

Acknowledgement

National Council of Women of Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Victoria and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. NCWV pays its respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past, present and emerging.



ALERT To foster our relationship with RHSV, our postal address is now: 239 A'Beckett St Melbourne, 3000, as our PO Box has been closed.

QUOTE: National Reconciliation Week, 27 May - 3 June, is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures, and achievements, and to explore how each of us can contribute to achieving reconciliation in Australia. Reconciliation supporters must stand up to defend and uphold the rights of First Nations peoples and call out racism wherever we encounter it. Reconciliation must live in the hearts, minds and actions of all Australians to move forward, creating a nation strengthened by respectful relationships between the wider Australian community, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In 1985, the Warumpi Band fired up reconciliation with the song 'Blackfella/Whitefella'. Written by band members Neil Murray and George Rurrumbu, the song is a call for all people of all backgrounds and races to come together and stand up for change. The song cut through with its simple but powerful message and catchy melody, becoming an anthem for the reconciliation movement in Australia. See and hear the song:

<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/our-work/national-reconciliation-week/voices-for-reconciliation-2024/>



This design represents the momentum of the theme *Now More Than Ever*. The chevron signifies advancing as one as we look towards a reconciled future. Artwork of Gubbi Gubbi artist Maggie Douglas encourages connecting with one another, understanding and continuing to move forward.

NAIDOC Week (7 -14 July) *Keep the Fires Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud!*. Sunday 7 July 2024 marks the commencement of [NAIDOC Week](#), to celebrate and recognise the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, whilst sharing these histories and oldest, continuous living cultures with all Australians. See page 10 for more info.

From the President, Elida Brereton



I hope that this report finds you well, keeping warm, and enjoying some of life's more pleasant surprises. Thank you for giving up your time to attend our June 6th meeting (or for apologising). We thank Terese Edwards, CEO of *Single Mother Families Australia Inc*, for alerting us to the rising number of homeless women aged 55 and over.

She spoke also about the appalling outcomes for single mothers and their children of some allegedly helpful legislation, including the 2006 Presumption of Shared Care which insisted on the rights of some abusive husbands/ partners to spend time with their children.

Members were invited to provide feedback to Robyn Byrne, Convenor of the NCWV Standing Committee, about possible areas needing our advocacy. The results of the last big survey we conducted a few years ago showed that at that time you were most interested in advocacy in aspects including gender equity and equal representation for women, addressing domestic violence, economic security for older women, women's health including pain control, and the quality of aged care. Let us know where you want our major efforts to be focused, and I know that the Standing Committee will be keeping us apprised of their work, and of the resolutions to go to the NCWA Conference in November.

Again, I offer my deepest sympathy to members close to and affected by the ongoing wars in Ukraine, and in Gaza. We deplore antisemitism and despicable prejudices that are afflicting residents in Melbourne, and of course we long for an ending to these heartbreaking conflicts.

The Geelong branch of NCWV is holding their annual Luncheon on Monday June 17th and those of us attending know that it will be a special event. I look forward to seeing you at our July 4th meeting from 5.15pm which will be held in person and by ZOOM to maximise your accessibility.

Congratulations Anne Parton



Highton's Anne Parton was inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women. Now 86, she has spent decades in service of communities in which she has lived. She has served multiple terms as Vice-president of the National Council of Women of Victoria and President of the Geelong branch. See full Report:

https://geelongindy.com.au/news/12-04-2024/a-true-pillar-of-the-community/attachment/anne_399451_01-jpg/

June 6 Individual Members & Council Meeting

Single Mothers Families Australia Inc. CEO, Terese Edwards <https://smfa.com.au/>



Single Mothers Families Australia Inc (SMFA) is an organisation that has been **championing single mothers and their families since 1973**. SMFA was founded 'out of wedlock' in Melbourne. It was started to fight the condoning of forced adoptions and the refusal of parent payments. We salute single mothers' talents, diversity and resolve and work with and for single mothers to advance equality, fairness, and respect. Structural and gender disadvantages are choices, and the wrong decisions have harmed too many single mother families who live with financial distress, fear, and stigma. We provide a range of platforms that give voice and respect to the lived reality for single mother families. Our key focus is single mother families affected by hardship, poverty, and gender-based violence.

SMFA knows that information is powerful, and it helps women to make informed decisions. SMFA's national connection is spearheaded through our social media. A platform that women can access when it suits them and that their contact and connection can be anonymous. SMFA has been campaigning for years to raise awareness for action. Leaving remains too hard and unsafe. Women know what the ultimate price is for leaving. It's our shame that women either live in poverty or return to their abusers because of a lack of economic security. Anne Summers outlines this brilliantly in her research and book *The choice: violence or poverty*.

In 2006 SMFA opposed changes that denied access to parent payments for new applicants unless their youngest child was under 8 years of age. In 2013 further changes occurred and all women whose youngest child's was 8 years of age or older were removed from Parenting Payment and forced onto the unemployment benefit. Terese appealed to the United Nations, stating this was violating Women's Rights. She created a documentary about the plight of mothers played in Parliament.

