



Chief Executive Women

Women leaders enabling women leaders

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**FEDERAL BUDGET 2017: Will 'fairness' and 'opportunity' lead to equality? : CEW**

Chief Executive Women (CEW) welcomes the 2017 Federal Budget measures that have the potential to remove some of the obstacles to women's financial equality and workforce participation in particular those that directly support women to remain in and return to the workforce:

- Investment in childcare subsidy CCS to ensure families on low to middle incomes requiring additional childcare will not face an annual cap
- The extension of the national partnership agreement on universal access to early childhood education
- Investment in major regional infrastructure projects with their accompanying employment opportunities
- Measures to increase the supply of affordable housing within reasonable distance to employment
- Investment in the Skilling Australians Fund, in partnership with the States and Territories targeting spending on apprenticeships and training
- Investment to expand the ParentsNext program across Australia, helping reduce welfare-dependency amongst young parents, particularly women, by supporting them to plan and prepare for employment

Equality for men and women is an inherently Australian value – as asserted by both sides of politics. A Federal Budget provides governments with the opportunity to promote equality through measures that make participation in the workforce as attractive to women as it is to men. The 2017 Federal Budget, in removing a number of barriers to women's workforce participation, has the potential to help this aim.

As this Budget's success in delivering "fairness and opportunity" to the typical Australian is assessed over the coming years, it will be important to remember that, according to the recent release of Census data, the 'typical' Australian is a 38 year-old woman with two children. Statistics tell us that she contributes double the unpaid work of her male counterparts, she faces a pay gap of 23 per cent and she looks forward to a retirement nest egg worth less than half that of men her age. Her workforce participation rate is still only 60 per cent and she is heavily overrepresented in part-time work. The barriers to her making it to decision-making levels in business or government are substantial.

For these reasons, CEW will continue to urge for measures to further:

- increase female workforce participation, with its attendant benefits to GDP growth
- reduce the gaps in financial inequality for women, particularly in superannuation and pay, and
- make child care more affordable, accessible and flexible to all who participate in the workforce

In addition, we note that policies that appear gender neutral may have unintended and different impacts between men and women in the way they distribute the benefits and burdens of spending and taxes.

CEW believes that having an economic plan that understands the gender impact of all budget measures is important to ensure that tax, spending and social programs aimed at improving fairness and opportunity actually work for the whole economy, including the 50% who are female. It is as much about economics as it is about social justice.

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***About Chief Executive Women ([www.cew.org.au](http://www.cew.org.au))***

Chief Executive Women is the pre-eminent organisation representing more than 420 of Australia's most senior women from the corporate, public, academic and not-for-profit sectors. Its mission is "women leaders enabling women leaders". Through advocacy, targeted programs and scholarships, CEW works to remove the barriers to women's progression and ensure equal opportunity for prosperity. CEW offers innovative and substantive programs aimed at enabling women's workforce participation and future leadership.

***For further information, please contact:***

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