



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Incoming Government Brief 2025



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Michael Lye
Secretary

Department of Social Services Enid Lyons
Building,
71 Athllon Drive,
Greenway, ACT, 2900

Dear Minister

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister for Social Services.

The Department of Social Services is the Australian Government's principal social policy and program management agency. The portfolio is responsible for a significant proportion of the government's budget expenditure.

My department stands ready to implement your agenda by providing national leadership on social policy. We will partner with portfolio agencies, states, territories and other stakeholders to deliver high quality services for all Australians.

I have asked Pat Hetherington, Chief Operating Officer, to liaise with your Chief of Staff on operational matters, including the establishment of your office and provision of ICT support, in consultation with the department's ICT provider, Services Australia. Your Chief of Staff will also be provided with a copy of our ministerial service offering.

Again, congratulations on your appointment.

s 22

Michael Lye
13 May 2025

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AGSVA	Australian Government Security Vetting
ASL	Average Staffing Level
APS	Australian Public Service
ASX	Australian Securities Exchange
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
CA	Carer Allowance
CP	Carer Payment
CtG	Closing the Gap
Disability Royal Commission OR DRC	Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability
The department OR DSS	Department of Social Services
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
FDSV	Family, Domestic and Sexual violence
FDV	Family and Domestic Violence
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and other sexual identities
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPL	Paid Parental Leave

Volume One: First Steps



Establishing your office

Key support contacts

Government and Executive Services Branch	Email: janet.gavey@dss.gov.au	Phone: s 22 Mobile: s 22
DSS VIP IT	Email: s 22 @dss.gov.au	Phone: s 22 7am - 11pm
DSS Property and Security	Email: s 22 @dss.gov.au Email: s 22 @dss.gov.au	Phone: s 22 12am - 12pm Phone: s 22 12am - 12pm
AGSVA VIP Support	Email: s 22 @defence.gov.au	Phone: 1800 640 450
DSS Media	Email: media@dss.gov.au	Phone: 02 6146 8080 5-9pm on weekdays 9-5pm on weekends
Ministerial Wing Support	Email: s 22 @finance.gov.au	Phone: s 22

The Portfolio, Department and Senior Leadership

The department

Our purpose

Our purpose is to improve the economic and social wellbeing of individuals, families and vulnerable members of Australian communities.

Our Outcomes:

Social Security – A sustainable social security system that incentivises self-reliance and supports people who cannot fully support themselves by providing targeted payments and assistance.

Families and Communities – Contribute to stronger and more resilient individuals, children, families and communities by providing targeted support.

Senior Leadership



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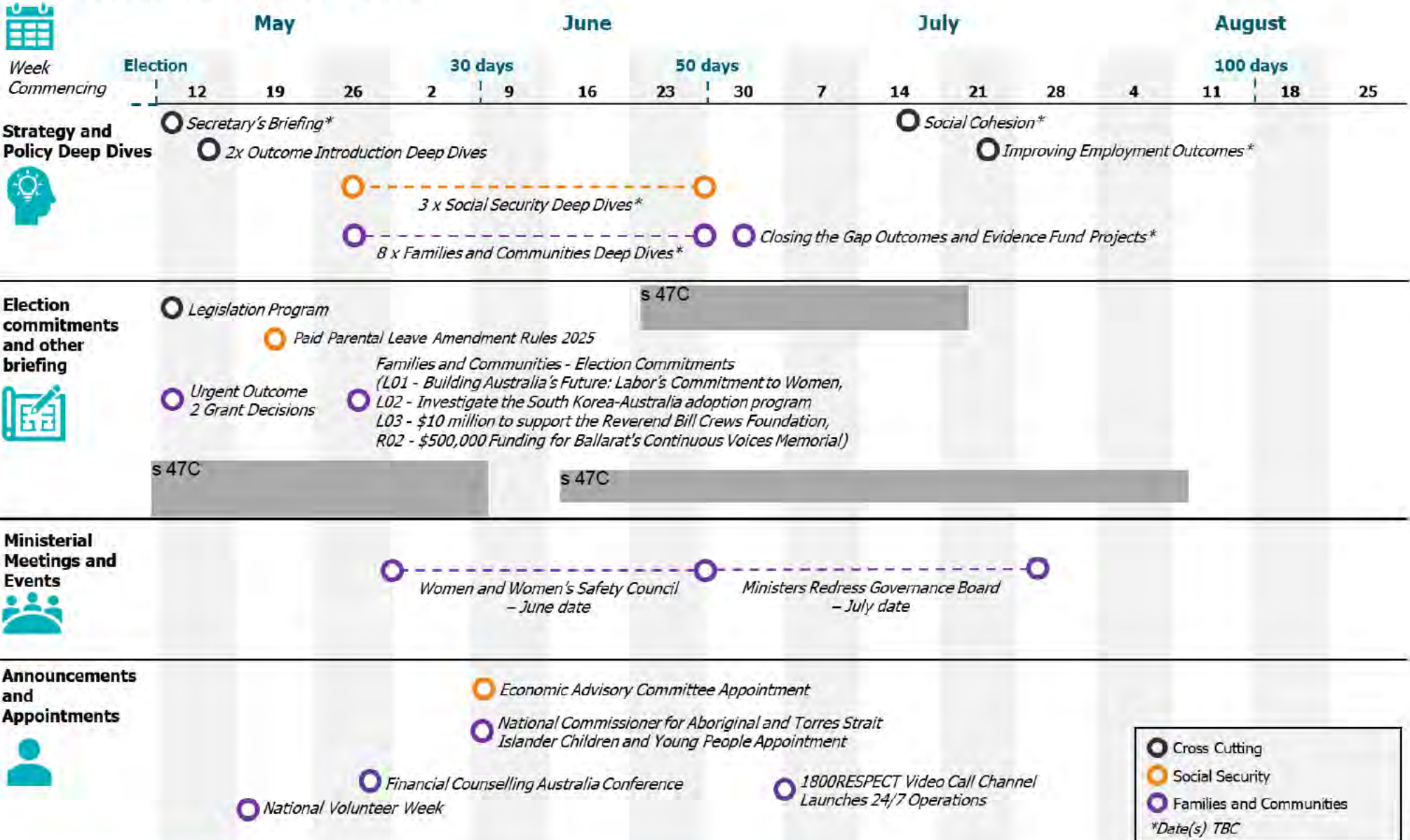
Patrick Hetherington
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Agenda for Action



Early Meetings and Events

Date	Meeting/Event	Contact
19-25 May 2025	National Volunteer Week National Volunteer Week is Australia's largest annual celebration of volunteering. Social Services Ministers have previously attended and provided an address at events held during the week.	Mary Hodge Branch Manager, Community Cohesion Branch
26-29 May 2025	Financial Counselling Australia National conference The national, annual conference attended across the community sector including financial counselling and financial capability workers. The government has provided sponsorship for the conference over the last few years. Social Services Ministers have historically attended and/or provided an address to the conference.	James Steen Branch Manager, Financial Resilience and Response Branch
May/June 2025	Meeting of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on FDSV Attendance for part of the last scheduled meeting of the Advisory Council noting its term is due to end 30 June 2025 (s 47C s 47C s 47C). It is expected the council will seek advice on transition arrangements from the existing action plan to the incoming plan, Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices.	Tim Crosier Branch Manager, National Policy
June 2025	Meeting of the Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council Meeting will seek in-principle support from state and territory ministers for Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices.	Tim Crosier Branch Manager, National Policy
1 July 2025	1800RESPECT's video call channel launches 24/7 operations Opportunity to officially announce the final expansion of 1800RESPECT's video call channel, which will begin to operate on a 24/7 basis on 1 July 2025 (aligning with the operational hours of 1800RESPECT's other service channels – voice, SMS and online chat).	Eve Cordeiro Branch Manager, National Programs
July 2025	Minister's Redress Governance Board Chaired by the Minister, with participation by each state and territory Minister. Meets bi-annually each financial year and a meeting is tentatively scheduled for July. The Board has decision making powers around proposed changes to primary legislation, rules and policy guidelines. Assists the proper, efficient and effective performance of the National Redress Scheme.	Alison Hale Branch Manager, External Engagement

First Briefs

Families and Communities

Contact: **Letitia Hope**

Deputy Secretary, Families and Communities

Grant decisions

Urgent decisions are required for multiple grant arrangements, including:

- s 47C
- s 47C

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Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices - Options for proceeding

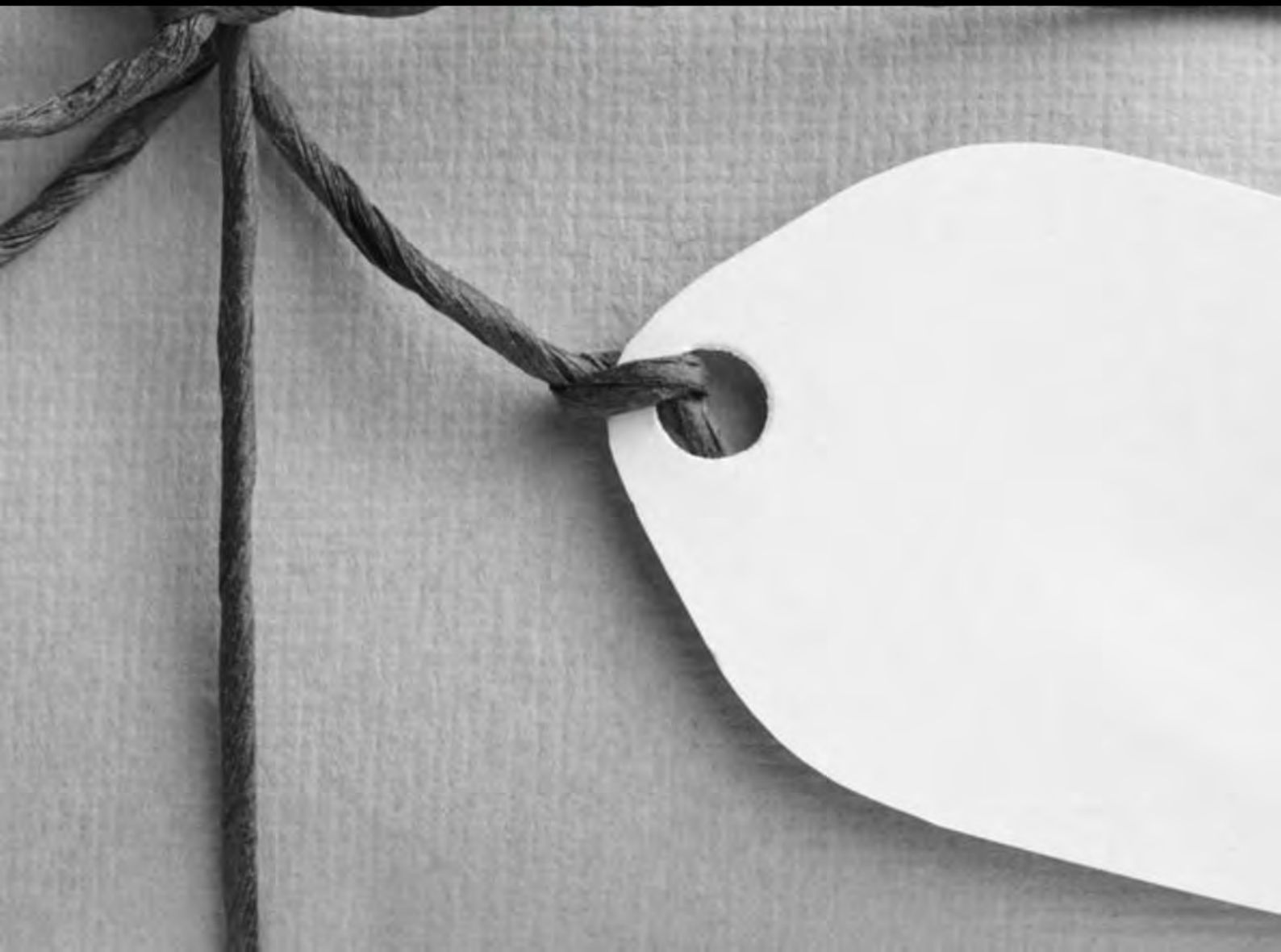
Brief providing options for the Minister's agreement in relation to proceeding with Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices. Brief seeking Minister's agreement to the final draft of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, including s 47C

s 47C

s 47C

Volume Two:

Delivering your agenda



Election Commitments and Legislation

The department will support you in delivering your agenda and election commitments. This section includes 8 briefs which provide advice on the implementation of your commitments in the Social Services portfolio.

Department led election commitments

Number	Commitment	Legislation required	Funding
EC-L01	Building Australia's Future: Labor's commitment to women <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Boosting Innovative Perpetrator Response program,</i> • <i>Supports and interventions for children and young people exposed to violence</i> • <i>Engaging men and boys in violence prevention,</i> • <i>First National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan</i> • <i>Address gender undervaluation in 5 female-dominated sector awards</i> • <i>End Financial Abuse Loopholes</i> 	Yes	\$173.6 million
EC-L02	Investigate the South Korea-Australia adoption program	No	Costs not available
EC-L03	\$10 million to support the Reverend Bill Crews Foundation	No	\$10 million

Department partially involved election commitments

Number	Commitment	Legislation required	Funding
EC-R01	End Financial Abuse Loopholes	Yes	Costs not available
EC-R02	\$500,000 Funding for Ballarat's Continuous Voices Memorial	Yes	\$500,000

Constitutional risk and new government spending

The **Australian Constitution limits the Commonwealth's powers to** spend money and make legislation; all spending activities must be supported by the Constitution.

Where you wish to progress election commitments within your portfolio, a 'new policy proposal' (NPP) is needed. Once developed, NPPs are considered and may be approved by the Cabinet or Prime Minister. Under the current Budget Process Operational Rules (BPORs), where an NPP involves new expenditure, even where net savings are produced, a Constitutional and Legislation Assessment (CLA) must be undertaken by the Australian Government Solicitor (AGS) to assess the constitutional risk of the proposed expenditure.

Under these arrangements, AGS applies four risk ratings (low; medium; high; high (particularly vulnerable)) to categorise the constitutional risk of a spending proposal in an NPP. The risk rating will determine whether and how an NPP can progress.

Where spending proposals receive a **'high (particularly vulnerable)' rating**, the BPORs provide that the NPP may only proceed to Cabinet if the risk can be lowered, and the policy is brought within the **Commonwealth's** constitutional powers. This may require considering changes to the scope, or method, of delivering the proposed spending. A constitutional **risk which remains 'high' can only** be progressed to Cabinet if there is a strong case for not mitigating that risk.

Regardless of the CLA risk rating, the department will present mitigation options to you so the election commitment can be progressed with reduced constitutional risk.

Delivery of **Government's Legislative Program**

The department is responsible for legislation covering matters within the portfolio, including legislation impacting portfolio agencies. You will be separately briefed on any legislative change required to implement government election commitments and/or priorities.

s 47C

In 2024 the *Delivery of Legislation Taskforce* was established between PM&C's and the Attorney **General's** Department (AGD). The Taskforce reviewed the legislative process to identify challenges and develop recommendations to effect improvement of the legislation process across parliament, ministers, their offices and the APS. **The Secretaries' Board has** endorsed each of the recommendations, with an update on implementation to be given by the end of 2025. We will provide further updates on the substance and progress of recommendations which are to be implemented in due course.

Proposed legislative projects

In addition to **delivering on the government's key election commitments**, there are a number of medium and long-term legislative projects fitting within the government's broader priorities that could be pursued within this portfolio.

Short-term (high priority for introduction)

- Implementation of election commitments (if required).

- s 47C [REDACTED]
- s 47C [REDACTED] s 47C [REDACTED].
 - s 47C [REDACTED] s 47C [REDACTED]
 - s 47C [REDACTED].

Medium-term (6 months to 12 months)

- Implementation of election commitments (if required).
- s 47C [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

Long-term (12 months plus)

- s 47C [REDACTED]:
 - s 47C [REDACTED]

Legislation process

Ministers must bid for drafting resources ahead of each parliamentary sitting period. It is likely that a call for legislative bids for the 2025 Winter sitting period will come from PM&C shortly after the election. Bids for drafting resources for the 2025 Spring legislative program are likely to follow soon after. It will be important to plan ahead for your legislative program and allow sufficient time to consult on and finalise the detailed policy parameters of proposed legislation prior to bidding for drafting resources. Re-bidding for drafting resources that have not been used can lessen the likelihood of obtaining the requested status.