Senator Katy Gallagher, Minister for Finance, Australia, appointed Terese to the Women's Taskforce looking into the many issues facing single mothers. This gave Terese many opportunities to lobby. The Taskforce put six items in their submission to the 2023 Budget, including raising the age for Parent Payment to 16 years. The age of 14 years was achieved after 10 years of unrelenting work, with 84% of eligible women received this.

That same year, the 50th anniversary of SMFA, and the Whitlam Government enacting the Supporting Mother's Benefit, Terese was interviewed by the ABC. Terese organised a Forum with the panel comprising women living with hardship, many close to losing their home and one woman was homeless. Various meetings, interviews and lobbying occurred. Positive changes were announced in lead up to the 2023 Federal Budget and enacted on 20th September 2023.

The presumption of equal shared parental responsibility was contained in [section 61DA of the Family Law Act 1975](#). That stated it is in the best interests of the child for the parents to have equal shared parental responsibility. This enabled non-custodial parents to have regular access to their children, regardless of circumstances. Terese worked with Women's Legal Services to present the case for change, initially in 2006. The [Family Law Amendment Bill 2023](#) passed in 2023 and came into effect May 2024, containing changes to the laws surrounding [parenting orders](#). The most important was the abolition of the presumption of equal shared parental responsibility. The primary focus now is on the best interest of the children.

Terese quoted from Research released in 2023 by Swinburne Professor Kay Cook [Swinburne Research Bank | Swinburne University of Technology](#) on **Financial Abuse: The Weaponisation of Child Support in Australia** which highlights the insidious ways that the Australian Child Support Scheme can be abused to jeopardise the financial safety of recipient parents and their children. Mothers can experience serious and ongoing financial abuse, when malicious ex-partners weaponise the Child Support Scheme. This refers to money paid by a non-resident parent to a resident parent to financially support children. The Australian Child Support Scheme is closely linked to Family Tax Benefit (FTBA) payments. FTBA is a means tested payment to support families with children. Single parents need to apply for child support to avoid their FTBA payments being reduced to the base rate (\$63.56 per child per fortnight). FTBA is also reduced by child support Maintenance Income Test (MIT). For every dollar of child support a single mother receives above a set threshold of \$1,752 per annum, each subsequent dollar of FTBA is halved. This reduction is automatic and applied even when child support is **not paid**. The reduction of mothers' FTBA leaves child support open to misuse and manipulation by abusive ex-partners.

The report recommendations include: Decouple social security from child support so that the poorest mothers don't 'contribute' to the cost of running the Child Support Scheme through reduced FTBA payments; compel child support payers to lodge timely tax returns to ensure mothers and children receive their correct entitlements; link non-compliance to payer's credit ratings; introduce a child support guarantee, paid by Services Australia when payers do not make payments.

Terese concluded by saying that we need to keep lobbying for these changes to occur.

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Registered office: Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 239 A'Beckett St, Melbourne.

Patron in Chief: Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria
Patron: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of Melbourne Sally Capp AO



THE SENATE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

References Committee

Inquiry into Issues related to menopause and perimenopause

The committee has accepted your submission as **public** and allocated it submission number **161**.

This means that your name and submission have been made publicly available on the inquiry [website](#), with any signatures and personal contact details removed.

Parliamentary privilege: The version of your submission **as published by the committee** is protected by parliamentary privilege. This means that what you say in the submission cannot be used in court against you or anyone else. It is an offence for anyone to harass or discriminate against you because you have made a submission. Further information about parliamentary privilege is available from [Senate Brief No. 11 – Parliamentary Privilege](#).

Reporting date: The committee is required to report by **10 September 2024** and the report will be published on the committee's [website](#).

The NCWV Council is delighted that this submission has been accepted. We thank Prof. Cassandra Szoeka, NCWV Health Adviser and Robyn Byrne, Coordinator Standing Committee Victoria, for their excellent work on this along with NCWA. The document (#161) can be read on the Inquiry [website](#). A link to this document will be placed on the NCWV website.

Coordinator Standing Committee: Robyn Byrne OAM

WA gun owners accused of domestic violence to lose weapons

A family and domestic violence complaint will automatically strip firearms owners of their guns under further legal changes announced by the WA Government. The government is already toughening the state's gun laws but Premier Roger Cook said it would change the bill to require police to remove firearms as soon as a family and domestic violence complaint was made. The changes provide an extra level of caution to prevent family and domestic violence incidents from escalating as it did in a shocking double murder in Perth. Under the proposed laws, police would act on a formal complaint and "not simply an accusation". If police found there was substance to the complaint, they would hold any seized.

NCWV applauds the current situation in Victoria: ***When a Final Intervention Order is put in place against an individual, they become a Prohibited Person under the Firearms Act 1996. A person subject to a Final Intervention Order will be a prohibited person for five years after the date the order expires.***

World-Leading Action in Ballarat to Prevent Family Violence

Ballarat will be home to a world-leading 'saturation model', bringing together new and expanded programs, policies and services with a singular focus: to drive down the rates of family violence and men's violence against women.

