

Founded 1902 ~ Celebrated 123 years in 2025

Newsletter

April 2026

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, and present



NCWV Website: <https://ncwvic.org.au/>

This is the link for our social media LinkedIn profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-council-of-women-victoria-inc/> Members with a LinkedIn account, can “Like” the page and share content that they feel resonates with them.

QUOTE: “On World Health Day 2026, April 7, WHO unites and mobilizes the world under the theme “Together for health. Stand with science.” celebrating the power of scientific collaboration to protect the health of people, animals, plants, and the planet.” World Health Organisation.

From the President, Elida Brereton



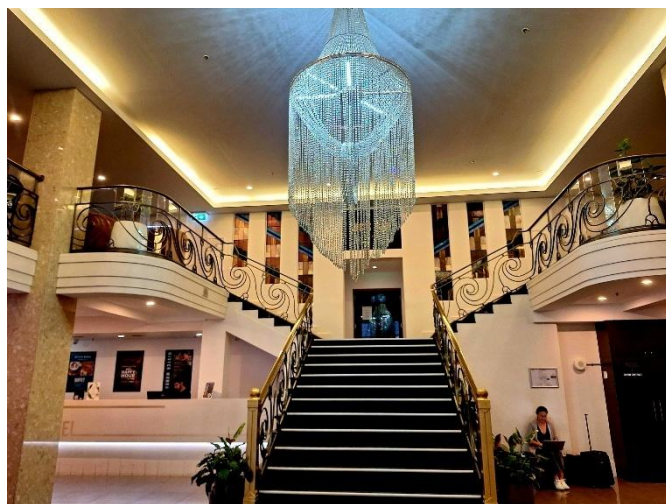
The past month has been busy for many NCWV members and I thank in particular Sarah Barnbrook, Ronnieta Milliken, Prof Cassandra Szoeka, Dr Deborah Towns OAM, and Pam Hammond for their excellent and ongoing contributions to our work. It has been a pleasure to welcome **5 new members to NCWV**, i.e. Guler Altunbas, Hyein Ellen Cho, Chris Skipper-Conway, Shucheen Yu, and Geet Gaba.

We wish them well and hope that they become involved in the work of NCWV, and that they receive the friendship that NCWV endeavours to provide.

NCWV, under the leadership of our members Dr Julie Stevens (co-Hon. Sec.) and Prof Cassandra Szoeka (Health Adviser) has been organising the promised follow-up to the excellent Government House Women’s Health Panel, featuring the video of the Panel discussion, and also an **exciting launch of a women’s health initiative. This will be held on May 8, 4:30-6:30pm.** Hopefully this date will suit you and friends to be part of an interesting and highly relevant sharing of issues and resolutions to improve women’s health. [See p.12](#)

NCWA has announced the **Mid-year NCWA Conference** will be held in delightful Canberra on **Sunday June 28th and Monday June 29th**. NCWV will be considering resolutions to take to this conference via our Standing Committees. Given NCWV’s reputation with the National Board of being very active and progressive, I am sure that Robyn Byrne OAM and her Advisers will be leading the way for key issues to be discussed, via resolutions from each constituency. Please consider attending this key gathering of all NCWs.

On March 19th Vice-President Pam Hammond and I were guests of a new women’s organisation, the **Women’s Justice League (WJL)**, led by CEO and founder, Kristina Snowball, at their Annual Luncheon held at the Art Deco Victoria Hotel. *Entrance lobby of the Victoria Hotel below:*



WJL is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to empowering victims and survivors of domestic and family violence. They provide crucial funding, legal support and other vital help for those navigating the family law system, so that every victim has the resources, advocacy, and safety they need to rebuild their life with dignity and justice. There were over 100 guests and Pam and I were impressed with the number of young women present. Speakers covered personal life experiences of sexual assault and domestic violence. One speaker showed us a graffiti attack in Hosier Lane, Melbourne on posters of women killed through domestic violence, placed there by family/friends. Tim shared his experience of mental and psychological abuse by his bullying, coercive and abusive wife, which showed that there is balance in their support. It is NOT a war on men as alleged, but a defence of those suffering violence. Legal people shared statistics relating to battles by women to gain protection and justice from the legal system and police. WJL seemed to us to be active and balanced in their approach. We were impressed.

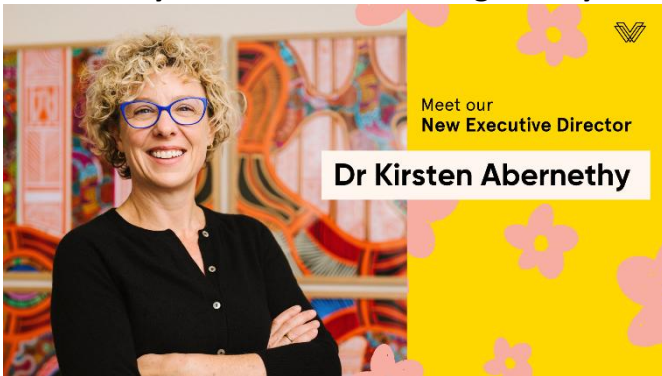
[The Australian Law Reform Commission report](#) on the family court filed in April 2019, gave 60 recommendations for Family Court Law Reform. A small portion only of the recommendations have so far been implemented making the risk of further harm to families going through the Family Court system high. “At Women’s Justice League we break down financial barriers, ensuring survivor’s voices are heard in the courtroom. Through support, education, and advocacy, we’re shaping a future where safety and

fairness are within reach for all. Because real change means survivors don't just survive - they thrive."



