

Media Release

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Aware Super welcomes appointment of Minister for Women's Economic Security

Aware Super welcomes the Morrison Government's renewed focus on women's issues following this week's ministerial reshuffle, tasking Minister for Superannuation, Financial Services and the Digital Economy, Senator Jane Hume, with improving women's economic security.

Senator Hume's appointment comes after the delivery of new research from Aware Super this month, revealing concerns for the long-term financial security of Australian women and the stark inequity they face in retirement.

The research shows that more than three in five Australian women worry they will run out of money during their retirement, with nearly 40% believing they will need to rely on family to help with the shortfall if they do.

Aware Super Chief Executive Officer and Workplace Gender Equality Agency Pay Equity Ambassador, Deanne Stewart, applauded the appointment of Senator Hume as Minister for Women's Economic Security and said she hoped this would lead to innovative and lasting change for women now and in the future.

'This week's Federal announcement coincides with the commencement of Victoria's landmark Gender Equality Act 2020 and is another significant step forward in responding to the inequality that impacts so many Australian women in so many facets of their lives,' Ms Stewart said.

'It is an uncomfortable reality that Australian women face greater economic uncertainty in retirement, and we're encouraged to see the Morrison Government recognising this and proposing positive action to respond to this challenge and help ensure that less Australian women face the very real prospect of poverty in retirement.

'Although we agree there is a need for more blue sky thinking to be had around women's economic security and superannuation to address the systemic issues that create such inequity, there are many important changes that could be made now to support Australian women to become more financially secure.

'Removing the \$450 threshold, paying the superannuation guarantee on family leave, family law reform, introducing joint super accounts between partners and making childcare cheaper and more accessible for families are all critical actions we can take today that will significantly improve retirement outcomes for women tomorrow.

'We also need change in the workplace because so much of this inequity starts there. We know that diverse companies are more successful in the long-term and it is time all organisations report on the gender balance of their leadership teams, undertake regular gender pay gap analysis and set clear targets and plans for how they will close any gaps. It's also important that as a society we continue to support and champion flexibility and shared caring responsibilities for both men and women.'

The need for these important changes was backed up by Aware Super's research which also showed 74% of Australians believed that improving access to childcare or reducing the cost of childcare would improve the retirement outcomes for women.

Calling out gender bias and inequity was also evident in the data, revealing more than 55% of Australians believed reducing the wage gap and 45% believed paying super on family leave, would help shift the dial for Australian women.

Further research released by the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) last week showed that education and training, healthcare and social assistance organisations were lagging in closing the gap for Australian women.

These sectors ranked the lowest when it came to their approach to gender equity in the workplace and comparatively showed the least improvement in the last five years.

'Our female frontline workers have played such a critical role in helping our community through the pandemic and it is time we repay them and start to truly tackle the current gender inequity in superannuation and at work,' Ms Stewart said.

'More than two thirds of our members are female, with many of those members working in healthcare and education sectors, and so we see the very real long-term impact these inequalities have on our members every day.

'The time for challenging these structural barriers is now. Quite simply, Australian women deserve better.'

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Note to Editors:

Previously known as First State Super we changed our name to **Aware Super** in September 2020.

Aware Super is a name that reflects our members and what we stand for. It echoes the strengths of our past, aligning to our purpose to be a force for good in superannuation, retirement, and advice, driving better outcomes for our members, their families, and communities.

First State Super's been the fund for people who value community since 1992, we're now one of Australia's largest funds and we're continuing to grow. We merged with VicSuper and WA Super last year and now manage nearly \$140 billion in savings for more than 1 million members located across the country.

Our members work in roles that breathe life into their communities and they expect us to do the same. So, we invest in assets that we believe will make a positive difference today - improving our communities, building a more a sustainable economy and supporting employment both locally and globally at the same time as providing strong long-term returns.

Discover how we're helping members do well financially while doing good in the world: Visit aware.com.au.