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Paid Parental Leave scheme – New Developments

The Paid Parental Leave scheme was introduced on 1 January 2011.

The Paid Parental Leave scheme provides Parental Leave Pay to support to eligible working parents to take time off work after a birth or adoption.

The Paid Parental Leave scheme currently provides 20 weeks of payment for a child, with 2 weeks reserved for each parent.

Under the amendments proposed in the Paid Parental Leave Amendment (More Support for Working Families) Bill 2023, subject to the passage of legislation, from 1 July 2024, 2 more weeks of payment will be added to Parental Leave Pay each year. This will increase the overall length of the Paid Parental Leave scheme by 6 weeks by July 2026.

By 2026, a total of 4 weeks will be reserved for each parent on a 'use it or lose' it basis. This will help to encourage greater sharing of care responsibilities.

The Bill will also increase the number of Parental Leave Pay days that a family is able to take together (at the same time) to 4 weeks. This will increase flexibility for families and support parents to take time off work together after a birth.

Minister for Women Katy Gallagher said, "We know that good women's policy is also good economic policy, and this investment will promote parenting as an equal partnership while boosting the economy," Minister Gallagher said.

"This is all about making sure that every family has more choice and better support."

Minister for Social Services Amanda Rishworth said, "The roughly 180,000 families who receive Paid Parental Leave each year will benefit from a more generous scheme that supports maternal health and wellbeing, encourages dads and partners to take leave, and gives families flexibility to choose how they share care" "Not only will this help families to better balance work and care, but it will also support participation and productivity over the longer term, providing a dividend for the Australian economy.

"These changes will provide better security and choice for families. They strike the right balance between supporting our working families, encouraging greater gender equality, and supporting greater workforce participation."

The Government's changes will benefit over 180,000 families each year, at a cost of \$1.2 billion from 2022-23 to 2026-27.

Positive Duty for Employers

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) delivered its landmark Respect@Work Report in 2020, highlighting the prevalence of sexual harassment across Australian workplaces and making extensive recommendations for change across government and business.

A key recommendation of the Respect@Work Report has seen to the introduction of a positive duty for employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to prevent workplace sexual harassment and a range of similar harmful conduct, such as sex discrimination, hostile working environments and victimisation conduct.

The positive duty will apply to all employers, with no exclusion.

What is considered 'reasonable and proportionate' measures by an employer will vary depending on the organisation, and be assessed on factors such as its nature, size, circumstances, and resources available.

The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) director's guide to the positive duty provides practical guidance to Australian directors to meet their positive duty obligations in preventing workplace sexual harassment and similar harmful conduct.

The AICD's director's guide to the positive duty covers:

- Directors' positive duty obligations and the AHRC's expectations of organisations
- Practical guidance to equip directors with suggested steps to elevate workplace sexual harassment at the board level
- Key questions to be asking management teams.

The guide can be downloaded at <https://www.aicd.com.au/organisational-culture/business-ethics/change/a-directors-guide-to-the-positive-duty-to-prevent-workplace-sexual-harassment.html>

Chanel Contos



Chanel Contos is the founder of Teach Us Consent - an organisation which has campaigned for providing holistic consent and sexuality education since February 2021. Following their petition, which gained more than 44 thousand signatures of support, Ministers of Education from around Australia in February 2022 unanimously committed to mandating holistic and age-appropriate consent education in every school from foundation until year 10 which came into effect at the beginning of 2023.

Chanel was the recipient of the Australian Human Rights Commissions Young People's Medal in 2021 for this work, and in 2023 she was named NSW Young Women of the Year for her persistent efforts towards eradicating rape culture.

Watch "IN FULL: Chanel Contos' Address to the National Press

Club of Australia" on YouTube

<https://youtu.be/nN6dUcWDiNo?si=mIU9tYTJH17HUsFH>

INTERVIEW: Chanel Contos reflects on the first year of the sexual consent curriculum:

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/podcast-episode/interview-chanel-contos-reflects-on-the-first-year-of-the-sexual-consent-curriculum/f9fgzzyv5>

(Photo of Chanel Contos: National Press Club of Australia)

What is the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032

On 17 October 2022, the Australian, state and territory governments released the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 (National Plan).

