

# **Ninth periodic report submitted by Australia under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to as ‘periodic report’ throughout this document.

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## **Ninth periodic report submitted by Australia under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

### **Introduction**

1. Australia welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (Committee) its ninth periodic report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Convention). This periodic report responds to the list of issues provided by the Committee on 6 March 2023 and provides an overview of key measures taken by Australia to advance gender equality.
2. Australia has made remarkable progress to achieve gender equality over the last 40 years. However, distinct challenges continue to impede women's equality. Australia's Status of Women Report Card is released annually on International Women's Day and includes the most up to date available data on the social and economic equality issues facing women and girls in Australia ([Appendix 1](#)).
3. Australia is committed to being a global leader on gender equality and is putting gender equality at the heart of policy and decision-making. The Australian Government's ambitious reform agenda is being delivered in partnership with state and territory governments and guided by consultation with the Australian public, civil society organisations and First Nations communities.<sup>2</sup>
4. Australia's first ever national strategy to achieve gender equality, *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality* (Working for Women Strategy), was released in March 2024 and will guide whole-of-community actions to prioritise measures to achieve a gender-equal society. The Working for Women Strategy sets a path to make progress towards the Australian Government's vision over the next 10 years, and focuses on gender-based violence; unpaid and paid care; economic equality and security; health; and leadership, representation and decision-making.
5. The Working for Women Strategy supports the work of similar state and territory plans and complements other Australian Government efforts to achieve gender

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<sup>2</sup> In this report, First Nations people, Indigenous people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are used interchangeably. See Australia's Common Core Document (2023) for further information.

equality. This includes significant national commitments on women's safety and health, led through the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (National Plan to End Violence against Women) and the *National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030* (National Women's Health Strategy).

6. Rates of violence against women in Australia have remained alarmingly high over recent decades, in spite of increased efforts across the country. In October 2022, the Australian Government and state and territory governments released the National Plan to End Violence against Women to guide action to achieve our goal of ending violence in one generation, as well as the *First Action Plan 2023-2027* and *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025* (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan).
7. There have been substantial improvements in women's economic equality in recent decades with increases to women's workforce participation, growth in women's level of educational attainment, reductions in the gender pay gap and narrowing of the retirement income gap. However, despite more work being required to achieve economic equality; significant legislative, policy and structural reforms have been implemented. This includes:
  - reintroducing gender responsive budgeting and gender impact assessments to the federal Budget process, whereby policymakers are now required to consider the gender impact of all new proposals;
  - making the Government's Paid Parental Leave scheme longer, more flexible, accessible and gender equitable, sending a strong signal that both parents play a role in caring for their children;
  - driving transparency and action by amending the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth) (WGE Act) enabling the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) to publish the gender pay gap of employers with 100 or more employees;
  - improving affordability of early childhood education and care and investing in childcare accessibility for First Nations families;

- investing to better value paid care work and feminised industries, through reforming aged care, early childhood education and care, veterans' care and disability support to create a sustainable and productive care and support economy that delivers quality care and support with quality jobs;
  - making gender equality an objective of the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) (Fair Work Act) as well as, banning pay secrecy, legislating a statutory equal remuneration principle and establishing an Expert Panel on Pay Equity in the national Fair Work Commission;
  - establishing entitlements to paid family and domestic violence leave; and
  - prohibiting discrimination against employees on the basis of gender identity, intersex status, breastfeeding and subjection to family and domestic violence.
8. Gender equality in Australia cannot be achieved without reconciliation and equality for First Nations women, girls and gender diverse persons. The Australian Government is committed to listening to and working in partnership with First Nations women to achieve change, in line with the Priority Reforms under the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (Closing the Gap). First Nations women are leading and engaging in a significant body of work to address their unique lived experiences in relation to racism and gender inequality. This includes through the *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing Our Rights, Securing Our Future Report* (Wiyi Yani U Thangani), the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Change Agenda for First Nations Gender Justice, its Implementation Framework and Change Agenda; and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women.
9. Australia also pursues gender equality as a core value and priority across Australia's foreign policy, international development cooperation, humanitarian action, trade and security efforts. Through Australia's International Development Policy, we advance gender equality as a key commitment and core issue for action. Australia has a target that 80 per cent of overseas development investments effectively

address gender equality, and a requirement that all investments over \$3 million have a gender equality objective.

### **Australia's system of government**

10. Australia has a federal constitutional system in which legislative, executive and judicial powers are shared or distributed between the Australian Government and the constituent states and territories.

11. Under Australia's system of government, powers are distributed between:

- the Australian Government;
- 6 state governments: New South Wales (NSW), Queensland (QLD), South Australia (SA), Tasmania (TAS), Victoria (VIC), Western Australia (WA);
- 2 self-governing territory governments: the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and the Northern Territory (NT);
- 537 local government councils.

12. The Australian Government (also referred to as the federal government in this periodic report) works closely with states and territories on measures to progress gender equality. This periodic report focuses on the Australian Government's actions at a national level and where relevant to the question, outlines state and territory measures. States and territories have undertaken significant reform on gender equality, particularly on implementing gender equality strategies, on gender-based violence, in education, health, justice and in correctional setting. Due to the brevity of this periodic report, only a snapshot of these measures across the 8 jurisdictions is provided.

### **Preparation of the periodic report**

13. *[Placeholder: paragraph 13 will detail the public consultation process undertaken as part of our intention to provide a full and robust report on Australia's progress under the Convention. A summary of the public consultation response will be included in an Appendix to the periodic report].*

14. The Australian Government deeply values the perspectives of Australian civil society, and to demonstrate our commitment to accountability and transparency,



funded Australia's 6 National Women's Alliances to develop an independent shadow report.<sup>3</sup>

### **Question 1: Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the pandemic, recovery efforts and global crises**

15. The Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic involved the development of a range of national health strategies and plans, which considered the diverse health needs of all Australians.<sup>4</sup> In recognition that the COVID-19 pandemic would exacerbate existing gender inequalities and violence against women in Australia, the Australian Government put in place measures to guard against backsliding on gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as future-proof against other global crises.

#### **Health response**

16. The Australian Government implemented various health-related initiatives targeted to women. For example:

- Funding of \$11.4 million was provided to the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health from March 2022 to February 2024, to establish and implement the Health in My Language program, to deliver COVID-19 vaccine information and health education to culturally and linguistically diverse people in their languages.
- To respond to the marked decrease in breast and cervical cancer screening at different points during COVID-19, funding of \$9.7 million was provided to BreastScreen Australia in 2022 for surge capacity for women who missed or delayed breast screening because of COVID-19.

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<sup>3</sup> The Australian Government funds 6 National Women's Alliances to elevate the voices of Australian women by engaging with the community and working with government in the following priority areas: women's safety; women's economic security and leadership; women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; First nations women; women living in rural, regional and remote areas of Australia; and women with disability.

<sup>4</sup> For example, the *Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)* and the *National COVID-19 Health Management Plan for 2023*. Australia was one of the first countries in the world to recognise the mental health impacts of the pandemic and develop a *National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan*, released in May 2020.

17. Australia assessed its national capacity as being ‘high’ (score of 5/5) against the International Health Regulations Indicator C1.2 – Gender equality in health emergencies in the 2022 States party self-assessment annual reporting tool.<sup>5</sup> The following has contributed to this high scoring:

- The Australian Government committed to expanding its approach to gender budgeting and from the 2023-24 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, gender responsive budgeting has been embedded across the budget process. All government agencies now play a greater role in delivering gender equality outcomes and are required to conduct gender analysis on all new policy proposals. The Australian Government invested \$589.3 million through the 2023-24 Budget to end violence against women and children building on the previous year’s record investment of \$1.7 billion. This additional investment includes dedicated funding for First Nations women’s safety.
- The Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2031 acknowledges that humanitarian crises affect people differently and disproportionately affect women and girls, with 60 per cent of maternal mortality occurring in humanitarian and fragile settings.<sup>6</sup> The Australian Government actions aim to adopt a gender-responsive approach to resilience, relief and recovery in humanitarian action, and stabilisation, development and disaster management. The Australian Government actions also aim to engage men and boys to protect and advocate for the rights and inclusion of women and girls in all stages of humanitarian assistance.

### **Financial support**

18. Women were more likely to experience economic insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic due to a number of factors including existing labour market inequalities, taking on a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, and

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<sup>5</sup> Source: World Health Organization <https://extranet.who.int/e-spar#capacityscore>

<sup>6</sup> UNFP, Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2015 – estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, the World Bank and the UN Population Division, United Nations, New York, 2015.

female-dominated industries such as childcare, healthcare, retail and hospitality being most affected by health restrictions.

19. The Australian Government delivered a series of economic support measures during COVID-19 that benefited women, noting women comprised a slightly larger proportion of recipients receiving economic support. For example:

- The JobKeeper Payment was one of the the largest fiscal measures in Australia’s history. The measure, which ran between March 2020 and March 2021, supported businesses and households with temporary and targeted payments. On average, 55 per cent of JobKeeper recipients were men and 45 per cent were women, compared with men and women’s pre-pandemic shares of employment of 52.9 per cent and 47.1 per cent respectively.<sup>7</sup>
- An additional top-up payment, Coronavirus Supplement, was provided for new and existing recipients of select social security payments. Around 54 per cent of Coronavirus Supplement recipients were women.
- Two Economic Support Payments were provided to eligible social security recipients, Family Tax Benefit Recipients, veterans, income support recipients and concession card holders. For the first payment, 58 per cent of recipients were women and for the second payment, 60 per cent of recipients were women.

### **Women’s safety**

20. The COVID-19 pandemic coincided with the onset or escalation of physical and sexual violence against women by a current or former cohabiting partner. In Australia, specific groups of women were more likely to experience physical and sexual violence during the pandemic. This included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, young women aged 18 to 24, women with a restrictive health condition, women with disability, pregnant women, migrant and refugee women (including those on temporary visas), and with women experiencing financial stress.

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<sup>7</sup> Source: [Independent Evaluation of the JobKeeper Payment Final Report \(treasury.gov.au\)](https://www.treasury.gov.au/evaluation)

21. The Australian Government provided \$130 million to state and territory governments in 2020 under the National Partnership on COVID-19 Domestic and Family Violence Responses. This is to invest in services to support women and children who were experiencing or at risk of violence during the pandemic. The Australian Government also provided \$260.7 million to the National Partnership in 2021-23, and committed a further \$159 million for 2023-25. Australian Government funding to states and territories for frontline violence services continued during this time.

#### **Future responses to crises**

22. The Australian Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry is underway to identify lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to improve Australia's preparedness for future pandemics. The inquiry is considering opportunities to better target future responses to the needs of particular populations, including across genders, age groups, socio-economic status, geographic location, people with disability, First Nations peoples and communities and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The final report is due in September 2024.

23. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring a gender-responsive approach to climate change, disaster and crisis mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery efforts including in leadership and advisory positions. The Australian Government recognises the need to ensure disaster management arrangements are inclusive and provide opportunities for diverse representation and meaningful participation in governance mechanisms.

### **Question 2 and 3: Legislative and institutional framework**

#### **Question 2: Reservation to article 11(2) of the Convention**

24. Australia is reviewing its reservation to article 11(2) of the Convention in relation to maternity leave with pay, noting the existence of and recent reforms to Australia's legislated Paid Parental Leave (PPL) scheme, with a view to withdrawing the reservation.

25. Australia has a national, federally funded PPL scheme, introduced on 1 January 2011. Under the scheme, eligible working parents across Australia can access a

payment for taking time off work to care for a new-born or newly adopted child. Eligibility is based on factors such as income, a work test and residency rules.<sup>8</sup>

26. Since 2023, the Australian Government has modernised Australia's PPL scheme to make it more accessible, flexible and to promote an equal distribution of paid and unpaid work within households. Key reforms include:

- expanding the number of weeks available from 20 weeks by 2 weeks each year from 1 July 2024, until it reaches 26 weeks per family from 1 July 2026;
- making the scheme more gender neutral so either parent can claim first;
- introducing 'reserved leave' from 1 July 2026, which means that each parent will have 4 weeks of entitlement for their exclusive use, with the remaining 18 weeks available to be shared. Additionally, the Government has committed to paying superannuation on its PPL scheme from 1 July 2025, subject to the passage of legislation, to help reduce the gendered gaps present in superannuation balances at the time of retirement and to signal that taking time out of paid work to care for children is a normal part of working life for both parents.<sup>9</sup>

27. The Australian Government's PPL scheme is provided in addition to employer-funded paid parental leave schemes operating through statutory entitlements, enterprise agreements and workplace policies. Employers are building on the government's PPL scheme, with around 63 per cent of Australian employers with 100 or more employees offering their own paid parental leave, 33 per cent of these offer paid parental leave regardless of gender, while 86 per cent of employers who offer their own paid parental leave also pay superannuation on that leave.

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<sup>8</sup> Source: [Who can get Parental Leave Pay for a child born or adopted from 1 July 2023 - Parental Leave Pay for a child born or adopted from 1 July 2023 - Services Australia](#)

<sup>9</sup> In Australia, superannuation is money put aside by employers over a person's working life for them to live on when they retire from work. Australia's superannuation system is the main way people save for their retirement.

- Under the National Employment Standards, all employees in the national workplace relations system are entitled to unpaid parental leave and related entitlements. Each parent can take up to 12 months unpaid parental leave or up to 24 months if their employer agrees. This is not affected by how much leave their partner takes.

**Question 3: Legislative amendments following previous concluding observations**

28. Since submission of Australia's eighth periodic report in 2016, a number of legislative reforms have had a positive impact on women's rights and gender equality.

29. In 2017, the *Marriage Act 1961 (Cth)* (Marriage Act) was amended to enable same-sex couples to legally marry in Australia. The right to marry in Australia is no longer determined by sex or gender. Same-sex marriages represented 6 per cent of all marriages in 2018, 5 per cent in 2019, 4 per cent in 2020 and 3 per cent in 2021.<sup>10</sup>

30. The *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* (NSW) has undergone a series of amendments to ensure the safety and protection of victim-survivors in domestic violence situations are at the forefront of police response. From 2018 to 2020, amendments were made to:

- extend the default duration of Apprehended Personal Violence Orders (APVOs) from one year to 2 years (s 79A);
- clarify that Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVOs) may be sought and made for an indefinite duration in severe cases (s 79B);
- require ADVOs to be made against adult offenders sentenced to a prison term with a duration 2 years longer than their prison sentence (s 39(2A) and (2C));
- expressly provide for the matters that the court is to consider when determining the duration of an ADVO (s 79A(3)); and

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<sup>10</sup> Source: [Marriages in Australia | Australian Institute of Family Studies \(aifs.gov.au\)](https://aifs.gov.au/marriages-in-australia)

- clarify police powers to vary Apprehended Violence Orders conditions in urgent circumstances (various provisions under Part 7 (s 27(3A), 28B, 29, 32(1)(c), 33(1)(b) and 33A(1)).<sup>11</sup>

These reforms commenced between March 2020 and March 2021.

31. Following the reforms to ADVO duration, the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research released a report in November 2023 on the impact of ADVO duration on offending and breaches.<sup>12</sup>
32. In 2022, as part of the reforms made by the *Crimes Legislation Amendment (Coercive Control) Act 2022* (NSW), a statutory definition of “domestic abuse” was introduced into the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* (NSW) as section 6A. ‘Domestic abuse’ is defined as any behaviour by a person directed against another person with whom they have a domestic relationship that is violent or threatening behaviour, behaviour that coerces or controls the second person, or behaviour that causes the second person to fear for their safety or wellbeing or the safety or wellbeing of another person.
33. In 2013, the *Crimes Legislation Amendment (Slavery, Slavery-like Conditions and People Trafficking) Act 2013* (Cth) criminalised forced marriage and harbouring a victim of trafficking, and established the standalone offences of forced labour and organ trafficking (trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal). Subsequent amendments (the *Crimes Legislation Amendment (Powers, Offences and Other Measures) Act 2015* (Cth) and the *Combatting Child Sexual Exploitation Legislation Amendment Act 2019* (Cth)) expanded the definition of forced marriage, increased applicable penalties, and explicitly captured all marriages involving children under 16. Since criminalisation in 2013, the Australian Federal Police report that forced marriage is the most reported crime within the definition of human trafficking and slavery. In responding to reports, and under Australian law, forced

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<sup>11</sup> Following these reforms to ADVO duration, the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research released a report in November 2023 on the impact of ADVO duration on offending and breaches. See NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, “The long and short of it: The impact of Apprehended Domestic Violence Order duration on offending and breaches”, (A Teperski and S Boiteux), Crime and Justice Bulletin, Number 261, November 2023.

<sup>12</sup> See NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, “The long and short of it: The impact of Apprehended Domestic Violence Order duration on offending and breaches”, (A Teperski and S Boiteux), Crime and Justice Bulletin, Number 261, November 2023.

marriage is understood as a form of gender-based violence, with complex social, family and cultural dimensions.

