Australia’s 2014 national report to UN Women on Australia’s implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of its adoption

Compiled by the Australian Government Office for Women
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

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Australia’s 2014 Beijing+20 report

FIVE MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR GENDER EQUALITY
Australia's 2014 Beijing+20 report

FIVE MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

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Section One — Australia’s major achievements for gender equality, 2009–2013

Australia is continuing to make significant progress in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action across all government jurisdictions. Five key achievements in progressing gender equality in recent years are explored in this section:

- a national framework for addressing violence against women and their children;
- a national government-funded paid parental leave scheme;
- a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security;
- international aid in the Indo-Pacific region; and
- a whole-of-government approach to action.

A national framework for addressing violence against women and their children

The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 (the National Plan) is a 12-year framework for collaboration between Australia’s Commonwealth, state and territory governments, non-government sectors and civil society. The National Plan sets out Australia’s commitment to upholding the human rights of Australian women, to coordinate action across jurisdictions at a systemic level, and achieve sustainable long-term change. The National Plan was informed by engagement with over 2,000 community stakeholders, the receipt of 370 public submissions, six expert roundtable forums and ongoing consultation processes.

The National Plan brings together considerable efforts of governments and communities across the nation to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in the levels of violence against women. In recognition that violence against women does not occur in isolation from other challenges faced by individuals and communities, the National Plan links strongly with other strategic policy frameworks, including Indigenous policy, and housing and homelessness programmes.

Targeted national outcomes under the National Plan

The National Plan seeks to ensure that, in Australia:

- communities are safe and free from violence;
- relationships are respectful;
- Indigenous communities are strengthened;
- services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence;
- justice responses are effective; and
- perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account.
These outcomes will be delivered through four three-year Action Plans, the first of which focused on building primary prevention capacity, enhancing service delivery, strengthening justice responses and building the evidence base.

The Second Action Plan was launched by the Prime Minister in Sydney on 27 June 2014. It focuses on driving significant improvements in prevention, action and support and contains 26 practical actions that the Commonwealth, as well as all state and territory governments agree are critical to improving women’s safety.


The National Plan is the first plan to coordinate action across jurisdictions and is unprecedented in the way it focuses on preventing violence by working to increase gender equality, raising awareness and building respectful relationships among the next generation. The aim is to bring attitudinal and behavioural change at the cultural, institutional and individual levels, with a particular focus on young people. The National Plan is also the first to focus on holding perpetrators accountable and encouraging behaviour change, and has been built from an evidence base of new research and extensive consultation with experts and the community.

The National Plan is underpinned by the belief that involving all governments and the wider community is necessary in reducing violence in the short and long term.

**Key achievements**

- The establishment, in 2013, of an independent Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children (the Foundation) to drive cultural change through community engagement and advocacy. The Foundation’s national consultations found the most frequently raised issue was the need to address underlying gender inequality in order to stem the prevalence of violence against women.

- The establishment, in 2013, of the Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety to build a research base to inform policy and practice.

- **1800 RESPECT** national telephone and online professional counselling service for victims of domestic and family violence and sexual assault, their family and friends and for people who work with victims. This service has recorded over 67,000 contacts since it commenced operation in October 2010.

- Support for community organisations to engage with the community about reducing violence against women including culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Indigenous communities, older women, women with disability, and gay and lesbian communities.

- Support for Indigenous communities to develop local solutions to prevent and respond to violence.

- The implementation of primary prevention campaigns such as [The Line website](http://www.theline.org.au) and [Facebook page](https), and a social marketing campaign targeted to young people aged 12 to 20 years, aim to change attitudes and behaviours which contribute to violence. The Line received international recognition in 2012 as a finalist in the innovation category of the Avon Communications Awards, held as part of the Second World Conference of Women’s Shelters. With over 70,000 Facebook fans, The Line Facebook page has evolved from having people waiting to comment on the blog...
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and poll topics to having fans create their own content and generate their own peer discussion. Around 1,200 Facebook fans are actively participating on the Facebook page each month. Over 600,000 unique visitors to the website have viewed over 1.9 million pages. Regular tracking indicates the campaign is having a positive impact on those it has reached.

- Primary prevention responses, such as the Respectful Relationship education projects, have been delivered across the country. These projects have reached over 32,000 participants, including 60 young people with intellectual disability and over 8,100 young people from Indigenous backgrounds. The Western Australian Government’s Youth Say No website aims to help young Australians on issues such as trouble at home, helping others, and dating violence.

- Improving and influencing community awareness and attitudes towards violence through campaigns such as the Australian Capital Territory’s Summer of Respect and New South Wales’ Rugby League Tackling Violence, which are encouraging men to be community leaders and role models in the campaign against domestic and family violence. In 2011, 740 men signed a code of conduct to tackle domestic and family violence.

- Domestic Violence Response Training has delivered free accredited training to over 1,100 health workers in over 45 locations across Australia to recognise, respond to and refer people experiencing domestic or family violence to relevant support services. Rural and regional areas are given priority recognising the difficulty in accessing services in these locations.

- Provision of collaborative, integrated support services to women who have experienced violence, such as the multidisciplinary Domestic Violence Resource Centres established in Victoria.

- Support for women who experience violence to stay in their homes, including the Staying Home, Leaving Violence programme in New South Wales and the Safe at Home initiative in Western Australia. The Safe at Home initiative assisted over 2,000 clients in 2011–12 (12% of these clients were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and a further 17% were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children).

- The Safe at Home, Safe at Work project, which promotes recognition of the impact of domestic violence on workers and workplaces. In 2013, over 1 million Australian employees were covered by domestic violence clauses in their employment agreements or award conditions.

- Assisting perpetrators to change their behaviour and take responsibility for their violence, for example through perpetrator intervention programmes in the Northern Territory, New South Wales and South Australia.

- Community events such as those held by the Violence Against Women Advisory Group and the Australian Women against Violence Alliance to build awareness of issues relating to violence against women.

- Enhanced service responses for key groups through projects like Child Aware Approaches, to promote a better understanding of the relationship between child abuse and neglect, and issues such as domestic and family violence, mental illness, sexual abuse and substance abuse. In 2012, 43 organisations across Australia received one-off grants of up to $200,000 to:
  - Build the capacity of domestic and family violence services to respond to the needs of children and young people exposed to domestic and family violence;
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- Support culturally appropriate responses for vulnerable children and young people impacted by the experience of family violence; and
- Support better service delivery and outcomes for children and young people through the development of new, evidence-based approaches.
- Support for the Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey and National Community Attitudes Survey to build the evidence base on community attitudes and the prevalence of violence against women.
- Funding for research on perpetrator interventions to support the implementation of national outcome standards for perpetrator interventions that are currently being developed.

Australia’s Paid Parental Leave Scheme

Government funded paid parental leave

The Australian Government introduced a national paid parental leave scheme in 2011, to strengthen productivity and the economy, to assist women to balance family, caring and work roles and to allow them to take time off work to care for their child. Paid Parental Leave offers eligible primary carers (mainly birth mothers) of newborn and newly adopted children up to 18 weeks’ pay at the national minimum wage.

The Paid Parental Leave Scheme, provides financial support to:

- allow primary carers to take time off work to care for the child after a child’s birth or adoption;
- enhance the health and development of birth mothers and children; and
- encourage women to continue to participate in the workforce.

From 1 March 2014, parents are able to count the time when they are on paid parental leave as ‘work’ towards the work test for their subsequent paid parental leave claim, which is estimated to help around 1,300 more working parents each year to access paid parental leave.

The Australian Government is developing a significantly more generous expanded Paid Parental Leave scheme to be introduced from 1 July 2015. Under the new scheme, new parents will be provided up to 26 weeks’ replacement wages, capped at $100,000 per annum, plus superannuation contributions. Fathers will be eligible for two out of the 26 weeks of payment for dedicated paternity leave at their replacement wage. These provisions will further strengthen women’s participation in the workforce and strengthen their economic and social outcomes.

Policy context

Between 1991 and 2011, Australia’s maternal employment rate increased significantly. Among families with children aged under 18 years old, the proportion of mothers who were employed increased to 65% in 2011 (68% for partnered mothers, an increase of just over 10 percentage points, and 57% for single mothers, an increase of 13 percentage points).
This increase is largely based on the growth in part-time work. More mothers work in part-time employment than in full-time employment. In 2011, 36% of mothers worked part-time, compared to 25% who worked full-time.\(^1\)

The Child Care Tax Rebate, first introduced in 2004–05, aims to encourage the labour force participation of mothers with young children by increasing the affordability of childcare. Employed mothers with children aged 0–14 years are still much more likely to be working part-time to balance their paid work and childcare responsibilities.\(^2\)

**Progress on employment entitlements**

In Australia, employer-provided leave and work arrangements, and government-mandated unpaid leave entitlements have contributed to incremental gains for gender equality. For example, a legislated unpaid maternity leave guarantee of 52 weeks that gives a mother the right to return to her job has been available since 1979 and, in 1990 the government extended this right to a father taking paternity leave.\(^3\)

The *Fair Work Act 2009* further extended rights to unpaid parental leave by giving parents the right to request to extend the initial period of unpaid parental leave by a further 12 months. This request can only be refused on reasonable business grounds.

Other gains in legislated employment conditions to support parents under the *Fair Work Act* include the introduction of *National Employment Standards* and modern awards which provide employees with minimum protections, including maximum weekly work hours, various types of leave, public holidays, and model flexibility terms that allow employers and individual employees to make individual flexibility arrangements that suit their particular needs, such as family responsibilities.

Employees with responsibility for the care of a child under school age or a child with a disability under the age of 18 years now also have the right to request flexible working arrangements, such as part-time work or flexible working hours. These provisions combine with the paid parental leave scheme to help parents to balance work and family responsibilities.

**Key achievements**

Since the Paid Parental Leave Scheme commenced in January 2011, around 300,000 have utilised the scheme. Many new mothers, including casual and contract workers, now have access to paid parental leave for the first time. To date, evaluation indicates that the Scheme is operating largely as intended and the majority of mothers are taking the full 18 weeks of paid leave.\(^4\)

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\(^{2}\) Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Gender Indicators, Australia*, Feb 2014, cat no 4125.0


\(^{4}\) Department of Social Services, *Administrative Data*, 2013
In January 2013, the Paid Parental Leave Scheme was expanded to include Dad and Partner Pay, a dedicated payment for dads and other partners for up to two-weeks at the national minimum wage. Dad and Partner Pay provides financial support to fathers and partners (including same sex partners) to take time off work to support mothers in their caring role and to help them recover from birth. It also helps fathers to establish bonds with their new child and to be involved in the child’s care from the start.

**Monitoring and evaluating the Paid Parental Leave Scheme**

The Australian Government undertook a review of the Paid Parental Leave Scheme, drawing on submissions, consultations, administrative data and the emerging findings of an independent Paid Parental Leave evaluation. The final report was released in June 2013.

The independent evaluation is a research project commissioned to be undertaken externally in three phases over five years by the University of Queensland Institute for Social Science Research. The final independent evaluation report, due later this year, will report in detail on the scheme’s success in achieving its outcomes.

**Australia’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security**


The National Action Plan consolidates and builds on the broad programme of work already underway and reflects Australia’s next steps to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) and related resolutions, recognising that the experiences and needs of women and girls differ from those of men and boys in conflict and post-conflict situations.


There will also be two independent evaluations of the National Action Plan during its lifetime. Australian civil society organisations have taken an interest in monitoring, releasing a [Report Card](#) in August 2013 that is expected to be the first in a series of annual Report Cards.

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Policy context

Australia’s work to eradicate violence against women, and to achieve gender equality more broadly, does not stop at our own borders. Australia is committed to promoting the Women, Peace and Security agenda across the breadth of our work in the United Nations Security Council. We are working actively to support efforts to prevent and address sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, and to promote the early involvement of women in conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building.

Key achievements

Australia continues to work to increase the level of attention paid to women, peace and security across the breadth of the United Nations Security Council’s work. Australia is working with our fellow members and the UN System to:

- pursue more comprehensive consideration and integration of these issues across the Council’s entire agenda;
- prevent impunity for sexual violence;
- ensure all relevant peacekeeping and peace-building operations address the impacts of conflict on women and girls; and
- advocate for peacekeeping mandates developed by the Council to include specific gender equality language and considerations (including the appointment of women protection advisors or gender advisors, where appropriate).

In addition to supporting UNSCR 1325, in 2013, Australia co-sponsored two new resolutions relating to women, peace and security – UNSCR 2106, focussing on conflict-related sexual violence, and UNSCR 2122, which sets in place stronger measures to enable women to participate in conflict resolution and recovery. Australia has also actively promoted gender-based training for peacekeepers and advocated for an increase in the numbers of deployed female peacekeepers and police internationally, for example:

- The Australian Federal Police (AFP) provides over 20% female representation for all UN peacekeeping mission deployments as recommended in UNSCR 1325.
- The AFP trains its members on awareness of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict environments and exploring ways to work with local women in developing justice programmes. All members of the Australian Federal Police undertake pre-deployment training before being deployed into overseas capacity building missions. This training incorporates information about how the Australian Federal Police implements recommendations of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions.
- The AFP is also promoting and supporting an increase in the profile and number of women in police development programmes and stability operations, the delivery of gender sensitive policing to communities in partner countries, and an increased understanding of the role of women in law enforcement and peace-building.
- As a means to promote the Women, Peace and Security agenda, the Australian Civil-Military Centre and UN Women, with the support of the Office for Women and the AFP, produced a documentary entitled Side by Side: Women, Peace and Security.
• The documentary is used as an educational tool for pre-deployment military, police, civilian and humanitarian personnel to international missions, and as a tool for civil society to learn more about Women, Peace and Security. The documentary is complemented by the Side by Side: Women, Peace and Security Educational Toolkit, which includes exercises, lesson plans and facilitators’ notes for trainers and educators of pre-deployed peacekeepers.

• The Australian Civil-Military Centre has published Occasional Papers related to women, peace and security, on Gendered Crises, Gendered Responses and Conflict-related Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

• The Protection in Humanitarian Action Framework guides the Australian Aid Programme in fragile and conflict-affected states to improve the safety of people affected by natural and human-induced crises.

Australia’s international aid programme and women’s leadership in the Pacific

Policy context

Gender inequality remains a significant development challenge for many countries in the world. In January 2013, women represented just over a fifth of the world’s parliamentarians. The Pacific region has the world’s lowest proportion of women in parliament, at round 5%.  

The Australian Government is committed to promoting women’s leadership and economic empowerment in the Pacific region, recognising that expanding women’s participation and access to opportunities is central to sustained economic and social development.

Australia’s approach is based on strong partnerships in the Pacific and links to implementation of the 2012 Pacific Leaders’ Gender Equality Declaration, which commits Pacific Islands Forum Leaders to promoting dialogue between female politicians in the region.

Key achievements

• The Australian Government is supporting a 10-year $320 million initiative, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, to help improve the political, economic and social opportunities of Pacific women to make a practical difference in the lives of Pacific women, their families and their communities.

• The initiative will run from 2012 to 2022. It will be guided by, and work with, Pacific women and men, local groups and coalitions to achieve sustainable improvement to gender equality in the Pacific. This initiative supports commitments made by Pacific Island Forum Leaders in the Gender Equality Declaration.

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7 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 43rd Pacific Islands Forum Communiqué, Annex 1
• The initiative operates in the 14 member countries of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) to promote gender equality outcomes through women’s participation in decision-making roles and change in social attitudes and behaviours.

• As part of this initiative, the Australian Government publishes the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development website to increase access to information on gender inequalities in the region and for individuals and organisations to share and access information on responses to gender equality in the Pacific region.

• The Pacific Women’s Parliamentary Partnerships Programme facilitates dialogue, exchanges and mentoring between Australian and Pacific Islands women political leaders, parliamentary staff and senior government officials, to improve women’s representation in national decision-making and progress the Pacific Leaders’ Gender Declaration commitments.

• A Safe Markets Programme to improve infrastructure and governance of produce markets to encourage women’s safe, fair and equal participation in local economies in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

• The Pacific Business Coalition for Women, formed in partnership with the International Finance Corporation in PNG, facilitates connections between Pacific women in private enterprise and Pacific and Australian businesses, and influences the agenda and outcomes of the PIF’s Forum Economic Ministers meeting (FEMM).

• The work of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) has expanded to incorporate gender stock takes of Pacific countries that inform their future policy and programmes.

• The AFP provides support to the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Women’s Advisory Network, including sponsoring Pacific delegates to attend the Australian Women and Policing Advisory Council Conference, the primary forum for women in policing. The programme also funds various activities, including professional development opportunities for network members.

• The AFP International Deployment Group encourages operational training programmes and the recruitment of women into policing in the Pacific as well as a focus on increasing female representation in leadership and management roles through targeted training programmes, including:
  
  - the Sexual Offences First Response Workshop pilot initiative in Samoa in 2012;
  - a Victim Support and Domestic Violence Unit as part of a trilateral Tonga Police Development Programme with New Zealand and Tonga;
  - participation in the 2013 Women and Policing Conference in Vanuatu, including delivery of the Terms of Reference workshop to female delegates from 20 Pacific countries;
  - Nauru police officers were supported to attend Women in Leadership Programmes and Interviewing Techniques courses held in Australia;
  - police from the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, PNG, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu received training in first response to sexual offences cases;
in collaboration with the New Zealand Police, to reduce domestic violence in the Pacific through the Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme, to increase the capacity of police in the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau to work effectively against reported instances of domestic violence;

- supporting female police officers from across the Pacific to attend specialist gender specific workshops conducted by the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre;

- support for the Pacific Islands Forum to conduct a 15-month costing study on the impact of violence against women in Kiribati and the Solomon Islands;

- train-the-trainer workshops delivered to Domestic Violence Coordinators from Chuuk, the Marshall Islands, Palau, and Pohnpei;

- support for the Police Channels of Hope Project with the Royal Solomon Island Police Force and World Vision Solomon Islands (as at October 2013, 30 Solomon Islands police members had completed training aimed at transforming attitudes and behaviours to gender-based violence);

- an additional 50 police officers working with community officers in PNG in late 2013 to develop community policing capabilities, including in specialised areas such as sexual offences investigations;

- increased opportunities for women in policing, providing assistance to safe houses, medical forensic facilities and victim support services, providing gender-based violence training support to the Timor Leste police force, and the provision of appropriate infrastructure and enabling tools to support victims of gender-based violence; and

- prior to the withdrawal of the Australian Federal Police from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, a representative was instrumental in the development of the Women’s Network to promote the strength, and advance the profile, of female police within peacekeeping missions. The aim of the network is to assist women in achieving their full potential and to develop strategies that will increase the number of women in missions, including, but not limited to, management positions.

A Whole-of-Government Approach to Action

Policy context

The Australian Government is committed to improving and enriching the lives of women to enable them to participate equally in all aspects of Australian life. The Australian Government recognises and values the many roles women carry out in work and in their communities.

