

Women have changed the face of Australian public life over the past twenty years but much remains to be done.

To make it easier for working women and their families we need to allow them to better balance their work and care responsibilities, they need essential work and family supports such greater access to high quality, affordable childcare, flexible working hours, the right to return to work part time and supports for a variety of caring roles including for the aged and disabled family members. The two major parties after years of resistance are now out-doing one another on paid maternity leave. This is good for women!

The 'gender lens' needs to be applied to health and other services because women's needs are different from men's.

Women in full time work still earn on average 17% less than men. Family responsibilities take them out of the workforce and out of superannuation, limiting their income even in retirement.

According to the ABS almost 6% of all women were hurt by family violence during 2005. A third of them were sexually assaulted by a partner. Shockingly women are most at risk while they are pregnant and many women with children are homeless as a result of partner violence. Disabled women and rural women are more likely to be trapped in violent relationships because of financial dependency and isolation.

..... raising the status of **Women**

Whilst women too can assault partners, 75% of family violence cases are perpetrated by men. Women and particularly children are traumatised with long term impacts.

Their low status in society and in relationships is a significant cause of the violence women experience.

Our Plan

- A **Work & Family Act** and a Commissioner to monitor and promote the importance of good work and family practices including restrictions on long and unsocial hours of work
- For parents to have the right to **flexible working hours** and to return to work part time
- More affordable and accessible **childcare**, especially for the under-twos
- Enhanced programs in **respite** for caring responsibilities and more options for caring for older disabled children
- In tackling **family violence** we need:
 - prevention programs, particularly education in respectful relationships in all schools and from the earliest years
 - more research on the factors that give rise to violence and the remedies and better evaluation of work done so far, particularly on perpetrator programs
 - better legal and service response systems for women in crisis, including financial and housing support, recovery and resilience building for families and rehabilitation for perpetrators
 - more housing options for women fleeing violence whether in their own home or in refuges