Pam and Elida with the founder of the Women's Justice League Kristina Snowball (left) and key colleagues.

NCWV May IM & Council Meeting, 7 May



Dr. Kirsten Abernethy from **Victoria Women's Trust**, will be our interesting speaker. She is a social scientist, researcher, and educator with over 20 years experience working with coastal and seafaring communities across Australia, the UK, and the Pacific. Her work is grounded in feminist values, and her research and advocacy has been centred upon worker's rights, looking deeply at the experiences of women. Kirsten has led major research and sector-wide programs focused on women's leadership, workplace inclusion and systemic reform. In 2017, she won the VIC AgriFutures Rural Women's Award.

In 2025 Kirsten was appointed **Executive Director** of the **Victorian Women's Trust** and looks forward to taking the Trust forward in its 40th Anniversary year, by bringing new and relevant projects. One such project which was launched late last year is [Madam Speaker](#), a digital initiative addressing the under-representation of women's voices in the public record. Their Mission: *Setting the public record straight and ending the invisibility of women's contributions. We (women) will continue to speak on behalf of our communities, industries and citizens...not just for each other.*

Also at our May Council Meeting: The Ukrainian Women's Association of Victoria will give a brief report, in the lead-up to International Children's Day on 1 June, on the unlawful deportation and forced transfer of Ukrainian children by Russia.

This issue has been the subject of international advocacy by Ukrainian women's organisations, including the Ukrainian National Women's League of America, which has drawn attention to the profound loss, displacement, trauma, and erasure of identity experienced by these children and their families. Information from the *Bring Kids Back UA initiative* indicates that, as at February 2026, there were around 20,000 documented records of possible deportation or forced transfer, 16,142 cases officially confirmed, and 2,003 children returned. The report will also note Australia's membership in the *International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children* and the possibility of a motion on this issue being prepared for consideration at the NCWA Conference in June.

SYLVIA GELMAN AM MBE BEQUEST

The Committee of Management of the Sylvia Gelman AM MBE Bequest is pleased to announce it will be offering grants to assist two NCWV Members to attend the NCWA Mid-term Conference to be held in Canberra on Sunday 28 and Monday 29th of June 2026.

Each grant will cover the registration fee and will assist with accommodation and travel costs. Until we receive full details from NCWA we are unable to say how much the grants are worth. This is, therefore, a preliminary notice requesting expressions of interest in attending the Conference which NCWA says "*will bring together members, leaders, and advocates from across the country to discuss the issues shaping the lives of women in Australia today. The two-day event commencing Sunday 28th June 2026 to Monday 29th June 2026 will provide space for dialogue, collaboration, and strategic thinking as we continue to advance equality, representation, and opportunity for women.*"

In keeping with Sylvia Gelman's wishes, preference will be given to applicants from new members to NCWV whether they be Delegates or Individual Members.

Interest in applying for a grant may be sent to me, Elisabeth, Convener of the Committee of Management of the Sylvia Gelman AM MBE Bequest; email as below.

The Committee of Management of the Bequest also wishes to remind members of the Award we offer. Details will be published in a later Newsletter; but in the meantime information may be obtained from me, Elisabeth; via the email below.

On behalf of the Committee of Management of the Sylvia Gelman AM MBE Bequest

Elisabeth Newman AM
NCWV Life Member

Convener Sylvia Gelman AM MBE Bequest

elisabeth_mn@hotmail.com Ph: 03 9699 9170

NCWV April Combined Council Meeting, Ross House, 2 April, 12:15pm and by ZOOM.

Our speaker was Marshida Kolthoff, Policy & Advocacy Manager at **Council on the Ageing (COTA) Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria**, the peak body for Victorians as they age, and the only state-wide community legal centre that is addressing elder abuse. Her team delivers policy advice, research and advocacy across a range of issues including social and economic participation, disaster resilience, elder abuse, disability equity, healthy ageing, and age discrimination. Prior to joining COTA Victoria, she worked for the New Zealand and Victorian governments in emergency management and online harm reduction.

COTA Victoria is the leading not-for-profit organisation representing the interests and rights of people aged 50+ in Victoria. "Celebrating 75 years of service in 2026, we have led government, corporate, and community thinking about the positive aspects of ageing. Today, our focus is on promoting opportunities for, and protecting the rights of, older Victorians. Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) is the key state-wide service dedicated to advancing the rights of older people and the early intervention into, or prevention of, elder abuse in our community.

COTA is currently undertaking a piece of work in relation to economic insecurity amongst Victorian women as they age. The report, which will be launched shortly, will present:

- A life-course analysis of the key drivers of older women’s economic insecurity in Victoria;
- Thematic deep dives into employment, housing, superannuation, health, caregiving, and family violence; each with intersectional insights;
- A structured set of recommendations across Victorian government action, federal advocacy, and cross-sector collaboration;
- A proposed pilot model for a *Victorian Older Women’s Economic Security Hub*, to operationalise coordinated, community-based responses.'

RECOMMENDATIONS

A 5-year sequenced Agenda for Action

Now (0–18 months)	Next (2–3 years)	Secure (3–5 years)
Pilot Older Women's Economic Security & Safety Hub	Sustained elder abuse awareness campaigns	Paid reproductive health leave incl. menopause
Digital & future-of-work training for women 50+	Legislate affordable housing (rent ≤30% of income)	Super credits for unpaid caring
Expand specialist elder abuse services	Lender protocols to prevent economic abuse	Super Guarantee on the Carer Payment
Age/gender-disaggregated family violence reporting	Age & Gender Fair Employer accreditation scheme	Expand public/community housing; ringfence for 55+
Culturally appropriate financial education	Strengthen equal opportunity laws	Improve income support settings for older women

Some of the attendees, Marshida is 3rd row on the right.



