**Election 2019 – Older women**

# What are the particular issues for older women?

* Between the 2011 and 2016 Census, [the numbers of women aged 55+ experiencing homelessness rose by 31%](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs%40.nsf/Latestproducts/2049.0Main%20Features12016?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=2049.0&issue=2016&num=&view%3e). Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare indicate a 10.8% annual average increase of women aged 55+ assisted by specialist homelessness services between 2011-12 and 2017-18.

* Census 2016 recorded that [of the over 100,000 people homeless on census night, 49,017 were women](http://chp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Women-and-Homelessness-Fact-Sheet.pdf).
* Sixty-one per cent of individuals receiving homelessness services are women. (AIHW, Specialist Homelessness Services Collection, 2017-18, cat. no. HOU 299).
* **Commonwealth rent allowance**: increasing numbers of older women cannot afford private rent and face homelessness. The Commonwealth rent allowance, the only specific financial assistance available to female age pensioners, was not increased in the Budget. [Virtually no properties on the commercial rental market can be afforded by older women aged pensioners without assets](https://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/rental-affordability-snapshot-2017.pdf).
* Social or public housing has long waiting lists—60,000 in NSW alone. Waiting time is up to ten years. [Public housing estates have been allowed to deteriorate and are often unsafe for older women](https://www.cis.org.au/app/uploads/2017/07/33-2-potter-michael.pdf).
* **Commonwealth support for community housing providers**: housing from community housing providers is the only option for poor older women. These providers manage only a fraction of the number of units needed by otherwise homeless older women. Needs far outstrip supply.
* **Commonwealth policy to reduce Elder Abuse**: national data still being collected but probably one in ten older people are abused. More older women than older men are affected.
* The Commonwealth is the main funder of residential aged care and home-based care. Older women are the majority receivers of both forms of aged care.
	+ Most aged care residences are understaffed. The aged care workforce is undertrained, especially in relation to dementia. Care staff are undertrained. Providers are not required to employ trained nurses. GPs are reluctant to visit residences because of absence of qualified staff and inadequate Medicare payments.
	+ The current shortfall in at home care packages exceed 100,000. Waiting time after assessment can be up to three years.

**Election commitments**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Full implementation | Partial implementation | No or negative response |

The table below sets out how fully parties’ current election commitments address NFAW recommendations:

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| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Realistic increases to commonwealth rent allowance. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  |  |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Funding support to ensure a rapid increase in social and community housing. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | Community housing got no increase under the Commonwealth State Housing agreement. |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Immediate steps to upgrade the training of aged care workforce and introduction of patient/nurse ratios. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | No targeted increases in the Budget, some of the extra skills funding may assist care workers to attain basic qualifications. No commitment to patient nurse ratios. |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Adequate new funding to meet the current shortfall in at home care packages. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | 10,000 new places, leaving over 100,000 shortfall. |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Funding of community education programs focused on identifying, reporting and protecting elder abuse cases. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | $18m for a national elder abuse hotline. |  |

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| OTHER ELECTION COMMITMENTS |
| Commitment | **Party** | **Comments** |
|  | Choose an item. |  |
|  | Choose an item. |  |
|  | Choose an item. |  |

Authorised by Kate Gunn, Sydney.