

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR WOMEN

Boosting women's wages, superannuation, proper parental leave and free childcare

Women aren't paid enough for the amount of work we do. Women are still paid a lot less than men, do more unpaid family work, and retire with a lot less superannuation. Older women are increasingly at risk of homelessness.

The Greens will close the gender pay gap through reversing the unfair Stage 3 tax cuts that will disproportionately benefit men, by raising wages, properly valuing care work, providing free universal childcare, investing in affordable housing, and reforming our unfair superannuation system.

These measures will provide a greater safety net to ensure no one is living in poverty or homeless.

THE GREENS WILL:

- ▲ **Invest \$24.5 billion over ten years to make parental leave fairer and encourage shared care**
- ▲ **Close the gender pay gap by**
 - Increasing minimum wages and supporting stronger equal remuneration provisions in the Fair Work Act
 - Paying super on parental leave
 - Boosting superannuation for low-income earners with caring responsibilities and doubling low-income super offsets
 - Reversing unfair Stage 3 tax cuts
 - Extending penalties for employers who fail to close their gender pay gap
- ▲ **Invest \$16 billion over the next three years to make high-quality early education and care free and universally available**
- ▲ **Investigate long-term options to value unpaid care work**

- ▲ **Support women-led businesses** through low interest loans in regional areas, greater access to funding, and encouraging procurement targets for government agencies,
- ▲ **Build one million public and community homes** so women can access safe, affordable, and appropriate homes throughout their lives
- ▲ **Require a Women's Budget Impact Statement** to consider the gendered impacts of budget allocations before they are made
- ▲ **Develop a National Gender Equality Strategy** and require explicit analysis of the gendered impacts of policy decisions
- ▲ **Implement all recommendations of the Respect@Work and Set the Standard reports** to ensure women are safe, equal, and respected at work

PAYING FOR OUR PLAN

By making billionaires and big corporations pay their fair share of tax and winding back handouts to big polluters, we can build a better life for all of us.

1 in 3 big corporations pays no tax and many big corporations and billionaires send their profits offshore tax free.

The Greens will tax billionaires with a new 'billionaires tax', require big corporations making excessive profits to pay a 'corporate super-profits tax' and axe billions of dollars in handouts to the coal, oil and gas giants that are driving the climate crisis.

These measures have all been costed by the independent Parliamentary Budget Office.

When big corporations and billionaires pay their fair share, everyone can have the services they need for a better life.

Fairer paid parental leave

Making paid parental leave available for both parents can foster a more equal division of caring responsibilities and set up habits for life.¹

The workforce participation of mothers is considerably higher in countries with both a strong paid parental leave scheme and available, affordable childcare.²

¹ Grattan Institute. August 2020. *Cheaper childcare: A practical plan to boost*

female workforce participation, p44.
<https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Cheaper-Childcare-Grattan-Institute-Report.pdf>

² See n15

Despite measures allowing fathers to take parental leave, only 1 in 20 fathers take parental leave beyond the legislated “dad and partner leave” entitlements.³

Studies have found that dedicated leave for both partners (‘use it or lose it’) is more effective in encouraging long-term sharing of care and household responsibilities than simply extending the overall leave available to parents.⁴

The Greens will invest \$24.5 billion over ten years to reform the paid parental leave scheme and provide families with flexibility to juggle their work and caring responsibilities in the way that works best for them.

To encourage more equitable care arrangements, the Greens will provide a 26 week parental leave package, to be shared between parents:

- ▲ 6 weeks to be taken exclusively by one parent
- ▲ 6 weeks to be taken exclusively by the other parent

- ▲ 14 weeks to be taken in whichever combination the family decides

Single parents are entitled to take the full 26 weeks themselves.

Parental leave will be paid at pro rata the parent taking leave’s existing wage (up to \$100,000 p/a). This parental leave scheme will complement employer-provided programs, not replace them.

The Greens will also ensure superannuation contributions are paid on parental leave.