ADVISER NEWS

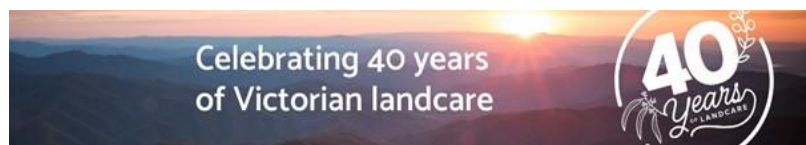
Environment Adviser - Pam Robinson AM

With the Artemis II mission launching on April 1, marking the first crewed flight to the Moon in over 50 years, many of us remembered the previous launch in 1972. As I write on Easter Saturday, we have already seen footage of the crew and they are well on their way and we are all wishing them a successful voyage and a safe return to Earth.

As the Orion spacecraft, carrying four astronauts, one of whom is a woman, is on a 10-day trip around the Moon to prepare for future lunar landings and eventual trips to Mars, we will be reminded again from footage just how small Earth is. We are reminded how precious our 'home' is and how we must care for its health.

Earth which in 1972 was home to 3.84 billion people is in 2026 home to 8.3 billion people and the state of our environment has declined, which is concerning not just for people but also for our flora and fauna that exist within habitats and ecosystems – exist on a planet that we all share.

To be part of the enjoyment and care of our environment there are many organisations and special days in the year when we can all do something to help our land, water and air and it is a good feeling taking part in what is also our responsibility. Local Landcare Groups are a very good contact to find activities in your local community, whether you live in a rural and urban area or not.



Wonderfully, Landcare, which started in Victoria in 1986 and is celebrating its 40th Anniversary, was an initiative of two strong community driven women, namely the late **Joan Kirner** (then Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands and who later became the first female Premier of Victoria) and **Heather Mitchell**, (then first female President of the Victorian Farmers Federation). Both had a strong sense of community, and they garnered great support from community members, farmers, and Victorian departmental officers – some of whom were already tackling grassroots environmental issues.

Landcare became a National Programme in 1989 and with bipartisan support announced its “*Decade of Landcare Plan*” bringing farmers and conservationists together to resolve environmental issues. As a farmer and Councillor in the early 80s I am proud to have worked closely with the development of Landcare and the ‘Mothers of Landcare’ and was appointed and served for some years on the first State and National Landcare Advisory Committees.

“We are actually nature ourselves; we are part of it, not apart from it” – and with this in mind do check out a Landcare Group in your area, so you can join in the activities of some 600+ Groups and Networks (including “Friends of” Coastcare and specialised groups), 60,000+ volunteers across all age groups fostering on-ground community led action, and of course, just think of all the people you haven’t met yet and whom you could enjoy time with while lending a hand to improve the health of our environment. <https://www.landcarevictoria.org.au>

Key environmental dates in April and early May focus on Earth protection, biodiversity, and conservation.

Major events which will give you lots of interesting information and the chance for participation are:

April is Earth Month. A 30-day dedication to environmental awareness culminating in **Earth Day on April 22.**

The official global campaign website is www.Earthday.org

April 11-22 Nature Play Week is an annual Australian celebration promoting outdoor, unstructured, and nature-based play for children to reconnect with the environment. <https://natureplayweek.org.au>

April 18 World Heritage Day, officially known as the International Day for Monuments and Sites, promotes awareness of cultural heritage and conservation. <https://whc.unesco.org>

May 9 World Migratory Bird Day. WMBD in Australia is celebrated twice a year – typically the second Saturday of May and October – to align with migration cycles. The 2026 theme is “*Every Bird Counts – Your Observations Matter*”, to highlight community science. <https://www.acf.org.au>

May 12 International Day of Plant Health raises global awareness on how protecting plant health can end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment, and boost economic development. <https://www.planthealthaustralia.com.au>

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN, Habitat Adviser Wendy Rainbird Report:

Being Prepared: Habitat and Natural Disasters. January 2026.

In Australia, the summer, December-February, experienced heatwaves, bushfires, floods, cyclones (hurricanes) and severe storms. These are all causing havoc and destruction in communities.

“Natural hazard risk is worsening due to climate change, increasing numbers of people living in high-risk areas and environmental degradation. In the future we will likely see widening natural hazard losses, increasing impacts on physical and mental health and rising insurance unaffordability.” (Ref Andrew Gissing of Natural Hazards Australia: How Can We Be Better Prepared?” in The Canberra Times, 13/1/2026.)

In Australia, lessons have been learned, the fire and emergency services are very capable, early warning systems and Australian Fire Danger Rating System empower communities to make informed choices. Advances in technology will upscale fire service capabilities. *"Internationally, firefighting drone swarms and autonomous helicopter platforms are being developed, and trialled for use in years to come."* (op cit)

The Los Angeles bushfires: *"Dozens of fires ignited in early January 2025, two of which grew to become the Palisades and Eaton Fires which spread through adjacent suburbs, burned 37,000 acres and destroyed more than 16,000 structures, driven by intense house-to-house fire spread. According to Swiss Re, the fires were the costliest wildfire event ever globally with insurance losses estimated at \$40 billion. Some sixteen times greater than Australia's Black Summer Bushfires."*

(<https://www.naturalhazards.com.au/news-and-events/news-and-views/los-angeles-fires-12-months-what-does-research-tell-us>)

Heat waves are killers: Many people die in heatwaves, especially old people, very young people, pregnant women and sick people. It is important for people to be aware, to take actions to keep cool and hydrated, and check in on the vulnerable.