34. In 2013 the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) (Sex Discrimination Act) was amended to prohibit direct discrimination against employees on the basis of their family responsibilities, and to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of breastfeeding, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status in a number of areas of public life. Since 2013 the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), Australia's national human rights institution has investigated over 1,400 complaints of unlawful discrimination on these grounds.
35. Between 2021 and 2023, the Australian Government made significant amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act in response to recommendations from *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report* (Respect@Work Report). The Government passed the *Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation (Respect@Work) Act 2022* (Cth) which progresses gender equality by ensuring women are able to earn a living in safe, sexual harassment-free workplaces. The key reform was introducing a duty on employers to take practical and meaningful action to prevent relevant unlawful conduct in the workplace and to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual and sex-based harassment, hostile work environments, and victimisation as far as possible, along with complementary compliance and enforcement functions for the AHRC.
36. In 2023 amendments to the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) (Family Law Act) made the family law system safer and simpler for separating families to navigate, introducing a requirement that the court must consider arrangements that promote the safety of the child and the child's carers, including safety from family violence, abuse, neglect or other harm. There are also measures to protect victim-survivors of family violence from systems abuse through the introduction of harmful proceedings orders.
37. To drive transparency, further amendments were made to the WGE Act in 2023, to enable WGEA to publish the gender pay gap of relevant employers with 100 or more



employees (mandatory under the WGE Act), in addition to its existing functions to publish the gender pay gap at a national, industry and occupational level.

#### **Question 4: Constitutional and legal framework**

##### **Question 4a: Federal human rights and anti-discrimination legislation**

38. Australia has a strong framework for protecting and advancing human rights through a combination of federal, state and territory legislation and administrative measures, policy and practice, and constitutionally entrenched institutions such as an independent judiciary, limited constitutional rights, and the common law.
39. Federal anti-discrimination legislation prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination based on protected attributes in key areas of public life, including employment, education, the provision of goods and services, and facilities and accommodation. Federal anti-discrimination legislation is concerned with regulating public life rather than the private domain. This approach aims to strike a balance between the rights to equality and non-discrimination and privacy.
40. At the federal level, Australian anti-discrimination legislation comprises of the Sex Discrimination Act, *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*, *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)* (Racial Discrimination Act) and *Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)*. Australia's anti-discrimination legislation does not expressly prescribe a process for making complaints of intersecting discrimination; however, complainants are able to make complaints to the AHRC on multiple grounds of discrimination.
41. The Sex Discrimination Act is the primary legislation that makes discrimination against women unlawful. It gives effect to many of Australia's obligations under the Convention. The Sex Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital or relationship status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding, sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status. It also prohibits discrimination on the grounds of family responsibilities in the area of work, sexual and sex-based harassment and subjecting someone to a hostile work environment, and includes a positive duty on employers to eliminate certain forms of sex discrimination. The Sex Discrimination Act also promotes the principle of gender equality; the objective to achieve, so far as is practicable, substantive equality between men and women.

42. On 15 March 2023, the Australian Attorney-General referred to the federal Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (PJCHR) Australia's Human Rights Framework for inquiry and report.

- The PJCHR tabled its report on 30 May 2024, and made 17 recommendations directed towards improving human rights protection in Australia. The Committee recommended the Australian Parliament:
  - i. enact a federal Human Rights Act;
  - ii. commit to national human rights education;
  - iii. enhance human rights parliamentary scrutiny; and
  - iv. review all existing legislation for compatibility with human rights.
- The Australian Government is considering the Committee's report.

#### **Question 4b: Recognition of First Nations People in the Constitution**

43. In October 2023, the Australian Government held a referendum to recognise the First Peoples of Australia in the Constitution through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. The referendum did not pass. The Australian Government respects the outcome of the referendum.

44. The Australian Government will continue to listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities to advance reconciliation and achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including women.

#### **Question 4c: Harmonising federal, state and territory legislation**

45. All Australian state and territory jurisdictions have adopted comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that makes discrimination unlawful on the basis of protected attributes, including sex and gender identity:

- ACT: *Discrimination Act 1991, Human Rights Act 2004*;
- NSW: *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*;
- NT: *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992*;
- QLD: *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991, Human Rights Act 2019*;
- SA: *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*;

- TAS: *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998*;
- VIC: *Equal Opportunity Act 2010, Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*;
- WA: *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*.

46. Where a state law is inconsistent with a federal law, section 109 of the Australian Constitution provides for the federal law to prevail, rendering the state law inoperative to the extent of the inconsistency. Similar principles apply to any inconsistency between territory laws and Commonwealth laws. These rules would apply to any inconsistencies between state or territory anti-discrimination legislation and the Sex Discrimination Act. Federal anti-discrimination legislation does not displace or limit the operation of state and territory laws where they are capable of operating concurrently.

47. While states and territories are responsible for their own anti-discrimination legislation, the Australian Government works closely with states and territories to bring leadership to the consistency and application of the Convention as well as domestic anti-discrimination legislation and policy.

- For example, during 2021-2023, the Standing Council of Attorneys-General (all state, territory and federal Attorneys-General) reviewed the consistency of sexual harassment and sex discrimination laws in response to the AHRC's *2020 Respect@Work Report*. In September 2023, Attorneys-General published the executive summary of the legislative review and agreed to continue progressing further legislative alignment to improve consistency across jurisdictions noting that in a federal system any changes to state and territory legislation is a matter for individual jurisdictions to determine.<sup>13</sup>

#### **Question 4d: Enhancing effectiveness of the Sex Discrimination Act**

48. The Australian Government continues to carefully consider and respond to recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the Sex Discrimination Act, and

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<sup>13</sup> See, [Standing Council of Attorneys-General Working Group Report Executive Summary Consistency of Sexual Harassment and Sex Discrimination laws in Australia](#).

has made several further amendments to the Act since the *2008 Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Report*. Key amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act are outlined in questions 3, 4a and 17c.

## **Question 5: Access to justice**

### **Question 5a: Australian Law Reform Commission 1986 recommendations on the recognition of Aboriginal customary laws**

49. In 1992, the High Court of Australia handed down its decision in *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)* [1992] HCA 23; (1992) 175 CLR 1 (3 June 1992) (Mabo No. 2). The court recognised that the Meriam people of the Torres Strait held “native title” over part of their traditional lands. The court found that the common law of Australia recognises rights and interests to land held by Indigenous people under their traditional laws and customs.

50. The source of native title rights and interests is the traditional laws and customs of the native titleholders. This means the nature of native title rights and interests varies from community to community.

51. Following the decision in Mabo No. 2, the government enacted the *Native Title Act 1993*, which commenced on 1 January 1994. The Act has a number of functions. It creates processes through which native title can be recognised and protected.

### **Question 5b: Productivity Commission 2014 recommendations on access to justice arrangements**

52. The Australian Government’s response to the *2014 Productivity Commission Inquiry Report into Access to Justice Arrangements* was published in 2016.<sup>14</sup> Responses to the Committee’s interest in specific recommendations are addressed below:

- Recommendation 16.3: the Legal Aid Schemes and Services Approval 2023 allows people who receive legal assistance from the providers listed within it to be exempt from court fees (e.g. document filing or service provision fees) in the federal courts (Federal Circuit and Family

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<sup>14</sup> See [Government response to the Productivity Commission's report into Access to Justice Arrangements | Attorney-General's Department \(ag.gov.au\)](#)

Court of Australia, Federal Court of Australia and High Court of Australia).

- Recommendation 21.6: since 2015, federal funding (previously under the National Partnership Agreement and Indigenous Legal Assistance Programme, and now the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP)) has been allocated using specific funding allocation models for each funding stream – legal aid commissions, community legal centres and Indigenous legal assistance services.
- Recommendation 25: in 2015, a National Legal Assistance Data Standards Manual was developed. The Manual standardises definitions, counting rules and collection protocols for the legal assistance sector. The Australian Attorney-General’s Department is partnering with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Australia’s national statistical agency, to deliver the first Australia-wide legal assistance data collection. This was published on 9 May 2024.
- Recommendation 22: legal assistance funding and funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) is a shared responsibility of the Australian Government and all states and territories. Delivering federal funding for ATSILS through the NLAP better promotes this shared responsibility.

**Question 5c: Australian Law Reform Commission’s 2019 review of the family law system**

53. The Australian Government’s response to the *2019 Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into the Family Law System* was published in 2021.<sup>15</sup> Responses to the Committee’s interest in specific recommendations are addressed below:

- Recommendation 9: in November 2023, the Family Law Act was amended to expand the definitions relating to the concept of ‘family’ to be more inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and traditions. This amendment is intended to reflect that Indigenous

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<sup>15</sup> See [Government Response to ALRC Report 135: Family Law for the Future – An Inquiry into the Family Law System \(ag.gov.au\)](https://www.ag.gov.au/government-response-to-alrc-report-135-family-law-for-the-future-an-inquiry-into-the-family-law-system)

peoples may have extended family structures or kinship systems and that child-rearing responsibilities may extend beyond the immediate family group or what is reflected in the current definition of ‘relative’ or ‘member of the family’.

- Recommendation 45: the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia has engaged 12 Indigenous Family Liaison Officers across Australia to support Indigenous Australian women and children engaging with the family court system.

#### **Question 5d: Indigenous legal professionals**

54. The Australian Government provides funding to the legal assistance sector, which provides culturally appropriate legal and other services to Indigenous peoples, including women. This includes funding to ATSILS and to Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, as well as to their peak representative bodies.

55. First Nations legal professionals are employed across the legal sector. In 2022, 749 solicitors identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, representing 0.8 per cent of all solicitors in Australia. Since 2014, this trend has remained relatively stable. Consistent with the gender distribution of the total profession, there were more female than male Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander solicitors (57 per cent versus 43 per cent).<sup>16</sup>

56. The Australian Government funds a network of 14 native title representative bodies and native title service providers to assist native title claimants and holders. Under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), native title claimants can make an application to the Federal Court of Australia to have their native title recognised by Australian law. Native title protects the recognised rights to country from further forced dispossession in perpetuity, until and unless the Native Title holders cede those rights for compensation on just terms.

#### **Question 6: National human rights institution**

57. The Australian Government supports the work of the AHRC as Australia’s independent National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). An independent and

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<sup>16</sup> Source: [2022 National Profile of Solicitors - Final.pdf \(lawsociety.com.au\)](https://www.lawsociety.com.au/2022-national-profile-of-solicitors-final.pdf)

appropriately resourced NHRI is central to Australia's domestic and international human rights agenda.

58. To address the Global Alliance of NHRI Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA)'s 2022 recommendations, the Australian Government passed legislative amendments, developed draft Policy and Guidelines and provided additional funding to the AHRC.

- The *Australian Human Rights Commission Legislation Amendment (Selection and Appointment) Act 2022* (Cth) commenced on 10 November 2022 – it requires all AHRC appointments be made by a merit-based and publicly advertised selection process, consistent with the Paris Principles.
- The Australian Government developed a policy and guidelines for appointments to the AHRC, following public consultation, about the appointment processes for the president and commissioners to the AHRC.
- In 2022, the Australian Government invested an additional \$49.8 million over 4 years to the AHRC. The additional funding comprised support for the implementation of Respect@Work Report recommendations, a National Anti-Racism Strategy which includes the development of an anti-racism Framework and the extension of the '*Racism. It Stops with Me*' campaign, and ongoing base funding.
- The Commission's annual appropriations from Government for 2024-25 are \$32.1 million.

59. In July 2023, Dr Anna Cody was appointed as Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner for a term of 5 years under a merit-based selection process. The former Commissioner, Ms Kate Jenkins, finished her 7-year term in April 2023.

60. The Australian Government will continue to work closely with the AHRC to ensure it is appropriately resourced to conduct its work, including discharging its mandate on women's rights and gender equality.

## Question 7: Temporary special measures

61. The Sex Discrimination Act provides that a person does not discriminate against another person if a measure is intended to achieve substantive equality. The Act allows the use of affirmative action by allowing a person to take ‘special measures’ to achieve substantive equality between men and women. Intersectional special measures are possible if the special measure complies with all relevant legislative requirements under the relevant Act. Similarly, the Race Discrimination Act allows for ‘special measures’ to be taken to advance the human rights of certain racial or ethnic groups of individuals.

62. The Sex Discrimination Act also empowers the AHRC to grant temporary exemptions from certain provisions under the Act that would normally constitute unlawful discrimination.<sup>17</sup>

63. The Australian Government has implemented a range of initiatives to accelerate substantive equality between women and men. Measures to increase the representation of women in political and public life can be found in question 13. Two further examples are outlined below.

### Example: Education and employment

- The Australian Skills Guarantee, which comes into effect on 1 July 2024, introduces national targets for women to increase the proportion of women working on major projects in information and communication technology and construction and drive long-term sustainable change to reduce gender segregation in the apprenticeship system. The 2024-2028 National Skills Agreement, a 5-year joint agreement between the Australian Government, states and territories working in partnership to strengthen the vocational education and training sector, includes gender equality as one of the agreed national priorities to improve women’s economic participation, reduce industry and occupation gender segregation and the gender pay gap.

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<sup>17</sup> A list of exemptions can be found here: [Exemption applications under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Cth\) | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)



- The federal and state and territory governments' Fee-Free TAFE initiative is continuing to exceed targets and remove financial barriers to training and upskilling.<sup>18</sup> Fee-Free TAFE is targeted towards priority cohorts, including women facing economic insecurity, women undertaking study in non-traditional fields, unpaid carers, First Nations Australians, and people with disability. In 2023, more than 355,000 Australians enrolled in Fee-Free TAFE, surpassing the initial first year target of 180,000 places, over 61 per cent of these enrolments by women.
- The Fee-Free TAFE initiative is supported by the TAFE Technology Fund with \$50 million in funding to support TAFEs around the country to upgrade and expand their facilities, such as laboratories, workshops, and IT services. This will support women undertaking training, through the improvement of training infrastructure.

### **Gender-responsive public procurement**

64. Public procurement is a key lever that governments have available to boost women's economic equality and drive progress toward gender equality.

65. Through the Workplace Gender Equality Procurement Principles, relevant businesses that employ 100 or more people must be compliant with the WGE Act in order to be eligible to win Australian Government work. Compliance requires employers to meet gender equality standards, report to the WGEA on their performance against Gender Equality Indicators, and communicate their performance to employees, shareholders and governing bodies.

66. The Australian Government will also introduce a requirement for businesses with 500 or more employees to commit to – and achieve – workplace targets against at least 3 of the Gender Equality Indicators, in order to win government work.

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<sup>18</sup> Technical and Further Education (TAFE) is a government-run system that provides education and vocational training after secondary school.

## **Question 8: Stereotypes and harmful practices**

### **Overcoming discriminatory stereotypes**

67. Australia recognises that to achieve gender equality, rigid attitudes and behaviours around gender need to keep changing. This means challenging stereotypes that limit how people behave, are perceived and are treated at work, at school, in relationships, in their homes, online and by their communities.

68. The Working for Women Strategy recognises addressing gender attitudes and stereotypes is foundational to achieve gender equality. Each priority area in the Working for Women Strategy is underpinned by gender attitudes and stereotypes. It also recognises that change is needed at a community level as government alone cannot change individual attitudes. The Working for Women Strategy is complemented by the work underway on state and territory strategies to address harmful gender stereotypes.

69. Australian Government action across priority areas can help to drive practical and meaningful change on gender norms. This includes work under the National Plan to End Violence against Women; the Government's PPL scheme, which has been reformed to encourage uptake from men and more shared care between partners; and efforts to reduce gender segregation in industries and workplaces. The Australian Government will further develop the evidence base on how society views women and girls, demonstrate equality in its leadership and public service, and explore options for reform which improve the representation of women in media and advertising.

### **Sexist portrayals of women in the media and online abuse**

70. Media has an important role in elevating diverse talent and leaders, delivering diverse stories and promoting women's reporting and participation in highly visible and influential areas.

71. The Australian Government has provided funding between 2021 and 2027 to Our Watch, an independent, not for profit organisation established to drive nationwide change in culture, behaviours and power imbalances to prevent violence against women and their children, to expand its national media

engagement initiative which promotes responsible and ethical reporting of violence against women.

72. The Government recognises that women and girls are more likely to be targets of online abuse, with one in 3 women experiencing online abuse in a work context. In 2021, Australia passed the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth), which empowers Australia's eSafety Commissioner to request or require social media companies and other online platforms and services to remove serious online abuse, image-based abuse, cyberbullying, and harmful content targeted at Australian adults and children.

73. Australia's eSafety Commissioner operates regulatory schemes to address different forms of online harm. This includes the Adult Cyber Abuse Scheme; Image-Based Abuse Scheme; Cyberbullying Scheme; and Online Content Scheme, which regulates illegal and restricted content. Notably, about two-thirds of the complaints received by the eSafety Commissioner concerning adult cyber abuse originate from women. The Australian Government also expects a sustained commitment and appropriate investments from the online industry to prevent online harms. This includes the Australian Government's request to the online dating services industry to adopt a voluntary code requiring them to take meaningful steps to address and prevent harms to users on their platforms. The eSafety Commissioner will assess the effectiveness of the code 9-months after it has commenced and will subsequently provide advice to the Minister for Communications.

74. The Australian Government has also invested in actions to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated abuse, including through the Preventing Tech-based Abuse of Women Grants Program; a National Roundtable on Online Dating Safety to improve safety for Australians using online dating platforms; and establishing the Online Harms Ministers Meeting to coordinate policy across the Australian Government to address online harms experienced by Australians.

#### **Preventing and protecting women and girls from forced marriage**

75. Australia's response to forced marriage forms part of the Australian Government's strategy to combat modern slavery, and other slavery-like practices such as servitude and forced labour. The *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) (Criminal Code Act) contains offences regarding forced marriage.

