

Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee Meeting Australia Region Report

1. Data on the number of women representatives

Including:

- Statistics in legislatures, executive, company boards
- Changes in representation following elections
- Affirmative Action policies, as they relate to quotas, constitutional, legislative, electoral changes
- Political Party Reforms and appointments of women within the Party Structure

Women in Legislatures

Australia overall (all parliaments) – 45.4% women

Women in state/territory parliaments (each jurisdiction):

- Commonwealth – 49.8% women
- Australian Capital Territory – 52% women
- New South Wales – 44% women
- Queensland – 36.6% women
- Tasmania – 46% women
- Northern Territory – 33.3% women
- South Australia – 40.6% women
- Victoria – 50.8% women
- Western Australia – 43.8% women

International Rankings

- CPA Regional Rankings for Women in Parliament: **1st**
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (which rank Parliaments by lower or single House only): **9th** for August 2025
- Global Gender Gap Report: ranked **13th** out of 148 countries

Women in the Federal Executive

The **Cabinet and Outer Ministry**, including assistant ministers, has 19 women and 23 men. In Cabinet there are 12 women and 11 men (including the Prime Minister). Women make up 56.1% of the ALP caucus, 46.3% of the Cabinet and Outer Ministry, and 52.2% of the Cabinet alone.

Affirmative action policies

The Australian Labor party has an Affirmative Action rule whereby at least 50% women must be preselected for state and federal winnable seats. This is a significant political party reform that began as a 35% rule in 1994, and in 2015 changed to a 50% rule by 2025.

The Greens: affirmative action is a part of the **Green's Charter and Constitution** and they advocate affirmative action in workplace policies more broadly.

Liberal Party and The Nationals: there is currently no policy for affirmative action. In 2016, the Liberal Party adopted a 50% target for female representation. Sussan Ley was elected as the **first female leader** of the Liberal Party on 13 May 2025.

	Parliamentary Leadership In the Australia Region, which encompasses nine parliaments (federal, six states, and two territories), there are currently four female presiding officers. Women in senior management and company boards Following changes to legislation in 2023, the government now publishes data on gender equality, including the gender pay gap, across the Commonwealth public sector. The second report, released in May 2025 by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), is titled the <i>Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Scorecard</i>. Key findings from the report include: • Lower Gender Pay Gaps: Commonwealth public sector employers generally have smaller gender pay gaps than those in the private sector. About 45% have a neutral pay gap (within $\pm 5\%$), compared to 31% in the private sector. This is largely due to a more balanced representation of women and men in management roles. • Workforce Composition: Women make up 55% of the workforce and hold 54% of management positions. • Top Earners: In the highest pay bracket, women represent 47% of employees, showing a more even distribution compared to the private sector
2. Information on elections that were held this year Including: • Data on women Members that won and/or lost seats or appointed to new positions	In 2025, Australia held two state elections and a federal election. The federal election on 3 May 2025 resulted in the highest number of women ever elected to Parliament, with female representation in the House of Representatives rising from 39.1% to 46% and remaining steady in the Senate at 56.6%. Senator the Hon Sue Lines continued as President of the Senate, and on 13 May, Sussan Ley was elected as the first female leader of the Liberal Party. In the Western Australian state election on 8 March 2025, the Labor government secured a third consecutive term, making them the first party to achieve this in WA since 1989. However, women's representation in the WA Parliament decreased from 47.4% to 43.8% following the election. In Tasmania, a general election for the House of Assembly was held on 19 July 2025 following a no-confidence motion in the government. This election also saw a decline in women's representation, dropping from 60% to 53%.
3. Status of the CWP in regional constitutions	There have been no amendments to the CWP's status in the CPA Australia Region Constitution since 2022.
4. CWP Regional Structure	CWP Australia Region structure is as set out in the CPA Australia Region Rules. "The Steering Committee will be comprised of one female representative from each CPA Branch of the Australian Region and the CWP Australian Region representative." There are eight State and Territory parliaments, and the Australian National Parliament is also represented. A total of nine representatives, plus the Chair, making ten members of the CWP Australia Region Steering Committee.