The National Plan is the overarching national policy framework that will guide actions towards ending violence against women and children over the next 10 years.

“This National Plan is our commitment to a country free of gender-based violence – where all people live free from fear and violence and are safe at home, at work, at school, in the community and online. This is a human right for all people, and we commit to ending violence against women and children in Australia in one generation.”

Why is The National Plan important?

“Violence against women and children is a problem of epidemic proportions in Australia. One in 3 women has experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and one in 5 has experienced sexual violence. On average, a woman is killed by an intimate partner every 10 days. Rates of violence are even higher for certain groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. A woman is also more likely to experience violence at particular life stages, such as while pregnant or while separating from a relationship. In 2021, girls aged 10 to 17 made up 42% of female sexual assault victims. These are not just statistics. They represent the stories of real people, and everyday realities.”

How will it address violence against women and children?

“Violence against women and children is not inevitable. By addressing the social, cultural, political and economic factors that drive this gendered violence, we can end it in one generation. If we address gender inequality, rigid gender norms, and discrimination, we can prevent this kind of violence. Gender inequality, compounded by other forms of discrimination including racism, is at the heart of the problem. Advancing gender equality must be central to the solution. It is vital if we are to end violence against women and children that the Commonwealth, states and territories are all pulling in the same direction and are united in our vision to achieve this within a generation. Everyone has a meaningful role to play – as families, friends, work colleagues, employers, businesses, sporting organisations, media, educational institutions, service providers, community organisations, service systems and governments.”

The National Plan outlines what needs to happen to achieve the vision of ending violence in one generation, across four domains:

Prevention – working to change the underlying social drivers of violence by addressing the attitudes and systems that drive violence against women and children to stop it before it starts.

Early intervention – identifying and supporting individuals who are at high risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence and prevent it from reoccurring.

Response – providing services and supports to address existing violence and support victim-survivors experiencing violence, such as crisis support and police intervention, and a trauma-informed justice system that will hold people who use violence to account.

Recovery and healing – helping to reduce the risk of re-traumatisation and supporting victim-survivors to be safe and healthy to be able to recover from trauma and the physical, mental, emotional, and economic impacts of violence.

Read the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032:

<https://www.dss.gov.au/the-national-plan-to-end-violence-against-women-and-children/the-national-plan-to-end-violence-against-women-and-children-2022-2032>

Personal Safety Statistics, Australia

The Australian Bureau of Statistics data on Rates of physical and sexual assault, family and domestic violence, economic and emotional abuse, stalking, sexual harassment, and childhood abuse for the 2021-2022 financial year was released on 15 March 2023.

The survey results should be understood and interpreted within the broader context of the wide-ranging changes to everyday life during the Covid-19 pandemic. Between March 2021 and May 2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic, government policies were in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including stay-at-home orders, border control measures, limits on gatherings, and social distancing rules.

Data shows An estimated 8 million Australians (41%) have experienced violence (physical and/or sexual) since the age of 15, including:

- 31% of women and 42% of men who have experienced physical violence
- 22% of women and 6.1% of men who have experienced sexual violence

An estimated 2.8 million people aged 18 years and over (14%) experienced sexual violence (assault and/or threat) since the age of 15.

Of women, 22% (2.2 million) experienced sexual violence, including:

- 20% (2.0 million) who experienced sexual assault
- 5.5% (544,700) who experienced sexual threat

Of men, 6.1% (582,400) experienced sexual violence, including:

- 5.1% (483,800) who experienced sexual assault
- 1.4% (137,900) who experienced sexual threat

Key Statistics on all forms of violence including sexual violence, physical violence, intimate partner violence and sexual harassment can be viewed at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>

Our Watch reported:

“There is increasing focus on perpetration and working with men and boys in the prevention of violence against women. Frameworks such as [Change the story](#), [Men in focus](#) and the National Plan outline key actions for working with men and boys. There is increasing focus on establishing prevention infrastructure to ensure our efforts are effective and lead to long-term social change. Examples of prevention infrastructure include sustained political leadership, policy, regulatory and legislative reform and national monitoring and reporting mechanisms. You can read more about it in [Change the story](#). Our [Tracking Progress in Prevention report](#) measures progress towards preventing violence against women in Australia over 10 years. It demonstrates that Australia’s approach to prevention is based on sound evidence and shows encouraging signs of progress. People working in primary prevention can use the findings to inform their efforts and investments, to help maximise impact and advance progress.”