Currently, where a birth mother earns more than the threshold amount, she is not able to transfer her leave entitlements to her partner, even where the partner’s wage is lower than the threshold. For families where the other parent earns more than the threshold amount, this restriction does not apply.

As a result, many families where the birth mother is the higher-wage earner cannot choose to share leave entitlements.

The Greens will remove this restriction, allowing more families to access paid parental leave and greater flexibility in shared care.

Flexible work

Availability of flexible work is a critical factor for many parents in deciding whether to return to work.⁵

Covid has demonstrated that workers are able to work effectively from home, and that

³ Australian Institute of Family Studies. “Fathers and parental leave.” <https://aifs.gov.au/aifs-conference/fathers-and-parental-leave>. In 2019-20, men accounted for only 6.5% of primary carer leave taken in Australia (WGEA. 2020. *Australia’s Gender Equality Scorecard*)

⁴ See, for example, Ásdís Aðalbjörg Arnalds. 2019. “The fathers’ quota in Iceland for 19 years: Impact on work and care” - Presentation at The Australia Institute Nordic Policy Centre Roundtable on Paid Parental Leave. https://www.nordicpolicycentre.org.au/fathers_quota
Sarah Duffy et al. August 2019. “Father’s days: increasing the ‘daddy quota’ in parental leave makes everyone happier”. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/fathers-days-increasing-the-daddy-quota-in-parental-leave-makes-everyone-happier-122047>

⁵ 4 in 5 Australian women with a child under 2 who have returned to paid work use some kind of flexible working arrangement: ABS (2018b, Table 15).

this makes a material difference to shared care.

The Greens will rewrite our labour laws to require employers to grant reasonable requests for family friendly working arrangements, including later start times, shared roles, or days working from home.⁶

Normalising flexible working arrangements recognises the productivity benefits of ensuring all workers can juggle family and work responsibilities.

Higher wages

Women make up 61% of workers being paid based on an award, and the majority of workers earning a minimum wage.

The Greens will rewrite labour laws to raise the minimum wage and ensure women in part-time, casual and low income roles have greater economic security.⁷

Closing the gender pay gap also requires decisive, targeted policy changes in the wages paid in female dominated sectors.

Pushing a wheelchair is not inherently less valuable than pushing a wheelbarrow, yet average wages in care sectors remain lower than in construction.

The Greens will strengthen the 'equal remuneration' provisions of the Fair Work Act to achieve greater pay parity between roles

⁶ See our Rewrite labour Laws policy

⁷ See Better Rights, More Pay, Secure Jobs, <https://greens.org.au/platform/jobs>

and require the Fair Work Commission to actively close the gender pay gap.

Workplace Gender Equality Agency data consistently shows that heavily female-dominated sectors such as health care, social assistance and education remain amongst the lowest paid.⁸

The Greens will increase award wages in these sectors by 0.5% above CPI each year for 10 years.⁹ Paying higher wages will improve economic security for individual women, attract and retain staff to these critical sectors, and close the gender pay gap by up to 4 percentage points.¹⁰

Addressing the parenting penalty for low income earners

Time out of the workforce to care for children significantly reduces the retirement income of many women, particularly those on low incomes.

The Greens will contribute \$500 per year to the superannuation accounts of low income earners who are primary carers for

⁸ WGEA, 2019, Gender Segregation in Australia's Workforce www.wgea.gov.au/publications/gender-segregation-in-australia-workforce

⁹ Where the industry average wages growth rate exceeds CPI +0.5%, then this growth rate would be applied instead.

¹⁰ Economic Security 4 Women, 2021, "Women and The Future of Work" Recommendation Paper. [eS4W-Future-of-Work-Recommendation-Paper_20210430.pdf](https://security4women.org.au/eS4W-Future-of-Work-Recommendation-Paper_20210430.pdf) (security4women.org.au)

For details of our policy on wages and conditions in the Aged Care sector, see Higher Quality Aged Care for All

- ▲ one or more children under 6 years old
- ▲ one or more children under 16 years old who have a disability requiring intensive care.