	• In June, Ms Kylie Wilkinson replaced Ms Lynda Voltz as the CWP representative from NSW. • In August, Hon Ayor Makur Chuot MLC was elected as Western Australia's new representative to the CWP Australia Region Steering Committee. • In November, Ms Caitlin Tough MLA replaced Ms Leanne Castley MLA as the CWP representative from the ACT.
5. Regional Budget for CWP Activities	No other budget is allocated to CWP beyond the Regional Strengthening Funds. The 2025 Regional Funds will support the Tasmania and Victoria Branches in delivering key leadership initiatives. In Tasmania, the funds will contribute to the Stepping Up – CWP Young Women in Leadership event, encouraging young women to engage in democracy and political careers. In Victoria, they will support a three-day WE Lead (Women Engaged in Leadership) program.
6. Regional Conference – What role did CWP play?	No Australia Region conference was held in 2025. The CWP Australia Region Steering Committee meets three times annually by video conference and once annually face to face for a planning day.
7. CPA International Executive Committee – does your region have a female Member?	Senator the Hon Sue Lines is the Australia Federal representative on the International Executive Committee.
8. Initiatives linked to CWP Thematic Priorities undertaken by Parliaments and/or Regions Including: • Legislation, resources, Inter-organizational strategies, Intra-Ministerial and Civil Society Cooperation and all other strategies.	<u>WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP</u> <u>Federal</u> <i>Status of Women Report Card</i> The Australian Government's Office for Women released its annual Status of Women Report Card on March 8, 2025, International Women's Day, detailing progress on the Working for Women agenda. The report highlights advancements in gender equality, such as a shrinking gender pay gap, increased women's workforce participation, and expansion of paid parental leave. However, it also identifies areas requiring more effort, particularly in addressing wage disparities in feminized sectors like aged care and early childhood education, and improving women's economic security and safety.

ELIMINATION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) IN ALL ITS FORMS & HARMFUL PRACTICES

Federal

National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses

The National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses is a funding agreement between the Australian Government and state and territory governments to support frontline services and initiatives that prevent and respond to family, domestic, and sexual violence. The agreement provides funding of \$351 million over five years from 2025–26, matched by states and territories, to deliver services like crisis accommodation, legal support, early intervention, recovery programs, and workforce capability development. It aims to improve safety for women and children, address the needs of diverse communities, and help achieve targets under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children. The funding supports a range of projects, including culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, men’s behaviour change programs, and specialist support for victim-survivor.

Universities Accord (National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence)

On 25 August 2025 the *Universities Accord (National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence) Bill 2025* (the Bill) passed Parliament. The Bill creates a power for the Minister for Education to make a National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence (National Code) as a legislative instrument to:

- reduce the incidence of gender-based violence
- proactively strengthen prevention efforts
- improve the response to gender-based violence; and
- hold higher education providers accountable for their performance, including in student accommodation.

The 2025 Universities Accord makes it mandatory for all higher education providers to meet strict standards in preventing and responding to gender-based violence, with compliance monitored and enforced by a new federal branch. This Code is one of seven key actions in the Action Plan Addressing Gender-based Violence in Higher Education, and builds on the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032

Leaving Violence Program

The Leaving Violence Program is a new national initiative that started on 1 July 2025. It supports eligible victim-survivors leaving violent intimate partner relationships. Eligible victim-survivors, regardless of gender or visa status, will be provided with an individualised financial support package of up to \$5,000. Packages include up to \$1,500 in cash and up to \$3,500 in goods and services, as well as safety planning, risk assessment and referrals to other essential services for up to 12 weeks.

New South Wales

The *Residential Tenancies Amendment (Domestic Violence Reform) Bill 2025* introduces changes to the process for leaving a tenancy due to domestic violence to better support victim-survivors.’

Relevant NSW Government strategies include the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022-2027 which has five pillars: primary prevention; early intervention; response; recovery and healing; and system enablers; and the NSW Women's Strategy 2023-2026 which identifies three priority areas for action: economic opportunity and advancement, health and wellbeing, and participation and empowerment.

Queensland

Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill

The Queensland Parliament passed the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill* in June 2025. The first objective of the Act is to establish a framework for police protection directions (PPDs) to improve efficiencies for police responding to DFV and reduce the operational impacts of the current DFV legislative framework, to improve the ability of police to respond to DFV, protect victim survivors, and hold perpetrators to account. While PPDs were supported by police working in the DFV space, concerns were raised by other DFV services in relation to the potential for misidentification, and that police would be able to pursue PPD’s without the consent of the victim-survivor. The Act will not take effect until police training has been rolled out, with training commencing in January 2026. The Act also enables piloting GPS monitoring of high-risk DFV perpetrators, and extends uses for video-recorded evidence by victim-survivors.

