

# OUR PLAN

## TO SUPPORT AUSTRALIAN WOMEN



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## KEY POINTS

The Liberal and Nationals Government has the values and plan to deliver for all Australians.

We are the party of endeavour and enterprise; the party of the family, choice and opportunity. We will continue to deliver for all Australians because both men and women deserve an equal stake in our society and our economy.

Our Government has delivered a strong economy resulting in over 6 million women in jobs (an extra 729,100 since 2013), with women's full-time employment and female participation reaching record highs and the lowest gender pay gap on record (14.2 per cent).

After five years of the Liberal and Nationals Government, there are over 1.3 million more Australians in jobs. Around 55 per cent of these new jobs have been taken up by women.

The Liberal and Nationals Government delivered the 2019 Women's Economic Security Statement, investing \$119 million to improve the financial security and independence of Australian women, giving them more choices in their lives. It includes:

- \$3.6 million to support young women to become entrepreneurs through the Future Female Entrepreneurs program.
- \$18 million Boosting Female Founders start-up fund to ensure women can access the finance they need to achieve their entrepreneurial goals.
- Career Revive – a program working with regional employers to develop action plans for their businesses to attract and retain women.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will:

*Secure women's economic opportunities*

- We will support young women and girls with educational investments in STEM, economics, business and enterprise, so they can get the high-paying jobs of tomorrow.
- We will introduce more flexible parental leave pay, so that more parents can access parental leave pay allowing them to balance work and family responsibilities to best suit their needs.
- We are helping vulnerable women get back on their financial feet with greater access to no interest loans.

All of this matters because nothing gives an individual more choices than a hand-up, a good education and the economic security that comes with a steady job.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will invest \$75 million to deliver a "Mid-career Checkpoint" for women aged 30 to 45 who have been caring for children or older family members to return to the workforce. Over the next four years, up to 40,000 women will have the



opportunity to participate in a mid-career checkpoint session. This commitment will be a key plank of the second Women's Economic Security Statement.

*Guarantee essential services for women*

A stronger economy means the Liberal and Nationals Government can guarantee essential services Australians rely on.

The Liberal and Nationals Government's investment in health care is growing year on year – delivering record bulk billing rates, new life saving medicines, record funding for hospitals and more health services for all Australians.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will extend our support for Australian women by

- Investing \$36 million to establish the new Maternity to Home and Wellbeing Program – a mums, dads and bubs check – to ensure that every Australian mother, father and baby has access to perinatal support.
- Providing \$8 million over four years to ensure patients suffering lymphoedema are able to access subsidised and specialised compression garments.
- Extending funding for the Australian Breastfeeding Association by \$4 million to \$8.2 million to ensure this valuable service can best support mothers.
- Providing \$5 million to support a National Women's Health Research Translation and Impact Network, with the spotlight on national collaboration, workforce capacity building, leadership development and broad research and translation in women's health.

This funding builds on our investment of more than \$50 million in a new Women's Health Strategy, including boosting investment for research into ovarian cancer and endometriosis. We are also saving breast cancer patients up to \$1,500 per scan with \$32 million towards life-saving MRI and PET scans covered under Medicare. And we will establish six residential eating disorders centres and provide national coordination for eating disorders treatment.

Our childcare reforms have eased cost of living pressures, with out of pocket costs already reduced by 8.9 per cent, providing cost of living relief, making it easier for families to manage their work and family responsibilities and providing greater reward for the paid work they do.

*Invest in women's safety*

Since 2013, we have made continued investments in women's safety – totalling \$840 million – because all Australian women have the right to be safe at home or in the street. Our record \$328 million contribution to the next National Action Plan to reduce violence against women and children is focused on prevention, frontline services and emergency accommodation. And we are working with the states and territories because stopping violence is everyone's responsibility.





Our record investment includes:

- \$82 million for frontline services.
- \$68 million for prevention strategies.
- \$35 million in support and prevention measures for Indigenous communities funded under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.
- \$78 million to provide safe places for people impacted by domestic and family violence.
- \$64 million for 1800RESPECT.

*Improve gender equality*

Australian women have benefited from a growing economy that creates jobs, an education system that nurtures talent and ability and a society that genuinely strives for equality of opportunity.