76. The Australian Federal Police can refer people who are in or at risk of forced marriage to the Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP), delivered by the Australian Red Cross, for case managed support and assistance with their accommodation, medical, mental health, legal and migration, and skills development or social support needs.
77. In 2022, Australia's Standing Council of Attorneys-General agreed to tackle the issue of forced marriage through a coordinated national response, including by developing options for a model to enhance civil protections and remedies.
78. The Australian Government committed \$12.1 million over 5 years from 2023–24 (and \$3.8 million per year ongoing) to establish the Forced Marriage Specialist Support Program. The program will provide caseworker support, counselling, temporary accommodation and financial support for those at risk of, or who have experienced, forced marriage.
79. Australia engages in extensive awareness raising on forced marriage including grant-funded projects and initiatives under the National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery, to encourage people to seek help and report suspected cases to the Australian Federal Police.
80. The Australian Government committed \$2.2 million over 4 years from 2024–25 to extend Speak Now, Australia's national forced marriage community education service, to prevent forced marriage and other forms of modern slavery through education, awareness-raising and through collaboration with frontline workers and the community.
81. The Australian Government registers and regulates Commonwealth-registered marriage celebrants. There are around 10,000 marriage celebrants and each celebrant is legally required to complete professional training on an annual basis. In 2022, celebrants were required to complete an activity on free and voluntary consent. The activity included significant content on forced marriage.

## **Question 9: Gender-based violence against women**

### **Changing behaviours and attitudes that lead to gender-based violence**

82. In addition to work underway to address discriminatory stereotypes (see question 8), the Australian Government has adopted a number of measures to change

behaviours and attitudes that lead to high rates of gender-based violence in Australia. This includes:

- Announcing an expert panel in May 2024 to undertake a rapid review of prevention approaches and to provide advice on how Australia can improve outcomes and build on existing efforts. This work will culminate in a final report outlining findings and key recommendations.
- Leading the *Stop it at the Start* campaign which aims to break the cycle of violence by encouraging adults to reflect on their attitudes and have conversations about respectful behaviours with young people aged 10-17. A fifth phase of the campaign will be released in mid-2024 targeting the rise of new online and offline influencers. The Phase 4 evaluation noted the campaign was successful as 56 per cent of people recalled an element of the campaign activity and 33 per cent tried to be more respectful to others.
- Funding Our Watch to deliver on key priorities under the National Plan to End Violence against Women, and continue delivering existing successful initiatives, including the *Line* campaign which encourages, educates and empowers adolescents and young adults to have healthy and respectful relationships.
- Funding of \$77.6 million over 5 years from 2023-24 to states and territories and non-government school sectors to invest in high quality, evidence-based, age-appropriate consent and Respectful Relationships Education in Australian primary and secondary schools.
- Providing \$32.2 million over 4 years from 2022-23 for a new national consent campaign to better inform young people and adults about the importance of consensual and respectful relationships.

**Question 9a: Federal legislation on gender-based violence**

83. Under Australia's federal system of government, states and territories are responsible for the majority of laws related to gender-based violence, including the making of domestic violence orders and criminal offences. Each jurisdiction

manages its own criminal justice system, including criminal laws, policing, courts and corrections. The Australian Government is responsible for the Family Law Act, which has seen a range of recent amendments to better recognise and respond to gender-based violence, as well as the Criminal Code Act, which contains offences regarding forced marriage.

84. Rather than shifting the power to legislate on gender-based violence to the Federal Parliament, the Australian Government provides national leadership and investment to end family, domestic and sexual violence including through the National Cabinet (the forum for the Australian Prime Minister and state and territory Premiers and Chief Ministers). The Australian Government oversees the National Plan to End Violence against Women which delivers certain supports for victim-survivors. The Government is working with state and territory governments to strengthen and harmonise sexual assault laws, criminal justice responses to sexual assault, and cross-jurisdiction recognition of domestic violence orders.
85. In 2022, the Federal Parliament passed the *Fair Work Amendment (Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Act 2022* to provide all employees, including casual employees, with an entitlement of 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave to deal with impacts of family and domestic violence where it is impractical for the employee to do so outside work hours. The leave is paid at the employee's full rate of pay and employers are prohibited from including information about the leave on payslips, to respect confidentiality. Over 2023–2024 the entitlement came into effect in 3 stages, depending on employer type, to cover all Australian employees.
86. The *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes) Act 2023* amended the Fair Work Act to make it unlawful for an employer to take adverse action against an employee or potential employee because they have been, or are being, subjected to family or domestic violence. The amendment also requires the Fair Work Commission to consider the need to prevent and eliminate discrimination on the basis of subjection to family and domestic violence when performing functions or exercising its powers under the Fair Work Act.

**Question 9b and 9c: Implementation status of the National Plan to End Violence against Women**

87. The National Plan to End Violence against Women addresses the issue of gender-based violence in Australia and outlines the pathway for an improvement in prevention, early intervention, response and recovery, and healing.
88. The *First Action Plan 2023-2027* and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025* form an integral part of commitments made in the National Plan to End Violence against Women. The Australian, state and territory governments in August 2023 launched both Actions Plans, as well as the Outcomes Framework. The Outcomes Framework details 6 10 year outcomes and 34 supporting sub-outcomes that will be used to track and monitor progress over the life of the National Plan to End Violence against Women.
89. Australia is one of 3 countries to have appointed a Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner in October 2022, to provide evidence-based policy advice to the Australian Government, promote coordination across jurisdictions and amplify the voices of people with lived experience.
90. The Australian Government has committed to a record investment of \$3.4 billion in funding commitments to implement the National Plan to End Violence against Women since 2022.<sup>19</sup> This includes \$925.2 million over 5 years from 2023–24 to permanently establish the Leaving Violence Program. This investment will help people experiencing intimate partner violence to leave those relationships, providing those eligible with access to up to \$5,000 in financial support along with referral services, risk assessments and safety planning.
91. The Australian Government recognises the availability of women-only and women-led support services can be important for some victim-survivors of gender-based violence, as well as always ensuring that support is trauma-informed, victim-survivor centric and inclusive. The Australian Government has invested in frontline services for women experiencing domestic and family violence, extending the National Partnership on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses and

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<sup>19</sup> All financial figures in this report are in Australian dollars.

funding 500 frontline service and community workers, with support targeted to women and children in rural, regional and remote areas, First Nations people, the culturally and linguistically diverse community, women with disability, and the LGBTIQ+<sup>20</sup> community.

92. Despite this significant investment in human, technical and financial resources, the Australian Government recognises that more must be done to eliminate gender-based violence.

**Question 9d: Prevention and early intervention**

93. See the response to question 8 and earlier sub-sections of question 9 for more details on prevention programs. Other programs include:

- In 2022-23, the Australian Government invested close to \$185.8 million for early intervention programs including specialised family violence services, nationally accredited training for frontline workers, counselling services for men who use violence, and programs to support children and adolescents who have experienced family and domestic violence.
- The Australian Government has also committed \$8.5 million from 2023-24 to 2026-27 for further early intervention initiatives, including developing a perpetrator risk assessment framework for frontline service providers, extending the Mensline Changing for Good Service and developing a national perpetrator referral database of services to improve uptake of intervention services.
- The Australian Government committed \$8.9 million in the 2023-24 Budget to expand the family violence provisions in migration legislation to most permanent visas. The family violence provisions aim to ensure that visa applicants do not feel compelled to remain in a violent relationship for a permanent visa outcome.
- The Australian Government committed a further \$6.1 million in the 2024-25 Budget to provide ongoing funding for the specialised visa

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<sup>20</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual.



support service for victim-survivors of domestic and/or family violence. The service assists visa holders experiencing family violence to regularise their visa status.

## **Implementing findings of the National System for Domestic and Family Violence**

### **Death Review report**

94. The Australian Government and state and territory governments have implemented a range of reforms related to the findings of the AHRC's 2016 report following the National System for Domestic and Family Violence Death Review.
95. The Outcomes Framework under the National Plan to End Violence against Women includes a target to reduce the number of women killed by their intimate partners by 25 per cent each year.
96. The National Homicide Monitoring Program delivered by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) is Australia's national data collection on homicide incidents, victims and offenders. The Australian Government introduced a national statistical dashboard, that went live on 26 June 2024 with the first quarter of data, which provides more timely reporting on female victims of intimate partner homicides. The dashboard will provide quarterly updates with the next update scheduled in August 2024.

## **Question 10: Extraterritorial obligations**

### **National action plan on business and human rights**

97. Australia takes business and human rights seriously. Australia is not progressing with a National Action Plan on business and human rights at this stage but is focused on supporting the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to further business and human rights in Australia.
98. Businesses must comply with all Australian laws, including those upholding international human rights obligations. Australia co-sponsored the resolution that adopted the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and encourages businesses to apply the guiding principles in their operations in Australia and abroad.

**Free, prior informed consent of Indigenous women affected before any large-scale development and extractive industry project is approved**

99. The Australian Government acknowledges and respects the unique relationship First Nations peoples and communities have with the environment including land, sea, waterways, flora and fauna.

100. The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) protects natural, historic or Indigenous places of outstanding national heritage value, and recognises the role of Indigenous peoples in protecting and sustainably using the environment, and promoting using Indigenous peoples' knowledge, with their permission and cooperation.

101. First Nations landholders and communities are essential to the resources sector's future sustainability. Under the *Critical Minerals Strategy 2023-2030*, the Australian Government acknowledges the benefits from the growth of Australia's critical minerals sector must be shared with and driven by the strengths and aspirations of the First Nations communities in which projects take place. Governments and industry are responsible for progressing meaningful engagement, agreement making and benefit sharing with First Nations communities.

- More than 60 per cent of Australian resource projects operate on land covered by a Native Title claim or determination. Nationally, Native Title holders and registered Native Title claimants have different procedural rights (such as the right to be consulted or the right to negotiate) relating to mining interests.
- Approximately 50 per cent of the Northern Territory's landmass and 80 per cent of its coastline is Aboriginal land subject to the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976* (Cth). The Act gives a right of veto to Traditional Owners in relation to exploration and mining on Aboriginal lands.

**Measures taken to investigate violations of women’s human rights by business corporations**

101. Australia expects multinational businesses operating in Australia, or operating overseas from Australia, to adhere to standards in the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct.

102. The Australian Government delivers the Australian National Contact Point for Responsible Business Conduct to help resolve complaints against multinationals as a non-judicial grievance mechanism for individuals or communities allegedly impacted by adverse human rights and other negative impacts from multinational operations. A number of Australian companies or multinationals based in Australia have participated in this grievance mechanism.

**Compensation and rehabilitation of women victims of the Bougainville conflict**

103. Australia continues to support rehabilitation and peace building efforts in Bougainville, including through community-based peacebuilding, conflict resolution and counselling services to women.

**Question 11: Climate change and disaster risk-reduction**

104. The Australian Government is taking concerted action to adapt to climate impacts and to build resilience and disaster readiness in our communities. Australia is committed to the *United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*. Australia’s domestic approach to disaster risk reduction is guided by the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, and implemented via National Action Plans. The Australian Government is considering options for domestic implementation of the *Gender Action Plan to support implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* (Sendai GAP).

105. The Australian Government is developing Australia’s first National Climate Risk Assessment and a National Adaptation Plan, to better understand the risks and impacts to Australia from climate change and to invest in a plan to adapt to those risks. The Australian Government recognises that climate change impacts disproportionately affect women. The National Adaptation Plan will be gender-sensitive, participatory and fully transparent and will ensure future climate

adaptation funding is targeted to ensure climate change does not disproportionately affect groups in vulnerable situations.

106. In 2022, the Australian Government legislated Australia's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, to reach net zero by 2050 and 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. The Government has committed to developing a Net Zero Plan, which will articulate how Australia will transition to a net zero economy, consistent with our international and domestic commitments.

107. The Australian Government is promoting and supporting gender equality through our commitment to the international Equal by 30 campaign. Following an extensive consultation across government and industry, the Australian Government has developed 5 additional commitments under Equal by 30 aimed at closing the gender gap across the clean energy sector in Australia, including developing a Women in Energy Resources Hub and Australian Women in Energy Roundtable for industry to promote and share equality initiatives and policies which accelerate the participation of women in the clean energy workforce.

108. Australia reaffirms our commitment to gender-responsive disaster risk reduction as central to achieving the 2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction outcomes. The Sendai GAP is a powerful instrument with which to deliver improved outcomes for women and girls, and to ensure that their voices are heard. The Australian Government shares the commitment to place inclusion at the centre of disaster risk reduction and is committed to building resilience within communities through locally led approaches.

109. Australia's international development program has always had a strong focus on gender equality and programs across the Indo-Pacific region that enhance women's leadership in climate mitigation and adaptation, as well as disaster risk reduction and resilience.

110. Australia's International Development Policy places climate action and gender equality as core priorities of our international development. All investments over \$3 million are required to have a gender objective. From 2024-25, 50 per cent of new investments over \$3 million are also required to have a climate objective. The combined gender equality mandate and climate goal puts in place systematic

change that ensures gender equality and women and girl’s empowerment have a central role in Australia’s growing international climate and disaster resilience work.

**Question 12: Trafficking, exploitation of prostitution**

**Question 12a: Number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions and sentences imposed on traffickers**

111. Australia’s laws criminalising human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery are contained within Divisions 270 and 271 of the Criminal Code Act.

112. The following table provides a breakdown of referrals of human trafficking received by the Australian Federal Police by offence category for the previous 5 financial years. All referrals are reviewed and investigated.

<b>AFP Referrals</b>	<b>2018-19 FY</b>	<b>2019-20 FY</b>	<b>2020-21 FY</b>	<b>2021-22 FY</b>	<b>2022/23 FY</b>
Forced Marriage	95	92	79	84	90
Sexual Servitude	31	40	42	54	73
Forced Labour	29	29	35	42	57
Child Trafficking	7	<5	12	21	22
Trafficking in Persons	20	<5	12	19	38
Exit Trafficking	13	24	16	37	30
Debt Bondage	9	3	<5	6	18
Domestic Servitude	9	20	15	18	16
Slavery	<5	<5	6	8	<5
Deceptive Recruiting	<5	6	<5	5	6
Organ Trafficking	<5	0	<5	0	0
Harbouring	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>340</b>

113. In the 5 years between 2018-2019 and 2022-23, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (Commonwealth) commenced or conducted a total of 28 prosecutions for human trafficking and slavery-related offences (0 men and 2 women prosecuted in FY 18-19, 6 men and 5 women prosecuted in FY 19-20, 3 men and 2 women prosecuted in FY 20-21, 3 men and 1 women in 21-22 and 5 men and 1 women in in 22-23).

114. From 2004 when human trafficking and slavery was criminalised until 30 June 2023, 30 people have been convicted for these types of offences.

**Question 12b: Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme**

115. In May 2023, the Australian Government committed \$370.8 million over 4 years to expand and improve the PALM scheme, which will enhance conditions and better protect and support PALM workers, increase the scheme's regional footprint and ensure sufficient support for smaller growers. All PALM scheme employers must comply with the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (Cth) (Modern Slavery Act), any state or territory legislation relating to the same or similar subject matter and the Criminal Code Act. All PALM scheme workers have the same workplace rights and protections as Australian workers.

**Question 12b: Measures to implement the Modern Slavery Act**

116. The Modern Slavery Act commenced on 1 January 2019. The Modern Slavery Act requires certain large businesses and other entities undertaking business in Australia to report annually to the Australian Government on their actions to assess and address the risks of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains. Modern slavery statements properly submitted are normally published on an online public register, the Modern Slavery Statements Register (the Register).

117. As at 4 July 2024, over 1,000 statements have been published on the Register, covering entities headquartered in 60 countries. There have been over 4.5 million searches conducted on the Register, indicating the interest generated by the reporting requirements under the Act.

118. The Modern Slavery Act requires the Australian Government to report annually to the Australian Parliament about its actions to implement the legislation. To date, 4 annual reports have been tabled and published. The Australian Government must also prepare an annual modern slavery statement which sets out the Australian Government's efforts to assess and address modern slavery practices in its operations and supply chains.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See [Modern Slavery Statements Register \(modernslaveryregister.gov.au\)](https://modernslaveryregister.gov.au)

119. The Australian Government announced as part of the 2024-25 Budget that it would invest \$2.5 million over 2 years to undertake a review of Commonwealth procurement procedures and supply chains for modern slavery risks.

**Question 12b: Support for Trafficked People Program**

120. Further to question 8, the Australian Government has committed \$24.3 million in additional funding for the STPP from 2023-24 to 2026-27 to introduce an additional referral pathway for people to access the program without having to engage with the Australian Federal Police and to make enhancements that better meet the needs of victim-survivors. From 1 July 2023:

- all victim-survivors referred to the STPP receive a minimum of 90 days support irrespective of their willingness or unwillingness to participate in a criminal justice process;
- additional support is available for dependents of victim-survivors;
- financial support available to visa holders matches financial support available to those who can access Australian Government social security payments;
- after leaving the STPP, victim-survivors who remain in Australia are able to check in with a caseworker at 3, 6 and 12 months.

121. The Department of Home Affairs administers the Australian Government's Human Trafficking Visa Framework (HTVF), enabling foreign nationals who do not already hold a valid visa and are suspected victims of human trafficking and slavery, to remain in Australia lawfully - either temporarily or permanently.