Coercive Control

Coercive control became a crime in May 2025. In August 2025, a man from Cairns became the first person convicted under Queensland’s coercive control laws. The court described his behaviour as “intimate terrorism,” and he was handed a two-year prison sentence.

Respect at Work Legislation

The Government recently paused implementation of Queensland’s Respect at Work legislation. This legislation, passed in 2024, was intending to implement key reforms recommended by the Australian Human Rights Commission in the Respect@Work: National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces Report (Respect@Work Report); implement key reforms recommended by the Parliament’s Legal Affairs and Safety Committee (LASC) reports — Inquiry into serious vilification and hate crimes (LASC Vilification Report) and Criminal Code (Serious Vilification and Hate Crimes) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 (LASC Vilification and Hate Crimes Bill Report); and introduce a positive duty to eliminate all forms of unlawful discrimination, sexual harassment, vilification and other associated objectionable conduct as far as possible (as recommended by the Queensland Human Rights Commission (QHRC) in its report, Building Belonging – Review of Queensland’s Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Building Belonging Report). The reason for this pause provided by Queensland’s Attorney General is to allow the government to undertake further consultation. The future of the legislation is unclear at this stage.

Penalties and Sentencing (Sexual Offences) Amendment Bill

The Queensland Parliament is currently considering a Bill which would limit a court's ability to consider good character evidence relating to an alleged sexual offender, make sexual assault if perpetrated against children aged 16 and 17 years an aggravating offence, including recognition of harm done to a victim in the sentencing process, and ensure that a court cannot diminish harm caused to victim-survivors when a victim impact statement is not given. The Bill is expected to pass in September 2025.

Tasmania

Joint Standing Committee on Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

On Tuesday, 11 September 2025, the House of Assembly agreed to a motion to establish a Joint Standing Committee on Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. While its formal establishment is reliant on the Legislative Council to agree to the motion, the House has provided its support. The Committee is intended to provide an ongoing, cross-party mechanism to scrutinise legislation, policy, and related matters concerning family, domestic, and sexual violence.

Family Violence Amendment Bill 2024

In the 51st Parliament, a Bill presented by a female Independent Member of the House of Assembly titled *Family Violence Amendment Bill 2024* was enacted. The Bill made amendments to extend family violence orders and the awarding of legal costs in certain circumstances.

Victoria

Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change

The Victorian Government has launched *Until every Victorian is safe: Third rolling action plan to end family and sexual violence 2025-2027*. This plan supports the implementation of the 10-year family violence reform plan, *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*. It sets out 106 actions to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence across the state. Building on previous plans and the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, this plan focuses on prevention, strengthening support for victim-survivors, holding perpetrators accountable, and improving services and community awareness. For the first time, it explicitly addresses elder abuse as a form of family violence. The plan takes a whole-of-person, whole-of-family, whole-of-community, and whole-of-system approach, aiming to ensure every Victorian is safe, respected, and free from violence.

Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Bill

The Justice Legislation Amendment (Anti-vilification and Social Cohesion) Bill was passed in April 2025 and expands the state's hate speech laws to protect people if they are vilified based on disability, gender identity, sex, sex characteristics or sexual orientation.

	<u>Western Australia</u> ‘Foundations for Change’ is Western Australia’s primary prevention to end violence against women. Key initiatives include <i>Preventing Violence Together</i> a collaborative initiative co-chaired and resourced by the Centre for Women’s Safety and Wellbeing and Stopping Family Violence. A new Firearms Act (<i>Firearms Act 2024</i> (WA)) was passed, it is considered one of the strictest in the country post-reform. Police are now required to remove firearms from anyone who is the subject of a domestic violence complaint, not just those convicted. It includes mandatory disqualifying offences, which automatically prohibit firearm ownership for individuals with serious convictions, including family and domestic violence (FDV) offences, or those the subject of a violence or family violence restraining order. Family Violence Legislation Reform (2024) includes mandatory electronic monitoring (GPS tracking) for high-risk or repeat offenders while on bail, parole, or release. Investment in prevention and support services including \$96.4 million in the 2024–2025 State Budget to respond to and prevent family and domestic violence. <u>ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN</u> <u>Federal</u> <i>Workplace Gender Equality Amendment</i> In March 2025, the Federal Parliament passed the <i>Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Act 2025 (Cth)</i>. This amendment introduces new requirements for large employers to set, report on, and achieve gender equality targets, further strengthening Australia’s workplace gender equality framework. <i>Fair Work Commission’s Gender Based Undervaluation</i> In April 2025, the Fair Work Commission released its decision on the <i>Gender-based Undervaluation – Priority Awards Review</i>. The Commission found that minimum wages in several female-dominated sectors, such as pharmacy, health, social and community services, and children’s services, had been set too low due to gender-based undervaluation. As a result, the Commission ordered significant pay increases for pharmacists and made provisional findings for other awards, with further consultation underway. This decision is a major step towards addressing pay inequity and ensuring that work traditionally performed by women is properly valued and compensated.
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Health Care Access and Affordability for Women

