



# The Coalition's Policy for Women

September 2013

## Key Points

The Coalition values women and men as co-contributors to the economic and social wellbeing of Australia.

Our policies aim to assist women lead happy, productive lives in safe communities, further their economic independence and stability, and improve their work-life balance.

The Coalition will move the Office for the Status of Women into the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

We will help women have more independence in making their career choices by providing a proper paid parental leave scheme and improving the child care system.

We will increase measures to prevent violence against Australian women, including:

- an increase in funding to the White Ribbon campaign by \$1 million over four years; and
- strengthened support services for overseas spouses by requiring:
  - additional information disclosure by the Australian husband or fiancé applying for an overseas spouse visa; and
  - the production of a pre-departure information pack containing important information about essential services and emergency contacts in Australia.

The Coalition will also provide additional assistance to international women at risk and their dependents by quarantining at least 1,000 places in Australia's refugee intake for this group.



# Introduction

The Coalition wants women to make their own choices about how they participate in Australian society and our economy.

We recognise and value the many varied roles women play within their communities.

However, we also recognise that women often need additional support to fully pursue the career opportunities available to them.

## The Plan

### 1. Relocate the Office for Women

The Coalition recognises that a whole-of-government approach will best optimise the work of the Office for Women and in particular the Women's Interdepartmental Committee. That's why the Coalition will relocate the Office for Women to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Whilst the current location of the Office for Women in the Department of Family and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs provides an important link with the services and support provided by that Department, it risks marginalising the Women's portfolio as simply a welfare concern.

The relocation of the Office for Women to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet will provide greater assurance of a whole-of-government approach to providing better economic and social outcomes for women.

### 2. A Real Paid Parental Leave Scheme

The Coalition will deliver a genuine paid parental leave scheme to give mothers six months leave based on their actual wage.

We will help families get ahead and give women a more realistic choice if they want to continue their career and combine work with family.

Under the Coalition's scheme, mothers will be provided with 26 weeks of paid parental leave at their full replacement wage or the national minimum wage (whichever is greater) plus superannuation.



According to Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data, around 80 per cent of Australian women earn a salary of less than \$62,400; and the average salary for women who work full-time is around \$65,000.

This means that women who earn the average full-time salary for women will be more than **\$21,000** better off under the Coalition's scheme because they will receive their actual wage over 26 weeks (around \$32,500 plus super) instead of the minimum wage for 18 weeks (around \$11,200 without super).

Women earning the minimum wage will be around **\$5,000** better off under the Coalition's scheme because they will receive their actual wage over 26 weeks (around \$16,200 plus super) instead of the minimum wage for 18 weeks (around \$11,200 without super).

Because the Coalition's scheme includes superannuation, a woman earning the average full-time female salary of \$65,000 who has a child at 26 years of age and another at 29 years of age will be around **\$50,000** better off in retirement than she would have been under Labor's scheme, which does not include superannuation.

The Coalition's paid parental leave scheme will commence from 1 July 2015.

In contrast, Labor's parental leave scheme is paid at the minimum wage for only 18 weeks.

Australia is one of only two countries with a paid parental leave scheme that doesn't base its payment on a woman's actual wage.

Paid parental leave should be a workplace entitlement not a welfare payment.

### 3. Help Make Child Care More Accessible and Affordable

The Coalition believes Australian families need more choices about the care of their children. Our increasingly 24-7 economy doesn't easily fit with a child care system that was established to support work based on a 9am-5pm, five-day-week model.

We understand that many families are struggling to find high quality, affordable child care. According to ABS data, nearly 120,000 Australian parents say they can't seek employment because suitable child care is unavailable; and child care fees have increased by around 27 per cent over the last three years.

We will, as a priority, task the Productivity Commission to review how child care can be made more flexible, affordable and accessible.

While the Coalition supports the National Quality Framework in principle, we are also concerned by reports that its implementation is causing administrative and staffing problems leading to higher costs for parents. We will work closely with the States and



Territories, as well as the child care sector, to find practical ways to improve the implementation of the reforms.

