



Women's Electoral Lobby | 8-10 Victoria Street, Newtown, NSW 2042 EMAIL: wel@welnsw.org.au
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The Hon Anthony Albanese

Prime Minister

PO Box 6022

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

19th April, 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

WEL launched a comprehensive set of Policy Priorities for the Federal Election and sent those to all relevant party representatives. Among those policies was one on *Decent Incomes for Everyone: Income Adequacy and Equality for Women*. We noted also the ALP Government's Election Policy – **Labor's Plan for Australian Women** had the ambition for Australia to lead the world in equality for women and men.

WEL welcomed the ALP Government's first **Women's Budget Statement** as setting the agenda for driving change. There are some areas of policy which need to be addressed for the most disadvantaged women and their children if the goals of any National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality are to be realised.

WEL noted in its policies that 95% of recipients of single parenting payments are women. Since the 2007-2013 transfer to *JobSeeker* (formerly *Newstart*) of single parents of children aged 8-15, their poverty levels have risen dramatically. Recent research completed by Professor Anne Summers and published as: **The Choice: Violence or Poverty** confirmed that 59.7% of women who are now single mothers experienced violence from a previous partner.

WEL supports the campaign by the Council of Single Mothers and their Children, and calls on you and the Government you lead to accord the restoration of single mothers to the dignity and financial security they deserve by:

- Restoring eligibility for the Parenting Payment Single (PPS) allowance to all single parents until their youngest child reaches 16 or still in high school.
- Abolishing the Mutual Obligations requirements for parents of school-aged children (currently imposed once the youngest child turns six years old).
- Increasing PPS to equal the Age Pension single rate.
- Indexing and benchmarking the PPS payments the same as pensions.

Single mothers should not be penalised for taking responsibility for the upbringing of their children. Payments to support them should recognise the social responsibility they have accepted and be regarded as an investment in them and their children's future.

WEL condemns the policy-induced poverty generated by the current social security payment rules for single mothers and their children. Any gender impact assessment of this current policy would identify the adverse impacts on these women. Your Government's commitment to such assessments must be reflected then in your budgetary priorities. While WEL appreciates the hard choices governments must make in deciding on spending priorities, a reform in this area is an urgent priority affecting many lives now.

We look forward to the right choice being made in this coming Labor Government Budget.

Yours sincerely

Jozefa Sobski AM
WEL Australia
National Convenor

Cc Senator the Hon. Katy Gallagher. Minister for Women, Minister for Finance and
Minister for the Public Service
The Hon. Jim Chalmers, Treasurer
The Hon. Amanda Rishworth. Minister for Social Services