To this end, the Australian Government is implementing a strategic agenda to help women to lead happy, productive lives in safe communities, further their economic independence and stability, and improve their work-life balance. It is also committed to delivering policies that will provide positive benefits for all including the economic empowerment of women and girls in Australia and across the Indo-Pacific region.
All Australian Ministers and Departments share a responsibility for delivering equality for women, and for considering the needs of different women, particularly those who may face multiple barriers to full participation in work and community life.

To support these portfolios, the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women and the Office for Women provide advice on the delivery of policies that will provide positive benefits for women and consults across government. The Minister and the Office for Women also consult with a wide range of stakeholders—business, academic and civil society organisations—to ensure the Government delivers better outcomes for women.

**Key Mechanisms supporting the Australian whole-of-government approach**

**Minister with responsibility for women’s policy**

In 2013, the Australian Government appointed a Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, who has responsibility for women’s policy within the Prime Minister’s portfolio.

The Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women works with other Ministers to ensure that women’s issues and gender equality are taken into consideration in policy and programme development and implementation. The Minister provides leadership on the Australian Government priority issues for gender equality—safety for women, women’s economic empowerment, women’s leadership, and international engagement and reporting.

**The Office for Women—coordinating gender policy from the centre of government**

In 2013, the Office for Women relocated to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, to ensure a whole-of-government approach is given to providing better economic and social outcomes for women, and better facilitate a whole-of-government approach to mainstreaming gender policy.

The Office for Women coordinates advice on gender equality policy at the national level. In addition, at the local level, women’s policy is coordinated though women’s policy offices run by state and territory governments. The Office for Women advises and supports the delivery of policies that will provide positive benefits for women and all Australians as a portfolio responsibility of the Prime Minister.

The Office for Women:

- provides advice to the Prime Minister and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women;
- provides national leadership on a range of priority issues including safety for women, supporting women’s economic empowerment, and supporting women’s leadership;
- influences policy, legislation, Cabinet and Budget decision-making to ensure women’s interests are considered;
- engages closely in inter-departmental and inter-government forums;
- consults with a range of key stakeholder groups, including government agencies, women’s sector organisations, the Australian Human Rights Commission, business, academics and civil society more broadly; and
- supports Australia’s international engagement on gender equality issues, including fulfilling international engagement and reporting obligations.
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Section Two — Progress on the 12 Critical Areas of Concern

The Australian Government is implementing a strategic agenda to progress gender equality and the empowerment of women across the critical areas of concern adopted by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Australia is continuing to make significant progress in implementation across all government jurisdictions. This section explores the policy context and progress Australia has made in addressing each of the 12 critical areas of concern. As specifically requested, it also addresses the impact of the global economic and financial crisis.

Australia’s response to the global financial crisis

The Global Financial Crisis of 2007–08 represented the most significant upheaval in global financial markets since the Great Depression, and produced a rapid deterioration in economic conditions. The global downturn stemming from the crisis was deep and widespread, and saw growth forecasts revised down sharply around the world.

In October 2008, the then Australian Government announced a $10.4 billion fiscal stimulus package, largely comprising cash transfers and tax bonuses. These packages were targeted at liquidity constrained low- and middle-income households who were more likely to spend the additional income. While these measures were not specifically targeted towards women, it tends to be the case that youth, women and the long-term unemployed are more at risk of losing attachment with the labour market during and following economic downturns.

As part of the stimulus package, Australia’s 2009–10 Budget also increased funding for jobs training ($1.5 billion spending over 5 years) with a focus on those likely to be affected by the global recession and introduced a government funded national Paid Parental Leave Scheme to boost female workforce participation.

The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women

The Government’s key policy responses to strengthen women’s access to economic resources include supporting workforce participation, addressing the gender pay gap, assisting women in business, and improving superannuation. Other initiatives to address some of the key economic barriers faced by women include the Paid Parental Leave Scheme and improving access to quality child care. For further information on related issues see information relating to Critical Area Six (page 37).

Policy context

In 2012, women and girls comprised 50.2% of the Australian population (11.4 million). Of all Australian women and girls, 3.1% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (2011).

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8 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Australian Demographic Statistics, March 2013, cat no 3101.0, Data cube 2, Tables 3 and 8
9 Ibid. Data cube 1, Table 11
Increasing the workforce participation rates of women could contribute billions per year to Australia’s economy. While the proportion of females participating in the labour force has increased in recent decades, only 58.6% of working age women (15–64 years) are employed compared with 71.2% of men. Women are also more likely than men to earn less than their male counterparts, work part-time and have fewer years in the paid workforce. Australian women who work full-time earn on average 17.2% less than men.

Women who have taken time out of the workforce to provide formal or informal care may experience multiple barriers to re-engaging in employment over the life course and this can have substantial flow on effects for their lifetime earnings. It is estimated that over her working life an average 25 year old Australian woman will earn AU$900,000 less than an equivalent man. Women aged 30 years, with two or more children, caring for a child with a disability and whose highest level of education is less than or equal to completion of secondary school, are expected to earn less than A$100,000 over their working life. Women sharing the same characteristics, but without the primary caring responsibility, earn four times that amount over their working life. While women with post-secondary education also show a difference in individual income earned over their working life, the difference between primary carers and other females is double (about AU$400,000 versus AU$800,000) compared to the four-fold difference observed with those with lower levels of education.

Key statistics

- Australia ranks 13th globally on economic participation.
- Labour force participation for Australian women aged 20–74 years was 65.2% in 2012–13, compared to 79% for men, a gap of 13.8%.
- In May 2012, 49.9% of all employees were male and 50.1% of all employees were female.
- In 2011, 15.9% of all families (901,637 families) were headed by single parents, and of these, by far the majority (82.4%) were single mothers.
- Closing the gap in the participation rate between women and men is estimated to boost Australia’s economy by 13%. In 2012, more female employees were employed part-time
(52.3% compared to 47.7% who worked full-time). Also, more women are employed as casual workers, compared to men (24.2% and 17.3% respectively).21

- The gender pay gap is 17.2% (equivalent to $266 average ordinary time weekly earnings). The gender pay gap has persisted at around 15–18% for the past two decades.23
- The gender pay gap is greater in the private sector at 20.2%, than in the public sector pay gap (13.4%).24 Health care and social assistance services have the highest gender pay gap (32.3%), financial and insurance services (31.4%), and professional, scientific and technical services (30.1%).25
- The average superannuation balance held by women reaching retirement age is $92,000, 40% lower than the average held by men ($154,000).26 Over 25% of women aged 45–64 years have accumulated no superannuation.27

**Key initiatives**

**Supporting women’s workforce participation**

The Australian Government has committed to increase provisions under the Paid Parental Leave Scheme from July 2015, to further strengthen women’s participation in the workforce, to help more working women to retain their attachment with the workforce while they balance their caring responsibilities following the birth or adoption of a child, and reduce the financial pressure that comes with this. For more information on the scheme, see Section One (page 5).

**Income Support**

The Australian Government has comprehensive income support and child support systems in place, to provide a safety net against poverty for women and their children, as well as support services and financial assistance for those in financial hardship, recognising that there are times when women are not able to participate fully or partially in the paid workforce due to the substantial economic and social contribution they make through their caring roles or because of other barriers such as age, disability, or social exclusion.

Australia’s comprehensive family payment system provides substantial financial assistance to families. The primary family assistance payment is the Family Tax Benefit, delivering around $16 billion per year in assistance to low-to-medium income families to assist with the cost of raising and educating children. Seven million parents and children (29% of Australians) shared in Family Tax Benefit payments of $18.9 billion in 2012–13 to assist with the cost of raising and educating children. This represents assistance to 1.9 million families of 3.1 million parents and 3.7 million children.28

21 Ibid
22 Ibid
24 ABS, Average Weekly Earnings, Nov 2013, cat no 6302.0, persons 21 years+, employed full time, ordinary time earnings
27 Ibid
28 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Annual Report 2012–13*
Australia also encourages and supports voluntary private savings through the Age Pension, Superannuation Guarantee, and taxation concessions and direct government payments for low income earners. The Australian Government also targets financial assistance to families, older Australians, carers, and people with disability.

**Pension system**

Australian women are more likely than men to be reliant on the age pension, with women aged 65 years and over representing 55.6% of all age pensioners and around 70% of all single age pensioners.\(^{29}\)

The Australian Government introduced changes to Australian’s pension system in 2009–10, to improve pension adequacy and sustainability, and provide greater financial security for pensioners.

The Single Pension Rate is set at 66.33% of the combined couple rate, which is in turn indexed by the greater of the Consumer Price Index and the Pensioner and Beneficiary Living Cost Index, and also benchmarked to 41.76% of Male Total Average Weekly Earnings.\(^{30}\)

A work bonus, introduced from July 2013 for Age Pensioners, provides concessional treatment of employment income, effectively increasing the amount an eligible pensioner can earn from employment before it affects their pension rate. The qualifying age for the Age Pension is to increase from 65 to 67 years from 2017–2023, to ensure the government’s retirement income policy is sustainable in the context of an ageing population.

In the 2014-15 Budget, the Government announced the Age Pension would be increased to CPI only and the retirement age would rise to age 70 from 2025-2035.

**Superannuation**

Australian women are currently retiring with less superannuation than men, making them more vulnerable than men to economic stress in later life, and this can be compounded if they experience ill-health, divorce or other adverse life events.

- Most Australian women hold significantly lower superannuation balances than men. The average superannuation balance held by women is $92,000, 40% lower than the average held by men ($154,000).\(^{31}\)

More than 25% of women aged 45–64 years have no superannuation.\(^{32}\)

Recognising that women earn less than men over their lives, and are much more vulnerable to poverty in retirement, the Australian Government is planning a phased increase in the Superannuation Guarantee to boost retirement savings. Under the Guarantee, most people are entitled to compulsory super contributions from their employer. A slightly increased Superannuation Guarantee percentage will pause at 9.25% from July 2014 to July 2016, before it increases to 9.5%, then gradually increasing by half a percentage point each year until it reaches 12% from 1 July 2021.

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\(^{29}\) Department of Social Services, Administrative Data, September 2013

\(^{30}\) Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Selected Living Cost Indexes*, Australia, September 2013, cat no 6467.0

\(^{31}\) Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Social Trends March 2009*, cat no 4102.0

\(^{32}\) Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Income and Housing 2009–10
Australian Human Rights Commission research on the drivers of inequity in retirement incomes and savings for older women and carers also found that caring has a disproportionate impact on women’s income and superannuation savings. The Commission’s report, *Investing in Care: Recognising and Valuing those who care* (2013), explores the scope of unpaid caring work and the gender gap in retirement incomes and savings.

**National Disability Insurance Scheme**

The Australian Government is implementing a National Disability Insurance Scheme to improve outcomes for people living with permanent and significant disability, their families and carers.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme aims to provide choice and control to the individual, and takes a whole-of-life approach to the support needed to live more independently and work towards achieving participants goals and aspirations with a focus on social and economic participation.

The Scheme is designed to meet the long term needs of people with disability. Greater flexibility will be available in the selection of supports and services. These could include supports provided through an established disability service provider or through uniquely individual and tailored arrangements.

The Scheme funds supports for carers and family members to build their skills and capacity to manage the impact of a participant’s disability on family life and increase the participant’s independence. This is likely to have a greater impact on women than men, given the greater proportion of caring responsibilities are undertaken by women.

The *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* Objects and Principles, give effect to obligations that Australia is a party to including:

- the Convention of the Rights of the Child
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and
- the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme funds reasonable and necessary supports to help a participant to reach their goals, objectives and aspirations in a range of areas, which may include education, employment, social participation, independence, living arrangements and health and wellbeing regardless of gender, marital status, pregnancy, age, ethnic or national origin, disability, sexual preference, religious or political belief.

The Scheme also offers information, individual support plans and referrals to services and supports to help people living with disability to achieve greater independence and community participation.

It is estimated that the National Disability Insurance Scheme will provide individualised support to around 460,000 Australians with a permanent and significant disability. The scheme commenced operating in Tasmania from July 2013. From 1 July 2014 trial sites include people up to age 65 in the Australian Capital Territory, the Barkly region of the Northern Territory and the Perth Hills area of Western Australia. The Scheme is also expanding in the Lake Macquarie area of New South Wales, and in South Australia where supports, including early intervention, will be provided for children up to age 13. A progressive roll out is planned to achieve national coverage.
Financial Literacy

Improving financial literacy skills can have significant benefits for everyone, whatever their age or income. Good financial literacy skills help individuals and families to make the most of opportunities, meet their goals and secure their financial wellbeing, and contribute to the economic health of society.

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) is the lead Australian Government agency with responsibility for financial literacy. The National Financial Literacy Strategy promotes a national approach to improving the financial wellbeing of all Australians, recognising that improving financial literacy is a complex and long term behavioural change initiative. An ASIC-led review of the Financial Literacy Strategy in 2013 identified key issues and priorities for a refreshed 2014–17 Strategy, to be released later in 2014.

Other important ASIC financial literacy building initiatives include:

- The MoneySmart.gov.au web portal, which provides targeted information based around life events on financial matters like managing money, credit and superannuation, as well as a suite of calculators and applications, to help women to build their financial capability, make informed financial decisions, get control of their money and avoid costly mistakes. The MoneySmart website attracts over 400,000 visitors a month.
- Delivering quality online resources and units of work for primary and secondary school students.
- MoneySmart Teaching professional development undertaken by over 8,000 teachers in 2013.
- Coordinating a Financial Literacy Community of Practice of over 400 participants from the education, financial services, civil and government sectors in Australia and New Zealand, which discusses financial issues affecting the most vulnerable members of the community, current research and programme achievements.33

Inequalities, inadequacies in, and unequal access to education and training

Policy context

A high quality universal education system is central to achieving gender equality in Australia by directly enabling women and men to gain employment and secure an income. Educational attainment is an important consideration in determining women’s long-term economic wellbeing through its impact on women’s participation in the paid workforce. The 2012 Programme for International School Assessment (PISA) found that Australia combines high levels of performance with equity in education.34

33 Australian Securities and Investments Commission, Financial Literacy Programme 2012–13
34 PISA, 2012 key findings, accessed at http://www.oecd.org/pisa/
In Australia, education is primarily the responsibility of the state and territory governments. They have the major financial responsibility for government schools, contribute supplementary funds to non-government schools and regulate school policies and programmes. They determine curricula, course accreditation, student assessment and awards for both government and non-government schools. State and territory governments are also responsible for the administration and funding of vocational education and training and for legislation relating to establishment and accreditation of higher education courses.  

The Commonwealth Government has special responsibilities in education and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrants, international partnerships in education, and providing financial assistance for students. It is principally responsible for funding higher education, and provides supplementary funding for schools and vocational education training.

Key statistics

- Australian girls perform better on average across all tested literacy and numeracy domains in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (94.9% compared to 90.6% achieved at or above the national minimum standard respectively).  
- Apparent retention rates for girls Year 7/8 to Year 12 were 58.2% for Indigenous girls, compared to 86.5% for non-Indigenous girls.  
- In 2013, 89.2% of women and 84.3% of men aged 20–24 years had attained Year 12 or equivalent, compared with 83.2% of women and 79.4% of men in 2004.  
- 68.8% of women and 62.6% of men had a non-school qualification in 2013, compared with 46.7% of women and 51.3% of men in 2002.  
- Australia ranked 39 out of 130 countries for the proportion of women enrolled in tertiary education compared with men.  
- 40% of women aged 15–64 years completing a non-school qualification, were enrolled in a Bachelor Degree, compared with 39% of men.  
- Similar proportions of men (11%) and women (11%) were undertaking postgraduate degree study.  
- Men were more likely than women to have a Certificate III or IV (23% of men, compared with 14% of women).  

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35 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Year Book Australia 2012, cat no 1301.0  
36 National Assessment Programme – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing averages, 2013  
37 ABS, Schools Australia, 2013, cat no 4221.0, Tables 63a and 64a  
38 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Gender Indicators, Australia, Feb 2014, cat no 4125.0  
39 Ibid  
40 Ibid. Table 9  
42 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Gender Indicators, Australia, Feb 2014, cat no 4125.0 Table 9  
43 Ibid  
44 Certificate IV is a supervisor, administrator or trainer level qualification for the workplace  
45 ABS, Education and Work, Australia, May 2013, cat no 6227.0
While the education gap has narrowed somewhat over recent years, educational participation and attainment rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians still remain below those of non-Indigenous Australians.

**Educational attainment**

Over the past 30 years, women’s performance and participation in all levels of education has increased and more women are now attaining higher qualifications.

- As has been the case for many years, the Year 7/8 to Year 12 apparent retention rate for females exceeded that for males. Between 2012 and 2013 the rate for females rose from 84.3% to 85.6%, while the rate for males rose from 75.8% to 77.8%.\(^{46}\)
- Data from the 2011 census showed that 53.9% of Indigenous Australians aged between 20 and 24 years had attained a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, up from 47.4% in 2006.
- In 2011, a greater proportion of women under 30 years of age had higher qualifications (at or above Certificate III\(^{47}\) than men under 30 years of age (for example 64.8% of women aged 25–29 compared with 62.7% of men).\(^{48}\)

**Vocational education and training**

Job skills training is increasingly important for employment in Australia. Apprenticeships, vocational education and training or other tertiary education qualifications or post-school education can equip people with the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in a labour market, and provide a solid foundation for life-long learning.\(^{49}\)

\(^{46}\) ABS, *Schools Australia, 2013*, cat no 4221.0

\(^{47}\) Certificate III is a trade level qualification, generally for outdoor workers, requiring technical skills and knowledge

\(^{48}\) COAG Reform Council, *Tracking equity: Comparing outcomes for women and girls across Australia*, 2013

\(^{49}\) ABS, *Australian Social Trends, September 2012*, cat no 4102.0
Participation in vocational courses (1,943,000 students in 2012), are now almost even between men (52%) and women (48%), however this varies by the field of study. Engineering and architecture courses are much more likely to be undertaken by men.\textsuperscript{50} Nearly twice the number of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds undertake vocational education than their counterparts in the highest income quintile.\textsuperscript{51}

**Foundation Skills**

Support for vulnerable Australian women is available through a range of Australian Government programmes that help build their foundation skills and enhance their capacity to undertake further vocational training or to transition into the workforce.

In 2012–13, nearly 50% of all clients that commenced in Foundation Skills programmes were women. Anecdotal evidence suggests that participation in these foundation skills programmes benefits participants in a number of ways, such as improved confidence, participation in further training and access to improved economic opportunities.

The Skills for Education and Employment Programme seeks to improve eligible job seekers’ language, literacy and/or numeracy skills with the expectation that this will enable them to participate more effectively in training or employment. In 2012–13, 60% of participants were women.

The Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP) provides free English language tuition to around 55,000 new migrants and humanitarian entrants each year at over 250 locations across Australia. Around 65% of AMEP clients are women. The programme provides flexible timetabling and learning options—such as face-to-face classroom tuition, distance learning, self-paced e-learning and one-on-one assistance through the home tutor scheme. AMEP clients also have access to support services including free counselling and childcare services to help clients, particularly women, attend classes who may otherwise not be able to do so due to childcare responsibilities. The AMEP Special Preparatory Programme also provides eligible humanitarian entrants additional hours of tuition.

**Apprenticeships and Traineeships**

In the 2012–13 financial year, women made up 40% of total Australian Apprentice commencements. Of these, 44% of apprentices who self-identified as being mature aged\textsuperscript{52} were women. Historically, the emphasis of apprenticeships on trade and agricultural areas has meant that women were under-represented in the uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships. Contemporary apprenticeships and traineeships cover a variety of industries and occupations including hospitality, sales and clerical work.

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\textsuperscript{50} National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), Australian vocational education and training statistics: Students and courses, 2012

\textsuperscript{51} NCVER, Students and Course Statistics, 2012

\textsuperscript{52} Generally considered to be over 21 years of age according to NCVER, Glossary at: http://www.voced.edu.au/content/glossary-term-mature-age-entry-scheme
The Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Programme is the Australian Government’s primary mechanism for encouraging participation in Australian apprenticeships, contributing to the development of a skilled Australian workforce, by providing financial and other incentives to employers to deliver genuine skills-based training of apprentices. Employers of eligible Australian Apprentices attract commencement and completion incentives and access the Support for Adult Australian Apprentices initiative.

Ensuring women’s access to quality education and work pathways can mitigate intergenerational disadvantage. This is critical for individual women’s wellbeing and economic security and for their families and their children.

**Education and Labour Force Outcomes**

There is a pronounced relationship between educational qualifications and labour force participation. In 2011, 84% of women with a higher education qualification were in the labour force compared with 62% of women without a higher education qualification. Women with a higher education qualification also have the highest proportion of full-time employment. In 2011, 62% of women with a postgraduate degree were employed full-time, and 53% of women with a bachelor degree were employed full time.53

For Indigenous students, while approximately 50% of female students progress to Year 12 compared to 44% of male students, Indigenous women are less likely to participate in the labour-force (49.3%) than Indigenous men (61.6%) and non-Indigenous women (60%).54, 55

**Support for education outcomes through the Australian aid programme**

The Australian Government’s education aid for developing countries helps more children, particularly girls, attend school for a longer and better education so they have the skills to build their own futures and, in time, escape poverty. Education is critical to empowering girls to advocate for themselves and to make better decisions about their lives. Australia strongly supports efforts to promote women’s leadership and economic empowerment and this can only be achieved by ensuring education for girls around the world.

To support more children to attend school, and improve the quality of their education, in 2012–13, the Australian Government’s education aid helped more than one million girls and boys go to school by building or upgrading more than 8,500 classrooms and providing more than one million students with financial and nutritional support. Australia also helped train 72,130 teachers and 33,830 school officials, and provided over 2.5 million textbooks.

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53 ABS, Australian Social Trends, *Education differences between men and women*, Sep 2012 cat no 4102.0
55 ABS, Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Labour Force Estimate, 2011, cat no 6287.0, Table 6
Inequalities, inadequacies in, and unequal access to health care and related services

The Australian Government recognises that by improving the health of all Australian women, the health of the whole community is improved.

Policy context

In Australia, women generally fare much better than men on many indicators of health and wellbeing, including life expectancy. Women’s health in Australia continues to improve with the average life expectancy of women 84.3 years at birth.\textsuperscript{56}

However, further improvements can be made on several health indicators, particularly for older women, Indigenous women, and women from low socioeconomic backgrounds and for women who live in rural and regional areas of Australia.

Key statistics

- In 2010–2012, life expectancy in Australia was 84.3 years for women and 79.9 years for men. Indigenous life expectancy was an estimated 73.7 years for women and 69.1 years for men.\textsuperscript{57}
- There were 2,562 perinatal deaths in 2011 (8.4 perinatal deaths per thousand births). Perinatal death rates have changed little over the past 10 years.\textsuperscript{58}
- Preliminary 2011 data shows that 58 in 100,000 women and 110 in 100,000 men died from ischemic heart disease, compared to 150 and 84 respectively in 2000.\textsuperscript{59}
- More males (70\%) than females (55\%) aged 18 years and over (age standardised) were overweight or obese in 2012.\textsuperscript{60}
- Between 2001 and 2011–12, smoking rates decreased for males and females aged 18 years and over from 27\% to 20\%, and from 21\% to 16\% respectively. Three times as many men as women aged 18 years and over consumed alcohol in amounts at risk to their health over their lifetime (29\% versus 10\%).\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{56} ABS, Deaths, Australia, 2012, cat no 3302.0
\textsuperscript{57} ABS, Gender Indicators, Australia, Aug 2013, cat no 4125.0
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid
\textsuperscript{60} ABS, Australian Health Survey: First Results, 2011–12, cat no 4364.0.55.001
\textsuperscript{61} ABS, Gender Indicators, Australia, Aug 2013, cat no 4125.0
Key initiatives

Women’s health policy

In recognition of these gaps, the National Women’s Health Policy was established in 2010, to address the specific health needs of Australian women. The policy aims to continue to improve the health and wellbeing of all women in Australia, especially those at greatest risk for poor health. The policy recognises the importance of addressing immediate and future health challenges whilst also addressing the fundamental ways in which society is structured that impact on women’s health and wellbeing. It reflects the equal priorities of:

- maintaining and developing health services and prevention programmes to treat and avoid disease by targeting health issues that will have the greatest impact over the next two decades; and
- aiming to address health inequities through broader reforms addressing the social determinants of health.

The Government also funds the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health, a landmark study which began in 1996, to identify trends and provide policy information relating to women’s health.

Mental health and wellbeing

Women are disproportionately affected by mental illness, and mental disorders have been estimated to represent the highest burden of illness for adult women in Australia.\(^\text{62}\) The latest National Survey of Mental Health (2007) found that:

- Females were more likely than males to have experienced mental disorders in the past 12 months (22.3% compared to 17.6%).\(^\text{63}\)
- More women experience depression than men (6.8% in women and 3.4% in men).\(^\text{64}\)
- The proportion of women experiencing anxiety (12.1%) is greater than for men (7.1%).\(^\text{65}\)

The Fourth National Mental Health Plan 2009–2014 takes a whole-of-government approach and acknowledges that many of the determinants of good mental health, and mental illness, are influenced by factors beyond the health system. It also has a strong focus on social inclusion through a range of initiatives including Beyondblue, the National Depression Initiative and Headspace, a youth-friendly health service.

To provide further support, Australia’s first National Mental Health Commission was set up in 2012 to provide independent reports and advice to the community and government on what is working and what is not in the area of mental health. The Government has also committed to building on the investment in Headspace Youth Mental Health Centres with an expansion of sites around Australia to 100.

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\(^\text{63}\) ABS, National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, 2007, cat no 4326.0

\(^\text{64}\) Ibid

\(^\text{65}\) Ibid
Sexual and reproductive health
The Australian Government funds a range of family planning organisations and national bodies to promote women’s choice and access to sexual and reproductive health services. Medicare ensures that all Australians have access to free or subsidised treatment by eligible health practitioners.

Maternity Services Framework
In November 2010, Health Ministers endorsed the National Maternity Services Plan, to provide a strategic framework to guide policy and programme development across Australia for the next five years, 2010–15. The Plan aims to improve coordination and ensure better access to maternity services across Australia.

The Plan focuses on primary maternity services during the antenatal, intrapartum and six week post natal periods for women and babies and identifies key priority areas: access, service delivery, workforce, and infrastructure. The priorities of the Plan reflect the high demand for maternity services that are responsive to the needs of all Australian women, their partners and their families.

Maternity care in Australia is among the safest in the world, with low maternal and perinatal mortality rates compared with other nations in the OECD. In 2012, Australia had 2,558 perinatal deaths or 8.2 perinatal deaths per thousand births.66

Antenatal Care Guidelines
National evidence-based Antenatal Care Guidelines designed to support Australian maternity services to provide high-quality, evidence-based antenatal care to healthy pregnant women. Module 1 of the Guidelines, which addresses pregnancy in the first trimester, was released in 2013.

The Antenatal Care Guidelines will assist health care professionals who contribute to antenatal care including: midwives, general practitioners, obstetricians, maternal and child health nurses, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, practice nurses and allied health professionals.

The recommendations cover a wide range of care including routine physical examinations, screening tests and social and lifestyle advice for women with an uncomplicated pregnancy.

Breastfeeding
In 2009, Australian Health Ministers endorsed the Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy 2010–2015. The Strategy provides a framework for priorities and action for all governments to address the protection, promotion, support and monitoring of breastfeeding throughout Australia.

In 2010, breastfeeding was initiated for 96% of children aged 0–2 years of age. Around 69% of infants were still receiving some breast milk at 4 months of age, although only 39% were exclusively breastfed to 3 months, and around 60% were still receiving some breast milk at 6 months, but only 15% were exclusively breastfed to 5 months.67

All Australian states and territories have legislative provisions protecting the rights of breastfeeding women, including in relation to employment and breastfeeding in public.

66 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Causes of Death, Australia, 2012, cat no 3303.0
Amendments to the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984 were passed in 2011, establishing breastfeeding as a separate ground of discrimination (in addition to state and territory anti-discrimination laws).

In November 2012, Australian Health Minister’s affirmed that all Australian jurisdictions support the effective, practical guidance provided by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund Baby Friendly Health Initiative (BFHI) and its ten steps to successful breastfeeding for health services. Australian jurisdictions encourage all public and private hospitals to implement the ten steps to successful breastfeeding and to work towards or to maintain their BFHI accreditation.

Post-natal Depression

Around one in 10 Australian women experience depression during pregnancy, and up to one in seven experience it in the year after giving birth. Since 2008–09, Australia has funded the National Perinatal Depression Initiative to improve prevention and early detection of antenatal and postnatal depression and provide better support and treatment for expectant and new mothers experiencing depression.

Cancer Prevention

Incidence and mortality of cervical cancer both halved since the National Cervical Screening Programme was introduced in 1991, remaining at historic annual lows of nine new cases, and two deaths per 100,000 women since 2002. Since the inception of BreastScreen Australia in 1991, mortality in women aged 50-69 years has reduced by approximately 36.5%, attributed to early detection and advances in management and treatment of breast cancer.68

Indigenous and rural health

In July 2013, Australia launched the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2012–2023. This Plan is an evidence-based policy framework designed to guide policies and programmes to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health over the decade to 2023. The Plan focuses on the key areas that will make the most impact on improving the health and wellbeing outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Rural Health Outreach Fund addresses the comparatively higher burden of disease of people in rural and remote communities by reducing waiting lists for patients to get treatment. Specialists and allied health professionals travel to rural and remote locations to provide a range of services which include gynaecology and obstetrics, sexual health, midwifery, and lactation consultant services. The funding enabled more than 29,100 women in rural, remote and very remote locations to access services. Australia also continues to fund the Rural Women’s General Practice Service, which transports female GPs to rural and remote areas that do not have access to a female GP.

In 2012–13, around one in twelve (8.2%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had diabetes mellitus and/or high sugar levels in their blood or urine. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rates for diabetes/high sugar levels were between three and five times as high as the comparable rates for non-Indigenous people in all age groups from 25 years and over.69

68 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), BreastScreen Australia monitoring report 2010–2011, cat no CAN 74
69 ABS, Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: First Results, Australia, 2012, cat no 4727.0.55.001
The **Healthy for Life** programme seeks to improve the quality and availability of child and maternal health services, and improve the prevention, early detection and management of chronic disease for Indigenous people. Research by the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare found that the average birth weight of babies attending these services increased between 2008 and 2011, while the proportion of low birth weight babies decreased slightly and the proportion with normal birth weight increased from 80.0% to 84.2%.  

The **New Directions: An Equal Start in Life for Indigenous Children** programme aims to improve the health and education of Indigenous children and their mothers through access to comprehensive mothers and babies services, programmes to address rheumatic fever, and accommodation for Indigenous women from remote areas who need to travel to regional centres to give birth.

The **Australian Nurse-Family Partnership** programme seeks to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and mothers. The programme provides comprehensive, nurse-led home visiting services to improve pregnancy outcomes by helping women engage in good preventive health practices and supporting parents to improve child health and development.

**Supporting health outcomes in the Indo-Pacific through the Australian aid programme**

The Australian Government, through the aid programme, works closely with partner governments, research institutes, civil society, and development partners to improve the health of poor and vulnerable women in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia focuses on supporting and promoting strong health systems to save lives and keep women and children healthy.

Australia is committed to supporting poor and vulnerable women throughout their life cycle — pregnancy and birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Australia is addressing maternal and child health challenges by improving access to skilled birth attendants and midwives. For example, in Indonesia in 2012, Australian aid helped almost 30,000 women give birth with a skilled birth attendant, which halved the number of maternal deaths in the hospitals supported by our programme.

Australia also provides support for innovative research into maternal and child health, to provide evidence on which to base our investment decisions, and help governments and policy makers understand what works and why.

The Australian Government is also supporting routine immunisation to save the lives of children, through Australia’s core contributions to the World Health Organization ($20 million in 2012–13), the UN Children’s Fund ($34 million in 2012–13) and the GAVI Alliance ($47.5 million in 2012–13).

Since 2011, our support to the GAVI Alliance has helped to fully immunise 7.7 million children in developing countries against major diseases, such as hepatitis B, yellow fever, meningitis and pneumonia, and stopped 3.9 million people dying from preventable diseases. Australia has also been supporting the introduction of the human papillomavirus vaccine in Pacific Island countries bilaterally and through the GAVI Alliance.

In 2012 in PNG, Australia helped over 31,000 pregnant women find out their HIV status. Early detection and treatment maximises the chances that babies will be HIV-free.

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The Australian Government is committed to supporting efforts to reduce the unmet need for quality reproductive health services in our region. Australia has consistently supported the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and their subsequent reviews. At the 6th Asian and Pacific Population Conference (September 2013), Australia strongly supported a progressive outcome declaration that upholds sexual and reproductive health and rights, and recognises the need for comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents and young people. Through core funding support to United Nation’s Population Fund ($15 million in 2012–13) and the International Planned Parenthood Federation ($20.5 million over three years, 2010–2013), Australia supports sexual and reproductive health interventions for vulnerable groups including adolescents and youth.

**Violence against women**

Whilst there are many forms of violent behaviour perpetrated against women, domestic violence and sexual assault are the most pervasive forms of violence experienced by women in Australia, and require an immediate and focused response.

Preventing the violence, supporting those who experience it and effectively responding to those who perpetrate the violence will help to protect the rights of all women to participate fully and safely and to achieve better economic and social outcomes.

**Policy context**

The Australian Government has a national, zero-tolerance policy platform to address violence against women and their children. Reducing violence against women and girls is a key priority for the Australian Government.

The Australian Government remains firmly committed to acknowledging and addressing violence against women and is investing significant resources to tackle issues such as sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, domestic and family violence against women and their children, and trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Nearly all Australians (98 per cent) recognise that violence against women and their children is a crime.71 The prevalence of violence, however, continues to be unacceptably high. Violence affects the whole society, victims, families and the community. Reducing all violence in our community is a priority.

Violence against women is one of the most serious causes and consequences of inequality, and one of the key risk factors for women entering poverty and disadvantage. All forms of violence against women are unacceptable, in any community and in any culture. While the number of Australian women experiencing violence has reduced over the past decade, violence against women remains a serious issue. Domestic violence and sexual assault perpetrated against women costs billions of dollars to the nation each year.72

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71 VicHealth, National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey, 2009
72 KPMG, 2009
The Australian Government Department of Social Services has responsibility for Australia’s Safety for Women government policy. The Department helps contribute to a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children in Australia, through the implementation of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (the National Plan) in partnership with state and territory governments and other key stakeholders.

Key statistics

- Around one in three Australian women has experienced physical violence since the age of 15 years, and around one in five Australian women has experienced sexual violence.\(^{73}\)

- Indigenous women are many times more likely to experience physical violence over their lifetime than non-Indigenous women.\(^{74}\)

- In 2012, an estimated 5.3% of Australian women aged 18 years and over had experienced violence and/or stalking during the previous 12 months (compared to 8.7% of men), of these women 4.6% experienced physical violence and 1.2% experienced sexual violence.\(^{75}\)

- In 2012, an estimated 17% of all women aged 18 years and over had experienced violence by a partner since the age of 15 years (compared to 5.3% of men).\(^{76}\)

- In 2012, 1.5% of women aged 18 years and over had experienced violence from a partner during the previous twelve months (compared to 0.6% of men). In 2011, around 44% of female victims of physical assault and 19% of female victims of sexual assault in Australia reported the incident to police.\(^{77}\)

- 63% of female victims are sexually assaulted by a ‘known other’, and 28% by a family member or partner. By far the most common location of sexual assault is private dwellings (60%), and most physical assaults on females occur in their own homes (45%) or the workplace or place of study (17%).\(^{78}\)

- Sexual harassment is an ongoing and common occurrence, particularly in workplaces, and sexual harassment continues to affect more women than men.\(^{79}\)

- One-third of women (33%) have been sexually harassed since the age of 15 years, compared to fewer than one in ten men (9%) (based on the legal definition).\(^{80}\) Only one in five (20%) of respondents who were sexually harassed made a formal report or complaint.\(^{81}\)

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\(^{73}\) Australian Bureau of Statistics, Personal Safety Survey, 2012, cat no 4906.0

\(^{74}\) ABS, The Health and Welfare of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008 cat no 4704.0

\(^{75}\) ABS, Personal Safety Survey, 2012

\(^{76}\) Ibid

\(^{77}\) Ibid

\(^{78}\) ABS, Crime Victimisation, Australia, 2011–12, cat no 4530.0, table 12

\(^{79}\) Ibid


\(^{81}\) Ibid
Key initiatives to address violence against women and girls

A national framework to reduce violence against women and their children

As outlined in Section One (pages 2 to 5), the Australian Government’s *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan) is a 12-year framework that represents a collaboration between Australia’s Commonwealth, state and territory governments, non-government sector and civil society. The National Plan sets out Australia’s commitment to upholding the human rights of Australian women, to coordinate action across jurisdictions at a systemic level, and to achieve sustainable long-term change.

Further, in response to the persistent challenge of reducing violence against women, in 2013 the Australian Government articulated increased supports for women under the following specific initiatives:

- increased funding to the White Ribbon campaign to expand their activities to increase engagement from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including new and emerging communities
- strengthened support services for overseas spouses by requiring additional information disclosure by the Australian husband or fiancé applying for an overseas spouse visa and the production of a pre-departure information pack containing important information about essential services and emergency contacts in Australia, and
- reserved 1,000 places in the Refugee and Humanitarian Programme for women at risk and their dependents.