We know there is more work to do to ensure women achieve their full potential in their industry of choice. That is why we will make targeted investments to boost participation and leadership in different sectors, including by:

- Investing \$2 million over four years in the Australian Music Industry Network to deliver a mentorship program aimed at empowering women in the creation, development and promotion of their music.
- Building on the Government's support for a Decadal Plan for Women in STEM. We will invest \$1.8 million to extend the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) initiative to advance gender equity in higher education and research institutions.
- Supporting Women Building Australia, a construction industry-led program with a \$675,000 grant to increase the participation of young women working in the sector.
- Investing in women's sporting participation and leadership, with the construction of female change rooms at sporting grounds and investing in leadership and mentoring for high-achieving female athletes.
- Building on our record 47.3 per cent women on government boards to meet our 50 per cent target.

*Increase leadership and participation in sport*

Participating in sport means a fair go for all, including women and girls who need equal access to our playing fields and facilities.

We need to ensure women are supported from entry level as young girls through to elite level competition, including in once male-dominated sports. We will:

- Support the construction of female change room facilities at sporting grounds across the country.



- Invest in netball as Australia's most popular sport for women, with funding to help Netball Australia to continue to grow the game, and establish the first International Leadership Hub for Netball in Melbourne.
- Back in one of the nation's most loved and successful women's sporting teams, The Matildas by supporting a permanent high-performance base in Melbourne.

## OUR RECORD

### Securing Women's Economic Opportunity

The Liberal and Nationals Government has worked to give women greater choices for their lives, improve their engagement with the workforce and build their financial security. The more choices for women, the better the opportunities to support themselves and their families.

With careful economic management, the Liberal and Nationals Government has delivered a strong economy with:

- Over 6 million women in jobs and female workforce participation at a near record high (60.5 per cent).
- Around 730,000 jobs for women created since coming to office in September 2013.
- The lowest gender pay gap on record (14.2 per cent).

Our investment to support women's economic opportunities includes:

- The landmark Women's Economic Security Statement investing \$119 million in the financial security and independence of Australian women with:
  - \$3.6 million to support young women to become entrepreneurs through the Future Female Entrepreneurs program.
  - \$18 million for the Boosting Female Founders start-up fund to ensure women can access the finance they need to achieve their entrepreneurial goals.
  - Career Revive – a program working with regional employers to develop action plans for their businesses to attract and retain women.

We have also established and invested \$60 million in Ecstra, the financial literacy foundation that will educate and assist Australians to build their financial capability. We are also supporting financial security for women with targeted assistance including:

- Extending access to, and increasing flexibility for, parental leave.
- Superannuation changes, including concessional catch-up contributions, benefitting those who have spent time out of the workforce, the Low Income Superannuation Tax offset and expanding access to the spousal tax offset, to boost super for parents who take time out from the workforce for family responsibilities.
- Capping fees and charges for low-balance superannuation accounts to ensure women retire with more savings.



Our Government has also prioritised gender equality across the aid program. In 2017-18, Australia delivered \$1.3 billion in official development assistance targeting gender equality and women's empowerment globally. We have increased our investment in the Pacific to advance gender equality and will deliver a 10-year roadmap to end violence against women and girls globally.

The Liberal and Nationals Government is proud to have delivered the highest-ever representation of women on government boards (47.3 per cent) – closing in on our 50 per cent target – and a record seven women in Cabinet.

### **Guaranteeing essential services**

A strong economy means that we have been able to guarantee essential services for women and girls. We have supported critical investments in women's health including:

- Listing the breast cancer drug Kisqali on the Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme. Without subsidy, the more than 3,000 patients eligible for this treatment would pay \$71,820 per year.
- \$20.5 million for breast cancer nurses through the McGrath Foundation.
- Funding for a National Action Plan for Endometriosis.
- \$39.5 million to immunise pregnant women against whooping cough.

We are helping women and girls to reach their full potential by supporting their access to education opportunities, including:

- Building interest in STEM subjects, through an expansion of the Curious Minds Program.
- Establishing the Future Female Entrepreneurs program to encourage girls into business.
- The Government's \$25 million investment in the Indigenous Girls STEM Academy – to support high-achieving Indigenous girls from middle to high school years through to higher education and graduate employment.

We are helping to relieve cost of living pressures for women including:

- Tax relief to encourage and reward hard work – benefiting more than 10 million workers and their families this year.
- The Government's new Child Care Subsidy – making child care more accessible and affordable for nearly 1 million families. Our reforms have reduced out of pocket costs by 8.9 per cent since their introduction. A typical family is around \$1,300 better off a year.
- Removal of the GST on sanitary items (the 'tampon tax').

