



PRESIDENT: Dr Deidre Palmer

GENERAL SECRETARY: Colleen Geyer

Prime Minister the Hon Scott Morrison MP
Treasurer the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP
Minister for Women Senator the Hon Marise Payne

cc: Opposition Leader Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Shadow Treasurer Dr Jim Chalmers MP
Shadow Minister for Women Hon Julie Collins MP

1 October 2020

UNITING IN SUPPORT OF A GENDER-EQUAL RECOVERY

Dear Prime Minister, Treasurer and Senator Payne,

We, the undersigned serve in various leadership roles across the Uniting Church in Australia - in the Councils of the Church, its community service and international partnership agencies. And we are all women.

In this Federal Budget with its focus on our economic recovery, we urge you to invest in measures that will support women and give them the best chance to recover and to flourish.

Women have been among the hardest hit by this health and economic crisis.

At home, women have taken on the heavy lifting, juggling increased responsibilities with working remotely.

Many women – including many parents – have suffered reduced hours and even lost their jobs.

We know this from our connections in our church networks and from personal experience.

We also know that women have been more likely to withdraw from their superannuation funds to get by, and many have emptied their accounts completely.

We know that extended periods of lockdown have increased the risk of domestic and family violence, which again disproportionately impacts women.

We know that for women in Australia's neighbouring countries, COVID-19 has exacerbated inequalities and poverty for those most vulnerable, including women and girls.

More women than men across the globe have lost employment due to the pandemic, widening the already stark poverty gap between them.

In the Uniting Church, we believe that men and women are equally created in the image of God and we greatly value the gifts and leadership of women across our Church and in the wider community.

As a nation we urge you to take the opportunity this crisis presents to reset our national vision for a gender-equal society and prioritise investment in measures that allow women to reach their full potential.

In particular:

- **Investment in the care economy** – an area where women are more frequently employed, including health care, child care, aged care, disability services, education
- **Investment in Child Care and Early Childhood Education** as industries which employ women and also provide care for children, thus enabling women’s participation in the workforce
- **Investment in Family Payments**, particularly payments for Single Parent Families which are predominantly women-headed families, as well as supporting housing and economic security and better social and health outcomes for women and children in low-income households
- **Investment in Domestic and Family Violence Support** programs, reflecting the deeply concerning trend toward increasing instances of violence against women during the pandemic
- **Increased financial support to unpaid carers at home**, including additional top-up payments to those receiving Carers Payments.
- **Personal tax cuts that are gender neutral** - stages two and three of personal income tax cuts will only widen the economic divide as men are more represented in the upper income brackets.
- **Overseas development funding** invested in programs that specifically support women and girls.

Australia can and should be a world leader in gender-equality – when we support and empower women, everyone wins.

Signed,

Dr Deidre Palmer, Assembly President

Rev. Denise Liersch, Moderator, Synod of Victoria & Tasmania

Susy Thomas, Moderator, Synod of Western Australia

Rev. Thresi Mauboy, Moderator, Northern Synod

Rev. Sharon Hollis, President-elect

Colleen Geyer, Assembly General Secretary

Rev. Felicity Amery, General Secretary, Synod of South Australia

Rev. Heather den Houting, General Secretary, Synod of Queensland

Isabel Thomas Dobson, Associate General Secretary, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Claerwen Little, National Director, UnitingCare Australia

Tracey Burton, Chief Executive, Uniting NSW.ACT

The Hon. Bronwyn Pike, Chief Executive Officer, Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania)

Jane Pickering, Chief Executive, Eldercare

Amanda Hunt, CEO, Uniting WA

Melanie Kiely, CEO, Good Sammy Enterprises

Dr Sureka Goringe, National Director, UnitingWorld

Jannine Jackson, National Director, Frontier Services

Alison Overeem, National Executive Committee Member, Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

Please send any responses to this letter to Jenny Bertalan jennyb@nat.uca.org.au