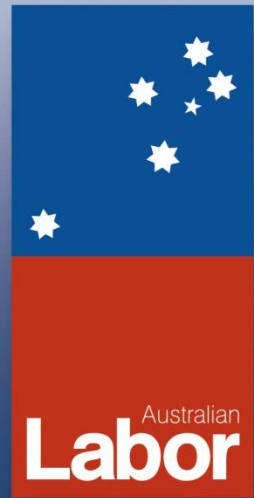


Equality for Women



Julia Gillard and Labor

Let's move Australia forward



Equality for Women

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ELECTION 2010

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Overview

Australia is one of the most equal nations in the world when it comes to equality between women and men. Young Australian women and men now leave school equally well educated and ready to join the workforce. Many women are taking more and more senior positions in industry, government and politics.

Over the last three years, Federal Labor has done the hard work to introduce the practical supports to improve women's lives – including increasing families' choices through initiatives such as additional child care benefits and paid parental leave which will commence from 1 January 2011. Federal Labor has also boosted women's economic security through the introduction of the Fair Work Act and superannuation reforms.

The Gillard Labor Government understands that Australian women are often stretched between work and family responsibilities. Women make up 45 per cent of the workforce and provide most of the informal care to children and other family members.

Most Australian women want the choice to pursue careers and be active members of their families, at a range of different points in their lives. Many men today also want to play a greater role in raising children than in earlier generations.

The Gillard Labor Government believes that families should be supported in making their own choices about combining work and family. Effective governments are aware of the different effects of policies on women and men as well as other population groups.

A Gillard Labor Government will work to deliver greater equality between women and men through practical support and policy reform in consultation with women, families and the broader community.

What the Federal Labor Government has achieved so far

Work, Family and Economic Security

The Gillard Labor Government understands that Australian women do not share the same economic security as men. Women earn about 83 cents for every dollar men earn.¹ Women are more likely to be reliant on pensions and are currently retiring with around 60 per cent of the superannuation balances that men have.²

A woman's economic position is linked to her family and caring responsibilities in the home. Women spend more time than men out of the workforce to raise children and care for other family members, and make up the majority of low income earners.

Five million, or around 60 per cent, of Australian women are in the workforce. This is low by international standards. According to the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report 2009*, Australia was ranked 50th internationally in regard to women's labour force participation relative to men's.³ Many women say that they don't work, or work less than they would like, because it is too difficult to combine work and family or because it is too hard to get back into work after starting a family.

Flexibility in the workplace, equal pay for women and men and how easy it is to move in and out of the workforce all contribute to the options that families have available to them.

The Gillard Labor Government believes that families should be supported in making their own choices about combining work and family.

Since coming to Government, Federal Labor has introduced practical reforms to improve the economic security of women by restoring fairness to workplace relations, improving retirement incomes, supporting flexibility in the workplace and increasing access to affordable quality child care.

Fair Work Act

The Gillard Labor Government has made important advances in achieving fairness for women in the workplace.

The Federal Labor Government got rid of WorkChoices and abolished individual work contracts – Australian Workplace Agreements or AWAs – that had a particularly harsh impact on women. Under the Liberal-National Coalition, AWAs could be required as a condition of getting a job without any real negotiation. AWAs removed basic conditions like penalty rates, overtime, redundancy pay and holiday leave.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 2009*, seasonally adjusted data, cat.no. 6307.0, ABS, Canberra, 2010.

² Treasury estimates based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics *Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation*, Expanded CURF, Australia, April to July 2007 (SEARS 2007), ABS cat. no. 6361.0.55.001.

³ World Economic Forum, 2009, *Global Gender Gap Report 2009*, www.weforum.org/en/Communities/Women%20Leaders%20and%20Gender%20Parity/GenderGapNetwork/index.htm.

