

MEDIA RELEASE:

Another Bloke Based Budget Misses the Mark for Women Reeling From COVID-19

The second Women's Economic Security Statement is a positive outcome for women, but the Federal budget lacks the structural changes and analysis that are sorely needed by women struggling under COVID-19, says Equality Rights Alliance.

Alongside the Budget handed down on Tuesday, the Minister for Women delivered a Women's Economic Security Statement Package outlining additional commitments to increasing women's workforce participation at a total of \$231 million over the next four years. Expenditure directed toward women at a time when gender inequality is deepening is welcome, but it's not the same as the structural and significant infrastructural investments needed to address the gendered impacts of COVID-19.

"The recognition of the impact on women of the COVID-19 crisis in the Women's Economic Security Statement is encouraging, and we're particularly pleased by Government's commitment to the Women's Leadership and Development Program, and the relaxing of the work test for Paid Parental Leave," says Helen Dalley-Fisher, ERA's Senior Manager. *"However, the balance of investment in the budget is not gender equitable. \$231 million is not significant compared with billions in spending where the benefits will flow primarily toward men."*

The centrepiece of the Budget was the acceleration of the second stage of already-legislated tax cuts, which will be of twice as much benefit to men than to women according to recent analysis.

"Without structural reforms across the Budget, we will always be fiddling at the edges of the problem and never getting to the heart of gender inequality. This budget needed to focus on constructing social housing to address rising rates of homelessness and poverty among older women. Increasing the cap for the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation to create more low cost loans for Community Housing Providers simply does not have the same impact," she said.

"The pandemic has also demonstrated how care services such as our early childhood education and care system are essential to our community and our economy in times of crisis. There's been a missed opportunity to rethink our childcare system and put child development, gender equality, women's workforce participation and our economic recovery at the centre of that system," said Ms Dalley-Fisher.

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) is internationally recognised as best-practice for promoting gender equality. GRB is [a set of tools and processes](#) that analyse the gender-differentiated impacts of budget expenditure and revenue measures. It's not about creating a budget for women, but a budget that equitably distributes benefits people of all genders.

"Gender responsive budgeting is the approach we needed to avoid entrenching the gender-inequitable impacts of COVID-19 in this budget. Unfortunately, we haven't seen that happen, but there's time to get it right for 2021-22 budget", said Ms Dalley-Fisher.

"We can't afford to keep missing these opportunities to address the impacts of COVID-19 on women, or we'll find ourselves still trying to respond to the same problems that we're seeing today, forty years into the future".

For media comment or speakers for interview, please contact Helen Dalley-Fisher, Equality Rights Alliance – Senior Manager on 0413 065 822 or era@ywca.org.au.

About Equality Rights Alliance

Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) is Australia's largest network advocating for women's equality, women's leadership and recognition of women's diversity. We bring together 64 non-government organisations and social enterprises with a focus on the impact of policy or service delivery on women. We are one of six National Women's Alliances, and are funded by the Commonwealth Government's Office for Women and auspiced by YWCA Australia

We believe the advancement of women and the achievement of equality are matters of fundamental human rights. We advocate for gender equality, women's leadership and government policy responses that support women's diversity. Using a range of methods to consult and engage with women in Australia, we work to bring the voices of women from diverse life situations to policy makers.