Storms, cyclones/hurricanes and floods: Weather bureaus tracking systems of cyclones and severe storms, inform people, and they can take shelter. Despite these efforts the damage to homes and businesses are huge. Cyclone Alfred in Australia in 2025 was estimated to have caused insurance losses of \$2.5 billion. ((Ref Andrew Gissing of Natural Hazards Australia: *How Can We Be Better Prepared?*" in The Canberra Times, 13/1/2026.)

Floods in northern Australia have been severe and frequent on the coastal areas, often with huge levels of rain on already saturated catchments and spreading over vast areas in the inland. Homes, structures, fences and livestock are damaged. Flood mitigation works like levees sometimes help, and not allowing homes to be built in flood prone areas would make a difference. Grants, insurance incentives or discounts might help people to build homes with better materials and in some cases higher off the ground. In storm and cyclone zones, houses are more resilient with strengthened roofs.

Insurance costs: An assessment of the January bushfires in Victoria reported, *"Most property owners have insurance, some savings and an ability to borrow to tide them over. In contrast, a low-income renter with little or no savings risks falling into a poverty trap. For some, a week of lost wages spirals into rent arrears and long-term debt."*

(<https://theconversation.com/as-we-begin-to-assess-the-fire-damage-in-victoria-we-must-not-overlook-these-hidden-costs.14/1/2026>). *"Many households did have insurance, yet their cover may fall short of today's rebuild costs. That shortfall will push families to run down savings, take on debt, or stay stuck in expensive rentals, despite having done the "right thing" by being insured. Underinsurance, especially for disadvantaged households, turns short-term shocks into long-term setbacks. When policy limits don't match real rebuild costs after years of rising construction prices, families stay in rentals longer and drain savings."* Countries which have house insurance, are finding the costs are rising. Globally, there are just a few re-insurance companies, so the costs might be passed on world-wide, making every natural disaster worse financially. As women tend to have less income and have the highest amount of poverty, insurance could well become too expensive.

Governments could look at developing more universal cover. When disaster destroys or badly damages homes and someone is not insured, in effect the government (the taxpayers) gives support payments.

"We also need to confront a growing insurance gap by creating rebuild-gap top-ups that account for increasing construction costs and fund 'build back safer' standards." (op cit)

It would be worth developing better schemes. National Councils of Women could contribute to the research into solutions to meet the specific needs or gaps in their areas.

Adviser on Children and Families: Dr Rumbidzai Nyanhoto



Pam Hammond and Rumbidzai

On 24 February, I attended the launch of the *Safe Down Under* website developed by Auswise. The platform serves as a one-stop hub for international students to access trusted, culturally relevant information about health, wellbeing, and support services in Australia. It is a very valuable resource, particularly for young women and girls, who may face additional barriers when trying to access health services.

We heard from international students sharing challenges they experience in health care such as:

- Limited awareness of available health services and how the Australian healthcare system works
- Difficulties navigating complex health information
- Concerns about healthcare costs and uncertainty around health insurance coverage
- Cultural stigma around discussing certain health issues, particularly mental health and reproductive health
- Fear or hesitation to seek help due to visa concerns or lack of trusted support networks.

Safe Down Under help address some of these gaps by empowering international students to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing. The website can be accessed here: <https://safedownunder.com.au>

On 28 February, I also attended the International Women's Day celebrations organised by the Australian Multicultural Association Inc. in the west. I was invited to speak to multicultural women on the topic of empathy-driven leadership, focusing on how responsive leadership can strengthen communities and support vulnerable groups.

Rumbi was honoured to receive a "Powerful Voice" recognition award during the event. Well done Rumbi!

Another International Women's Day event I attended was the *Changepreneurs* event on Sunday, 22 March at Seasons 5 Resort. The event featured distinguished speakers including Professor Kudzai Kanhutu, the first woman to hold the role of Dean of the Royal Australian College of Physicians in the College's 85-year history, who was also inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women, as well as Silvia Renda, Chairperson of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV).

Human Rights | Youth | ICT | Communications Adviser: Sarah Barnbrook

A long-standing tradition quietly broke this year. The consequences may not be good.

The Commission on the Status of Women has always relied on consensus. Not perfect agreement, but enough alignment to move forward together. At the CSW70 International conference this year, that alignment fractured.

For the first time, the Agreed Conclusions were adopted by vote rather than consensus, an outcome many delegates warned could weaken both the legitimacy and continuity of global commitments to women's rights.

Yet beyond the formal negotiations, another story was unfolding, less visible, but no less important. Away from the negotiating floor, conversations were grounded in lived experience.

In the workshops I delivered, I also spoke about my roles with the National Council of Women of Victoria, roles I carry with both responsibility and pride.

Across four sessions focused on technology, safety and human rights, the same patterns emerged. Women described harm that does not stay contained, abuse that moves across platforms, across borders, and persists long after it begins. The gap between experience and response was clear. *"Harm is happening at machine speed, while our systems are still responding at human speed."*

There was little disagreement in these rooms. Participants, regardless of region, were describing the same realities. The issue is no longer recognition of the harm facing women. It is response.