Eradicating trafficking in persons

Australia recognises the disproportionate impact that human trafficking, slavery and related slavery-like practices such as forced marriage have on women and girls and is committed to combating these crimes at both a domestic and international level.

Opportunities to traffic people into or exploit people within Australia are limited because of our geographic isolation and strong migration controls and enforcement. However, Australia is a destination country for victims of trafficking, mainly women who have been exploited within the sex industry in Asia.
Since 2003, 225 people (202 women and 23 men) have been identified by the Australian Federal Police and referred to the Government’s Support for Trafficked People Programme. Of the 202 women identified, 173 were subjected to labour exploitation in the sex industry, while 29 were subjected to labour exploitation in other industries including agriculture and domestic work. In 2013, 21 trafficking victims—including 12 subjected to sex trafficking and 9 subjected to labour trafficking—were identified by the Australian Federal Police, and referred to the programme. Of these 21 trafficking victims, 19 were female and 2 were male. To date, one referral for forced marriage has been made to the programme.

Since the establishment of the Human Trafficking and Slavery Strategy in 2003, the Australian Government has provided more than $150 million to support a range of domestic, regional and international anti-trafficking initiatives.

Measures to address trafficking in persons include:

- Specialist teams within the AFP to investigate human trafficking and slavery related matters, and an Australian Policing Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Persons.
- Legislation to criminalise human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices, including forced labour and forced marriage.
- Legislation to protect vulnerable witnesses giving evidence in Commonwealth criminal proceedings, including victims of slavery, slavery-like and human trafficking offences.
- A victim support programme which provides individualised case management support.
- Visa arrangements to enable suspected victims and witnesses of human trafficking and slavery to remain in Australia and support the investigation and prosecution of offences.
- Specialist immigration officers posted in Thailand, China and the Philippines, who focus on human trafficking issues and aim to prevent trafficking in source countries.
- Support for the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute human trafficking and slavery-related matters, including funding and training.
- Regional engagement in the Asia-Pacific on human trafficking issues through the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.
- Research into national and regional trafficking activities by the Australian Institute of Criminology.

The Australian Government has invested significant resources through its aid programme over the past decade, to improve the capacity of other countries in the region, to tackle human trafficking effectively. Beginning in 2013, a new 5-year investment, the Australia-Asia Programme to Combat Trafficking in Persons, builds on previous achievements in strengthening criminal justice responses to trafficking in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) region.

The Australian Government also works to address the underlying causes of human trafficking and exploitation with a focus on poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Specific anti-trafficking programmes, to improve legislation, prosecution, victim support, and awareness raising, will have more impact where the contextual factors that cause people to be vulnerable to trafficking are also being addressed.
**Legislative framework**

In 2013-14, the Australian Government has continued to advance a strong programme of work aimed at supporting the four legislative pillars under Australia’s strategy to combat human trafficking and slavery: prevention and deterrence, detection and investigation, prosecution and compliance, and victim support and protection. Together these measures address the full cycle of trafficking from recruitment to reintegration and give equal weight to the critical areas of prevention, prosecution and victim support.

The *Crimes Legislation Amendment (Slavery, Slavery-like Conditions and People Trafficking) Act 2013* enhances Australia’s legislative framework by expanding the range of exploitative behaviour that is criminalised, including by introducing a new offence of forced marriage. This Act also improved the availability of reparation orders to individual victims of Commonwealth offences, including human trafficking and slavery.

The passage of the *Crimes Legislation Amendment (Law Enforcement Integrity, Vulnerable Witness Protection and Other Measures) Act 2013* recognised the importance of providing appropriate support and assistance to victims of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices. Protections available under the Vulnerable Witness Act include the ability to give evidence by closed-circuit television, video link or video recording, have their contact with the defendant or members of the public limited, and have a support person with them while they give evidence.

This Act also makes it an offence to publish material identifying a trafficked person, and allows trafficked people to make victim impact statements to the court outlining the harm they have experienced. The protections apply automatically to victims of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like offences, in recognition of the extreme forms of trauma and exploitation they have experienced.

Australia is developing a new *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery (2014–18)*, to set the strategic aims of Australia’s whole-of-community response to human trafficking and slavery, and contains measures to measure the effectiveness of our collective efforts to combat these crimes. This is being done in collaboration with stakeholders, including members of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery, the key consultative mechanism between the Government and non-government organisations on human trafficking and related issues.

Australia is also revamping its *Communication and Awareness Strategy for Human Trafficking and Slavery* to improve general community awareness of human trafficking and slavery, and is developing strategies to increase resilience amongst groups identified as particularly vulnerable to these crimes. A key focus of this work is raising awareness among groups and individuals considered vulnerable to forced marriage. In our region and internationally, Australia is continuing to focus efforts in areas where Australia can make a difference and where our resources can most effectively and efficiently be deployed. Australia’s new, $50 million flagship programme, the Australia-Asia Programme to Combat Trafficking in Persons, commenced in late 2013 to strengthen criminal justice responses in the ASEAN region.

Under the *Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime*, Australia is working with Indonesia to establish a Working Group to specifically focus on human trafficking issues, and with Thailand to develop regional policy guides to support policy makers and practitioners to criminalise human trafficking.

The Australian Institute of Criminology report, *Human trafficking and slavery offenders in Australia, 2013* helps to build the evidence base on this issue.
Addressing violence against women in the Indo-Pacific through Australia’s aid programme

The Australian Government aid programme partners with national governments, civil society, international partners, and individuals to reduce and respond to violence against women. Australian aid helps ensure women have access to support services such as medical services and counselling; women have access to justice; and violence against women is prevented.

The Australian Government supports women survivors of violence in countries including Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Nepal and Sri Lanka. This includes emergency shelters, counselling and legal advice. For example, in Afghanistan, Australia’s support builds on national efforts, including working through Afghan civil society and women’s organisations, to increase women’s access to support services, improve women’s access to justice and strengthen violence prevention activities.

The Australian Government, through the aid programme, has worked with partner organisations across the Pacific to extend services to women who have experienced violence. Between 2010 and 2012 the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre provided counselling and support services to almost 12,000 new and repeat clients. The Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre is an autonomous, multi-racial non-government organization established in 1984 which is currently in its fifth phase of multi-year funding from Australia.

The Australian Government has supported the establishment of 11 Family and Sexual Violence Units in police stations across PNG to provide an environment for survivors to be supported through the process of reporting their cases, receiving referrals to relevant agencies for counselling or other support such as the issuing of interim protection orders or finding emergency accommodation.

Australia has also provided support to Magisterial Services, which introduced Interim Protection Orders, a short-term intervention in Family and Sexual Violence cases to remove the perpetrator of violence.

In 2012, there were 1,003 Interim Protection Order cases processed (55% completed). Since 2010, there have been over 2,780 cases in total (completed or pending).

Australia has also provided technical support to most Pacific Island Forum countries in writing domestic violence legislation. In 2013 alone, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga all passed stronger legislation prohibiting such violence. The Australian Government provides technical support through law and justice programmes in these countries to improve a legal response to such violence.

The Australian Government is supporting international efforts to build a strong and shared evidence base on violence against women. In the Pacific, the Australian Government is working with a range of partners, including national governments, regional organisations, civil society groups, and the United Nations Population Fund to undertake national prevalence studies. This has included supporting surveys in the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji, Cook Islands, Nauru, Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and Palau.
The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation

The Australian Government recognises the serious effect that armed conflict has on women's lives and that the experiences and needs of women and girls differ from those of men and boys in conflict and post-conflict situations, particularly in relation to human rights violations such as sexual and gender-based violence. The Government also recognises the essential role of women in conflict prevention, peace building and post-conflict reconstruction.

Key initiatives

Australia’s Women, Peace and Security agenda

Introduced in 2012, Australia's *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012–2018)* (the National Action Plan) identifies strategies and actions that Australia will take domestically and in international arenas to progress Australia's peace and security efforts through the integration of a gender perspective; protecting women’s and girls’ human rights particularly in relation to gender-based violence; and promoting their participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

The National Action Plan is a whole of government effort, coordinated by the Office for Women. It consolidates and builds on the broad programme of work already underway in Australia to integrate a gender perspective into peace and security efforts.


Civil society engagement on Women, Peace and Security

The Australian Government supports and encourages the engagement of civil society organisations in the Women, Peace and Security agenda in a variety of ways. Civil society organisations play a vital role in promoting equality and increasing women’s participation in the Women, Peace and Security agenda at local, national and international forums. Civil society organisations have been strong advocates for the development of an Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and they play an important role in holding the Government to account on its obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which recognises that the experiences and needs of women and girls differ from those of men and boys in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Civil society organisations play an important role in monitoring the Government’s progress on the implementation of activities outlined in the National Action Plan. The first *Annual Civil Society Report Card on Australia’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* was launched by the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women in October 2013, at an event held at the Australian National University’s Gender Institute in Canberra. The Annual Civil Society Report Card provides valuable feedback to Government on its progress in implementing the National Action Plan, and it will feed into an independent review to be undertaken in 2015.
In April 2013, the Office for Women and the Australian Civil-Military Centre supported the Civil Society Dialogue on Women, Peace and Security, co-hosted by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom Australia, the Australian National Committee for UN Women, the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and the Australian National University Gender Institute. The Dialogue successfully brought together government agencies and civil society organisations to share knowledge and discuss the implementation of Australia’s National Action Plan.

Building women’s representation in the Australian Defence Force

Since 2011, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner of the Australian Human Rights Commission has led a comprehensive review of the treatment of women within the Australian Defence Force and the Australian Defence Force Academy.

Specifically, the Review has examined:

- the treatment of women with a particular focus on the adequacy and appropriateness of measures to promote gender equality, ensure women’s safety, address and prevent sexual harassment and abuse, and sex discrimination
- initiatives required to drive cultural change in the treatment of women, including the adequacy and effectiveness of existing initiatives and of approaches to training, education, mentoring and development, and
- measures and initiatives required to improve the pathways for increased representation of women into the senior ranks and leadership of the Australian Defence Force.

This Review is an important step in removing obstacles to women joining and staying in the Australian Defence Force. Two reports were tabled in the Australian Parliament, in November 2011 and August 2012. The first report made 31 recommendations designed to ensure a safer, more inclusive and equitable environment for women at the Australian Defence Force Academy. The second report examining the treatment of women in the Australian Defence Force, made 21 recommendations designed to promote cultural and systemic change. Phase 3 of the Review involved an audit of the implementation of these recommendations with a specific focus on Australian Defence Force recruit and training schools as these are formative environments in which behaviour, attitudes and values begin to be embedded.

The Audit Report: Review into the Treatment of Women at the Australian Defence Force Academy, 2013 examines the extent to which the recommendations from the Phase 1 report have been implemented. The Australian Human Rights Commission audit report, Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force, 2014 finds that the Defence Force has made significant progress and provides an update of the Australian Defence Force Academy’s further progress in implementing the recommendations from the Review into the Treatment of Women.

Significant work regarding women is also being carried out through Defence’s comprehensive strategy for cultural change and reinforcement, Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture, 2012 announced by the Minister for Defence, the Secretary of Defence and the Chief of the Defence Force on 7 March 2012. The strategy aims to increase the number of women in the Australian defence forces and increase their length of service. It also responds to a suite of reviews into Defence culture. The strategy makes recommendations for innovative policies and options to break down barriers to women joining and serving in the Australian Defence Force and the Defence Australian Public Service. These recommendations are being implemented across the Department of Defence. In addition, from January 2013, combat roles opened to women currently serving in Australian Defence Force.
The move to open these previously restricted employment categories aligns with the *Removal of Gender Restrictions Implementation Plan, 2012* to ensure women entering these categories are supported and have the same opportunities as their male colleagues. Direct recruitment into these roles will commence in 2016.

**Women in peacekeeping and police deployment roles**

Recognising the vital role of the United Nations peacekeepers in protecting civilians from violence, including sexual violence, the Australian Government is committed to women’s representation in peacekeeping missions. 22% of Australian police personnel involved in peacekeeping missions are women and many hold senior roles within these missions.82

Within each of the missions the AFP operates in, the deployed members work with local jurisdiction to reduce discriminatory practices and promotes an increase of women for Police recruit training, management and leadership development opportunities.

**Support for women at risk through the Refugee and Humanitarian programme**

The Government is committed to providing 1,000 places in the Refugee and Humanitarian Programme each year for women at risk and their dependents, out of a total of 11,000 places offshore. While women at risk of persecution may be eligible for any of the humanitarian visa subclasses, the specific Women at Risk cohort represent the most vulnerable.

Australia is one of only a few countries in the world that specifically offers a Woman at Risk visa subclass and provides dedicated refugee settlement programmes for women and their families. In recognition of the priority given by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to the protection of refugee women in vulnerable situations, the Australian Government established the Woman at Risk visa category in 1989. Since its inception, over 13,000 visas have been granted. It provides a pathway for the resettlement of vulnerable women refugees and their dependants who are living without the effective protection of male relatives.

**Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources**

Women’s equal opportunity to participate in the economy is an important component of Australian Government policy, recognising that gender equality benefits women and men, as well as their families and communities.83

Australia is committed to increasing women’s safety, economic security and leadership participation; and supporting families to balance workforce participation and caring responsibilities.

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82 *Australian Federal Police, Statistics of Australian Federal Police Staff Overseas, 2013*

83 *Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Annual Report 2012–13*
**Policy Context**

Australia is generally performing well on international indicators of gender equality. The United Nations *Human Development Report, 2012* ranked Australia second in the world on human development and 17th on its Gender Inequality Index.

The *World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2013* ranked Australia 24th out of 136 countries on its Gender Gap Index. The Gender Gap Index considers women’s economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment.

Australia has improved its ranking on economic participation, driven by advances in labour force participation and reductions in the wage gap between male and female workers. However, while women make an enormous contribution to the economy and the community, they continue to experience poorer average outcomes than men against some key indicators.

Women are more likely to be economically disadvantaged by the triple impacts of earning less than their male counterparts, working part-time and having fewer years in the paid workforce. Women can also be more vulnerable than men to economic stress in later life, in part due to lower superannuation savings and if they experience ill-health, or other adverse life events.

Legislative reforms aim to better promote women’s workforce participation, remove discrimination, and address the gender pay-gap.

**Key statistics**

- Australia ranks 28 of 41 countries for the gap between women and men's labour participation.85
- Of Australians aged 15 years and older, women’s labour force participation rate is 58.6% and men’s is 71.2%, a gap of 13.6% (Oct 2013).86
- Of adults aged 25–34 years, women’s labour force participation rate is 73.9% and men’s is 91.0%, a gap of 17.1% (2012).87
- Indigenous women have a lower labour force participation rate (49.3%) than Indigenous men (61.6%) and non-Indigenous women (60.0%).88
- The underemployment rate is 9.8% for women and 5.9% for men (Aug 2013).89
- Many parents of children aged 0–12 years (16.4%) have an unmet need for child care or preschool services. Just over half of these parents (51.1%) require child care to work (2011).90

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84 Key indicators include labour force participation; wage equality; literacy rates; enrolments in primary, secondary and tertiary education; life expectancy; women in parliament and ministerial positions and years with a female head of state. World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2012*, p120
85 ABS, *Census 2011 Quick Stats*
87 OECD, *Stat Extracts*, LFS by Sex and Age—Indicators, 2001–2012
88 ABS, *Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*, Labour Force Estimate, 2011, cat no 6287.0, Table 6
89 ABS, *Labour Force, Australia*, Oct 2013, cat no 6202.0, Trend data, Table 1 and Table 22. Underemployed people refer to employed persons aged 15 years and over who want, and are available for, more hours of work than they currently have.
90 ABS, *Childhood Education and Case Survey 2008 and 2011*, data available on request
Key initiatives

Building women’s equality in the workforce

The Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012, which replaced the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999, is designed to support employers in the removal of barriers to women’s full and equal participation in the workforce, including through improved data collection.

Under the Workplace Gender Equality Act, from 2014 non-public sector organisations with 100 or more employees are required to report to the Agency on a number of gender equality indicators, including the proportion of women in the workforce, the proportion of women in leadership positions, pay equity, the availability of flexible working arrangements, and more. Previously, employers reported on workplace programmes designed to improve women’s equal opportunity, but the new reporting system will focus on the outcomes of those programmes. The new reporting framework will create a world leading dataset that will be used to provide valuable insights to employers on their own performance, while painting an unprecedented picture of gender equality in Australian workplaces.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency advises and assists employers in promoting and improving gender equality in the workplace with the goal of seeing women and men equally represented, valued and rewarded in the workplace. The Agency carries out important gender analysis across a range of policy issues to promote gender equality in the workplace.

The Agency works collaboratively with employers collecting data, and analysing and reporting on gender in the workplace, as well as providing advice, practical tools and education to help employers to improve their gender performance. The Agency also provides tools and resources (for example a calculator for setting gender diversity targets, and a payroll analysis calculator) to help employers to meet their gender equality goals.

In addition, research commissioned by the Office for Women, and undertaken by Graduate Careers Australia and the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training, is building the evidence base in relation to pay equity. The findings of the research are consistent with previous pay equity reporting; on average men are earning more than women and the gender pay gap is apparent upon entering the workforce after graduating from university or vocational education and training.

Helping women balance work and family

The Australian Government is committed to helping families balance their caring responsibilities and working lives and is addressing barriers to women’s workforce participation. The Australian Government is seeking to ease the pressure of balancing family and work by introducing family-friendly work arrangements, providing government funded paid parental leave, and conducting an Inquiry into better quality more affordable and accessible childcare.

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92 Productivity Commission Inquiry into Child Care and Early and Childhood Learning.
Key measures include:

- **National Employment Standards** under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) provide an entitlement of 12 months unpaid parental leave and a right to request an extension of unpaid parental leave beyond 12 months which the employer can only refuse on reasonable business grounds. Effectively this enables both parents to access separate periods of up to 12 months unpaid parental leave. The legislation also gives employees the right to request flexible working arrangements if they are a parent or guardian of a child who is school age or younger, are a carer, have a disability, are 55 or older, are experiencing family or domestic violence (or caring for an immediate family or household member who is experiencing family or domestic violence).

- **Paid Parental Leave**: from January 2011 new mothers have been eligible to receive the equivalent of the minimum wage for 18 weeks following the birth or adoption of a child. From 2013, the scheme expanded to include Dad and Partner Pay for up to two-weeks at the national minimum wage, to take time off work to support mothers in their caring role and help them recover from birth. **The Australian Government is developing a significantly more generous expanded Paid Parental Leave scheme to be introduced from 1 July 2015. See Section One for more details.**

- **Child care fee assistance**: including the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate to help working families better meet child care and early childhood education costs.