Department led election commitments

EC-L01 - Building Australia's Future: Labor's Commitment to Women

Announcement	Funding	Priority/timeframe
24 April 2025	\$88,600,000 in additional funding	No delivery timeframe announced
Katy Gallagher	\$173,600,000 total	

[Link to announcement](#)¹

Brief includes the following commitments:

- *Boosting Innovative Perpetrator Response program,*
- *Supports and interventions for children and young people exposed to violence*
- *Engaging men and boys in violence prevention,*
- *First National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan*
- *Address gender undervaluation in 5 female-dominated sector awards*
- *End Financial Abuse Loopholes*

Description

A re-elected Labor government will take steps to sharpen its approach to stopping violence-focussing on intervention with men who use violence, and breaking cycles of violence for children and young people. By building on the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* (the National Plan), we will embed safety in our Commonwealth systems and continue to strengthen our focus on preventing and responding to sexual violence.

Implementation approach

New commitments

- s 47C

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¹ <https://alp.org.au/news/labor-s-commitment-to-women/>

s 47C

Commitments already underway

- A key priority is the finalisation and delivery of *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan* as per the 2022 election commitment. The plan has been drafted in consultation with Commonwealth and state and territory governments and First Nations National Plan Steering Committee. The final plan will require agreement from state and territory Women's Safety Ministers and through Cabinet.

s 47C

- We will also continue implementing the critical initiatives from the two Ending Gender-Based Violence National Cabinet meetings held in 2024 including:
 - Coordinate approach to engaging men and boys in violence prevention building on our existing work on national standards for men's behavioural change programs, healthy masculinities, and early intervention efforts for young men and boys.
 - Work to break cycles of trauma and violence by strengthening support for children and young people exposed to violence through comprehensive work with sector experts to design new initiatives and interventions that can fill the gaps in supports for children and young people.

Please note the following commitments are outlined in separate briefs:

- EC-L03 - \$20 Million in women's and children's trauma recovery centre
- EC-L05 - \$4.5 million to St Vincent de Paul & Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre

To be included in Budget or MYEFO	Requires new or amended legislation	Constitutional risk advice required	Future briefing required
s 34(3)	s 47C	s 34(3)	s 47C

Departmental contacts	
Letitia Hope Deputy Secretary, Families and Communities Phone: s 22 Email: letitia.hope@dss.gov.au	Anna Lutz Group Manager, Ending Gender Based Violence Phone: s 22 Email: anna.lutz@dss.gov.au

EC-L02 - Investigate the South Korea-Australia adoption program

Announcement	Funding	Priority/timeframe
11 April 2025 Sydney Morning Herald article	N/A	No delivery timeframe announced

[Link to announcement](#)²

Description

Labor has promised to investigate concerns about the South Korea-Australia adoption program if re-elected to government. The pledge comes after media reports on the interim findings of the South Korean government-appointed Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) investigation. The March 2025 TRC findings identified systemic fraud and abuse in the country's historical adoption program, including falsified orphan registrations, leading to a profit-driven "mass exportation of children" with minimal procedural oversight. On 24 April 2025 international media reported that the TRC investigation has been suspended indefinitely. It is unclear if the investigation will recommence.

Implementation approach

- s 47C
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- s 47C

To be included in Budget or MYEFO	Requires new or amended legislation	Constitutional risk advice required	Future briefing required
s 34(3)	s 47C	s 34(3)	s 47C

Departmental contacts	
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² <https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/labor-pledges-to-investigate-australia-korea-adoption-program-20250410-p5lqp5.html>

EC-L03 - \$10 million to support the Reverend Bill Crews Foundation

Announcement	Funding	Priority/timeframe
26 April 2025	\$10,000,000	No delivery timeframe announced
Anthony Albanese and Amanda Rishworth		

[Link to announcement](#)³

Description

A re-elected Albanese Labor Government will invest \$10 million to support the critical work of the Reverend Bill Crews Foundation and secure its future in supporting vulnerable Australians. For more than 30 years, Reverend Crews and a team of volunteers have provided free meals, accessible healthcare, welfare support and literacy programs for the most vulnerable Australians.

Implementation approach

- s 47C

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To be included in Budget or MYEFO	Requires new or amended legislation	Constitutional risk advice required	Future briefing required
s 34(3)	s 47C	s 34(3)	s 47C

Departmental contacts	
Letitia Hope Deputy Secretary, Families and Communities Phone: s 22 Email: letitia.hope@dss.gov.au	Patrick Burford Group Manager, Communities Phone: s 22 Email: patrick.burford@dss.gov.au

³<https://capitalmonitor.com.au/Display.aspx?TempLock=HtQ%2b5Wr%2bbPgB%2b1KW%2fmAykhUpX%2b8pJBfYNBUFs43CtTU%3d&DocFrom=AdvancedSearch>

Department partially involved election commitments

EC-R01 - End Financial Abuse Loopholes

Announcement	Funding	Priority/timeframe
22 April 2025 Jim Chalmers	N/A	No delivery timeframe announced

[Link to announcement](#)⁴

Description

A Labor Government will continue its efforts to end gender-based violence (see related brief EC-L01 - brief *Building Australia's Future: Labor's Commitment to Women*), by cracking down on perpetrators and addressing financial abuse in Commonwealth systems, by:

- looking at making perpetrators liable for social security debts incurred by a victim-survivor due to coercion or financial abuse, and
- preventing perpetrators from using the tax system to create debts, including in the Child Support Scheme, as a form of coercive control and making perpetrators accountable.

Implementation approach

s 47C

To be included in Budget or MYEFO	Requires new or amended legislation	Constitutional risk advice required	Future briefing required
s 34(3)	s 47C	s 34(3)	s 47C

Departmental contacts	
Matt Flavel Deputy Secretary, Social Security Phone: s 22 Email: matt.flavel@dss.gov.au	Jo Evans Group Manager, System, Strategy and Seniors Phone: s 22 Email: jo.evans@dss.gov.au

⁴ <https://alp.org.au/news/labor-s-commitment-to-women/>

EC-R02 - \$500,000 Funding for Ballarat's Continuous Voices Memorial

Announcement	Funding	Priority/timeframe
3 Apr 2025	\$500,000	No delivery timeframe announced
Catherine King		

[Link to announcement](#)⁵

Description

Labor has committed to investing \$500,000 in 2025-26 towards the Continuous Voices Memorial in Ballarat, which aims to acknowledge and honour survivors of sexual assault and abuse. The project is a community-driven initiative informed by the stories of over 50 survivors and supporters. The funding will complement support from the Victorian Labor Government and the City of Ballarat.

Implementation approach

- s 47C [REDACTED]
- s 34(3) [REDACTED]
- s 47C [REDACTED]

Sensitivities

- s 47C [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

To be included in Budget or MYEFO	Requires new or amended legislation	Constitutional risk advice required	Future briefing required
s 34(3)	s 47C	s 34(3)	s 47C

Departmental contacts	
Letitia Hope Deputy Secretary, Families and Communities Phone: s 22 [REDACTED] Email: letitia.hope@dss.gov.au	Jacqueline Hrast Group Manager, Children and Families Phone: s 22 [REDACTED] Email: jacqueline.hrast@dss.gov.au

⁵ <https://www.catherineking.com.au/media/500-000-for-ballarat-s-continuous-voices-memorial/>

Related Election Commitments

The below commitments are led by other agencies but have intersections with the department's policy and/or programs.

Commitment	Lead Portfolio
<u>\$8.5 billion to Strengthen Medicare: More Bulk Billing, More Doctors, More Nurses</u>	Health and Aged Care
<u>\$1 billion Mental Health Investment</u>	Health and Aged Care
<u>\$793 million Investment in Women's Health</u>	Health and Aged Care
<u>PPL for stillbirths and infant deaths</u>	Employment and Workplace Relations
<u>\$21.4 million for Pilot Specialist Trauma-Informed Sexual Assault Legal Services</u>	Attorney-General's
<u>\$8.5 million Investment in Central Australia's Tourism</u>	Foreign Affairs and Trade
<u>\$2.6 million for Street Side Medics</u>	Health and Aged Care
<u>\$1.6 million for Turbans 4 Australia</u>	Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
<u>\$20 Million in women's and children's trauma recovery centre</u>	Department of Treasury
<u>\$4.5 million to St Vincent de Paul & Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre</u>	Department of Treasury
<u>\$2.8 Million to Secure the future of Survivor's R Us</u>	Department of Treasury

Department Budget Measures 2025-26

The department will advise on the status and implementation of the budget measures below.

Measures announced since the 2024-25 Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements

Measure title	Description	2025-26 \$'000	2026-27 \$'000	2027-28 \$'000	2028-29 \$'000
Savings from External Labour-Further Extension (a)	Overall, the government will achieve savings of \$718.8 million in 2028-29 by further reducing spending on consultants, contractors and labour hire, bringing the total savings from reducing reliance on external labour to \$4.7 billion since 2022-23.	-	-	-	(5,375)
Small Business and Franchisee Support and Protection (b)	The government will provide a \$12.0 million package over 4 years from 2025-26 to support and protect small businesses. The department component is \$1.2 million in 2025-26 to partner with White Box Enterprises to establish a Social Enterprise Loan Fund to offer small loans to social enterprises, including work integration social enterprises, to support employment for disadvantaged Australians.	-	-	-	-

Portfolio Budget Statement, Department of Social Services, Page 21 - Prepared on a Government Finance Statistics (Underlying Cash) basis. Figures displayed as a negative (-) represent a decrease in funds and a positive (+) represent an increase in funds.

(a) The full measure description and details appear in Budget Paper No. 2 under Cross Portfolio.

(b) The government has already provided funding of \$1.2 million in 2025-26 for this measure. The full measure description and details appear in Budget Paper No. 2 under the Treasury Portfolio.

Volume Three:

Strategic Considerations



Environmental scan

Ongoing and rising geopolitical tensions and political polarisation have implications for economic stability, feelings of safety and security and social cohesion. Government policies and programs will continue to have an important role in building resilience and supporting people as they face more intense and frequent disruptions.

Momentum for inclusion remains strong with continuing progress towards social and economic equality in **women's employment and** income, stronger recognition of the rights of people with disability to participate in employment and social life, community resistance to racially divisive activities, and ongoing support for action to close the gap for First Nations peoples. Continuing to focus on inclusion will promote stronger employment and wellbeing outcomes and support social cohesion, with no-one held back and no-one left behind.

Strategic context and challenges

Economic instability worsens income inequality and weakens resilience.¹ Uncertainty is likely to remain with current conflicts and their aftermath.² Escalation in trade hostilities has created significant economic uncertainty, as per the 2025 Pre-election Economic and Fiscal Outlook.³ The International Monetary Fund has cut its projection for global output growth in 2025 to 2.8%⁴ and downgraded **Australia's economic** growth forecast from 2.1% to 1.6% in 2025.⁵ The frequency and intensity of economic and environmental shocks are pushing more people into more vulnerable situations, increasing the risk of entrenched disadvantage.⁶ This can compound with regional vulnerabilities due to extreme weather events, industry shutdown and existing economic inequality.⁷

s 47C

Sound economic management that maintains employment remains a cornerstone protective policy for vulnerable groups, together with capacity building efforts to strengthen employment and wellbeing outcomes for at risk populations. Workforce participation fosters resilience by enhancing financial and social protections against crises. It contributes to mental and physical wellbeing, independence and a sense of purpose.⁸

Australia's demographics are evolving and will have broader implications for fiscal and social policy and demands for services.^{9,10} Life expectancy is rising, and fertility rates are declining, reducing the working age population and influencing family composition and structures. Overseas migration is expected to continue to support population growth, offsetting demographic and economic challenges to some extent,¹¹ as higher immigration correlates with higher tax revenue and increases in working age population.¹² Concurrently, Australia has higher rates of population growth within more disadvantaged populations including First Nations people and people with disability.^{13,14,15} Future productivity will depend on strategic and impactful investment in social services, as well as health and education, to support all cohorts to fulfil their potential.

Australia's social contract is under challenge, impacting institutional trust and social cohesion. Concerns of intergenerational inequalities are growing, **and young people's** circumstances are falling short of their expectations. As more rely on family for financial support and/or housing well into adulthood, they experience delayed milestones including education, employment, family and home ownership.^{16,17} Many also struggle with compounding and competing responsibilities of paid employment and unpaid care. This has implications on household incomes, workforce participation, gender equality,^{18,19} and may have greater social, economic and intergenerational ramifications.

Progress is evident towards equality and inclusion, although challenges remain. **Women's** employment continues to increase and the gender pay gap has fallen from 18.7% (2015) to 11.9% (2025).²⁰ The trajectory on increasing employment for First Nation people aged 25-26 (Closing the Gap - Outcome 8) was exceeded in 2021, with 54.7% of working age First Nation people in employment, tracking towards the target rate of 62% by 2031.²¹ Inclusion of people with disability is a central policy concern and social attitudes are positive around the rights of those identifying as LGBTIQ+,²² as well as valuing multiculturalism and the contribution of migrant diversity to Australian society, culture and the economy.²³ Further progress on equality and inclusion will reduce disadvantage and improve employment and social wellbeing.

Combating violence and abuse remain critical to fighting severe disadvantage. The experience of violence and abuse can disrupt support networks, aggravate existing inequalities²⁴ and have lifelong effects on **a person's education, employment, financial security**, housing and emotional and social wellbeing.²⁵ FDSV and other forms of violence persist and most affect First Nations women, who experience the highest rates of FDSV, people with disability, refugee and migrant women and people who identify as LGBTIQ+.^{26,27} People with disability experience high rates of maltreatment, neglect and abuse associated with disability services, causing lasting trauma and harm and impinging on their right to develop and acquire skills and to participate in community.²⁸

Advancing your agenda

A robust and strategic Social Services portfolio. More focus on security and managing economic risk could see pressure on the Social Services portfolio to justify and prioritise payments, programs and services. This will require increased focus on policies that demonstrate value for money and lead to improvements in employment, social inclusion and overall wellbeing. Achieving this will require reforms to be disciplined and have a robust evidence base, taking advantage of opportunities to improve productivity and impact. It will also require unlocking existing opportunities in sectors experiencing employment growth such as the care and support economy. In addition, ensuring our services are more strategic will require a focus on person-centred, connected services that are easy for users to navigate.

A stronger focus on how social programs can contribute improving employment outcomes will strengthen individual resilience and reduce long term disadvantage. Increased employment is a cornerstone outcome for families to thrive and strengthens vulnerable communities by contributing to enhanced social participation and sustained economic growth.²⁹

Early intervention is key to disrupt disadvantage and greater harm. Starting from the early years, programs that support children to have the best start in life improve overall child wellbeing, build family capability and contribute to strong and resilient communities.³⁰ The government has the opportunity to build on its existing investments in early years by prioritising actions to support all families with the resources they need to raise their children, including children with disability or developmental delay. This could also include strategies to support the development of young boys, to address the drivers of FDSV, and seeking to prioritise programs which build resilience to shocks and stresses.^{31,32} Early intervention can also play a role in designing more timely interventions when risk factors are first identified, such as precarious care situations, to prevent more serious harm and more disruptive interventions with lasting consequences. These approaches would complement ongoing investment in responsive interventions to support individuals, families and communities in crisis.

These issues are explored further in the below Strategic Issues Briefs.

Strategic Issues Briefs

Improving Employment Outcomes

Employment is central to people's financial independence, sense of purpose, and stronger mental and physical wellbeing. The employment outcomes of people with disability, carers, women, First Nations people, young people and individuals from low-socio-economic backgrounds are central to the Social Services portfolio and its vision to achieve economic and social wellbeing.

Government employment services support the most vulnerable Australians. Australia is in a period of strong economic and employment growth. Yet there are still 404,235 JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance (other) recipients of 2 years and over,³³ many of whom face compounding vulnerabilities that the department has a role in addressing. Social policy is critical for job preparedness, which is fundamental for improving economic participation for all people.

Strategic context and challenges

Australia's labour market is tight and unemployment is steady, but many of the most vulnerable are still missing out on work The average length a person is in receipt of unemployment payments is over 3 years, with 24% of recipients on payments for over 5 years.³⁴ or more.³⁵ The transition to work for those experiencing long-term unemployment is primarily through part-time or casual entry-level positions.³⁶ As at March 2025, of the 973,490 recipients of JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance (JobSeeker), 370,075 (38%) were assessed as having a partial capacity to work (unable to work for 30 hours or more a week) due to disability or health condition, and 252,205 (26%) of recipients were aged 55 years and over,³⁷ (15%) were First Nations people.³⁸ For adolescents whose parents' extended receipt of welfare, there was an 80% greater likelihood of not being in employment or in education/training (NEET) at age 18-19.³⁹ Young people, experiencing disadvantage increases the likelihood they will experience repeated and long-term periods of unemployment throughout their life.⁴⁰ For many individuals, engagement arrangements have been suspended when they are most in need of help.

