

President's Message MAY 2026

Dear Members

Australians recently commemorated Anzac Day on the 25 April – the anniversary of the day when soldiers (both Australian and New Zealand) landed on Gallipoli. Anzac Day is a time to recognise the more than two million men and women who have served in war and peace operations. We also remember that over 100,000 Australians sacrificed their lives for their country.

Vorasidenib:

At the March 2026 Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) meeting Vorasidenib resubmission request was approved. National Council of Women (WA) was one of the organisations who advocated strongly for the approval of Vorasidenib along with a number of individuals and health care professionals. There was a high unmet clinical need for effective treatments for astrocytoma and oligodendroglioma.

The significant burden faced by individuals living with IDH-mutant brain tumours include the progressive symptoms, seizures, cognitive decline and loss of independence-that profoundly affect their quality of life. During the time the medication was made available through a compassionate access program across the country for patients the results were very positive and was effective at slowing cancer progression. However, those on the trial that I

had contact with had no financial means to access the medication unless it was on the PBS. That has now changed with the PBAC listing.



Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Vaccination Free for Older Australians:

The Federal Government is introducing free RSV vaccinations for older Australians. From 15 May 2026 Australians over 75 years of age and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 60 years of age will be able to receive a free RSV vaccination through their local health service including GP's immunisation clinics, community and Aboriginal health services and participating pharmacies. The West Australian Government had announced it would make available free of charge RSV vaccination to those residents over 65 years of age in residential care facilities.



NCWWA advocated strongly for RSV to be made available not only to those in residential care facilities but those

in hospitals waiting for a residential care facility bed and those residents receiving in-home care.

In 2025 Western Australia recorded over twelve thousand cases of RSV with about 25 per cent

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ending up in hospitals. RSV is very contagious and causes serious illness especially to older Australians with lung conditions and weakened immune systems. The current cost of the RSV vaccination was restricting many in the cohort receiving the RSV vaccination. In my view the announcement from the Federal Government is a very welcome one however perhaps it should be provided for those Australians over 65 years of age.

Health Insurance Rebate slashed for Seniors:

The Federal Government has announced a range of positive changes to aged care however the changes will come at the expense of older Australians receiving a reduction in the higher private health insurance rebate. For many this will be a significant reduction and could push older people with limited income and savings out of the private health system.

There is no doubt there is a need for reforms to the private health system given the affordability of private health insurance and out of pocket costs. As premiums continue to rise the risk for governments is that older people will drop their private health insurance cover and place even greater pressure on the public health system. NCWWA will advocate for a Productivity Commission review of the private health system.

Support at Home Program:

NCWWA recently made a submission to the "Support at Home Program" being conducted by the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs. The ability for older Australians to access services to live safely and with dignity at home should be paramount. Unfortunately, even though the Royal Commission into Aged care Quality and Safety recommended the Home Care Package wait list be cleared by immediately



increasing the number of packages available and then allocating packages within one month of assessment people are waiting months for help according to MY Aged Care figures. Even the system navigation remains

extremely challenging for many older Australians.

NCWWA has also written to the Federal Minister for Aged Care earlier this year without a response to date.

NDIS:

The NDIS was established in 2013 as a government program intended to assist individuals living with severe, permanent and profound disability. Sadly, even the Federal Health Minister now admits that the fundamental barrier is the design of the scheme itself. The NDIS costs \$52 billion a year and is growing at more than 10 per cent annually. It is costing more than universal Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme combined.



We are all in support of those people with severe, permanent and profound disability receiving the support they so desperately need. However, one in six boys in Australia aged between five and

seven are enrolled largely for autism and developmental delays. The cost of NDIS payments to participants with autism has blown out to more than \$10 billion annually after a record 62,500 children and adults diagnosed with the disorder joined the scheme in 2025.