Irene Natividad, Linda Liu, Dr Jungsook Kim



At the International Council of Women event *Women's Leadership: Breaking Barriers to Equal Access to Justice*, the discussion was measured, but not optimistic. Speakers including Martine Marandel and Nicole Ameline focused on a persistent gap: the difference between legal rights and actual access. In many regions, justice systems exist but remain out of reach, limited by cost, geography, or social pressure.

The implication was straightforward: Legal recognition does not guarantee lived equality.

Later, at the International Council of Women dinner, the tone shifted. With the World President and delegates from across regions present, the setting was informal, but the conversations were meaningful.

Back in the formal session, the divide was more visible. Disagreement centred on language, particularly around gender and reproductive rights, but the underlying issue was broader: who defines terms, and whose frameworks prevail. Several delegations warned that reopening previously agreed language risks destabilising decades of negotiated progress.

Others maintained that those same terms no longer reflect their national positions. The process moved from negotiation toward impasse. The vote, when it came, confirmed it.

Two Realities, One System. CSW70 did not present a single narrative. On one level, there is ongoing collaboration, practical, informed, and often aligned. The workshops, including those I delivered, reflected a shared understanding of emerging risks, particularly in digital environments. On another level, formal negotiations are becoming more contested. These realities now sit alongside each other. It is unclear whether this moment represents a turning point or a temporary fracture. What is clear is that consensus can no longer be assumed. From where I stood, moving between workshop spaces and formal sessions, the contrast was consistent.

Clarity in lived experience. Complexity in agreement. Both continue. Whether they remain connected is less certain.

Soroptimist International Global: *How are homelessness, discrimination, access to justice connected for women and girls?* In a CSW70 blog, Soroptimist International delegate Sarah Barnbrook (SI Melbourne Inc.) reflects on the parallel event *"A Home for All Is Justice for All"*, hosted by the NGO Working Group to End Homelessness.

The discussion highlighted how barriers to housing, land ownership, inheritance rights, and employment place many women and girls at greater risk of homelessness. Speakers emphasised that homelessness is rarely a single event. It is often the result of structural inequality, poverty, and violence experienced across the life course.

Read the blog and keep up to date with Soroptimist International's events, blogs, and activities at CSW70 on our hub: <https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/csw70/> #SIAdvocates #CSW70

OTHER NEWS

Chemist Care Now - To find a Chemist Care Now pharmacy, visit betterhealth.vic.gov.au/chemist-care-now

Since it began as a pilot in 2023, more than 76,000 services have been delivered by pharmacists across the state. One of those services is a resupply of an existing oral contraceptive pill prescription, which has been accessed by 17,000 women since 2023. Currently treatment is also available for uncomplicated UTIs, skin conditions such as shingles and travel vaccines. Most Chemist Care Now consultations are free.

From July, women over 18 will be able to access the oral contraceptive pill at one of 850 participating Chemist Care Now pharmacies. Pharmacists who want to deliver this service will be required to complete a postgraduate training module to keep women safe. Before dispensing the medication, pharmacists must undertake a thorough consultation and outline any risks. The Chemist Care Now consultation with the pharmacist is free. Women will pay for the medication. They will also provide comprehensive advice about other options, including long-acting reversible contraception.

Over the next two years, Chemist Care Now will grow to include another 23 treatments – including the resupply of hormone replacement therapy.

This change saves women time and gives them more options to get the care they need. It also expands access for women in rural and remote areas where access to a GP is more challenging. Give your chemist a call before you go to check what treatments are available or if you need to book ahead. After consulting your chemist, GP follow up is always recommended.

Information on the link above is in your language: [English \(PDF\)](#) | [العربية - Arabic \(PDF\)](#) | [简体中文 - Chinese Simplified \(PDF\)](#) | [繁體中文 - Chinese Traditional \(PDF\)](#) | [Ελληνικά – Greek \(PDF\)](#) | [Italiano – Italian \(PDF\)](#) | [ਪੰਜਾਬੀ – Punjabi \(PDF\)](#) | [Türkçe – Turkish \(PDF\)](#) | [Tiếng Việt – Vietnamese \(PDF\)](#)



**VICTORIAN
WOMEN'S TRUST**

The Victorian Women's Trust is seeking an Early Career Researcher (or equivalent) to spearhead a 33-day harm prevention research project focused on Gender and AI.

This residency is a strategic evolution of our 40-year history advocating for gender equality.

We are looking for someone who is curious, autonomous, and passionate about intersectional feminism to work with us to identify practical circuit-breakers required for a fairer, more inclusive AI landscape.

Closing soon: **[Apply to be our inaugural Feminist Researcher in Residence. Submit by Fri 10 April, 2026.](#)**

- Role: Fixed-price consultancy of \$25,000 (exc. GST).
- Timeline: 33 days delivered between May 2026 and January 2027 (negotiable)
- Location: Remote-friendly, with hot desk space at our Clifton Hill HQ.
- Key outputs: Research Snapshot, White Paper and public facing events.

[Download the full EOI \(PDF\)](#)



March 17th, 2026



by Angela Priestley, the Founding Editor of *Women's Agenda*, proudly independent under the parent company she co founded, *Agenda Media*.

There were cheers at the CSW70 Conference after a Trump-led US delegation failed miserably in its attempts to meddle with the language of a key gender equality document. The US delegation had taken issue with terms like “reproductive rights”. But 37 countries voted in favour of the document, leaving the US isolated. The United States stood alone during a United Nations vote on the “agreed conclusions” document to establish priorities for advancing women’s rights worldwide.

