



MORRISON MISSING

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**A RECORD OF HIS FAILURE  
FOR WORKING WOMEN**

**“WHEN IT COMES TO  
RESPECT FOR WOMEN,  
THE MORRISON  
GOVERNMENT HAS  
BEEN MISSING.”**

**MORRISON  
MISSING**

**The Morrison Missing series.**

When it comes to the issues that matter for working people, Scott Morrison has been missing. From keeping people safe during the pandemic to wage rises, respect for women to job security, he has either done nothing, blamed others, or made the problem worse. The Morrison Missing series from Australian Unions reviews his legacy of neglect and harm.

[www.australianunions.org.au/morrison\\_missing](http://www.australianunions.org.au/morrison_missing)

Authorised by Sally McManus, ACTU, 365 Queen St, Melbourne, 3000.

## **4 INTRODUCTION**

### **6 WOMEN ARE PAID LESS**

Under the Morrison Government, women earn on average \$483.30 less than men each week.

### **8 WOMEN RETIRE WITH LESS SUPER**

Under this Government, a woman retires on average with about half the amount of super as a man.

### **10 INSECURE WORK**

Under this Government a woman on average has less control over her hours of work and less job security than a man and is more likely to have been sacked or lose hours during the pandemic.

### **12 VIOLENCE AT WORK**

Under this Government nearly two thirds of women (64%) report that they have faced sexual harassment at their current or former workplace.

### **14 FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Under this Government, most women have no right to paid family and domestic violence leave, despite the leave keeping women safe and being widely supported by employers and unions alike.

### **15 WORK AND CARE**

Under this Government a woman is confronted with some of the most expensive childcare and the second worst paid parental leave scheme in the developed world.

### **16 THERE IS A BETTER WAY...**

# INTRODUCTION

**Australian unions have a very proud record of campaigning for stronger rights for women at work, including equal pay, paid parental leave, increased job security, safer workplaces, and a better balance between work and family life.**

But Scott Morrison and the Coalition Government have seriously eroded the gains we have made towards respect for women. Australian women are now less safe and economically secure than they were, and we have no national plan to fix these problems.

Australia has dropped from *15th to 50th* place in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report - the international ranking of how countries are performing on equality for women - since 2006; now ranking well below peers like New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada.<sup>1</sup>

The Morrison Government's response to the COVID pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and further damaged women's safety and economic security.

A new national-wide ACTU survey shows that the clear majority of Australians believe that they are worse off now than they were a year ago; and women have felt the biggest impact.

- » **77% of women say the cost of living has gotten worse, compared to 67% of men,**
- » **55% of women say their job security has gotten worse compared to 45% of men, and**
- » **56% of women believe the economy has gotten worse compared to 50% of men.<sup>2</sup>**

This is no surprise. Women lost more jobs and carried more of the burden of unpaid caring work during the pandemic; but were much less likely to get government support.<sup>3</sup> Family and domestic violence, has spiked during the pandemic.<sup>4</sup>

The most undervalued and insecure workers in our community are often women; many of whom have put their health and safety on the line to carry our community through the pandemic, including in healthcare, early education, retail, hospitality, aged care and disability support.

This neglect of Australian women is totally unacceptable. It is damaging not only to women, but to men, children, families and communities. It is holding our national economy back and harming all of us.

**When it comes to respect for women, the Morrison Government has been missing. Under his Government, a woman on average:**

- » **Earns \$483.30 less per week than a man.**
- » **Retires with about half the amount of super as a man.**
- » **Has less control over her hours of work and less job security and is more likely to have been sacked or lose hours during the pandemic.**
- » **Has a 2 in 3 chance that she has experienced sexual harassment at her current or former workplace.**
- » **Will have no right to paid family and domestic violence leave, despite a spike in family and domestic violence during the pandemic.**
- » **Australian women are confronted with some of the most expensive early childhood education and care and have the second worst paid parental leave scheme in the developed world.**

Scott Morrison could be taking action on each of these problems. The solutions exist and they work. But in every case he is either doing nothing, passing the buck or making the problem worse. Brittany Higgins spoke for us all when she said during her press club speech with Grace Tame on 9 February 2022, *'I'm not interested in words anymore. I want to see action.'*