To learn more about what drives violence against women and what works to prevent it, visit Our Watch’s Prevention in Action at <https://action.ourwatch.org.au/what-is-prevention/>

The aim of primary prevention is to stop violence before it happens. To do this, we need to address the drivers of violence against women by promoting gender equality.

Status of Women Report Card 2023

The Government will release a Status of Women Report Card every International Women's day to shine a light on where progress is slow, and more effort is needed. The Status of Women Report Card – 2023 is reproduced below:

Australia is ranked 43rd for gender equality internationally.

- **3.9%** are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- **28.3%** were born overseas. **48.5%** have a parent born overseas.
- **29.4%** are under the age of 25. **18.0%** are 65 and over
- **17.8%** are women with a disability
- **28.4%** live in regional or remote Australia
- **4.6%** identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual
- **79.9%** of one parent families are single mothers.
- Australia has the **4th highest** level of tertiary educated women in the OECD.
- On average women aged 15-64 years do **55.4 hours** of work a week (2 hours more than men). **34.7 hours** of these are unpaid
- **59.9%** of women over the age of 15 are employed
- **22% of young men** believe that men should take control in relationships. **36% of young men** believe that women prefer the man to take control.
- **1 in 2 women** and **1 in 4 men** have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime.
- **1 in 4 women** and **1 in 13 men** have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.
- Approximately **1 in 9 women** suffer from endometriosis. It takes an average of **5 years** to receive a diagnosis after first seeing a doctor.
- Single women are the majority of rent assistance recipients.
 - **45%** are single women
 - **30%** are single men
 - **20%** are couples
- In the last 10 years, there has been a **three-fold increase** in intentional self-harm hospitalisations for young girls
- A gender pay gap emerges immediately after graduation, full-time starting salaries average **\$69,000** for men and **\$67,000** for women
- Young women are more likely to report experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime

- Born 1989 to 1995: **51%**
- Born 1973 to 1978: **34%**
- Born 1946 to 1951: **26%**
- There is gender segregation in how we work. Women work:
 - **96.6%** of hours worked by child carers
 - **86.9%** of hours worked by registered nurses
 - **79.9%** of hours worked by primary school teachers
- The full-time gender pay gap is a record low, but women still earn less on average
 - Hourly earnings pay gap: **11.6%**
 - Full-time weekly pay gap: **13.3%**
 - Total annual taxable income gap: **29.2%**
- **55% drop in earnings** for the mother in the 5 years following childbirth, while men's remains unchanged
- Women of all ages spend 9 hours a week more than men on unpaid work and care
 - Women: **31.6 hours**
 - Men: **22.4 hours**
- Women do more unpaid housework than men even when they are the primary breadwinner. There is a **5 hour gap**
 - Women: **24.1 hours**
 - Men: **19.1 hours**
- Women approaching retirement have **23.1% less superannuation** than men of the same age.

<https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/status-women-report-card-2023#status-of-women-report-card-2023>

Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) 2023 Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard

According to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) 2023 Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard, Australia's gender pay gap is 21.7%. On average, women are paid \$26,400 less than men a year.

The WGEA average gender pay gap is the lowest it has ever been at 21.7%. The average total remuneration gender pay gap is 21.7%.

The key driver of this change was an increase in the proportion of women in management and in the upper pay quartiles in 2022-23, with the proportion of women in management increasing at every level, except at CEO.

However, the gender pay gap is a persistent feature in Australian workplaces. Every industry and almost threequarters (73%) of employers have a gender pay gap of larger than 5% in favour of men. Construction has the highest gender pay gap, with an average gender pay gap of 28.3% and a median gender pay gap of 31.8%.

The data indicates positive trends on availability of paid parental leave. Of the 63% of employers offering some form of paid parental leave, 33% offer universally available paid parental leave – a 9 percentage point increase from last year. As in previous years, as the level of seniority in management increases, women's representation decreases and in 2022-23, the proportion of women CEOs decreased slightly to 22% (from 22.3%).