The moment marked a victory for countries that are determined to stand firm on an inclusive vision of equality for women and girls, even in the face of Trump-led attempts, such as trying to remove terminology like “reproductive rights” from key gender equality documents. So much so that the General Assembly Hall erupted into a loud, standing ovation, as the US pushed for a vote on the text and failed miserably. The document was passed 37 in favour, 1 against (from the United States), with 14 abstentions. The goal of Agreed Conclusions is to provide a collective roadmap for advancing gender

equality, and for reaffirming commitments across issues like women's rights, safety from violence and access to sexual and reproductive health services.

But the Trump delegation had arrived at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) with the goal of further expanding its war on women by overriding decades of progress and previously agreed international language.

Leading up to CSW, delegations had been negotiating to reach a consensus on language acceptable to all member states. The US had a number of other objections, including provisions that sought to address regulating artificial intelligence and that the language in the text could be interpreted as endorsing abortion rights. It attempted to pursue eight amendments and failed on all of them.

[The US was left "isolated" on the world stage](#) according to Outright International, marking the first time in 70 years that the UN had broken from consensus at the Commission on the Status of Women.

But there are also lessons in the disruption the US delegation caused, creating the first time in 70 years of the forum that such a vote was needed. The Trump-led US delegation provided an example of what happens when women aren't in the room. ***The US delegation at CSW70 was not led by women fighting for women's rights, but rather by men and political appointees tasked with showing up to the vote to attempt to remove words like "gender", "reproductive health", and "bodily autonomy" from a global agreement on women's access to justice.*** This should also provide a warning of where these votes could go in the future, and/or how, once accepted, consensus on the language we use to protect marginalised people can come under threat, especially as women's rights continue to send shockwaves across the world. And also, the proportion of women in leadership positions worldwide is not enough to ensure we can hold the line. At any point, such rights can go backwards. At any point, we can again find ourselves fighting over words like "reproductive health". Only next time will those rallying against such terms gain more traction.

Indeed, we often ponder how different the world would look if women were in the majority of leadership roles.

At CSW70, we received a hint of an answer, as 37 countries with delegations mostly led by women held the line on women's rights—even in the face of the most powerful country in the region, the United States. We also saw that the countries that abstained or voted against were almost entirely countries where women hold little or no power in government. The correlation here should highlight the roadmap we need ahead: one with more women in foreign affairs, in treasury, across justice and defence. And more women in general, [in Cabinet positions](#).



Friday, 27th March 2026, By [Madeline Hislop](#)

Regular exercise halves risk of early death for middle-aged women, major Australian study finds. Researchers from the University of Sydney used data from more than 11,000 women born between 1946 and 1951, who enrolled in the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health. The study is one of the biggest longitudinal studies of its kind. The women answered surveys every three years, starting in their fifties, providing insights into their health and lifestyle.

The analysis found the incidence of death was 5.3 per cent in women who consistently met exercise guidelines, compared to 10.4 per cent in those who consistently did not. The study used the physical activity guidelines recommended by the World Health Organization, which suggests people do at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week. *"This study supports the growing evidence that maintaining an active lifestyle in midlife provides health benefits,"* the authors say. *"Women should be encouraged to meet physical activity recommendations throughout mid-age to derive these benefits."*

Lead researcher Binh Nguyen said *"Our study shows that maintaining recommended levels of physical activity over multiple years helps protect against early death."* Published in *PLOS Medicine*, the study suggested the magnitude of effect appeared to be similar or stronger for cardiovascular disease and cancer mortality, findings for this were less conclusive.

In 2024, [a major global study](#) found the key barriers to women exercising more included time pressures, low self-confidence, intimidating environments, and not feeling sporty enough. Meanwhile, nearly two-thirds of mothers said motherhood was the main reason that prevented them from doing regular physical activity.

In Australia, other research has indicated women are doing much less exercise than men each week – [it's called the "gender exercise gap"](#), with women doing 60 minutes less exercise than men per week.

Victorian Healthcare Association (VHA)

Pain Inquiry and the VHA's call for further investment, in addition to the recently announced Women's Health Clinics that will extend this focused service to 20 across the state. However, the juxtaposition of this progress with the recent media coverage of endometriosis care and treatment of Victorian women is unsettling. We know that it is a difficult time for many women and health care professionals working in this area, but we are pleased to see the swift action to offer support as the community navigates the implications.

We extend thanks to Women's Health Victoria (WHV) for their support in setting up the [Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain Surgery Concerns Line](#) to support people who may be affected by care they have received

We welcome Minister Thomas' announcement of the new women's health clinics which will be established across Victoria, including in Ararat, Bacchus Marsh, Heidelberg and Prahran. The announcement reflects the important work of the [Inquiry into Women's Pain](#), which highlighted the need for better recognition, diagnosis and treatment of women's health conditions. The VHA extends our congratulations to the four health services that will operate the new clinics, which are part of an ongoing phased roll-out of twenty new clinics over the next four years.

The expansion of the services will increase access to specialists such as gynaecologists, urologists, specialist GPs, nurses and allied health support. Workforce staffing continues to be a challenge in services, and expanding access must be complemented with sustainable funding to support a strong workforce.

The [VHA's Victorian Health Investment Strategy](#) has called for \$14 million to support the rollout of these clinics, including operational funding for services already established. With the Victorian State Budget approaching in May, we hope to see continued investment and commitment reflected by political candidates and parties.

Aboriginal women and their families at the centre of care – making sure it's free, culturally safe and close to home.