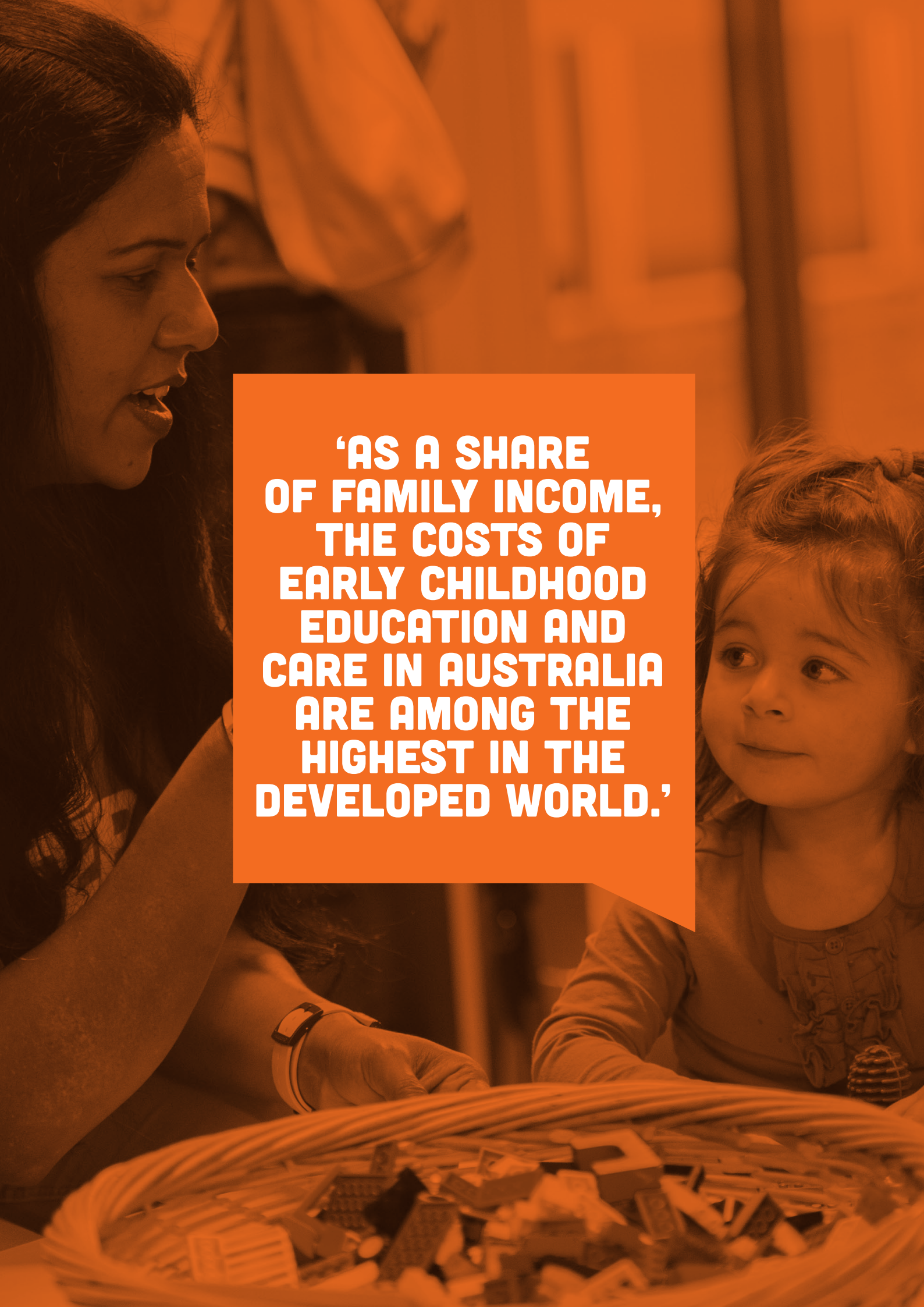
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021> at p 103

<sup>2</sup> ACTU (2022), Attitudes, Sentiments and Knowledge tracker survey – November 2021 wave

<sup>3</sup> <https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Womens-work-Grattan-Institute-report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://research.qut.edu.au/centre-for-justice/wp-content/uploads/sites/304/2021/09/Carrington-et-al-FINAL-paper-05052021.pdf>



A woman with long dark hair is looking down at a young child with curly hair. They are both focused on a large wicker basket filled with various toys, including blocks and small figurines. The scene is warmly lit, and the overall color palette is a soft, monochromatic orange. A large, semi-transparent orange rectangle is positioned in the center of the image, containing a quote in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