The Australian Government introduced a \$792.9 million women's health package in 2025, focusing on improving access to care and targeted support. Key measures include new Medicare items for menopause and perimenopause assessments, expanded endometriosis and pelvic pain clinics, and increased funding for long-acting reversible contraception. Additional investments were made to support women's mental health, maternal health, and cancer screening programs. These initiatives aim to address gaps in women's health, improve early intervention, and ensure more equitable access to essential services across Australia.

Queensland

Training and education

The new government in late 2024 launched the Future Women Jobs Academy, aimed at women over 40 returning to the workforce. It invested \$20 million over four years and offered 250 places in 2025 for training, mentorship, and online resources.

Ensuring fair pay conditions for working women

The new government's 2025–26 Budget contained a Women's Economic Security Statement, emphasising breaking down barriers to economic participation, prioritising safety, and supporting women's success across Queensland. In addition to funding continued initiatives, \$20 million over four years was allocated for the Returning to Work Package to support Queensland women returning to the workforce after having children, caring for family, or illness.

Women's health and wellbeing

Termination of pregnancy became lawful in Queensland with the Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018. On 10 December 2024 the new Premier successfully moved a motion to disallow any further bill, motion or amendment in relation to termination of pregnancy for the term of the 58th Parliament. The Premier stated that this motion would ensure termination of pregnancy remained lawful in Queensland, amid concerns raised during the election campaign that an LNP government would undo the legislation. Another perspective is that prohibiting debate on this aspect of women's healthcare prevents reform and progress in this area, with impacts particularly for Queensland's regions where reliance on pharmacological advancements is critical. In relation to breast screening; earlier this year BreastScreen Queensland launched a mobile mammogram van in North Queensland, offering free screenings for women over 40. This is part of the 2032 Strategic Plan, aiming to boost screening rates from 51.5% and reach 60% by 2032

Victoria

Gender Responsive Budgeting

Victoria was the first jurisdiction in Australia to legislate gender responsive budgeting requirements. Gender responsive budgeting is a policy and process that involves systematically analysing government budgets to understand how decisions and spending impact men, women, and gender diverse people differently, with the goal of improving gender equality. It applies a gender lens to public finances to ensure that resources are allocated fairly and effectively, benefiting the entire community and creating more equitable outcomes for all Victorians.