WorkChoices and AWAs were especially bad for Australian women. Women on AWAs earned on average \$87.40 less per week than their counter-parts on collective agreements. Research in 2007 found that women in award-reliant sectors lost significant income under AWAs. In retail, the losses were between 2 and 18 per cent while in hospitality the losses were between 6 and 12 per cent.⁴

Labor's Fair Work Act introduces a fair and decent employment safety net all workers can rely on. Employees benefit from ten national Employment Standards and ten more conditions in modern awards applying to each industry - conditions that can never be stripped away. Employees benefit from a fair process for adjusting award wages each year.

Federal Labor has introduced a new low paid bargaining stream to help award-reliant workers in sectors like child care, aged care and the community sector to get the benefits of enterprise bargaining.

The Federal Labor Government is helping parents balance work and family responsibilities with the Fair Work Act giving parents with young children a new right to request workplace flexibility and up to 24 months unpaid parental leave.

The Fair Work Act improves measures aimed at delivering pay equity between women and men. The Act now allows Fair Work Australia to compare the pay levels of jobs undertaken by women with pay rates for male dominated jobs of similar skills level and value and make orders to remedy this.

The improvements brought about by the Fair Work Act are now starting to bear fruit.

More parents are using the new right to request provisions and more employers are finding ways to meet those requests.

The Australian Services Union has lodged an application under the new equal pay provisions. The test case will look at the value of work done by 200,000 community service workers, who are mostly women, and may have a long term effect on other female dominated industries in years to come if successful.

Federal Labor believes the community sector plays a vital role in delivering services to the most vulnerable in our community and must have the resources it needs to do this job. The Gillard Labor Government has committed to work through the funding implications of any increase in wages awarded as a result of the Australian Services Union's national pay equity case in partnership with the affected unions, employers and the States and Territories.

⁴ Van Wanrooy, B., Oxenbridge, S., Buchanan, J., Jakubauskas, M., *Australia at Work: The Benchmark Report*, September 2007.

Paid Parental Leave

The Federal Labor Government has delivered Australia's first national Paid Parental Leave scheme.

Paid Parental Leave is important because it helps parents give newborns the best start in life. It also means parents stay connected to the workplace, making it easier for parents to return to work if they want to.

From 1 January 2011, eligible primary carers of new babies will be able to receive 18 weeks paid leave to stay at home with newborns. The benefit can be transferred between mothers and fathers in line with the choices families wish to make.

Currently only half of all Australian women have access to any amount of paid parental leave. Women on low incomes are most likely to miss out. Only one in four women earning less than \$400 a week have access to employer paid parental leave.

The Gillard Labor Government's Paid Parental Leave system is fully funded from the Budget and will not put pressure on the cost of living.

Affordable, quality child care

Affordable child care is critical to enabling parents to participate in paid work. Mothers and fathers also need to be assured that their children receive quality care and are being well looked after.

The Federal Labor Government increased the Child Care Rebate from 30 per cent to 50 per cent and lifted the maximum threshold from \$4,354 to \$7,500. We also changed the Child Care Rebate to a quarterly payment, so parents don't have to wait until the end of the year to receive this crucial assistance. And to further help ease cost of living pressures being faced by many families we will also provide parents with the option to receive Child Care Rebate payments fortnightly from 1 July 2011.

The Federal Labor Government will invest \$17.1 billion over the next four years in early childhood education and child care. This includes \$14.4 billion to help more than 800,000 Australian families annually with the cost of child care, \$8 billion more than was provided in the last four years of the former Coalition Government.

The Federal Labor Government, in partnership with State and Territory Governments, is implementing a new National Quality Framework to improve the quality of child care including better staff-to-child ratios and staff qualification requirements, which will provide peace of mind to parents.

Federal Labor also stabilised the child care system post the collapse of ABC Learning to help ensure that Australian families have access to reliable care.

Support for Pensioners

The Federal Labor Government has improved Australia's pension system. Around 72 per cent of single age pensioners and 70 per cent of Carer Payment recipients are women.

Federal Labor's historic reforms to the pension system have delivered pension increases to around 2.1 million age pensioners, 764,000 disability support pensioners and 167,000 Carer Payment recipients.

