



MEDIA RELEASE

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Migrant and refugee women overlooked in Budget

The Harmony Alliance has this evening welcomed a series of measures announced in the 2018 federal budget aimed at improving the lives of Australian women. The Alliance has, however, expressed concern at the lack of focus on the needs of women from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

The Chair of *Harmony Alliance: Migrant and Refugee Women for Change*, Ms Maria Dimopoulos, welcomed policies aimed at improving women's safety, economic security and health, including additional funding to implement the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children through DV-alert and 1800RESPECT, funding to enhance female financial capability, and funding to improve infant and maternal health.

"I am pleased to see a focus on tackling elder abuse and mental health concerns, to which women of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can be particularly vulnerable," said Ms Dimopoulos, "as well as the establishment of an Anti-Slavery Unit and a Centre to Counter Child Exploitation."

"However, I am concerned by a lack of focus on the distinct needs of women of multiple and intersecting forms of diversity, including women from migrant and refugee backgrounds" noted Ms Dimopoulos. "It is imperative that the Government tailors implementation of the announced measures to ensure equitable outcomes for women across Australia."

The Harmony Alliance was particularly disappointed to see measures announced in the budget seeking savings through cuts affecting vulnerable migrants. Waiting periods for newly arrived migrants are set to increase from two to four years before access is provided to many important welfare benefits, including Newstart, widow allowance and parenting payments.

"Many of the allowances targeted by increased waiting periods are safety-nets that are relied upon disproportionately by women", outlined Ms Dimopoulos. "With female homelessness on the rise, and continued gendered gaps in income, superannuation and workforce participation, removing these safety nets



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sets a dangerous precedent contrary to the Government's agenda of empowering women and girls"

"The budget also did not address prior concerns raised by Harmony Alliance and the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance regarding access to support for temporary visa holders experiencing domestic, family or sexual violence" said Ms Dimopoulos. "I restate our call to the Government to ensure migration rules and eligibility requirements for support services do not disempower victims of violence or discourage women in Australia from leaving violent relationships."

For media enquiries contact Iona Roy – 02 6162 0361 or 0437 294 133

The Harmony Alliance is one of the six National Women's Alliances funded by the Australian Government to promote the views of all Australian women, to ensure their voices are heard in decision-making processes. Our purpose is to provide a national inclusive and informed voice on the multiplicity of issues impacting on experiences and outcomes of migrant and refugee women, and to enable opportunities for women from migrant and refugee backgrounds to directly engage in driving positive change.