

WOMEN'S BUDGET STATEMENT

2002-03

STATEMENT BY
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FOR THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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WOMEN'S BUDGET STATEMENT 2002-03

Overview

The *Women's Budget Statement 2002-03* demonstrates the Government's strong and continuing commitment to women in this special year—the Centenary of Australian Women's Suffrage. It is one hundred years since the *Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902* came into effect, allowing most Australian women the right to vote and to stand for Federal election for the very first time. They exercised this right 18 months later in the Federal election held on 16 December 1903.

This statement reflects a strong commitment to Australian women across all spheres of Government activity. It outlines the initiatives in the current budget over a range of portfolios and highlights achievements during the past 12 months.

Highlights of this year's *Women's Budget Statement* include the following initiatives:

- The Baby Bonus takes effect from 1 July 2002 and will apply to first children born on or after 1 July 2001. As a transitional measure it will also apply to children born on or after 1 July 2001 for families who already have children. Parents adopting or otherwise gaining custody of a first child will also be eligible. Every year for up to five years, a parent will be able to claim up to \$2,500 of the tax payable on their income earned in the year prior to the birth of their child. A minimum annual benefit of \$500 will be available to parents with annual incomes of \$25,000 or less.
- Women make up 56 per cent of the population aged over 65 (and almost 70 per cent of those aged over 85). Women also comprise 72 per cent of residents in aged care homes. Over the next four years the Government will provide \$509.3 million in additional funding to increase residential aged care subsidies, community care packages, support for carers and expanded training and development opportunities for members of the aged care workforce—most of whom are female. Measures include:
 - \$163.7 million on additional care packages and enhanced assistance for carers to allow older Australians, primarily women, to stay in their homes for as long as possible.
 - \$78.8 million over the next four years (\$100 million over six years) to assist with the upgrading or replacement of small high care homes in rural, remote and urban fringe areas and provide transitional capital funding for homes needing financial assistance to enable them to maintain ongoing certification.
 - \$211.1 million in increased subsidies for residential aged care to allow providers of aged care to attract and retain more nurses by offering them pay rates closer to those of nurses in the public hospital sector.

- \$7.2 million for a review of the current pricing arrangements for residential aged care subsidies

\$26.3 million for up to 250 scholarships (valued at up to \$10,000 a year) for students from regional areas to undertake nursing studies at rural and regional universities;

- \$21.2 million will enable personal care staff in aged care homes to take up accredited training; and
 - \$1 million to establish a Productive Ageing Centre within the University of the Sunshine Coast.
- A \$61.1 million programme over four years that allows women in the late stages of breast cancer to receive Herceptin – a new drug to treat certain forms of metastatic breast cancer.
 - Twice yearly indexation of the ceiling rate of Income Support Supplement (ISS) for war widows.

The 2001-02 Budget provided \$30 million over four years to fund four new policy initiatives for women. Progress on these initiatives is reported at pp 11-13.

MAJOR INITIATIVES IN THE 2002-03 BUDGET

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACTION PLAN FOR REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Communications services are an important tool for Indigenous communities in facilitating economic development and self-sufficiency and improving the delivery of government services. Information technology is also becoming a significant resource for cultural maintenance and education purposes.

Many Indigenous women, their families and communities will benefit from the \$8.3 million Telecommunications Action Plan for Remote Indigenous Communities (TAPRIC) announced in the 2002-03 Budget. Over the next three years, the Action Plan will provide targeted funding for initiatives to improve telecommunications for remote Indigenous communities, including:

- improving phone services;
- increasing access to internet and higher bandwidth services;
- improving information and awareness;
- providing support for the development of indigenous online content; and
- providing better coordination and support to oversee the implementation of telecommunications initiatives.

These programmes will build on the extensive range of projects being funded under Networking the Nation and other Government programmes. Funding for these activities has been made possible through the partial sale of Telstra.

BABY BONUS

The Government is currently implementing its election commitment to provide further tax relief for families, through the introduction of the Baby Bonus.

The Baby Bonus is a refundable tax offset that recognises that one of the hardest times for families financially is the birth of a first child, where one parent may give up or reduce paid employment to care for the child.