**‘AS A SHARE  
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## 1

# WOMEN ARE PAID LESS

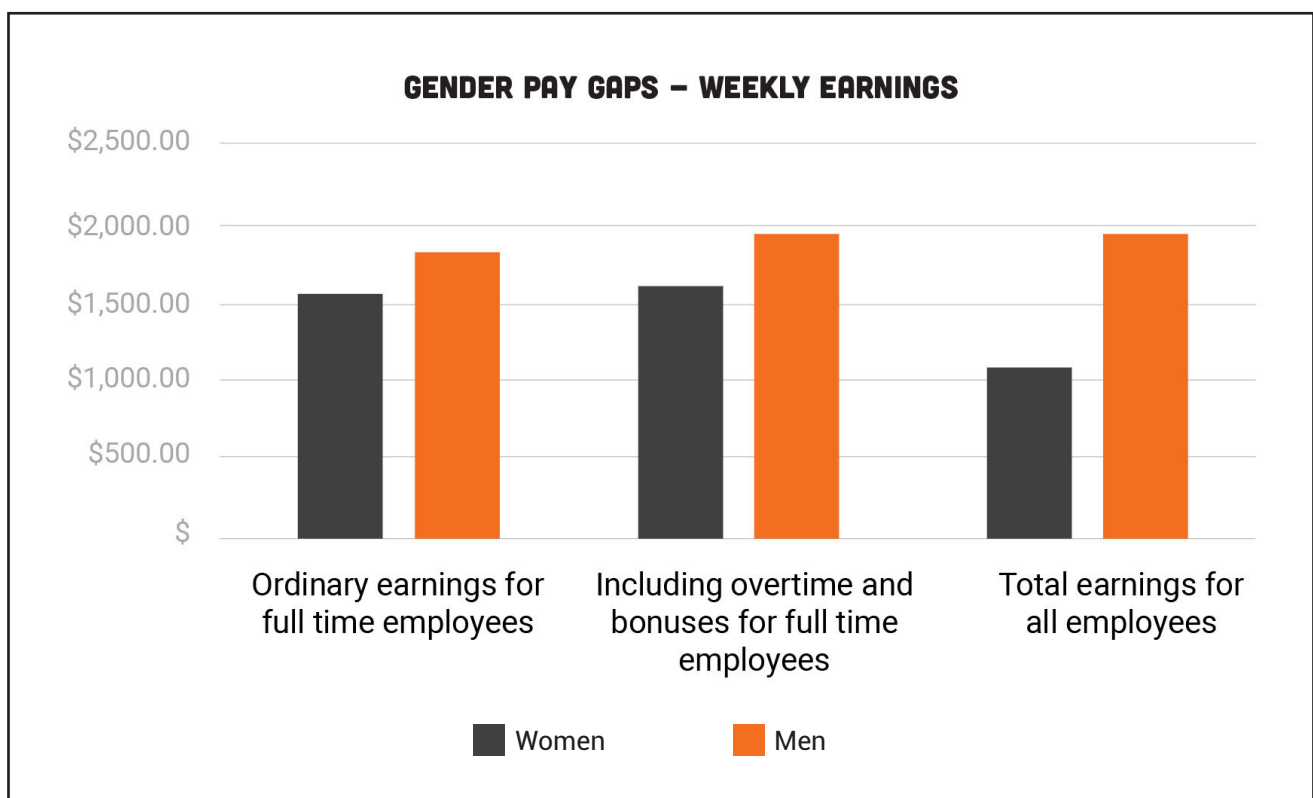
**UNDER THE MORRISON GOVERNMENT, WOMEN EARN ON AVERAGE \$483.30 LESS THAN MEN EACH WEEK.**

**Although Australian women are very well educated by global standards, this is not translating into well-paid, secure jobs.**

Sectors where the majority of workers are women in Australia remain underpaid and undervalued. Women are more likely (61%) to be reliant on the minimum rates of pay in Awards<sup>5</sup> and work less paid hours often because of greater responsibilities caring for others.

Australia's national gender pay gap (comparing full-time ordinary earnings) is 13.8%, which equals \$255.30 less per week for women.<sup>6</sup> But when you include all money that men and women actually earn, including overtime and bonuses, the true gender pay gap is over 30%;<sup>7</sup> or \$483.30 per week less in earnings for women.<sup>8</sup>

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg's claims that the gender pay gap has narrowed to 'record lows' and women's employment has risen to a 'record high'. These claims don't stand up to scrutiny. Women's participation rates are still only 61.5%, - well below men's participation rates which are over 70%. Recent ABS data also showed that reductions in hours for workers due to Omicron has been far higher for women: 9.7 percent for women compared to 8.1 percent for men. While the Treasurer claimed that the economy created 66,000 jobs for women in January 2022, nearly 57,000 of these jobs were part time, most of which would have been casual.<sup>8</sup>



Source: ABS, Average Weekly Earnings, May 2021.

5 ABS 6306 Employee Earnings and Hours.  
 6 ABS Average Weekly Earnings, November 2021  
 7 Ibid.  
 8 ABS, Labour Force, January 2022

The most recent Workplace Gender Equality Agency data shows that Australian men are twice as likely to be highly paid than women; with women "substantially overrepresented" at the lowest levels of earnings.<sup>9</sup>

While the Government has claimed success for some small percentage point decreases in the pay gap since 2013, closer analysis shows these are predominantly driven by wages stagnating across the board, rather than an increase in women's wages and living standards.<sup>10</sup> Most recently, the national gender pay gap has actually increased, due to real full time weekly earnings falling for women.<sup>11</sup>

A key driver of gender pay gaps includes pay secrecy rules that give employers the upper hand in pay negotiations and hide pay discrimination against women. In the public sector where pay is transparent, the official pay gap is 10.8%, but in the private sector, where pay settings are often opaque, the gap is 17.5%.