Most employers now have a flexible work policy, and for the first time, more than 50% of employers with a flexible work policy also hold leaders to account for improving flexibility. However, less than half (43%), provide managers with specific training on flexible work and the proportion offering team training has dropped to just over a third (35%). Flexible working arrangements are an essential method of balancing care responsibilities and therefore a vital tool in the gender equality journey.

The areas that haven't changed over the last year haven't seen corresponding actions to prompt change. Women's representation on boards stayed the same as the previous year at 34% and few organisations (13%) set targets to increase this.

While women comprise half (51.1%) of all employed persons in the labour force, women continue to be under-represented in managerial positions across all industries, including female dominated industries. Women hold 19% of chair positions and 34% of board memberships and represent 22% of CEOs and 37% of key management personnel.

Women of all ages spend over 9 hours a week more than men on unpaid work and care (31.6 hours for women compared to 22.4 hours for men).

While industrial and occupational segregation remains an issue across the board, what is clear is that industrial and occupational barriers for women are particularly pernicious to gender equality.

For the first time, the Scorecard analysed occupational segregation by full-time and part-time work and what it shows is that more senior positions remain incompatible with how many women need to, or want to,

engage in the workforce – 92% of manager roles are fulltime, while 57% of women work in part-time and casual roles.

The higher proportion of men in full-time employment (67% compared to 43% of women) increases their chances to progress into higher earning and management positions. While female-dominated industries are more likely to have a broader range of flexible work options available, they are stagnating on taking action on gender equality compared to male-dominated industries. They are three times less likely to analyse their payroll for gender pay gaps and take action than male-dominated industries in the past year.

Female dominated industries still have gender pay gaps and do not have proportional representation of leadership, so should not rely on significant representation of women to deliver their gender equality outcomes.

At the most basic level, employers are still not consulting staff on gender equality. While 47% of employers reported they consult employees, only 3 in 10 employers have a formal policy or strategy to do so. This figure has not changed from 2021-22. This is a simple and effective way to start demonstrating to employees' commitment on gender equality.

Source: Key results from the [Workplace Gender Equality Agency's Employer Census 2022-2023](#)

Australian Companies to Publish Gender Pay Gap Data

New federal laws aiming to motivate employers to close the pay gap has led to a new mandatory requirement for Australian companies with more than 100 people to publish their gender pay gap data in early 2024.

"The Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Closing the Gender Pay Gap) Bill 2023 passed through Parliament on 30 March 2023, just as the 2022-23 WGEA reporting year concluded. The legislative amendments are a significant step forward to accelerate employer action to close the gender pay gap. Most notably, they enable WGEA to publish employer gender pay gaps, starting with the data collected in 2023 year's reporting", said Mary Wooldridge, CEO of WGEA.

For the first time, every private firm with more than a hundred employees will have the details of its gender pay gap published. That is the difference in what they pay their male and female employees.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) will publish the first set of private sector employer gender pay gaps in early 2024. This will cover 2022-2023 reporting. Data for Commonwealth public sector organisations will be based on 1 January 2023 – 31 December 2023 reporting.

Since 2012, private-sector employers with 100 or more employees have been required to report data about the gender gap among their employees to the federal government's Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA).

There are more than 4.6 million workers covered by the data. But the WGEA up till now has only published information about industry sectors, not individual companies. Currently WGEA uses remuneration data to publish gender pay gaps by industry – e.g., for the mining, health care and social assistance, financial and insurance services, and construction industries.

This was because the Workplace Gender Equality Act provides that WGEA is not able to include remuneration data provided by a relevant employer in WGEA's public data or reports (section 14 of the Act). This means WGEA cannot currently publish an employer's gender pay gap at an organisation level.

New legislation is forcing the publication of company-by-company data in early 2024.

For eight years, companies have received individualised agency reports about their pay gaps. But as WGEA chief executive Mary Wooldridge says companies should be acutely aware of both gaps and how to fix them, "But we have seen a decline in the rate of reduction in the gender pay gap," she says. "It's stalled over the last two years at 22.8 per cent." "I think the transparency does focus the minds of business leaders and leaders in employers to do better," she says.

When the UK government first published the information in 2017 it was explosive, with companies forced to defend large gaps between what they paid their male and female staff.

They included well-known companies such as airline RyanAir (a 72 per cent gap), bank Barclays (44 per cent), publisher Telegraph Media Group (23 per cent) and consulting firm KPMG (22 per cent).