Caring responsibilities can lead to a disengagement with employment, education, and training, resulting in a reduction in lifetime employment outcomes. The majority of care is done by women and 12.9% of all carers in 2022 (or 391,300 people) were 25 or younger.⁴¹ Carers are more likely to work part-time and experience interruptions to their careers, have lower superannuation balances at retirement, and experience depression, anxiety and isolation.^{42,43} Carers have also reported poor access to supports for their care recipient, including respite care, which impacts their employment.⁴⁴ Some mature age carers can face workforce disadvantages due to extended periods out of work and a need to update their skills. For young carers, this negatively impacts education attainment⁴⁵ and makes it difficult to secure and maintain employment.⁴⁶ The lifelong impact for young carers is significantly greater rates of income support reliance compared to their non-carer peers (income support reliance projected at 33 years at a life-time cost of \$447,000, compared to 16 years and \$161,000 for other young Australians⁴⁷). As care systems have professionalised (childcare, NDIS, Aged Care) policies have not adapted to encourage carers to participate.

Employment is central to improving outcomes for people with disability and reforms are underway. Rates of employment for working age people with disability (15-64 years) remain

significantly lower than for those without disability (56.1% compared to 82.3% as at 2022).⁴⁸ Individuals with an intellectual disability face particular barriers to entering and maintaining employment within the current employment economy, with only 39% in employment.⁴⁹ The Disability Royal Commission called for improvements to the quality of employment services and the transformation of the supported employment sector to ensure that people with high support needs have greater choice and control in their work, higher wages and genuine pathways to mainstream/open employment settings. There are also opportunities to improve pathways to employment for young people with disability, noting 52% of NDIS participants are under 18 (as at December 2024).⁵⁰ Improved linkages between employment services and the NDIS, coupled with greater support to build independence and develop job-ready skills, will help young people transition to employment and improve the trajectories of future generations.

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The department recommends a deep dive in your first 100 days to further explore this topic

Social Cohesion, Social Inclusion and Social Policy

A cohesive society is an inclusive, equitable, prosperous society. The OECD characterises a society as cohesive if “it works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward social mobility”. Low social cohesion can lead to low trust in government, less resilient communities, risks to domestic security and lower social and economic participation.

Social policy and social inclusion are fundamentally important to improving social cohesion. The Social Services portfolio is responsible for systems which drive improvements to social cohesion. This includes work to reduce inequality, build inclusive and resilient communities, ensure strong employment markets and provide economic and social opportunities.

Strategic context and challenges

Social cohesion is relatively high in Australia. This is supported by our multicultural society, high levels of civic engagement, strong communities and democratic processes, which together are protective factors against divisive ideologies. People’s sense of connection and engagement within their local communities remains a strength of Australian society (82% agree that people in their local area are willing to help their neighbours).⁵⁶

While high by international standards, social cohesion is declining. After a temporary spike in social cohesion during COVID-19, it has declined rapidly, reaching its lowest levels since 2007. According to the Scanlon Institute, *social belonging* declined from 93 in 2014 to 77 in 2024. Similarly, *sense of social inclusion and justice* declined from 94 in 2014 to 74 in 2024.⁵⁷

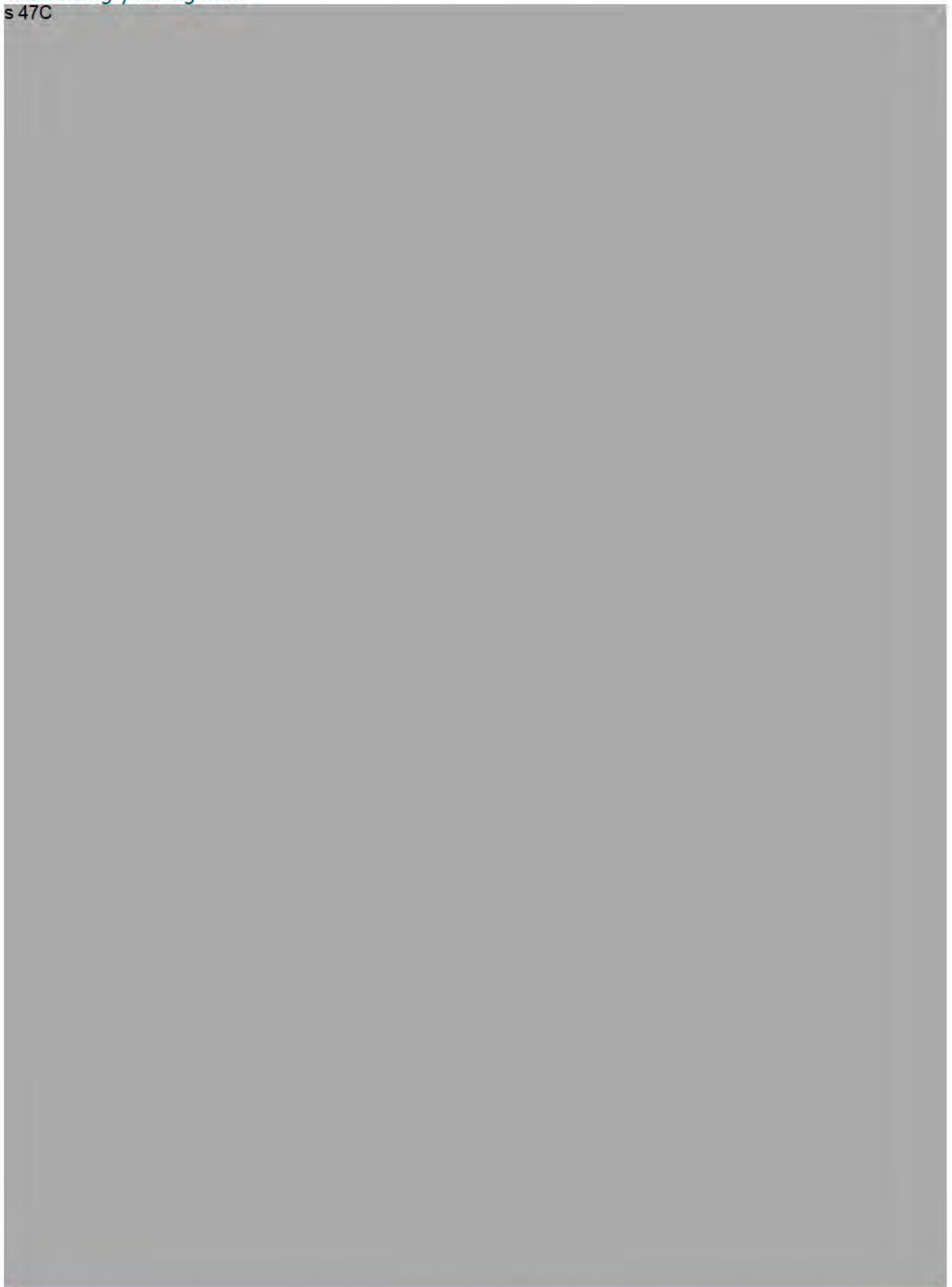
There are a number of threads to the decline in Australian social cohesion. Australians are increasingly pessimistic about their future. Only 21.7% of Australians believe their life has improved in the past year. 50.3% of Australians believe life will be worse in 50 years.⁵⁸ The majority of Australians feel current income distribution is unfair. This appears to be affecting views on democracy, as less people believe that hard work leads to a better life.^{59,60} Additionally, intergenerational trauma continues to shape the lives of First Nations peoples and their relationship with government, presenting ongoing challenges to achieving equality and reconciliation.⁶¹

Loneliness and social isolation, and low social connectedness, are growing concerns for certain cohorts. Approximately 1 in 6 Australians experience loneliness (some studies suggest this could be as high as 1 in 3), and 1 in 7 Australians are socially isolated (as high as 1 in 2). Certain cohorts are more vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation, including people with disability, young people,⁶² older people, single parents, LGBTIQ+ people, newly arrived migrants and people in low socioeconomic status areas.⁶³

Young men are at high risk of loneliness, social isolation and disengagement. Men aged 15-24 experienced significant increases in loneliness and social isolation over the past 10 years.⁶⁴ People experiencing loneliness and social isolation, particularly men, are often the target of extremist groups.⁶⁵ Increased violent, extremist views are also linked to higher rates of misogyny and violence against women, undermining work to prevent violence against women and children.^{66,67}

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Place-based Policy

Place-based policy is an essential tool for government to ensure no Australian community experiencing entrenched disadvantage is left behind. It involves tailoring support to specific communities or “places” by involving local people in the development of local solutions when universal support systems alone have had insufficient impact.

The Social Services portfolio delivers a range of place-based work to support disadvantaged communities, and has, with Treasury, led recent efforts to coordinate place-based work across the APS through the Targeting Entrenched Disadvantage (TED) package. The next stage of TED must address the structural barriers to delivering effective place-based work and formalise ways for the Australian Government, other levels of government and other stakeholders to connect place-based initiatives to enable community-led change and partnerships.

The department should continue its leadership role on place-based work through the next stage of reforms by delivering an investment strategy that sets out how and where to invest in place, testing ways to pool funding across agencies to fund local solutions and build community capability to partner with government, and align place-based work vertically across all levels of government, as well as horizontally across the Australian Government.

Strategic context and challenges

For some Australian communities, disadvantage is complex, persistent and intergenerational. Around one in 3 children born into families in the bottom 20% of the income distribution in Australia will remain there over their lifetime.⁸⁵ Evidence also shows that children who spend more than half of their childhood with a parent or guardian receiving income support are 1.5 times more likely to receive income support themselves. They’re also more likely to receive it earlier in life and for longer.⁸⁶ There are 235 communities in Australia that, together, account for the top 10% of disadvantage in Australia.⁸⁷ Of those communities, 65 are estimated to be home to over half of Australians living in the most disadvantaged locations.⁸⁸ Locations demonstrating persistent disadvantage have many common social and economic indicators, including jobless parents, youth not in employment, education or training, and low income.⁸⁹

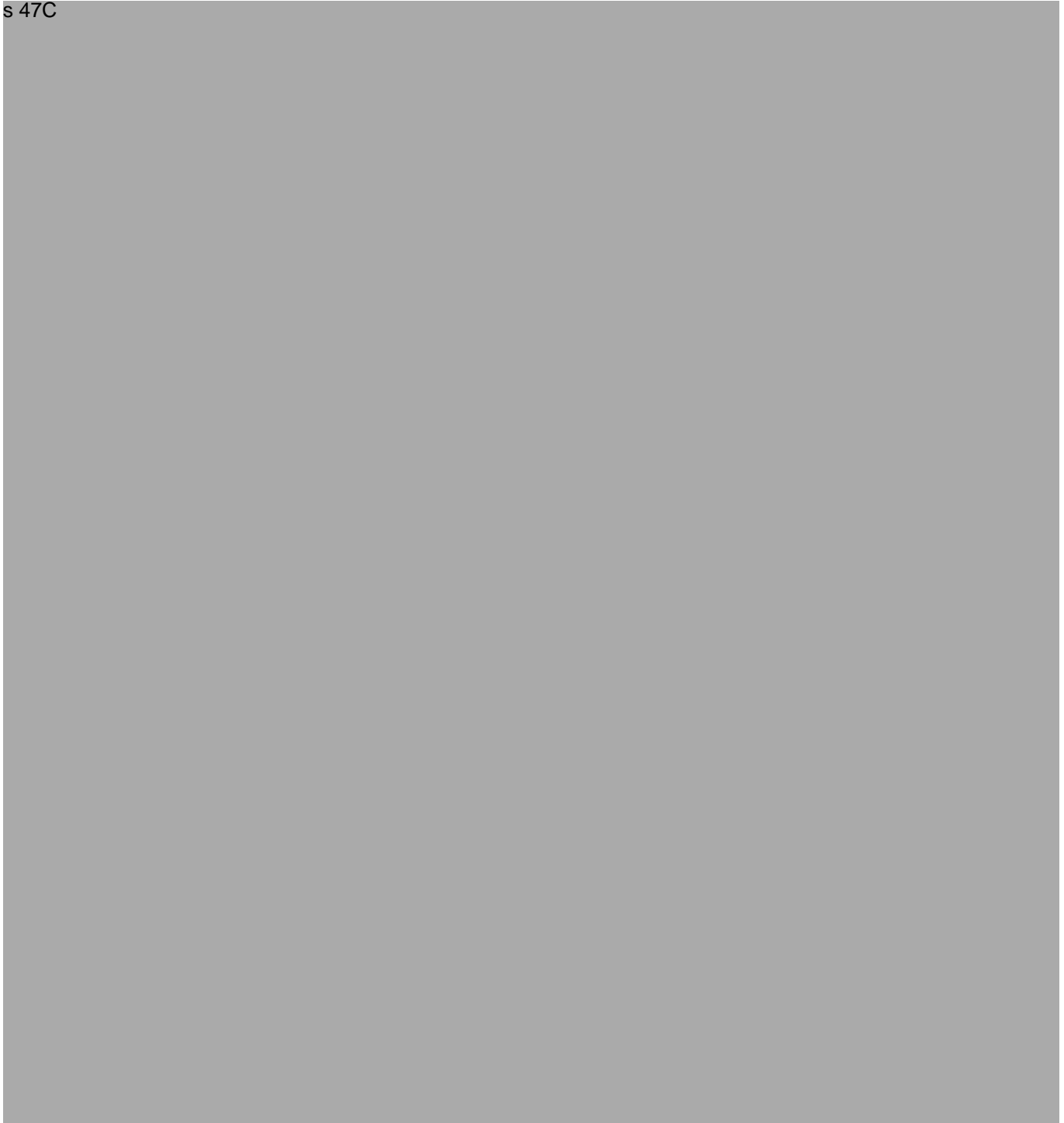
Complex social and economic challenges cannot be solved through universal support systems alone. No single policy, government department or organisation can solve the interconnected and cumulative challenges facing people living in areas of persistent disadvantage. These challenges require tailored solutions that complement programmatic and universal supports to more effectively address social and economic issues in a holistic and flexible way. This approach can be targeted to the local community context to tackle the root causes of local issues, with economic drivers of outcomes being considered together with social challenges to help communities thrive.

Local people know local context and have local solutions. They understand the communities they live in and the impacts of different services. Place-based work leverages local assets to find the solutions that lead to the best outcomes. Internationally, there are an increasing number of countries, including the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada and the European Union, targeting entrenched disadvantage using place, including supporting community governance arrangements to enable local planning and priority setting processes that inform more aligned and targeted mainstream services.

Place-based approaches across the APS have largely expanded in an ad hoc manner. A **2023–24 stocktake of APS place-based** work identified over 60 place-based initiatives operating across 300 locations. Many locations support multiple, unconnected programmatic responses without the flexibility to fund across portfolios, do not have the longevity required to deliver long term impact, and are more often initiated by government priorities rather than community-led change. A more joined up approach to administration and governance across all levels of government is needed to address duplication and free up funding for community-led responses.

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The department recommends a deep dive in your first 50 days to further explore this topic.



Social Security Reform

Australia's social security system is fundamental to assisting those who are unable to fully support themselves. Social security policy has evolved from its origins in 1908 to a complex, far-reaching categorical system of payments. In the past 3 years, a number of government measures have strengthened the safety net and increased targeted assistance. Priorities for the next 3 years include simplifying and modernising systems, addressing legal issues, improving the targeted nature of support and ensuring the investment in these systems complement assistance through a range of other government supports such as health, childcare, aged care and the NDIS.

Strategic Context

The social security system has an important role to play in supporting people across their life course. The system supports around 5.5 million people, family payments support around 1 million families and the Child Support Scheme supports around 1.1 million children. Despite a strong labour market, and a maturing superannuation system, the system supports more than 6 million Australians, at a cost to of \$152 billion in 2025-26 (19% of all Government expenditure). Despite a protracted period of low unemployment following the pandemic, demand for unemployment payments remains high. There were 875,000 JobSeeker Payment recipients in March 2025, and a further 98,000 job seekers in receipt of Youth Allowance.

Payments sometimes considered as temporary supports are actually being relied on by many as the sole source of income in the medium- to long-term. The proportion of JobSeeker recipients who have been on the payment for more than 2 years increased from 35% in 2010 to 53% in 2024. Complementary supports such as employment services and are failing to achieve effective employment outcomes for many of these recipients, particularly those with barriers to work. Mutual obligations rules are suspended for those with the highest needs.

There are community concerns about payment adequacy. The Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee's 2024 report found indexing working age payments (e.g. JobSeeker and Youth Allowance) only in line with CPI has resulted in their base rates falling relative to existing benchmarks (e.g. the Age Pension).⁹⁰ Despite more support for low-income renters through a 26% real increase to maximum rates of Commonwealth Rent Assistance since 2023, many recipients continue to experience housing stress and need to use a significant proportion of their primary payment to cover rent. The point at which a low-income family's rate of Family Tax Benefit (FTB) starts to reduce has also reduced compared to wages (from 96% to 87% of Average Weekly Earnings since 2006).

Coverage of student payments has fallen significantly. The number of students or apprentices in receipt of Youth Allowance halved from around 283,000 in May 2012 to 142,000 in March 2025. However, study continues to be the norm with 53.3% of year 12 students commencing undergraduate study in 2023, compared to 49.9% in 2018.⁹¹ The parental income test contributes to the preclusion of some young people from study assistance, with the Parental Income Free Area not keeping pace with growth in wages over time.⁹² The low rate of Youth Allowance presumes a secondary source of income, leading to young people living with parents longer, and combining work and study. A stronger labour market and changing study methods have also changed behaviours.