For example, at the Commonwealth Bank all employees are required to sign contracts with pay secrecy clauses as a condition of employment. According to the Finance Sector Union (FSU) this is a key practice enabling the Commonwealth Bank to "rip off their predominantly female workforce to the tune of \$500 million per annum".

The Morrison Government has refused to outlaw pay secrecy practices, despite them being outlawed in many other countries.

The Government promised that a report reviewing the effectiveness of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) - the key body tasked with reducing the gender inequity at work would be released before the end of 2021. At the time of writing, no report has been provided.

The WGEA regime currently lacks focus on concrete action, excludes too many workplaces from reporting requirements, and has no requirement to consult with workers and unions about gender equity at work. The Government has not even managed to conclude the review it started, let alone make any meaningful improvements to WGEA.

Serious and sustained action to close the pay gap is needed, stronger equal pay provisions in the Fair Work Act, and an urgent wage increase for Australia's most undervalued women workers. Each of these measures could have been implemented by the Morrison Government, but he has refused to act.

## SOLUTIONS

Many solutions are needed to close the gender pay gap. Some key ones include:

- » Stronger equal pay laws in the Fair Work Act and a requirement for the Fair Work Commission to proactively tackle gender inequity across all of its functions.
- » Strengthened requirements on all employers to report to WGEA on their gender pay gaps and take action to address it.
- » Investing in our social infrastructure, including fixing aged care and delivering free and universal access to quality early childhood education and care.
- » Urgent wage increases to ensure Australian's undervalued women workers get fair pay, and a significant increase in Award minimum wages to ensure they are living wages.
- » Outlaw pay secrecy clauses that make it easier for employers to pay women less.

9 <https://www.wgea.gov.au/newsroom/men-twice-as-likely-to-be-highly-paid-than-women#:~:text=%E2%80%9CNew%20WGEA%20analysis%20shows%20men,bottom%20level%20of%20all%20earners.%E2%80%9D>

10 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-02/fact-check-gender-pay-gap/10302358?nw=0&r=HtmlFragment>

11 <https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/australias-gender-pay-gap-statistics>



## 2

## WOMEN RETIRE WITH LESS SUPER

**UNDER THIS GOVERNMENT, A WOMAN RETIRES ON AVERAGE WITH ABOUT HALF THE AMOUNT OF SUPER AS A MAN.**

Throughout their working lives women get paid less than men on average and do far more unpaid hours looking after others. As a result, women, on average, retire with superannuation balances 47% lower than men.<sup>12</sup>

Shamefully, 40% of older single women live in poverty in retirement<sup>13</sup> and women over 55 are the fastest growing group of homeless people.<sup>14</sup>

The Morrison Government has recently made this worse. Its very first response to the financial impact of the COVID pandemic was to force those with the least financial security to raid their super and jeopardise their retirement just to get by. As of February 2021, women were forced to make over 2 million applications for the early release of their retirement savings. In total, Australians seeking to cushion the financial blow of the pandemic withdrew \$37.8 billion of their super.<sup>15</sup> Women 36 years old and over were more likely to withdraw their superannuation early than men.<sup>16</sup> Up to 70,000 women are also estimated to have been coerced into withdrawing super early by abusive partners.

The Government's 'early release' scheme was a short sighted, unfair and lazy policy response which has only exacerbated the gender pay and superannuation gap and increased the risk of poverty and homelessness in retirement for women.

## SOLUTIONS

Some key ones include:

- » Superannuation paid on all paid and unpaid parental leave and care-related absences
- » A legislated pathway to a superannuation guarantee rate of 15%, expedited for women.

<sup>12</sup> David Hetherington and Warwick Smith, Not so Super, for Women: Superannuation and Women's Retirement Outcomes (Melbourne: Per Capita and the Australian Services Union, 2017), at p 6


<sup>13</sup> <https://www.womeninsuper.com.au/content/the-facts-about-women-and-super/gjumzs>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/article/400-000-women-over-45-are-at-risk-of-homelessness-in-australia/hiaghq5n5>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/a-perfect-storm-up-to-70-000-women-may-have-been-coerced-into-withdrawing-super-20220217-p59xac.html>

<sup>16</sup> APRA, COVID-19 Early Release Scheme - Issue 36, February 2021



A woman wearing a white hard hat and a high-visibility safety vest over a dark long-sleeved shirt. She has her arms crossed and is looking directly at the camera. The image has a warm, orange-toned filter. A large, semi-transparent orange rectangle is centered over her chest, containing white text. 