Minister Thomas has announced a \$15.8 million boost to expand Koori Maternity Services. The funding will support 10 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) right across Victoria. It includes services in Bendigo, Ballarat, Melbourne, Lakes Entrance and Albury Wodonga.

The goal of the services is to ensure culturally safe and high-quality pregnancy care, with the following outcomes:

- More Aboriginal women access antenatal care earlier in their pregnancy
- Fewer Aboriginal women smoke during pregnancy
- Fewer Aboriginal babies are born early
- Fewer Aboriginal babies die during pregnancy or soon after birth.

Care delivered by our ACCHOs is grounded in culture, connection and kinship.

It is also delivered by clinicians who understand their community, their needs and their experiences.

NCWV Geelong Member Barbara Abley said: *"One of them is Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Limited. It actually has a really good Health service for Mums and children, and a good name too."*



Australian Human Rights Commission

The Answer is Human Rights | 21 April

We are launching our national *The Answer Is Human Rights* seminar series in Hobart with a seminar on **Tuesday 21 April** in partnership with the Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner Tasmania. With growing concerns around social cohesion, the right to peaceful protest, housing affordability, economic inequality, the impact of climate change and digital technologies, the seminar will focus on how human rights can help us address these and other challenges. The series is part of our program marking 40 years since the establishment of the Australian Human Rights Commission.

This national seminar series seeks to engage people and organisations across Australia about why human rights are the answer to many of our social problems and how we can work together to strengthen our country's commitment to – and accountability for – protecting human rights.

With seminars in each capital city as well as a national online seminar, attendees will join some of Australia's leading human rights advocates to explore advancing a human rights agenda at the national, state and territory levels.

The seminars are being presented by the Commission in partnership with the peak human rights and anti-discrimination agencies in each state and territory. Each seminar will have a focus on national solutions to revitalising Australia's commitment to human rights – such as an Australian Human Rights Act and reform of Australia's anti-discrimination laws – as well as a focus on relevant local issues in each state and territory.

Each seminar will comprise a presentation, panel discussion and attendee questions. This series is part of the Commission's [40 Years program](#). See: [The Answer Is Human Rights national seminar series | Australian Human Rights Commission](#).

Still Becoming: Our Anti-Racist Future



A series of four animated stories has been created by GARUW, a First Nations owned and led production company, with the Race Discrimination team at the Australian Human Rights Commission. GARUWA. Titled *Still Becoming: Our Anti-Racist Future*, stories centre lived experience, truth-telling and First Peoples' leadership in anti-racism. They share the voices and perspectives of First Peoples. Each story highlights how racism is shaped by the ongoing impacts of colonisation and how it's experienced in everyday life. Stories invite audiences to listen, reflect critically and better understand why First Nations justice is racial justice.

We're grateful to each storyteller for the courage it took to share them, and the space that their true stories open for collective healing. Watch: [Four stories from First Peoples | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

40 stories for 40 Years | Gender equality: [40 stories for 40 Years | Gender equality | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

On International Women's Day, the Commission released a new video and accompanying stories celebrating 40 years of advancing gender equality. Featuring former Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins and other advocates, the video highlights the landmark *Respect@Work* Inquiry and its impact on Australia's workplace laws and culture. The stories showcase key achievements, from improving work and care systems to strengthening safety in Defence and Parliament



This GenVIC project aims to conduct an environmental scan of gendered loopholes and gaps in Victorian legislation to advocate for system improvement and policy change.

This Survey is scheduled to close in late 2026: [Unequal Laws | Gender Equity Victoria](#)

NCWV is requesting members and friends to respond to this survey, so that we can have input into this project.



Conversation at the Crossroads – Connecting People Through Conversations

I write at a time when democracy is faltering across much of the Western world, Australia included. Yet this country is well placed to engage this moment not as spectator, but as participant in democratic renewal. In this spirit I am approaching your organisation and other civil society organisations as well as several institutes, centres, colleges, associations and think tanks to explore possibilities for consultation and collaboration.

First, a few words by way of background. Conversation at the Crossroads, of which I am the Convener, has been actively considering the prospects for democratic renewal in response to deeply worrying trends.

As in other Western countries, our political institutions seem strangely divorced from the pressing challenges we face. If we look at how we're handling the approaching climate catastrophe, Australia's stark wealth divide, and the silence on Treaty and Truth Telling, ..., the same picture emerges: governments that are largely unaccountable or simply missing in action.

With this in mind and in consultation with many progressive voices, Conversation at the Crossroads is about to embark on an ambitious 7-year project: **Reclaiming Democracy Together: Governance and citizenship renewed for a shared, liveable future.** Preliminary details can be accessed on our [website](#).

We will launch the project in May. We may focus on different issues: homelessness, food insecurity, working conditions, mental health, domestic violence, discrimination in its many forms, refugees and asylum seekers, justice for the First Nations, human rights, animal rights, war and militarism, climate change or loss of biodiversity. But we share a common concern: is government based on public deliberation and decision-making or the influence of powerful lobbies?

Joseph Camilleri, Convener

Conversation at the Crossroads

Connecting People Through Conversation

connect@crossroadsconversation.com.au www.crossroadsconversation.com.au

Join us at [Reclaiming Democracy Together – Australian Launch](#)

[Reclaiming Democracy Together - National Launch — Conversation at the Crossroads](#)

The Melbourne Town Hall | 9 May 2026, 1:30 pm - 4:30 pm

ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE: WHAT'S On: Kids & Families and Adults

[Andy Griffiths' YOU & ME and the Land of Lost Things](#)

The team behind the *13-, 26-, 52-, 78- and 91-Storey Treehouses* brings Andy Griffiths and Bill Hopes' brilliantly bonkers book to the stage in a hilarious new theatrical adventure through the *Land of Lost Things*.

