

President’s Message APRIL 2026

Dear Members

International Women’s Day

Another International Women’s Day (IWD) has come and gone. The official theme for IWD 2026 “Balance the Scales” reminds us that equality is not about advantage for some but a system that is fair, inclusive and accessible to all women and girls. Every woman and young girl should be able to live safely.

Unfortunately, in 2026, in my view, the quality of leadership is lacking. As Lana Hill stated recently IWD should be about not just getting more seats at the table, but what kind of a table is it? Not just who gets to lead but how leadership is being practised.

CSW was held 9 -20 March 2026 at the UN Headquarters in New York with the priority theme “ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory law policies and practices and addressing structural barriers”.

I am reminded of my attendance at CSW 63 at the UN Headquarters in New York in 2019 as a member of the Australian Government delegation. The priority theme then was “social protections systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”. My question remains what has changed from 2019 until now 2026?

Australian Chinese Women’s Federation

Representing National Council of Women WA (NCWWA) I spent International Women’s Day attending the fantastic afternoon organised by Australian Chinese Women’s Federation (ACWF).



The afternoon “Her Power-Leading the Intelligent Future” included Dance, recognition of Outstanding Women and Youth Achievements and a panel session engaging the community on AI-era education trends. ACWF is a member of NCWWA. It was a fantastic afternoon and extremely well attended.



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The Western Australian Health and Wellbeing Surveillance System

The West Australian Health and Wellbeing Surveillance System is a continuous data collection initiated in 2002 to monitor the health status of the population of Western Australia. In 2024 13,780 participants completed either a computer assisted telephone interview or an online survey from February to December, with a participation rate 39.7 per cent. Just over 95 per cent of those surveyed were adults over 16 years of age and the remaining participants responded on behalf of children.

Less than half (47.6 per cent) self-reported their health status as excellent or very good. Some of the statistics were quite alarming including more than one in ten adults reported currently having asthma, more than one in four adults suffered an injury in the past twelve months that required treatment from a health professional and one in four adults have been told by a doctor that they have a mental health condition in the past twelve months.

Some of the lifestyle and biomedical risk factors included one in eight adults aged 18 years of age and over were current smokers and one in three adults reported drinking at levels that put them at risk of harm from alcohol related disease or injury. Only one in three adults met the guidelines for recommended daily intake of fruit, while only one in twenty (4.7 per cent) adults met the guidelines for recommended daily intake of vegetables.

Surprisingly almost nine in ten (87.8 per cent) adults used primary health services within the past twelve months which is a good result as everyone should be in the habit of having an annual check-up each year regardless of age as early detection is the key to treating many serious illnesses.

Cleanbill Blue Report

A new Cleanbill Blue Report released in January shows Australians are being slugged skyrocketing out-of-pocket costs to see a GP. The report reveals that the average out-of-pocket cost for a standard GP visit has surged by 13.5 per cent in the last twelve months. This mirrors the latest official data from the Health Department which shows that the average out-of-pocket cost nationwide has risen to more than \$50 on average for the first time in Medicare's history.

While the report records a welcome increase in the number of bulk billing clinics, it also confirms access is becoming more unequal. Australians who do not live near one of these clinics are facing soaring costs and fewer options, with Cleanbill also reporting a net decline in the total number of GP clinics nationally for the first time.

Urgent Care Clinics

In Western Australia the Federal Government Urgent Care Clinics appear to be few in regional and rural Western Australia. I am advised that there is an Urgent Care Clinic in Bunbury, Geraldton and Broome. According to the Urgent Care Clinic website it also appears that many of the clinics do not open past 6.00pm. Locating a centre also needs to be made easier on the website. According to a number of people who have visited an urgent care clinic they are then referred to their own GP or to a hospital.

Regional Connectivity in Telstra shutdown

Telstra has announced it will shut down its CAN radio and ADSL networks. Some 8,500 customers, mainly in remote Australia will be exited from the CAN Radio Network by November 2027 and the ADSL network by the same timeframe will affect some 50,000 customers. More information needs to be provided by Telstra about the cost of the shutdown and who will be most impacted.



WA Women's Hall of Fame

The WA Women's Hall of Fame Inductee Ceremony for 2026 was held on the evening of Thursday 5 March 2026 at the Government House Ballroom. Two inductees from each of eight categories Arts, Business, Community, Culture, Education, Health, Sport and STEM and Technical Trades were inducted into the WA Women's Hall of Fame. The Roll of Honour also had an additional four inductees. Full details of recipients later in the newsletter.

2026 Touring Photographic Exhibition

The 2026 Touring Photographic Exhibition was officially opened on Friday 6 March 2026 at 1 the Esplanade, Perth which was beautifully hosted by the 2023 WA Women's Hall of Fame Inductee Dr Ahn Nguyen. The photographs are exceptional thanks to Karen Wheatland Photography. The Exhibition will move to the A.H. Bracks Library and Creative Space, 431 Canning Highway, Melville from 4th to 26th of April. Other regional locations to follow.



RSV Vaccination

The Western Australian Government has announced that the RSV vaccination will be made available free of charge to those residents over 65 years of age in residential care facilities. A vital initiative and at an opportune time before winter. However, NCWWA strongly believes that the vaccination should also be made available to those men and women over 65 years of age in hospital waiting for a residential care facility bed. Unfortunately, as we all know those numbers continue to grow. Residents receiving in-home care over 65 years of age should also be able to access the RSV vaccination free of charge.