**‘WOMEN  
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### 3 INSECURE WORK

**UNDER THIS GOVERNMENT A WOMAN ON AVERAGE HAS LESS CONTROL OVER HER HOURS OF WORK AND LESS JOB SECURITY THAN A MAN AND IS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN SACKED OR LOSE HOURS DURING THE PANDEMIC.**

Australia has one of the highest rates of insecure work in the OECD, with women disproportionately affected.<sup>17</sup> Nearly 7 in 10 (68%) part time jobs in Australia are held by women<sup>18</sup>, and most of those jobs tend to be casual - with no guarantee of hours or even a job<sup>19</sup> next week. 53% of casual employees are women.<sup>19</sup>

Women lost jobs and hours during the initial stages of the COVID pandemic at far higher levels than men because they were more likely to be in insecure work, and because the Morrison Government deliberately excluded casual workers with less than 12 months of service from Job Keeper.<sup>20</sup>

Further, women in sectors such as community services and education are stuck on rolling fixed term contracts for years on end, while others in aged care, retail and hospitality are trapped in insecure part-time jobs with very little control over their hours of work.

The Morrison Government has the power to act to increase wages and reduce job insecurity but has chosen not to. The Aged Care sector, for example, has had inquiry after inquiry telling the Government exactly what is needed to fix the problems, including most importantly, better pay, conditions and job security for workers; yet still no action has been taken. The Government's 'aged care bonus' payment has been widely criticised as far too little, too late, and poorly designed – failing to even acknowledge that only a minority of the workforce is employed on a full-time basis.<sup>21</sup> The crisis in Aged Care is now so bad that the defence force has been called in to assist.

Long-term investment and action is needed, not band-aid solutions.

Scott Morrison's main contribution to work insecurity facing women has been to increase it. He changed the Fair Work Act last year to make it easier for an employer to call someone a casual employee.

## SOLUTIONS

Some key ones include:

- » Changing the law to stop employers turning secure jobs into insecure ones.
- » Providing proper income support for workers losing jobs and hours during the pandemic.
- » Supporting workers' claims for higher wages in the current work value case for aged care workers.
- » Ensuring women working in services sectors, such as aged care and early childhood education and care, have fair pay and conditions.
- » Introduce a common sense definition of casual employment and a proper right for casuals to convert to permanent work.
- » Limit the use of fixed term contracts to no longer than two years, like nearly all other developed countries do.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.actu.org.au/media/1449502/actu-sub.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> ABS Labour Force – January 2022

<sup>19</sup> ABS 6333 Characteristics of Employment August 2020

<sup>20</sup> WGEA, Gendered impacts of COVID-19, May 2020

<sup>21</sup> <https://7news.com.au/politics/aged-care-workers-to-receive-two-bonuses-c-5512678>



## CASE STUDY

# MICHELLE

## AGED CARE WORKER



**Michelle is a 54-year-old part-time worker at an aged care centre in Brisbane. She loves her job.**

But she only makes \$21.90 an hour and lives week to week. She is often scared about how she will pay her bills, earning only about \$550 a week. She can't even afford to buy a new work uniform that she needs.

Her pay has only gone up 80 cents since she first started working at the centre almost 5 years ago – while the cost of living has significantly increased.

She is worried about her ability to retire. Her super would only support her for a few years.

Her aged care centre is understaffed in every area, often leaving her to do work with aged care residents (like dressing them, helping them be mobile around the centre) that she is unqualified for.

Many of her colleagues – nearly all women – have left the centre because they are burnt out.

Michelle wishes she could be full-time, but her employer continues to cut costs and use labour hire or just not roster on enough staff. Michelle has never taken the two breaks she is entitled to because her centre is understaffed.

**She believes the Morrison Government offers no help for aged care workers:**

**'SCOTT MORRISON IS ALL TALK AND NO ACTION – HE NEEDS TO SPEND A DAY AT A FACILITY AND ACTUALLY SEE WHAT'S GOING ON AND DO SOMETHING REAL. HE'S OFFERED NO HELP FOR AGED CARE WORKERS. INSTEAD THERE SHOULD BE MORE STAFF, SECURE WORK AND A WAGE INCREASE GOOD ENOUGH TO LIVE ON.'**



## 4

## VIOLENCE AT WORK

**UNDER THIS GOVERNMENT NEARLY TWO THIRDS OF WOMEN (64%) REPORT THAT THEY HAVE FACED SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT THEIR CURRENT OR FORMER WORKPLACE.**

**Violence against women, including sexual harassment, is at crisis levels across Australian workplaces.<sup>22</sup> Nearly two thirds of women (64%) who responded to the ACTU's Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces survey said they'd experienced sexual harassment at a current or former workplace.<sup>23</sup>**

Sexual harassment is so widespread because of the power imbalance between men and women, not helped by a Prime Minister effectively turning a blind eye to abuse. The shameful events at Parliament House that led to the March4Justice Rallies united Australian women around a set of clear and urgent demands for reform to keep women safe at work.<sup>24</sup>

Those demands were contained in the groundbreaking Respect@Work report by Kate Jenkins, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner. It found that "Australia now lags behind other countries in preventing and responding to sexual harassment", its legal system was "no longer fit for purpose", and it concluded with 55 recommendations for action.<sup>25</sup> But these demands for action have fallen on deaf ears.