We are helping to provide for women in need by investing more than \$1.5 billion annually to support housing and homelessness services.

- The new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) took effect on 1 July 2018 and has been signed by every state and territory. The agreement identifies priority



cohorts for the delivery of housing and homelessness services. Funding will be 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.

### **Investing in women's safety**

All Australians have the right to be safe at home, on the street and online. Sadly, too many women are still at risk from family, domestic and sexual violence.

Recent statistics reveal that 18 per cent of women have experienced sexual violence and 17 per cent have encountered violence from a partner since the age of 15.

The Liberal and Nationals Government has invested over \$840 million in women's safety since 2013. We will continue to treat domestic violence prevention and reduction as a national priority with \$328 million invested under the Fourth Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. Since 2013, we have:

- Reformed the family law system to stop DV victims being cross-examined by perpetrators and introduced a new minimum standard of five days unpaid family and domestic violence leave.
- Expanded the role of the eSafety Commissioner to tackle online abuse, including through the eSafety women program, the introduction of a complaints and civil penalty regime for posting, or threatening to post, an intimate image without consent and new criminal offences for aggravated and repeated non-consensual image sharing.
- Funded the Australian Human Rights Commission's Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in the Workplace led by Kate Jenkins.
- Granted over 7,046 visas to vulnerable women and children since 2013 through the Women at Risk program.

## **OUR PLAN**

### **Women's economic opportunity**

The more choices for women, the better their opportunities to support themselves and their families.

A strong economy means Australian women have more choices about what they do while receiving the essential services they rely on – whether they are studying, starting a career or family or enjoying their retirement.

Under the Liberal and Nationals, more women are in work than ever before. Women's full-time





employment and female participation rates have hit record highs. The gender pay gap is the lowest on record at 14.2 per cent.

### **Mid-Career Checkpoint**

Many women in their 30s and 40s have taken a career break to start a family, care for older family members, or both.

The skills and experience gained in these unpaid roles is often not properly acknowledged, and women in these caring roles can sometimes lose their confidence as others have gone ahead at work and technology has changed their role.

We respect the choices families make when taking on caring responsibilities, whether that be staying at home or returning to work. For those who decide to return to work after a period of caring for others, we want to support their choice because boosting women's workforce participation is good for them, their families and the economy.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will invest \$75 million to deliver a 'Mid-career Checkpoint' for women aged 30 to 45 who have been caring for children or older family members to return to the workforce.

Over the next four years, up to 40,000 women will have the opportunity to participate in a Midcareer Checkpoint session. The program will also be open to men returning to work after caring responsibilities but will be targeted towards women in low-and middle-income areas, and who do not work for companies already offering professional development support.

The checkpoint will provide targeted and tailored support, catering to the needs of different women – be it interview support, advice on further education or training, mentoring or a career workshop.

We will work with a restricted list of approved providers across all states and territories to design and roll out a government-endorsed program that is adaptable and well-managed to benefit women and men returning from two or more years out of the workforce caring for family.

This initiative will be a key plank of the second Women's Economic Security Statement.

This initiative will complement other measures the Liberal and Nationals Government is taking to support women's economic opportunity at all stages of life including:

- Extended access to, and increased flexibility for, parental leave pay.
- Expanding the no interest loans scheme to assist 45,000 additional women escaping family and domestic violence.



- Career Revive – a program working with regional employers to develop action plans for their businesses to attract and retain women.
- \$18 million in grants through a women's start-up fund, Boosting Female Founders, to increase entrepreneurship opportunities for women.
- Changes to superannuation rules, including concessional catch-up contributions, to boost super after taking time from the workforce for family responsibilities.
- Capping fees and charges for low-balance superannuation accounts to ensure women retire with more savings, and reuniting Australians with their lost superannuation savings through the ATO.
- We are helping drive the cultural change to improve workplaces for women. The Liberal and Nationals Government is supporting practical action to address sexual harassment, by contributing \$500,000 towards the Australian Human Rights Commission's Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in the Workplace to be led by Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins.
- And under the Liberal and Nationals Government more women are in leadership positions than ever before, with a record seven women in Cabinet and a record number of women on government boards (47.3 per cent).

### **Guaranteeing Essential Services**

A stronger economy means the Liberal and Nationals Government can guarantee essential services Australians rely on.

