leave, and specifically to incentivise men to access PPL:
 - include a 6 week 'use or lose it' provision for each parent, plus 12 weeks to share between them as best suits their family
- Offer a bonus two weeks leave (which can be used by either parent) if both parents take at least six weeks leave

Reform:

- Continue to expand the Commonwealth PPL scheme in line with best practice in other OECD nations

Currently, 88% of [parental leave](#) is taken by women.

6. Make workplaces safe from sexual harassment

- Fully implement the Set the Standard Report recommendations.
- The new National Plan to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls must support inclusive, diverse workplaces grounded in respectful cultures, which prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace.

Read CEW's full Pre-Budget Submission [here](#).