- **High quality early childhood education**: programmes for children in the year before formal schooling enable parents to participate in paid work knowing their children receive quality care.

**Child Care Review**

Access to affordable child care is an important contributor to women’s workforce participation. Caring and domestic responsibilities still fall disproportionately to women. The Government has initiated a Productivity Commission Inquiry into childcare and early childhood learning to explore options for reforming how childcare and early childhood learning are delivered in Australia. The Inquiry will consider:

- the contribution affordable, high quality child care can make to increased participation in the workforce and children’s learning and development
- the current and future need for child care in Australia
- whether there are any specific models of care that should be considered for trial or implementation in Australia, and
- options for enhancing the choices available to Australian families as to how they receive child care support.

The Productivity Commission released its draft report in July 2014 and has been asked to provide its final report to Government by the end of October 2014. In addition to over 400 formal submissions, the Commission has received more than 700 comments from members of the public for consideration in the draft report.

The Australian Human Rights Commission research report *Investing in care: Recognising and valuing those who care, 2012*, examines the nature of unpaid caring work in Australia and the barriers it creates for women’s equal participation in the workforce; analyses models and measures of valuing unpaid work and explores workplace and strategies to influence cultural change. The *Investing in Care* report identifies three strategies to address women’s disadvantage in the current retirement income system, including
recognising and rewarding unpaid caring work. This research follows earlier research by the Commission on the gender gap in retirement savings in *Accumulating poverty? Women’s experiences of inequality over the lifecycle, 2009* which examined systemic gender inequality; attitudes towards gender roles and caring; women’s vulnerability to violence; the gender pay gap; constrained choices and decisions about paid work and care; the impact of divorce; and women’s experiences of discrimination and harassment in the workforce which lead to some women accumulating poverty instead of financial security.

**Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work National Review**

In 2013, the Australian Human Rights Commission conducted a national review, *Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work*, to identify the prevalence, nature and consequences of discrimination in relation to pregnancy at work and return to work after parental leave.

In April 2014, as part of this review, the Commission released a report, *Headline Prevalence Data: National Review on Discrimination Related to Pregnancy, Parental Leave and Return to Work 2014*, providing an overview of data that measures discrimination in the workplace related to pregnancy, parental leave and return to work following parental leave.

In July 2014 the Commission released their final report, *Report: pregnancy and return to work discrimination costs everyone*. The report found that little has changed in the 15 years since its first Inquiry into this subject and Australian workplaces still overwhelmingly view working while pregnant as a privilege, not a right. The Review found that one in two (49 per cent) mothers and over a quarter (27 per cent) of the fathers and partners surveyed reported experiencing discrimination in the workplace during pregnancy, parental leave or on return to work.

The recommendations in the Report are directed towards government, workplaces and the wider Australian community, all of whom have an interest in increasing women’s participation in the workforce and creating supportive workplaces. While noting there are a few areas where the laws can be strengthened, the recommendations are directed towards a much better implementation of legal obligations through greater provision of information about employee rights and employer obligations. The recommendations also emphasise the need for strategies and approaches designed to help dismantle stereotypes and drive cultural change within workplaces, as well as the importance of further monitoring, evaluation and research to shape effective action.

Research and modelling shows that if businesses and other employers are able to retain women and men who are becoming new parents by eradicating pregnancy/return to work discrimination, there will be a considerable economic dividend to both them and the wider economy.

In response to the report findings the Australian Government is investing in a project for the Commission to develop resources for employers on how to best manage and support working parents through pregnancy, parental leave, and on return to work.

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93 AHRC, *Supporting Carers in the Workplace*, 2013
Building women’s participation in traditionally male-dominated industries

In 2011, women represented almost 46% of all employees in Australia and 33% of managerial positions were held by women.\(^{96}\) However, for industries described as ‘male-dominated’, including mining, construction and utilities, the picture is different:

- All industries—women are 45.7% of employees and 33% of managers
- Construction—women are 11.8% of employees and 16% of managers
- Mining—women are 15.1% of employees and 13% of managers, and
- Utilities—women are 22.6% of employees and 16% of managers.

Generally, there have been significant increases in the proportion of women working in traditionally male-dominated industries such as mining (17.1% in 2011–12, up from 13% in 2004) and electricity, gas, water and waste services (22.4% in 2011–12, up from 16.8% in 2004).\(^{97}\)

However, this trend is not reflected in remote Australian communities, where a particularly strong gender bias in employment persists. Indigenous women are finding employment in these industries, but are more likely to be employed in community and personal service positions that have a gender pay gap,\(^{98}\) despite having a high percentage of women in senior executive positions.\(^{99}\)

Overall, women are under-represented in the manufacturing industry in Australia, however there are women breaking down the barriers to become high achievers in traditionally male dominated workforces. Workplaces across Australia are being influenced through the experiences of women working in industry as well as initiatives that promote research and good news stories about women in trades, such as the Manufacturing Skills Australia [Women in Industry](http://www.wgea.gov.au) webpage.

The Australian Government is actively partnering with industry representatives to build women’s participation in these sectors:

- The Auto Skills Australia [MAAP My Future—Girls in Auto](http://www.wgea.gov.au) social media campaign is helping to encourage more women to enter into the motor industry to fill skills shortages.
- The Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council [Industry Women Central Hub](http://www.wgea.gov.au), officially launched in March 2014, is a first point of contact for women at all levels in the construction and property services industry sectors, from entry level to senior management.

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\(^{96}\) Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2011


\(^{98}\) Office of the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services, Gender and Culture Inclusivity in Remote Service Delivery, 2014

It aims to provide networking opportunities, information about the industry, and help women share experiences and apply for industry awards and to meet ambassadors in the industry.

- The Attracting and Retaining Women in the Resources and Construction Sectors project focuses on identifying gaps, developing resources, research and best practice, and providing advice and services to improve the attraction and retention of women at worksites, particularly for small and medium enterprises. Additionally, the project involves establishing and growing the Australian Women in Resources Alliance to oversee and coordinate the project and support the work of existing women’s networks, other industry peak bodies, and state and federal government agencies.

- The Australian Mines and Minerals Skills Connect Project focuses on connecting labour and skills within the relevant industries through a pilot that aims to connect at least 250 women with training and employment pathways within the mining, resources, construction and related industries.

- The SkillsOne TV Women in Trades Channel, which airs on subscription television services in Australia, features hundreds of videos (also available online) to assist women into trades industries.

- The Surveying & Spatial Sciences Institute Women in Spatial project supports a network of women professionals and provides opportunities for learning and professional development through a national scholarship in technical, management or policy roles.

- Agri-Food SHE—Skilling Her Enterprise workshops deliver a support network and business and management skills for women in the agribusiness sector.

- The Australian Women in Resources Alliance e-Mentoring project is working towards a goal of 25% of women in the resources sector by 2020 through a best practice model.

- The first annual Women in the Energy Industry Conference was held in April 2013 in Canberra, to explore ways to increase female participation in energy sector trades.

- In 2013, the Australian Government funded the Australian Human Rights Commission to develop an online resource, the Women in male-dominated industries: A toolkit of strategies—on the attraction, recruitment, retention and development of women in industries such as mining, construction and trades. The toolkit helps leaders to develop and implement constructive and sustainable strategies to increase the representation of women in these industries and has been designed to be on-line and interactive. Associated with the Toolkit are on-line discussion forums to enable people to ‘virtually network’ with others to share their views on effective strategies and ideas for increasing the representation of women in these industries.

Support for women’s economic participation through the Australian aid programme

Empowering women economically and improving their livelihood security is a priority of Australia’s aid programme. The Australian Government, through the aid programme, is helping partner governments and communities to enable women to participate fully in national and local economic development processes. Focus areas include supporting women entrepreneurs, improving access to financial services, providing access to new technology and supporting regional and global catalytic activities that aim to raise the capacity of women to participate in, and benefit from economic activity.
In Timor-Leste, the Australian Government supports the Inclusive Finance for Under-Served Economy (INFUSE) programme which aims to reduce poverty in rural Timor-Leste by providing financial services such as access to loans, savings accounts and financial advice to poor women and men. From 2009 to the end of 2012, an additional 5,300 clients were registered with the local microfinance institutions directly supported by INFUSE—almost all of these were women.

In the Pacific, the Australian Government is jointly funding the Pacific Financial Inclusion Programme with the United Nations Capital Development Fund. The programme provides women with access to mobile money. Since 2009, more than half a million people across Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu have been provided access to mobile money—38.5% of users of this service are women.

Partnering with the Asian Development Bank, the Australian Government is working with Pacific island governments to improve the business-enabling environment through the Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative. The initiative provides technical assistance to assist Pacific countries increase incomes, jobs and economic growth through private sector growth. The Australian Government has supported over 35,000 women in the Pacific gain access to a savings account through the initiative.

In Solomon Islands, the initiative has supported the Government of Solomon Islands to reform company legislation and compliance procedures. Since new legislation\textsuperscript{100} came into force in July 2010 that required the gender of directors to be included in financial statements and annual reports, the number of women company directors has increased by 29% and the number of women shareholders by 15%.

The Australian Government is also working with other donors to support efforts to improve the collection and use of gender statistics, particularly in the areas of assets and entrepreneurship, through its support to the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality Programme, which is managed by UN Women and the UN Statistical Division.

**Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels**

Ensuring women are represented in leadership and decision-making roles is important—for business, the community and for women themselves. However, the number of Australian women in leadership positions in the public, business and community sectors is not representative of women’s interest or ability.

The barriers that women face to participating as leaders in the community include broken work patterns due to pregnancy or caring responsibilities; inadequate family friendly or flexible work conditions; and discrimination or exclusion.

\textsuperscript{100} Solomon Islands Companies Act Regulations 2010, made under the Solomon Islands Companies Act 2009
Policy Context

Women in Australia have more employment opportunities and are more educated than ever before, however gender equality at senior levels in the workplace has yet to be achieved. In senior leadership positions, men outnumber women across the public and private sectors, as well as in the upper and lower houses of federal parliament.101

The Australian Government works through agencies such as the Workplace Gender Equality Agency and the Australian Human Rights Commission and industry bodies to drive cultural change and support more women into leadership roles and encourages employers to reach voluntary leadership targets within their organisations.

Key initiatives

Women’s representation on decision-making bodies

While the numbers of women occupying board positions has increased both within the government and private sectors over the last decade, the number of women in these and other senior management positions remains substantially lower than for men. Recognising the importance of women’s participation in the workforce and in all levels of decision-making to the national economy, the Australian Government is committed to increasing the number of women in leadership and decision making roles, including the number of women appointed to boards and other decision making bodies in the private and public sectors.

The 2012 Australian Census of Women in Leadership found that, despite faster growth in the number of women on the boards of ASX 200 companies, there had been negligible progress for females in executive ranks over the past decade. Women comprised less than one in 10 executives of ASX 200 (9.7%) and ASX 500 (9.2%) companies. Only 12 ASX 500 companies had a female CEO.102

In June 2013, the Australian Government met its 2015 target for the proportion of women on its boards. Women held 41.7% of Government board positions (up from 35.3% in 2011). Eight government portfolios met or exceeded the 40% gender balance target, twice as many as in 2011–12.103 However, only 15.4% of women participate on ASX 200 public company boards, and the proportion of women CEOs remains below 5% in ASX 200 companies.104

Other key achievements relating to women’s representation on decision-making bodies include:

- The publication of an annual report providing a statistical gender analysis of the composition of Australian Government boards. The latest report covers the period 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013.
- In 2009, the Australian Public Service Commissioner released the Merit and Transparency: merit-based selection of APS agency heads and APS statutory office holders guidelines, which encourages an increase in the representation of women on public, private and community sector boards.

103 Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Annual Report 2012–13
104 Australian Institute of Company Directors, ASX 200 Snapshot Report 2012
• The Australian Government partners with the Australian Institute of Company Directors. The Board Diversity Scholarship initiative awards full-fee scholarships (not including accommodation and travel costs) to high-calibre women to undertake the Australian Institute of Company Directors’ highly regarded Company Directors Course or Mastering the Boardroom courses, and provides a complimentary 12-month membership to the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

• The Australian Government has partnered with the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia to promote the participation of women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds on boards and in other decision-making positions.

• The Australian Government continues to support the 2013–16 Sports Leadership Scholarships and funding programme for women, recognising the important role of women leaders in sport. Over 20,600 women have benefited from the programme since it began in November 2012.

• The Australian Government funds the YWCA to deliver the Every Girl programme for girls aged 9-14 years from disadvantaged communities to improve their self-esteem and leadership abilities.

The Australian Government has a range of mechanisms to expand the pool of women available for board positions and promote gender diversity on Australia’s boards:

• Boardlinks network — helps board-ready women seeking their first government board appointment.

• AusGovBoards database — a comprehensive searchable list of Government boards and vacancies.

• AppointWomen database — matches qualified and experienced candidates to vacancies on Australian Government decision-making bodies.

• From 2014, non-public sector employers with 100 or more staff will report to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency on the gender composition of their governing board or body, and advise their targets for increasing women’s representation on the governing board or body.

Women in local government

Local government roles offer a pathway for women to progress from community leadership into influential and public leadership roles. Australian women are under-represented in management and elected positions in local government. Women represent less than 30% of councillors and elected local government members, women represent only 20% of senior executives in local councils, and women represent only seven per cent of council CEOs.

Since 2010, (The Year of Women in Local Government), the Government has funded the Australian Local Government Women’ Association 50:50 Vision—Councils for Gender Equity programme addressing gender equity issues among elected representatives and staff within organisations and recognising excellence through an accreditation and awards project, and strategies to promote gender equity in councils. Other initiatives include Executive Leadership Scholarships for senior women in local government, and the collection of data and reporting on the status of women in the local government sector.
Women in parliament

Australian women continue to occupy senior positions in Australian Parliaments.105

The Hon Julie Bishop MP, was sworn in as Australia’s first female Foreign Minister on 18 September 2013, following four years in the role of Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade. On 24 June 2010, Julia Gillard became Australia’s 27th Prime Minister, and the first woman to hold that position, having previously served as Australia’s first female Deputy Prime Minister.106

Every state and territory except South Australia has had a woman premier or chief minister. The proportion of women in parliament, at February 2014, was:

- 31.3% of Federal Parliamentarians were female, 68.7% were male
- 16.7% of Federal Government Ministers were female, 83.3% were male
- 5.3% of Federal Government Cabinet Ministers were female, 94.7% were male, and
- Two of the eight Australian state and territory leaders are women.107

Australia’s first Governor-General, Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO, held office from September 2008 until March 2014. Australia currently has two female state governors, the Hon Marie Bashir AC CVO, Governor of New South Wales, and Penelope Wensley AC, Governor of Queensland.

Census of Women in Leadership

In 2012, the then Governor-General, Her Excellency the Honourable Quentin Bryce AC CVO, launched the Australian Census of Women in Leadership. The Census measures the number of women holding board and senior executive positions in the top 200 publicly listed Australian companies (ASX200). In 2012, the Census also reported data on ASX500 companies, showing:

- a decade of negligible change for females in executive ranks
- women hold 12.3% of directorships in the ASX200
- women comprise 9.2% of executives in the ASX500, and
- only 12 ASX500 companies have female CEOs.108

Workplace Gender Equality Agency

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency provides incentives and support to employers to improve gender equality outcomes in their business. The Employer of Choice for Gender Equality Citation recognises and rewards businesses who are leading the way in achieving gender equality.

105 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Gender Indicators, Australia, Feb 2014, cat no 4125.0
106 McCann and Wilson, Representation of women in Australian parliaments, 2014, accessed at www.aph.gov.au
107 Ibid
Public Sector Leadership

The Australian Government recently launched a new policy initiative, Women in Public Service, to support Australia’s future female leaders in the broader spheres of public service (including careers in government and community services, law reform and enforcement).

The Australian Government will partner with the Global Women’s Leadership Initiative at the Woodrow Wilson Centre. Core components of the Australian Chapter will involve a training institute to develop strategic and critical leadership skills and a facilitated mentoring programme.

For the first time, in 2013, the Australian Public Service Commission State of the Service survey asked agencies to report on the representation of women in their senior leadership group by level of hierarchy to reflect the reporting recommendations made by the Male Champions of Change to public companies. The Australian Public Service (APS) is one of Australia’s largest employers, employing more than 160,000 people, with a 57.5% female workforce (compared to 58.5% of the Australian labour force). However it is noteworthy that women represent only 39.5% of the APS senior executive.109

Male Champions of Change

Despite aspirations for more women in senior leadership roles, progress over the last 10 years has been slow. In 2010, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner of the Australian Human Rights Commission brought together some of Australia’s most influential and diverse male CEOs and Chairpersons to form the Male Champions of Change group to build women’s representation at senior levels within both the private and public sectors.

The group aims to use their individual and collective influence and commitment to ensure the issue of women’s representation in leadership is elevated on the national business agenda. The Commission’s progress report Accelerating the advancement of women in leadership: Listening, Learning, Leading, 2013 highlights actions that leaders can take to influence cultural shifts in their organisation. Feedback from participants shows that responsibility for driving change needs to be at the personal level; that influencing cultural shifts requires buy in from all levels, especially senior executive champions; there is a need to understand the subtle attitudes which create barriers to change; and, that it is necessary to make it clear that gender equality is a performance priority.110

Supporting Indigenous Women’s Community Participation

The Australian Government Indigenous Women’s Grants provide funding for activities that respond to the particular needs and circumstances of local women and their communities. The activities support culture and traditions and strengthen women’s networks to support more women to undertake leadership, representative and management roles. In 2012–13, the programme supported 63 projects and assisted more than 3,600 women.

Building women’s leadership through the Australian aid programme

The Australian Government is committed to promoting women’s leadership internationally. In 2013, the Government appointed Ms Natasha Stott Despoja AM as Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls.

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110 AHRC, Accelerating the advancement of women in leadership: Listening, Learning, Leading, 2013
The Ambassador will address women's leadership, economic empowerment and addressing violence against women through her bilateral, regional and multilateral advocacy.

Through the Australian aid programme, women candidates and voters in Kiribati received training to build their knowledge of the role of democratic institutions. Four women were elected to federal government in 2012, two as Ministers. The 2012 Papua New Guinea national election was made more inclusive, through increasing voter awareness on how to vote, women’s rights and access for people with disabilities. Women candidates received training in political and parliamentary processes. Three women were elected.

In Indonesia, the Australian Government ‘Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction Initiative’ supports emerging women leaders in the community, government and within civil society to find solutions on employment, family planning and increasing protection against domestic violence.

The Australian Government supports international scholarships and fellowships offering the next generation of global leaders an opportunity to undertake study, research and professional development. Around half of scholarship and fellowship recipients are women.

The Australian Government is also providing opportunities for women's leadership in a range of sectors. For example, some road building programmes have trained local women to set up small businesses and tender for small road maintenance contracts. Not only has this increased women’s status, it has also opened up access to income.

