



MEDIA RELEASE

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Harmony Alliance and allies call on female MPs and Senators to support their migrant sisters

A coalition of Australian women and organisations championing gender equality have today joined together in an open letter calling upon the female Members of Parliament and Senators to oppose proposed changes to Social Services legislation that would see new permanent residents of Australia wait four years before being eligible to access many crucial welfare payments.

Among the 44 signatories to the letter are peak body members of the Harmony Alliance, the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, Migration Council Australia, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, Refugee Council of Australia and the Settlement Council of Australia, as well as sister national women's alliances, Australian Women Against Violence Alliance, Equality Rights Alliance and National Rural Women's Coalition.

The letter highlights the disproportionate impact these changes stand to have on women, with new waiting periods levied at Paid Parental Leave, Parenting Payments, Family Tax Benefit, Carer Allowance, Widow Allowance and Bereavement Allowance.

The Chair of the Harmony Alliance: Migrant and Refugee Women for Change, Ms Maria Dimopoulos expressed deep concern at the threat posed by these proposed changes to the reproductive rights of recently settled Australian women and children's developmental outcomes. "Women who fall pregnant unexpectedly may feel financial pressure to terminate as a result of these new waiting periods" she warned "and children of permanent resident parents, who are themselves Australian citizens, will be indirectly discriminated against through the application of waiting periods to their parents".

"It is the view of our members and allies across the country that this measure will not have the intended result of encouraging self-sufficiency but instead, has the potential to condemn Australia's newest residents to economic hardship and deny society the contributions of those who otherwise have so much to offer" stated Ms Dimopolous.

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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.