The Baby Bonus takes effect on 1 July 2002 and will apply to the first children born on or after 1 July 2001. As a transitional measure, it will also apply to children born on or after 1 July 2001 for families who already have children. Parents adopting or otherwise gaining legal custody of a first child will also be eligible. Every year for up to five years, a parent will be able to claim up to \$2,500 of the tax payable on their income earned in the year prior to the birth of their child. A minimum annual benefit of \$500

will be available to parents with annual incomes of \$25,000 or less. Parents returning to work will still be eligible for the Baby Bonus, but the entitlement will be reduced in proportion to the income earned.

The Baby Bonus will generally be paid to the mother, but a father with sole legal responsibility for the care of a child may also be eligible. Where the mother returns to work and her spouse stays home to take care of the child, the benefit will be able to be transferred to him.

The Baby Bonus will be claimed as part of the tax return. It will be available for tax returns submitted from the 2001-02 financial year. For those parents who would not otherwise lodge a tax return, a claim form will be available from the Australian Taxation Office.

It is expected that around 245,000 mothers and their families will benefit from the Baby Bonus in the first year and eventually it will deliver benefits to some 600,000 families at any one time.

INDEX THE CEILING RATE OF INCOME SUPPORT SUPPLEMENT FOR WAR WIDOWS

The Government will provide funding of \$84.7 million to introduce twice yearly indexation of the ceiling rate of Income Support Supplement (ISS) for war widows, based on increases in Male Total Average Weekly Earnings or the Consumer Price Index, whichever is greater, from 20 September 2002. This will result in the maximum income support payable to war widows being indexed in line with service pensions indexation. ISS provides income support in addition to the war widow's pension for Australian war widows with limited means.

FUNDING FOR PROVISION OF HERCEPTIN FOR PATIENTS WITH METASTATIC BREAST CANCER

The Federal Government has recently created a programme that will allow women in late stages of breast cancer to receive Herceptin – a new drug to treat certain forms of metastatic breast cancer. In most cases, use of Herceptin can lead to prolonged survival by six to nine months without any significant side effects. Herceptin is available free of charge to eligible patients in both the public and private health sectors. The Health Insurance Commission administers the Herceptin programme, which commenced on 1 December 2001. Funding will be \$13.2 million in 2002-03; \$14.5 million in 2003-04; \$15.9 million in 2004-05; and \$17.5 million in 2005-06.

Older Women

The aged care measures announced in the 2002-03 Budget represent a significant step forward in securing quality of care in both residential and community settings. To

meet its election commitments, the Government will provide \$509.3 million in additional funding over four years for the care of older Australians through: increased residential aged care subsidies and community care packages; increased support for carers; and expanded training and development opportunities for members of the aged care workforce, most of whom are women.

Better care for older Australians

Women comprise 72 per cent of residents in aged care homes. Since 1995-96, the Government has substantially increased funding for residential aged care to ensure that Australia has an aged care system that offers high care standards, has the confidence of the community and is responsive to community needs. The outlay in the 2002-03 financial year is expected to be \$4.3 billion. This is an increase of \$1.8 billion or 72 per cent over the 1995-96 expenditure of \$2.5 billion.

The Government will spend \$344.6 million over four years on measures that will ensure that significant improvements in the quality and standards of care for older Australians, realised since the introduction of the Aged Care Reforms in 1997, are maintained and enhanced. Since 1995-96, funding for residential aged care has increased significantly, both in recurrent terms and to assist in capital improvements in rural, remote and urban fringe areas. Additional funding in this Budget will ensure this momentum is maintained, while ensuring that inaccurate or inappropriate claims for funding are dealt with in a timely way through better systems for review of concessional claims. As women comprise the majority of older people living in aged care homes, they will benefit from the additional funding provided. Included in this are the following five budget measures:

INCREASED RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE SUBSIDIES / REVIEW OF PRICING ARRANGEMENTS FOR RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE SUBSIDIES

The Government will increase residential care subsidies by \$211.1 million over four years and has allocated \$7.2 million for the review of pricing arrangements for residential aged care.

