

POLICY SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS THE COVID-19 GENDER BIAS

Are you concerned by the emphasis on economic repair rather than community needs in the government's response to COVID-19? Are you ready to lobby for better solutions? We recognise our governments have taken necessary steps to contain the virus, but these have decimated our workforce, social and commercial activities. What isn't so readily acknowledged is that these job losses have disproportionately affected women, despite women also bearing the brunt of frontline public health work and community needs. How can we be so necessary but so quickly abandoned?

The planned financial assistance focuses on primarily male-dominated sectors such as jobs in the building, infrastructure and commercial sectors. However, any serious rebuild of the economic and social sectors also needs support for more traditionally feminised occupations in healthcare, education, hospitality, and unpaid and paid domestic work. All of these have been deemed essential, and all of these are undervalued. The policies below have been put together by the Elpis Network to remedy these gendered imbalances and work toward rebuilding our community and economy.

Below are some 'shovel ready' social policies to be funded at both federal and state levels:

- 1. Provide funding for the shortfalls in the NDIS, aged and disability care packages.** Home care packages are crucial to providing necessary support and dignity to vulnerable citizens – currently there over 100,000 approved home care packages desperately awaiting delivery and a number of approved recipients have died waiting on this list. Through appropriate funding and staffing of service providers allow for the delivery of much-needed home care services, and secondly provide a job for a home care worker. *For more info check out the data and stats [here](#).*
- 2. Increase funding to aged and disability residential services so these sectors can employ more qualified nursing staff needed to ensure safety and better standard of care.** Too many nursing homes and other institutions aren't properly staffed with disastrous results. Funding better qualified workers, and more of them, would mitigate many of the ongoing problems in this sector. *For more info check out the data and stats [here](#).*

3. **Extend subsidies to all states for allied health staff such as ambulance, emergency care, and other support workers to improve overload and quality care.** This will ensure ongoing adequate staffing and decrease current workers doing too many hours or additional unpaid time. *For more info check out the data and stats [here](#).*

4. **Reintroduce contracts between the federal government and children's services.** These would ensure affordable fees, accessible locations, and appropriate age mixes to meet parental needs rather than centre profits. Activity tests for access must be removed and instead determined by child and family needs, not by parental work status – particularly now that so many people's work circumstances have been affected by COVID-19. *For more info check out the data and stats [here](#).*

5. **Simplify welfare payments and consolidate all current programs into a single liveable payment with just one program name.** This would reduce the complex administrative costs of current welfare payments plus ameliorate the stigma of particular payments. Given that jobs are continuing to disappear, this also would allow for a participation payment for those who volunteer their labour. *For more info check out the data and stats [here](#).*

6. **Continue and expand arts funding and jobs schemes for regional and isolated areas.** This would fund the continuation of small local services that have a vital social purpose and are so desperately needed by these communities. *For more info check out the data and stats [here](#).*

7. **Increase funding for tertiary and other higher and further education institutions in line with community and national priorities.** Over the past three decades, commonwealth funding has been slashed by more than 50% in this sector. This has resulted in the tertiary education sector's over-dependence on fee paying students and corporate support. Rather than a for-profit market model, higher education's role should be one of public benefit. *For more info check out the data and stats [here](#).*

8. **Establish new funding for a national network of local volunteer groups that can assess, plan and provide input into social and environmental issues.** The bushfires showed the value of engaging local knowledge and such a network would ensure this can continue. We all saw how well this worked then, so let's make it a priority to value and tap into local knowledge when planning. *For more info check out the data and stats [here](#).*

Government level involved in above proposals

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Federal - Social Security | 5. Federal & state - Community Services |
| 2. Federal - Aged Care | 6. Federal - Treasury & Social Security |
| 3. Federal - Aged Care | 7. Federal - Education |
| 4. Federal & state - Health | 8. State & Local |

Elpis Network's goal is to give people ideas and encourage solution-based thinking.

So, share these ideas with your networks, your communities, and both your state and federal MPs.

Think:

- Who do you know who works in related areas that might be useful to enlist?
- Are there groups you know or are a member of, that may be interested in talking to these points?
- Do you have friends or family members that could be interested in being involved?

Send the whole document, or choose policies that you have interest in.

Check out our [website](#) for more info on what you can do and for email templates if you find yourself stuck.



Australia's blue sky thinking extends beyond just the fossil fuels