Low- and middle-income taxpayers are subsidising the retirement incomes of seniors with significant wealth in addition to their homes. Age Pension continues to be payable to couples with income of almost \$100,000 a year or assets of almost \$1.05 million, in addition to their principal home of unlimited value. Age Pensioners generally maintain or grow their assets in the last 5 years prior to their death. By contrast, a single job seeker without children who has more than \$11,500 in liquid assets must wait 13 weeks before any income support becomes payable.

Social Security systems can be used as a weapon of economic violence. The Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System found in 2021 that the refusal to pay child support can be used to continue to exert power and control over an ex-partner.⁹³ This abuse can flow on to other payments, because child support can be manipulated to cause debts to be raised against FTB.⁹⁴

System and legislative complexity is undermining effective service delivery.

The underpinning legislation on which almost all social security policy is based is vast and complex. The last overhaul of the *Social Security Act 1991* was 34 years ago, and it has been amended hundreds of times since. This complexity, and the sustained demand for social security, have led to service delivery challenges and claim backlogs, with applicants sometimes waiting many months before payment is granted. There is also a growing debt backlog, with more than 2 million potential debts valued at \$3 billion, which brings financial and reputational risk if not addressed.

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The department recommends a deep dive in your first 50 days to further explore this topic

Families and Communities

Families and communities are the bedrock of Australian society. Families are the natural environment for the growth and well-being of both parents and children. Family policies and programs aim to support families to provide the opportunity for children can grow up in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding and develop their personalities and abilities to reach their potential. The Australian Government administers \$1.3 billion of program funding each year to support families to thrive. While many programs well established, there are opportunities to better target programs and funding to achieve outcomes for families and communities.

Reform of policies and programs for families and children should focus more on prevention and early intervention by giving stronger priority to improving the socio-emotional wellbeing of children, empowering parents through information, evidence-based parenting programs and peer support, and enhancing connection and the inclusivity of communities for children, young people and families. More attention is needed to supporting the healthy development of boys. Targeted programs to respond to individuals, families and communities in crisis or at risk of harm remain essential. Complementary to prevention strategies, the Government has a role in partnership with states and territories to respond economic, social and natural crises, including violence, abuse and neglect, and financial hardship and community recovery.

Strategic context and challenges

Australian families are diverse and have changed over time. The number of households has increased and average household size continues to fall (2.5 in 2021); the number of single person households has risen (18% in 1981 to 26% in 2021), with 55% of those being women; the number of families with dependent children is declining while couple-only households increase.⁹⁵ Young people are living with parents longer, particularly young people with disability.⁹⁶ The proportion of people identifying as First Nations has increased (2.5% in 2011 to 3.2% in 2021).⁹⁷

Strong families are vital to a strong and vibrant civil society and resilient individuals.

Positive early experiences are the foundation for later life outcomes, and reduce the risk of FDSV, poor mental health, homelessness and out-of-home care. Supporting well-functioning families is key to prevention and early intervention.⁹⁸ Some families need more support. Living in a family headed by a single parent impacts on economic and social wellbeing. Children living in single-parent families are more than 3 times as likely to be in poverty as children in two-parent families and young people aged 18-26 are almost twice as likely to rely on social security payments if their parents have a history of receiving them. A key determinant of single parent poverty is that 176,000 (24%) were jobless. Single parents are more likely to have poor mental health.

It is becoming harder for families and communities to deal with challenges. One in 6 families are very concerned about their family's current financial situation and financial future, especially low-income families and renters.^{99,100} Australians also have concerns about the increasing risk of problem gambling and its impacts on their community.¹⁰¹ The number of children in out-of-home care is increasing and there are concerns around the availability of foster and kin carers.¹⁰² FDSV continues to impact women and children. Where challenges like these are concentrated in a location, over time they can lead to complex and entrenched disadvantage. The Place-based Policy Strategic Brief explores this further.

Engaging men and boys through a strengths-based approach can enable change in families and communities. Young men and boys have significant differences in outcomes across their life course. Men are increasingly more lonely and socially isolated than women, especially 15-24-year-olds and 35-44-year-olds.¹⁰³ Men and boys are also more likely to have lower educational attainment¹⁰⁴ and higher unemployment rates compared to women and girls at the same age.¹⁰⁵ Further, younger men are more likely to agree with traditional gender norms.¹⁰⁶ This has impacts across society and subsequently for policy responses to issues including for gender-based violence, workforce participation and men's approach to parenting.¹⁰⁷ Existing programs and services for men and boys are generally framed around deficits, which is ineffective in achieving change.

Progress has been made in addressing FDSV but is still too high. There were 46 female victims of intimate partner homicide in the 2023-24 financial year and 1 in 4 women have experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 15. Sexual violence rates increased by 58% between 2010 and 2023. First Nations women continue to disproportionately experience FDSV. First Nations women are 33 times more likely than other women to be hospitalised due to family violence and up to 7 times more likely to be homicide victims. FDSV also disproportionately affects women with disability, women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and trans and gender diverse people.¹⁰⁸ Almost 50% of women who left violent relationships are reliant on income support.¹⁰⁹

Commonwealth family policies aim to work with similar state programs, to prevent extreme policy interventions. Commonwealth family policy and programs are designed to build the resilience and capacity of families through parenting programs, family relationship services, and social connection. Despite this, out-of-home care rates are increasing, performance against Target 12 of CtG¹¹⁰ is worsening, and a higher proportion of young people under youth justice supervision had an interaction with the child protection system. Moreover, the complexity of the current support system can particularly impact on vulnerable families' ability to access services.¹¹¹

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Volume Four: The Portfolio



Department of Social Services Staffing Profile

Social Security Group

Group and group manager Total Staff

s 22	Participation and Family Payments Ben Peoples, GM	108
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s 22	Data and Evaluation Gemma Van Halderen, GM	197
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s 22	System, Strategy and Seniors Jo Evans, GM	54
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Families and Communities Group

Group and group manager Total Staff

s 22	Redress Mark Harrigan, GM	535
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s 22	Communities Patrick Burford, GM	89
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s 22	Children and Families Jacqueline Hrast, A/g GM	132
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s 22	Ending Gender Based-Violence Anna Lutz, GM	176
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s 22	Community Policy and Engagement Chris D'Souza, GM	118
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Chief Operating Officer

Group and group manager Total Staff

s 22	Chief Counsel Legal Services Bronwyn Worswick, GM	75
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s 22	Community Grants Hub Emma Kate McGuirk, GM	990
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s 22	Chief Finance Officer Cheryl-Anne Navarro, A/g GM	118
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s 22	Corporate Group Bruce Taloni, GM	254
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s 22	Portfolio Coordination Richard Baumgart, GM	113
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s 22	Social Policy Group Andrew Whitecross, GM	16
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Social Services Portfolio Agencies

The Social Services Portfolio comprises the following portfolio bodies:

Under the Administrative Arrangement Orders, the Department of Social Services is responsible for social security, and families and communities. The department delivers many of our key services through other social services portfolio agencies.

Services Australia

Services Australia provides advice and high quality accessible social, health and child support services and payments to individuals, families, businesses and communities. Services Australia administers the programs – Centrelink, Medicare, Child Support and myGov.

Australian Institute of Family Studies

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) is a statutory body established under the Family Law Act 1975. The AIFS conducts impartial research into the wellbeing of Australian families and provides an evidence base for developing policy and practice relating to the wellbeing of families in Australia.

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission's core function is to promote and report the achievement of the objectives of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032, and to hold governments accountable to it. It does this through amplifying the voices of lived experience of violence, fostering collaboration and coordination, and providing strategic advice to governments.

National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

The National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People (National Commission) commenced operations on 13 January 2025 as an executive agency in the Social Services portfolio. The National Commission is dedicated to protecting and promoting the rights, interests and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, as well as supporting their voices, goals and aspirations.

Portfolio Agencies

The department works in collaboration and alignment with other Social Services portfolio agencies. The department and each portfolio body maintain MoUs which facilitate structured, ongoing collaboration.

Portfolio Agencies' Leadership



David Hazlehurst
Chief Executive Officer,
Services Australia

Email: david.hazlehurst@servicesaustralia.gov.au

Work: s 22



Liz Neville
Director,
Australian Institute of Family Studies

Email: liz.neville@aifs.gov.au

Work: 0448 212 143



Micaela Cronin
Commissioner,
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Lil Gordon
Acting Commissioner,
National Commission for Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander Children
and Young People

Email: lil.gordon@ncatsicyp.gov.au

Work: (02) 6146 0514

Portfolio Statutory Appointments

You are responsible for Portfolio Statutory Appointments for all portfolio agencies.

The acting National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People's current term is due to expire on 12 July 2025, with the permanent National Commissioner still to be determined.

There are 4 positions on the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee still vacant.

Financial Overview

Please note, figures relate to the department **prior to Machinery of Government** processes.

The department is responsible for approximately \$198 billion of Commonwealth expenditure in 2025-26. This is around 25% of Whole of Government spending, which increases to \$206 billion in the Forward Estimates, with key expenditure in 2025-26 being:

- Personal Benefits - \$153 billion
- NDIS and National Disability Insurance Agency - \$39 billion
- Annual Administered (mostly grant funding) - \$3 billion
- Departmental resources - \$0.6 billion
- Federation Funding Agreements Framework (FFAF) - \$2 billion

The department reports on 4 outcomes totalling \$196 billion excluding FFAF spending:

Outcome 1 Social Security	Outcome 2 Families and Communities	Outcome 3 Disability and Carers	Outcome 4 Housing
\$152 billion	\$2.5 billion	\$41.2 billion	\$0.1 billion

The department's funding sources are as follows:

Funding Source	2025-26 (\$'000)
Departmental appropriation	553,277
s74 own source revenue	33,625
Annual Administered	3,340,189
Special Appropriation	152,993,428
Special Accounts	14,089
Total	156,934,608

Departmental funding in 2025-26 totals \$583 million; a reduction of \$47 million from 2024-25, as shown above. Most of the departmental funding is associated with workforce expenditure. Achieving a balanced outcome next financial year will require a reduction of around 441 ASL against current staffing of 3,418. It's the department's responsibility to manage within its available resources and a reduction in workforce of this size will require careful prioritisation. It's important the department understands your priorities clearly so our resources are allocated appropriately as we reduce the size of the workforce. Further briefing can be provided in due course.

	2024-25 <i>RB</i>	2025-26 <i>NB</i>	2026-27 <i>FE1</i>	2027-28 <i>FE2</i>	2028-29 <i>FE3</i>
Total Operational Expenditure \$m (Movement \$m)	630.0	583.0 (47.0)	432.0 (151.0)	420.6 (11.0)	417.5 (3.0)
ASL (Movement)	2,918	2,905 (13)	2,249 (656)	2,232 (17)	2,228 (4)

How we deliver on our outcomes

The department works in partnership with government, non-government organisations and communities to ensure the effective development, management and delivery of payments, evidence-based policies, programs and services to support individuals and families.

The department provides advice to its Ministers and effectively implements government policies and programs. In doing this, the department draws on the best available research, evidence and data.

The department works closely with other government agencies, state and territory governments, international organisations, regulators, businesses, education institutions, peak bodies, providers, industry and the community. This engagement combined with strong working relationships ensure policy development, program delivery, services and evaluation reflect the needs of the sectors, stakeholders and the Australian public. We aim to maximise the benefit of our state and regional presence and international engagement to support local relationships, contribute local knowledge and deliver services nationally and internationally.

The Community Grants Hub

The department operates the Community Grants Hub which delivers grant services for 12 client agencies, managing around 22,000 grants worth \$11.5 billion in 2024-25.⁶ Since the establishment of the Hub, improvements have been made in streamlining grant processes, driving consistency and improving the service offer for client agencies and grant applicants. Centralised administration of grants has also led to greater compliance with the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Principles. The department is investigating further opportunities using technology, including automation and AI, to drive ongoing productivity improvements and better service.

In 2024, the Department of Finance (Finance) commenced a review of grants administration and associated ICT systems with a view to presenting modernisation options to government. The department understands that Finance intends to pursue this work and will seek authority for it to be brought forward for Cabinet consideration in due course. The department will continue to work closely with Finance as this work develops but assesses that this offers an opportunity to consider both the mechanisms for grants delivery and the overarching grants policy. More detailed briefing can be provided in due course.

⁶ As at 28 February 2025

Department's Outcomes Summary

Touchpoints	Social Security / Income Support					Ending Gender Based Violence		
				Disability				
National Strategies / Plans / Framework / Agreements				Employ My Ability: Disability Employment Strategy		National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032		
Programs / Activities	Student Payments	Age Pension	Working age (unemployment) payments	Disability Support Pension	Disability Employment Services	Crisis and Transitional Accommodation	Safe Places	1800 RESPECT
Payment rates (fortnightly unless otherwise specified) <i>NB: Payment amounts can vary due to circumstance or other payments received</i>	Youth Allowance (YA) Student and Apprentice: \$414.20-\$1,030.30 Austudy: \$670.30-\$845.80 ABSTUDY: \$414.20-\$1,285.40	Single: \$1,149.00 Partnered: \$866.10 Couple combined: \$1,732.20	JobSeeker: \$723.00-\$1,030.30 YA (Other): \$414.20-\$1,030.30	Base rate: \$582.30-\$1,149	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Participation / key data <i>NB: as at March 2025 unless otherwise specified</i>	Total: 173,170 recipients YA (student and apprentice): 142,765 recipients (approx. 5% of people aged 15-24) Austudy: 23,235 recipients ABSTUDY: 7,170 recipients	Total: 2,654,725 recipients <i>1% identify as Indigenous</i>	Total: 973,490 recipients Jobseeker: 875,020 recipients <i>13% of recipients identify as indigenous</i> YA (Other): 98,470 recipients <i>30% of recipients identify as Indigenous</i>	Total: 823,005 recipients <i>8% of recipients identify as Indigenous</i> <i>50% over 55</i> <i>19% over 65</i>	Total: 247,990 participants <i>8.9% identify as Indigenous</i> <i>26.3% aged 55-64</i>	Safe Places: 34 projects completed, supporting approx. 5,360 women and their children annually Crisis and Transitional Accommodation Program: Approx. 290 new safe and secure homes (April 2025)	Total: 34 projects complete providing 676 safe places, assisting up to 5,360 women and children annually <i>1,500 safe places to be created by 30 June 2027</i>	Total: 307,428 contacts across all channels. (1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024)
Closing the Gap Outcomes	7: Youth are engaged in employment or education	8: Strong economic participation and development of people and their communities				9: People can secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and needs		
					Cross cutting disability outcome	13: Families and households are safe		

	Family and Children			Redress	Community Support			
National Strategies / Plans / Framework	Safe and Supported the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031			Joint Select Committee on Implementation of the National Redress Scheme	National Consumer Protection Framework for Online Wagering Framework			
	Early Years Strategy 2024-2034							
Programs / Activities	Family and Parenting Support Payments	Child Support Scheme	Families and Children Activity	National Redress Scheme	Gambling Support	Income management	Emergency Support	Strong and Resilient Communities
Payment rates (fortnightly unless otherwise specified) <i>NB: Payment amounts can vary due to circumstance or other payments received</i>	Family Tax Benefit (FTB) Part A: <i>Max under 13: \$222.04</i> <i>Max 13+: \$288.82</i> <i>Base rate: \$71.26</i> FTB Part B: <i>Youngest child <5: \$188.86</i> <i>Youngest child 5+: \$131.74</i> Paid Parental Leave: \$1,831.60 Parenting Payment (Single): \$1,030.30 Parenting Payment (Partnered): \$723.00	N/A	N/A	One-off payment: up to \$150, 000, decided on an individual basis.	N/A	N/A	Amount and type of support/aid varies based on the financial and/or material need of people in immediate financial crisis.	N/A
Participation / key data As at March 2025 unless otherwise specified	FTB Part A: 1.3 million FTB Part B 1.0 million PPL: 226,120 recipients <i>70% birth mothers, 30% are fathers or partners (2023-24 financial year).</i> Parenting Payment (Partnered): 59,320 recipients <i>90% of recipients are female</i> Parenting Payment (Single): 328,790 recipients <i>94% of recipients are female, 30% of recipients have youngest principal care child aged 8 to 13 years</i>	Total: 1.32 million separated parents for 1.1 million children. (2023-2024)	Total: approx. 270,000 clients access services annually, inclusive of services to families and children to support family functioning	Received Applications: 59,343 Finalised Applications: 20, 170 Applications on hand: 34, 989	Active Gambling Self Exclusions: 21,381 people <i>39% were lifetime exclusions</i> <i>48% of exclusions were for people aged under 30</i> Financial Counselling for Gambling: 5,000 clients annually	Total: 31,942 people <i>93% of participants located in the Northern Territory</i>	Emergency Relief: Approximately 430,000 annually	Total: 36,721 participants since 2022 <i>74% reported improved circumstances</i> <i>66% reported improvement in achieving their goals</i> <i>92% were satisfied with the services.</i>
Closing the Gap Outcomes	4: Children thrive in their early years					8: Strong economic participation and development of people and their communities		

Portfolio Factsheets

Intersectionality in the Social Services Portfolio

Australians are not homogenous – they have many and varied personal identities, backgrounds and experiences. Over 6 million people interact with our services and systems in different ways and at different times based on their life experiences. Those who are marginalised can face compounding forms of disadvantage which increase the difficulty they experience in social and economic participation. They can require increased interventions and supports which could be provided through any of our outcome areas. Based on experiences of intersectional disadvantage, it is critical we build on person-centred approaches to provide system-based, holistic responses for better outcomes.