The Liberal and Nationals Government's investment in health care is growing year on year – delivering record bulk billing rates, new life saving medicines, record funding for hospitals and more health services for all Australians. And we are easing cost of living pressures with our childcare reforms that support those who need it most.

*Supporting Women's Health Services - Maternity to Home and Wellness Program – Mums, Dads and Bubs mental health check*

The Liberal and Nationals Government will invest \$36 million to establish a new Maternity to Home and Wellbeing Program – a Mums, Dads and Bubs check – to ensure that every Australian mother, father and baby has access to perinatal support.

The first one thousand days of a child's life are critical to their development. Nothing is more important during that time than the mental health of the parents, particularly the mother. It's estimated that one in seven mothers experience post-natal depression, with around 100,000 Australians impacted directly every year. It also impacts men – so we are working with the whole family.

A Mums, Dads and Bubs check will ensure good mental health, with a focus on minimising the



impact of perinatal depression. Every mother and father will be able to undertake the check before they leave the hospital, just as they do with their other clinical health checks. Where risks are identified people will be directed to additional support services.

Acting early ensures good mental health to best support new parents and their bubs. It removes the stigma of mental health by making it an important part of parental health care – as much as breastfeeding and vaccinations.

A Mums, Dads and Bubs check will become a nationally recognised program, which will also be accessible in 10 different languages, ensuring all families are part of the screening program and receive advice on keeping mentally well when having a baby.

We will provide \$16 million to the Centre of Perinatal Excellence (COPE) to roll out their world-leading perinatal mental health screening tool which can be securely and rapidly delivered using a digital tablet/iPad.

The Liberal and Nationals Government will provide up to \$20 million to ensure a nationally consistent approach and that it is an integral part of hospital care and occurs before the family goes home.

#### *Supporting Women's Health Services - Lymphoedema Garments Program*

The Liberal and Nationals Government will provide \$10 million over 4 years to ensure patients suffering lymphoedema are able to access subsidised specialist compression garments, through a nationally consistent approach.

Lymphoedema is most commonly caused by lymph node removal or damage due to cancer treatment – women who have undergone surgery and radiotherapy for treatment of breast cancer are particularly susceptible to lymphoedema.

Across Australia there is a need for a consistent approach to providing specialised subsidized garments to the 300,000 Australian patients who suffer lymphoedema.

The cost of the specialised garments can be many hundreds of dollars, and, while they are part funded through state based schemes, health insurance and charities, the approach is inconsistent and there can be an ongoing cost for patients who have had cancer. Without these garments lymphoedema sufferers experience excess fluid and proteins in the tissue cause swelling and inflammation, which can lead to fibrosis if lymphoedema is not treated. These infections place greater stresses on the already labouring lymphatic system and hospital admission may be required in severe cases.

The Government will partner with states, territories and major support groups to ensure this





extends funding already available, to provide maximum benefit to patients.

*Supporting Women's Health Services - Support for breastfeeding mothers*

The Liberal and Nationals Government has led the development of Australia's National Breastfeeding Strategy, approved by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council last month and now endorsed by the COAG Health Council.

We will extend funding for the Australian Breastfeeding Association by \$4 million to \$8.2 million over 4 years to ensure that this valuable service can best support mothers. This builds on \$2 million in funding to the Australian Red Cross Blood Service to ensure that all premature babies born in Australia can access human milk through the establishment of a centralised Donor Human Milk Service.

*Supporting Women's Health Services - National Women's Health Research Translation and Impact Network*

A Liberal and Nationals Government will provide \$5 million to support a National Women's Health Research Translation and Impact Network - a national collaboration, workforce capacity building, leadership development, and broad research and translation in women's health. The funding will be provided through the Medical Research Future Fund and priority areas will include preconception, pregnancy, postpartum and intrapartum health of women and babies, mental health and reproductive health.