Many water and sanitation programmes, supported by the government, strive for at least 30% women on water and sanitation committees, enabling women to directly influence the allocation of a critical resource for their families’ wellbeing and also attain leadership roles at community level.

**Mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women**

The Australian Government values the contribution Australian women make in their workplaces, homes and communities across the country and is working to maximise opportunities for women so that they continue to help build an inclusive, safe, fair and unified Australia. The Government is committed to strengthening the provision of gender analysis, advice and mainstreaming across Government.

**Australian Government infrastructure on women’s policy**

**Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission**


The [Sex Discrimination Commissioner](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/sex-discrimination-commissioner), Ms Elizabeth Broderick, is committed to improving gender equality through advocacy in preventing violence against women and sexual harassment, improving lifetime economic security for women, balancing paid work and unpaid caring responsibilities, promoting women’s representation in leadership and strengthening gender equality laws, monitoring and agencies.
In April 2011, the Commissioner was appointed to lead the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Review into the Treatment of Women in the Australian Defence Force Academy and Australian Defence Force. The fourth and final review report was released on 26 March 2014.

Workplace Gender Equality Agency

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency is a statutory authority which promotes and improves gender equality in Australian workplaces through the gender indicators reporting framework. The Agency administers the workplace Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012. Under the Act, non-public sector employers with 100 or more staff are required to report to the Agency. For the first time, in 2014, they will report under a new gender equality indicator framework, using standardised data.

In addition to administering the Act, the Agency is required by legislation to promote and contribute to understanding and acceptance, and public discussion, of gender equality in the workplace.

The Agency works collaboratively with the business representative groups, employers, industry and professional associations, academics and researchers, equal opportunity networks and women’s groups to improve equal opportunity outcomes for women by delivering practical solutions, building strategic partnerships, and leading public debate.

Consultation Processes

The Australian Government regularly consults with the Australian community on how to better recognise, protect and promote human rights. For example, the Attorney-General’s Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade host regular meetings with non-government organisations to discuss the Government’s domestic and international approach to human rights.

National Women’s Alliances—promoting women’s diverse voice

The Australian Government has funded the National Women’s Alliances (representing over 100 women’s organisations) to bring forward the views, voices and issues of Australian women to influence decision-making and policy outcomes, and in particular, to support the views of marginalised or disadvantaged women, women living in rural and remote areas and women from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The role of the Alliances is to engage with governments and across portfolios, and women’s organisations and individuals, with a focus on:

- promoting lifelong economic wellbeing for women;
- gender equality and international human rights principles;
- women’s leadership, diversity and bringing women’s voices to policy and decision-making;
- advocating for the issues concerning migrant and refugee women;
- bringing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’s voices to priority issues; and
- addressing violence against women.
Australia also actively participates in mechanisms to address gender inequality internationally. Civil society and other sectors contribute to international dialogue on gender equality through consultations and meetings. In addition, the Australia’s foreign policy has a strong focus on the Indo-Pacific region, and a key part of our strategy for improving gender equality and women’s empowerment internationally, includes working with women leaders in the region.

**Respect for and adequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women**

The Australian Government recognises the importance of protecting human rights and acknowledges that women and girls experience different forms of discrimination in their lives that may be a direct result of or exacerbated by virtue of their sex.

The Australian Government has a long-standing history of commitment to the protection of human rights and has made significant progress across important human rights issues. However, the Government recognises that protecting human rights is still a significant challenge for our nation.

**Policy context**

Australia is a signatory to the major human rights treaty for women, the *United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*, and is a party to the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. Accession to the Optional Protocol makes a powerful statement that discrimination against women is unacceptable—both in Australia and internationally.

The Office for Women works with agencies across Commonwealth, state and territory governments, to ensure that Australia fulfills its reporting obligations under CEDAW.

Australia also participates in the *United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)*, the United Nations highest forum on women’s issues. It meets annually to discuss critical and emerging issues concerning women globally. CSW works to achieve equal rights for women and men by developing policy recommendations for the international community. CSW also reviews critical areas of concern under the *United Nations Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. The Australian Government sends a high-level delegation to participate in CSW each year.

Australia also participates in the *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) mechanism on gender equality*. Australia is a member of the APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy, and participates in the APEC Women and the Economy Forum. *The Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy* is the senior-officials working group, providing policy advice on gender issues and supporting gender equality where relevant to the APEC process.

As the only dedicated APEC forum on gender issues, the annual Women and the Economy Forum enhances economic opportunities for women through three key meetings—a high-level policy dialogue, public-private dialogue and officials-level meeting—which Australia regularly attends.

Australia has co-sponsored a Chinese Taipei APEC project on *Innovation for Women and Economic Development: facilitation of women’s livelihood development and resilience with Information and Communications Technology*, and supported two United States-led workshops on women entrepreneurs and their access to markets and capital.
As a member of the Commonwealth, Australia also contributes to the development of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–15, and participates in Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Minister’s meetings that support the Commonwealth’s mandate to address gender equality issues. The plan of action is a framework within which Commonwealth nations are contributing to advance gender equality and equity. It focuses on four critical areas for Australian Government action—gender, democracy, peace and conflict; gender, human rights and law; gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment; and gender and HIV/AIDS.

Australia also supports International Women’s Day, which celebrates the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future.

**Millennium Development Goals**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly the gender-related MDGs, have played an important role in galvanising international support for gender equality as an important goal in its own right, as well as a key factor in the success of other development goals. In September 2013, world leaders renewed their commitment to meet MDG targets, and agreed to hold a high-level Summit in September 2015, to adopt a new set of Goals building on the achievements of the MDGs.

The eight goals for 2015, ranging from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, are a blueprint agreed to by all the world’s countries and all the world’s leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world’s poorest.


In preparing for CSW, the Australian Government sought input from civil society organizations on critical and emerging issues relating to the MDGs and this feedback was used by the delegation throughout their participation at CSW, particularly during negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions.

The Australian Government remains committed to supporting progress on the MDGs particularly in the Indo–Pacific region, particularly the need for full recognition of women and girls’ human rights, and international action to eliminate and prevent violence against women and girls and harmful traditional practices such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

**Addressing discrimination against women in the workforce**

In 2011-12, 21% of complaints to the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission) under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 related to pregnancy discrimination and family responsibilities, and 21% of complaints investigated by the Fair Work Commission in the same period related to an allegation of pregnancy discrimination. The most common issues were missing out on opportunities for promotion (34%) or training and development (32%), and inappropriate or negative comments from their manager (28%).
Key initiatives

Since April 2010, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner of the Australian Human Rights Commission has been instrumental in bringing together some of Australia’s most influential male CEOs and Chairpersons to form the Male Champions of Change group of male chief executive officers and chairpersons. The group aims to use their individual and collective influence and commitment to ensure the issue of women’s representation in leadership is elevated on the national business agenda.

The Defence Force strategy Pathway to Change – Evolving Defence Culture responds to a suite of reviews into Defence culture, and aims to increase the number of women in the Australian defence forces and their length of service. The strategy makes recommendations for innovative policies and options to break down barriers to women joining and continuing to serve in both the Australian Defence Force and the Defence Australian Public Service. These recommendations are being implemented across the Department of Defence. For further information see information relating to Critical Area Five at page 35.

Australia’s legislative framework to promote equal rights for women

Sex discrimination remains a harsh reality for many Australian women, who continue to experience unfair treatment in the workplace and other spheres of life. Australian Government and state and territory government anti-discrimination legislation and policies uphold Australia’s commitment to equal rights for women.

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

The Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) (the Act) is the overriding legislation for making discrimination against women unlawful. The Act gives effect to Australia’s obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and certain aspects of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 156. The Act prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital or relationship status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding, sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status, in the areas of work, accommodation, education, the provision of goods, facilities and services, the disposal of land, the activities of clubs and the administration of Commonwealth laws and programmes. It also prohibits discrimination on the ground of family responsibilities in the area of work and prohibits sexual harassment in the workplace, in educational institutions and in other areas of public activity; and promotes the principle of gender equality.

All states and territories have anti-discrimination legislation in addition to the Act. However, any state or territory law or part of a law that is inconsistent with the Act is invalid, under section 109 of the Australian Constitution.

In 2011, significant amendments to the Act came into effect, including:

- ensuring that protections from sex discrimination apply equally to women and men;
- prohibiting direct discrimination against male and female employees on the ground of family responsibilities, in all areas of employment;
- strengthening protections against sexual harassment in workplaces and schools and prohibiting sexual harassment conducted through new technologies; and
- establishing breastfeeding as a separate ground of discrimination, allowing measures to protect and accommodate the needs of breastfeeding mothers.
The Australian Human Rights Commission can investigate and conciliate complaints of breaches, including complaints of direct and indirect discrimination and sexual harassment. In 2012–13, the Commission received 417 complaints and finalised 533 complaints under the Act. Of these complaints, 21% concerned sexual harassment. Complaints under the Act account for approximately 20% of total complaints received by the Commission.

In 2013, the Act was amended to provide new protections from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status.

The *Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Bill 2013*:

- provided new protections against discrimination on the basis of a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status;
- extended the ground of ‘marital status’ to ‘marital or relationship status’;
- qualified the exemptions for religious organisations to the effect that it does not apply to conduct connected with the provision of Commonwealth-funded aged care services;
- extended the list of circumstances to be taken into account as part of the test for sexual harassment to include marital or relationship status, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status; and
- replaced references to ‘opposite sex’ with ‘different sex’, recognising that a person may be, or identify as, neither male nor female.

**Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012**

In November 2012, the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Amendment Bill passed in Parliament, with specific recognition that equal remuneration between women and men and support for women and men to take part in family and caring responsibilities are central to improving gender equality, and in particular women’s workforce participation. As a result, the objects of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* now cover men in relation to caring responsibilities and equal remuneration, support for the removal of barriers to full and equal participation of women in the workplace, and promotion of the elimination of discrimination on the basis of gender.

The principal objects of the Workplace Gender Equality Act are:

- to promote and improve employment and workplace gender equality (including equal remuneration) to support employers to remove barriers to the full and equal workforce participation of women, in recognition of the disadvantaged position of women in relation to employment matters;
- to promote, amongst employers, the elimination of discrimination on the basis of gender in relation to employment matters (including in relation to family and caring responsibilities);
- to foster workplace consultation between employers and employees on issues concerning gender equality in employment and in the workplace; and
- to improve the productivity and competitiveness of Australian business.
Equal opportunity practices are encouraged to ensure women have merit based equal access to employment and employee provisions. Australia does not rely on targets or quotas. However, a new reporting framework requires private non-public sector employers of over 100 staff to report annually to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (the Agency). Data collected covers the gender composition of the workforce and governing bodies, equal remuneration and terms and conditions which contribute to gender equality benchmarks against which businesses can monitor and compare their outcomes.

The overall proportion of employers reporting to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency increased from 70% in 2011–12, to 94% in 2012–13. Following a national workshop roadshow, 3,966 employers submitted compliance reports for 2012–13, and in October 2013, six organisations were listed as non-compliant, down from 13 in 2006.

**Fair Work Act 2009**

The Commonwealth *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)* improves measures aimed at delivering pay equity between women and men, providing for equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value. The provision also removes responsibility from the applicant to demonstrate the employer has discriminated against them in setting remuneration. The Fair Work Act includes ten national employment standards and modern awards providing employees with minimum protections including maximum weekly work hours, various types of leave, public holidays and that all modern awards and enterprise agreements must include model flexibility terms, allowing employers and individual employees to make individual flexibility arrangements that suit their particular needs, such as family responsibilities.

In June 2013, the Act was amended to broaden the category of employees who can request flexible work arrangements to include parents of all school-age children, and encompass all forms of family and carer responsibilities such as disability and elder care, as well for those employees experiencing or supporting an immediate family/household member who is experiencing violence in the family or household.

**Other avenues for promoting equal rights for women**

**Gender Equality Sex Discrimination Commission Priorities**

In 2010, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner launched the *Gender Equality Blueprint 2010*, setting five priority areas which significantly affect the lives of Australian women and men:

- balancing paid work and family and caring responsibilities
- ensuring women’s lifetime economic security
- promoting women in leadership
- preventing violence against women and sexual harassment, and
- strengthening national gender equality laws, agencies and monitoring.

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*111 Workplace Gender Equality (Matters in relation to Gender Equality Indicators) Instrument 2013 (No. 1)*
National Employment Standards

The Fair Work Act 2009 also provides a safety net of enforceable minimum employment terms and conditions through the National Employment Standards, which set minimum workplace entitlements applying to all employers and employees in the national workplace relations system from January 2010. The standards provide parents the right to request an extension of unpaid parental leave by a further 12 months, which can only be refused by the employer on reasonable business grounds.

Fair Work Commission

The Fair Work Commission is the national workplace relations tribunal. It is an independent body with power to carry out a range of functions relating to employment and workplace matters such as minimum wages, employment conditions, industrial action, and dispute resolution. The Fair Work Commission conducts regular reviews on superannuation funds, minimum wages and wage awards.

Social and Community Sector Workers Equal Remuneration Case

The introduction of the Fair Work Act provided a new broader test for equal pay on the basis of equal or comparable work. In February 2012, Fair Work Australia made an historic decision to increase wages in the social and community services sector from 1 December 2012 for social workers, carers and child protection workers. Fair Work Australia awarded all workers in the social and community services sector equal rates of pay, finding that their work had been undervalued on the basis of gender.

The decision will affect around 25,000 workers across Australia. The Australian Government supported the case of social and community sector workers before Fair Work Australia and will support the cost of the increases to organisations who deliver in-scope programmes through Commonwealth-State Agreements, at a cost of around $2.8 billion.

Support for community legal services

The Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department administers the Community Legal Services Programme, which includes funding (A$5 million in 2013–14) to community legal centres specifically for assistance to women, including:

- A$3.1 million for 11 Women’s Legal Services. These services provide legal information, advice and casework to women, offering state-wide services through telephone advice lines. They also undertake community legal education and law reform activities in relation to family law, violence against women and children, discrimination, and employment.
- A$1.2 million for eight community legal centres for Indigenous Women’s Projects. This funding is provided to help address the particular legal service needs of Indigenous women.
- A$0.7 million for eight generalist community legal centres for rural women’s outreach services. This funding enables the employment of rural women’s outreach lawyers to assist women in rural and remote areas, particularly where isolation is exacerbated by factors such as disability, age, and domestic violence.

• A$1.01 million for 16 community legal centres to help increase assistance for victims of family violence and raise awareness of victims’ rights including women and their children.

The Australian Government is providing A$74.6 million in 2013–14 for Aboriginal Legal Services across Australia to deliver culturally sensitive, appropriate, accessible, equitable, efficient and effective legal assistance and related services to Indigenous Australians, so that they can fully exercise their legal rights as Australian citizens. This includes legal assistance for women. In 2012–13, the Aboriginal Legal Services provided assistance to 61,373 women across urban, regional and remote areas.

**Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media**

Commercial and subscription broadcasting services in Australia are provided under a co-regulatory legal framework that recognises the importance of ensuring that radio and television content reflects community standards and provides a means by which the community can formally express its views to such broadcasters.

**Key initiatives**

**Industry codes of practice**

The [Australian Communications and Media Authority](https://www.acma.gov.au) (ACMA), the independent industry regulator, oversees the development of industry codes of practice by the various broadcasting sectors. Most aspects of programme content are governed by codes of practice developed by industry groups representing the various broadcasting sectors. The ACMA registers codes once it is satisfied that broadcasters have undertaken public consultation and the codes contain appropriate community safeguards.

The codes of practice for free to-air television, subscription television and commercial radio all proscribe that broadcasters may not broadcast a programme which is likely to provoke or perpetuate intense dislike, serious contempt or severe ridicule against a person or group of persons on the grounds of gender (among other things). In addition, the [Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice](https://www.acma.gov.au/en/code-practice/commercial-television-industry-code-practice) provides that news and current affairs programmes broadcast on free-to-air commercial television should not portray any person or group of persons in a negative light by placing gratuitous emphasis on gender (among other things).

In addition, the [Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice Advisory Note—The Portrayal of Women and Men](https://www.acma.gov.au/en/code-practice/commercial-television-industry-code-practice-advisory-note-the-portrayal-of-women-and-men) and the [Commercial Radio Codes of Practice Guidelines and Explanatory Notes](https://www.acma.gov.au/en/code-practice/commercial-radio-codes-practice-guidelines-explanatory-notes) indicate that programmes on commercial free-to-air broadcasting services should avoid encouraging or endorsing inaccurate, demeaning or discriminatory references or descriptions, stereotyping or unwarranted generalisation in describing and portraying women (and men) of any age. The advisory note and guidelines also encourage a better balance in the use of women and men as experts and authorities, and to give more prominence to the achievements of women in areas such as sport.
National broadcasting services

The Australian Government provides an overall level of funding for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), but has no power to direct the ABC or SBS in relation to operational matters. Parliament has guaranteed this independence to ensure that what is broadcast is free of political interference. Internal ABC and SBS programming and editorial decisions are the responsibility of the ABC and SBS boards and executive.

The ABC and SBS boards are required to develop codes of practice relating to programming matters and to lodge these codes with the ACMA. The ABC Code requires that programmes broadcast must avoid the unjustified use of stereotypes or discriminatory content that could reasonably be interpreted as condoning or encouraging prejudice. The SBS Code states that the representation of women in programming should not create or reinforce stereotypes regarding sexuality, gender or race. SBS will avoid broadcasting programmes that suggest that the exploitation of women is acceptable.

Advertising

The Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) is the self-regulatory body for the advertising industry in Australia. Under the AANA's Code of Ethics, there are two sections of relevance to gender stereotyping and equality, namely advertising shall not portray people or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of gender (among other things); and advertising should not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people.

Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment

The Australian Government is committed to addressing gender inequality in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment. This includes through key initiatives aimed at addressing the shortfall in women's participation in the resources sector, empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women through employment programs that incorporate both natural and cultural values of traditional country and achieving better outcomes for women living in regional, remote and rural Australia.

Key initiatives

National Rural Women’s Coalition

The Australian Government funds a range of national women’s alliances, including the National Rural Women’s Coalition which represents over 250,000 rural, regional and remote Australian women, their families, communities and associated networks to ensure better social and economic outcomes for women living in regional, remote and rural Australia. The National Rural Women’s Coalition provides a channel to advocate for rural, remote and regional issues and works to ensure the rural perspective is accurately reflected in all emerging policies.
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance

The Australian Government also funds the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Alliance which aims to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and advocate for policy interventions into issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Women in the resources sector

The Australian Government is partnering with the resources industry on a number of initiatives to address the shortfall in women’s participation in this sector. For example, the Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council Women in Industry web portal, launched in March 2014, is a first point of contact for women in the construction and property services industry sectors, from entry level to senior management, to network, find information and meet industry ambassadors.