The four-year saturation model will bring together every part of the community – from local sporting clubs, workplaces, community, organisations health services, council, schools, emergency services and more – to deliver a new coordinated approach to prevention.

It will also deliver initiatives to test new prevention approaches, reflecting the changing nature and dynamics of violence and harmful attitudes to women. Because of the influence of social media – and because it's a place where toxic attitudes to women are spread and sowed in young people – the model will have an online focus, too. This could include geo-targeting tools on social platforms and working with local influencers who can counter harmful attitudes to women.

It will also deliver stronger referral pathways between prevention programs and specialist response services, so people experiencing violence – or seeing early warning signs – can get the help they need as early as possible.

Respect Victoria will work with locals to develop and deliver initiatives that are tailored to the needs of the city.

The impact of these actions will be closely measured – giving a real-world example of what works – and potentially providing a transformative understanding of how to prevent and respond to violence against women.

Victorian State Government statement provisions made in the 2024-25 for women's economic security.

<https://www.budget.vic.gov.au/womens-economic-security#providing-more-opportunities-for-women-and-girls>

Women are still under-represented in many industries and occupations in Victoria. Women are only 32% of both Victoria's architecture and engineering workforce and Victoria's chief executive officers and general managers. Greater gender diversity in a workplace leads to less gender-based discrimination, helping to reduce barriers for other women over time. The Victorian Government is helping to celebrate women in leadership and grow women's representation across the Victorian economy, with:

- **\$40 million** of investment delivered by LaunchVic to support Victoria's startup ecosystem and bolster women's representation in the startup sector.
- **\$1.8 million** to deliver leadership and mentorship programs to support women, including women from diverse backgrounds, to gain leadership positions and advance their careers, paving the way for systemic and cultural change.

Ensuring women are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow can create pathways for women's economic security.

Victoria is growing, which means demand for services is growing too. To keep up with this demand, we need to invest in future workforces now to make sure we have the skills we need for tomorrow. Yet, some of the highest-paid jobs are fields still dominated by men. Information and communications technology managers earn nearly three times the average Victorian wage, and they are expected to be in demand in the future – however, women make up only 22% of these roles. Closing this gap starts early by encouraging girls to build skills and consider careers in STEM.

This Budget invests **\$14 million** to support Tech Schools, including regional Tech School camps. This program will help young Victorians – particularly girls – consider a spectrum of career pathways, unlimited by expectations linked to their gender.

The Government is investing in tomorrow's workforce today through:

- **\$394 million** to deliver Vocational Education and Training (VET) to Victorians looking to reskill or upskill. This allows more Victorians to access subsidised training, including Free TAFE which removes tuition fees for students and provides opportunities for women, including women returning to work.
- **\$113 million** to support our TAFEs, including wellbeing supports to assist students get the most of out their studies, including women returning to work.
- **\$51 million** for programs to improve the education and wellbeing outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, by engaging with Traditional Owner groups that strengthen their sense of identity, culture and belonging, and provide access to Education Partnerships led by different genders.
- **\$38 million** to improve students' access to VET through their schools. This includes our new VET 'taster' program, which will provide access to a variety of short courses and the experience of studying in a TAFE, and a careers fair that will help girls and gender diverse students.
- **\$32 million** to deliver industry aligned and short-form training in priority skill areas.
- The pathway to a better future for families and women, with:
 - **\$129 million** to continue to deliver the rollout of Three Year Old Kinder and support families with Free Kinder for three and four-year-olds - saving families up to **\$2,500** a year for each child.
 - **\$15 million** in Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) with grants to support small and regional schools to continue providing the vital OSHC programs that families rely on.
- They will deliver the first 30 early learning and childcare centres by 2028, with additional five every year until 2032.

NCWV will be monitoring the roll-out of these programs and hold the Government to account for these promises.

Human Rights Adviser: Barbara Latham



Nitrous oxide can cause paralysis and death.

Abusing the gas from bulbs or canisters, known colloquially as "nangs", can cause psychosis, irreversible brain and spinal damage, incontinence and, in some cases, even death. Despite those serious health concerns, it can be ordered online from companies promising to deliver the gas 24/7. Amid the increasing ease of access to nitrous oxide, health professionals are concerned about misuse and for health consequences.

Katherine Isoardi, director of toxicology at Metro South Health, recounts one harrowing tale from a paramedic who had to "wade through thousands of nangs" to get to a patient who could no longer walk properly.

After national concerns about recreational use of nitrous oxide, the gas was listed as a Schedule 6 poison — since 2022, the product's packaging must include labels identifying it as a poison and warn that it could cause nerve damage if inhaled.

Nitrous oxide causes oxidation of the cobalt ion in vitamin B12, rendering it inactive, leading to vitamin B12 deficiency.