**Question 12b: Early identification and referral of victims of trafficking**

122. The Australian Federal Police's Look a Little Deeper program is a human trafficking, slavery information, and awareness program for frontline officers, first responders and other government agencies which commenced in 2018. Sixteen government agencies have adopted the program, including every state and territory police force in Australia.

123. In the 2022-23 financial year, the Australian Federal Police delivered presentations on the program to 2,081 persons. E-learning material is available for all Australian Federal Police members to complete and has been provided to all adopting agencies.

**Question 12c part 1: De-criminalising sex work**

124. The Australian Government recognises everyone is entitled to respect, dignity and the opportunity to participate equally in society, regardless of their sex, gender identity or occupation. Those who work in the sex industry, like any other workers, deserve respect and safe work environments.

125. Under Australia’s federal system of government, each state and territory manages their own criminal law and related systems and the decriminalisation of sex work falls under state and territory responsibility.

126. Across Australian jurisdictions there are 3 legislative approaches to sex work – legalisation, decriminalisation and criminalisation. Consensual adult sex work is legalised in the ACT through a licensing model (sole operator sex workers are exempted from the requirement to hold a licence), although street-based solicitation remains criminalised. SA, WA and TAS have fully or partially criminalised this form of work. NSW decriminalised sex work in 1995, the NT decriminalised sex work in 2019, VIC in 2022 and QLD in 2023.

127. Decriminalisation models recognise sex work as a legitimate profession which is regulated through standard business law, rather than through licencing and criminalisation. The VIC model contains provisions preventing the discrimination of sex workers on the basis of their “profession, trade or occupation”.<sup>22</sup>

**Question 12c part 2: Addressing sexual servitude and exploitation**

128. The *National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-25* (National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery) provides the strategic framework for Australia’s response to modern slavery which includes human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices. The Criminal Code Act comprehensively criminalises human

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<sup>22</sup> Victorian Government, *Decriminalising sex work in Victoria* (Web Page) < [Decriminalising sex work in Victoria | vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au/decriminalising-sex-work-in-victoria) ([www.vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au))>; *Sex Work Decriminalisation Act 2022* (Vic) s 34.



trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices in all industries, including within the sex industry.

129. The Australian Government is committed to tackling modern slavery at home and abroad. Aspects of the Government's response are outlined in question 12. In addition, the Australian Government is committed to establishing a federal Anti-Slavery Commissioner. On 28 May 2024, the Australian Parliament passed the Modern Slavery Amendment (Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner) Bill 2024, which received Royal Assent on 11 June 2024. The legislation establishes the inaugural Anti-Slavery Commissioner as an independent statutory office holder, who will be appointed following a transparent and merit-based selection process.

**Question 12d part 1: 3-Year Review of Modern Slavery Act**

130. On 25 May 2023, the Australian Government tabled a report on the statutory review of Australia's Modern Slavery Act, which reviewed the first 3 years of the Act's operation.

131. The report made 30 recommendations for government consideration including:

- introducing penalties for non-compliance with statutory reporting requirements;
- lowering the reporting threshold from \$100 million to \$50 million;
- requiring entities to report on modern slavery incidents or risks;
- amending the Act to require that entities have a due diligence system in place;
- strengthening the administration of the Act through proposed legislative amendments and expanded administrative guidance;
- proposing functions for the federal Anti-Slavery Commissioner in relation to the Act.

**Question 12d part 2: Implementation of the National Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-2025**

132. The National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery underpins the whole of government strategic framework for Australia's efforts to combat modern slavery

over 2020-25 and includes 46 actions in support of 5 National Strategic Priorities which involve: prevention; disruption, investigate and prosecute; support and protect; partner; and research.

133. Twelve of the 46 action items have been completed with the remaining 34 in progress and on track for implementation by 2025. The National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery is underpinned by an evaluation framework managed by the AIC.

**Question 12e: Support for victims of trafficking**

134. Providing holistic and tailored support and protection that meets the needs of victims and survivors of modern slavery is a national strategic priority under the National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery.

135. Compensation for victims of crime is traditionally a matter for the states and territories under Australia's federated justice system.

136. Under the National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery, the Australian Government is undertaking a review of state and territory victims of criminal financial assistance schemes and their availability for victims and survivors of modern slavery.

137. Australia provides a comprehensive range of support services through STPP. See response to question 12b.

138. The Australian Government's HTVF enables foreign nationals to lawfully remain in Australia if they are suspected victims of human trafficking and slavery and do not hold a valid visa.

139. The Australian Government also provides victims of modern slavery with access to civil mechanisms, such as the Fair Work Ombudsman and Fair Work Commission, and the ability to pursue civil and administrative remedies, including for unpaid wages and entitlements, irrespective of their nationality or visa status.

140. Courts in Australia may order offenders convicted of a federal offence to make reparation to victims for any loss suffered or expense incurred by reason of the relevant offence under the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth).

### **Question 13: Participation in political and public life**

141. There have been remarkable improvements in women’s representation in Australia’s political and public life, and key leadership roles over recent decades, particularly at all levels of government. This is the result of concerted efforts to boost representation, but there is still a long way to go.

#### **Representation of women in political and public life**

142. In the 47<sup>th</sup> Australian Parliament (as of June 2024), there are 59 women in the House of Representatives and 43 of the 76 senators are women in the 47<sup>th</sup> Australian Parliament. The Cabinet, which is made up to 22 Ministers, comprises 10 women. This is the highest number of women in a Cabinet in Australia’s history, and was achieved through a concerted effort to ensure the Cabinet reflects the gender diversity of Australia.

143. As of September 2023, there were 9 Indigenous Australian women (15 per cent of all Parliamentarians) in the 47<sup>th</sup> Parliament and 28 women (47 per cent of all Parliamentarians) who have served in the 47<sup>th</sup> Parliament identified as having at least one non-English speaking ancestry, with 6 of these women being born in a country other than Australia.<sup>23</sup> Data on women with disabilities in Parliament is not collected.

144. The Australian Government does not implement special measures for women’s representation in Parliament. Political parties may implement their own temporary special measures, such as targets for women’s representation. Under the Australian Government’s Working for Women Program, funding is provided to Women for Election Australia to improve gender equality and diversity in politics thereby equipping and encouraging women across the political spectrum to run for public office at local, state and federal levels.

#### **Representation of women on Government boards**

145. Since 2016, the Australian Government has had the following targets for gender balance on Australian Government boards: achieving 50 per cent representation of

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<sup>23</sup> Source: [Cultural diversity in the 47th Parliament: a quick guide – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](https://aph.gov.au/parliamentary-business/committees-and-inquiries/cultural-diversity-in-the-47th-parliament-a-quick-guide)

women at a whole-of-Government level and at least 40 per cent representation of women and men each at the individual board level.

146. As at June 2023, women held 51.6 per cent of Australian Government board positions and 42.3 per cent of Chair and Deputy Chair positions on Australian Government boards. As of June 2023, 78.7 per cent of Australian Government boards have met the target of women holding at least 40 per cent of positions.<sup>24</sup>

147. The Government is leading by example through implementing new targets for women's representation on Australian Government boards to include portfolio-level targets of 50 per cent representation of women on boards and 50 per cent representation of women in Chair and Deputy Chair positions.

148. The Australian Government is committed to new targets for Chair and Deputy Chair positions; boosting board representation in portfolios lagging in gender diversity; increasing diversity data collection; and addressing under-representation of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

### **Recognition of women in public life**

149. The Australian Government launched the #NominateAWoman campaign on 2 August 2023 with the aim of increasing nominations for women for the Order of Australia,<sup>25</sup> particularly where women had previously been underrepresented. In the first 4 weeks of the campaign (from 2-31 August 2023) the campaign reached 550,385 people and supported an increase in Order of Australia honours for women. In the January 2024 Australia Day Order of Australia Awards List, women received 50.5 per cent of awards in the General Division. This was an increase from 48.1 per cent in the 2023 Australia Day Order of Australia list.

150. Women also received 50.5 per cent of the Order of Australia General Division awards in the 2023 King's Birthday honours list. This was the first time women had received a majority of the awards.

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<sup>24</sup> Source: [www.pmc.gov.au/office-women/womens-leadership/gender-balance-australian-government-boards](http://www.pmc.gov.au/office-women/womens-leadership/gender-balance-australian-government-boards)

<sup>25</sup> The Order of Australia recognises Australians who have demonstrated outstanding service or exceptional achievement. There are four levels of award. The Order of Australia also has a Military Division (awards in this division are recommended to the Governor-General by the Minister for Defence). It is administered by the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General Secretariat and is governed by the Constitution of the Order of Australia.

151. The Australian Government's #NominateAWoman campaign will run again in the lead-up to the 2025 Australia Day Order of Australia awards with an intention to increase equal representation of women in all 4 levels of the Order of Australia.<sup>26</sup>

## **Question 14: Women, peace and security**

### **National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security**

152. Australia's *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2031* (WPS National Action Plan) aims to support the human rights and participation of women and girls in global stability, including in their meaningful participation in bringing about stability after disasters, preventing conflict and creating durable peace in the wake of conflict. In 2024, Australia will release its first progress report under the WPS National Action Plan, outlining progress and activities under each of the 4 key outcomes of supporting women's meaningful participation and needs in peace processes; reducing sexual and gender-based violence; supporting resilience, crisis, and security, law and justice efforts to meet the needs and human rights of all women and girls; and demonstrating leadership and accountability for women, peace and security (WPS).

153. Each of the WPS National Action Plan government implementing partners has its own WPS implementation plan, and allocates resources to support its delivery. Examples of the work of the Departments of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Home Affairs, as well as the Australian Federal Police are as follows.

- The Department of Defence focuses on enhancing capacity through increased women's participation and leadership across all ranks and employment occupations, deploying more women on exercises, operations, humanitarian and disaster response missions, and their appointment to key engagement and representational roles.
- The Australian Federal Police works with partner law enforcement services to promote and protect gender equality through the integration of gender-related policies and practices across our

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<sup>26</sup> There are 4 levels of the Order of Australia, which are recognised across two Divisions (General and Military): the Companion of the Order (AC) highest level of award; Officer of the Order (AO), Member of the Order (AM), and Medal of the Order (OAM).

international policing operations. The AFP collaborates with partners to build environments (through capability) that prevent gender-based crime, and to improve the practice of gender mainstreaming wherever AFP operates internationally.

- The Department of Home Affairs enhances participation of Pacific women in the customs and border protection domain, and improves safety and security for women and girls through expanded family violence provisions in migration legislation and programs addressing violent extremism.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade supports women and girls' participation and leadership in peace and security processes including through international advocacy, membership of global WPS alliances, and through support to regional women peace mediator networks.

154. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has a dedicated WPS Investment, of \$25 million for 2022-2027 to the WPS agenda. This WPS Investment involves partnerships with UN Women Asia-Pacific, Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund, ActionAid Australia, Legal Action Worldwide, and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies. Gender-responsive analysis of the security sector, including arms exports.

155. Australian export controls include consideration and assessment around human rights and international obligations, although obligations around gender equality and the human rights of women and girls are not explicit.

156. All Australian Government entities are required to analyse the gender equality impacts of all new policy proposals being considered by the Government. This includes proposals related to the security sector and arms exports. This analysis enables the Government to make informed and practical decisions that close gender gaps.

### **Question 15: Nationality**

157. Significant effort is in place across all states and territories to facilitate access to birth registration and certificates, which under Australia's federated structure is a jurisdictional responsibility.

- The ACT has introduced revised policies in Births, Deaths and Marriages aimed at easing access to identity documents and certificates. The revised policy has greater regard for the kinship family structures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as providing relief from associated fees.
- NSW works in partnership with non-government organisations to provide birth registration and birth certificate services to vulnerable persons in areas with high birth rates and low registration rates. In particular, the NSW Government partners with Pathfinders to deliver their National Aboriginal Birth Certificate program and provides a quantity of free birth certificates for Indigenous clients. This partnership also helps to identify unregistered births of Indigenous children so the Government can follow up.
- The NT has implemented a Remote and Regional Circuit Program since 2017 in rural and remote areas, which has issued approximately 1,400 birth certificates across many remote communities.
- QLD is implementing the *Closing the Registration Gap Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2024)* to improve the birth registration rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. As of March 2023, 83 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children born in 2022 were registered within one year of birth (an increase from 78 per cent in 2020 before the strategy commenced). QLD runs the Our Kids Count campaign with face-to-face support for parents and caregivers in rural and remote communities and partners with service providers in these areas to assist parents with registering births.
- SA has online and hardcopy birth registration. Registration is free but birth certificates have fees, which can be waived upon supporting evidence of financial or other hardship. The SA Government regularly engages with support services such as Link-Up and Relationships Australia to assist Aboriginal communities with access to services.

- TAS has an online birth registration service to improve accessibility and coverage for residents in remote and rural areas and facilitate access to birth certificates. There are no penalties for late registrations.
- VIC supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' access to services, such as mobile registration services including visits to communities to assist with registering births. The Marguk-bulok koolin-ik Team works to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community access births, deaths and marriages services, and is currently developing a new engagement strategy.
- The Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages has launched an Online Birth Registration Portal to provide quick and accessible assistance to regional and remote communities registering births. By providing a digital platform that streamlines the birth registration process, the Registry aims to improve and expand access to vital services across the state. The Registry also continued its participation in the Department of Justice's Aboriginal Justice Open Days and interagency Community Service Delivery Days to increase remote and regional communities' access to key identity documents and registration services.

## **Question 16: Education**

### **Question 16a: Denial of education on the basis of motherhood**

158. Among all states and territories, there are no grounds for suspension and expulsion on the basis of motherhood. State and territories have a range of policies and programs to support students who are pregnant or parenting to be able to access education:

- The Australian Government has announced that, from 1 November 2024, a new voluntary pre-employment service will provide support for eligible parents of young children, replacing ParentsNext.
- Parents and stakeholders have been, and will continue to be, major contributors to the development and roll-out of the new service.



- Parents in non-remote areas who are not in paid employment, have a child aged under 6 years, and are receiving certain payments will be eligible. First Nations parents will not need to be receiving any payments to be eligible for the service.
- In the ACT, CCCares at Canberra College provides an alternate education and support program for pregnant and parenting students from the ACT and surrounding districts. CCCares uses Personalised Learning Plans tailored to individual student needs, with flexible delivery of learning and content towards the receipt of an ACT Senior Secondary Certificate and certified competency-based training.
- In NSW, pregnant students have access to a variety of wellbeing supports. Over 2,000 specialist staff provide wellbeing support to students. Pregnant students attending a school with a Wellbeing and Health In-reach Nurse can access specialist health staff who provide support. There are 95 nurses working in over 356 schools across NSW. Public schools also provide adjustments to support continuing education provision of pregnant students or young parents. These may include but is not limited to flexible lessons timetables, leave from attendance before and/or after birth of baby and option to complete year 11 or 12 over a period of up to 5 years.

The Student Health in NSW Public Schools: A summary and consolidation policy states that all children and young people of legal school age are entitled to participate in education and training regardless of their health support needs.

Students also have access to other dedicated wellbeing staff including the School Counsellors and School Psychologists, Student Support Officers, School Wellbeing Officers, School Chaplains and 'Team Around a School', a partnership between schools, families, social workers and support agencies.

Public schools can provide adjustments to support continuing education provision of pregnant students or young parents. These are subject to the school being able to accommodate and may include:

- flexible lessons timetables;
- leave from attendance before and/or after birth of baby;
- option to complete year 11 or 12 over a period of up to 5 years;
- distance education school enrolment when no appropriate local provision is available; and
- undertaking studies at a TAFE college.

An example of a local program in place is at Narara Valley High School Young Parent Program.

- A crèche is available while parents study 2 days week.
  - Participants are included in the Year 10 enrolment numbers. There is no additional or external funding support.
  - It is a flexible program with what is offered with the main focus being on vocational opportunities.
- The NT's Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025 includes a commitment to 'develop, support and promote programs and activities that assist young parents and carers to continue their education and participate in the workforce. NT offers programs for building parenting capacity and re-entry of young mothers such as the Literacy for Parents - Strong Young Mums Program. The NT Government's commitment includes developing a cross agency framework to enable young parents to complete their schooling with wrap around health education and parenting support services.
  - QLD has guidelines to retain and support young people who are pregnant and parenting in education. Public schools provide services to support pregnant and parenting students to continue their education, including guidance officers, school-based youth health nurses and

youth support coordinators, and linking the student with government and external agencies.

- SA's Open Access College enrolment policy supports students who are unable to attend their enrolled school on a full time basis due to family commitments that may include, a student who is pregnant or any new parent. All schools ensure students can access education and health counselling that may include services provided through the Department for Education, along with external supports within government and non-government agencies to encourage students to continue their education.
- In TAS, the Pregnant and Parenting Student Policy and Procedure supports pregnant and parenting students so that they can receive an education in a safe and supportive environment and commits schools not to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against pregnant and parenting students. In TAS, Child and Family Learning Centres provide support to families with children from pregnancy to 5 years. This may include supporting parents to re-engage in education.
- VIC's Pregnancy and Parenting – Students policy provides guidance to schools to support pregnant and parenting students. Victorian Government schools employ a range of supports to help young parents continue education including flexible options for continuing education, support to balance workload and out of class commitments, tailoring programs and resources to individual needs, and preparing an Individual Education Plan and a Student Support Group.
- WA has guidelines for supporting students to continue their education if they are pregnant or parenting. Students in regional and remote areas are provided additional contextual support. School staff ensure students can return to school after birth in a place they can feel safe and supported, share experiences and have a sense of belonging. Childcare access is supported through local Child and Parent Centres, which are located on, or near, public schools.