Over the past year, Federal Labor's pension reforms have driven increases for pensioners worth an extra \$100 a fortnight for singles and an extra \$74 for couples combined.

Federal Labor's pension reform has made the pension system sustainable for the long term. It will mean that it will be better positioned to support women approaching retirement who did not have the chance to build substantial retirement savings.

Women's equal place in society

The Gillard Labor Government believes that all Australians should be able to aspire to leadership. The last few years have seen major gains for women in leadership including Australia's first female Governor General and Prime Minister. Around one third of parliamentarians are women, including 36 per cent of Labor members in the Federal parliament.

Currently women occupy just one in eight private sector executive management positions. Women hold less than 10 per cent of private board directorships and 34 per cent of positions on Federal government boards.

The Federal Labor Government has taken action to increase women's equal place in society and the number of leadership positions held by women.

Federal Labor's achievements include:

- The largest ever representation of women in the Federal Ministry, including the first female Prime Minister in Australian history. There are now seven women in the Ministry, compared to the four under the former Coalition Government.
- Appointing Australia's first female Governor General.
- \$3.6 million to boost women's community representation through the National Women's Alliances.
- Funding for the Year of Women in Local Government and Year of the Girl Guides.
- Local community grants for women to take up leadership positions in sport.
- Ensuring that 50 per cent of representatives on the new national Indigenous representative body, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, are women.
- Improving government processes to improve gender equality by returning the Office for Women to a whole of government policy focus and establishing a high level Women's Interdepartmental Committee.

- Increasing international engagement and overseas development assistance by increasing Australia's aid contribution to 0.33 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, including for maternal health and anti-violence against women projects.
- Acceding to the Optional Protocol of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women , increasing involvement in the UN Commission on the Status of Women and supporting the establishment of the new gender entity UN Women.

Reducing Violence against Women

Domestic violence and sexual assault are the most common forms of violence experienced by women.

The ABS Personal Safety Survey (2006) showed that:

- In any year, nearly half a million Australian women experience physical or sexual violence.
- One in three Australian women have experienced physical violence, but only one in five report the violence.
- One in five Australian women has experienced sexual violence.
- About 90 per cent of women who are sexually assaulted do not access crisis support, legal help or services.

The Gillard Labor Government takes a zero tolerance approach to all forms of violence, whether it be in the home or in public places.

Over the last three years, the Federal Labor Government has worked with women's organisations, State and Territory Governments and the community to find ways to reduce violence against women.

The Federal Labor Government appointed the National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children to advise on how to bring together the efforts of governments to prevent violence, deliver justice to victims and improve services.

The Council consulted with over 2,000 people and set an agenda to reduce violence over the next decade.

The Federal Government provided an initial investment of \$42 million to respond to the most urgent recommendations. This included:

- \$12.5 million for a new national domestic violence and sexual assault telephone and online crisis service.
- \$9.1 million in respectful relationships education to give young men and women the communication skills they need to establish good friendships and relationships that are based on equality and respect.

- \$17 million for a social marketing campaign focused on changing attitudes and behaviours that contribute to violence.
- \$3 million to support research on perpetrator treatment and nationally consistent laws.

The Federal Labor Government has directly responded to domestic violence through a number of policy areas including:

- \$4.9 billion in new funding to reduce homelessness. Domestic and family violence continue to be the single largest cause of homelessness. New funds will build more homes and fund new services such as Safe at Home programs.
- \$154 million for legal aid commissions, community legal centres and Indigenous legal services. This funding will increase the availability of legal assistance including for women who experience violence.
- \$1.8 million in 2010-11 for domestic violence training for rural health workers.
- \$4.6 billion for the Close the Gap Strategy including funding for Indigenous family violence and safety programs.
- \$50 million to tackle binge drinking in the community.

The Federal Labor Government has also progressed reform in the law and justice area including:

- The development of a national scheme for domestic and family violence orders to be enforced across State and Territory borders.
- Training for lawyers, judicial officers and other professionals working in the family law system.
- The establishment of an Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry on the relationship of Federal and State and Territory laws relating to the safety of women and their children.