	<u>Western Australia</u> Employment and economic benefits include Residential Tenancies Act Reforms that allow victims of family and domestic violence to terminate their tenancy with just seven days' notice, without financial or legal penalty, and Courts can assign liability for damages or unpaid rent to the perpetrator, protecting victims from financial fallout. Western Australia's Public Sector Gender Equality Strategy is a key mechanism to improve gender equity across the state's largest workforce (over 140,000 employees). The Strategy sets out clear actions on gender pay equity, leadership representation, flexible work, and respectful workplace culture. <u>EQUAL ACCESS TO NATIONAL RESOURCES</u> <u>Australian Capital Territory (ACT)</u> The ACT Government has expanded its nation-leading period poverty initiative, with free pads and tampons now available in more than 30 public schools across the Territory, alongside community locations such as public libraries, health and community centres, and selected government buildings. In schools, dispensers are being installed in student-friendly locations, including girls', gender-neutral, and accessible bathrooms, to ensure access is private, respectful, and easy. Primary schools are providing pads, while high schools, P-10 schools, and colleges are offering both pads and tampons. The ACT is the first jurisdiction in Australia to legislate guaranteed free access to period products for students, recognising that dignity and equity require ensuring no young person is held back from learning, sport, or everyday life by their period. Canberra Health Services facilities, including Canberra Hospital, UC Hospital, community health centres, and walk-in centres, will also have dispensers installed by the end of August.
9. The Contribution of women parliamentarians to The Parliamentarian journal article	THE ROLE OF THE SECOND CHAMBER <i>Book Review</i> <i>The Parliamentarian: 2025 Issue One – Women Speakers: Leading Roles</i> (p.42-43) Professor Gabrielle Appleby is Professorial Fellow of the Pro-Vice Chancellor Society and the University of New South Wales (UNSW) Sydney, a Constitutional Consultant and Clerk at the Australian House of Representatives. Ms Kate Doust, Chair of the Australia Region Steering Committee is a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for The Parliamentarian.
10. Other Including, for example: • Strategies to Overcome Gender Inequality • Education • Gender Quotas	<u>Queensland</u> The government in June 2025 removed mandatory diversity quotas for the Brisbane 2032 Olympics Organising Committee (OCOG) board, reversing requirements for 50% female representation and at least one Indigenous member.

• Leadership programmes • Childcare Mechanisms to prevent political violence, • Equal access to Party resources • coordination with other like-minded Women’s organizations	<u>New South Wales</u> The NSW Government's Gender Equality Action Plan 2025-2028 targets multiple areas of change across 5 priority areas: • Inclusive workforce participation • Equitable career opportunities • Safe and respectful workplaces • Flexibility and support • Advancing gender equality The NSW Government also issued a Gender Equality Budget Statement 2025-26, aligned with the Performance and Wellbeing Framework. The Gender Equality Budget Statement within Budget Paper No. 2 details new budget measures that support gender equality, showcases select gender impact assessments and provides updates on previously funded initiatives. <u>Western Australia</u> WA has implemented a wide range of legislative and policy reforms that advance gender equality and protect women’s rights, further to those already mentioned in this report, others include: • Women’s Legal Service WA, a specialist legal centre for women. They provide legal advice, representation, information about rights, law reform advocacy, etc • Legal Aid WA – Domestic Violence Legal Unit (DVLU) that provides free legal advice on issues such as restraining / protection orders (Family Violence Restraining Orders, FVROs), safety planning, representation in courts etc. They also have resources to help understand what legal options are. • Domestic violence leave entitlements for WA Public Sector Employees • The WA government has launched campaigns to raise awareness about coercive control — what it is, how to spot it, that it is not only physical violence. • Respectful Relationships Teaching Support Program is a prevention/early education program in public schools aimed at promoting gender equality, respectful relationships, non-violent communication, etc. Teachers are supported to help students understand what healthy relationships look like, what abuse looks like. The idea is that if people understand early, the incidence of family/domestic violence is reduced. • Sexual and reproductive health and rights – Introduction of reproductive health leave, provision of free menstrual hygiene products, and expanded domestic violence leave entitlements for WA public sector employees. • Women’s health services – Development of a new Women and Babies’ Hospital, investment in Women’s Community Health Services, adoption of the WA Women’s Health and Wellbeing Policy, and participation in national collaborative efforts. • Legal equality and cultural rights – Safeguarding women’s rights to land and inheritance and strengthening legal protections for women and girls.
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New South Wales

Speaker's Guideline – use of offensive or disorderly words, and unparliamentary language

Issued 19 September 2024 pursuant to Standing Order 9(2)

Members are not to use language, make gestures, or behave in any way in the Chamber that is sexist, racist, homophobic or otherwise exclusionary or discriminatory. Such conduct may be considered offensive and disorderly, in accordance with Standing Order 74. Where a Member has used such language, taking into account the context, tone and manner of the Member speaking, the Speaker may intervene and direct the Member to withdraw the remark, resume their seat or discontinue the behaviour concerned.

Under the authority of the relevant Standing Orders, it is the role and responsibility of the Speaker to deal with any such conduct as matters of disorder. Where a Member refuses to comply with a direction of the Speaker, further action may be taken, including directing the removal of the Member from the House under Standing Order 249 or 249A. I also note that Standing Order 250(3) provides that a Member may be named by the Speaker for using offensive words, and refusing to withdraw them, with the potential consequence of suspension from the service of the House.