First Nations family experiencing overcrowding

Lesley is a 30yo single mother with two children aged 6 and 1 living in regional Queensland. Lesley's brother and his family are frequently staying with Lesley, with all children sharing bedrooms and the parents sleeping in the living room.

Lesley receives Parenting Payment, Family Tax Benefit and Child Support to assist her with meeting the essential needs of her family.

Lesley lives in social housing provided by the Queensland Government. This is supported through funding provided under the National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness.

Governments and First Nations community representatives are working together through the Housing Policy Partnership to make progress on Closing the Gap target 9a to reduce overcrowding and improve housing outcomes for First Nations people. Over time, more housing options will be available for First Nations families.

Sometimes Lesley reaches out for assistance to help manage the stressful living environment when her broader family is staying. Parentline Queensland and Northern Territory provides advice and support. Lesley takes her youngest child to the local community-led playgroup to help build social skills and to talk to the other mothers.



Young boy experiencing homelessness

Ahmed is a 4yo boy with two parents who are living in crisis housing in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Overall household income is low due to the family business closing recently.

Ahmed's parents receive Parenting Payment, JobSeeker Payment and Family Tax Benefit.

Ahmed's family lost their private rental housing six months ago and were staying with friends until they were provided short-term crisis accommodation. His parents have been looking for an affordable private rental but with no success so far.

Ahmed's parents have been working with a specialist homelessness service provider to access crisis housing and assistance for private rental housing. This is supported through funding provided under the National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness.

Ahmed's parents are trying to provide some stability and support for him in this difficult situation. Noticing Ahmed has been very distressed recently, his parents have been taking him to sessions with a local Family Mental Health Service for early intervention assistance.

Ahmed regularly attends pre-school and has good connections with his peers.



Older jobseeker

Henry is 57yo and lives in Launceston, Tasmania. Henry was recently caring for his mother at home and was receiving Carer Payment and Commonwealth Rent Assistance. Henry's mother is now in Aged Care.

Henry is now looking for work and receives JobSeeker Payment and Commonwealth Rent Assistance. Henry has worked for most of his life but has had some time out of the workforce in recent years.

Henry faces some physical disability challenges acquired from a previous job. He is registered with a Disability Employment Services provider.

Henry is working with his provider to transition back into full time work and receive support for future workplace adjustments. Henry is hoping he can find stable reliable work for another 5 or so years before retiring.

Henry uses the Disability Gateway to find local services and supports in his area. He has found social groups which are helping to make new connections in the community.

Henry recently had to do some essential repairs to his house, which caused him significant financial stress. He was able to access Emergency Relief which covered some food and utility expenses until his financial position stabilised.



Family experiencing FDV

Nicky and her daughter Jasmine escaped an abusive relationship around 18 months ago. Nicky is 45yo and Jasmine is 15yo. They are now living in a private rental in Western Sydney. Nicky is working in administration to support Jasmine who is in high-school.

Nicky and Jasmine are survivors of FDV. Their journey involved accessing many different services and supports. 1800RESPECT helped Nicky to get some immediate support and advice on what next steps she should take. Nicky obtained referrals to local support services, organise legal advice, and ensure her daughter Jasmine was also being supported during this difficult time.

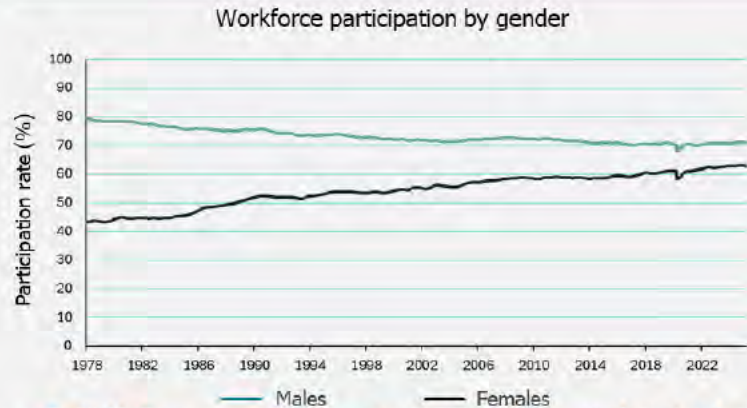
Finding safe accommodation was critical for Nicky. She obtained emergency accommodation that was established through the Safe Places program.

This emergency accommodation provided Nicky with time and space to consider longer-term plans. The Escaping Violence Payment provided financial and goods-based support to enable Nicky to meet some of their immediate short-term needs.

To ensure Jasmine was able to maintain connection to education and her friends, Nicky and Jasmine together undertook family counselling with Relationships Australia.

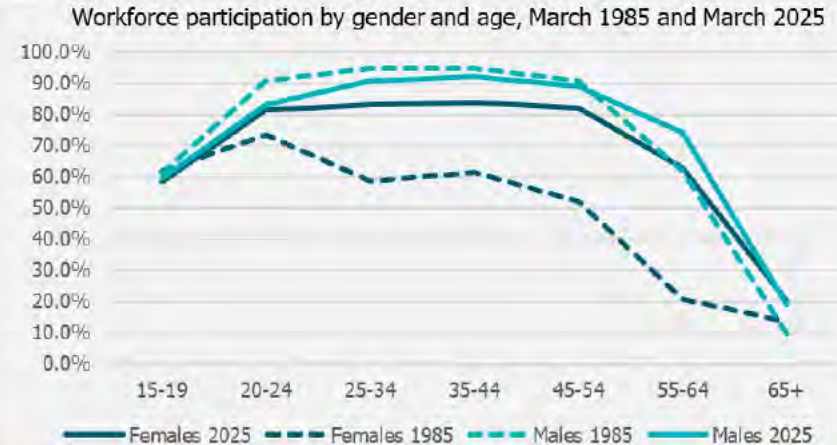
Workforce Participation chart pack

1 The gap in workforce participation between men and women has decreased significantly over the past 40 years

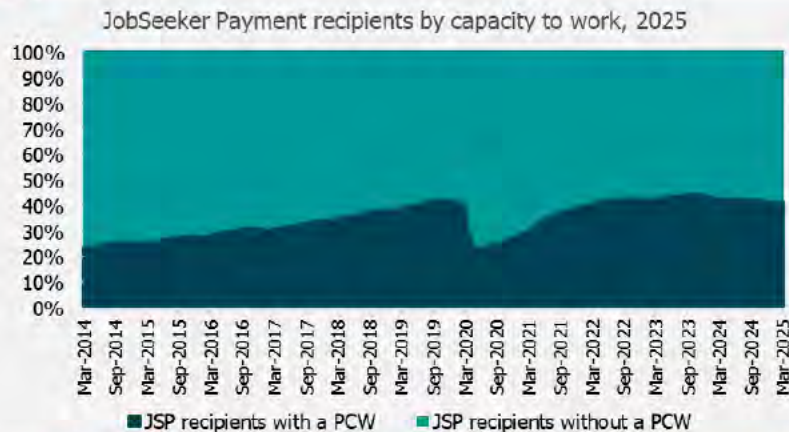


Source: [Spotlight: Changes in participation rates for men and women in Australia | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

2 Women's workforce participation has increased across all age cohorts over the past 40 years

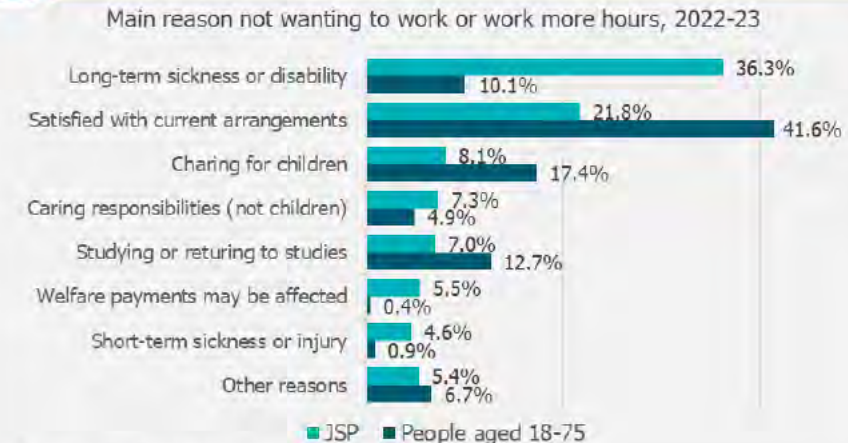


3 The proportion of JobSeekers with a Partial Capacity to Work has increased over the past 10 years



Source: [DSS Income Support Recipients – Monthly Time Series | Datasets | data.gov.au - beta](#)

4 The most common reason for JobSeekers not taking up more work or hours is long term sickness or disability



Source: ABS Barriers and Incentives to Survey 2022-23

Workforce Participation Key Figures

Employment and economic trends



The trend in unemployment rate remained at 4% in March 2025

It has been within a relatively narrow range of 3.9% and 4.1% for the past 16 months. Underemployment remained at 5.9%

Source: ABS, April 2025

Employment grew by around 14,000 people (0.1%) in March 2025

It has grown by 2.3% over the last 12 months

Source: ABS, April 2025

Since January 2024 the number of JobSeeker Payment recipients has increased by 82,770 people

Over the last decade, JobSeeker Payment/Newstart Allowance recipients with earnings has remained constant, at around 20% of the population

Source: DSS demographic data 2024

Labour force demographics



63% of women and 71.2% of men aged 15+ were participating in the labour force as at December 2024

Source: ABS 2025

In 2022, 60.5% of people with disability (age 15-64) were in the labour force, compared to 84.9% without a disability (aged 15-64)

Source: ABS 2025

In 2021, 50.7% First Nations people aged 15-64 were in the labour force

Only 30.2% of First Nations people aged 15-64 in very remote areas were in the labour force

Source: AIHW 2023

Workforce spending snapshot



\$13.8 billion for JobSeeker

in 2024-25, to support those who cannot fully support themselves through work

Source: Portfolio Budget Statements 2025-26

\$1,143.7 million for Youth Allowance (other)

in 2024-25, to support young people who cannot fully support themselves through work

Source: Portfolio Budget Statements 2025-26

Projected \$39.4 million for Disability Employment Services

in 2024-25, to support people with disability to find and maintain employment

Source: Portfolio Budget Statements 2024-25

Barriers



The JobSeeker Payment/Newstart Allowance population has grown by 7.7%

over the last decade to 847,960 in December 2024.

However, the proportion of JobSeeker Payment recipients with a Partial Capacity to Work has increased by 73% over the same period.

This has helped drive an increase in amount of time a JobSeeker recipient receives an income support payment – currently 173 weeks on average, an increase of over 60 weeks over the last decade.

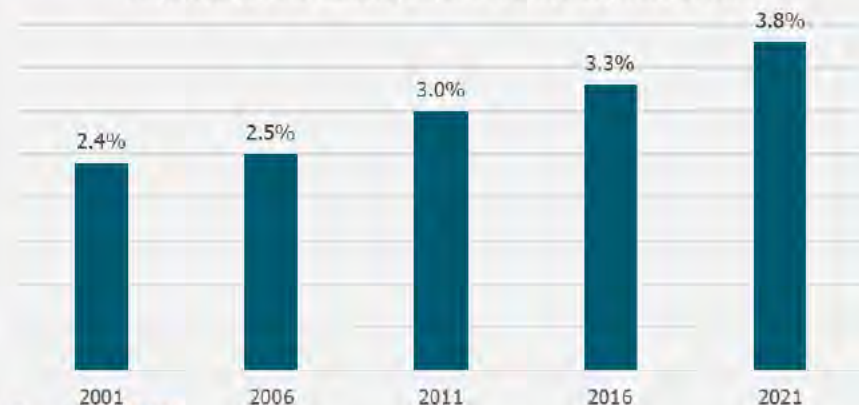
Source: DSS demographic data, DSS Income Support Recipients – Monthly Time Series | Datasets | data.gov.au - beta

First Nations People chart pack

1

The proportion of Australians who identify as First Nations has increased over the past 20 years

Proportion of First Nations people in the Census, 2001 to 2021

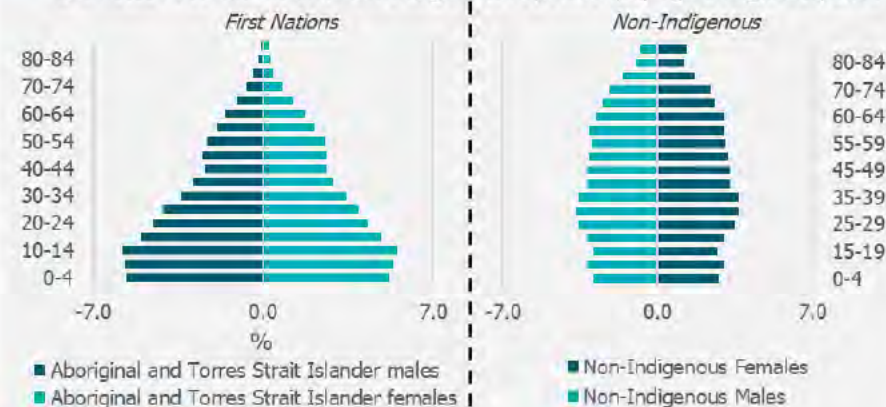


Source: [ABS, 2021](#)

2

The median age of First Nations people is 24 years, 14 years less than the median age of all Australians (38 years)

Estimated First Nations and Non-Indigenous Population, by age and gender, 2021

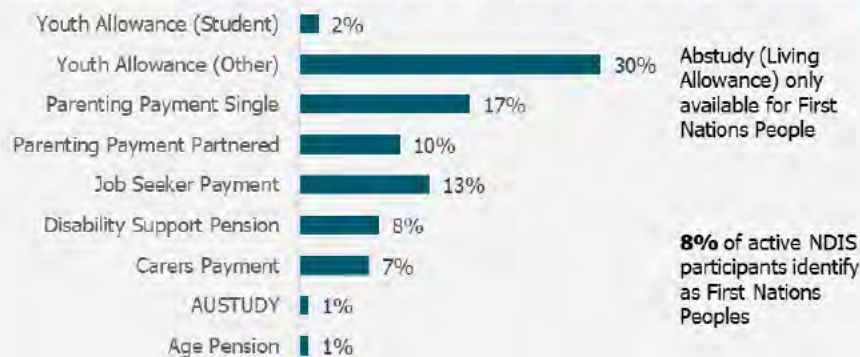


Source: [ABS, 2021](#)

3

First Nations people are over-represented across a number of income support payments

Representation of First Nations people (self-identified) in Income Support Payments

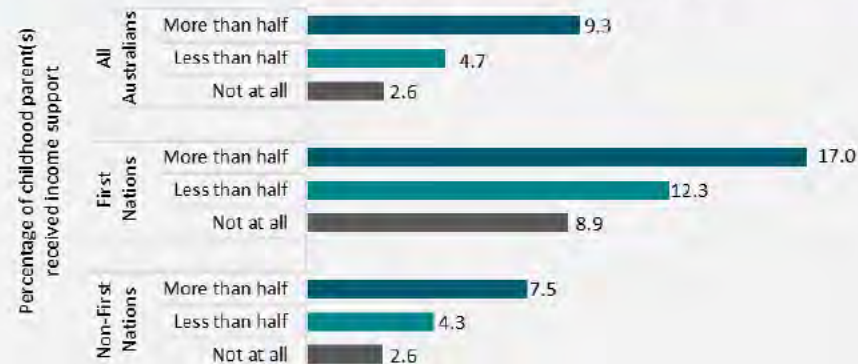


Source: DSS, March 2025 (Data and Evaluation Group: Bluebook); NDIS, December 2024 (Quarterly report to disability ministers Q2 2024-25)

4

First Nations children who grew up with parent(s) receiving income support are projected to spend longer receiving support

Projected average years receiving income support



Source: [PIA 2022 Valuation Report](#)

First Nations People key figures

Demographics



Almost 4 in 10 First Nations people (or 37%) reported that they had a disability

People living in non-remote areas were more likely to report they had a disability (38%) than those living in remote areas (31%)

Source: [ABS, 2022-23](#)

A quarter of people experiencing homelessness are First Nations people

On Census night 2021, 24,930 First Nations people were homeless

Source: [ABS Census](#)

In 2021, 41% of First Nations people lived in major cities, 44% lived in inner and outer regional areas and 15% lived in remote and very remote areas

Source: [AIHW 2023](#)

Closing the Gap targets



Target 9a – People living in appropriately sized housing – increase share to 88% by 2031

Not on track to be met by 2031 - shows improvement from 78.9% in 2016 to 81.4% in 2021,

Source: [Productivity Commission, March 2025](#)

Target 12 – Out-of-Home Care – reduce rate by 45%

Worsening and not on track to be met - the 2024 rate was 50.3 per 1,000 children in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, the same rate in 2023, and an increase from 47.3 in 2019 (the baseline year).