The data didn't fix the problem. But it did make a substantial impact.

Many stakeholders said that the current approach of publishing aggregate industry gender pay gaps is not creating the transparency, accountability and insights necessary to closing the gender pay gap fast enough.

Source: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-05-16/gender-pay-gap-data-of-businesses-to-be-published/102324482?fbclid=IwAR35kVJ6jCTh1Pgk1CXBeisUzRCch4EOeoMSi-t91mJgE1GQAzPV9Le771>

The Women's Economic Equality Taskforce

Final Report to Government

Women's Economic Equality Taskforce, chaired by Sam Mostyn AO and 13 members has released their report for unlocking women's full and equal economic participation. The Taskforce was established in September 2022 and provided independent advice to Government on a wide range of women's economic equality issues.

The report entitled, 'Women's Economic Equality: A 10-year plan to unleash the full capacity and contribution of women to the Australian economy' has identified the barriers that women face in the Australian economy and provided government with practical advice on how to address these issues.

The seven primary recommendations to the Government include immediate and longer-term actions, focusing on the key themes of care, work, education and skills, the tax and transfer system and Government processes.

\$128,000,000,000 is the value to the Australian economy that can be realised by purposefully removing the persistent and pervasive barriers to women's full and equal participation in economic activity, the report states.

The government is going to consider these recommendations alongside the analysis and policy directions of the Employment White Paper as they continue to develop a National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality that will be released in 2024.

The Taskforce was an important contributor, alongside other consultation, research and engagement pathways, in driving progress towards gender equality and keeping women at the centre of government policy and decision making.

The Taskforce had a leading role in the development of the National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality and contributed to the Employment White Paper emerging from the [2022 Jobs and Skills Summit](#).

The Taskforce's advice complements the Government's continued engagement with business, community and advocacy sectors on gender equality issues, including the six [National Women's Alliances](#).

The report can be viewed at <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/10-year-plan>

Gender Responsive Budgeting in Australian Government Departments

Gender responsive budgeting is a core government commitment to drive gender equality and give decision makers information about the gendered impacts of Budget proposals.

While Australia has made significant gains towards gender equality, inequality still exists in a range of areas across people's lives.

These existing inequalities mean that even when a policy seems gender neutral, it can still impact people differently or disproportionately based on their gender. This means policies can have unintended consequences, exacerbate or perpetuate existing inequality or fail to achieve their intended outcomes.

Gender responsive budgeting weaves consideration of gender impact through the budget process and is a key way the Government can identify and fund measures that close gender gaps. Gender analysis of new budget proposals is a key tool to support gender responsive budgeting and support policy developers and decision makers to understand and react to gender impacts.

Australian Government departments are now required to undertake gender analysis for New Policy Proposals (NPPs) and Cabinet Submissions.

The level of gender analysis needed should be targeted and proportional to the potential impact, value and scope of the policy. NPPs and Cabinet Submissions that meet the criteria below will need to include a Gender Impact Assessment:

- Gender Equality – the proposal has a significant positive or negative impact on gender equality.
- Cohorts – the proposal targets cohorts of people who can be typically disadvantaged.
- Workforce – the proposal relates to a gender segregated industry.
- Partnerships – the proposal establishes a National Partnership Agreement (or like agreement).
- Value – the total value of the proposal is \$250 million or more over the forward estimates.

Departments are responsible for self-assessing whether a gender impact assessment is required and the level of gender analysis necessary to support this.

The Australian Public Service (APS) Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment (the Guide) provides information to assist APS policy makers developing a Cabinet Submission or New Policy Proposal in fulfilling gender analysis requirements set by Government.

Gender responsive budgeting applies across the Budget process and is the responsibility of all departments as set out in the Cabinet Handbook and Budget Process Operational Rules. GRB requires all proposals to undertake gender analysis and provide a Gender Analysis Summary in the Cabinet Submission or New Policy Proposal.

Proposals that meet key criteria are also required to include a Gender Impact Assessment. The Guide, Quick Reference Guide and Gender Impact Assessment Template are available for download: [Including Gender: An APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment](#)

Source: <https://www.pmc.gov.au/office-women/national-strategy-achieve-gender-equality>