Past Convenor, Status of Women: Sheila Byard OAM

In the lead up to National Reconciliation Week, the Kensington Reconciliation Action Group in partnership with Kensington Neighbourhood House took this opportunity to learn more about our Traditional Owners, and support a local Wurundjeri organisation; [Djirri Djirri](#), who facilitated a workshop on Wurundjeri culture for the Kensington community. Djirri Djirri are the only Wurundjeri female dance group and Traditional Custodians of Narm (Melbourne) and surrounds. Djirri Djirri means Willy Wagtail in Woi-wurrung, language. We were honoured to have Stacie Piper, a Djirri Djirri dancer, educator and proud Wurundjeri, Dja Dja Wurrung and Ngurai Illum-Wurrung woman share her culture and language. She told us her stories and answered our questions on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, liwik (ancestors), kerr-up-non (family) and biik (country), aided by Fenna, her manggip (daughter).

Stacey spoke about her journey to bring back the Wurundjeri practice of making drums, and also the duty she felt to fulfil the role of custodian caring for country. Stacie was the Chairperson of the Victorian NAIDOC Committee for 5 years from 2018 and is currently the *Curator & Collections* at the *Victorian Indigenous Centre* at the *State Library Victoria*. She recently curated the library's *beruk* exhibition (Dec 2023-July 2024) that celebrated the life and legacy of William Barak, Ngurungaeta (leader), activist, artist, and diplomat. Stacie is a direct descendant of Barak's younger sister, Annie Borate.

Experiencing Stacie's passion to protect and heal Country and to support and witness the progress of First Nations people was, as expressed by a participant, "a privilege". The workshop was possible due to a City of Melbourne Small Neighbourhood Grant and Kensington Neighbourhood House funding.



NEXT EVENT: NAIDOC Week (7 -14 July) *Keep the Fires Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud*. July 9th, 7.00 – 9.00pm. Kensington Town Hall

We will be talking about the things that have helped build our personal awareness of our First Nations history and present.

A session of simple sharing of things that have helped in our own personal learning. Bring along a story, a song, a reading, a short something that has made you go 'aha!' In the appreciation of our First Nations people. Or just come along to hear what others have to share. We'll have the kettle on.

When RSVPing, for planning purposes, please let us know if you would like to share something. RSVP by emailing kensingtonreconciliation@gmail.com

OTHER NEWS



Reports

Hot off the press: Federal, state and territory governments have fallen well short of a target to hire 500 domestic violence and community workers, with new data showing just [63 workers have been hired](#) across the country since 2022. The federal government has provided funding to states and territories, but the hiring of workers has been far too slow. Meanwhile, Australia's domestic violence crisis [continues to escalate](#).

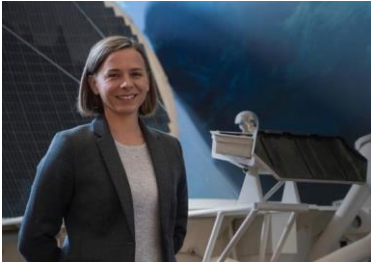
NCWV's May speaker from Safe & Equal spoke of funding concerns for EXISTING employees.

Superannuation will be paid on Commonwealth funded parental leave: Parents accessing paid parental leave on or after 1 July 2025 will now receive superannuation payments. The measure is one step towards closing the massive gap in women's retirement savings

NCWV is disappointed that the Australian government is **ending the Women in STEM Ambassador initiative** after almost six years of operation, a move that has been described as "another blow" for advocates. **Professor Lisa Harvey-Smith** began her role as the Women in STEM Ambassador in 2018, a government initiative in collaboration with UNSW and other stakeholders. Over that time, she conducted research and advocated for better diversity and inclusion in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics sectors. Friday May 31, was the last day of operations for the Women in STEM Ambassador. "After five-and-a-half years of research, advocacy, advice, programs and public engagement on equity in STEM, the Australian Government's Women in STEM Ambassador initiative will conclude," Professor Lisa Harvey-Smith continues: "Between 2018 and 2022, there was a 38% increase in the number of women working in STEM-qualified occupations, compared to a 10% increase amongst men. From 2018-2021, the number of women enrolled in university STEM courses increased from 77,673 to 92,162. This was an 18% increase, compared to a 9% increase for men."

I hope that national data will include other gender identities in future. For the past few months, our team has been working to finalise several research projects, including systematic reviews of workplace inclusion initiatives, and analysis of grant outcomes according to researcher's gender. The valuable insights from this work will be shared as we complete them."

*"We have also worked closely with UNSW Sydney to preserve the legacy of the many reports, tools, programs and materials we have created. Elements of our current website have been migrated to dedicated pages that will be managed by UNSW. There are currently 152 STEM equity program leaders using the STEM Equity Evaluation Portal, and our STEM careers initiative Future You has reached more than 23 million people. Thanks to support from UNSW Sydney and The University of Sydney, these valuable resources will continue to be available to those who are striving to improve equity in STEM. Despite no longer being Australia's Women in STEM Ambassador, I will remain dedicated to advancing gender equity in STEM through research and programs as a Professor of Practice at UNSW Sydney."*Lisa



Prof Lisa Harvey-Smith



Jenna Roberts

Jenna Roberts has been appointed as the Assistant Commissioner for the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission. A proud Aboriginal woman, Roberts will work with the Commissioner for Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Micaela Cronin, to engage and work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in overseeing and reporting on the first *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan*, a key element of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children.