Source: [Productivity Commission, March 2025](#)

Target 13 – Family Safety – violence reduced by 50%

No new data - In 2018-19, 8.4% of females aged 15 years and over experienced domestic physical violence or face-to-face threatening physical harm.

Source: [Productivity Commission, March 2025](#)

Enhanced Income Management



There are 31,874 participants on the income management (IM) programs

20,007 participants are on enhanced IM and 11,867 on IM of which 56% are female.

Source: [DSS, 2025](#)

Over 80% of participants of Income Management programs are First Nations

87% for Income Management and 79% for Enhanced Income Management

Source: [DSS, 2025](#)

93% of participants live in the Northern Territory

18,240 are on the enhanced IM program and 11,433 on the IM program. 76,487 First Nations people live in the NT, 30.8% of the NT population

Source: [DSS, 2025](#)

Gender Based Violence



3 in 5 First Nations women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a male intimate partner

32% of female victims of intimate partner violence are First Nations women

Source: [Australian Human Rights Commission 2020](#)

First Nations Women are 33 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence

They are up to 7 times more likely to be a domestic homicide victim than non-Indigenous women

Source: [AIHW 2025](#)

Up to 90% of violence against First Nations women is undisclosed and not reported

Source: [AIHW 2025](#)

Gender Equality chart pack

1

The pay gap between men and women is declining

Gender pay gap, average weekly earnings, commonly cited measure, 2014-2024

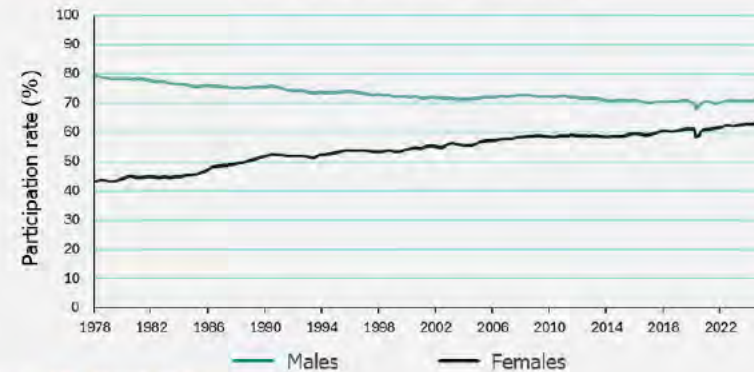


Source: [ABS, 2024](#)

2

The workforce participation gap between men and women is closing

Workforce participation by gender

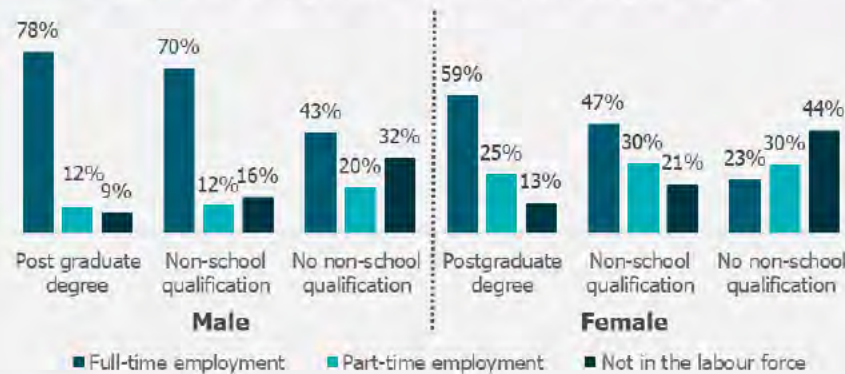


Source: [ABS, March 2025](#)

3

Across all qualification levels, women are more likely to be in part-time employment or not in the labour force than men

Employment rates by gender and qualification level, age 15-74, 2024

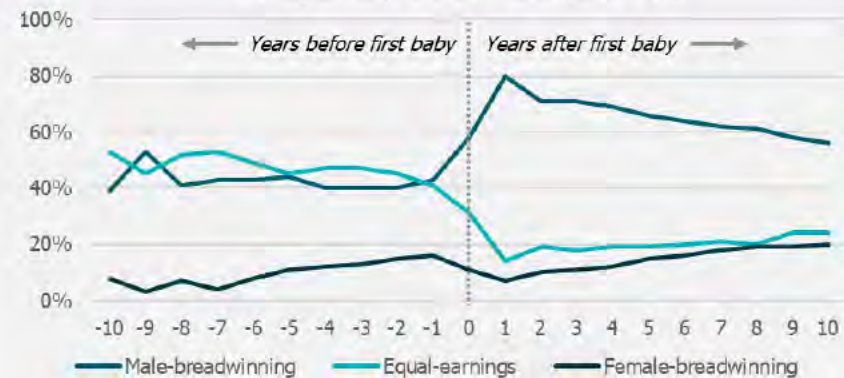


Source: [ABS, 2024](#)

4

Women's pay falls below their partners following the birth of a child, this is unlikely to recover over time

Primary earner, before and after parenthood



Source: [Steinbring R et al \(2025\), based on author analysis of HILDA data](#)

Gender Equality key figures

LAST UPDATED: May 2025

Demographics



LGBTIQ+ Australians make up about 3.6% of the population

This increases to 4.5% for Australians 16+. About 0.9% are trans and/or gender diverse.

Source: [ABS, 2022](#)

Women (65+) have a median superannuation balance of \$168,000. For men, the median is \$208,200

Source: [ABS, 2019-20](#)

In 2022, 13.2% of men over 15 engaged in 'risky gambling', compared to 6.5% of women

Source: [HILDA, 2024](#)

Gender-based violence



Over 1 in 4 women in Australia have experienced family and domestic violence since age 15

23% of women have experienced emotional abuse by a current or previous cohabitating partner.

Source: [ABS, PSS, 2021-22](#)

Approximately 61% of LGBTIQ+ people have experienced intimate partner violence

Emotional abuse (48%), verbal abuse (42%) and social isolation (27%) were the most commonly reported types.

Source: [AIHW 2019](#)

Almost 4 in 5 Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence offenders were male in 2023-24

Source: [ABS, PSS, 2023-24](#)

Housing and homelessness



More men are experiencing homelessness than women, women receive more support from services

24% of women receive accommodation support, compared to 16% of men.

Source: [ABS Census 2021](#)

More than half of social housing tenants are women and women tend to be head of the household

55% of social housing tenants are women, and 62% are the main tenant.

Source: [AIHW, 2024](#)

60% of Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) clients were women in 2023-24

SHS supported 280,000 clients in 2023-24. FDSV was main reason clients sought support (33%). Most adult clients with children were women (90%).

Source: [AIHW, 2025](#)

Protective factor of connected fathers



Greater involvement of men in parenting and care is linked with reductions in violence against women

The pre-natal and new parenthood periods are times when men are more open to help-seeking and behaviour change. 20% of mothers experienced intimate partner violence in the first 12 months postpartum

Sources: [Keleher Consulting 2025](#)

Confident fathers take on a greater share of care

Social norms around parenting are changing but gendered patterns of employment remain and women still doing more unpaid care per day. 1.3 million Australian women took on 30 hours or more of unpaid hours of domestic work in 2021, compared to 394,996 men. 1.7 million women took on 15-29 hours of unpaid domestic work, compared to 819,324 men. Men were more likely to take on less than 5 hours a week than women.

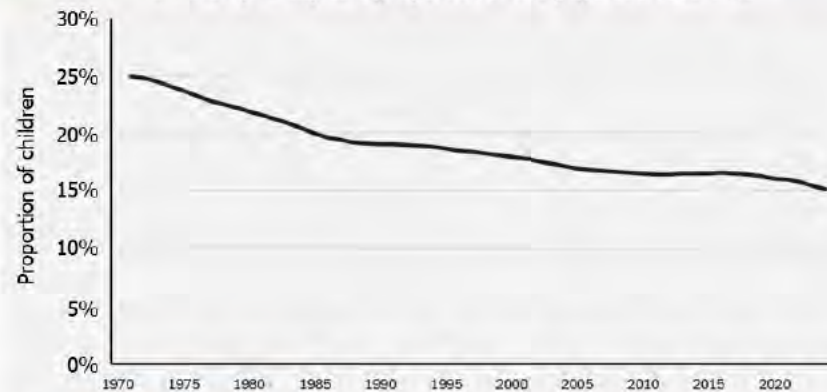
Sources: [Keleher Consulting 2025](#); [ABS, 2021](#)

Children and the Early Years chart pack

1

The proportion of the population aged 0-12 has decreased over time as Australia's population ages

Children (0 – 12) as a proportion of the population overtime

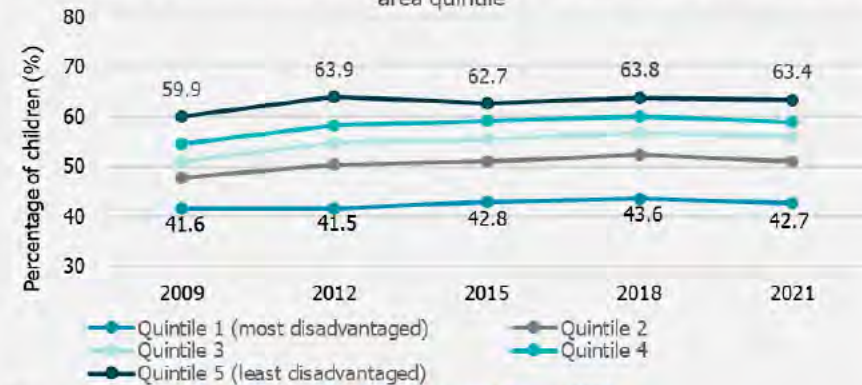


Source: [ABS, September 2024](#)

2

There is a persistent 20 percentage point gap in developmental outcomes for children in the highest and lowest SES areas

Percentage of children developmentally on track on five domains by socio-economic area quintile

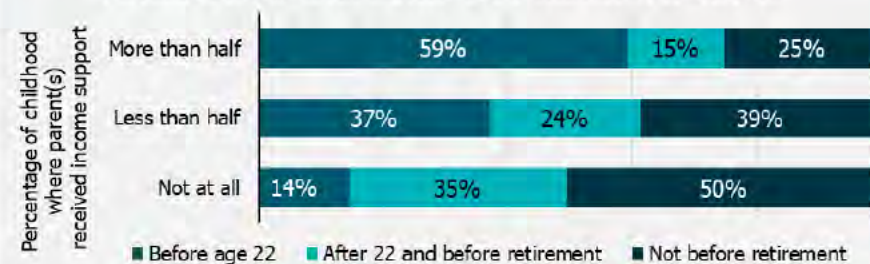


Source: [Australian Early Development Census National Report 2021](#)

3

Children whose parents access income support are 1.5 times more likely to receive income support themselves

Percentage of children by expected age of first income support use



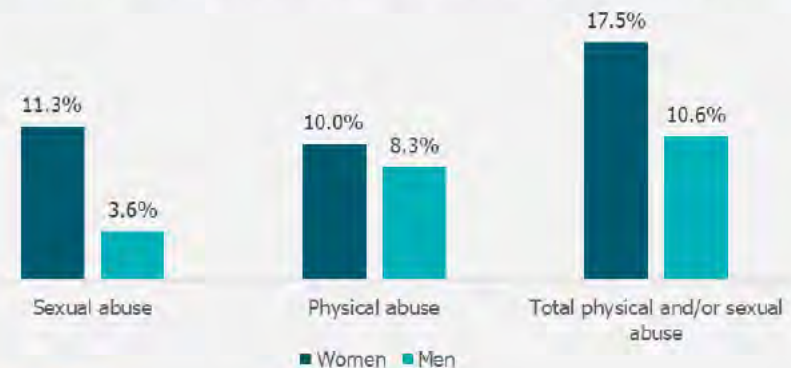
Children who spent more than half of their childhood in a household with parent(s) receiving income support are 1.5 times more likely to receive income support themselves, than children whose parent(s) were not on income support. They are more likely to receive this support before age 22.

Source: [PIA 2022 Valuation Report](#)

4

17.5% of women and 10.6% of men have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse before age 15

Experiences of physical and/or sexual abuse before age 15, 2021-22



Source: [ABS, 2022](#)

Children and Early Years key figures

Demographics



In 2021, there were 266,000 First Nations children aged 0-14

This is around 5.7% of the total child population in Australia. This compared to First Nations people making up 3.8% of the total population

Source: [ABS, 2021](#)

In 2022, an estimated 11% (520,000) children aged 0-14 had a disability

This includes an estimated 6.6% (310,600) with a severe or profound disability. In 2022, 21.4% of the total population had a disability

Source: [ABS 2022](#)

In December 2024, 961,335 children were eligible for Child Support

Source: [DSS 2024](#)

Children in out-of-home care



As at 30 June 2024, 8 per 1,000 children (44,866) were in out-of-home care nationally

Source: [Report on Government Services 2025](#)

As at 30 June 2024, the rate of First Nations children aged 0-17 years in out-of-home care was 50.3 per 1000 children

This is 19,985 of the 44,866 (or 7.7 per 1,000) children in out-of-home care

Source: [Report on Government Services 2025](#)

In 2022-23, there were 9,661 children with disabilities in out-of-home care (21% of all children in out of-home-care)

Source: [2022-23, Data - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)

Spending Snapshot Children and Early Years



\$17.8 billion for Family Tax Benefit Parts A and B in 2024-25 to support low-income families with the costs of raising children.

\$477.9 million for Families and Children Activity in 2024-25 to improve individual and family functioning

\$553.9 million to support Family Safety in 2024-25 including delivery of initiatives under *the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2023*

\$35 million for Protecting Australia's Children in 2024-25 including projects as part of *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*

Source: [DSS Portfolio Budget Statements \(2025\)](#)

Housing and homelessness



In 2021, 21,882 children were experiencing homelessness

Children aged 0-14 made up 15% of the homeless population

Source: [ABS Census \(TableBuilder | Australian Bureau of Statistics\)](#)

Over 160,000 children live in social housing

Children aged 0-14 made up about 20% of social housing tenants

Source: [AIHW HAA \(Households\)](#)

Rates of homelessness were highest among children in remote areas and First Nations children

In 2021, 4.4% of children aged 0-14 living in remote areas were homeless, compared to 0.4% in major cities; and 2.7% of First Nations children were experiencing homelessness, compared to 0.3% of non-Indigenous children.

Source: [ABS Census \(TableBuilder | Australian Bureau of Statistics\)](#)

Young People chart pack

1

In 2024, 9% of all people aged 15-24 were not engaged in any work or study

People aged 15-24 years not engaged in work or study 15-24 years (%)

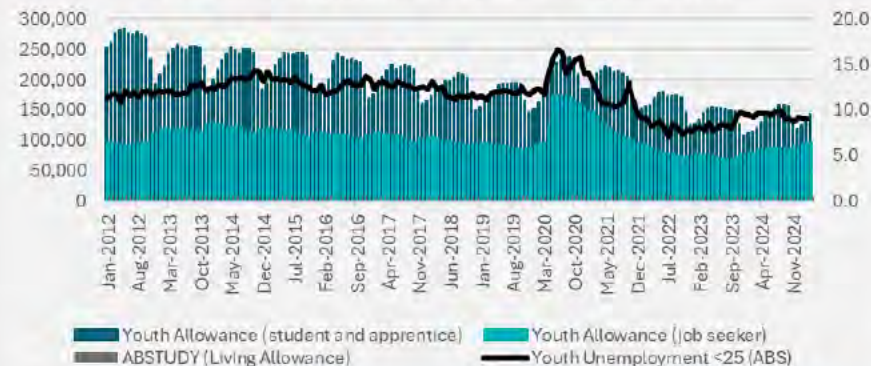


Source: [ABS 2024](#)

2

Changes in the Youth Allowance population do not always change in line with youth unemployment

Youth Allowance population and youth unemployment rate



Source: [Department of Social Services, March 2025](#); [Australian Bureau of Statistics, March 2025](#)

3

Capacity to work and education levels make a difference to how long young people are on income support

Younger people receiving JobSeeker Payment with a partial capacity to work who did not complete Year 12 are projected to spend 5.7 of the next 10 years on income support, 50% longer than those with full capacity and who completed Year 12 or above.