People trafficking

The Federal Labor Government has improved Australia's response to people trafficking. In July 2009, the Federal Labor Government simplified the visa framework, enabling a wider range of victims and their immediate families to access support and improved Support Program Services. Eligibility for the Support Program is no longer dependent on a person holding a people trafficking-related visa, ensuring that victims who already hold another valid Australian visa are not at a disadvantage.

In April 2010, the Government also introduced reforms to further strengthen offences relating to child pornography and child abuse material overseas. The new laws ensure that Australians who travel overseas to sexually abuse children will not escape the tough penalties they would have received if the offences were committed at home. The reforms also enhanced the coverage of offences for using a carriage service (e.g. the internet) for sexual activity with a child or for child pornography or abuse material.

Future Challenges

The Gillard Labor Government believes that women and men should hold an equal place in Australian society.

Labor understands that improving gender equality in Australia is about both women and men.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will support families in making their own choices about combining work and family.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will continue to take practical steps to improve workplace flexibility, maintain fairness in the workplace and help all workers build better retirement incomes.

More leadership positions in Australia should be occupied by women. A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will work to increase the number women in leadership positions in government, industry and the community.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will deliver a long term *National Plan* to address domestic violence and assault. This strategy will focus on reducing violence, delivering justice for victims and improving services by all levels of Government working together.

What a Gillard Labor Government would do next

Work, Family and Economic Security

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will adopt a target for Government Boards that at least 40 per cent of members should be women and 40 per cent of members should be men.

The Gillard Government will also partner with the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) to increase the number of women on private sector boards by providing 70 scholarships for board ready women to complete key courses such as the AICD Company Directors Course.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will strengthen protections against discrimination. Labor will improve on the existing *Sex Discrimination Act* by:

- Establishing breastfeeding as a separate ground of discrimination.
- Extending protections from discrimination on the grounds of family responsibilities to men in all areas of employment. Currently only women are protected from this form of discrimination
- Provide greater protection from sexual harassment for students and workers.

These changes will be incorporated into consolidated anti-discrimination legislation.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will deliver reforms to superannuation that will boost the retirement savings of all workers and provide better support to lower income workers and people with interrupted careers. These reforms will deliver a woman aged 30 with broken work patterns an extra \$78,000 in superannuation savings.

Specific reforms include:

- Increasing the superannuation guarantee rate to 12 per cent by 2019-20.
- Providing workers earning less than \$37,000 an annual tax offset of up to \$500. This will boost the retirement savings of 2.1 million lower income women, such as those working part-time.
- Continuing to match dollar for dollar the voluntary contributions to superannuation made by workers earning up to \$61,920 up to an annual maximum of \$1,000.
- Permanently providing workers over 50 with less than \$500,000 in superannuation a \$50,000 Concessional Contributions Cap. This will be of most benefit to part time workers and workers who have had interrupted careers because of child care and caring responsibilities.

Women's equal place in society

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will support women's equality and leadership.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will support gender equality and workplace flexibility by retaining and improving the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace and Agency (EOWA) and its underlying legislation (EOWW Act). A re-elected Gillard Labor Government intends to streamline the existing reporting requirements, reducing cost to business, by using measurable indicators of outcomes for men and women in the workplace.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will raise the profile of women's sport and boost the involvement of women in sports leadership. The Federal Labor Government has invested \$195 million into Australian sport through the Australian Sport: the Pathway to Success. This policy includes funding for new Women in Sport Awards and resources to improve the coverage of women's sport. A new 'women in sport register' will also be established to boost women's representation on sporting club boards and for the first time require National Sporting Organisations to report to the Government as part of their funding agreements the number of women that are represented on their boards.

Funding will also be provided for *Sport Leadership Grants and Scholarships for Women* in areas such as coaching, officiating, governance, management, administration and communications.