**Question 16b: Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) academy for Indigenous girls**

159. The Indigenous Girls' STEM Academy (the Academy) is a \$25 million, 10-year national investment between 2018 and 2028 in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls who aspire to pursue education and careers in STEM professions. The Academy operates nationally, with locations chosen strategically according to populations, language groups and maximising access.

160. The Academy has 2 initiatives: the Student Initiative and Teachers of STEM Initiative. The Student Initiative supports up to 1,000 high-achieving Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young women from high school, through university, and into graduate careers. Teachers of STEM Initiative supports training of up to 99 new, STEM specialised, female, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander teachers.

**Question 16b: Make use of information and communications technology to enhance access to education for girls and women in remote regions**

161. States and territories provide a diverse range of ICT initiatives to enhance access to education for girls and women in remote regions. The below list shares a non-exhaustive range of examples:

- In the NT, the Katherine School of the Air is continuing the use of iSee, a contemporary IT platform with low bandwidth, to enhance access to education for girls and women through delivery of curriculum.
- The SA's SWiFT Program provides high-speed fibre internet to schools and preschools in regional areas, helping to reduce barriers to accessibility and connectivity to digital technologies. Schools in remote areas where fibre internet is unavailable have bespoke connections to a high performing, stable Starlink business service.
- VIC funds the Software for Connected Learners program, which provides teachers and students with no-cost access to high quality, curriculum-aligned software and digital content. The program covers a range of curriculum areas, including Science, Digital Technologies and Design and Technologies.

**Question 16b: Measures to promote non-traditional educational choices of girls and women in particular STEM and ICT**

162. Australia is committed to enabling women and girls through STEM education and increasing their representation and retention in STEM careers. Australia's *Advancing Women in STEM Strategy (2019)* guides Australia's efforts to increase gender equity in STEM and raise the visibility of women in STEM.

163. The Australian Government supports a range of initiatives to promote women and girls in STEM and non-traditional careers. For example:

- funding the Building Women's Careers program that will boost women's participation in construction, clean energy and advanced manufacturing industries, and technology and digital sectors;
- commissioned an independent Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review to evaluate existing women in STEM programs; in response is providing \$38.2 million over 8 years from 2023–24 (and \$1.3 million ongoing) to support a thriving, skilled and diverse STEM workforce. This funding will scale up Women in STEM and science engagement programs that are creating positive change to attract and retain more women, and other under-represented groups, in STEM education and jobs; and
- publishes the STEM Equity Monitor, which is a national data resource on girls and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The monitor reports the current state of STEM gender equity in Australia and measures changes and trends.

**Question 16c: Safe and inclusive learning environment**

164. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring every student has the opportunity to access a safe and inclusive learning environment.

165. The Final Report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability made several recommendations relating to the provision of inclusive learning environments. The Australian Government and state and territory governments have accepted in principle recommendations related to the Commission's vision for more accessible and inclusive education,

building workforce capability and expertise, and strengthening complaints management practices.

166. Respectful relationships education is embedded in the Australian Curriculum (version 9.0). The revised Australian Curriculum (Version 9.0) was endorsed by all state, territory and federal education Ministers in April 2022 for implementation in schools from 2023.

167. The Australian Government is working with states and territories and the non-government education sector to enhance the delivery of respectful relationships education in Australian primary and secondary schools. Respectful relationships education uses the education system as a catalyst for generational and cultural change by engaging schools to comprehensively address the drivers of gender-based violence and create a future free from violence and discrimination.

168. States and territories delivering public primary and secondary education services offer a diverse range of programs and policies to promote a safe and inclusive learning environment. The below list shares a non-exhaustive range of examples.

- The ACT Safe and Supportive Schools Policy requires all ACT public schools have a minimum of 2 Safe and Supportive Schools Contact Officers, who are teachers selected to support and respond to students who may be experiencing or involved in bullying, discrimination and/ or racial or sexual harassment.
- The NSW Department of Education's Multicultural Education Policy responds to the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of NSW, requires NSW public schools to ensure inclusive teaching practices that recognise and respect the cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds of all students, and also requires schools to deliver targeted programs that support students learning English as an additional language or dialect for newly arrived and refugee students.
- The NT Government Department of Education *Framework for Inclusion 2019-2029* is a 10-year strategy to improve inclusive education for all NT Government school students. Consultation is currently underway on

a Statement of Commitment on Supporting Diversity of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Sex Characteristics in Education.

- The QLD Department of Education delivers evidence based support, advice and professional development to Queensland state schools and departmental staff with the capability to provide safe, supportive and inclusive environments for all students, including gender and sexuality-diverse students, based on state and federal anti-discrimination, human rights and education legislation.
- The SA Department of Education are developing practice guides for educators that clearly articulate the evidence-based strategies and advice to improve learning and wellbeing outcomes for learners with additional needs. Specific practice guides on autism in girls are now available to SA schools.
- TAS Government schools must create Learning Plans to support all students who identify as First Nations Australians, speak English as an Additional Language, and/or have a disability who require educational adjustments. A number of staff including School Support and Wellbeing Teams and Safeguarding Officers in each school to help support any young people who are vulnerable or who present with complex needs. Inclusive Language Guidelines that provide staff and students with advice regarding inclusive language.
- The VIC Department of Education supports schools to create a safe and inclusive learning environment through the Child Safe Standards, which are compulsory minimum standards for all VIC schools. The Child Safe Standards require schools to uphold diversity and equity in policy and practice, paying particular attention to the needs of students with disability, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students who are unable to live at home, international students, LGBTIQ+ students and Aboriginal students, and provide and promote a culturally safe environment for them.

- The WA Government's Tracks to Two-Way Learning resource and associated professional learning aims to improve quality teaching and learning of Aboriginal students through the recognition and acceptance of Aboriginal people's language backgrounds, including Aboriginal English, and their effects on cross cultural communication.

169. The Australian Government is responding to high rates of sexual violence on university campuses including through a National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence and by establishing an independent National Student Ombudsman.

**Question 16d: Secondary schools established in Indigenous communities**

170. Australia is committed to ensuring secondary schools are accessible and established in Indigenous communities. For example:

- NSW has 11 secondary or central/community government schools in remote and very remote areas with a majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled.
- NT has 94 combined and secondary schools located throughout remote and very remote areas with a majority of Indigenous students enrolled.
- QLD has 17 schools located in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- SA has 15 combined primary and secondary schools servicing regional and remote Indigenous communities.
- In 2024, there are 21 public remote community schools in WA, some of which have campuses in multiple remote communities.

**Question 16d: Incorporating education on First Nations communities into the school curriculum**

171. The Australian Government is committed to a national curriculum that incorporates education on First Nations histories and cultures.

172. Version 9.0 of the Australian Curriculum includes deepening students' understanding of First Nations histories and cultures and their contribution to the



building of modern Australia, as well as the perspectives of First Nations peoples on the arrival of British settlers and its impact. There are improved links between learning areas and cross-curriculum priorities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority. States and territories have adopted a range of additional education such as learning about local Aboriginal communities and language learning opportunities.

## **Question 17: Employment**

### **Addressing gender segregated industries and occupations**

173. Australia's labour market is highly segregated by industry and occupation. Workforce gender segregation contributes to the gender pay and wealth gap, as men continue to dominate in industries and occupations with higher earnings. A highly gendered workforce also increases the risk of workforce shortages.

174. The Working for Women Strategy outlines Australia's vision to achieve less gender segregated industries and occupations, whilst recognising that gender attitudes and stereotypes about 'men's and women's work' and a higher valuing of feminised industries is needed to drive change.

175. Australia's efforts to address this include action across education, through procurement and in priority sectors. Further initiatives including on Fee-Free TAFE, the Australian Skills Guarantee, Equal by 30 campaign, and initiatives to promote women and girls in STEM and non-traditional careers are outlined in questions 7, 11 and 16b.

- The Government will invest \$55.6 million over 4 years, commencing in 2024–25, in the Building Women's Careers program which will drive structural and systemic change in training and work environments. The program will fund large-scale projects and smaller, place-based partnerships to improve women's access to flexible, safe and inclusive training and work opportunities in key male-dominated industries.
- The Australian Government has developed a new Australian Apprenticeship service delivery model with additional support for women in male dominated trades.

**Implement the principle of equal pay for work of equal value**

176. Employers must pay all employees equally for work of equal or comparable value. Best practice employers understand the benefits of creating a culture that promotes gender pay equity.

177. Australia has improved transparency and reporting on the gender pay gap including amendments to the WGE Act. For more information, see question 3.

178. Australia has introduced reforms to put gender equality at the centre of the workplace relations system including:

- making gender equality an object of the Fair Work Act;
- guiding the way Australia's workplace relations tribunal, the Fair Work Commission, considers equal remuneration and work value cases;
- requiring the Fair Work Commission to consider gender equality, when setting modern awards conditions and minimum wages;
- establishing Expert Panels for pay equity and the Care and Community Sector so the FWC has the expertise it needs when considering pay equity or care and community sector matters;
- reinvigorating the bargaining system focusing on opening it up to low-paid, female-dominated sectors; and
- prohibiting pay secrecy clauses in employment contracts.

179. The Secure Jobs, Better Pay Act amendments to the Fair Work Act instructs the Fair Work Commission to consider gender as a criteria to delivering pay increases that are helping close the gender pay gap. Examples of the reforms include:

- in 2022-2023, the Fair Work Commission increased the national minimum wage by 8.6 per cent to benefit low paid workers (more likely to be women); and
- increased the award wage for more than 250,000 aged sector employees, historically undervalued because of assumptions based on gender, by up to 28.5 per cent.

### **Implementation of 2017 Senate Inquiry into gender segregation in the workplace**

180. The Government response to the Senate inquiry into gender segregation in the workplace and its impact on women’s economic equality, was published in July 2018.<sup>27</sup> The implementation of recommendations relating to gender segregation in the workplace, the gender pay gap, amendments to the Fair Work Act and women and girls in STEM are covered in questions 3, 16b and 17. The Australian Government has also committed to conduct the Time Use Survey, detailed data collection that records the activities Australians take part in each day, including the amount of time people spend on unpaid work such as caring for children and older people, and doing housework, on an on-going basis from 2024.

### **AHRC report “Supporting working parents: pregnancy and return to work national review”**

181. Australia has undergone significant reforms since the AHRC report was published in 2014. The implementation of recommendations relating to legislative amendments and addressing harmful stereotypes are outlined in questions 3 and 8. Clear, comprehensive information about employer obligations and employee rights are published by various Australian departments and agencies including the Fair Work Ombudsman,<sup>28</sup> the AHRC,<sup>29</sup> the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations,<sup>30</sup> and the WGEA.<sup>31</sup>

### **Question 17a: Code of Practice**

182. Australia does not have a code of practice regarding the legal obligations of employers with regard to pregnant employees and employees with family obligations, however Australia has a comprehensive legislative framework that outlines employer obligations and employee rights. This includes under the Sex Discrimination Act, Fair Work Act and the *Paid Parental Leave Act 2010*.

183. The Government recognises that efforts must be made to ensure that employers understand these obligations. See response to question 17 for detail on key

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<sup>27</sup> [Additional Documents – Parliament of Australia \(aph.gov.au\)](https://aph.gov.au)

<sup>28</sup> [Parental leave - Fair Work Ombudsman](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Working Parents: A quick guide to your rights | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

<sup>30</sup> [Understand your workplace rights - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government \(dewr.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>31</sup> [WGEA-Leading-Practice-Parental-Leave-Policy-Guide.pdf](#)

Australian departments and agencies which publish guidance and information for employees and/or employers.

**Question 17b: Gender analysis of Australia’s pension fund**

184. In Australia, the retirement income system aims to protect older Australians who have retired from formal employment. It includes 3 main aspects: compulsory superannuation employer contributions, voluntary employee contributions, and the Australian Government Age Pension safety net. The Age Pension is a social support payment designed to support the basic living standards of older Australians who need it most. Women make up 55.5 per cent of recipients of the Age Pension.

185. The Working for Women Strategy outlines a commitment to implement actions to reduce the retirement income gender pay gap, develop superannuation-system supports for people to catch up after time out of the workforce, and implement a strong safety net provided by the social security system.

186. Subject to the passage of legislation, from 1 July 2025, the Government will pay superannuation on its PPL scheme to signal that taking time out of paid work to care for children is a normal part of working life for both parents; help normalise parental leave as a workplace entitlement; and reduce the impact of parental leave on retirement incomes.

187. Any new policy proposals relating to Australia’s retirement income system must undergo a gender analysis, under Australia’s gender responsive budgeting system.

188. To further accelerate progress, directions for future effort include examining the gender and care interaction within the superannuation system to narrow retirement income gender gaps.

**Question 17c: Respect@Work Report**

189. The Australian Government has committed to implement all recommendations of the Respect@Work Report, and has provided \$367 million in funding to support the implementation.

190. A significant amount of work has been completed to date. All but one of the recommendations requiring federal legislative change have been implemented through the following amendments:

- The Sex Discrimination Act was amended to broaden the scope of the Act to apply to all forms of workers, expressly prohibit sex-based harassment and conduct that results in a hostile work environment, and introduce a positive duty on all employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate certain forms of unlawful sex discrimination as far as possible.
- The *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)* was amended to provide the AHRC with new inquiry powers to inquire into, and report on, issues of systematic unlawful discrimination, and new compliance and enforcement functions to complement the positive duty.
- The Fair Work Act and *Fair Work Regulations 2009 (Cth)* were amended to expressly prohibit sexual harassment in connection with work, introduce powers for the Fair Work Commission to deal with workplace disputes concerning sexual harassment and issue a ‘stop sexual harassment order’, and clarify that sexual harassment can be conduct amounting to a valid reason for dismissal.
- To enhance data collection and information sharing, the WGE Act has been amended to require federal public sector organisations, in addition to non-public sector employers, to report annually on gender equality indicators.

191. The final recommendation requiring federal legislation is the implementation of a costs protection model for discrimination matters that proceed to the federal courts. On 15 November 2023, the Australian Government introduced the Australian Human Rights Commission Amendment (Costs Protection) Bill 2023 into Parliament to implement this recommendation. The Australian Government is considering the report of a Senate inquiry into that Bill.

192. Key non-legislative measures taken by the Australian Government in response to recommendations from the Respect@Work Report include:

- developing training and education materials for critical groups on workplace sexual harassment;

- funding a Sexual Harassment Research Program to support a national evidence base to inform policy and practice;
- developing Guidelines on the use of confidentiality clauses in settlement agreements in sexual harassment matters;
- commissioning the Australian National University to undertake research on costs and damages in sexual harassment litigation in order to inform a review into an appropriate costs protection model for discrimination matters;
- providing funding for working women’s centres, community legal centres and legal aid commissions and 1800RESPECT to support individuals who experience sexual harassment;
- ratifying the International Labor Organisation’s Violence and Harassment Convention 190;
- conducting and releasing the results of the fifth national survey on sexual harassment;
- establishing the Respect@Work Council to provide advice on the implementation of the recommendations;
- developing Good Practice Indicators Framework for preventing and responding to workplace sexual harassment; and
- launching the Respect@Work website which delivers information and resources on workplace sexual harassment, including guidance on external pathways to address workplace sexual harassment.

## **Question 18: Sexual harassment**

### **Addressing workplace sexual harassment**

193. Measures taken to encourage reporting of sexual harassment in the workplace can be found in response to question 17c which outlines the Australian Government’s response to the landmark Respect@Work Report.

194. These amendments have strengthened the legal and regulatory frameworks and shifted the system to focus on preventative efforts to eliminate sex discrimination and sexual harassment, particularly in the workplace.
195. The *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Act 2009* amended the *Fair Work Act 2009* to prohibit sexual harassment in connection with work, and to provide workers with the option to deal with sexual harassment complaints through the Fair Work Commission. Access to existing channels for complaints are still applicable, such as the Australian Human Rights Commission and state and territory anti-discrimination or workplace health and safety bodies.
196. The Australian Government has provided funding for working women's centres in all states and territories, to provide information, advice and assistance to women who experience workplace sexual harassment and other workplace issues. This funding implements recommendations from the Respect@Work Report.

#### **Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces**

197. The Australian Government has committed to implement recommendations of the *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces*. The Report aims to ensure that Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces are safe and respectful. To date, the following measures have been taken:

- A human resources entity has been established to support parliamentarians and their staff, including through professional development, resources to professionalise management practices, guidance to manage suspension and termination decisions, and training on respectful workplace behaviour and codes of conduct. The human resources entity can also conduct reviews of complaints made about certain alleged workplace misconduct.
- The Australian Parliament has endorsed interim behaviour standards and codes for parliamentarians, their staff and Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces that, amongst other things, prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace.

- Legislative amendments have been made to modernise the employment framework for parliamentarians' staff, and to support safe, respectful and accountable workplaces.
- Parliament's standing orders have been reviewed with a view to improving safety and respect in the parliamentary chambers.

198. The Australian Government is progressing, as a priority, in consultation with the Parliament, establishing an Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission which will investigate complaints of breaches of behaviour codes and standards for parliamentarians, staff and Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces.