*National Women's Health Strategy*

Our new support builds on the National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030 announced in April 2019 with more than \$50 million in funding to improve women's health in areas such as ovarian cancer and endometriosis. Through the National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030 we have invested:

- \$20 million for research to help Australian women in their fight against ovarian cancer with a focus on early detection. Ovarian cancer has a poor prognosis, with only 43 of every 100 women diagnosed still alive five years after their diagnosis. A complete understanding of the risk factors for ovarian cancer is not yet known and further research is required to develop comprehensive prevention and detection strategies. The funding will support ovarian cancer research under the new Medical Research Future Fund. Early detection and finding a cure for ovarian cancer will be a priority for this funding.
- Over \$10 million for endometriosis, including \$9 million from the Medical Research Future Fund for endometriosis research to improve the treatment and understanding on an often misunderstood and crippling condition; \$1.06 million to develop a digital health platform for endometriosis research and support; and \$160,000 for Endoactive to disseminate its





award winning Shared Perspectives endometriosis videos, free of charge, to medical professionals and women affected by endometriosis. Shared Perspectives is a resource of 25 evidence-based videos that help health professionals and patients to better understand the condition and provide guidance regarding effective methods of management and treatment.

- \$5 million to Jean Hailes for Women's Health for the continuation of its National Women's Health Initiative, including clinical services, provision of information on women's health to employers, and the national digital gateway for women's health and wellbeing for doctors and patients.
- \$1.3 million for an intensive support service to support families following stillbirth. The program, delivered through SANDS, will deliver an intensive support service that begins in the hospital and continues once the family has returned home.
- \$1.5 million over three years for local women's health promotion grants.

Our funding builds on the National Strategic Approach to Maternity Services, which is being developed with stakeholders, including consumers, states and territories, and health professionals, to deliver a genuinely holistic policy framework that recognises and values all models of care. We are committed to improving access for women to continuity of care with the provider of their choice and this includes for midwifery continuity of care.

We continue to invest to support women with cancer treatment including in the 2019-20 Budget.

For the first time we are making Medicare available for MRI and PET scans for breast cancer with an investment of \$32.6 million to benefit 15,000 patients during their diagnosis and pre-surgery planning.

This is in addition to the \$198.6 million funding for diagnostic imaging to reduce the costs of vital scans and x-rays, plus a further \$375 million expansion of more than 50 MRI licences around the country.

We have subsidised on the Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme Ibrance® and Kisqali® for advanced and metastatic breast cancer, which would otherwise cost over \$70,000 per year without subsidy.

We have extended free mammograms for women between the age of 50 and 74 through BreastScreen. We have also provided over \$27 million in new funding for more McGrath Foundation Nurses for breast cancer, particularly to support patients in rural and regional areas.

To support women with Type 1 diabetes we have expanded free access to glucose monitoring devices for pregnant women, children and more adults with type 1 diabetes, saving Australians up to \$7,000 a year. Our investment over the next four years will ensure that free glucose monitoring devices are available to over 37,000 eligible Australians with type 1 diabetes.



More than 75 per cent of Australians affected by eating disorders are women. We are investing \$70.2 million to establish six residential eating disorders centres and provide national coordination for eating disorders treatment. This builds on the historic \$110 million investment to introduce new MBS items for eating disorders, announced in December 2018. This will allow people with anorexia nervosa and other severe psychological eating disorders to be able to access a Medicare rebate of up to 40 psychological and 20 dietetic services per year, depending on their needs.

### *Child care*

Child care accessibility and affordability are crucial to creating more workforce opportunities for parents.

Our reforms have made child care more affordable with almost 1 million families realising the benefits.

We abolished the annual subsidy cap for more than 80 per cent of families, allowing them to work as many days as they choose without a looming cap on their child care subsidy.

We know that these changes are working. More families and children are using child care, more than 90 per cent of families are entitled to a child care subsidy of 50 per cent or more and the ABS has reported that out-of-pocket costs for families have fallen by 8.9 per cent across Australia since our new child care package began.

Our reformed Child Care Subsidy helps around 1 million families to balance work and parenting responsibilities. A typical family is around \$1,300 better off each year.

Typical families who are better off with the new subsidy which significantly reduces their daily fee:

- A family on \$50,000 - both parents or a single parent working, with two children under 6 in long day care three days a week at \$100 a day. More than \$3,000 a year better off.
- A family on \$80,000 - both parents or a single parent working full-time, with two children under 6 in long day care five days a week at \$100 a day. Over \$8,000 a year better off.
- A family on \$94,000 - both parents or a single parent working, with two children under 6 in long day care two days a week at \$100 a day. Around \$1,500 a year better off.
- A family on \$150,000 - both parents or a single parent working, with two children under 6 in long day care three days a week at \$100 a day. Around \$1,000 a year better off.

Families earning \$186,958 or less are no longer limited by the amount of subsidised child care they can access. This benefits more than 80 per cent of families who use child care.

