**Election 2019 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women**

# What are the particular issues for aboriginal and torres strait islander women?

* The worsening in health and wellbeing and their determinants among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples clearly shows that current strategies are failing, and that the directives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders have not been supported.
* Potentially the women experiencing the greatest vulnerabilities are those in prison. They now comprise 34% of all female prisoners compared to 2% of the overall Australian population ([ALRC, 2017](https://www.alrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdfs/publications/discussion_paper_84_compressed_cover2.pdf)). Although the majority of people in prison are male (97%), Aboriginal women are the most rapidly growing population of prisoners, with rates increasing by 150% since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, twice the rate of other females and double the rate of Aboriginal males from 2000-2016 ([The Guardian, 2017](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/may/15/soaring-female-indigenous-imprisonment-rate-obstructing-closing-the-gap-targets-report)). These women have often experienced poverty, grief and loss, violence, racism and poor mental health.
* Further, the trajectory from juvenile detention to adult incarceration is clear; Aboriginal youth aged 10-17 years are 20–26 times more likely to be in detention than others, and Aboriginal adults in prison are more likely to have been in juvenile detention than others ([AIHW, 2018](https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/55f8ff82-9091-420d-a75e-37799af96943/aihw-juv-128-youth-detention-population-in-Australia-2018-bulletin-145-dec-2018.pdf.aspx?inline=true)). There has been no commitment to gender- and culturally-informed programs to reduce or prevent incarceration and re-incarceration. Instead, international evidence also shows the damaging impact of parental incarceration and poor maternal health and wellbeing.
* In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health organisations (ACCHOs) have been reported as more effective, timely and appropriate and as having greater reach, although demand outstrips supply, for all populations including female prisoners. They also have episodes of care and better outcomes than mainstream health care. ACCHOs are a vital element of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s action to self-determine, a right articulated in Article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to which Australia is party.

**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** |
| Strategies to remove impacts of farming and mining on environmental health including river systems, water sources and sites of cultural heritage directly affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | $3.5 billion for Climate Solutions – working with farmers and Indigenous communities but no detail. Hopefully this is for Indigenous peoples’ knowledge and influence on design rather than strategies to close Indigenous communities and avoid repairing infrastructure. Private industry is not mentioned in its role in climate solutions. Minimally more funds appear allocated for example to the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation however over future years a decline is projected overall. Investment to the Torres Strait Authority is minimal and will not address threats to communities from rising sea levels. |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Address social determinants of health accounting for 39% of the health inequity gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and others, including income security and employment. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | Allocations to job skills and training are much needed but not likely to be diverse enough, beyond typically male-dominated industries if growth is attached to building industry. |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Address impoverished conditions particularly of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and invest in local economic development.  |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
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| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Build the evidence base about effectiveness in health service delivery for and by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | $160 million has been allocated for a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research initiative. Whilst the initiative is led by two Aboriginal academics, only a very small proportion is allocated to the National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research, the Lowitja Institute. Allocation of the further $150m should take into account the need for governance by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.  |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Boost the funding, role and evidence base about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Organisations, which to date have been found to deliver more culturally-safe care, with greater reach and follow-up and result in fewer hospitalisations than mainstream health care.  |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
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| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Repair existing government housing and deliver new, more climate-sensitive housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in remote areas. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
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| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Targeted, age-appropriate, culturally and gender-informed legal services and support for those in the criminal justice system. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | The Indigenous Legal Assistance Program was cut entirely in the budget, and the budget failed to deliver required funding for Legal Aid Commissions (LACs), Community Legal Centres (CLCs), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services. LACs, CLCs and ATSILS will likely be forced to compete with each other for funding from 2020 onwards. An additional $16.7 was allocated to ATSILS; however this does not meet need. |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in caregiving roles; many have responsibility for both older and younger generations. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | $84 million to enable carers to leave a loved one in safe hands and get a much-needed break – no announcement of allocations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations for culturally-safe care. Unlikely to be centres for respite for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in regional and remote communities.  |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled disability services and support schemes. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
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| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community calls for residential alcohol and drug rehabilitation for women. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | Funds have been allocated for alcohol and drug rehabilitation, but details are too scant to assess whether they will meet community action for a female, Aboriginal community-controlled centre. In line with current directions for other health funding, funds are likely to be open for tender beyond and in competition with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services. |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Invest in First 2000 Days and other early childhood supports to prevent health and social issues emerging. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | Allocation for early childhood education noted but with very limited, if any, focus on improving early life determinants. Funds are allocated to a National Office of Child Safety but decrease over subsequent budgets with no clear allocations for family support programs particularly to reunite removed children with family. |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Invest in early life determinants including education from culturally-relevant perspectives including languages as central to identify and wellbeing. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | Women and girls’ inclusion in STEM welcome but likely to reinforce mainstream assimilative directions rather than privileging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ sciences including those that have occurred for environmental protection since time immemorial, representing a net loss to Australia as a whole. |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Allocate funds for family support programs, particularly for families with children in foster care, to achieve reunification and healing. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
|  | Allocations are variably reported and are not likely to achieve healing required across generations, or to prevent violence of non-Indigenous men toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. |  |
| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Support the Uluru Statement and further decisions about Constitutional Recognition. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
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| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Improve food security and access to fairly-priced fresh foods in rural and remote Australia. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
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| **NFAW RECOMMENDATION** |
| Ensure timely access to culturally-relevant aged care, noting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people die between 11-17 years younger than other Australians. |
| **PARTY COMMITMENTS** |
| **ALP** | **LNP** | **GREENS** |
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| OTHER ELECTION COMMITMENTS |
| Commitment | **Party** | **Comments** |
|  | Choose an item. |  |
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Authorised by Kate Gunn, Sydney.