Projected average time on income support over the next 10 years for people aged under 35 receiving JobSeeker Payment at 30 June 2022



Source: Priority Investment Approach unpublished data (DSS), June 2022

4

35% of young women (18-24) report experiencing sexual harassment and stalking

Women who experienced sexual harassment in the 12 months before the survey, by age group, 2021-22



Source: [AIHW 2025](#)

Young People Key Figures

Demographics



In 2020, 3.2 million young people aged 15–24 lived in Australia

Young people made up 12% of the whole population

47% (1.5 million) of young people were aged 15 to 19 and 53% (1.7 million) were 20 to 24

In 2019, 5.1% of young people were First Nations young people

There were 164,000 First Nations young people in 2019

13.9% (291,000) of young people had a disability in 2022

This is up from 9.4% in 2018

Source: [AIHW 2021](#); [ABS 2022](#)

Youth Homelessness



In 2021, 23% of all people experiencing homelessness were aged 12 to 24

The rate of homelessness for this age group decreased from 73 people per 10,000 in 2016 to 71 people per 10,000 in 2021

Young females had a homelessness rate of 70 people per 10,000 in 2021 (up from 68 in 2016)

Young males had a rate of 71 people per 10,000 (down from 77 in 2016)

Young females were more likely to be in supported accommodation or staying with other households than males. Young males were more likely to be living in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out, living in boarding houses or living in 'severely' crowded dwellings.

Source: [ABS 2023](#)

Youth Income Support Payments Snapshot



Youth Allowance (Student and Apprentice)

(for young people aged 16 to 24 studying full time or undertaking a full time Australian Apprenticeship)

\$1,819.14 million in 2024-25 (estimated actual)

158,940 recipients (as at September 2024*)

52% (82,610) do not have earnings

1.6% (2,520) identify as Indigenous**

*September data is used to address seasonality in student enrolments

**Indigenous students and Australian Apprentices can access income support through ABSTUDY

Youth Allowance (job seeker)

(for young people aged 16 to 21 years who are seeking or preparing for paid employment or unable to work)

\$1,143.7 million in 2024-25 (estimated actual)

91,200 recipients (as at December 2024)

ABSTUDY Living Allowance

(for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying full time or undertaking an Australian Apprenticeship)

\$335.9 million in 2024-25 (estimated actual)

8,290 recipients (as at September 2024)

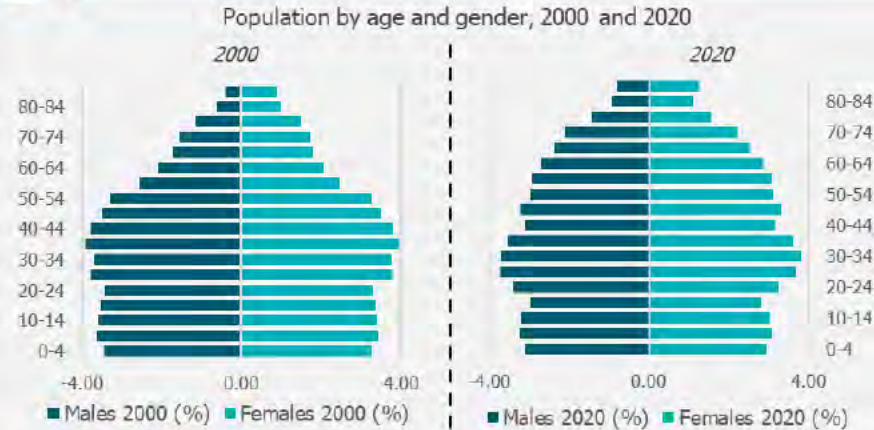
In 2022, 86.5% of Youth Allowance (student and apprentice) and 64.1% of ABSTUDY Living Allowance recipients were not receiving income support 12 months after exiting payment.

Source: [Portfolio Budget Statements 2025-26](#); [Department of Social Services, March 2025](#)

Older Australians chart pack

1

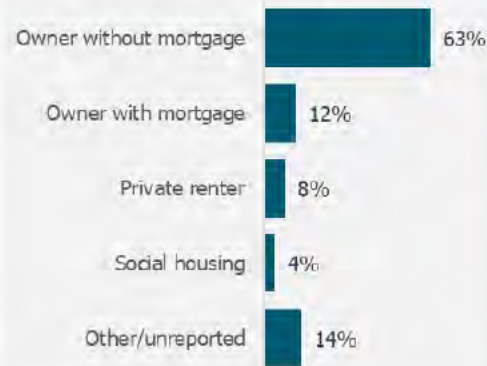
The proportion of the population over 65 has increased by 31% since 2000, the fastest growth of any age cohort



2

The majority of people aged over 65 own their home without a mortgage

Tenure type of people aged over 65, 2021



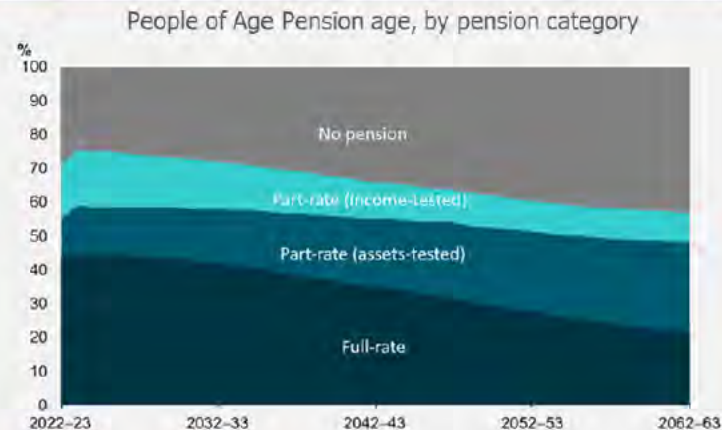
Source: Census DataCubes

Homelessness statistics

Status	2021
No. of homeless individuals 65+	8,400
% of total homeless	7%
Homeless 65+ per 10,000 people	19

3

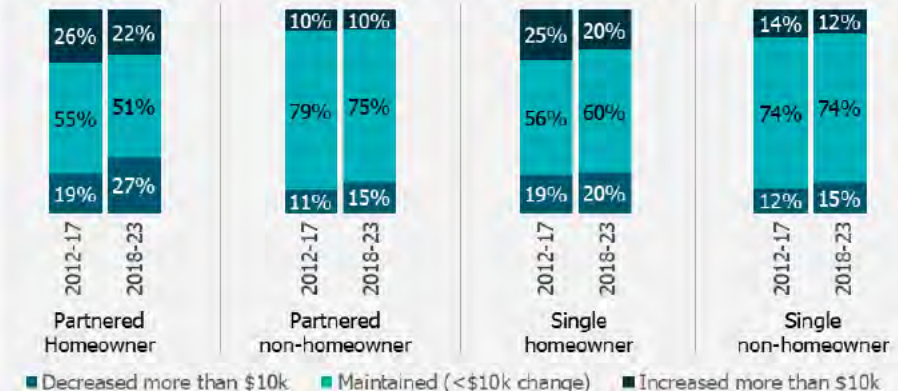
The proportion of people over 65 who are on the full rate aged pension is projected to decline over the next 40 years



4

Over half of aged pensioners maintain their asset holdings prior to death, this varies by tenure and partnered status

Asset holdings of Age Pensioners in the 5 years prior to death



Source: DSS Bluebook

Older Australians key figures

Income support and participation



63% of people aged 65+ receive income support payments, compared to 24% of all Australians

92% of these receive the Age Pension, 4% receive DSP, 2% receive carer payment and 1% receive Job Seeker Payment

92,000 or 3.5% of Age Pension recipients have earnings from an employer

A further 45,950 or 1.6% have self-employment income.

Source: [DSS, March 2025](#)

19.7% of males and 18.6% of females aged 65-74 provided informal care in 2022

20.1% of males and 13.8% of females aged 75 and over provided informal care

Source: [ABS 2022](#)

Older Australians demographics



53% female 47% male

55% partnered 42.2% single

1.2% First Nations

75% homeowner

25% non-homeowner

50% of people aged 65 and over had a disability in 2019

2 in 5 grandparents with grandchild under 14 provided child-care

Source: [DSS, March 2025 \(linked\)](#), [AIHW 2024](#), [ABS 2022](#)

Age Pension demographics



55.5% female 44.5% male

51.2% partnered 48.8% single

1.2% First Nations

72.8% homeowner

27.2% non-homeowner

23.5% households receiving Commonwealth Rent Assistance
(61.0% at maximum rate)

Source: [DSS, March 2025 \(linked\)](#), [AIHW 2024](#), [ABS 2022](#)

NDIS participation



36,219 active NDIS participants over 65 as at Q4 2024

An increase of 4,268 participants since Q1 2024

\$76,767 was the average committed support for NDIS participants aged 65+ as at Q4 2024, the second highest of any age group

An average payment of \$58,463

as at Q4 2024, the second highest of any age group

Source: [NDIA 2024](#)

Same pension, different circumstances



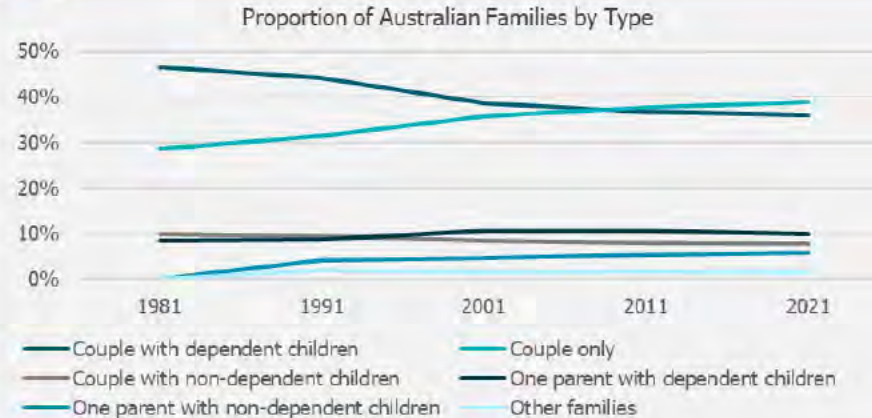
Homeowner couple with private income and assets		Renting couple with no assessable income/assets
\$1,732.20 per fortnight (pf)	Maximum rate of Age Pension received	\$1,732.20 pf
\$780,000	Principal home value	NA
\$425,000	Financial assets	\$0
\$19,125 pa (\$736 pf) <i>Interest on \$425,000 in a 12-month term deposit, earning 4.5% pa</i>	Actual private income	\$0
\$7,487 pa (\$288 pf) deemed income <i>No impact on pension (below income free area)</i>	Assessable income	\$0
NA	Rent payable	\$800 pf (will receive \$200pf of CRA)
\$1.205 million, including home	Total assets to draw on	\$0
\$64,162 pa (\$2,467.77 pf), \$0 mortgage repayment	Total income	\$50,232 pa (\$1,932 pf) before rent is paid

¹ Does not include Group households or other ² Does not include zero rate, suspended, or undetermined/manual rate recipients.

Families chart pack

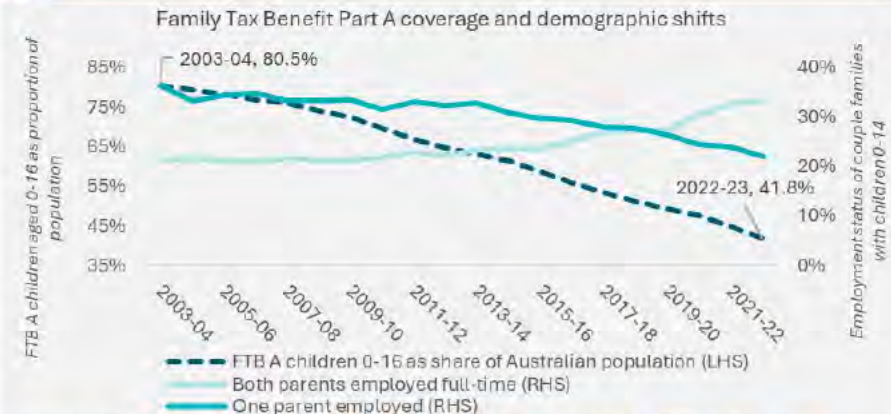
1

Couple only and one-parent families are increasing over time



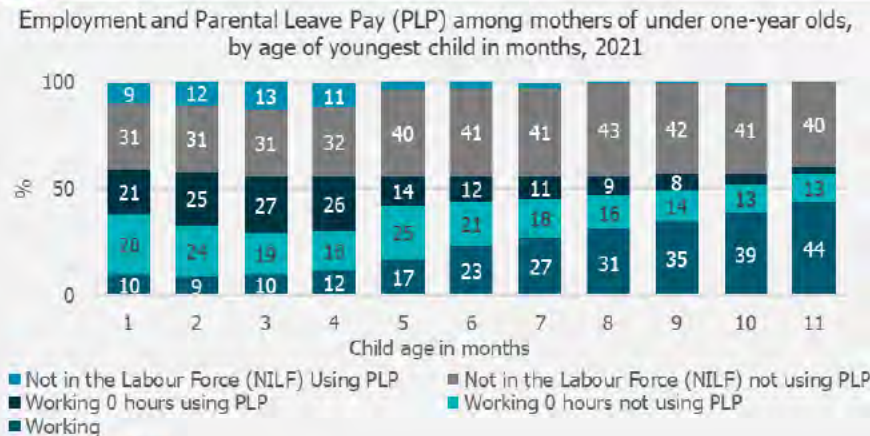
2

The number of families receiving Family Tax Benefit Part A has decreased as more families have both parents working



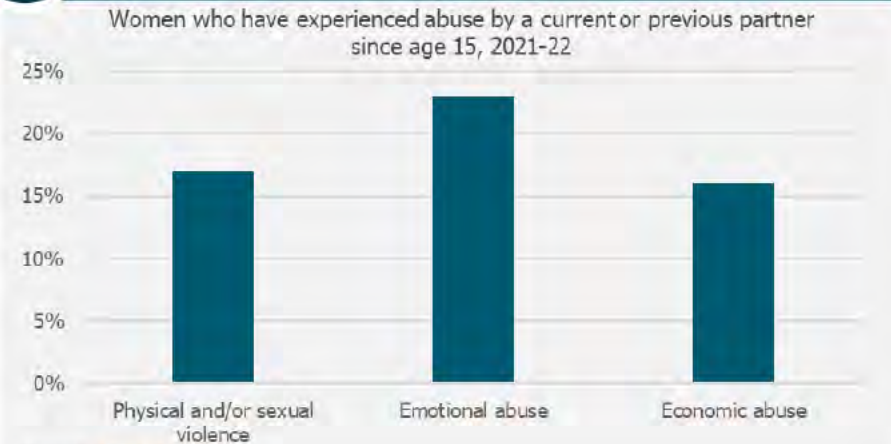
3

44% of women have returned to the workforce once their youngest child is 11 months old. 41% are NILF or unemployed



4

1 in 4 women (23% or 2.3 million) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a partner since age 15



Families key figures

Demographics



In 2021, 3.8% of all households in Australia (352,041) were First Nations households

The most common family type was couple family with children (29.7% of Indigenous households), followed by one parent households (24.%) and couples with no children (17.8%)

46,200 children in out-of-home care at June 2021

1 in 17 (19,500) First Nations children were in out-of-home care

29.8% of Australia's population was born overseas

11% of permanent migrants lived in crowded housing (requiring 1 or more bedroom) in 2021 (compared to 7% of all Australians). This increased to 33.7% of migrants who arrived on humanitarian visas

Sources: [ABS 2021](#); [AIHW 2022](#); [ABS 2021](#)

Intergenerational inequality/location disadvantage



Children growing up in a household with parent(s) **receiving income support** for more than half of their childhood **and living in the most disadvantaged** areas of Australia are projected to spend **4.5 times longer** receiving income support (10.3 years) than children whose parent(s) did not receive income support in the most advantaged areas (2.3 years).

Years projected to receiving income support by percentage of childhood where parent(s) received income support

		More than half	Less than half	Not at all
Socio-economic Area Grouping	Lowest 20%	10.3	5.9	3.2
	20%-40%	9.3	5	2.8
	40%-60%	8.5	4.5	2.6
	60%-80%	7.7	4	2.5
	Highest 20%	6.7	3.3	2.3

Source: [PIA 2022 Valuation Report](#)

Spending Snapshot Families



\$17.8 billion for Family Tax Benefit Parts A and B in 2024-25 to support low-income families with the costs of raising children.

\$553.9 million to support Family Safety

in 2024-25 including delivery of initiatives under *the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2023*

\$477.9 million for Families and Children

in 2024-25 to improve individual and family functioning

\$21.5 million for Social Impact Investing Initiatives

in 2024-25 to bring governments, service providers, investors, and communities together to address social policy issues.

