**Election 2019 – Women with disabilities**

# What are the particular issues for women with disabilities?

**Poverty & Economic Security:**

* Forty-five percent of people with disabilities live in or near relative poverty[[1]](#endnote-1). This is 2.5 times the poverty rate of non-disabled people and double the OECD average (22%).
* Those with mild to moderate core activity restrictions due to their disability are in the 90% of people with disabilities who are not eligible for NDIS support packages. They are increasingly likely to be on Newstart Allowance rather than the Disability Support Pension. At the same time they are still likely to have higher costs of living than non-disabled women.

**The Royal Commission:**

* Government should commit itself to fully fund and support the Royal Commission into violence, abuse and neglect of people with disabilities, and to take a gendered approach to recognise the impact of gender and disability discrimination on women’s self-confidence and self-esteem, in turn affecting their ability to bring their grievances to the commissioners. The Royal Commission should be allowed to run over full election cycle at a minimum.

**National Disability Insurance Scheme**

* Women with disabilities are only 38% of participants in the NDIS. The agency needs to show leadership in employment of people with disabilities, including at all levels achieved by meeting a quota of 51% for employment of people with disabilities[[2]](#endnote-2) (this is not to include people who are the primary carers of people with disabilities). There needs to be a requirement for training of employees in human rights (in particular CRPD and CEDAW), the social model of disability, and the impact of violence abuse and neglect on functioning and activities of daily living (ADLs). Changes must be made to implement functional assessments in planning and review, in order to move away from reliance on diagnoses, so that outcomes are closer to a social model that is rights based.
* Intersectionality also needs to be better acknowledged in assessment and review, as the percentage of people with disabilities with two or more disabilities is high. Estimates of the number of people with cognitive impairment who have a dual disability with a psychiatric disorder varies from 9% to 39%.[[3]](#endnote-3)[[4]](#endnote-4)[[5]](#endnote-5)

**Housing initiatives**:

* There is a need for funding to be made available for a further increase in supply of social and public housing to be matched by states and territories through national housing programs. All housing should be accessible and sustainable in design to minimise heating/cooling costs. All new Class 1A (private) dwellings should have minimum levels of accessibility as outlined in the National Dialogue on Universal Housing Design.[[6]](#endnote-6)

**Employment:**

* People with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as the non-disabled (10% versus 5%[[7]](#endnote-7)).Women with disabilities face greater discrimination in the open employment market. Despite a greater proportion of women with disabilities (compared to men with disabilities) having post school qualifications, they are half as likely to have full time work as their male counterparts and twice as likely to have part time work.
* The NDIA needs to reinforce and amplify its employment goal-setting to focus on support for people with disabilities to find and keep a job and have the expectation of a career pathway.

**Social Welfare:**

* The current debt recovery process has unfairly impacted on women with disabilities who have to juggle caring responsibility with job-search obligations. Thirty-two percent of women with disabilities have a primary carer role.[[8]](#endnote-8) There is a need for review of the social security system to look at the fairness of the definitions in impairment tables for eligibility to the DSP.

**Violence against Women:**

* Violence against women with disabilities is an urgent and largely unaddressed issue. The National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women needs to cover all settings in which violence experienced by women with disabilities occurs.

**Emergency Accommodation (Women’s Refuges):**

* Funding agreements for Emergency Accommodation should mandate the building of accommodation that meets the accessibility standards necessary to accommodate women with disabilities escaping domestic violence.

**Election commitments**

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| 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** |
| A review of the social service system be undertaken and recommendations acted on, including the raising of the Newstart Allowance by $75 per week, and including the veracity of the impairment tables to assess eligibility for the Disability Support Pension. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | No increase in the Budget to Newstart, 50% of whom are people with disabilities. And nothing to address the decreasing numbers of people deemed ineligible for the DSP and thence relegated to Newstart.No funding for review of the welfare/social services system.The expansion of the Cashless Debit Card system in 2020 to 22,500 more people is likely to affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women disproportionately and detrimentally (DSS PP P.23)Reporting of income when it is received rather than when earned may improve burden of reporting for women with disabilities on Newstart (DSS PPp.23).  |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| An impact analysis of all policies and programs be undertaken to ensure that they account for the intersection of a range of attributes, primarily gender, but also disability, race, culture, and rurality. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | The Budget has committed $14.1M for a Social Impact Investment trial (DSS PP p.24) but this is narrow in scope and does not apply to disability policy and outcomes |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| The scope of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children include all settings where women with disabilities experience violence, abuse and neglect. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | Funding for the 4th Action Plan of the National Plan has been announced previously. The $328 million is insufficient to enable supports for legal services and women’s services to meet the needs of women, including women with disabilities, including $263.5M to fund prevention strategies and frontline services initiatives.The only gendered information in the Budget relates to the funding for men’s behaviour change. The amount for that is separate to the National Plan and is still inadequate.The scope of the National Plan has not been formally changed to include women in institutional settings. |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| The Royal Commission into the abuse, violence and neglect of people with disabilities be gender aware, adequately resourced, and have an allowable time frame beyond a single election cycle. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | The $527.9M earmarked for the Royal Commission over 5 years is a significant amount and establishes a realistic timeframe,Funding support services of $148.8M to assist and provide counselling for women with disabilities to appear as witnesses is also good recognition of the challenges. However, there is nothing to indicate that the support money will be allocated in a way that does not penalise women. |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| National Disability Insurance Agency. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | The underspend in money allocated to the NDIS was partly addressed pre-budget with the allocation of $800M approx. to increase service provision ratesThe underspend in people’s plans is not addressed. The staffing level freeze is also not addressed.The current underspend accounts for approximately one quarter of the projected 2018-19 surplus. |  |

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| OTHER ELECTION COMMITMENTS |
| Commitment | **Party** | **Comments** |
| Mental Health | LNP | Funding for Mental Health Services of $360M is welcome but inadequate. There is no recognition of dual disability with mental health condition in addition to a primary disability |
| National Centre for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse: $22.5M to 2024-25 (DSS PP p.25) | LNP | The initiative is good but the amount probably inadequate. |
| Money for Carers: $84.3M for planned and emergency respite services, including young carers | LNP | Unclear what is meant by respite services, since carer respite has been not been recognised under the NDIS. To be rolled out through an enhanced Carer Gateway, commencing July 2019. |
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Authorised by Kate Gunn, Sydney.

1. Price Waterhouse Coopers, Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) (2011) *Disability expectations: Investing in a better life, a stronger Australia*; accessed online at: <https://www.pwc.com.au/industry/government/assets/disability-in-australia.pdf>. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. People With Disabilities Australia, Federal Election 2019, <https://pwd.org.au/federal-election-2019/> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. State Government of Victoria, Department of Human Services, *Intellectual Disability,* 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. National Association for persons with Developmental disabilities and mental health needs, *information on dual diagnosis,* <http://thenadd.org/resources/information-on-dual-diagnosis-2/> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Mind Australia, *Mind Australia’s approach to working with people who have a dual disability,*  [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Department of Social Services, *National Dialogue on Universal Housing Design – Strategic Plan, 2010,* <https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/national_dialogue_strategic_plan.pdf>, [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers 2015*, Cat. No. 4430.0, Summary of Findings, 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)