CAPITAL ASSISTANCE FOR AGED CARE IN RURAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA

Many smaller aged care homes in rural and remote areas have difficulty meeting accreditation standards and maintaining their financial viability. Allocation of an additional \$25 million in capital funding per annum for four years (expended over a six year period, with \$78.8 million expended in the first four years) will assist these homes with the cost of building and upgrading.

MORE AGED CARE NURSES

The Government recognises the crucial role played by women who comprise around 96 per cent of the aged care workforce. Funding of \$26.3 million over four years will provide up to 250 scholarships, valued at up to \$10,000 a year, for students to undertake undergraduate, postgraduate or re-entry nursing studies at rural and regional universities.

SUPPORT FOR AGED CARE TRAINING

As a consequence of the current shortage of nurses and the need to free nurses to concentrate on clinical duties, the Government will provide funding of \$21.2 million over four years to enable personal care staff in smaller, less viable aged care homes to take up a range of accredited courses related to geriatric care.

Choosing to stay at home

Women comprise the majority of older people living in their own homes in the community. Women also form the majority of those who provide care to older Australians or younger people with disabilities. In the 2002-03 Budget, the Government will build on existing programmes that assist older Australians to remain in their own homes for as long as possible by providing \$163.7 million over four years for additional care packages and enhanced assistance for carers. Included in this are the following five budget measures:

MORE COMMUNITY AGED CARE PACKAGES

The Government will provide \$68.8 million for an additional 6,000 community aged care packages over four years. These packages are in addition to those provided for in the forward estimates.

CARE PACKAGES IN RETIREMENT VILLAGES

To increase the range of care choices available to older Australians, the Government will provide \$14.9 million for aged care packages in retirement villages. This will assist people who have chosen to buy or lease independent living units in retirement villages.

CARERS OF OLDER AUSTRALIANS/MORE SUPPORT FOR CARERS OF PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA/MORE SUPPORT FOR AGEING CARERS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Support for carers is a fundamental plank in the Government's aged care policy. Women comprise 56 per cent of the 2.3 million carers in Australia. In recognition of the contribution made by carers, the Government will provide an additional \$80 million in the 2002-03 Budget to build on existing infrastructure under the National Respite for Carers Program, a network of Carer Respite Centres, Carer Resource Centres and community respite services.

Within this amount, funding of \$20 million will be targeted towards providing more support for carers of people with dementia by expanding the coverage of psychogeriatric units and paying a top up subsidy to aged care providers to assist them to improve access to this specialised care. Ageing carers of people with disabilities will also benefit from the provision of \$30 million to conduct a pilot program of education and training for specialist volunteer carers, the provision of additional care packages, and assistance with the costs including respite, transport, equipment and other services. The remaining \$30 million is allocated to expanding Commonwealth funded respite services, especially for carers in rural and remote areas.

Coalition rewards active Seniors

The challenges arising from an ageing population mean it is crucial that we improve our understanding of ageing and how older Australians can contribute to the nation's economic and social advancement. Women make up more than half—56 per cent—of the Australian population aged over 65 and almost 70 per cent of those aged over 85. Included in this is the following budget measure:

PRODUCTIVE AGEING CENTRE

In the 2002-03 Budget, the Government will provide \$1 million over four years to establish a Productive Ageing Centre within the University of the Sunshine Coast. The centre, which will operate as a corporate entity in its own right and have a formal and financial relationship with the National Seniors Association Limited, will develop the community's interest and involvement in all aspects of productive ageing.

Report on Key Policy Initiatives for Women 2001-02

In 2001, the Honourable Amanda Vanstone, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women, endorsed a three-year strategic plan for the Office of the Status of Women (OSW) *Working for Women: Office of the Status of Women Strategic Directions 2001-2003* which outlines a vision and mission for OSW, and a series of objectives in four goal areas.

The Government announced a series of measures in the 2001-02 Budget to move forward on these objectives.