The Minister has now unveiled plans to shift 160,000 people off the NDIS. The NDIS has about 760,000 participants and was on track to hit 900,000 participants by the end of the decade-double the Productivity Commission original projection. The original cost estimate by the Productivity Commission in 2011 was \$14 billion. The Minister has announced stricter eligibility criteria by assessing people on functional capacity rather than the diagnosis-driven approach that has led to a surge in people with mild disability and developmental delay on the scheme.

However, many in the community strongly believe that the review must stamp out rorting and bad actors in the scheme and a number of other reforms including:

- All provider organisations must have pre-employment checks including qualifications and experience and be registered;
- Pricing of service caps and maximum levels must be reviewed, as research demonstrates many providers charge just below model caps for commercial benefit;
- Freeze NDIA staffing increases, noting that a headcount of 11,052 in December 2025 is up from 9,127 in 2024 (1925 headcount increase) and constitutes 70% of all new Commonwealth Public Service hires in 2025;
- Reduce the amount of \$60 million of taxpayer expenditure on external legal firms in 2024-2025;
- Address the number of participant complaints-13390 to December 2025 (7.1 per cent) up from 6.7 per cent in June 2025;
- Reduce the \$11.6 billion spent in 2025 on social and community NDIS supports and ensure such supports are evidence based and delivering real outcomes;
- Restore the maximum timeframe of 60 days completion reviews as promised by the NDIA, noting 3 in 10 reviews were completed within 60 days with the December 2025 Quarterly Dashboard shows falling trends in every jurisdiction.

Organ Donation:

Despite strong public support only around 200,000 Australians sign up as Organ Donors each year with the population growing by about 450,000 annually. Transplant Australia has provided clear evidence that linking donor registration to driver's licences would boost rates of organ donation.

Registration can save lives. While driver licences are a State and Territory Government issue it is a practical measure to promote the value of organ donation and make it easier for Australians to notify their loved ones of their intentions.



In South Australia where it is easy to register as an organ donor through the driver's licence process 74 per cent of adults are signed up. In contrast in Western Australia, it is only 35 per cent. A number of Western Australians are waiting for organ donation. The circumstances where organs can be donated can be time-critical and very narrow. It is critical we all do everything we can to encourage more Western Australians to register as organ donors.

Trajectories of Outcomes of Neurological Conditions (TONiC) – Perron Institute:

Some members may not be aware that I have been a member of the Perron Institute Parkinson's Consumer Reference Group for sometime, as my late father was diagnosed with Parkinsons. The Perron Institute does outstanding work in the research field. Perron is currently seeking research participants. Collecting and measuring information about what it is like for patients living with neurological conditions is part of that outstanding work in the research field. Further information is available in this Newsletter- please pass on to anyone you may know.

Western Australian Budget:

The 2026-2027 Budget was handed down recently. According to the budget papers there is a range of targeted support for women through investments in secure housing, prevention and responses to family and domestic violence, health and mental wellbeing, workforce participation and skills development. The additional investment in the Group Training Subsidy Program for fifty (50) places specifically for women wanting to work in electrical trades is a worthy investment indeed.

NCWWA Treasurer:

A very special thank you to **Sally Plummer** who has stood down after many years as NCWWA Treasurer. Sally has done an outstanding job in the role and we all thank her most sincerely. Sally will remain on the NCWWA Executive Committee - something we are very grateful for! Thank you to Linda Elezovich who is now the NCWWA Treasurer.

Robyn Nolan

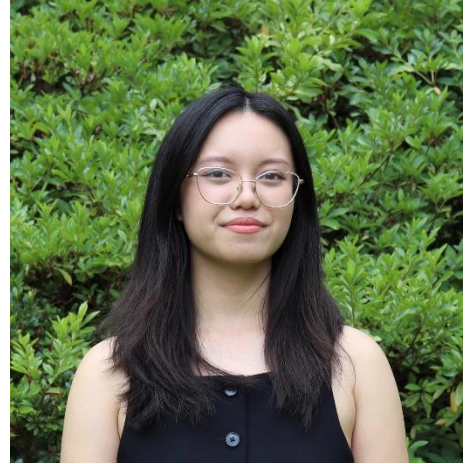
NCWWA STEM BURSARY RECIPIENT

Helen Pham is the recipient of the 2026 NCWWA STEM Bursary.

