

2019 ELECTION PLATFORM

WHO WE ARE

YWCA Australia is a feminist organisation focused on improving gender equality for women, young women and girls.

Together we challenge the systems, structures and policies that act as barriers to women, especially young women, achieving their full potential. Our evidence-based programs and services, delivered across the country, aim to be inclusive of all women and offer support with housing, homelessness, leadership, safety and wellbeing.

Our goal is to positively impact the lives of more than two million women, young women and girls by the end of 2023.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING FOR THIS FEDERAL ELECTION:



HOUSING: Develop a gender-responsive national housing strategy that aims to reduce homelessness and increase affordable housing stock for women.



SAFETY AND WELLBEING: Fund and implement best practice primary prevention programs, which aim to change the structures, norms, and practices that drive gender-based violence.



LEADERSHIP: Elevate young women's leadership by reinstating the Minister for Youth, implementing a National Equality Strategy and increasing ongoing funding for the National Women's Alliances.



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HOUSING

YWCA Australia advocates for programs and policies that take a gender-responsive approach and support all women, young women and girls to obtain affordable, adequate, secure, appropriate and accessible housing.

Background:

Women make up the majority of people utilising housing support systems, including public housing tenants, Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) recipients and those approaching specialist homelessness services (i.e. family violence services).¹

There has been a 10% increase in homelessness among women since 2011. In particular, the number of older women experiencing homelessness grew 31% from 2011-2016.²

Almost 95% of the women housed by

YWCA National Housing have experienced family violence. A lack of affordable and available housing further inhibits women's options to leave.

Women's economic disadvantage also contributes to instability in housing. Workplace Gender Equality Agency data consistently reports that men outearn women in every industry and across all occupations, and women disproportionately occupy part-time and casual employment.³ Women also retire on average with around half the superannuation of men.⁴

Ask:

Develop a gender-responsive national housing strategy that aims to reduce homelessness and increase affordable housing stock for women. This includes:

- Provide a catalytic investment in housing stock – 500,000 social and affordable rental homes are needed to meet demand across Australia
- Work with states and territories to develop National Housing and Homelessness Agreements (NHHA) that are funded over a five year cycle, and that address gender and other forms of marginalisation
- Support YWCA Australia to double the number of women who can access our safe and affordable housing options – from 363 to 726 in the first year of government
- Fund YWCA Housing's Pathways to Independence prevention program for women at risk of homelessness (estimated investment \$120,000 p.a per location).

Our Impact:

YWCA National Housing is a registered Community Housing Provider, providing 132,495 nights of affordable accommodation for women each year across Australia. We also provide financial support to women at risk of homelessness through our **Pathways to Independence Program and No Interest Loan Schemes**. In the last year, 75% of women seeking assistance through YWCA Housing could not be housed.



¹ <http://www.equalityrightsalliance.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/AWA/VA-andERA-Submission-to-PC-Draft-Report-onHuman-Services-20170714.pdf>

² <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2049.0>

³ Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Annual Report 2017-2018

⁴ ASU & Per Capita 2017, Not So Super For Women: Superannuation and women's retirement outcomes

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SAFETY AND WELLBEING

YWCA Australia advocates for programs, policies and laws that will end violence against women, young women and girls, also referred to as gender-based violence.

Background:

Violence against women, including family violence, sexual assault and sexual harassment, is a pervasive social issue. This violence is perpetuated by gender and power inequalities, which are referred to as 'gendered drivers'.

Women are at greater risk of family, domestic and sexual violence, with some groups more vulnerable than others, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, young women, and women with disabilities. Overall, one

in six women have experienced either physical, sexual or emotional violence by a current or former partner, and one woman a week is killed at the hands of a current or former partner.⁵

The cost of violence against women in Australia has been estimated at \$21.7 billion each year.^{6, 7}

We must significantly invest in the prevention of violence against women in order to achieve lasting social change.

Ask:

Fund and implement best practice primary prevention programs, which aim to change the structures, norms, and practices that drive gender-based violence. YWCA Australia is calling for a \$10 million investment in our primary prevention programs which will:

- Fund and implement our Gender Equity Matters programs in all federal government departments and agencies
- Support the further development of our Bystander Intervention Training for workplaces and communities with the aim of national and sustainable implementation
- Expand our respectful relationships education for children and young people
- Fund the establishment of Australia's first International Women's Day Awards to recognise and celebrate leaders, champions and organisations in gender pay equality.

Our Impact:

YWCA has a strong history in delivering **respectful relationships education in schools**, designed to support children and young people to develop safe, healthy and respectful relationships.

YWCA's **Bystander Intervention Workshops** are delivered in workplaces, schools and communities, empowering participants with knowledge, skills and confidence to safely intervene in situations where the respect or safety of women is at risk, and challenge attitudes and behaviour based on gender inequality.

YWCA Australia's **Gender Equity Matters (GEM)** program with workplaces to embed gender equity measures into its policies, practices and workplace culture. This involves analysis of the workplace through staff surveys and policy reviews, and training on **Unconscious Gender Bias and Workplace Responses to Violence**.

YWCA's prevention work is **evidence based, uses best practice models**, and aligns with Our Watch's 'Change The Story: A shared framework for the prevention of violence against women and their children' and 'Changing the Picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children'.

YWCA in New Zealand run the NZ Equal Pay Awards and have built phenomenal success in recognising and celebrating leaders, champions and organisations in gender pay equality.

⁵ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/domestic-violence/family-domestic-sexual-violence-in-australia-2018/contents/summary>

⁶ <https://www.pwc.com.au/publications/economic-case-preventing-violence-against-women.html>

⁷ <https://www.pwc.com.au/pdf/a-high-price-to-pay.pdf>

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LEADERSHIP

YWCA Australia advocates for women, young women and girls to develop their own leadership identity to achieve societal and structural transformation.

We recognise that women's leadership extends not only to women holding positions of leadership, but also to equal participation and inclusion in decision-making in the private and public spheres, the community and non-normative roles including autonomy over their own lives.

Background:

Representation matters. In the workplace, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions across almost every industry, with the latest Workplace Gender Equality Agency scorecard reporting that women still only make up 17% of CEOs.⁸

In the Federal Parliament women only make up 32% of members, despite being 50% of the population.

It is critical that women, including young women, are given opportunity, access and support to reach leadership positions, in order to reflect the diversity of women's voices.

There are six National Women's Alliances who represent over 180 women's organisations across Australia. The Alliances ensure that the views, voices and issues of women in Australia, and in particular, women from marginalised and disadvantaged groups, are at the forefront of policy and decision-making.

Funding for the National Women's Alliances has not increased since 2015, despite the critical work for women in Australia and women's organisations, both domestically and internationally.

Ask:

Elevate young women's leadership by:

- Invest in the implementation of a National Gender Equality Strategy and the recognition of gender expertise in women's organisations
- Commit to increased ongoing funding for the National Women's Alliances to ensure women's voices, interests and needs are at the forefront of policy and decision making
- Reinstate the Minister for Youth and commit to a dedicated focus on young women's leadership.



Our Impact:

YWCA Australia provides leadership training, events and opportunities to women, young women and girls across Australia.

These include our [SHE Leads](#) and SHE Leads High suite of programs and conferences, and our [Every Girl](#) program for girls in primary school.

YWCA also provides opportunities for young women to elevate their voices by supporting their attendance at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and through our Young Women's Council, comprised of 18 young women aged 12-30 from across the country.

⁸ https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2017-18-gender-equality-scorecard_0.pdf