A re-elected Gillard Labor government will fund celebrations for the Centenary of International Women's Day in 2011. This will include events across Australia to be organised by UNIFEM and the National Women's Alliances.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all women in Australia and will deliver a new National Women's Health Policy. The new policy will build on the strengths of the first National Women's Health Policy which was released more than 20 years ago. The National Women's Health Policy will encourage the implementation of policies to make the health system more responsive to the needs of women and promote the participation of women in health decision-making.

To help address body image issues, funding will be provided to the Butterfly Foundation to develop training and workshop materials tailored to the needs of primary and high school students. These materials are expected to reach more than 100,000 young people across the country. The Gillard Labor Government has also endorsed a Voluntary Industry Code of Conduct to guide media, fashion and advertising industries on body image.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will deliver a *Women, Peace and Security Action Plan* to recognise the disproportionate impact of war and armed conflict on women and highlight the critical role of women's contributions in conflict resolution and peace. The *Action Plan* directly responds to UN Security Council resolution 1325.

Knowing whether Australia is progressing in improving gender equality requires solid evidence. A re-elected Labor Government will complete work with the States and Territories to develop national gender indicators to monitor progress towards equality across a range of areas including employment, access to child care and family friendly work, housing, safety and leadership. The Federal Labor Government is supporting the Australian Bureau of Statistics to establish the Gender at a Glance website, a new web portal that will provide a range of easy-to-digest statistics on gender.

Reducing Violence against Women

A Gillard Labor Government will implement the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*. The *National Plan* will be a 12 year strategy to prevent domestic violence and sexual assault, deliver greater justice for victims, and improve support services. The *National Plan* brings together the efforts of all governments and the community on an agreed set of common goals.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will support the implementation of the *National Plan* by increasing the Women's Safety Agenda to over \$100 million, a funding boost of \$44.5 million over four years. This is on top of the \$1.9 billion spent every four years on addressing domestic violence and sexual assault through payments, programs and services – including the additional \$730 million in new funding invested by Labor since 2007.

New initiatives include:

- \$3.75 million for local community programs to prevent domestic violence and encourage respectful relationships including funding for sporting codes to establish zero tolerance programs in local sporting clubs.
- \$8.8 million for telephone support for frontline workers such as allied health professionals, child care and paramedics to better assist clients who have experienced violence.
- \$4.8 million for projects to improve services for victims of violence focusing on the health sector and on services provided to children, Indigenous women and women with disabilities.
- \$4.6 million for programs to develop effective ways to stop perpetrators committing acts of violence in the future.

- \$6.9 million for a new National Centre of Excellence to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies to reduce violence against women, improve best practice and support workforce development.
- \$14.9 million to conduct the Personal Safety Survey and National Community Attitudes Survey every four years to track the impact of the action plans.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will also improve sexual assault victims' access to justice and develop a media code of practice on the reporting of sexual assault and domestic violence.

All funding will be fully offset, consistent with the Gillard Labor Government's commitment to return the budget to surplus in 2013, three years ahead of schedule. \$17.4 million of this funding will be drawn from existing uncommitted funds.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will move to secure agreement to this plan from all States and Territories through the Council of Australian Governments.

The Coalition's Record

Over the 12 years of the former Coalition Government - women's policy was downgraded.

The Howard Government:

- Lowered women's wages through the introduction of Work Choices and Australian Workplace Agreements.
- Failed to introduce paid parental leave.
- Failed to take an evidence based and national approach to reducing domestic violence and sexual assault.
- Failed to accede to the Optional Protocol of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Tony Abbott

Australian women should be concerned if Tony Abbott is elected Prime Minister.

In a joint letter to The Age newspaper, 45 leading women's advocates including commentator Leslie Cannold said,

"Abbott's views and past policies have and will continue to give rise to policies that undermine the respect and equality women have fought to so hard to achieve."⁵

Until this year, Tony Abbott had always vehemently opposed paid parental leave. Under Mr Abbott's plan, all Australians will be lumped with an unfair \$6.1 billion tax whenever they are at the shops or the petrol station.

⁵ Das, S 2010, "Feminists sceptical of Abbott" *The Age*, published 10 August 2010.