13–14 June, Playhouse, Arts Centre, St Kilda Rd

Book



[Where is the Green Sheep?](#)

22–26 September

Playhouse

An immersive visual theatre experience based on the beloved children's book by Mem Fox and Judy Horacek. We meet Blue Sheep who loves blue flowers and Red Sheep who loves to cartwheel in the fields, Bath Sheep who loves bubbles and Bed Sheep who loves to bounce... But where IS that Green Sheep?

Ages 1-6.

Tickets on sale now. 2 - 26 September | Playhouse

Book



Kids & Families

[New Owner](#)

17–18 July

The Show Room

Blending puppetry, live action and animation, this beautifully crafted story follows a journey of love, loss and new beginnings, through the eyes of a boisterous shelter puppy. Ages 8+

Book

From opera stars to pop icons, celebrate the power and creativity of the diva. Presented by Arts Centre Melbourne; Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

DIVA is a groundbreaking exhibition celebrating some of history's most provocative and powerful performers. The exhibition presents more than 250 objects, including 60 spectacular costumes, jewellery, photography, art, and music, drawn from the V&A's Collection, Arts Centre Melbourne's Australian Performing Arts Collection, and loaned treasures from across the world. Discover the triumphs of the diva, from 19th-century opera goddesses and silent film stars to Golden Age Hollywood legends and today's global megastars and pop icons.

It features legends such as Maria Callas, Judy Garland, Joan Crawford, Dame Nellie Melba, Grace Jones, Cher, Prince, Tina Turner, Elton John, Madonna, Adele, Rihanna, Lady Gaga, Whitney Houston, P!nk, Bjork, Billie Eilish, Dame Joan Sutherland, Peter Allen, Marcia Hines, Kylie Minogue, Olivia Newton-John, Cate Blanchett, Kate Miller-Heidke, Chrissy Amphlett, Dame Edna Everage, Jessica Mauboy and Amy Taylor (Amyl and the Sniffers).

Soundscape designed by world-leading sound designer Gareth Fry, with hits and hooks from *DIVA*'s biggest stars.

Australian Museum of Performing Arts UNTIL – 26 April
Enjoy half-price tickets for *DIVA*'s final week. Book tickets: [AMPA - DIVA - Tickets](#)

VALE

June Danks - 15 June 1931 to 26 March 2026

For many years June was an active contributor to the work of National Council of Women Victoria.

Elisabeth Newman AM reflects: I had a little to do with June, a lovely lady, when I was active as NCWV Health Convenor/ Adviser in the 1980s/90s, and she was a good support to me as well as to NCWV in general.

May she rest in Peace.



The poster is purple with white and yellow text. At the top left is the NCWV logo (National Council of Women Victoria). To the right, it says '8TH MAY' and '4:30PM - 6:30PM'. The main title is 'RMIT MOTHER'S DAY EVENT' in white, followed by 'SPECIAL SCREENING HEALTH PANEL' in yellow, and 'FEATURING A LIVE PANEL HOSTED BY NCWV & RMIT' in white. Below the text is a row of six women's portraits.

Join us for a Mother's Day rescreening and live panel event hosted by NCWV & RMIT University.

In light of the rapid sell-out of tickets to the Government House Women's Health Panel on 3 March, NCWV & RMIT University have come together to host a rescreening of the Government house event. Two of the Government House Panel members, Prof Cassandra Szoek and Sarah Barnbrook, will be present to answer any audience questions you may have from the original event.

An in-person, live panel will follow the re-screen, including Prof Catherine Itsiopoulos and Dr Julie Stevens, to discuss the importance of teaching sex-specific health within university health degrees.

The venue will be in lecture theatre: 080.002.007 RMIT University, Building 80
435-457 Swanston St, Melbourne VIC 3000

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 2026

Month	Date	Day	Meeting Type	Time	Method
April	13 th	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
April	16 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
May	7 th	Thursday	Council Meeting	12:00	Ross House/ZOOM
May	18 th	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	RHSV and ZOOM
May	8 th	Friday	Mothers Day Panel & Video	16:30-18:30	RMIT University
May	21 st	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
June	4 th	Thursday	Individual Members & Council Meetings	11:00, 12:15	Ross House/ZOOM
June	16 th	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
June	18 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
July	2 nd	Thursday	Council Meeting	17:15	Ross House/ZOOM
July	13 th	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
July	16 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHS
August	6 th	Thursday	Individual Members Annual Meeting; & Council Meeting	11:00, 12:15	Ross House/ZOOM
August	17 th	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
August	TBC	Friday	My Vote My Voice	9:15	Parliament
August	20 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
September	3 rd	Thursday	AGM /Council Meeting	12:15	Ross House/ZOOM
September	14 th	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
September	17 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
October	1 st	Thursday	Individual Members & Council Meetings	11:00, 12:15	tbc
October	12 th	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
October	15 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
November	5 th	Thursday	Council Meeting	17:15	Ross House/ZOOM
November	16 th	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
November	19 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
November	24 th	Tuesday	Annual Luncheon	12:00	William Angliss
December	3 rd	Thursday	Individual Members & Council Meetings	11:00, 12:15	Ross House/ZOOM
December	17 th	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
February 2026			Pioneer Women's Ceremony	TBA	

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