

CLOSE THE GENDER WAGE GAP

Everyone has the right to equal pay for equal work. Achieving equal opportunity for all genders, while supporting financial and workplace security, must be a priority. The Greens have a 5-point plan to close the Gender Wage Gap in Australia. We will support women's rights to financial security, and begin legal, workplace and economic reforms to address the roots of women's income inequality.

THE GREENS WILL:

- **Ensure equal pay for equal work** to boost women's financial security
- **Make workplaces more family friendly**
- **Extend paid parental leave** and investigate **valuing unpaid care work**
- **Support more affordable and accessible early childhood education** for more kids
- **Ensure fairer superannuation** for casual, part-time and low income workers

Taking steps to achieve pay equality is a way of challenging the long-standing belief that women's work is less valuable than men's. By levelling gendered inequality of paid and caring work, we can build a fairer society for all of us.

To finally close the gender pay gap, we must work for wholesale gender equality. This means addressing discrimination, sexism, racism, differential access to education and resources, the predominance of women and men in different industries or jobs, the lack of women in senior positions, the lack of part time or flexible roles, and the unequal burden of unpaid domestic and caring labour.

The Greens will work towards equality for all women in all aspects of life, and we are committed to seeing these values reflected in our laws and society. Our plan to address the Gender Wage Gap includes measures at every stage of women's lives and for all women regardless of their culture, religion or sexual identity.



EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK TO BOOST WOMEN'S FINANCIAL SECURITY

Women continue to be paid much less than men. Australia's gender pay gap is currently 16.2%. This means the average full-time female worker earns \$15,457 less than the average man each year.¹ Women from migrant and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds face even worse workplace conditions and pay disparity.

The Greens will set gender pay equality as an objective of awards and the Fair Work Act. We also support measures to ensure appropriate classification and pay for work in traditionally low paid industries where the majority of workers are women and/or migrants.

In the private sector, we will legislate to ban 'pay gag clauses' in employment contracts, which stop workers in the private sector from discussing their pay rates, and serve to disguise the gender pay gap. Research from Australia and other countries has shown that making pay more transparent is a critical factor in closing the gender wage gap.²

The Greens support the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) which monitors the private sector gender pay gap, and want to give it more teeth, strengthen its ability to gather data, resource it to undertake audits of pay and conditions, and develop sector-specific guidelines to improve gender equality in the workplace. We support calls to expand coverage of the WGEA to include the public sector.

¹ Workplace Gender Equality Agency, What is the gender pay gap? www.wgea.gov.au/addressing-pay-equity/what-gender-pay-gap

² Michelle Brown. To close the gender wage gap, we need to end pay secrecy. <http://theconversation.com/to-close-the-gender-pay-gap-we-need-to-end-pay-secrecy-31626>



THE RIGHT TO REQUEST FAMILY FRIENDLY, FLEXIBLE WORKPLACES

Promoting work/life balance should be a priority of workplace regulation. Everyone should get the chance to live a good life.

In 2018, the Greens introduced the Fair Work Amendment (Better Work/Life Balance) Bill to give workers the right to request flexible working arrangements from the start of their contract rather than after 12 months, which is the current requirement. All employees with caring responsibilities will have a right to request flexible work arrangements, which an employer can only refuse on reasonable business grounds.

The Greens believe that if people want to work different hours or work from home, then the law should allow it, provided it doesn't unduly impact on their employer. In fact, allowing workers more flexible hours will be a productivity bonus for the economy.

Business will benefit from this reform and good employers are already promoting work/life balance. Satisfied employees are likely to remain in a workplace longer, be healthier and more productive.

VALUING THE WORK OF CARERS THROUGH PAID PARENTAL LEAVE AND SUPERANNUATION

The Greens will extend the current paid parental leave arrangements to six months, paid at 100% of the primary carer's regular wage (mother or father) capped at \$100,000 per annum. We would also ensure that superannuation contributions are paid on the Paid Parental Leave Scheme, to ensure women are not worse-off when they reach retirement. Our paid parental leave scheme will complement employer-provided programs, not replace them.

The Greens have always been and will continue to be strong proponents for a paid parental leave scheme that is just and equal. A strong parental leave entitlement reduces the gender wage gap, increases the number of women returning to the workforce and allows for positive health, wellbeing and bonding between parents and children. We recognise that paid parental leave should be a workplace entitlement for all women to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in the workforce after having children.

The Greens are committed to the principle of valuing caring work. We believe that unpaid caring work is as valuable as other forms of work. When deciding how best to value unpaid care, Australia needs a system suitable for both people taking a break from paid employment to fulfill caring duties (such as parental leave), and full-time carers permanently out of the paid workforce.

The Greens will task the Productivity Commission with investigating how best to value unpaid caring work, whether for full-time carers or those only temporarily out of the workforce. The Productivity Commission would undertake an independent investigation into the workplace and social security reforms needed to value unpaid caring work over the medium and long-term, including considering universal basic income for carers, and the payment of superannuation to carers ("caring credits").

AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Greens would make early childhood education more affordable and accessible to more children - details coming soon!

FAIRER SUPER LEADS TO SECURITY IN RETIREMENT

On average, women in Australia are retiring with almost half the super balance of men.³ This is due to the gender wage gap and because women still carry out the bulk of unpaid domestic work, which often means taking extended time out of the workforce to undertake caring roles.

Women also make up the bulk of part-time workers and lower income earners, meaning that they are disproportionately affected by our current unfair super tax system and disadvantaged in retirement.

The Greens have been campaigning to make super fairer for women since 2015 and have taken detailed reform proposals to successive elections.

Currently, employers do not have to pay superannuation to staff if they earn less than \$450 per month. The Greens will legislate to remove the minimum threshold for compulsory employer contributions of \$450 a month. By removing the minimum super threshold, more casual and part-time workers will get super payments each month.

The Greens' plan for superannuation would also change how superannuation contributions are taxed, to make it fairer. We would replace the existing flat rate of tax, which advantages the extremely wealthy with progressive tax rates similar to how income tax works. We would use the extra tax revenue raised to fund doubling the payments made into low income earners' retirement accounts - the Low Income Superannuation Tax Offset. Of the 3 million Australians who receive the Low Income Superannuation Tax Offset, 2 million are women.

Our policy would increase the retirement savings of women in the casual and part-time workforce by an average \$265 a year. Compounded over a lifetime - this means a massive increase to the quality of retirement for women.



The Greens will also introduce legislation to amend the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 to put beyond doubt that companies are able to make higher superannuation payments for their female employees when they wish to do so.

The Greens recognise the diversity of experience and outcomes in retirement incomes for different groups in society, particularly but not restricted to women. All these proposed reforms are guided by the principle of dignity in retirement.

³ Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia Funds of Australia Limited, Superannuation account balances by age and gender, 2017, www.superannuation.asn.au/ArticleDocuments/359/1710_Superannuation_account_balances_by_age_and_gender.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y