In 2025 alone over twelve thousand cases of RSV were recorded with about 25 per cent ending up in Western Australian hospitals. Many of those ending up in hospital were over 65 years of age.

Lung Cancer Screening

NCWWA recently wrote to the Federal Health Minister seeking the Minister to review and extend the eligibility for men and women 50-70 years of age to be able to access free of charge lung cancer screening to include men and women 50-70 years of age who have experienced pneumonia in the last ten years. The current cohort able to access free of charge lung cancer screening all have to be a smoker or previous smoker.

It is reported only 65 per cent of cancer in women is caused from smoking. Many women and some men have complications from pneumonia which cause lung damage as does smoking. As such it is vitally important that those men and women 50-70 years of age with a history of complications from pneumonia should also be included in the free of charge lung cancer screening program.

Low rates of childhood Immunisation in Western Australia

NCWWA wrote to the Federal Health Minister back in October 2025 expressing concern about the low rates of childhood immunisation in Western Australia. Sadly, nothing seems to have changed since then and as of early February the rate of fully immunised five- year- olds sits at 91.95 per cent. This continues to be well below the rate in 2020 (94.1 per cent) and Australia's aspirational target of 95 per cent which gives the population enough herd immunity to stop the spread of measles and other preventable diseases and protect those who cannot be vaccinated. Unfortunately, a response to my letter has not been received to date.

Government Grants

Most Western Australians would be surprised to learn the scale of grant funding by the Federal Government. These grants can range in size from thousands to billions of dollars covering areas as university research, foreign aid, sporting facilities and highways. They often fund or co-fund areas of traditional state responsibility such as schools, hospitals and local government. The Menzies Research Centre (MRC) last year delivered an outstanding paper "*Stop the Bloat: Delivering a more efficient and effective Government*" which details a selection of grants of questionable value for taxpayers including highly ideological research in areas of state responsibility.

According to the MRC a more extensive ongoing audit of Federal Government grant programs would uncover considerable more wasteful spending that could be redirected towards other priorities.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare approximately one in six Australians live with a disability with one third of these having severe or profound disability that significantly impacts daily life. NDIS must focus on these people requiring support throughout the person's lifetime with severe and profound disabilities. No-one can understand why a parent with a child with severe and complex disabilities is refused additional core funding to help with the intensive caring responsibilities and transport to school while others are given huge amounts of often unnecessary funds. NCWWA has written to the NDIS Minister and will continue to advocate for a genuine and fairer NDIS system.

Administrative Complexity for Accommodation Payments

Australia's residential aged care system has never been simple, but the November reforms around accommodation payments are creating an expensive new problem for some residents entering care. No longer can a resident pay a RAD before their means assessment outcome is complete. By not allowing the resident to pay a RAD upfront (or part there -of) their savings remain assessable potentially reducing their pension while they wait for the means assessment outcome which was taking some 29 plus days in February 2026. NCWWA has written to the Federal Aged Care Minister citing an example of someone loosing over \$4,000 while waiting for their means assessment outcome. Some residential aged care residents are paying the price of complexity of a system promising choice but removing it on entering care.

Robyn Nolan

WA WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME

The WA Women's Hall of Fame Inductees for 2026 are:

Arts:

Janine Ban
Sue Starcken BA (Hons)MA

Business:

Megan McCracken
Mala Haji-Ali JP

Community:

Deb Wilkes
Rabia Siddique

Culture:

Carol Pettersen OAM JP
Rosemary Walley

Education:

Emerita Professor Lynette Abbott
Emerita Professor Margaret Nowak AM

Health:

Dr Danuta Sampson
Professor Roz Walker
PhD

Sport:

Kate Bevilaqua
Penny Tanner Hoath BAppSc

STEM and Technical Trades:

Professor Archa Fox
Donna Buckley BSc, Grad Dip Ed Murd

Roll of Honour:

Margaret Cockman OAM CSTJ
Harriett Hooten
Simone McMahon AM
Shirley Thorn AM JP



NCWWA MEMBERSHIP FEES

NCWWA membership fees for the 2025-2026 year are now overdue as fees become due 1 July each year. If you would like to remain a member please pay your membership fee which remains the same as last year.

Payment may be made by Bank Transfer or by Cheque:

Associate (Individual) Memberships:	\$55.00
Affiliate Memberships (Not-For -Profit Organisation)	\$66.00

Payment by Direct Transfer:

Account Name: National Council of Women of WA Inc

BSB: 036 034

Account Number: 559 683

Payment by Cheque:

National Council of Women of WA Inc
P.O. Box 6224 East Perth. WA 6892

Please ensure you identify your name in the 'comments' field.

THE MEANING OF EASTER

Easter commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the tomb, occurring three days after His crucifixion.

According to the New Testament, Easter falls three days after Jesus' crucifixion, following a period of fasting known as Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes on Good Friday, the day of Jesus death.

Easter is one of the most important holidays in the Christian calendar. For many Easter is also a time to reflect on the meaning of life and the power of love and forgiveness.

The term "Easter" is believed to have originated from the old English word "Eastre" or "Eostre" which refers to a pagan festival celebrating the goddess of spring and fertility

Easter is a time when many families come together in celebration to eat, share stories and spend treasured time together. For some especially young children it can be also about chocolate eggs, egg baskets, egg hunts and symbolic animals like the Easter Bunny.

Happy Easter!