199. There is public reporting on implementation of the recommendations available online which is updated on a regular basis.<sup>32</sup>

### **Question 19: Health**

200. The National Women's Health Strategy outlines a national approach to improving health outcomes for all women and girls, particularly those at greatest risk of poor health, and aims to reduce inequities in health outcomes. The Strategy identifies 5 priority areas with key measures of success to improve health outcomes for Australian women and girls: maternal, sexual and reproductive health; healthy ageing; chronic conditions and preventive health; mental health; and the health impacts of violence against women and girls.

201. Equitable access to pregnancy termination services is a key measure of success in the National Women's Health Strategy. The Australian Government provides support for pregnancy termination services through Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS)<sup>33</sup> rebates for relevant services, including telehealth consultations, subsidies for the cost of medicines under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)<sup>34</sup> and via the National Health Reform Agreement.<sup>35</sup> In 2023, the Australian Government,

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<sup>32</sup> See [www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Leadership\\_Taskforce/Progress\\_of\\_recommendations](http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Leadership_Taskforce/Progress_of_recommendations)

<sup>33</sup> The Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) is a list of health professional services that the Australian Government subsidises. MBS items provide patient benefits for a wide range of health services including consultations, diagnostic tests and operations.

<sup>34</sup> The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is an Australian Government program that benefits all Australians by subsidising medicines to make them more affordable

<sup>35</sup> The NHRA is an agreement between the Australian Government and all state and territory governments. It is the key mechanism for the transparency, governance and financing of Australia's public hospital system.



supported by expert advice, introduced changes to the dispensing and prescribing of a medical abortion drug, mifepristone and misoprostol (MS-2 Step©). This will reduce barriers to safe and affordable abortions, especially for women in rural and remote areas.

202. The Australian Government is also supporting awareness raising and access to sexual and reproductive health services and related training, including through:

- providing \$5.2 million over 3 years from 2024–25 to support health practitioners, including regional and remote practitioners, to undertake training in long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) insertion and removal. This will increase the number of healthcare practitioners trained in LARC insertion so women have more access to these highly effective, reversible forms of contraception;
- providing \$1.1 million over 4 years from 2024–25 to support the development of a virtual contraception decision-making tool for women and health practitioners;
- committing \$1.1 million over 4 years from 2023–24 for the Australian Contraception and Abortion Primary Care Practitioner Support Network to provide health professionals with support in delivering LARCs and medical termination of pregnancy.

### **Abortion services in Australia’s states and territories**

203. Abortion is legal in every Australian state and territory, but legislation differs among jurisdictions.<sup>36</sup> States and territories have made progress via recent laws, policies and initiatives to make abortion more accessible. This includes through state wide abortion care helplines, online consumer information resources in multiple languages and partnerships with non-government organisations to support access to high quality sexual and reproductive health services and information.

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<sup>36</sup> *Health Act 1993 (ACT); Abortion Law Reform Act 2019 (NSW); Termination of Pregnancy Law Reform Act 2017 (NT); Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018 (QLD); Termination of Pregnancy Act 2021 (SA); Termination of Pregnancy Regulations 2022 (SA); Reproductive Health (Access to Terminations) Act 2013 (Tas); Abortion Law Reform Act 2008 (Vic); Abortion Legislation Reform Act 2023 (WA).*

204. All Australian states and territories now have legislation establishing safe access zones of 150 metres around the premises where abortion/termination services are provided, with the exception of the ACT. In the ACT safe access zones of an area no less than 50m can be declared by the Minister based on community need (to date only one such zone has been declared).<sup>37</sup>

205. All Australian states and territories have legislation or are in the midst of legislating an obligation requiring medical or health practitioners with a conscientious objection to make a type of referral to other health service providers who can provide advice (either directly or through the provision of a list).<sup>38</sup>

### **Question 19a: Mental health**

206. Mental health, and access to care, is impacted by a range of social and economic inequities which are disproportionately experienced by women. Socioeconomic risks for mental ill health in women include lower income, poorer job conditions and insecure work, primary carer responsibilities, and physical and sexual violence. The ABS found that in 2020–2022, one in 4 women (24.6 per cent) had a mental health disorder in the previous 12 months, compared with almost one in 5 men (18.3 per cent). Transgender and gender diverse Australians had higher rates of 12-month mental health disorders than cisgender Australians (33.1 per cent compared with 21.3 per cent).

207. There are a range of national policies and plans helping to guide government action on mental health issues.<sup>39</sup>

208. At a federal level, mental health support is available to eligible Australians, regardless of gender, under the Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners initiative (Better Access). The Better Access initiative aims to improve outcomes for people with a clinically diagnosed mental disorder through evidence-based treatment. Benefits are available for up to a maximum of 10 individual and 10 group mental health services per calendar year. These services

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<sup>37</sup> *Health (Patient Privacy) Amendment Act 2015 (ACT); Public Health Amendment (Safe Access to Reproductive Health Clinics) Act 2018 (NSW); Termination of Pregnancy Law Reform Act 2017 (NT); Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018 (Qld); Health Care (Safe Access) Amendment Act 2020 (SA); Reproductive Health (Access to Terminations) Act 2013 (Tas); Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Act 2015 (Vic); Public Health Amendment (Safe Access Zones) Act 2021 (WA).*

<sup>38</sup> Conscientious objection provisions are found in jurisdictional legislation outlined in Footnote 30.

<sup>39</sup> For example, see [What we're doing about mental health | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#)

can be provided by appropriately trained General Practitioners, psychologists (clinical and registered), eligible social workers and occupational therapists.

209. In addition, the Australian Government funds a range of nationally available, free or low cost, digital mental health services, including crisis support, helplines and webchat, clinician-supported online therapies, self-directed education programs and tools, and moderated peer support forums.

210. The Australian Government is also providing \$888.1 million over 8 years from 2024–25 to expand the range of free mental health services available to all Australians, including women. To address the gap for people experiencing mild mental health symptoms, a new national, low-intensity digital service will be provided. From 1 January 2026, every Australian will be able to access this free service without a referral, providing them timely, high quality mental health support. The Federal Government is providing over \$80 million from 2019-20 to 2024-25 to support universal perinatal mental health screening initiatives and working with states and territories to support the collection of data to enable new and expectant parents to access early support for perinatal mental health issues.

211. Each state and territory has its own mental health legislation, and diverse strategies and initiatives that support the mental health of cohorts of women outlined in question 19a. A non-exhaustive snapshot of initiatives is outlined below:

- The ACT Government supports women’s and girls’ mental health through the implementation of the *Mental Health Workforce Strategy and Action Plan*; Expanding Public Healthcare Services for Eating Disorders project; and improvements to perinatal mental health screening. The *ACT Disability Health Strategy 2024-2034*, under development, aims to ensure people with disability have equitable and appropriate access to healthcare, including mental health services.
- The NT’s bilateral agreement with the Australian Government on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention (2022-26) supports expanding Headspace services and Head to Health centres to Katherine and Alice Springs, including a priority focus on First Nations children. As part of mental health reforms, the NT is also providing an effective and

responsive territory-wide child and adolescent service and improving services for children with harmful sexual behaviours. In addition, the NT is improving access to specialised perinatal mental health services and enhancing screening during the perinatal period for women and families. This is through an NT wide perinatal and infant mental health service to improve equity of access, service delivery, and early identification and intervention for vulnerable women and families.

- Specialised NSW Health Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Services (PIMHS) provide perinatal women with serious mental illness with consultation liaison services or direct care. This includes assessment, intensive support and referrals to specialist mental health mother baby units or general inpatient units for acute care. PIMHS also offers services within women's prisons as well as a telehealth outreach to rural and remote areas. Programs are available to support early parent-child relationships when parental mental ill-health affects attachment. These programs are crucial for babies' healthy development and enhancing parental confidence and capacity.
- QLD has released the *Queensland Women and Girls Health Strategy 2032* that considers all aspects of women and girls' health, including mental health. The Queensland Government fund investments that will support the mental health of women and girls, including in eating disorder responses.
- SA provides the Refugee Health Service, a specialist state wide health service for newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers in SA. The service focuses on new arrival families and individuals with complex health and psycho-social needs, and provides interventions to address the acute and chronic physical/psychosocial consequences of torture, trauma and gender-based violence.
- TAS is progressing a range of initiatives to support the mental health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians, including women and girls, under the Bilateral Schedule for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention between

the Australian and TAS governments (May 2022), including establishing a state-wide eating disorder service and universal aftercare services.

- VIC is investing in supports for mothers experiencing acute mental health and wellbeing issues during the perinatal period and expanding the Perinatal Emotional Health Program.
- WA provides funding to 11 community organisations across WA as part of the Proud and Connected Community Grants program to increase connection and build resilience within the LGBTIQ+ community, aligning with outcomes outlined in the *Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025*.

#### **Question 19b: Transgender women**

212. The Australian Government recognises that individuals may identify and be recognised within the community as a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth or during infancy, or as a gender which is not exclusively male or female. The Sex Discrimination Act makes discrimination on the grounds of gender identity unlawful in key areas of public life. There is no requirement for any person to obtain legal recognition of their gender identity, however some people may wish to obtain legal recognition of their gender identity in their birth certificate.

213. The Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender, which were released in 2013, apply to all Australian Government departments and agencies that maintain personal records (including employee records), and/or collect sex and/or gender information. The Guidelines support departments and agencies to meet their obligations under the Sex Discrimination Act and outline a consistent standard of evidence required for people to change or establish their sex and gender information on personal records.

214. In 2021, the ABS released its new *Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables 2020*. (ABS Standard). The ABS Standard states “gender is about social and cultural differences in identity, expression and experience as a man, woman or non-binary person. A person’s gender may differ from their sex and may also differ from what is indicated on their legal documents”. The ABS Standard is influential in guiding policy and data

collection across the federal government, states, and territories. The ABS Standard was informed by the Guidelines but incorporates more recent developments to appropriate terminology and language.

215. Under Australia's federal system of government, laws for registering a change of gender are the responsibility of states and territories. Each state and territory's legal and policy position is outlined below:

- The ACT amended the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1997* (ACT) in 2014 to remove criteria requiring a person to have gender re-assignment surgery before they would be eligible to alter their registered sex. In March 2024, further amendments were made to remove the requirement for a person to have received clinical treatment before their registered sex could be changed. A person can now apply to alter their registered sex if the person believes their sex to be the sex nominated in their application. No authorisation or verification from a medical practitioner is required.
- In NSW, the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995* (NSW) provides that a person who is 18 years or above and has undergone a sex affirmation procedure, may apply for an alteration of their birth certificate. NSW is giving consideration to whether reforms to the requirements for sex markers on birth certificates may be appropriate.
- In the NT, the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996* (NT) allows for a change of sex or gender without medical treatment. An application must be accompanied by a statement from a medical practitioner or a psychologist certifying that the adult has received appropriate clinical treatment, which may involve counselling.
- QLD's new *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 2023* (Qld) removes the surgery requirement for transgender and gender diverse people to obtain legal recognition of their gender, and establishes a new framework that supports bodily integrity, autonomy and self-determination. Under this new framework, a person aged 16 years and over may apply to alter their record of sex by providing a

declaration accompanied by a supporting statement from an adult who has known the applicant for at least 12 months. The parents of, or persons with legal parental responsibility for, a child under the age of 16 may apply to alter their record of sex by providing a report from a developmentally informed practitioner confirming the child understands the meaning and legal implications of doing so.

- SA's *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996* (SA) provides that a person 18 years or above can apply to record their new sex or gender identity if they have undergone the required clinical treatment, which does not need to involve invasive medical treatment and may include counselling.
- In TAS, the *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1999* (Tas) provides for registration of gender identity on the basis of self-identification. The gender registration process specifically states there is no requirement for any medical treatment. Birth certificates can be issued with a person's chosen gender or no gender at all.
- In 2020, VIC made amendments to their *Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996* (Vic) which mean that Victorians are no longer required to undergo gender affirmation surgery to apply to change the record of sex. The VIC Government has reflected this in published guidance to health services on inclusive collection and reporting of sex and gender data.
- In April 2024, WA announced new reforms to abolish the Gender Reassignment Board and introduce a streamlined administrative process for sex and gender recognition in WA. These reforms will mean that Western Australians will no longer be required to undergo medical or surgical reassignment and have their application determined by a board if they want to change their sex or gender on their birth certificate. Instead, an application will have a statement from a medical practitioner or psychologist certifying the person has had appropriate clinical treatment, which may include counselling. The Births, Deaths

and Marriages Registration Amendment (Sex or Gender Changes) Bill 2024 was introduced in WA Parliament on 17 April 2024. It was passed by the Legislative Assembly on 9 May 2024 and second read on the same day in the Legislative Council.

**Question 19c: Culturally appropriate, gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory health-care services, and training for Indigenous health professionals**

216. The Australian Government leads a national approach on health through policies and programs, subsidies for health services and medicines, regulation of medical devices and treatments and work with states and territories to deliver a vision for greater health and wellbeing for all Australians – particularly those at greatest risk of poor health.

217. The Australian Government has made a number of culturally- and gender-responsive health investments and reforms, including:

- committing \$3.5 million over 4 years from 2024–25 (and \$0.4 million per year ongoing) to expand the Midwife Professional Indemnity Scheme. The expansion will support improved health outcomes for First Nations women and babies by enabling Birthing on Country programs to engage midwives who can provide culturally safe, continuous midwifery care;
- committing \$12.5 million over 4 years to the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to facilitate community-led distribution of menstrual products in regional and remote First Nations communities where menstrual products are expensive and hard for First Nations women and girls to access.

218. The *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021–2031* addresses the structural, systemic, organisational and personal barriers to recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the health landscape.

219. The Australian Government will support and grow the First Nations health workforce across all levels, roles, and locations to eliminate racism and build the



capacity of mainstream settings to deliver culturally safe, trauma informed, and appropriate health care to First Nations peoples. This includes:

- \$54.3 million over 5 years (2022-23 to 2026-27) for NACCHO to deliver a First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program supporting up to 500 First Nations trainees to undertake qualifications enabling them to work across various health settings and be able to deliver culturally appropriate care to First Nations peoples.
- \$52.9 million over 4 years (from 2022-23 to 2025-26) provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Professional Organisations to support and develop the First Nations health workforce.
- \$197.9 million to NACCHO to employ up to 260 new positions in Aboriginal community controlled health services to deliver cancer treatment and other supports such as health promotion activities, support for patients to navigate cancer care following diagnosis, and access to treatment and care on Country.

220. All states and territories have in place a broad range of strategies and initiatives to deliver culturally appropriate, gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory health-care services, and support Indigenous health professionals. The below list shares a non-exhaustive range of examples:

- NSW funds the Health Education and Training Institute, Training and Support Unit to provide high quality, culturally responsive, evidence-based education and support to staff working in the Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service and Building Strong Foundations teams. The NSW Government has also funded the Aboriginal Allied Health Cadetship since 2011.
- Under the *Improving Aboriginal Cultural Respect Across Tasmania's Health System Action Plan 2020-2026*, the TAS Government is implementing a range of initiatives including increasing capacity of Aboriginal Health Liaison Officers and establishing an Aboriginal Health Worker traineeship pilot program.

- The WA Government has established dedicated Aboriginal health workforce officers across WA health service providers; the Aboriginal Cadetship Program, which offers Aboriginal University students the opportunity to gain paid work experience in the WA health system; and the WA Health Aboriginal Leadership Excellence and Development Program, which prepares talented Aboriginal leaders in the WA health system for senior management and executive positions.

**Question 19d: National strategic framework for the mental health and social and emotional well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including steps taken to address intergenerational trauma in culturally appropriate ways.**

221. The Australian Government is committed to and actively participates in the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership which aims to improve social and emotional wellbeing and mental health and reduce suicide rates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

222. On 3 August 2023, the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership agreed to establish a small working group of members to progress the refresh of the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023*. The Australian Government contributed funding to support the refresh and implementation planning process.

223. The National Plan to End Violence against Women and associated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan recognises the ongoing impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including intergenerational trauma. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan's second reform area is 'Strength, resilience and therapeutic healing', which aims for:

- primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery services to be trauma-informed, healing-focused, culturally safe, place-based and kinship centred;
- cultural knowledge and practices to be developed by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to address the impacts of intergenerational trauma; and

- health and wellbeing to be prioritised.

224. The Australian Government is committed to Closing the Gap, and funds a range of programs in genuine partnership with communities to provide crucial opportunities for trauma recovery. This includes the *Healing for Families* program which delivers culturally-based and trauma-informed healing support such as counselling and therapy, financial support and advice. This program recognises the crucial role First Nations women play in ensuring the strength and wellbeing of their families and communities, while working to address the disproportionately high rates of violence they experience.

## **Question 20: Social and economic benefits**

### **Question 20a: Ensuring an adequate standard of living**

225. The Australian social security system is a taxpayer-funded, non-contributory system that aims to support the basic living standards of all Australians and their social and economic participation.

226. Income support payments, such as the JobSeeker Payment, support Australians who are unable to support themselves while they look for a job or have a temporary injury or incapacity. Those who receive an income support payment are eligible for at least one additional supplementary payment, which could include the Energy Supplement, Family Tax Benefit or Rent Assistance. Family Tax Benefit is also available to Australians who do not receive an income support payment if their income is below certain thresholds.

227. In recognition of the costs associated with raising a family, a higher basic rate of JobSeeker Payment is payable to recipients with dependent children. The Parenting Payment also provides financial assistance to principal carers with parenting responsibilities for a young child.