The Morrison Government sat on the Respect@Work Report for over a year, and still continues to ignore key reforms it recommended, including positive duties on employers to stop sexual harassment and assault before it starts, a quick and easy complaints process in the Fair Work Commission, and a national gender equality strategy.<sup>26</sup>

The Morrison Government also held a 'National Women's Safety Summit' and developed a draft National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children but both completely failed to properly respect or engage in the views of working women, nor did they have targets or the actions and resources needed to meet them.<sup>27</sup>

## SOLUTIONS

Some key ones include:

- » Fully implement all 55 recommendations of the Respect@Work report, including positive duties on employers to prevent sexual harassment, a new prohibition of sexual harassment in the FW Act, and a national gender equality strategy.
- » Adopt a real National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children that has ambitious targets backed up with proper action and funding.

<sup>22</sup> See for example: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/everyones-business-fourth-national-survey-sexual>  
<sup>23</sup> <https://www.australianunions.org.au/campaign/sexual-harassment-in-australian-workplaces-survey-results/>  
<sup>24</sup> <https://www.australianunions.org.au/2021/04/14/safe-work-4-women/#:~:text=The%20Safe%20Work%204%20Women,Sara%20Charlesworth%20from%20RMIT%20University,>  
<sup>25</sup> <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/respectwork-sexual-harassment-national-inquiry-report-2020>  
<sup>26</sup> [https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/ahrc\\_wsh\\_report\\_2020.pdf](https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/ahrc_wsh_report_2020.pdf) See Recommendations 6, 17, 18 and 28  
<sup>27</sup> <https://www.actu.org.au/actu-media/media-releases/2021/not-one-voice-representing-working-women-at-summit>



# UNDERMINING RESPECT FOR WOMEN

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>5 MARCH<br/>2020</b>     | The Respect@Work Report is published calling for 55 changes to tackle sexual harassment at work. The Morrison Government ignores it until:                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>5 FEBRUARY<br/>2021</b>  | Brittany Higgins alleges that she was raped in Parliament by a colleague in 2019.                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>4 MARCH<br/>2021</b>     | Linda Reynolds, Defence Minister and Ms Higgins' former boss calls her a "lying cow".                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>15 MARCH<br/>2021</b>    | <p>The March4Justice rallies take place in 40 cities across Australia demanding justice for women.</p> <p>Scott Morrison refuses to meet with protesters later stating that they should be grateful they weren't "met with bullets" as they might be in other countries.</p>              |
| <b>21 MARCH<br/>2021</b>    | The Sex Discrimination Commissioner tells the Senate that she has never had a meeting with the Attorney General about her report.                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>8 APRIL<br/>2021</b>     | <p>With political pressure building the Morrison Government is finally forced to respond to the Respect@Work Report, more than a year after it was released.</p> <p>Scott Morrison says he "accepts" all recommendations, but actually rejects many of them.</p>                          |
| <b>24 JUNE<br/>2021</b>     | <p>The Morrison Government finally introduces a "Respect@Work" Bill into Parliament but missing eight of the key recommendations that require legislation.</p> <p>Scott Morrison refuses to attend Parliament to say a word of support for the Bill or even cast a single vote on it.</p> |
| <b>2 SEPTEMBER<br/>2021</b> | The Bill passes but with the Morrison Government voting against amendments to implement the other eight key recommendations.                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>14 FEBRUARY<br/>2022</b> | The Morrison Government announces another inquiry into some of the remaining Respect@Work recommendations it already voted against, knowing that is it almost impossible to get them passed in the remaining life of this Parliament.                                                     |

## 5

## FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**UNDER THIS GOVERNMENT, A WOMAN IS VERY LIKELY TO HAVE NO RIGHT TO PAID FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEAVE, DESPITE THE LEAVE KEEPING WOMEN SAFE AND BEING WIDELY SUPPORTED BY EMPLOYERS AND UNIONS ALIKE.**

Family and domestic violence is a national crisis. On average a woman is killed each week by a partner, ex-partner or family member in Australia. Hundreds of thousands report facing violence at home – figures that have surged during the pandemic, as many women were trapped further into abusive relationships. The true picture is likely to be even worse. Sexual assaults against women nearly doubled in 2020 to 2021.<sup>28</sup>

10 days paid family and domestic violence leave is crucial to keep women safe. It can also assist with closing the gender pay gap and promoting gender equity, because it maintains the economic security women need to leave and recover from violent relationships. One in four women cite financial barriers as the reason they are unable to leave abusive relations.<sup>29</sup> And without access to paid leave, women face an 'increased risk of financial instability and homelessness.'<sup>30</sup> Due to the action of unions and union members, about 1.2 million Australian workers now have access to paid family and domestic violence leave.<sup>31</sup> While this is great progress, it leaves far too many workers affected by family and domestic violence forced to make the choice between their safety and their wages. This is not a choice anyone should ever have to make.