Roberts has had an extensive career across mental health, drug and alcohol services and the domestic, family and sexual violence sector, working in regional and rural communities. Most recently, Roberts was the Deputy Commissioner of the Mental Health Commission of NSW, a role she held since 2018. "Having lived, worked and grown up in rural and regional communities, I am deeply committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are at the centre of our thinking, discussions and actions to end violence against women and children," Roberts said. "We must shine a light on the alarming rates which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are affected by domestic, family and sexual violence – as Assistant Commissioner I will be doing just that." Cronin said Roberts will play a key role in ensuring that governments meet targets to reduce the rate of violence by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.



Premier Jacinta Allan has appointed **Tim Richardson MP**, the member for Mordialloc, as the inaugural Parliamentary Secretary for Men's Behaviour Change, a new parliamentary role in the Victorian government to change men's behaviour and encourage more respectful relationships within the community. "This is the first position of its kind in Australia, and will focus largely on the influence the internet and social media have on boys' and men's attitudes towards women and building respectful relationships," Allan said.

Richardson said:

"We know that the time to act on men's violence against women is now and it starts with us - men and boys,"

NCWV supports this appointment and will follow closely the programs that are developed to address this scourge.

A new app has been developed to help women who suffer from endometriosis track and treat their symptoms.

The app, called [Endo45](#), encourages users to log their symptoms into a trend-spotting feature, giving them a platform to document their health when seeking further treatment with doctors. The app includes tailored learning modules and guidelines on how to relieve symptoms. The app's founder, Juliet Oliver, wanted to give women suffering from the condition something more than just an ordinary health app. "We're not just tracking symptoms, we're laying out a comprehensive roadmap to navigate the complex terrains of endometriosis, both physically, mentally and spiritually."

Juliet said. "Coming off the pill was like hitting a detonator. Suddenly, I was living with pain, the notorious "endo belly", and zombie-level fatigue." After a period of investigation, she was diagnosed with polycystic ovary syndrome and severe endometriosis. The [energy sector engineer](#) turned entrepreneur investigated her conditions to unlock a way to live well with endometriosis – a condition that affects roughly [one in seven women](#) in their 40s in Australia. Oliver said the app provides users with strategies for an all-in-one endo-fighting toolkit. It contains four features: Know your Health, users log symptoms; Master Healthy Habits, step-by-step tips; Outsmart Endo, solutions for symptom relief, Become EndoFit, gives a visual indication of their progress. <https://womensagenda.com.au/life/health/how-a-new-app-is-helping-women-navigate-the-complex-terrains-of-endometriosis/>

Girl Guides Victoria

GO GIRLS: Online Guiding fun: *Every Wednesday throughout term, online*

GO GIRLS is our refreshed Guides Online Program, bringing girls all the fun, friendship and adventure of Guiding, from the comfort of their own home. The program is a great fit for girls on a Girl Guides Victoria waitlist, those living in remote or rural Victoria, or girls who feel more comfortable in a digital space.

[Register for GO GIRLS](#)



Victorian Early Years Awards

Celebrating the outstanding work of our early childhood sector to improve the learning, health and wellbeing of Victorian children and their families.

Now in its 19th year, the Victorian Early Years Awards (VEYA) celebrate leadership, outstanding achievement, exceptional dedication and innovation in improving outcomes for children aged birth to eight years and their families.

The 9 award categories focus on improving engagement in learning, supporting parents, building collaborative community partnerships, improving child health and wellbeing, exemplary practice in early childhood education, leadership and significant improvement on learning and teaching practices.

Winners are recognised as the best in Victoria for their category and go on to develop and share their inspiring work with their communities. Winners of each category will receive a grant of \$15,000 for professional development or to support their nominated initiative. The finalists in each category are also eligible to win the prestigious Minister's Award, selected by the Minister for Children.

With the roll out of three year old kindergarten, there's never been a better time to recognise and celebrate the great work happening every day in the early childhood sector. [2023 VEYA finalists and winners](#). [Nominate here](#)

Key dates:

- Nominations close: Thursday 13 June 2024
- Finalists announced: late August 2024
- Awards ceremony: Thursday 7 November 2024
- To read the 2024 Victorian Early Years Awards Terms and conditions visit [Victorian Early Years Awards Terms and Conditions](#).
- For information about nomination writing support, please visit [writing tips](#).
- If you have any queries please email early.years.awards@education.vic.gov.au.

[International Day of Play \(IDOP\), on Tuesday 11 June 2024.](#)

The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution to create the annual day to call attention to the need to ensure every child's right to play is respected, protected and fulfilled, so they thrive and reach their potential. Through play, children engage with the people, places and objects around them to build an understanding of their world. Positive attitudes towards learning, such as persistence, curiosity and imagination, are all developed during play, setting children up for a lifelong love of learning.