Reversing Stage 3 tax cuts

The Morrison Government's Stage 3 tax cuts will worsen the gender pay gap, giving men about \$2 for every \$1 women receive.¹¹

The Greens will reverse these unfair cuts and ensure the tax system isn't entrenching inequality.

Target the gender pay gap

The gender pay gap in Australia is 13.8%, with men working full time taking home, on average, \$25,800 more than women working full time each year. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency estimates that it will be 26 years before this gap closes completely.¹²

To improve data collection and action on gender equality in the workplace, the Greens will invest \$40 million over 10 years to extend workplace gender reporting obligations to the public sector and businesses employing more than 50 staff.

We will also work to

- ▲ require large businesses to include gender pay gap data in annual reports
- ▲ boost the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's powers to take action against employers who do not take action to address gender pay gaps in their organisation, including making lagging companies ineligible for government grants and contracts.

We will also legislate to remove pay gag clauses that prevent women on contracts in the private sector talking about what they get paid.

Boosting retirement savings for low income earners

Currently, 3 million Australians receive a Low Income Superannuation Tax Offset (LISTO) of up to \$500 per year into their retirement savings account, 2 million of them are women.

The Greens will double the LISTO payment cap to \$1,000, allowing millions of women on low incomes to save more for their retirement.

Valuing care work

The Greens are committed to valuing caring work, which is essential to society and as valuable as other forms of work. Estimates

¹¹

www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jul/29/tax-cuts-backed-by-labor-will-give-men-2-for-every-1-women-get-greens-modelling-shows

¹² WGEA. 2021. *Gender Equity Insights 2021: Making It A Priority*, <https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/gender-equity-insights-series>

suggest that the value of unpaid care work to the economy is \$560 billion each year.¹³

Women continue to perform the bulk of caring responsibilities and unpaid domestic labour, which can affect their capacity to undertake paid work. This division was further exacerbated during Covid.¹⁴

The Greens will task the Productivity Commission with investigating options to value unpaid caring work¹⁵. We will use the Commission's findings to develop a roadmap towards ensuring care work is properly recognised and compensated.

Free and universal early childhood education and care

Early childhood education is too expensive and too hard to access. It's holding kids back, limiting choices about care, holding women back from the workforce, and adding financial pressure on families.

The Greens will invest \$16 billion over the next three years to make childcare free for everyone; we will expand access to early childhood education, establish specialised cultural early education for First Nations

¹³ PWC. 2017. *Understanding the Unpaid Economy*. <https://www.pwc.com.au/australia-in-transition/publications/understanding-the-unpaid-economy-mar17.pdf> (this figure includes \$410B in unpaid childcare)

¹⁴ ABS. Household Impacts of COVID-19 Survey, May 2021. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/household-impacts-covid-19-survey/may-2021>

¹⁵ See *End the Insecure Work Crisis & Deliver a Jobs Guarantee* policy. The unpaid care work analysis may be delegated to the Productivity Commission.

children, and phase out for-profit early learning providers.¹⁶

Supporting women-led businesses

Businesses with female founders and executives employ, on average, six times as many women as other businesses.¹⁷ The Greens will help these businesses to grow and provide employment opportunities for more women.

Micro-financing facility

The Greens will establish a \$10 million micro-financing facility to provide low and no interest loans up to \$10,000 to women-led businesses who struggle to access traditional finance.

The micro-financing scheme would also offer financial training to borrowers, and refer businesses to the Boosting Female Founders Initiative for mentoring and support.

Procurement policies

The Greens will work with government agencies to introduce targets of 3% of their annual procurement budget with women-led businesses.

Setting minimum procurement targets for women-led businesses benefits everyone in the supply chain and helps women-led businesses to grow.¹⁸

¹⁶ See Free and Universal Early Childhood Education and Care policy.

¹⁷ Economic Security for Women - Femeconomy presentation, June 2021

¹⁸ EY. June 2021. *Advancing women-owned businesses in the COVID-19 recovery*, p38

Access to Entrepreneurs Program

The Greens will help more women-led businesses to seek support under the existing capped-funding Entrepreneurs Program by:

- ▲ recognising women-led businesses as a Growth Sector, and
- ▲ reducing the turnover threshold for eligibility to \$750,000 (in line with the threshold for rural and regional businesses).