228. Single principal carers on the Parenting Payment receive a higher basic payment rate compared to partnered carers. Reforms in the 2023-24 Budget allow single principal carers to receive a higher amount through the Parenting Payment (Single) until their youngest child turns 14 (up from age 8). As of 31 May 2024, this measure

had benefited around 79,500 women (who head an overwhelming majority of single-headed households) and 10,075 First Nations carers.

229. In 2022, the Australian Government established the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee to provide advice to Government on economic inclusion and the adequacy, effectiveness and sustainability of income support payments ahead of every Federal Budget. The Committee's role explores options to address barriers to economic inclusion for long term unemployed and disadvantaged groups. The Committee reports to the Government on a yearly basis ahead of each Budget.

**Question 20b: Economic empowerment of single mothers**

230. The Australian Government recognises the important role parents play as carers of children in Australia and is committed to building a social security system that provides a strong safety net to support single mothers who rely on income support.

231. In addition to the expanded eligibility to the Parenting Payment (Single) (see question 20a response), the Australian Government has delivered legislation to improve the timely collection of child support owed to parents (the majority women); is investing \$5.1 million to action child support recommendations of the family law inquiry; and has established a Child Support Stakeholder Consultation Group and Child Support Expert Panel to ensure the voices of stakeholders engaged in the Child Support Scheme and experts are informing future policy.

232. In addition, the Australian Government is making early childhood education and care (ECEC) more affordable.

233. An accessible, affordable ECEC system serves as an important lever to improve workforce participation among parents and carers—especially single mothers. The Australian Government provides the main source of funding to support families' access to ECEC services through the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and Additional Child Care Subsidy.

234. The percentage of CCS to which a family is entitled was increased from July 2023 as part of the Government's \$4.7 billion Cheaper Child Care package to make child care more affordable and reduce barriers to workforce participation. This means that eligible families earning \$80,000 or less will have their CCS entitlement lifted

to a new maximum rate of 90 per cent, tapering down by one percentage point for each additional \$5,000 of income.

235. Through the Fee-Free TAFE Skills Agreement (formerly known as the 12-Month Skills Agreement), the Australian Government has partnered with states and territories to deliver over \$1.5 billion funding for 500,000 Fee-Free TAFE and vocational education and training (VET) places across Australia over 2023 to 2026. Fee-Free TAFE supports training places in areas of high demand and skills need and supports students by removing financial barriers to study. Priority sectors under Fee-Free TAFE include Agriculture, Care, Construction, Defence, Early Childhood Education and Care, Hospitality and Tourism, Manufacturing, Sovereign Capability, Technology and Digital, as well as VET workforce from 2024.

236. From 1 November 2024, the Australian Government will introduce a voluntary pre-employment service which will provide support for eligible parents of young children to meet their education, employment and career goals, without limiting the need to prioritise family. A Parents Advisory Group has also been established to ensure parents with lived experience, and key stakeholders, continue to contribute to the development and continuous improvement of the new service.

## **Question 21: Indigenous women**

### **Question 21a: National Congress of Australia's First Peoples**

237. The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples went into voluntary administration in 2019. The Australian Government provided the National Congress \$5.4 million between 2013-2017 for National Representative Body Consultation and approximately \$3.3 million between 2016 and 2019 for capability projects.

238. The Australian Government has provided \$3 million in funding across the next 3 financial years to assist in the establishment of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Institute for First Nations Gender Justice. The Institute is located at the Australian National University and Chaired by the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar OA. The Institute will carry on the work begun on the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Institute (Women's Voices) project. The key focus of the Institute will be to undertake multidisciplinary research and initiatives to identify root causes of intersectional discriminations and other systemic barriers impacting

the lives of First Nations women and girls. Research data will create an evidence platform, employing the principles of Indigenous data sovereignty, which can inform policy development across all levels of government.

**Question 21b: Safe, secure and affordable housing**

239. The Australian Government has committed to a comprehensive housing agenda which includes the National Housing Accord, the Housing Australia Future Fund, the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) with states and territories, the Social Housing Accelerator Fund, and the National Housing Infrastructure Facility, the latter of which the Government has targeted \$1 billion towards crisis and transitional accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic violence, and youth.

240. The Australian Government is developing a National Housing and Homelessness Plan in collaboration with state and territory governments.

241. Established in 2023, the Housing Australia Future Fund is a key element of the Australian Government's commitments to address Australia's shortfall of social and affordable housing. It will support 30,000 new social and affordable housing dwellings in its first 5 years. Disbursements from the Housing Australia Future Fund will provide:

- \$200 million for the repair, maintenance and improvements of housing in remote Indigenous communities,
- \$100 million for crisis and transitional housing for women and children impacted by family and domestic violence and older women at risk of homelessness; and
- \$24 million for capital works projects that provide additional crisis and transitional housing stock for veterans and their families. An additional \$6 million to fund specialist support services for those in the veteran community who are experiencing, or are at risk of, homelessness.

242. Established in 2022, the Housing Policy Partnership is a key mechanism to delivering outcomes for First Nations housing and will provide a forum for

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have a genuine say in the design and delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing services.

243. The Australian Government signed the new \$9.3 billion 5 year National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness (NASHH) with states and territories (states). This includes a doubling of Commonwealth homelessness funding component to \$400 million every year, matched by states. The NASHH will replace the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement which expired on 30 June 2024.

244. The Australian Government and states and territories have in place a broad range of initiatives to ensure safe, secure and affordable housing including for First Nations women. At the federal level, this includes \$172.6 million over 7 years for the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program (Safe Places), which provides capital works grants to support the building, renovation or purchase of emergency accommodation to support women and children experiencing family and domestic violence. Of this funding, \$100 million will deliver the Safe Places Inclusion Round. The Safe Places Inclusion Round focuses on improving access to appropriate emergency accommodation for First Nations women and children, women and children of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and women and children with disability.

## **Question 22: Refugee and asylum-seeking women**

### **Question 22a: Intercepting and returning asylum-seeking women and girls arriving by sea**

245. The Australian Government remains committed to combatting maritime people smuggling in our region and preventing people, including women and girls, from risking their lives at sea. The Australian Government's policy is to intercept any vessel seeking to reach Australia irregularly and to safely return those on board to their point of departure or country of origin, consistent with all applicable domestic and international laws.

246. If people are unable to be safely returned, they will be transferred to Nauru. The Government of Nauru is responsible for assessing protection claims.

247. Australia is committed to upholding its *non-refoulement* obligations under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol (together referred to as the Refugee Convention) and other international human rights instruments to which it is a party.

248. Australia does not return individuals to situations where they face persecution or a real risk of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, arbitrary deprivation of life or the death penalty.

249. Australia is one of only a few resettlement countries that has a dedicated refugee visa program to assist women and their dependent(s) at risk. The Woman at Risk visa subclass provides a pathway for the resettlement of women refugees and their dependents in vulnerable situations.

**Question 22b: Regional processing arrangements**

250. The Australian Government remains committed to regional processing which provides a policy and operational response to maritime people smuggling. There has been one child in Nauru under regional processing arrangements since February 2019. This child and his parents were accommodated together, and have since voluntarily returned home.

251. The Government of Nauru is responsible for the conduct and operation of regional processing arrangements within its territory. Australia supports Nauru to ensure dedicated health and welfare services for women and girls are in place for any new arrivals taken to Nauru for regional processing.

252. Protection claims assessment for all individuals, including women and girls, under regional processing arrangements is a matter for the regional processing country under their domestic legislation.

253. Protection visa applications are assessed against criteria set out in the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth) (Migration Act) and the *Migration Regulations 1994* (Cth). All protection claims are assessed individually on their own merits and the particular circumstances of the applicant are taken into consideration.

254. The Australian Government acknowledges that women may experience particular persecution, harm and discrimination because of their gender or specific



to their gender. Visa decision makers are supported, to effectively and sensitively address and assess claims related to gender. Visa decision makers also undertake Domestic Violence Interview training.

**Question 22c: Mandatory detention**

255. Immigration detention supports Australia’s well-managed migration system and is used to manage potential risks to the Australian community, including national security, health and character risks. Under the Migration Act, a person who does not hold a valid visa is an unlawful non-citizen and must be detained.

256. Immigration detention is used as a last resort. Whenever possible, people who are unlawful non-citizens and face detention are accommodated in the community or in less restrictive placement, in particular where children are involved.

257. People who are unlawful non-citizens and who are detained are subject to placement in immigration detention facilities. Decisions about the most appropriate immigration detention accommodation are determined on a case-by-case basis and involve consideration of a number of factors including the operational capacity of each facility, and the safety and security of people who are unlawful non-citizens, staff and visitors.

258. As of 30 April 2024, there are 50 women held in immigration detention, representing less than 6 per cent of the total detention population. More than 40 per cent of these women had their visa cancelled under section 501 of the Migration Act – also known as the ‘character test’. There are no women who arrived in Australia by sea and became unlawful non-citizens upon entry held in immigration detention.

**Question 22d: Access to health and education**

259. The Australian Government has contracted two service providers to deliver services to people in immigration detention. The Facilities and Detainee Services Provider delivers security, garrison, welfare and facilities management services, while the Detention Health Services Provider provides health and wellbeing services to detainees.

260. Healthcare services for people in immigration detention are broadly comparable with those available within the Australian community under the Australian public health system. Detention health services are provided within an integrated primary care framework, delivered by a multidisciplinary team. The Detention Health Services Provider also provides regular health information to all people in immigration detention which includes women's health topics, lifecycle information, contraception, sexual and reproductive health, as well as breast and ovarian cancer.
261. The Detention Health Services Provider provides access to sexual and reproductive health services, including antenatal screening and obstetrics, termination of pregnancy if requested, emergency contraception and assistance to victims and survivors of female genital mutilation and family violence.
262. Culturally appropriate interpreters and support services are provided in immigration detention and all care is taken to ensure interpreters and support services are responsive to gender, culture and religion. Steps are taken to ensure confidentiality and provide reassurance of confidentiality to detainees.
263. All refugee and asylum seeker children have access to primary and secondary education consistent with the education provided to citizens in the states and territories where they are located.

**Question 22e: Status resolution support services**

264. The Australian Department of Home Affairs administers the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) Program. SRSS provides needs based, targeted support to eligible individuals whilst they are resolving their immigration status. Support will depend on individual circumstances and is targeted towards eligible individuals facing significant barriers affecting their ability to support themselves or engage in status resolution actions. Refugee and asylum seeking women and girls may be eligible for SRSS if they meet the criteria for support (for example hold a bridging visa in association with a protection visa claim and can demonstrate hardship). Assistance may include income support, case management, access to health care, accommodation and the development of a case plan for improving independence and supporting integration.

265. SRSS providers are required to ensure that all personnel undertake training related to the Child Safeguarding Framework, and training related to family and domestic violence awareness.

**Question 22f: Gender-based violence in immigration facilities**

266. Women in immigration facilities are able to lodge a complaint or provide feedback on any aspect of their immigration detention without hindrance or fear of reprisal. Complaints can be made directly to the Australian Department of Home Affairs, Australian Border Force, service providers, and/or oversight bodies.

267. There are laws, policies, rules and practices that govern how people are treated in immigration detention facilities in Australia. The length and conditions of immigration detention are subject to regular internal and external review. The Commonwealth Ombudsman, AHRC and Australian Red Cross conduct ongoing inspections of immigration facilities and engage with detainees and staff to ensure the transparency and integrity of operations.

**Question 23: Women in criminal justice detention**

268. In Australia, states and territories administer their own criminal justice systems and correctional or prison services. Due to the brevity of this periodic report, a snapshot of policies, initiatives and approaches across the 8 jurisdictions is provided throughout question 23. Further detail can be provided as part of the State Party Dialogue.

**Question 23a: Holistic early intervention, design prevention and diversion strategies**

269. The Australian Government works with states and territories to address underlying factors that lead to offending by maintaining a focus on strengthening prevention, early intervention and diversion strategies.

270. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women continue to be over-represented in the criminal justice system including in the prison system and are also the fastest growing incarcerated population.<sup>40</sup> The Australian Government is committed to working in partnership with First Nations organisations and communities to

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<sup>40</sup> Howard-Wagner, D, 2021, 'Increased incarceration of First Nations women is interwoven with the experience of violence and trauma' The Conversation (online article, 6 August 2021) [Increased incarceration of First Nations women](#)

improve justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and complementing state and territory efforts through Justice Policy Partnership, and the the Indigenous Advancement Strategy's Safety and Wellbeing Programme. This includes a focus on reducing incarceration rates and contact with the criminal justice system, in line with Outcomes and Targets 10 and 11 under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

271. In the 2022-23 and 2023-24 Federal Budgets, the Australian Government invested in justice reinvestment initiatives to improve outcomes for First Nations people, including:

- a. establishing a National Justice Reinvestment Program to support up to 30 community-led justice reinvestment initiatives addressing the underlying causes of incarceration (\$69 million over 4 years);
- b. designing and establishing an independent National Justice Reinvestment Unit to coordinate and support justice reinvestment initiatives at a national level (\$12.5 million over 4 years);
- c. place-based justice reinvestment initiatives in Central Australia.

272. A non-exhaustive snapshot of state and territory initiatives as well as 'paperless arrest' and mandatory sentencing laws is outlined below:

- To specifically address mandatory sentencing, the NT's *Sentencing and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2022* (NT) abolishes mandatory sentencing terms of imprisonment and mandatory non-parole periods for violent offences, drug offences and breach of domestic and family violence order offences. This Act reformed non-custodial sentencing options, as well as community youth programs focused on diversion and early intervention.
- In January 2024, Queensland Corrective Services released the *Queensland Corrective Services Reframing the Relationship Plan 2024-2033*, a 10-year First Nations Strategy, which commits to Closing the Gap on First Nations peoples incarceration and victimisation from violence, increasing opportunities for connection to culture and family,

helping provide meaningful rehabilitation, and assisting successful returned to community. Queensland Corrective Services is developing associated action plans. Further to this, the First Nations Justice Office in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General is developing a 7-year co-designed whole-of-government and community strategy to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the criminal justice system.

- In 2023, the VIC Government amended bail laws to reduce unnecessary remand for people accused of low-level offending and reduce disproportionate impacts on groups including women.

**Question 23b: Supporting the needs of women in prison**

273. Across jurisdictions, comprehensive programs are in place to address the needs of women in detention and promote alternatives to prison, especially for Indigenous women. For example:

- In the ACT, women in prison have access to a range of rehabilitative and re-integrative programs and services, including alcohol and other drug programs, a range of mental health supports, employment and education programs and a service that coordinates community resources to support eligible detainees leaving custody with basic needs including housing, health, income, family and community connections.
- In NSW, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women have access to a range of programs designed to address their unique and complex needs. This includes access to cultural programs, pathways to employment, education, housing, criminogenic needs, and initiatives that provide essential documents such as birth certificates. NSW also offers the Miruma Program, a diversionary program for female offenders with mental health and drug and alcohol abuse issues.
- Both the Mary Hutchinson Women’s Prison in TAS and NT Correctional Services provide a range of programs, initiatives and supports to meet the needs of women in detention, including education and training courses, therapeutic, cultural and health-based recreation and

offence-specific programs. In the NT, these programs are administered with Aboriginal cultural and practice advisors. The NT Government provides Bail Support Accommodation services in Darwin and Alice Springs for women as an alternative to detention. NT Correctional Services provide a range of offender programs and individual intervention, health, education and training, recreation and other activities. Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid, visits by Elders and Yarning Circles have also been provided. NTCS is currently developing two new correctional centres for women that are being designed on a therapeutic foundation. Noting that this extends beyond the adult custodial facilities which include the Alternatives to Custody facilities.

- Following funding from the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce, Queensland Corrective Services is undertaking a suite of women’s system reforms including, increasing women’s access to programs and services including those targeting drug and alcohol, mental health, parenting, and domestic, family and sexual violence.
- In SA, Yalakiana Tapa delivers Marni Tapa, a program that provides individualised support, cultural accommodation, and drug and alcohol residential treatment for women exiting custody onto bail.

**Question 23c: Comprehensive health screening**

274. All states and territories conduct comprehensive physical and mental health needs upon admission to detention. For example:

- NSW Corrective Services ensures that gender specific issues, including health, abuse and trauma related factors, are taken into account when assessing the needs of women offenders. The NSW Government is working to develop a Women’s Intervention Pathway to inform inmate case plans and referrals to gender-responsive programs and services.
- In TAS, all detainees undergo an initial health screening on reception to custody, undertaken by a registered nurse, to determine priority steps and ensure rapid health response can be provided. Within 4 weeks of being in custody, prisoners are seen by a doctor to review ongoing

health needs. Dedicated health teams comprising nurses, general practitioners and psychiatrists operate on-site, and further referrals are available where required.

- In WA, a registered nurse will conduct a full health assessment within 24 hours for adult prisoners and 12 hours for a young person. Young women and girls in detention in WA have access to a range of services including psychologists, general practitioners and dentists, and may access referrals to external specialist services where required. WA is developing a service model for screening, assessment and intervention for neurodevelopmental disabilities and mental health issues. Preliminary negotiations are underway to engage Aboriginal Medical Services to supplement the medical services provided in custody.