The Government also supports the Australian Women in Resources Alliance through the National Resource Sector Workforce Strategy, a federal government and industry funded national framework to facilitate the increased attraction and retention of women in the resources workforce. Women in the earlier stages of their resource sector careers can now benefit from a best practice e-mentoring programme that connects them with experienced mining, oil and gas professionals. The Alliance’s baseline report, Gender Diversity in the Australian Resource Industry, is available at www.amma.org.au.

Recognition of the value of women in the workforce is growing within traditional industries. The first annual Women in the Energy Industry conference held in April 2013 in Canberra, demonstrates the insight the industry has developed on women and apprenticeships, research and career pathways to non-traditional roles.

Working on Country

The Australian Government’s Working on Country programme provides employment for Indigenous rangers to manage the natural and cultural values of traditional country. This work reflects the aspirations of Indigenous people to care for land, sea and cultural heritage. The programme is on track to meet the published target of 730 Indigenous rangers employed by July 2015.

The programme commenced in 2007 with a majority of the ranger positions occupied by men. By 2013, 34% of all positions (full time, part-time and casual) were taken up by Indigenous women rangers. This expanding participation resulted from increased flexibility in working hours to allow for women’s broader role in community and family as well as the implementation of policy initiatives.

Extensive consultation with Indigenous women recognised the role of women in land and sea management, advocated the funding of additional women’s ranger groups and promoted the employment of women in existing funded ranger teams.

Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child

Policy context

Most children and young people in Australia grow up in a safe, healthy and positive environment. However, there are groups of vulnerable Australian children—children experiencing homelessness or mental health issues, children with disability, Indigenous children, and children in immigration detention, can be particularly at risk.
Key initiatives

The Australian Human Rights Commission has undertaken a number of major projects to draw community attention to the serious human rights challenges facing vulnerable groups of children, develop research into key issues affecting children and young people, and monitor how Australia meets its international human rights commitments to children and young people to complement the important work of State and Territory Children’s Commissioners and Guardians.

Australia’s national framework to protect children

The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020 (the National Framework) is a partnership between the Australian Government, state and territory governments and the community sector to improve the safety and wellbeing of Australia’s children and aims to deliver substantial and sustained reduction in child abuse and neglect over time. The National Framework is implemented through a series of three year action plans. The ‘Responding to Sexual Abuse’ priority is one of six national priorities under the Second Action Plan working towards ensuring that child sexual abuse and exploitation is prevented and survivors receive adequate support. However in regards to sexual abuse, in all jurisdictions, girls are more likely to be the subject of a substantiation of sexual abuse than boys (17% and 8%, respectively).

In 2012, actions under the First Action Plan (2009–12) of the National Framework were finalised, and the Second Action Plan 2012–15 was endorsed by the Standing Council on Community and Disability Services.

The Australian Government provides funding to help raise community awareness and to prevent child sexual abuse, including through:

- the Australian Institute of Family Studies, for research into the prevention and early Intervention in child sexual abuse, which focuses on understanding the risk and causal factors of child sexual abuse perpetration;
- Bravehearts for Ditto’s Keep Safe Adventure Show, a live 30-minute production, aimed at children in the early years of school, that teaches children strategies and skills to stay safe in a range of situations from sexual assault to bullying, and White Balloon Day, an annual event to raise awareness about child sexual assault and empower survivors to break their silence;
- National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, for National Child Protection Week, an annual campaign developing multimedia, visual and text resources to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of primary prevention in dealing with the challenges of child abuse and neglect in Australia;
- Child Aware Approaches funding under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, to implement 43 projects to address risk factors for child abuse and neglect including the Child Aware Approaches Conference which was held in April 2013 to showcase best practice;
- Find and Connect support services in every Australian state and territory to help the estimated 500,000 Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants trace their families and access support services;

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• the first National Children’s Commissioner, appointed in March 2013;

• the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was established in January 2013 to investigate how institutions responsible for children have responded to allegations of child sexual abuse. The Government is investing $45 million until 2015–16 for community-based support services for those affected; and

• In 2013 the Senate Community Affairs Committee conducted an inquiry into Involuntary or Coerced Sterilisation of People with Disabilities in Australia. The two reports tabled in parliament recommended, amongst other things, that for a person with a disability who has the capacity to consent, or to consent where provided with appropriate decision-making support, sterilisation should be banned unless undertaken with that consent, and that this be recognised in state and territory legislation. The Australian Government is currently considering the recommendations in these reports.

Children’s Rights Commissioner

In 2013, Australia’s first National Children’s Commissioner, Ms Megan Mitchell, was appointed to the Australian Human Rights Commission. The Children’s Commissioner is a strong advocate for the rights of children and young people across Australia and will help ensure that their voices are heard by decision-makers and the community. The Commissioner has consulted widely with children and young people and their representatives, and released the Children’s Rights Report (2013) which examines the key international human rights treaty on children’s rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its implementation in Australia, and shows how children are faring in Australia.

Legislation to protect children

In 2006, the Australian Government introduced amendments to its Family Law Act 1975, which included a new emphasis on the right of the child to know both parents and be protected from harm. The reforms created a presumption of shared parental responsibility after separation where this is in the child’s best interests. They also include a compulsory dispute resolution requirement before parenting matters can be filed in court, with exceptions to ensure safety of all parties, particularly when there are allegations of family violence.

Further amendments to the Family Law Act in 2011 were focused on family violence. Those amendments sought to remove disincentives to the disclosure of family violence, improve the understanding of family violence and abuse, and streamline the provisions relating to the reporting of family violence and child abuse to make reporting simpler and remove duplication. The changes introduced a new definition of family violence, which includes examples of harmful behaviours such as physical assault, emotional manipulation, economic abuse, and threatening behaviour. The definition is closely aligned with the definition recommended by the Australian and New South Wales Law Reform Commissions in their report, Family Violence – A National Legal Response. The changes continue to promote a child’s right to a meaningful relationship with both parents, but emphasise that the child's safety must come first in situations where there is conflict.

In Australia, sterilisation of a child with disabilities must be authorised by a court or tribunal. Application for authorisation may be sought under the Act or relevant state or territory legislation.
Addressing female genital mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is recognised by the United Nations and other international organisations as a violation of women’s and girls’ human rights. In December 2012, the United Nations General Assembly, supported by Australia, adopted its first resolution on FGM aimed at increasing efforts globally to end the practice (GA/11331).

In Australia, the criminalisation of FGM is a matter for the states and territories. All states and territories in Australia have enacted legislation that makes it a criminal offence to perform FGM, and to remove a child from the state or territory in which they live for the purpose of performing FGM. The maximum penalties range from 7 to 21 years’ imprisonment.

Activities to address FGM in Australia began in the 1990s, and included a Commonwealth programme to support state and territory FGM education projects and the enactment of legislation against FGM in all states and territories. Bipartisan and cross sectoral action to increase efforts on FGM is currently being taken through all health departments and at the Commonwealth level.

Health agencies from all jurisdictions have been working together to share information and best practice on addressing FGM, including providing culturally appropriate and sensitive support to those affected.

Measures to address FGM in Australia

The Australian Government Departments of Health, Immigration, Foreign Affairs and Social Services and the Attorney-General’s Department have initiated recent action to address FGM, including:

- In early 2013, the Attorney-General’s Department undertook a review of Australia’s legal framework to ensure that FGM is comprehensively criminalised in Australia. The review found that Australia’s laws are effective in criminalising FGM and made several recommendations aimed at further strengthening these laws. The Standing Council on Law and Justice agreed to all of these recommendations on 5 April 2013.

- In April 2013, Australia held a National Summit on Female Genital Mutilation, bringing together government, non-government, health, legal and community representatives to share expertise and discuss a national way forward on FGM. The Summit resulted in commitment to action across multiple sectors, including through a National Compact on Female Genital Mutilation. The National Compact reinforces Australia’s position that the practice FGM is illegal and will not be tolerated, and encourages collaboration to support the girls and women affected by FGM and to help communities abandon the practice.

- The Australian Government Department of Health has funded 15 projects aimed at supporting the development of education materials on FGM. The majority of the projects are expected to be completed in mid to late 2014, and the outcomes could inform consideration of future work on FGM at the Commonwealth level. Project activities include the development of community based education workshops, continuing professional development for health workers and an on-line national resource centre.

- The Australian Migrant and Refugee Women’s Alliance conducted a roundtable on FGM in 2013, which was attended by a number of Commonwealth agencies including the Department of Health.
Australia’s international actions on FGM

Australia will continue to advocate for the elimination of FGM internationally. Following on from the UN General Assembly resolution, Australia joined 87 other States in a statement to the 23rd session of the UN Human Rights Council calling on the Council to address the issue in its future work. Australia will continue to work actively internationally to ensure FGM remains on the international human rights agenda.

Australia welcomed the historic Agreed Conclusions on preventing violence against women and girls at the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2013.

The 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2014 reinforced these Agreed Conclusions. The Agreed Conclusions emphasise the need for policies and programmes that enable girls to take responsibility for their own lives, including through the elimination of FGM. Consistent with the Agreed Conclusions, Australia recognises that custom, tradition or religious consideration should play no part in denying women equal rights or justifying violence against them.

Australia has also strengthened its consular response to managing cases involving FGM. This has included improving guidance and training for consular officers at post on the reporting of cases and the provision of support to victims. The Smartraveller website has also been updated to provide targeted information about FGM for Australian travellers, including alerts that Australian laws have extraterritorial application. Smartraveller also offers information to the public on reporting suspected cases of FGM, and support services for victims.

Australia has continued to advocate for the elimination of FGM internationally, through its Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls and international human rights treaties. Following on from the UN General Assembly resolution, Australia joined 87 other States in a statement to the 23rd session of the UN Human Rights Council calling on the Council to address the issue in its future work and has been active internationally to ensure FGM remains on the international human rights agenda.

More recently, Australia supported a resolution put forward by the African Group to the United Nations Human Rights Council calling for a High Level Panel Discussion on FGM at its 26th Session, taking place in 2014.

Addressing early and forced marriage in Australia

Australia considers forced marriage to be a slavery-like practice. It comprises a marriage in which one or both parties do not fully and freely consent to the marriage because of coercion, threat or deception. In March 2013, the Australian Parliament passed the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Slavery, Slavery-like Conditions and People Trafficking) Act 2013. This Act recognises forced marriage as a serious form of exploitation, akin to a slavery-like practice, and ensures that Australia meets our international legal obligations to prevent forced marriage and protect and support the victims.

The Act amended the Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995 to establish new offences of causing a person to enter into a forced marriage and being a party to a forced marriage. The offences carry a maximum penalty of four years’ imprisonment, or seven years’ imprisonment for an aggravated offence, including where the victim is under 18 years of age. The forced marriage offences capture a range of marriage and marriage-like relationships, including registered relationships and those formed by cultural and religious ceremonies. The intention is to target marriages or relationships where there is some identifiable point in time at which the victim’s lack of consent can be assessed, be that at a ceremony or through the act of registering a relationship.
The offences apply where the marriage occurs in Australia, where the victim or the spouse is brought to Australia to get married, or where the victim is taken overseas to be married. The offences can apply to any person with a role in bringing about the forced marriage, including families, friends, wedding planners or marriage celebrants. It is our hope that the criminalisation of forced marriage will encourage and empower victims, their family members, and their friends to come forward to report the crime and seek help from authorities.

Australia also has other legislation relevant to early and forced marriage. The *Marriage Act 1961* includes provisions whereby a marriage may be void if the consent of a party was not real, or if a party was not of marriageable age. The Marriage Act permits a marriage where a person is aged between 16–18 years, where there is parental consent or an Australian court order is in force from a judge or magistrate authorising the marriage. In addition to the criminal framework Australia also has in place civil measures to prevent children being taken overseas for the purposes of exploitation. The Federal Circuit Court of Australia can make orders to:

- prevent a passport being issued for a child;
- require a person to deliver a child or accompanying adult’s passport to the court;
- restrain the removal of a child from Australia; and
- request that the Australian Federal Police place the child’s name on the Airport Watch List.

**Support for victims of early and forced marriage**

Australia recognises the importance of providing appropriate support and assistance to victims of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices through the Support for Trafficked People Programme.

Possible victims are referred to a specialist Human Trafficking Team for assessment and, where appropriate, entry to the Support Programme. The Support Programme provides intensive support, including access to accommodation, financial assistance, legal and migration advice, training and social support. If the victim is a minor, he or she is referred to the relevant State or Territory child protection authority for appropriate assistance.

Victims of forced marriage are also eligible to access the Australian Government’s Human Trafficking Visa Framework. The Visa Framework allows victims of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices to remain in Australia lawfully if they are not an Australian citizen or resident and do not hold a valid visa. These protection and support frameworks are complemented by federal legislation to protect vulnerable witnesses and victims giving evidence in Commonwealth criminal proceedings. The legislation also makes it an offence to publish material identifying a victim of specified crimes, including forced marriage. The protections apply automatically to victims of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like offences in recognition of the extreme forms of trauma and exploitation they have experienced.

**Community awareness of early and forced marriage**

The Australian Government is continuing to work in consultation with stakeholders to make the community aware of early and forced marriage issues, including by delivering presentations about forced marriage to vulnerable groups, and developing a series of awareness materials on early and forced marriage, including in relevant community languages, and incorporating information about forced marriage in the training provided to civil celebrants. As part of this process, Australia is working to clarify community understanding, including on the differences between arranged marriage and forced marriage, and that the new forced marriage offences do not target any particular community or religious group.
Cooperation with UN member states on early and forced marriage issues

Australia is working to address the transnational elements of early and forced marriage. The Australian Federal Police maintains an extensive international network of officers posted to Australia’s overseas Embassies, Consulates and High Commissioners. The officers provide a conduit for Australian and overseas law enforcement agencies to exchange information and progress investigations. As part of its management of Australia’s visa system, officers of the Department of Immigration and Border Protection responsible for screening processes are also trained to be aware of the indicators of forced marriage.

The Attorney-General’s Department has also worked with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to update its Consular Operations Handbook to include guidance for consular officers on the management of forced marriage cases, including specific advice regarding the complexities and sensitivities of cases involving minors. Australia also continues to advocate at the international level, including at the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and the 2011 Commonwealth Law Ministers’ Meeting, both of which were hosted by Australia. Australia has also engaged on these issues with United Nations forums such as UN General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women.
Section Three — Data and Statistics

The Australian Government is committed to strengthening national legislation, policies and programmes to empower women and continues to take action to improve the collection, analysis and dissemination of relevant sex-disaggregated data.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

COAG promotes policy reforms that are of national significance, or which need co-ordinated action by all Australian governments. The 2013 COAG Reform Council report Tracking equity: Comparing outcomes for women and girls across Australia highlights outcomes for women and girls, examining:

- education and training outcomes and post-school study and work prospects;
- participation in the labour force, as well as leadership and pay equality;
- health outcomes and use of health services;
- use of homelessness services, and the reasons why women need them;
- whether women with disability are receiving support for economic and social participation; and
- the contribution of women as carers, and the impacts on economic participation and wellbeing.

The report shows that girls and young women have achieved equity in education but gaps remain in workforce participation. The COAG Reform Council found that while Australian women lead healthy and long lives, more needs to be done to address inequalities for disadvantaged Australians.

Australia’s national statistical agency

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (the ABS) is Australia’s official national statistical agency. The ABS collects national and regional data to encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the community on all areas of policy.

The ABS collects data by sex in all of its household surveys and a number of administrative datasets. As a result, a wide range of gender-disaggregated data is available. The Australian Census of Population and Housing and ABS demographic data provide benchmark information on population numbers, distribution and characteristics.

Other ABS datasets contain gender-disaggregated information on issues of interest such as labour force, education and training, time use, crime and safety, health and wellbeing, sport and recreation, economic wellbeing, disability, ageing, and carers.

Gender Indicators

The ABS has carriage for the ongoing development and updates of the Australian Gender Indicators and hosts releases of the Indicators on its website. A Gender Statistics Advisory Group has been established by the ABS and is regularly consulted to inform the ongoing development and maintenance of gender statistics, with representation from the Office for Women, other Australian Government agencies, state and territory governments and academics.
The ABS is a member of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe international task force on indicators of gender equality, to select indicators for measuring a country’s progress on gender equality; improve the monitoring of gender equality in the Europe region by consolidating and systematising the existing proliferation of gender-relevant statistical indicators; and propose ways for sustainable data collection on selected indicators.

Australia’s set of gender indicators, *Gender Indicators, Australia*, provides a report card on gender equality across six important policy areas:

- **economic security** describes the working population, earnings, housing and economic situation;
- **education** describes attainment, participation and engagement in education and employment;
- **health** describes overall health status, cause of death, risk factors and use of health services;
- **work and family balance** describes time usage, time stress, volunteering and care provision;
- **democracy, governance and citizenship** describes leadership and outstanding service; and
- **safety and justice** describes offenders, victims and imprisonments and draws on the [Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4905.0) to report on women’s experience of violence, harassment or stalking.

The sixth issue of *Gender Indicators, Australia* was released in February 2014. It contains updated data from the 2012 ABS Personal Safety Survey and the 2012 ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. The Australian Gender Indicators are updated six monthly to include new data, indicators and commentary where available, as well as further disaggregation by populations of interest or geography as required and where possible. The development and release of the Indicators moves Australia towards international best practice in reporting and monitoring gender equality. The Indicators are also used to inform and improve on Australia’s international reporting obligations including the four yearly reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

### Indicators on violence against women

Both the ABS Personal Safety Survey and the [Crime Victimisation Survey](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4905.0) collect information about the nature and extent of violence experienced by men and women in Australia. The Personal Safety Survey collects information via a personal face-to-face interview about a person’s experience of violence by men and women including: sexual and physical assault and threat; partner violence and emotional abuse; stalking; and sexual harassment. The survey measures the **nature and extent of violence against men and women and the effects of this violence**. The ABS [Safety and Justice commentary, Experience of Violence and Stalking](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4905.0) data, has also been updated with data from the 2012 ABS Personal Safety Survey.

The collection of such sensitive data is both complex and challenging. The accuracy of statistics can be affected if respondents feel threatened by providing information or if they are concerned that the information might be used against the perpetrator. To collect high quality data on violence against women and men, the ABS collects information whilst helping to ensure the safety of both respondents and interviewers. The ABS also contributed to the development of the WHO Guidelines, *Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women*, which provide guidance for the collection of sensitive data. The ABS follows these best practice guidelines.

In addition, the Australian Human Rights Commission report, *Working without fear: Results of the Sexual Harassment National Telephone Survey* (2012) discusses the prevalence, nature and reporting of sexual harassment in Australian workplaces over the past five years.
Section Four — Australia’s priorities for gender equality and the empowerment of women

The Australian Government recognises and values the many roles women carry out in work and in their communities as co-contributors to the economic and social well-being of Australia. The Australian Government is committed to improving and enriching the lives of women to enable them to participate equally in all aspects of Australian life.