Families earning more than \$186,958 and less than \$351,248 will also benefit from an increased annual subsidy cap of \$10,190 per child per year.



Low income families earning \$66,958 or less who do not meet the activity test have access to 24 hours of subsidised care per child per fortnight.

### **Women's Safety**

The Liberal and Nationals Government's first priority is to keep Australians safe and secure. That means continuing to stand up to the scourge of domestic violence.

We are proud to be making the biggest-ever Commonwealth investment in the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, with \$328 million for prevention measures and frontline services.

Our investments are the product of extensive consultations with frontline workers, experts and survivors ahead of the release of the Fourth Action Plan in mid-2019. It's why a core focus of our investment is prevention — changing the attitudes to violence and helping those who think violence is an option, to stop.

Our record \$328 million investment includes:

- \$82 million for frontline services.
- \$68 million for prevention strategies.
- \$35 million in support and prevention measures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities funded under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.
- \$78 million to provide safe places for people impacted by domestic and family violence.
- \$64 million for 1800RESPECT.

A key feature is our ground-breaking commitment to build new emergency accommodation for women and children escaping violence. Women and children leaving dangerous homes should have a safe place to go. And where they are safe, women and children survivors should be helped to remain in their homes and in their communities.

This investment includes a \$60.4 million grants program to provide new or expanded emergency accommodation facilities for those escaping family and domestic violence and a further \$18.0 million to continue the Commonwealth's investment in the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes program.

We've also introduced reforms to the family law system to stop DV victims being cross-examined by perpetrators and introduced a new minimum standard of five days unpaid family and domestic violence leave.

To tackle online abuse, we have expanded the role of the e-Safety Commissioner. This office now also takes responsibility for online safety issues affecting adults, including victims of non-





consensual image sharing. Ninety-eight per cent of domestic violence workers say they have had clients who experienced technology-facilitated stalking and abuse. The Government will work with the states and territories to ensure police and other frontline workers are equipped to respond quickly to incidents of online harassment and abuse.

Under the Fourth Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, a Liberal and Nationals Government will:

- Invest \$1.5 million for the Office of the eSafety Commissioner to provide targeted advice to help women with an intellectual disability and/or communication difficulties to identify and report online abuse, and to enable the safety features on their devices and online accounts. Research indicates that women with an intellectual disability are more vulnerable to technology-facilitated abuse. The program will also include training for domestic and family violence frontline workers.
- Provide up to \$2.5 million for the Office of the eSafety Commissioner to work with and assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in communities across Australia to identify, report and protect themselves and their children from technology-facilitated abuse. The program will develop a range of culturally-appropriate resources for frontline workers to help them identify, understand and report technology-facilitated abuse, and ultimately empower the women they support to be safe online.

The Liberal and Nationals Government will also mandate transparency reports from the major social media platforms on the number and type of responses to reports and complaints about illegal abusive and predatory content. To send a clear message to criminals and predators, we will toughen penalties for online abuse and harassment. This will also allow the courts to impose penalties in line with community expectations.

- We will increase maximum penalties for those using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence under section 474.17 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 from three years' jail to five years.

Our total contributions to women's safety are more than \$840 million since 2013 – because women have the right to be safe in their homes, communities, online and at work.

We have also granted over 7,046 visas to vulnerable women and children through the Women at Risk program, which specifically helps women targeted because of their gender.

- In 2017-18, the highest number of women and dependents were granted a woman at risk visa in our history (2,126 people in total).
- In 2018-19, at least 15 per cent of places have been set aside for the Women at Risk program, up from last year's 10 per cent target.

A re-elected Liberal and Nationals Government will increase the Women at Risk Program as a proportion of the Offshore Component of our refugee intake from 14 per cent in 2017-18 to 20 per cent in 2019-20.





We have also introduced a new directive to prevent the entry to Australia of people convicted of violent crimes against women or children – regardless of the nation in which the offence occurred or the sentence that was handed down.

### **Improve gender equality**

By keeping the economy strong, the Liberal and Nationals Government has created jobs and careers and built an education system that nurtures talent, regardless of gender.

We now have so many more women serving at senior levels in business, the professions and in government.

However, women are still not represented at all levels, in all sectors, or in equal numbers to men. While progress has been strong, there is still more work to do. We have acted to improve gender equality, with a record number of women in Cabinet and a record number of women on government boards. We will also build on our record 47.3 per cent women on government boards to meet our 50 per cent target.