Helen is currently in her fourth year of Chemical Engineering (Honours) at University of Western Australia where she has demonstrated strong academic excellence in a demanding Chemical Engineering program in complex study areas including metallurgy, particle technology and process design.

To date Engineering remains a field where women are underrepresented particularly in industries related to Chemical engineering such as energy and mining. Helen has a keen interest in these industries and is also keen to increase female representation in these non-traditional areas.

Helen also holds a number of leadership positions in student organisations including the Marketing Director of the Chemical and Process Engineering Club (CPEC) and the Creative Marketing Co-ordinator and Engagement Vice President of Engineering without Borders (EWB). Helen is also involved in the Society of Petroleum Engineers WA.



In her spare time Helen plays netball and basketball and enjoys creative hobbies such as nail art, video editing and graphic design.

Congratulations Helen!

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

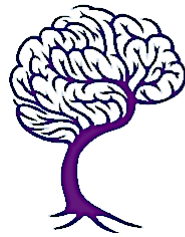
BSB: 036 034

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.



TONiC
Trajectories of Outcome in Neurological Conditions
www.tonicstudy.org

Research participants wanted

PARKINSON'S DISEASE at THE PERRON INSTITUTE

For a number of years, the United Kingdom has been conducting one of the largest studies into the quality of life of patients suffering from neurological conditions ever undertaken. The study is called TONiC: Trajectories of **O**utcomes in **N**eurological **C**onditions. It was envisioned by Professor Carolyn Young from the Walton Centre in Liverpool.

Parkinson's disease (PD) isn't the same for every patient. Patients will progress at different rates, or experience certain symptoms that affect their day to day life more than others. These differences can change the way people cope with disease progression, as can a patient's personal characteristics or social context. Genetics likely also play a part in why disease progression can be different between patients, but more research into this is needed.

With the assistance of funding from MSWA, Western Australia will be the first international site to implement TONiC in the hopes of improving care for patients, and identifying genetic contributors to disease. Professor Sulev Koks of Murdoch University, based at the Perron Institute, is leading TONiC WA. The TONiC WA study will collaborate with UK team.

Collecting and measuring information about what it is like for patients living with neurological conditions, and identifying factors that influence patient quality of life (some of which may be typically underestimated), we can improve the expand and improve health services and support, as well as work towards more personalized care.

By investigating genetic factors that influence and contribute to PD, it is possible to eventually create targeted treatments and predict disease progression. An individual's genetic makeup can also influence social, psychological and biological function, in turn affecting how PD may affect them. We would like to investigate this for the purpose of early intervention with care plans and treatments.

If you would like to be involved in this research, please contact Professor Sulev Koks, or the TONiC WA research coordinator, Denise Howting.

Contact:

Sulev.koks@perron.uwa.edu.au

denise.howting@uwa.edu.au ;

[Phone: 08 6457 0305](tel:0864570305)



Participation includes:

- Completing a questionnaire pack once every 12-months expected to take 3 hours max (follow-up questionnaires require 2.5 hrs)
 - Providing a saliva sample (requiring 15 minutes) for DNA analysis
- Total time commitment 3 hours 15 minutes initially**
(ideally repeating assessments requiring 2-3 hours every 12 months)

We are also looking for control participants who are unaffected by PD to provide a saliva sample for DNA analysis!

To register your interest with us:

Email the research coordinator:

tonic@perron.uwa.edu.au

Complete our expression of interest survey:

Either by following this link:

<http://bit.ly/tonicpd>

Or by scanning our QR code:

Use your smartphone camera or a QR code app to scan this code and follow the prompts



SCAN ME



Our research coordinator can get in touch with you!