The Coalition wants to ensure that Australia has a child care system that provides a safe, nurturing environment for children, but which also meets the working needs of families.

#### 4. Take Further Steps to Reduce Violence Against Women

The Coalition believes it is fundamental that women and their families are safe from violence. Domestic violence and sexual assault perpetrated against women costs the nation \$13.6 billion each year. By 2021, the figure is likely to rise to \$15.6 billion if extra steps are not taken to address violence against women.

We will ensure that the 'National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022' continues to be implemented and its programmes are properly resourced and effective. Where appropriate, they will be augmented with new initiatives that can provide cost-effective, practical ways to address violence against women.

We will also implement the following specific initiatives:

- an increase in funding to the White Ribbon campaign by \$1 million over four years; and
- strengthened support services for overseas spouses by requiring:
  - additional information disclosure by the Australian husband or fiancé applying for an overseas spouse visa; and
  - the production of a pre-departure information pack containing important information about essential services and emergency contacts in Australia.

#### 5. Increase the Annual Target for Women at Risk Visa Grants

The Coalition will provide a guaranteed minimum of 1,000 places for women at risk and their dependents within Australia's annual humanitarian intake. We will ensure that Australia's refugee and humanitarian resettlement programme provides places to those who are most in need.

Women at risk and their dependents waiting in refugee camps and in other desperate situations overseas are among the most vulnerable of all who seek a better life in Australia. They have neither the means nor the opportunity to escape their circumstances. These people will be given high priority by a Coalition government in Australia's refugee and humanitarian programme.



In recent years, the annual intakes in the women at risk category have steadily fallen from 995 visas in 2005-06 to 759 visas in 2010-11. This reflects the downward trend that has seen fewer places made available to poorer and more vulnerable offshore refugees.

This is a direct consequence of the Rudd-Gillard Government's decision to abolish the Coalition's proven border protection policies.

The Coalition will refocus Australia's refugee and humanitarian program to give more priority to genuine refugees and specifically to women at risk. We will reserve a minimum of 11,000 places available in the 13,750 place Refugee and Humanitarian programme for offshore applicants. Of these 11,000 places, a minimum of 1,000 Women at Risk visas would be allocated.

The Coalition will ensure that appropriate settlement services are provided to these women at risk once they arrive in Australia. Our policies will ensure Australia's refugee and humanitarian resettlement programme provides hope to the most vulnerable.

## The Choice

Australians have a choice between the Rudd-Gillard Government – which has been strong on rhetoric but weak on delivery when it comes to policies that support and advance the status of Australian women – and the Coalition, which has a plan for women to make their own choices about how they participate in society and the economy.

The Rudd-Gillard Government is responsible for a litany of failures, including:

- taking more than two years to appoint a permanent Director for the Office for Women in the Workplace Agency;
- the delay in launching the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 and the delay of more than 12 months in releasing the first three-yearly implementation plan (due in July 2011, but released in September 2012);
- the failure to build 222 of the 260 additional child care and early education centres on school and community sites promised during the 2007 election campaign;
- reducing the Child Care Rebate cap from \$7,778 to \$7,500, freezing its indexation for four years, then subsequently extending the freeze until 2017;
- the unnecessary pressure the Government is placing on the child care sector through the implementation of the National Quality Framework which is placing cost pressures on centres and leading to higher fees for parents; and



- the failure to include superannuation in its paid parental leave scheme, and the failure to include paternity leave in the initial scheme.

The Coalition has a plan that will support Australian women to make their own choices about how they participate in Australia's society and economy.

## Cost

The Coalition's *Policy for Women* will invest \$1 million to support the White Ribbon campaign.



Hope.  
Reward.  
Opportunity.



**THE NATIONALS** *for Regional Australia*

For further details of the Coalition's Plan go to  
[www.realsolutions.org.au](http://www.realsolutions.org.au)