Play-based learning is central to developing and nurturing children's cognitive skills and overall wellbeing. This well-known pedagogy is outlined in the [Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework](#) (VEYLDF), which describes adult-led learning intersected with child-directed learning. Children learn best through a combination of adult-led and self-directed exploration and imagination, in which adults react to children's interests to achieve learning outcomes through their play, to stimulate their intellectual, physical, social, and creative abilities. For tips on how to integrate play into a child's learning, refer to [Play-based learning for preschoolers](#).



Australian Human Rights Commission

Government must seize the moment for a National Human Rights Act

The parliamentary report, released by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights on 30 May, has recommended that the Federal Government introduce a National Human Rights Act. This brings Australia to establishing the comprehensive human rights protections that Australians need and overwhelmingly support. The Commission is hosting the Free + Equal Conference this week examining Australia's human rights framework, where key figures from the legal and human rights community are expected to back calls for the Government to enact a National Human Rights Act.



For almost 80 years, Prison Network we have **left a light on** for hundreds of women who have been in prison. Government funded support for women coming out of prison is typically for three months and is limited to weekly check-ins and some basic material aid, but many have little or no support, and certainly, nothing that extends long term.

Prison Network's approach is different. We understand that rebuilding a life takes time, our door is always open, and the light is always on.

This long-term approach has seen incredible results. For the many women we have supported through our housing and post release recovery group programs, only **4%** have returned to prison. That is **35% lower than the state average**. Rarely does a week go by that we don't receive a call, text, or email from a woman we have supported, who has hit a hurdle and needs support to get back on track, sometimes 10, 20 or even 30 years after their last engagement with us. They call us because they know we understand in ways that few others would and because we have managed to leave a light on for 80 years, through ups and downs, pandemics, and financial challenges. We currently provide wrap around support to almost 100 women leaving prison each year, plus the many more who will re-connect with us. Support that rebuilds lives, reunites families, and breaks intergenerational cycles of incarceration and disadvantage.

There are more women who desperately need long-term wrap support. We are limited by our capacity to meet the need. As it comes time for end of financial year giving, we ask you to consider investing in our long-term Post Release Support. Together we can leave a light on, so women can find what they need and find a way forward.

Every donation makes this possible.

Please Give Today: [2024 PrisonNetwork Mid Year Appeal \(raiselysite.com\)](https://raiselysite.com)



FASSTT

The Forum of Australian Services to Survivors of Torture and Trauma has launched *Witness to War*, a free and confidential multilingual telephone hotline for people in Australia affected by overseas conflicts. Staffed by mental health practitioners and bicultural support workers, offering community members counselling, information about support, and connections to other local services. *Witness to War* staff can speak to callers in Arabic, Hebrew, Dari, Ukrainian and English and in other languages with an interpreter. It operates from Monday to Friday across Australia: ACT, NSW, VIC, TAS: 10am – 7pm

Call *Witness to War* on (free call) 1800 845 198

Free counselling for refugees

The Counselling, Psychology and Social Work Clinics of the Australian College of Applied Professionals (ACAP) are offering free individual and group therapy for children and adults in Melbourne. There is currently no waitlist and services are open to people regardless of visa status, including refugees and international students. People located outside Melbourne are eligible for telehealth support. Bicultural counselling is available for many language groups. Find out more [here](#).

Making it Easier for Victim-Survivors to Report Violence MEDIA RELEASE

Introduced into Parliament, the *Justice Legislation Amendment (Integrity, Defamation and Other Matters) Bill 2024* will remove barriers that some victim-survivors face in coming forward and will include other improvements to modernise Victoria's justice and integrity system. The Bill will extend the defence of absolute privilege to reports made to police. This will protect all, including victim-survivors, who make a report to police, granting them complete immunity if their alleged perpetrator tries to bring a defamation suit against them. This reform continues work to remove barriers on reporting crime and improves the way the justice system responds to serious offences, especially for sexual and family violence matters.

Victoria's defamation laws will also be strengthened to respond to the ever-evolving online landscape. The Bill will clarify the liability and responsibility of digital intermediaries like search engines and social media platforms when a third-party uses their online service to publish defamatory content.

The reforms will also ensure police-issued body worn camera footage can continue to be used as evidence in court cases involving a family violence offence or intervention order. This can replace the need for victims to make a formal written statement, but they will still be able to provide one if they wish. This form of evidence has been trialled following the *Royal Commission into Family Violence* – and has allowed victim-survivors to provide a statement in their own words immediately following an incident, reducing the burden on frontline police and better holding perpetrators to account.

The Victorian Inspectorate will be renamed *Integrity Oversight Victoria*, led by the Chief Integrity Inspector to reflect the important role this office has overseeing Victoria's integrity agencies. The Bill will provide the Chief Statistician with access to court data supporting accurate reporting on criminal justice issues/trends, complementing access to Victoria Police data.

Empowering Diverse Women in Leadership

MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Women Natalie Hutchins today announced that applications are now open for the Women of Colour Executive Leadership Program backed by an \$180,000 investment by the State Government to support the nation-leading program.