**Question 23d: Gender-sensitive training and behaviour of correctional staff, and complaints mechanisms**

275. States and territories provide a range of gender-specific training and professional development opportunities for staff in correctional facilities, with several jurisdictions collecting data on the completion rates of this training. For example:

- ACT Corrective Services delivers the Women in Custody course to all custodial officers during their recruit course. Delivered since 2015, 83 per cent of staff have completed this training, as at October 2023.
- In QLD, the Trauma-Informed and Gender Responsive Practice is a specialised training module to support staff to work in trauma-informed and gender-responsive ways with individuals involved in the criminal justice system. It is already part of foundations training provided to Community Corrections staff and will be introduced into the custodial officer training curriculum in 2024-25.
- In SA, a Working with Women mandatory training package is delivered to all new correctional officer staff and is underpinned by relational and trauma informed practices.

- VIC's *Standards for the Management of Women Prisoners in Victoria* outlines a responsibility for Prisoner General Managers to ensure staff complete a training unit on issues specific to managing women in detention, covering issues such as women's different pathways into offending; the intersection between women's substance abuse, mental health and past victimisation; empathetic communication between staff and women in detention; mother-child relationships; and professional boundaries.

276. In all states and territories, women who are in prison can make complaints to staff and external complaint bodies and oversight agencies such as the relevant jurisdictional Ombudsman, and are provided information on how to make complaints as part of admission and induction procedures.

277. In regards to confidentiality, there are various avenues via which women in detention can access confidential access to complaints. For example:

- In the ACT, women can make complaints to a range of external oversight bodies. Phone numbers for these oversight agencies are on the free-call list, and their email addresses are whitelisted.
- In WA, women in detention can make complaints through confidential mail to various regulatory and governmental bodies. The prisoner grievance process and WA health service for prisoners are also confidential complaints processes. Women also have access to confidential services legal services.

**Question 23e: Investigations, prosecutions and punishments of cases of sexual violence against women in detention**

278. All jurisdictions take extremely seriously any allegations of sexual violence against women in prison. Each jurisdiction adopts a different approach to the collection of data relating to investigations, prosecutions and punishments of cases of sexual violence against women in detention.

- The ACT identified no incidents in the last 2 years involving sexual violence against women in custody.



- NSW collects data on relevant investigations but does not report this data publicly. In 2023, NSW introduced a Sexual Misconduct Reporting Line for prisoners to report any sexual harassment or assault perpetrated by staff which they experienced or witnessed. These allegations are considered to be serious misconduct and are referred to the Corrective Services Investigations Unit for criminal offending which are staffed by police officers.
- The NT identified no known investigations, prosecutions or punishments regarding sexual violence against women in custody in the last 3 years.
- TAS, SA, VIC and WA do not publicly report on and/or collect data on the number of investigations, prosecutions and punishments of cases of sexual violence against women in custody. QLD collects data on prosecutions and punishments of cases of sexual violence and reports are published on this periodically by the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council.

**Question 23f: Alternative screening methods**

279. Across Australian states and territories, the use of full body x-ray scanners are becoming an increasingly prevalent alternative to strip-searching to improve the dignity of prisoners including women and the security of the facility. Whilst practice differs across states and territories, all jurisdictions have or are in the process of procuring and/or installing x-ray body scanners in their correctional facilities (or are trialling scanners at select facilities).

- The ACT Government installed 2 x-ray body scanners at the Alexander Maconochie Centre in June 2022 to reduce the number of non-admission strip searches and improve the dignity of detainees and the security of the facility.
- The NSW Government provided funding to install full body x-ray scanners in most of the 34 correctional centres across NSW. It has amended the Custodial Operational Policy and Procedures so a strip

search is only necessary where body scanning is unavailable or impractical, or when the body scan indicates presence of an anomaly.

- In NT, a full unclothed search of prisoners is only required in certain circumstances, most notably on reception to the prison. Women should not be strip searched unless it is absolutely necessary to do so. NT Correctional Services is developing a plan to create a search facility with x-ray technology in both Alice Springs and Darwin Correctional Centres.
- Queensland Corrective Services has committed to trauma informed practice including reducing the demand for removal of clothing searches in women's prisons in the future, where suitable alternatives such as an x-ray body scanner, are available. In 2024, Queensland Corrective Services will commence trialling the use of body scanner (non-invasive screening) technology at Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre before rolling across the other women's correctional centres.
- South Australian Department for Correctional Services is finalising procurement of new Body Scan Technology for the Adelaide Women's Prison. This will provide an alternative to the historical use of strip-searching practices.
- The TAS women's prison has recently installed a body scanner machine. Once in use, women will only have to be strip searched when they are at risk of self-harm or suicide or the scanner shows they have something on their person.
- VIC has undertaken significant work over many years to reduce strip searching requirements in the Victorian custodial corrections system, including through the use of body scanning technology and saliva drug testing. Strip searching is currently used as a last resort as part of a suite of other mechanisms to limit contraband entering prisons.
- WA has a dedicated policy outlining the method to be adopted for women, trans, gender diverse or intersex prisoners, and those with disabilities, as well as culturally appropriate approaches to searching

women. In 2022, the WA Government installed the first x-ray body scanning device at Melaleuca Women's prison.

**Question 23g: Women's conditions of detention**

280. State and territory justice and correctional agencies have strong regard for international, national and state-level obligations in the management of women in custody, including the Bangkok Rules and the Mandela Rules.

281. At a national level, the *Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia (2018)* represents a national intent around which each Australian state and territory will develop its practices, policies, and performance standards.<sup>41</sup> The Principles are informed by internationally accepted rules, standards and practices such as the Mandela Rules, Bangkok Rules, Tokyo Rules as well as key mechanisms such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). They also consider the specific needs of particular prisoner cohorts including young adult offenders, women, aged and frail, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex offenders, those with mental health issues and/or disabilities, and remand prisoners.

282. The OPCAT requires that Australia establish a National Preventive Mechanism to enable independent bodies, including the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, to inspect and monitor places of detention. It is a key mechanism to ensure women, girls, *sistergirls*<sup>42</sup>, and gender diverse persons, are treated with dignity and humanely in places of detention.

283. As outlined throughout question 23, states and territories deliver a range of gender-responsive services to ensure women's health, wellbeing and safety are met whilst in prison.

284. On 21 June 2023, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) released the national real-time reporting of deaths in custody dashboard to assure the public that all federal, state and territory governments are transparent and accountable

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<sup>41</sup> Guiding Principles for Corrections in Australia (act.gov.au)

<sup>42</sup> *Sistergirl* is a term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe gender diverse people that have a female spirit and take on female roles within the community, including looking after children and family. How the word *Sistergirl* is used can differ between locations, countries and nations. *Sistergirls* might be non-binary, female or male. Ref: [TransMob](#).

for their respective criminal justice systems. Data published on the real-time reporting platform includes Indigenous status, custody type, sex and age group. Data is published at the national level as an aggregate, real time total for Indigenous and non-Indigenous deaths in custody.

## **Question 24: Marriage and family relations**

### **Family Law Act amendments**

285. The Family Law Act was amended in 2023, in response to recent reviews of the family law system.<sup>43</sup> A summary of the amendments are outlined in question 3. In addition, the amendments remove the requirement for consideration of equal shared parental responsibility for children when parents separate, as this provision has led to significant misunderstanding of the law that may lead parents to agree to unsafe and unfair arrangements. The Family Law Act is gender-neutral, and does not make assumptions about parenting roles, or how much time a child should spend with each parent.

### **Cultural-community divorce**

286. The Marriage Act establishes the framework for legal marriages in Australia, including the requirements for marriages to be validly solemnised under Australian law, and for foreign marriages to be legally recognised under Australian law. Australian law provides for no-fault divorce for the dissolution of legal marriages. This process is regulated by the Family Law Act.

287. It may be the case that a legal marriage is dissolved (the parties divorce under the Family Law Act), but a cultural or religious marriage continues in effect pursuant to the relevant cultural customs or religious practice. Successive Australian governments have not supported the recommendation within the 2001 Family Law Council's Report. There are concerns that the recommended amendments would undermine the concept of no-fault divorce.

288. All Australians are entitled to express and practise their religion and their beliefs, without interference, as long as those practices are within the framework of

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<sup>43</sup> Eg. Australian Law Reform Commission's Family Law for the Future – An Inquiry into the Family Law System and the Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System Inquiry.

Australian law. Australia has a legal tradition in which secular law is separate from religious law and applies to everyone equally.

### **Question 25: Additional information**

#### **Integrate a gender perspective into efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

289. Australia's Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the SDGs was submitted in 2018.<sup>44</sup> Achieving the SDGs is in Australia's interests, contributing to lasting regional and global prosperity, productivity and stability. The SDGs are consistent with the Australian Governments priorities and long standing commitment to gender equality. The SDGs are integrated with issues that cut across multiple aspects of sustainability, including gender equality. Chapter 5 focuses on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, with a clear understanding that greater gender equality, especially in leadership and decision-making, improves the economic circumstances at the country, local, and household level.

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<sup>44</sup> See, [Report of the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals \(dfat.gov.au\)](https://dfat.gov.au)

## Ninth periodic report submitted by Australia under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

### Glossary

Term	Definition
<b>Committee</b>	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
<b>Convention</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>Australian Government</b>	The national government of Australia – also referred to as the federal government of Commonwealth government. Australia has a federal constitutional system in which legislative, executive and judicial powers are shared or distributed between the Australian Government and the constituent states and territories
<b>State and territories</b>	Refers to Australian states and territories – Queensland (QLD), New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (VIC), Tasmania (TAS), Western Australia (WA), South Australia (SA), Northern Territory (NT), Australian Capital Territory (ACT).
<b>LOIRP</b>	List of issues prior to reporting [ <i>this is a simplified procedure employed by the Committee in lieu of a periodic report – the Committee sends States parties a list of issues for response directly relevant to that States previous reports and actions</i> ]

Term	Definition
<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>ADVO</b>	Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders
<b>APVO</b>	Apprehended Personal Violence Orders
<b>AFP</b>	Australian Federal Police
<b>AHRC</b>	Australian Human Rights Commission
<b>AIC</b>	Australian Institute of Criminology
<b>ATSILS</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service
<b>CCS</b>	Child Care Subsidy
<b>Closing the Gap</b>	<b>Closing the Gap</b> is a national strategy that aims to reduce Indigenous disadvantage with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement and employment outcomes. It acknowledges the ongoing strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in sustaining the world's oldest living cultures. Closing the Gap is underpinned by the belief that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a genuine say in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services that affect them, better life outcomes are achieved.
<b>ECEC</b>	Early childhood Education and Care

<b>First Nations</b>	People who have identified themselves or have been identified by a representative (for example, their parent or guardian) as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin <i>[throughout the report, terms First Nations people, Indigenous people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are used interchangeably]</i> .
<b>First Action Plan</b>	The First Action Plan (2023-2027) provides a roadmap for the first 5 year effort towards achieving the vision of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children.
<b>First Action Plan 2023-2027 and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025</b>	A dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan that will work alongside the First Action Plan, developed in genuine partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence. It recognises the disproportionately high rates of family, domestic and sexual violence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience.
<b>FVP</b>	Family Violence Provisions
<b>FWC</b>	Fair Work Commission
<b>Gender</b>	<i>[World Health Organisation definition]</i> Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.
<b>Gender Equality Indicators</b>	The <i>Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012</i> requires employers with 100 or more employees to report annually against 6 Gender Equality Indicators. The 6 indicators are: gender composition of the workforce; gender composition of governing bodies of relevant employers; equal remuneration between women and men; availability and utility of employment terms, conditions and practices relating to flexible working arrangements for employees and to working arrangements supporting employees with family or caring responsibilities; consultation with employees on issues concerning gender equality in the workplace; and sexual harassment, harassment on the ground of sex or discrimination.
<b>Gender impact assessment</b>	A Gender Impact Assessment provides decision makers with a transparent and clear understanding of the gendered impacts of the policy proposal. It also outlines where gender analysis has been used to inform the policy design to deliver better gender equality outcomes.
<b>Gender mainstreaming</b>	<b>Gender mainstreaming</b> means integrating a gender equality perspective at all stages and levels of policies, programmes and projects.
<b>Gender responsive budgeting</b>	<b>Gender-responsive budgeting</b> is a strategy that develops budgets that work for everyone and weaves consideration of gender impact through the budget process. It is a key way that the Australian Government can identify and fund measures that close gender gaps. Australian Government departments are now required to undertake gender analysis for New Policy Proposals and Cabinet Submissions.
<b>HTVF</b>	Human Trafficking Visa Framework
<b>JobKeeper Payment</b>	An initiative introduced during COVID-19 [March 2020-March 2021] to support businesses and households affected by the pandemic with temporary and targeted payments.
<b>JobSeeker Payment</b>	Financial help provided by the Australian Government through Services Australia to persons aged between 22 and Age Pension age and looking for work. It also provides financial support when an employee is sick or injured and unable to do their usual work or study for a short time.

<b>LARC</b>	Long-acting reversible contraception
<b>LGBTIQA+</b>	<b>LGBTIQA+</b> is an evolving acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual.
<b>NACCHO</b>	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
<b>NASHH</b>	National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness
<b>National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032</b>	The National Plan was launched in October 2022 by the federal, state and territory governments. It is the overarching national policy framework that will guide actions towards ending violence against women and children over the next 10 years.
<b>National Agreement on Closing the Gap</b>	The objective of the <b>National Agreement on Closing the Gap</b> is to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.
<b>National Women’s Health Strategy 2020–2030</b>	The Women’s Health Strategy outlines Australia’s national approach to improving the health of women and girls – particularly those at greatest risk of poor health – and to reducing inequities between different groups.
<b>NHHA</b>	National Housing and Homelessness Agreement
<b>NHRI</b>	National Human Rights Institution
<b>NLAP</b>	National Legal Assistance Partnership
<b>Non-refoulement</b>	Under international human rights law, the principle of non-refoulement guarantees that no one should be returned to a country where they would face torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and other irreparable harm. This principle applies to all migrants at all times, irrespective of migration status.
<b>NPP</b>	New Policy Proposal are any policy that requires a government decision.
<b>OPCAT</b>	Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
<b>Order of Australia</b>	The <b>Australia Day Order of Australia</b> recognises Australians who have demonstrated outstanding service or exceptional achievement. There are four levels of award. The Order of Australia also has a Military Division (awards in this division are recommended to the Governor-General by the Minister for Defence). It is administered by the Office of the Official Secretary to the Governor-General Secretariat and is governed by the Constitution of the Order of Australia.
<b>PALM scheme</b>	The <b>Pacific Australia Labour Mobility</b> scheme allows eligible Australian businesses to hire workers from 9 Pacific islands and Timor-Leste when there are not enough local workers available. The countries include Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.
<b>Paris Principles</b>	The Paris Principles (Principles Relating to the Status of National Human Rights Institutions) set out the minimum standards required by national human rights institutions to be considered credible and to operate effectively.
<b>PBS</b>	Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme
<b>PIMHS</b>	NSW Health Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Services



<b>Place-based</b>	A place based approach is about working together with community members and stakeholders (citizens, industry, diverse non-government organisations and all levels of government) to understand challenges, lived experiences,, interconnections and relationships in a place and developing action and investment to improve the quality of life for that community. Place-based initiatives can be a successful mechanism for responding to entrenched disadvantage and improve community outcomes in particular locations.
<b>PPL</b>	<b>Paid Parental Leave</b> - a federally funded parental leave scheme introduced in Australia in January 2011. Under the scheme eligible working parents across Australia can access payments for taking time off work to care for a new-born or newly adopted child.
<b>Respect@Work</b>	The <b>Respect@Work</b> platform helps individuals and organisations prevent and respond to workplace sexual harassment.
<b>Royal Commission</b>	A <b>royal commission</b> is an independent public inquiry. In Australia, royal commissions are the highest form of inquiry on matters of public importance. They are only established in rare and exceptional circumstances.
<b>Senate Inquiry</b>	Committees inquire into all kinds of matters—workplace relations, foreign policy, immigration, health, proposed taxes and government spending. Committee hearings are usually open to the public. In some cases however, evidence may be taken in private.
<b>Sendai GAP</b>	Gender Action Plan to support implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030
<b>SDG</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
<b>Sistergirls</b>	Sistergirl is a term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe gender diverse people that have a female spirit and take on female roles within the community, including looking after children and family. How the word Sistergirl is used can differ between locations, countries and nations. Sistergirls might be non-binary, female or male.
<b>SRSS</b>	Status Resolution Support Services Program
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
<b>STPP</b>	Support for Trafficked People Program – a program delivered by the Australian Red Cross to provide case managed support to people affected by human trafficking, including those in or at risk of forced marriage.
<b>The Register</b>	The Modern Slavery Statements Register – an online public register
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training
<b>WGE Act</b>	Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cth)
<b>WGEA</b>	The Workplace Gender Equality Agency

<p><b>Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality</b></p>	<p>The Working for Women strategy was launched in March 2024 and outlines the Australian Government’s vision for gender equality – an Australia where people are safe, treated with respect, have choices, and have access to resources and equal outcomes no matter their gender.</p>
<p><b>WPS</b></p>	<p>Women, Peace and Security was recognised by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 2000. The UNSC formally acknowledged, through the creation of Resolution 1325, the disproportionate impact that conflict and war has on women and girls, as well as the critical role that women can, and already do, play in peacebuilding efforts. The Australian Government is a committed global champion of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.</p>