Source: [DSS Portfolio Budget Statements \(2025\)](#)

Disadvantaged Location



Of the 5 most disadvantaged LGAs, 3 are in Queensland and 2 are in the Northern Territory

Generally, disadvantaged areas tend to be in regional and remote communities, while advantaged areas tend to be in major cities.



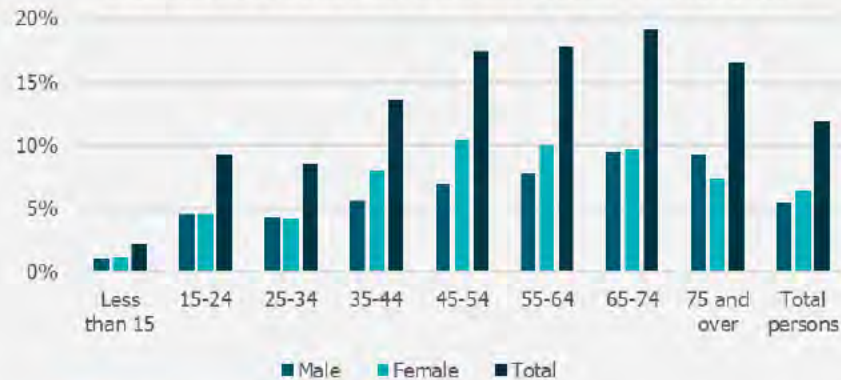
Source: [ABS, 2021](#)

Carers chart pack

1

Australia has 3 million unpaid carers, 71% of these unpaid carers are aged 45 and over

Unpaid carers as a proportion of the total population, by age group

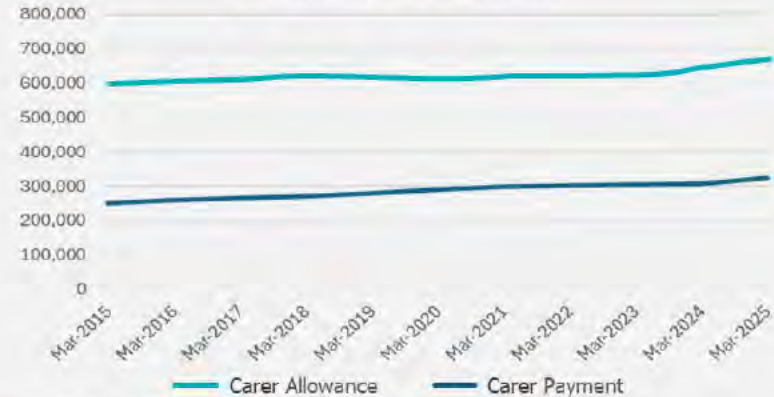


Source: [ABS, Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers, 2022](#)

2

Carer Payment and Carer Allowance participation rates are increasing

Participation rates, 2015 - 2025

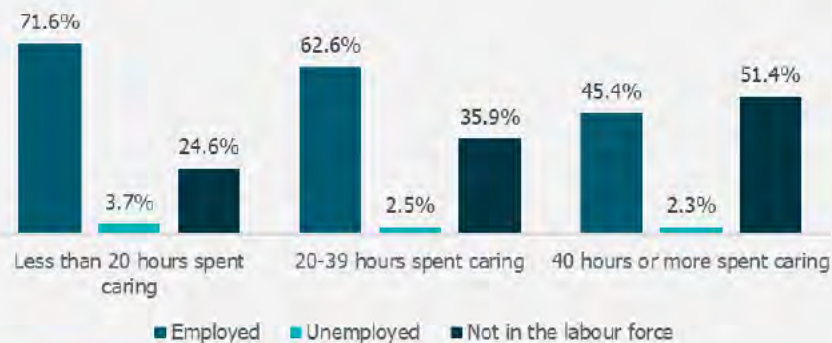


Source: DSS, March 2025 (Data and Evaluation Group: Bluebook)

3

More than half of primary carers who spend 40 hours or more a week caring are not in the labour force

Time spent caring for main recipient of care by labour force status of carer (primary carers aged 15-64 years)

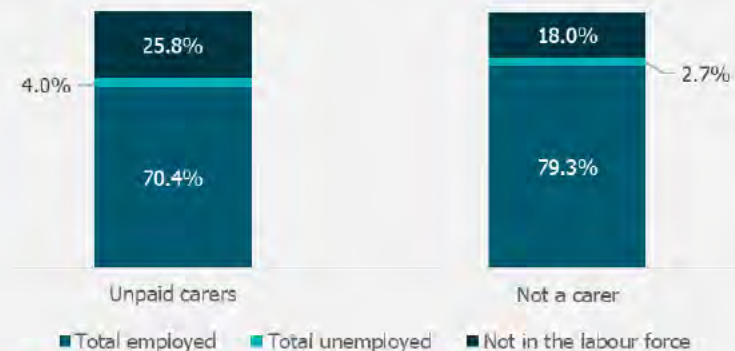


Source: [ABS, Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers, 2022](#)

4

Unpaid carers have significantly lower employment rates than non-carers

Employment status – unpaid carers and non carers, aged 15-64



Source: [ABS, Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers, 2022](#)

Carers key figures

Key Outcomes



14.1% of First Nations people are carers

In 2022, 102,500 or one in seven (14.1%) First Nations people were carers.

Source: [ABS, Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers, 2022](#)

53.7% of carers report high psychological distress

According to the 2024 Carers Survey, this is 3.7 times higher for carers than the general population.

Source: [Carers NSW, National Carer Survey, 2024](#)

Almost two thirds of all carers are socially isolated

53.1% of carers reported that their caring duties regularly or always had a negative impact on their social life, and 44.3% reported their caring duties negatively impacted on their relationships with friends and family. This is more pronounced for young carers. 4 in 5 carers (78.2%) aged 25 to 34 years report being socially isolated or highly socially isolated.

Source: [Carers NSW, National Carer Survey, 2024](#)

62% of all carers are aged 25-65

This is a key workforce participation age.

Source: [ABS, Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers, 2022](#)

Carers in supportive workplaces are 33% more likely to have healthy levels of wellbeing

Almost 25% of carers report that their employer is not understanding of their caretaking role.

Source: [Carers Australia, 2024](#)

Young carers often struggle to balance caring with education which can affect lifelong opportunities

\$129,000 is the projected average cost of income support payments for young carers over the next 10 years compared to \$17,000 for all young Australians aged 15-24. Six years is the length of time young carers are projected to spend on income support over the next 10 years compared to 1 year for all young Australians aged 15-24

Source: [DSS, PIA, 2025](#)

Spending Snapshot



\$11.7 billion in Financial Support for carers

in 2024-25 to financially assist eligible carers of people with disability or a severe medical condition

\$370 million for 2024-25 and 2025-26

To extend the Carer Gateway Service Provider grant agreements for 2 years from 1 July 2024

Source: [DSS Portfolio Budget Statements \(2025\); DSS Annual Report](#)

Carers and the NDIS

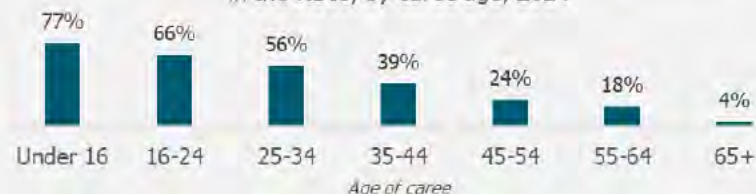


91,981 people receiving Carer Payment are caring for an NDIS participant (29% of total carers)

319,654 people receiving Carer Payment are caring for someone not in the NDIS

The proportion of people receiving Carer Payment who are caring for someone in the NDIS declines with the age of the carer:

Proportion of Carers Payment recipients caring for someone in the NDIS, by caree age, 2024



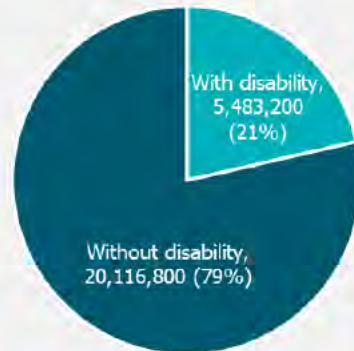
Source: [DSS NDIS-DOMINO 2024, Caree Extract data 2025](#)

Disability chart pack

1

1 in 5 Australians (21.4%) identify as having a disability

Australians that identify as having a disability

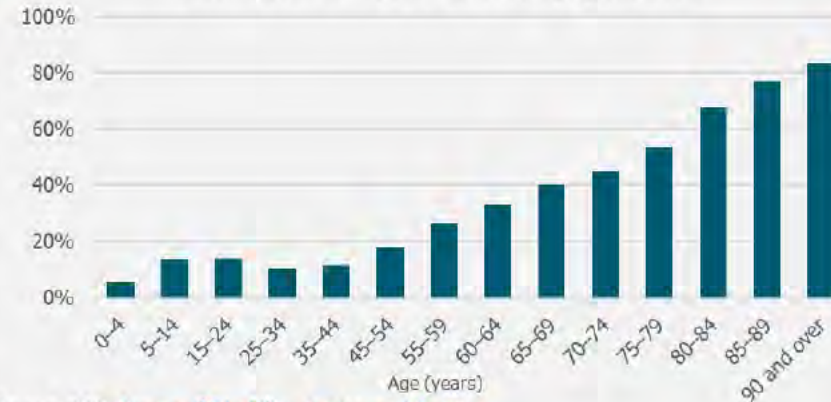


Source: ABS, [Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers](#), 2022

2

The proportion of Australians with a disability increases with age

Estimated disability prevalence by age group 2022

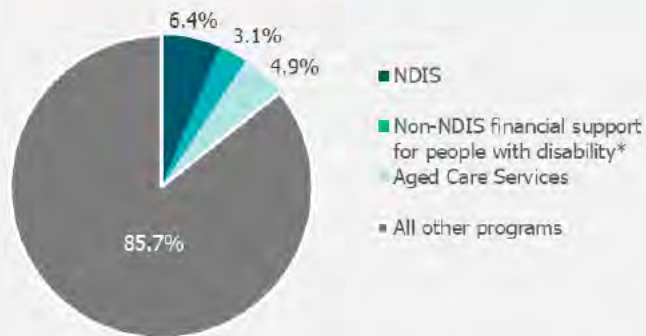


Source: ABS, [Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers](#)

3

The two largest programs to support people with disability represented 9.5% of government expenditure in 2024-25

Government expenses, 2024-25



*Including Disability Support Pension, Essential Medical Equipment payments and Mobility Allowance.

Source: Commonwealth of Australia, [Budget Paper No. 1 2025-26](#), March 2025

4

Labour force participation of working age people with a disability has grown but remains below those without a disability

Labour force participation rates, people aged 15 - 64, 2012 - 2022



The increase in labour force participation is likely due to a range of factors including a tighter labour market, increased access to remote work and an increase in the prevalence of disability in the population during this period.

Source: ABS, [Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers](#), 2022, 2018, 2015, 2012

Disability key figures

Key outcomes

People with disability report greater social isolation

19% of people with disability experience social isolation, compared to 9.5% of people without disability.

Source: AIHW, [People with disability](#), April 2024

Disability discrimination is persistent

Between 2018 and 2022, there was been no reduction in the proportion of people with disability experiencing discrimination due to disability.

Source: AIHW, [ADS 2021–2031 Outcomes Framework: 3rd annual report](#), Jan 2025

Women with disability are more likely to experience physical, sexual, emotional and economic abuse

In 2021–22 women over 18 with disability experienced greater rates of physical violence (5.8%), sexual violence (4%), emotional abuse (7%) and economic abuse (4.6%) than women without disability (4.2%, 2.5%, 4.6% and 2.4% respectively).

Source: AIHW, [Violence against people with disability](#), April 2024

Younger people on DSP are projected to remain on income support for an average of 9 of the next 10 years





This is consistent across both age and employment status

Projected time on income support over 10 years for DSP by age and employment earnings, June 2022



Source: Priority Investment Approach unpublished data (DSS), June 2022

Inter-department strategic relationships

Related department	Description of strategic relationship
 Department of Treasury (Treasury)	<p>The department collaborates with Treasury to discuss emerging issues in relation to means testing and the superannuation system. We further collaborate on the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee to support the Treasurer and the Minister for Social Services as joint Ministers for the Committee. Treasury has joint responsibility with the department for existing international social security agreements that contain both social security and superannuation provisions, and is a partner stakeholder in the development, negotiation and implementation of new agreements.</p> <p>The Targeting Entrenched Disadvantage package is led by the department and Treasury, with the ABS leading on the development of the Life Course Data Initiative. The relationship with the Treasury is essential to driving Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children Commitments.</p>
 PM&C - Office for Women (OfW)	<p>OfW provides input on policies within the department that may contribute to improvements in gender equality. The department and OfW jointly support the Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council.</p>
 Attorney-General's Department (AGD)	<p>AGD is leading WoG work on setting legislation, which will govern how automation, automated decision-making and AI can be used by government, which affects delivery of the department programs through Services Australia using these tools.</p>
 Australian Taxation Office (ATO)	<p>The ATO will administer the PPL Superannuation Contribution, which will come into effect from 1 July 2025. Family assistance payments are dependent on annual income data provided by the ATO through a data exchange with Services Australia. Access to Single Touch Payroll Phase 2 will be important to improve payment accuracy and compliance for social security and family payments. The Child Support Scheme is also reliant on income information provided by the ATO. The ATO support the Scheme through the Lodgement Enforcement Program, and through the interception of tax refunds used to pay child support debt.</p>



Department of Education

The department provides financial support to students while undertaking further education through student income support, contributing to the Department of Education's objective to promote growth in economic productivity and social wellbeing through access to quality higher education. Family Assistance (the department) and Child Care Subsidy (Department of Education) both fall under the A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999 and the A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999. The department works with the Department of Education on cross-policy matters, including No Jab, No Pay immunisation requirements.

The departments are also partners in the development and implementation of the Early Years Strategy 2024-2034. Education is responsible for reforms to ECEC, while the department is responsible for broader programs to support child development and wellbeing, including support for those in parenting roles.

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)



DEWR has responsibility for mainstream employment services (Workforce Australia) and mutual obligations which influences social security expenditure and has linkages to the department's policies such as the Disability Support Pension Program of Support. DEWR also has policy responsibility for setting employment entitlements for employees in Australia, including employer-funded parental leave, which has interactions with the PPL scheme.

DEWR manages the ICT system which supports the Disability Employment Service program. The department has been working closely with DEWR on an ICT uplift project, which will support the new specialist disability employment program, scheduled to commence 1 November 2025. The department also engages with DEWR on a range of employment services policy areas and disability workforce policy, including Fair Work Commission matters, and in relation to the National Autism Strategy 2025-31 and First Action Plan (the department-led). DEWR cooperates closely with the department in support of international social policy standards and norms setting, including with close partners such as New Zealand, United States, United Kingdom and Canada, as well as the department's engagement with the OECD.



National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)

NIAA is the lead agency responsible for the National Agreement on Closing the Gap CtG). There are a series of CtG meetings with NIAA and other related departments including high-level (e.g. CtG Priority Reform considerations), policy (e.g. CtG Target related engagement) and specific (e.g. CtG Place-Based Partnerships and Community Data Projects) matters. NIAA provides a secretariat function for the CtG Governance forums, including the Joint Council and the Partnership Working Group. The department works closely with NIAA on the completion of the Annual Report and

Implementation Plan. NIAA has responsibility for remote employment services (currently CDP) and which influences social security expenditure.

The department has policy responsibility for the ABSTUDY Scheme, which supports First Nations students' access to education. It is supported in its aims and objectives by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy programs administered by the NIAA.

The department and NIAA collaborate to deliver Income Management programs, the Cashless Debit Card and Food Security.



**Department
of Foreign Affairs
and Trade (DFAT)**

DFAT plays a key role in facilitating the department's international engagement and outreach priorities, including with international ministerial visits, as well as supporting the department's important relationships with international organisations such as the United Nations and OECD. DFAT also supports management of existing international social security agreements and the development, negotiation and implementation of new agreements, including facilitating engagement with current and future agreement partner countries. DFAT has overarching policy responsibility for initiatives to strengthen Australia's relationship with the Pacific (including through the Pacific Labour Mobility Scheme and Pacific Engagement Visa), which intersect with the social security system and payment access, and the child support system.



**Department
of Veterans' Affairs
(DVA)**

The income support provisions of veterans' entitlements law largely mirror the Social Security Act 1991. As a result, the department and DVA engage closely on issues related to income support entitlements and the interpretation and maintenance of the relevant provisions in the 2 Acts. DVA has responsibility for veteran's payments which may manifestly qualify an individual for Disability Support Pension (Totally and Permanently Incapacitated). The department works with DVA on cross-payment policy matters (e.g. interactions between DVA payments and family assistance payments).

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