Women of colour face additional barriers in their careers and the *Women of Colour Executive Leadership Program* provides support for those working in a range of sectors including not-for-profit and community sectors, corporate and the Victorian Public Service. The 2024 program will support 16 women to navigate the barriers that women of colour face via workshops, mentoring and coaching. Previous participants include Arshin Zaman, an engineer and Lama Tiavo who is a manager in a private sector consultancy, leading work on commercial strategies across the country.

Changing Laws and Culture to Save Women's Lives

MEDIA RELEASE

A new package of reforms will change laws and culture and deliver new support for victim survivors when they need it most. The package will drive action at every stage: better responding to victims when violence occurs, delivering a stronger justice response that holds offenders to account, and continuing Victoria's world-leading prevention response – stopping violence before it starts. The State Government will implement changes to ensure Family Violence Intervention Orders (FVIOs) keep victim survivors safe for as long as they need – and avoid the retraumatising steps of reappearing in court.

Currently, most FVIOs are between six and 12 months long. Victims can be required to return to court – retraumatising them in the process. That's why the Government will introduce a new minimum length for FVIOs – providing enduring protection for victim survivors, putting focus on perpetrators and their behaviour instead of requiring victims to prove they're not safe. Building on the recommendations of the Royal Commission, the Government will deliver new action to stop violence before it starts. Respectful Relationships curriculum is delivering age-appropriate lessons to students in all Victorian government schools and many non-government schools, promoting respect and healthy relationships early, making sure more boys and young men have the right role models to build positive behaviours, expanding the Modelling Respect and Equality (MoRE) program. Already being piloted in 100 schools, the program will be rolled out to 240 more – delivering intensive training to help 'MoRE Champions' establish a culture of healthy masculinity, as part of Respectful Relationships. Mandatory training will be added to Victoria's RSA training requirements teaching staff how to identify and prevent sexual assault and harassment in venues. Respect Victoria will launch a new advertising education campaign later this year, aimed at promoting healthy attitudes among boys and young men, including a strong focus on social media.

TWA Trade Women Australia, from Clea Smith, CEO TWA:

The Federal Budget 24-25 was announced this month and, for the first time, used [gender responsive budgeting](#), putting gender equality and impacts on women at the centre of budget decision making.

The good news is that the [Building Women's Careers Program](#) will invest \$55.5million in structural and cultural change and support women in key male dominated industries. While the details are yet to be revealed, TWA will keep an eye on future announcements. We will continue to advocate on behalf of tradeswomen with governments and industry organisations.

The [Ministerial Roundtable: Women in Manufacturing Strategy](#), with Minister Natalie Hutchins, was one of these opportunities where we discussed important issues for tradeswomen - such as building networks for new tradeswomen, mentoring for equity, gender pay gap audits, advancing women as leaders, and sharing the accountability for workplace culture, safety, diversity and wellbeing.

This month TWA advocated for tradeswomen with the [Australian Apprentice Review](#); was a panellist on the [ICN Building Equality Policy Gender Pay Gap webinar](#) and attended the Women in Male Dominated Occupations and Industries (WIMDOI) conference.

Women succeed in trades – we see it every day. TWA want women to choose, enjoy and benefit from a great career in trades and so we will keep having positive conversations with policy makers, government bodies and industry organisations.

CAREERS SESSION COMING UP IN JUNE - WITH YARRA TRAMS

If you are a qualified tradeswomen - mechanical fitter or electrician, looking for the next step in your career, think about working on the biggest tram network in the world. **Tradeswomen Australia** and [Empowered Women in Trades](#) are partnering with [Yarra Trams](#) for a career information session. Find out about what Yarra Trams has to offer and meet the tradeswomen who work on the trams. Register by clicking [here](#):

Wednesday 19 June, 3:00 – 5:00pm, Yarra Trams Preston Depot, 18 Miller St, Preston

Some of the best free festivals in Melbourne

<https://whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au/>



Explore a **blazing fire festival** after-dark, Harbour Esplanade Docklands.

Fri 28, Sat 29 Jun 5pm - 10.30pm
Sun 30 June 5pm - 10pm

Bastille Day party, 13-14 July.

.Swap your beanie for a beret at this annual festival dedicated to all things French. Stop by the Queen Vic Market to see it transformed into a European winter wonderland. Pick up indulgent French cuisine and loads of freshly baked buttery croissants. There'll also be performances, walking tours and talks to celebrate all things **French**.



Adorable new tram café,

Where: William Angliss, La Trobe Street

This retro tram has been transformed into Melbourne's cutest new cafe.

Grab a seat inside, ring the bell and order coffee starting at just \$3.50

Book market | free entry, Queen Victoria Market, **Every Saturday and Sunday.** Calling all word nerds: it's officially curl up with a good book season. Browse a curated collection of more than 5000 new and pre-loved titles.



Melbourne Magic Festival, **July 1-13,** various venues and prices

<https://melbournemagicfestival.com/> There are many shows for kids and families "A magic show meets a Pixar movie!" The annual comedy magic extravaganza in HappyVale takes an unexpected turn, evolving into a thrilling adventure to rescue the forest! This heartwarming show will have you gasping in awe, laughing until your belly hurts, and possibly shedding a tear or two (of joy, we promise!).