We will continue to make targeted investments to boost participation and leadership in different sectors.

### *Education*

Nothing provides more opportunity and choice than a strong education.

We have implemented fair, needs-based funding that maintains choice for families and will increase average funding per student by 62 per cent over a decade. In addition, we are making targeted investments in education to encourage more girls to participate in traditionally male-dominated professions. The Liberal and Nationals Government is:

- Developing a 10-year plan to boost women in STEM alongside the Australian Academy of Science to ensure women and girls are ready for the jobs of the future.
- Investing \$1.8 million to extend the Curious Minds program and bring more girls into science, technology, engineering and maths.
- Supporting the Future Female Entrepreneurs program with a \$3.6 million investment for around 55,000 girls and young women to encourage entrepreneurialism and self-employment.

Providing scholarships for women in economics and finance through the Women's Leadership and Development Program.



### *STEM equity*

The Liberal and Nationals Government is taking action to ensure that women and girls are equally represented in STEM.

Only 16 per cent of Australians qualified in the science and technology fields are female. This is unacceptably low for an area so critical to the future of our economy. Building on the Government's support for a Decadal Plan for Women in STEM, we will:

- Develop a 10-year plan to boost women in STEM, alongside the Australian Academy of Science.
- Reduce barriers to STEM through the Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship grants program.
- Expand the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) program promoting gender equity and diversity in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine.
- Invest \$1.8 million to extend the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) initiative to advance gender equity in higher education and research institutions.
- Invest \$1.5 million for a digital awareness initiative to heighten visibility of girls and women and showcase the benefits of study and a career in science.

### *Women in construction*

We are supporting more women to work in construction, one of our largest employing industries, with a \$675,000 grant over three years for Women Building Australia.

This construction industry-led program is working to increase the participation of young women in the sector. While the sector has traditionally been male dominated, statistics have shown that women working in building and construction leads to better business performance and workplace morale and a decrease in mental illness rates.

Through a national mentoring program and a national career expo program run by Master Builders Australia, the Women Building Australia initiative will encourage women to enter and remain in the building and construction industry. The initiative targets the four main barriers to women's participation:

- Perceptions of the industry.
- Lack of appropriate workforce pathways for young women.
- Lack of encouragement for young women to consider a career in building and construction.
- Lack of support to retain female newcomers in the industry.

### *Women in Music mentor program*

As part of the Liberal and Nationals Government's \$30.9 million investment in the Australian



music industry, we will provide \$2 million over four years to the Australian Music Industry Network to deliver an open, competitive mentorship program aimed at empowering women in the creation, development and promotion of their music.

Women are under-represented in the Australian music industry: the mentoring program will assist them to navigate and lead within the industry, as well as providing professional development.

Funding will be directed towards emerging talent, aiming to equip female musicians with the skills to move to the next stage.

### *Gender equality in Foreign Affairs*

The Liberal and Nationals Government has established Australia as a global leader on gender equality and women's empowerment.

We believe that gender equality is a fundamental human right, and that respecting fundamental human rights and freedoms makes Australia and the world safer and more secure.

Through the Liberal and Nationals Government's 2016 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy and 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, we pursue gender equality as a core Australian value and a top priority across Australia's foreign policy, economic diplomacy and development investments.

We have increased our investment in the Pacific to advance gender equality and will deliver a 10 year roadmap to end violence against women and girls in our region. The Liberal and Nationals Government has forged a new partnership in the Pacific, investing \$7.6 million in the Pacific Partnership to End Violence Against Women and Girls, which will see Australia work with the Pacific community, European Union and UN Women to eliminate violence against women and girls.

### **Increasing participation and leadership in sport**

Participating in sport means a fair go for all, including women and girls who need equal access to our playing fields and facilities.

We need to ensure women are supported from entry level as young girls through to elite level competition, including in once male-dominated sports. For example, female change rooms should be the standard rather than the exception.

In the 2019-20 Budget we set aside funding to kickstart our ambition to deliver proper and equitable changing facilities at every sporting field across the country.



Our mission will help address the unmet demand resulting from the massive increase in women's and girls' participation in football, cricket, Australian Rules, rugby league and rugby sevens.

*Securing the long-term future of Australian netball*

Netball has long been the leading team sport for girls and women throughout Australia with over one million participants nationwide, and a strong footprint into regional communities across the country.