Nearly all parts of the Australian community support 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave, including major business organisations such as the BCA, and governments in every jurisdiction, except the Morrison Government. It has long opposed it, and Michaelia Cash, the current Attorney-General, has even said that the leave would lead businesses to say: "I just won't employ women".<sup>32</sup>

Most recently it joined forces with One Nation to vote down this right when it was put to Parliament again, back in September last year.

During the pandemic the Morrison Government even went so far as to tell victims of family and domestic violence to raid their super to get by.<sup>33</sup>

## SOLUTIONS

Some key ones include:

- » **Legislating to include at least 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave in the National Employment Standards.**
- » **Adequate, ongoing funding of women-led, not-for-profit services to support women experiencing violence.**

28 ABS Crime Victimisation, Australia (2020-21 financial year)

29 ABS (2020), Partner Violence - In Focus: Crime and Justice Statistics, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/focus-crime-and-justice-statistics/partner-violence-january-2020>

30 <https://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/sites/family-domestic-violence-leave/correspondence/am202155-report-wad-data-031121.pdf> at p 7

31 <https://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/sites/family-domestic-violence-leave/correspondence/am202155-report-literature-review-031121.pdf> at pp 10 and 17

32 SMH, 27 May 2016, "Domestic Violence Leave would mean fewer jobs for women":

<https://www.smh.com.au/public-service/domestic-violence-leave-would-mean-fewer-jobs-for-women-cash-20160527-gp5h1z.html>

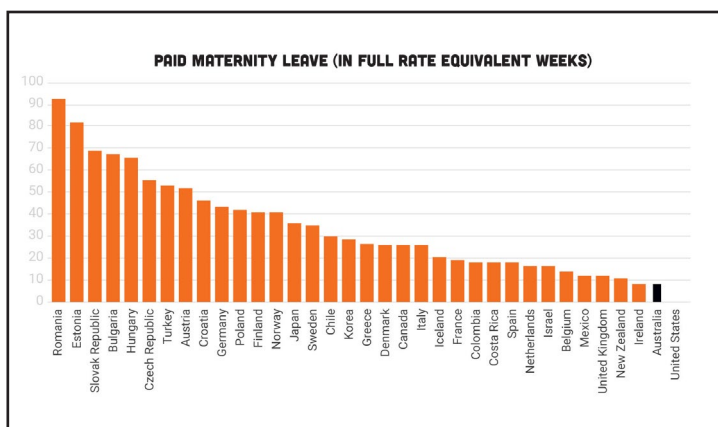
33 ABC News, (19 March 2021), Government reviewing plan to give domestic violence victims early access to superannuation, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-22/government-dumps-domestic-violence-victims-superannuation-plan/13268294>

## UNDER THIS GOVERNMENT A WOMAN IS CONFRONTED WITH SOME OF THE MOST EXPENSIVE CHILDCARE IN THE DEVELOPED WORLD.

Workers are stressed, exhausted and at financial breaking point trying to manage their caring responsibilities.<sup>34</sup> Women have taken on even more unpaid caring work during the pandemic as schools and childcare centres shut down.<sup>35</sup> Our system of support for working parents and carers in Australia is completely broken.

As a share of family income, the costs of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Australia are among the highest in the developed world.<sup>36</sup> Out of pocket ECEC costs have jumped by 14.7% since the last Federal election in 2019, leaving families struggling to manage the cost of living.<sup>37</sup> An average working couple loses almost two thirds of their income to either higher taxes or lower benefits if they access ECEC for their child. Australia ranks in the bottom half of OECD countries in terms of public funding of ECEC.

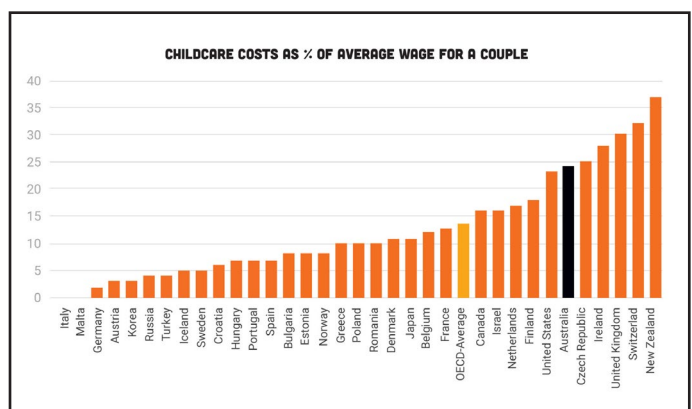
Australia's paid parental leave (PPL) scheme, which is paid at the national minimum wage, is one of the least generous of any developed country. UNICEF ranks Australia 40th of 41 comparable EU and OCED countries on PPL provided to mothers – providing the full-time equivalent of only 8 weeks paid leave. Australia is ranked 27th on the amount of PPL provided to fathers, providing the full-time equivalent of 0.8 weeks paid leave.<sup>38</sup>