Koori Heritage Trust: Retrospective of the late Josh Muir.

A loving tribute showcasing his career through paintings, digital artworks, iconography informed by his cultural identity as a young Yorta Yorta and Barkindji man. **Until July 14, FREE.**



NAIDOC Week (7 -14 July) *Keep the Fires Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud*'.

Sunday 7 July 2024 marks the commencement of [NAIDOC Week](#). This week celebrates and recognises the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, whilst sharing these histories and oldest, continuous living cultures with all Australians.

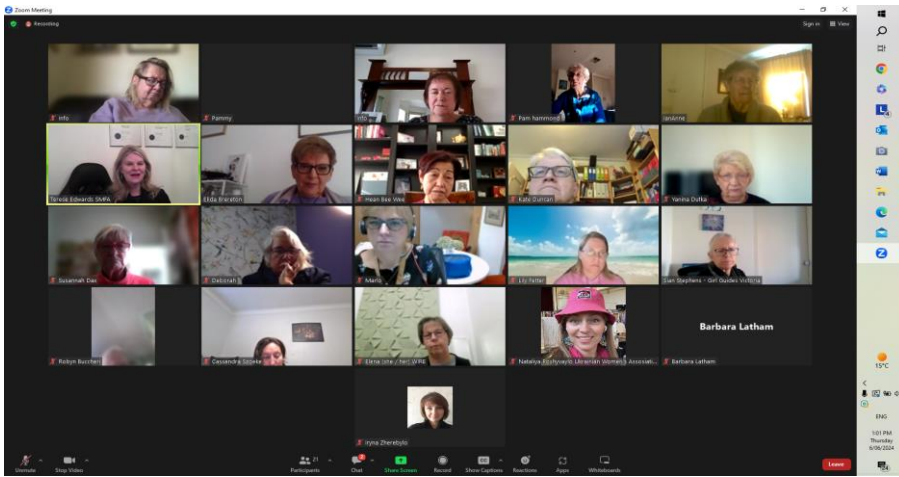
The 2024 theme is [Keep the fire burning! Blak, loud and proud](#). The theme honours the enduring strength and vitality of First Nations culture – with fire a symbol of connection to Country, to each other, and to the rich tapestry of traditions that define Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This year's theme celebrates the unyielding spirit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and invites all to stand in solidarity, amplifying the voices that have long been silenced. See what is happening: [Local NAIDOC Week events | NAIDOC](#)

Environment Victoria.

The 'Inquiry into Climate Resilience' will shape how the Victorian Parliament responds to the climate crisis. We know communities are feeling climate impacts right now - from renters who are unable to keep cool when a heatwave strikes, to those still rebuilding from recent devastating bushfires and floods.

We need to put local people and local solutions at the centre of this Inquiry - and make sure our government feels the urgency to act. That's why your input is so important.

We're collating these responses into one BIG people-powered submission to the Victorian government's 'Inquiry into Climate Resilience' - [Take our quick survey to share your thoughts here >>](#)



Some of the attendees at NCWV June Council Meeting, with our speaker, Terese Edwards highlighted.

Our Purposes: to provide a non-party political, non-sectarian, not-for-profit, umbrella organisation with broadly humanitarian and educational objectives, empowering women and girls; raising awareness of gender equality; act as a voice on issues and concerns of women and girls at State level; develop policies and responses on behalf of women and girls on a State-wide basis; maintain and strengthen the Association's relationship with all members; link with women in Australia and International Council of Women through the National Council of Women of Australia and contribute to the implementation of their plans of action and policies.

Our motto: The Preamble to the original ICW Constitution said "We, women of all Nations, in the conviction that the good of humanity will be best advanced by greater unity of thought, sympathy and purpose, and that an organised movement will serve to promote the highest good of the family and of the Nation, do hereby band ourselves together in a federation of women of all races, nations and creeds, to further the application of the Golden Rule to society, custom and law: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

National Council of Women of Victoria Meeting Dates for 2024

Month	Date	Day	Meeting Type	Time	Method
June	17 th	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	17:00	Zoom
June	20 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
July	4 th	Thursday	Council Meeting	17:15	Zoom and RH
July	18 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
August	1 st	Thursday	Individual Members Annual Meeting; & Council Meeting	11:00, 12:15	Zoom and RH
August	9 th	Friday	My Vote My Voice	9:00	Parliament
August	12 th	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	Zoom
August	15 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
September	5 th	Thursday	NCWV AGM	12:15	Zoom and RH
September	19 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
October	3 rd	Thursday	Individual Members & Council Meetings	11:00, 12:15	Zoom and RH
October	14 th	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	Zoom
October	17 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
November	7 th	Thursday	Council Meeting	17:15	Zoom and RH
November	15 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
November	28 th	Thursday	Annual Luncheon	12:00	In person
December	5 th	Thursday	Individual Members & Council Meetings	11:00, 12:15	Zoom and RH

This publication is compiled and edited by Pam Hammond, Vice-President NCWV, with support from the President, Elida Breerton.