Key Goal Areas and Outcomes

Economic self-sufficiency and security for women throughout their lives

The **Informed Choices for Australian Women** budget initiative provides funding of \$5.5 million over four years to develop a women's information strategy which includes a data warehouse, women's internet portal, a research and policy publication series to integrate information about women's circumstances and needs, and a biennial national women's conference.

The women's data warehouse, *Window on Women*, will provide a single source of data for and about women across a variety of issues of importance to women. The data warehouse will give government departments, NGOs, students and the community easy access to information about women. It will also play an important role in policy development, implementation and evaluation. The Commonwealth Government envisages a role for the data warehouse in encouraging organisations to adopt gender equity benchmarks in relevant policies and programmes. A contractor was engaged in March 2002 to develop, build and support the data warehouse infrastructure. Discussions with the Australian Bureau of Statistics have also been initiated to assist in determining data collections for the launch of the data warehouse, presently scheduled for late October 2002.

Under the Informed Choices for Women initiative, the Government is developing an internet portal, *women.gov.au*, for women to provide a single point of online access to government information for and about women. An interim site, as well as a new OSW website, went live in August 2001.

In August 2001, the Government hosted *Australian Women Speak*, the first national Women's Conference, to celebrate the diversity of Australian Women and provide a forum for lively discussion and debate, and the sharing of views and ideas. Over 700 women and men from across the country attended *Australian Women Speak*, including 56 women who received financial assistance from the Commonwealth Government and Conference sponsors to help them to meet the costs of participating. The Government will host the second national women's conference in early 2003.

A series of one-year fellowships will be funded for research into Australian Bureau of Statistics time use survey data from a gender perspective. These fellowships are aimed at early post-doctoral researchers and will encourage innovative research and add to the body of research and analysis in this area. It is expected that the first fellowship will begin early in the 2002-03 financial year.

Over the past 12 months, OSW has identified, monitored and researched a number of emerging issues, which have an impact on women's economic self-sufficiency and security. Some of this work will feed into, and be reported in, publications such as the next edition in the Women in Australia series and a series of focus papers planned for release throughout 2002.

Optimal status and position for women

The **Women's National Leadership Initiative** was established with funding of \$2.4 million over four years in the 2001-02 Budget to extend Government activities that are increasing the participation of women in leadership positions and to promote leadership by women in other areas, particularly rural, Indigenous, marginalised and disadvantaged women. The Government is meeting this commitment through a range of strategies:

- Upgrading its Executive Search database to a comprehensive service, *AppointWomen*, to assist government with the appointment of highly skilled women to Commonwealth Boards and advisory and decision-making bodies. The new service is expected to be launched by June 2002.
- The *Honouring Women* initiative aims to encourage the community to nominate more women for awards and honours, particularly prominent and national level awards. In January 2002, 7 new high profile women joined the existing team of 20 Honouring Women Ambassadors to support and assist in the promotion of the initiative.
- The Women's Leadership initiative is also focussing on young women, Indigenous women and women in local government to enhance their skills and increase their participation in decision-making forums. Strategies include support for several young women's leadership initiatives; the establishment of a National Indigenous Women's Advisory Group and a partnership to develop a national strategy to increase women's representation in local government.
- The establishment in the 2001-02 Budget of a **Women's Development Programme** with funding of \$5.6 million over four years expands and enhances government support for organisations representing and addressing the diversity of Australian women. This new programme funds targeted research, policy and service development projects and encourages and supports women's contributions to Government policy formulation. The programme included the following initiatives in 2001-02:

- funding to four women’s organisations for capacity building: Older Women’s Network Australia; Breast Cancer Network Australia; National Council of Single Mothers and Their Children; and the National Association of Women in Construction.
- funding to five organisations for research projects: National Foundation for Australian Women; National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence; National Network of Indigenous Women’s Legal Services; Australian Women’s Justice Coalition; and Guides Australia.
- Funding Capacity Building Workshops for women’s non-government organisations in rural communities, following a series of successful workshops in major cities in 2001.
- funding three existing national Secretariats, YWCA, Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women and National Council of Women of Australia to broaden their representative base through the establishment of a consortium of organisations as participants in the Secretariat. The national secretariats currently work collaboratively with their members to represent the diverse views of women.
- funding of \$450,000 over three years for a new National Rural Women’s Secretariat, which will represent the diversity of rural and regional women and their organisations.