The Australian Government has comprehensive support systems in place, to provide a safety net against poverty for women and their children, as well as services and financial assistance for those in financial hardship due to caring roles or because of other barriers to participation such as age, disability, locational disadvantage or language barriers. As part of these efforts, we are looking at ways to better collect disaggregated data to support monitoring and evaluation of policy and programmes.

The Office for Women coordinates the Australian Government’s agenda on gender equality as a portfolio responsibility of the Prime Minister. The Office for Women takes a whole-of-government approach to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women through four pillars—safety for women, women’s economic empowerment, women’s leadership and support Australia’s international engagement and reporting obligations.

Priority One—Safety for women

The Australian Government has a zero tolerance policy on violence against women and is committed to delivering programmes that address, and seek to eliminate, violence against women. However, violence against women continues to be one of the most serious causes and consequences of inequality, and one of the key risk factors for women entering poverty and disadvantage.

- 1.2 million women and girls aged over 15 years have experienced domestic or family violence.

- Violence against women and their children is estimated to cost the Australian economy around $13.6 billion a year in pain, suffering, premature death and financial costs. This is estimated to grow to $15.6 billion in 2021–22.\textsuperscript{114}

The Department of Social Services has lead responsibility for the Australian Government’s policy to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in the levels of violence against women and their children. The Department works with the Office for Women and other portfolios to advance gender equality and improve the status and wellbeing of women in Australia, through the implementation of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022.

Australia’s Commonwealth, state and territory governments, the non-government sector and civil society are collaborating through this 12-year framework, to uphold the human rights of Australian women, coordinate action across jurisdictions at a systemic level, and achieve long-term sustainable cultural change. For further information on Australian Government efforts to reduce violence against women, see Section One at 2 and Section Two at page 29.

Australia’s work to eradicate violence against women, and to achieve gender equality more broadly, does not stop at our own borders. The Australian Government has identified gender equality as a critical cross cutting theme of Australia’s aid programme and remains committed to remain a persistent advocate and practical supporter of gender equality. Three of 10 development objectives of the aid programme specifically address gender equality and women’s empowerment. These are empowering women to participate in the economy, leadership and education saving the lives of poor women through the provision of quality maternal health care services; and enabling more girls to attend schools.

Australia’s approach to promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment through the aid programme is detailed in the Gender Thematic Strategy Promoting opportunities for all—Gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls, works to ensure that the empowerment of women and girls is a central focus of Australia’s diplomatic, development and national security concerns. By advocating internationally for women’s equal participation in political, economic and social affairs, the Ambassador advances global progress, peace and stability.

Australia is an active participant in determining the post-2015 development agenda. In particular, the Australian Government remains committed to supporting progress on the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, with a focus on the need for full recognition of women and girls’ human rights, and international action to eliminate and prevent violence against women and girls and harmful traditional practices such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Australia is committed to promoting the Women, Peace and Security agenda across the breadth of our work in the United Nations Security Council. We are working actively to support efforts to prevent and address sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, and to promote the early involvement of women in conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building. Australia also recognises the disproportionate impact that human trafficking, slavery and related slavery-like practices such as forced marriage have on women and girls and is committed to combating these crimes at both a domestic and international level. For example, beginning in 2013, a new 5-year investment, the Australia-Asia Programme to Combat Trafficking in Persons, builds on previous achievements in strengthening criminal justice responses, to reduce the incentives and opportunities for human trafficking in the Association of South East Asian Nations region.
Priority Two—Economic empowerment

In Australia, women’s economic outcomes over the life course are affected by a diverse range of intersecting factors, including earning less than an equivalent male counterpart, working part time and having fewer years in the paid workforce due to caring responsibilities. Women can also become more vulnerable to economic stress in later life, through lower accumulated wealth or superannuation savings, or ill-health, divorce or other significant life changes.

- 58.6% of working age women (aged 15–64 years) are employed compared with 71.2% of men.  

- Indigenous women are less likely to participate in the labour-force (49.3%) than Indigenous men (61.6%).

- Australian women who work full-time earn on average 17.2% less than men.

- Eliminating the gender wage gap is estimated to be worth $93 billion to the Australian economy and closing the workforce participation gap between women and men could boost gross domestic product by a further $25 billion (or 11% of GDP).

- The average superannuation balance held by women is $92,000, 40% lower than the average held by men ($154,000).

The Australian Government’s agenda to support women’s economic empowerment includes a focus on increasing women’s workforce participation, assisting women in business, and addressing the gender pay gap. The Australian Government supports women and men to have more choices in balancing paid work and caring responsibilities through the Paid Parental Leave Scheme and a focus on making child care more accessible and affordable.

The Paid Parental Leave Scheme aims to encourage women’s ongoing connection to the workforce as well as to enhance the health and development of birth mothers and children. The Scheme provides financial support to help primary carers to take time off work after the birth or adoption of a child. The Australian Government is developing a significantly more generous expanded Paid Parental Leave scheme to be introduced from 1 July 2015.

The Australian Government is implementing a National Disability Insurance Scheme to improve outcomes for people living with permanent and significant disability, their families and carers.

The Disability Insurance Scheme aims to provide choice and control to the individual, and takes a whole-of-life approach to the support needed to live more independently and work towards achieving participants goals and aspirations with a focus on social and economic participation.

115 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Social Trends, Oct 2013, cat no 4102.0
117 ABS, Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Labour Force Estimate, 2011, cat no 6287.0, Table 6
118 ABS, Average Weekly Earnings, Nov 2013, cat no 6302.0, Table 1 persons 21 years+, employed full time, ordinary time earnings
119 NATSEM, The impact of a sustained gender wage gap on the Australian economy, 2009 p25
121 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Social Trends, March 2009, cat no 4102.0
The *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* sets out six *Gender Equality Indicators* with outcomes for measuring progress on gender equality in the workplace. For further information on the indicators, see Section Three (page 67). The Workplace Gender Equality Agency tools and educational resources assist private sector organisations to understand and comply with reporting requirements.

The Australian Government is also committed to promoting women’s leadership and economic empowerment in the Pacific region, recognising that expanding women’s participation and access to opportunities is central to sustained economic and social development.

Australia’s approach is based on strong partnerships in the Pacific and links to implementation of the 2012 Pacific Leaders’ Gender Equality Declaration.\(^{122}\)

**Priority Three—Women's leadership**

Women in Australia have more employment opportunities and are more educated than ever before. However, gender equality in the workplace has yet to be achieved.

Reducing the disparity between men and women in leadership roles has the potential to counter existing stereotypes about the role of women and men, both at work and in wider society. Barriers to increased representation of women at senior levels include the availability of quality part time work, inadequate family friendly or flexible work conditions and a male oriented culture in the workplace.

In senior leadership positions, men outnumber women across the public and private sectors, as well as in the upper and lower houses of federal parliament. There has been steady progress in the representation of women at senior leadership levels in the Australian Public Service over the past 20 years, however, women continue to be under-represented in senior roles compared with men.

- Women make up 39% of senior executive positions in the Australian Public Service.
- In June 2013, Australia met its 2015 target for the proportion of women on its boards. Women held 41.7% of Government board positions (up from 35.3% in 2011).
- However, only 15.4% of women participate on ASX 200 public company boards, and the proportion of women CEOs remains below 5% in ASX 200 companies.\(^{123}\)

The Australian Government is committed to improving gender diversity in leadership and decision-making roles, particularly in terms of changing our workplace culture and achieving sustained change. The Government models good practice through positioning women in senior parliamentary roles. For example, the Hon Julie Bishop MP was appointed Australia’s first female Foreign Minister in September 2013, Ms Natasha Stott Despoja was appointed Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls in December 2013 and on 24 June 2010, Julia Gillard became Australia’s 27\(^{th}\) Prime Minister, having previously served as Australia’s first female Deputy Prime Minister.\(^{124}\)

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\(^{122}\) Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *43rd Pacific Islands Forum Communiqué*, Annex 1

\(^{123}\) Australian Institute of Company Directors, *ASX 200 Snapshot Report 2012*

\(^{124}\) McCann and Wilson, Representation of women in Australian parliaments, 2014, accessed at www.aph.gov.au
The Government engages actively with stakeholders in the government, business and community sectors to support women’s leadership representation on boards, including on government boards and in public service.

The Office for Women coordinates government support to help ensure that women’s voices, particularly marginalised women’s voices, are heard and that genuine choices can be delivered. The Australian Government funds the National Women’s Alliances (the Alliances) to advocate on behalf of women from across Australia, engage with Government to ensure good policy outcomes for women, and increase leadership and representation opportunities. For example, the Alliance’s provide resources to support women’s leadership, including an online learning and networking programme for rural women, and initiatives to increase participation of women in local government at both senior management and elected representative levels. Other initiatives targeted to building women’s participation as leaders, include online databases to help women to participate in Board roles, data collection and reporting through the Australian Census of Women in Leadership report and senior executive engagement to promote women’s leadership through the Male Champions of Change initiative. For further information see Section Two (page 49).

The Australian Government also recently launched the Australian Chapter of the Women in Public Service Project to support Australia’s future female leaders in the broader spheres of public service (including careers in government and community services, law reform and enforcement). The Australian Chapter will deliver a training institute to develop students’ strategic and critical leadership skills and a facilitated mentoring programme.

In the Indo-Pacific region, the Australian aid programme supports women’s leadership development and participation through a range of initiatives which include training, professional development and scholarships. For further information see Section Two (page 49).

Priority Four—International engagement and reporting

International engagement is central to Australia’s role as a good international citizen as well as benefiting Australia directly. International engagement provides important opportunities to advance and reinforce domestic priorities to advance gender equality and women’s rights.

The Office for Women works with agencies across Commonwealth, state and territory governments, to fulfill multiple ongoing international obligations relating to gender equality and to help ensure gender equality is mainstreamed across Australia’s international engagement efforts.

The Australian Government has a steadfast and ongoing commitment to be at the forefront of efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls globally. The Australian Government places a high priority on working with other countries, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, bilaterally and in international forums to promote progress for all women, no matter where they live in the world. Australia’s foreign policy and aid programme invests in targeted programmes to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment where there are persistent challenges and progress toward gender equality has been slow, including through a 10-year A$320 million initiative to help improve the political, economic and social opportunities of Pacific women.

Australia also actively participates in annual sessions of the United Nations’ Commission on the Status of Women, as well as APEC and Commonwealth forums on gender equality, to pursue bilateral engagement on issues of mutual concern and share best practice around issues such as violence against women.
### 1. ECONOMIC SECURITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN/Indicator</th>
<th>KEY SERIES</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>LATEST</th>
<th>UNIT</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour force</td>
<td>Labour force participation rate 20–74 yrs 2012–13^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment conditions</td>
<td>Employed persons, proportion employed part-time 20–74 yrs 2012–13^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underutilised labour</td>
<td>Unemployment rate 20–74 yrs 2012–13^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in labour force</td>
<td>Persons not in labour force 20–74 yrs 2012–13^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings (mean)</td>
<td>Non-managerial adult hourly ordinary time cash earnings (mean) 21+ yrs 2012^</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>31.20</td>
<td>35.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earnings (median)</td>
<td>Non-managerial adult hourly ordinary time cash earnings (median) 21+ yrs 2012^</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>26.90</td>
<td>29.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic resources</td>
<td>Persons living in low economic resource households 15+ yrs 2011–12^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main source of income at retirement</td>
<td>Persons not in labour force, main source of personal income is superannuation or annuity 65+ yrs 2011–12^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superannuation</td>
<td>No superannuation coverage 15–69 yrs 2007</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial stress</td>
<td>Persons, proportion living in households with one or more cash flow problems (a) 15+ yrs 2009–10</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing circumstances</td>
<td>Proportion living in low income household in rental stress (b)(c) 15+ yrs 2011–12^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN/Indicator</th>
<th>KEY SERIES</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
<th>LATEST</th>
<th>UNIT</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th>MALES</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 12 formal qualification at Certificate II or above</td>
<td>Attainment of Year 12 or formal qualification at Certificate II or above 20–24 yrs 2013^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-school qualification</td>
<td>Attainment of formal qualification at Certificate III or above 25–29 yrs 2013^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy / numeracy skills</td>
<td>Skills tested at level 1 and 2 (d) 15–64 yrs 2011–12^^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation and retention</td>
<td>Education participation rate (e) 15–24 yrs 2013^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in non-school qualification</td>
<td>Enrolment in Bachelor Degree or above 18–24 yrs 2013^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work related learning</td>
<td>Participation in work related learning in last 12 months 20–64 yrs 2013^^^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not fully engaged in education and/ or employment</td>
<td>Not fully engaged in education and/ or employment (f) 15–19 yrs 2013^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
### 3. HEALTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain/Indicator</th>
<th>Key Series</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Latest</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Female S</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
<td>Life expectancy at birth</td>
<td>0 yrs</td>
<td>2010–12^</td>
<td>years</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morbidity prevalence</td>
<td>Reporting one or more long term health conditions</td>
<td>All persons</td>
<td>2011–12</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with disability</td>
<td>Reporting disability</td>
<td>All persons</td>
<td>2012^</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological distress</td>
<td>Reporting high/ very high level of psychological distress</td>
<td>18+ yrs</td>
<td>2011–12</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>Reporting any 12-month mental disorder</td>
<td>16–85 yrs</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death rate</td>
<td>Death rate, all causes</td>
<td>All persons</td>
<td>2012^</td>
<td>/1,000</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaths from cancer</td>
<td>Death rate from cancer</td>
<td>All persons</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>/ 100,000</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>138.4</td>
<td>221.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaths from diseases of the circulatory system</td>
<td>Death rate from ischaemic heart disease</td>
<td>All persons</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>/100,000</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>109.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicides</td>
<td>Death rate from suicide</td>
<td>All persons</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>/ 100,000</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death in motor vehicle accidents</td>
<td>Death rate in motor vehicle accidents</td>
<td>All persons</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>/100,000</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug induced deaths</td>
<td>Drug induced death rate</td>
<td>All persons</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>/ 100,000</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perinatal Deaths</td>
<td>Perinatal deaths (g)</td>
<td>All births</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>/1,000 – (h)</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumption of Alcohol</td>
<td>Consumption of alcohol – exceeds lifetime risk (i)</td>
<td>18+ yrs</td>
<td>2011–12</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>Drug induced death rate</td>
<td>18+ yrs</td>
<td>2011–12</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight/obesity</td>
<td>Perinatal deaths (g)</td>
<td>18+ yrs</td>
<td>2011–12</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Exercise</td>
<td>Perinatal deaths (g)</td>
<td>18+ yrs</td>
<td>2011–12</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicare Services</td>
<td>Perinatal deaths (g)</td>
<td>All persons</td>
<td>2012–13</td>
<td>no.</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. WORK AND FAMILY BALANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain/Indicator</th>
<th>Key Series</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Latest</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Female S</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement in work (employment or unpaid)</td>
<td>Total time per day spent on work (employment related and unpaid)</td>
<td>15+ yrs</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>hh:mins</td>
<td>7:34</td>
<td>7:25</td>
<td>Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for children</td>
<td>Total time per day spent by parents to care for children</td>
<td>15+ yrs</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>hh:mins</td>
<td>8:33</td>
<td>3:55</td>
<td>Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing primary care to a person with a disability</td>
<td>Providing primary care to a person with a disability</td>
<td>15+ yrs</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided care to someone in the last week</td>
<td>Employed persons who provided care to someone in the last week</td>
<td>15+ yrs</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressed for time</td>
<td>Always/ often feel rushed or pressed for time</td>
<td>15+ yrs</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>Δ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work and family balance</td>
<td>Feel their work and family roles are rarely/ never in balance</td>
<td>15+ yrs</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering rates</td>
<td>Volunteering rate</td>
<td>18+ yrs</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>Δ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. SAFETY AND JUSTICE

Victims of violence and stalking
Experience of violence during the last 12 months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>2012^</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2013^</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18+ yrs</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victimisation rates
Rate of physical or threatened physical assault

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>2011–12^</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2013^</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15+ yrs</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Imprisonment rates
Imprisonment rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>2013^</th>
<th>/100,000</th>
<th>~</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18+ yrs</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>318.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Offender rates
Offender rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>2010–11</th>
<th>/ 100,000</th>
<th>~</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10+ yrs</td>
<td>833.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,959.3</td>
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</table>

6. DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND CITIZENSHIP

Leaders in top 200 ASX companies
Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in top 200 ASX companies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2014^</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parliamentarians
Federal parliamentarians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>2014^</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2013^</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Members of Government boards and bodies
Members of Commonwealth Government boards and bodies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>2013^</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2013^</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Australian Public Service senior and middle managers
Senior executive service (SES) managers in the Australian Public Service (APS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>2013^</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2013^</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Judges and magistrates
Commonwealth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2013^</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Order of Australia awards
Companion/Officer of the Order (AC/AO) (General) recipients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All recipients</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>2013^</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(\Delta\) includes historical commentary - see January 2013 release of Gender Indicators, Australia (cat. no. 4125.0).


\(^{^\text{a}}\) Series updated in this release.

\(^{^\text{b}}\) Series updated in this release. Prior to the February 2014 release of Gender Indicators, Australia, data for this series was sourced from the ABS Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, Australia, 2006 (cat. no. 4228.0). Because this survey has since been discontinued, this table now sources data from the ABS Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, Australia. For methodological reasons, data from these two surveys are not comparable. \(^{^\text{c}}\) age standardised

(a) household activities when constrained by shortage of money could be: went without meals; could not afford to heat home; could not pay electricity, gas or telephone bills on time etc.

(b) A household is considered to be in rental stress if its rental costs exceed 30 per cent of its gross income.

(c) Males and females aged 15 years and over, living in low income households in rental stress as a proportion of total population in the lowest two income quintiles of Equivalised Disposable Household Income.

(d) Skill level 2 and under reflects lower competency and levels 4 and 5 reflect higher competency.

(e) Includes persons enrolled in formal or non-formal learning.

(f) Those not fully engaged in education and/or employment are those who in the survey reference week were: not studying or working (and unemployed or not in the labour force); studying part-time and not working (unemployed or not in the labour force); or not studying but in part-time work.

(g) Perinatal deaths are all fetal deaths (at least 20 weeks gestation or at least 400 grams birth weight) plus all neonatal deaths (death of a live born baby within 28 completed days of birth). As male deaths include those perinatal deaths of sex indeterminate, only the total rate is presented.

(h) Calculated per 1,000 all births for the calendar year.

(i) Based on 2009 National Health Medical Research Council ’Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol’. The guidelines define what constitutes ‘risky’ alcohol consumption for males and females.

(j) Based on measured height and weight.

(k) In the last week.

(l) In Queensland, includes persons aged 17 years and over.