Women's Budget Impact Statement

As Minister for Women, Tony Abbott scrapped the long-held practice of preparing a Women's Budget Impact Statement, which applied a gender-lens during budget development to consider the impacts on women.

In 2021-22, the Morrison Government released a post-facto Women's Budget Statement - a collation of budget announcements targeted at women. This is a step in the right direction, but still falls short of giving detailed consideration to the impacts on women of *all policies during budget development*.

The Greens will mandate development of a Women's Budget Impact Statement to ensure that all Budget allocations consider the impacts on women's safety and economic security.

Gender Equality Strategy

The Greens will develop a whole of government National Gender Equality Strategy to guide action to address inequality. The Strategy will link to work being done by the APS, the development of respectful relationship education curriculum, and to the National Plan to End Violence Against Women, recognising that gender inequality is a key driver of gendered violence.

We will also require gender equality analysis of all new policies and legislation.

One million homes

People wait for over a decade to access social housing in some parts of Australia, while hundreds of thousands of people seek help from homelessness services every year.

Women, especially older women, have been the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness.¹⁹

The Greens will establish a Federal Housing Trust to build one million public and social homes across cities, towns, regions and remote areas over 20 years, and a shared equity scheme to enable women to own their home and have greater security in retirement.

²⁰

The scale of the build would obliterate social housing waiting lists and reduce homelessness, particularly for vulnerable

¹⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission, Risk of Homelessness in Older Women
<<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/age-discrimination/projects/risk-homelessness-older-women>>

²⁰ See One Million Homes policy

older women, women escaping violence, First Nations and migrant women.

Safer workplaces

The National Sexual Harassment survey found that nearly 40% of women have been harassed at work, but many do not report the harassment for fear of reprisal or lack of confidence that any action will be taken.²¹

The Australian Human Rights Commission's comprehensive report, *Respect@Work*, provides a roadmap towards safer, non-discriminatory workplaces, but the government has failed to act on all its recommendations.

The Greens will implement all 55 recommendations in full, including:

- ▲ A positive duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination in their workplace
- ▲ Giving the AHRC powers to investigate systemic discrimination and harassment
- ▲ Allowing class actions for sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination
- ▲ \$8 million per year to fund Working Women's Centres in all States and Territories

²¹ Australian Human Rights Commission. 2018. *Everyone's business: Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces*

To ensure that perpetrators are held accountable and sexual harassment is not swept under the carpet, we will also prohibit non-disclosure agreements unless requested by victims and allow factual information about the outcome of harassment claims to be made public by the victim.

Parliament needs to lead by example and set the standard for gender equity and a no-tolerance approach to harassment and bullying at work. The Greens will implement all 28 recommendations of the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Set the Standard* report, including:

- ▲ Implementing gender equity and diversity strategies
- ▲ Maintaining the new independent process for bullying and harassment complaints
- ▲ Requiring all MPs and senior staff to undertake regular, comprehensive anti-bullying and harassment training
- ▲ Introducing an enforceable Code of Conduct for all politicians and senior staff.

HOW THE GREENS HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR YOU

In the last parliament, it was the Greens who:

- ▲ Pushed for gender equality reporting requirements to be extended to the

public sector, and introduced a Bill to remove pay gag clauses.

- ▲ Opposed the Stage 3 tax cuts, and pointed out that the vast bulk of savings will be enjoyed by wealthy men
- ▲ Moved amendments to implement all 55 recommendations of the Respect@Work report, including positive duties on employers
- ▲ Moved amendments to increase the minimum wage and retain the increased rate of Jobseeker, disproportionately relied upon by women
- ▲ Successfully maintained pressure on the government to remove the \$450 superannuation contribution threshold to enable lower income workers, who are more likely to be women, to be paid super
- ▲ Pushed the government to ensure COVID job losses did not impact paid parental leave entitlement

FIND ALL OUR POLICIES:

greens.org.au/platform