Source: OECD Family Database, Table PF2.1, (2020), <https://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>

Men account for only 6.5% of all primary carer's leave taken in Australia, with the vast majority of PPL undertaken by women.<sup>39</sup>

Making matters worse, compulsory superannuation is not paid on Australia's PPL scheme. The Government's failure to properly support working parents and carers is a significant contributor to the gender pay gap and economic insecurity for women.



Source: OECD Selected Countries, 2020, <https://data.oecd.org/benwage/net-childcare-costs.htm>

## SOLUTIONS

Some key ones include:

- » Investment in social infrastructure, including free, universal accessible and high-quality early childhood education and care delivered by properly paid, securely employed educators.
- » Guaranteed and enforceable access to secure family friendly working arrangements in the Fair Work Act.
- » Improving Australia's Paid Parental Leave scheme to provide access to 52 weeks paid leave at full-wage replacement, with both parents entitled to access the same amount of paid parental leave and to share the entitlement as they see fit.

<sup>34</sup> [https://cpow.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Who-Cares-Survey-Report-2021\\_Lowres.pdf](https://cpow.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Who-Cares-Survey-Report-2021_Lowres.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Benefits and wages - Net childcare costs - OECD Data

<sup>36</sup> <https://cpd.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CPD-Starting-Better-Report.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> <https://thrivebyfive.org.au/news/the-parenthood-new-cpi-data-reveals-childcare-costs-soar-by-6-5-in-past-year-and-helps-drive-cost-of-living-for-parents/>

<sup>38</sup> Family-Friendly-Policies-Research\_UNICEF\_2019.pdf (unicef-irc.org)

<sup>39</sup> Towards gender balanced parental leave | WGEA

# THERE IS A BETTER WAY...

We know what needs to be done to improve the position of women in Australia. We deserve better than platitudes, spin and broken promises. We need a government that will do what it takes to close the gender pay gap, support women's economic security, and ensure women are safe at work and at home.

On each of these issues Scott Morrison has either done nothing, shirked responsibility or actively opposed solutions.

**For working women he is missing.**



## THE GENDER PAY GAP

- » Stronger equal pay laws in the Fair Work Act and a requirement for the Fair Work Commission to proactively tackle gender inequity across all of its functions.
- » Strengthened requirements on all employers to report to WGEA on their gender pay gaps and take action to address it.
- » Investing in our social infrastructure, including fixing aged care and delivering free and universal access to quality early childhood education and care.
- » Urgent wage increases to ensure Australian's undervalued women workers get fair pay, and a significant increase in Award minimum wages to ensure they are living wages.
- » Outlaw pay secrecy clauses that make it easier for employers to pay women less.

## THE SUPER GAP

- » Superannuation paid on all paid and unpaid parental leave and care-related absences.
- » A legislated pathway to a superannuation guarantee rate of 15%, expedited for women.

## INSECURE WORK

- » Changing the law to stop employers turning secure jobs into insecure ones.
- » Providing proper income support for workers losing jobs and hours during the pandemic.
- » Supporting workers' claims for higher wages in the current work value case for aged care workers.
- » Ensuring women working in services sectors, such as aged care and early childhood education and care, have fair pay and conditions.
- » Introduce a common sense definition of casual employment and a proper right for casuals to convert to permanent work.
- » Limit the use of fixed term contracts to no longer than two years, like nearly all other developed countries do.

## GENDERED VIOLENCE AT WORK

- » Fully implement all 55 recommendations of the Respect@Work report, including positive duties on employers to prevent sexual harassment, a new prohibition of sexual harassment in the FW Act, and a national gender equality strategy.
- » Adopt a real National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children that has ambitious targets backed up with proper action and funding.

## FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- » Legislating to include at least 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave in the National Employment Standards.
- » Adequate, ongoing funding of women-led, not-for-profit services to support women experiencing violence.

## WORK AND CARE

- » Investment in social infrastructure, including free, universal accessible and high-quality early childhood education and care delivered by properly paid, securely employed educators.
- » Improving Australia's Paid Parental Leave scheme to provide access to 52 weeks paid leave at full-wage replacement, with both parents entitled to access the same amount of paid parental leave and to share the entitlement as they see fit.
- » Guaranteed and enforceable access to secure family friendly working arrangements in the Fair Work Act.

Australian  
**Unions**

**Address**

4/365 Queen Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

**Phone**

1300 486 466

**Web**

[australianunions.org.au](http://australianunions.org.au)