Traditionally, netball has retained players for longer than other sports, especially in the 18-24 age bracket. However, in recent years there has been an increasing number of our best young female athletes pursuing other sports.

A Liberal and Nationals Government will provide \$30 million for Netball Australia to roll-out a number of initiatives which aim to secure a strong and long-term future for the game.

The leading initiative will be the 'Play Netball' participation strategy. 'Play Netball' will enhance participation at a grassroots level through a range of products and programs that can be localised to netball communities across each state and territory:

- NetSetGO 3.0, a revised junior introductory program which will directly support clubs and associations to trial and implement innovative approaches for delivering the game, and increase annual participants from 75,000 to 100,000.
- Digital upgrades to improve club and association operations, including additional online coaching models, administration resources, and an improved competition management platform for more than 40,000 coaches and officials.
- Expansion of the Confident Girls Foundation Grassroots Participant program aimed at supporting state and territories which do not have government subsidised sporting voucher programs.
- An enhanced national child safe framework to support clubs and associations provide a fun and safe place for children.
- Revised national facilities guidelines to support grassroots community club volunteers and local councils in applying for government funding.
- Provide a clearer and more defined high-performance pathway, and increase employment opportunities for athletes.

'Play Netball' will also provide direct financial support for Netball ACT, Netball Tasmania and Netball Northern Territory to deliver localised grassroots participation, schools, coaching, umpiring and volunteer programs.

A Liberal and Nationals Government will also back Netball Australia's bid for the Netball World Cup 2027, an event that will once again showcase Australia, and its capability to host major international sporting events, to the world.





### *Establishing a home for The Matildas*

A Liberal and Nationals Government will back in one of our nation's most loved and successful women's sporting teams, The Matildas, by supporting a permanent base in Melbourne.

The home of the Matildas will be established as a state-of-the-art facility at a site identified through an expression of interest process currently being run by Football Victoria.

It will provide a fully equipped performance centre to maintain the high standards of our current players, coaches and officials, as well as preparing our next generation of female footballers to keep the game strong.

We recognise that the success of the Mathilda's has been the catalyst for driving female participation as the fastest growing area of football.

This Centre will be pivotal to football reaching a 50:50 gender equality target at a grassroots level over the next ten years by engaging with female footballers across Melbourne and inspiring female participation.

The Liberal and Nationals Government's \$15 million contribution will require matching funds from the Victorian Government.

These commitments are in addition to our other investments which will see us:

- Partner with Tennis Australia to increase opportunities for women and girls from all regions, towns and cities around Australia to participate in grassroots tennis.
- Secure the future of the AFLW in Queensland with a new sporting and entertainment precinct in Springfield.
- Redevelop Ikon Park in Melbourne into the home of AFLW in Victoria.
- Transform the iconic Royal Hall of Industries in Sydney into a high performance home of women's sport.
- Redevelop Allan Border Field into a hub for female cricket.
- Continue to actively support the Women Leaders in Sport Program through the Women's Leadership Development Program and Sport Australia.
- Host the 2020 ICC Women's T20 World Cup and support the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup bid.

## THE CHOICE

The Liberal and Nationals Government is building a stronger economy, delivering tax relief, fixing the Budget and delivering a surplus.



We have a plan to secure our future and guarantee the essential services that Australians rely on. The Liberal and Nationals Government will create the pathway for women's economic empowerment. It's imperative that women have an equal stake in our economy and in our society.

Women must also be safe in their communities, homes, online and in their workplaces. In the last Parliament, the Labor Party refused to support Government measures to help Australian women.

These included policies to secure their financial future – particularly women about to retire – that would limit the fees and charges applicable to low-balance superannuation accounts. The Liberal and Nationals Government is ensuring women can build their financial future and save for their retirement with catch-up contributions in superannuation. We're levelling the playing field so that all women, no matter how they're employed, can make a tax deductible contribution to their superannuation.

Yet the Labor Party plans to scrap both of these measures.

The Labor Party's Retirees Tax will impact 30 per cent more women than men, including single women and widows. This heartless tax grab would hurt vulnerable women, including pensioners.

The Labor Party would weaken our economy with \$387 billion more in higher taxes. Time and again, Labor have shown they can't manage money. And then they come after yours.

## THE COST

The Liberals and Nationals will provide an additional \$123 million to support women's economic security and health services.