The elimination of violence in the lives of women

The \$50 million Commonwealth **Partnerships Against Domestic Violence** initiative aims to gather knowledge and trial new ways of preventing and responding to domestic violence. The initiative was launched following a 1997 summit of Heads of Government, convened by the Prime Minister. One hundred projects have been completed which include prevention and early intervention projects; improving responses in services and in the justice sector; research into working with older women, perpetrators, women with disabilities, children and young people; and increased awareness of domestic violence as a social issue with huge economic costs for our community.

Partnerships project successes have been achieved through collaboration across and between Commonwealth Departments and states and territories. Partnerships between the community, domestic violence service sector, criminal justice sector, government and business continue to be strengthened. In particular, *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence – A Business Approach* is supporting businesses that recognise the impact domestic violence has on the workplace and assisting them to better support employees who are affected by it.

The \$25 million second phase of *Partnerships* will conclude in June 2004. Phase 2 focuses on work with:

- children to reduce the effects of witnessing domestic violence;
- perpetrators to encourage acceptance of responsibility for violence;
- women's services;
- national community awareness; and
- an Indigenous Grants Programme to build the capacity of Indigenous communities to find and implement their own solutions to deal with domestic violence.

In addition, *Partnerships* maintains its commitment to research and evidence based policy and practice through a meta-evaluation and funding for the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse.

The maintenance of optimal health and wellbeing throughout women's lives

The Government is facilitating research and brokering of effective partnerships between women's organisations, OSW and Departments and research bodies to ensure that key issues on health and wellbeing are addressed.

The focus in 2001-02 has been on establishing a strong evidence base, developing strategic alliances and establishing best practice models in identified priority areas. Issues currently being examined are women in correctional institutions, women in health leadership and the key characteristics of successful collaboration between consumers, medical providers and researchers as demonstrated by the breast cancer model.

Other areas of attention include the impact of work/life balance on women's health, differences between urban, regional, rural and remote women's health, and women's transitions out of homelessness.

In July 2001 a Commonwealth-State/Territory working party was convened to explore the issues contributing to body image for women. The first meeting of the Body Image Working Party was convened in January 2002, resulting in a discussion paper which will now be expanded to cover the broader spectrum of risk taking behaviours of young women.

Corporate leadership

The Government continues to work nationally and internationally to promote and advance the status of women and the achievement of its four policy goals for women.

Australia has signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW is the most comprehensive international legal instrument to date to deal with the rights of women, spanning a range of issues directly related to the role and status of women. In ratifying CEDAW, Australia has entered into a legally binding commitment to work towards the elimination of discrimination against women, and continues to submit reports as part of this agreement.

Australia has provided input to the Commonwealth Secretary-General's Report (2001) on the implementation of the 1995 *Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development* (PoA) and *Update* (2000-05). A five-year framework for Commonwealth action to achieve gender equality by mainstreaming gender into all policies, programmes and activities is in the process of being achieved.

Australia supports the internationally agreed *Beijing Plus Five Platform for Action*, which has identified twelve critical areas of concern or priority action to achieve the advancement and empowerment of women. Australia's Action Plan provides a framework for work by government agencies and non government organisations to promote gender issues in policy development and service planning.

Australia attended the 46th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York. The meeting focussed on reviewing governments' implementation of the *Beijing Plus Five Platform for Action* and the *Beijing Plus Five Outcomes Document* and considered two major thematic issues - HIV/AIDS and gender and racial discrimination.

During 2001, Australia chaired meetings of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Gender Integration (AGGI). These meetings continue into 2002 and aim to increase the representation of women on APEC groups and communities and ensure that APEC working groups consider gender issues in their decision-making.

The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November 2001 was marked by the government sponsored White Ribbon Campaign. The Government worked in conjunction with the national Secretariats and key men's organisations (Men Against Sexual Assault and No to Violence) on the campaign to raise public awareness of, and eliminate violence against women and girls around the world.