

## President's Message November 2025

Dear Members

It has been a while since the last NCWWA Newsletter and my apologies for that. However, that is not to say the NCWWA Executive has not been busy with a range of advocacy issues.

Congratulations to all who were elected at the recent Local Government elections including a number of NCWWA members. Well done!

### Health:

NCWWA recently wrote to the Federal Minister for Health about a couple of very important issues including the low rates of childhood immunisation in Western Australia and other Australian States. Australia's aspirational target is 95 per cent which gives the population enough herd immunity to stop the spread of measles and other vaccine preventable diseases and protect those who cannot be vaccinated. This year alone Western Australia has recorded 45 cases of measles which is highly infectious and can cause hospitalisation and even death.



Currently Western Australia has recorded one of the worst childhood vaccination rates in the country. Western Australia has the second lowest number of fully immunised five-year olds (91.4 percent) just a touch behind Northern Territory. Only ACT has a rate of fully immunised children over 95.0 percent.

NCWWA is also calling for the RSV vaccination to be available and funded by the National Immunisation Program for older Australians over 75 years of age and including all residents in residential care facilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over 60 years of age and people with medical risk factors for severe RSV disease over 60 years of age. In Western Australia the RSV vaccination is funded for pregnant women and babies by the Western Australian Government but not for older more vulnerable people.

### Transport for Children with a Disability:

Imagine having a young child with special needs, restricted mobility and a severe disability travelling two hours (120 minutes) to attend school. That is exactly what is happening from the Perth Western suburbs for those attending either the Mount Hawthorn Educational Support Centre or the Sir David Brand School from the Western suburbs of Perth.

## In This Edition

Page 1-3.	President's Message
Page 4.	Paddy Firstenberg Award
Page 4.	NCWWA Membership Fees

All children should be able to attend school to learn. Unfortunately, unless a local primary school has a specialised program to support them there is no alternative but to seek a placement for children with special needs, restricted mobility and other severe disabilities at schools quite some distance away from Perth Western suburbs. Two hours (120 minutes) on a bus is totally unacceptable for these children. They arrive at school exhausted and upset. The teachers then spend much of their time calming and settling them down rather than spending quality teaching time. The Transport Assistance Program needs an urgent review and NCWWA has written to the Hon. Rita Saffioti MLA Minister for Transport seeking such a review.

#### **Domestic and Family Violence:**

NCWWA is disappointed that another inquiry is being called for by a Member of the State Oppositions into Family and Domestic Violence. There have been so many inquiries into family and domestic violence that even those in the sector have inquiry fatigue. Time and resources would be much better spent addressing some of the recommendations from the many inquiries. There is no doubt that Police need more training for an expanded number of Police Officers.



The co-responder model which has been rolled out in the Northern Territory after a trial for eighteen months in Alice Springs is providing positive results. The model has also been expanded in Queensland after a trial in Cairns. The model has improved Police response as local services and Police work together to learn from each other. The co-response model has four sections of the team Police, Child Protection

practitioners and two teams from the family and domestic sector, one working with the victim and the other with the perpetrator. The focus is on supporting people in the early stages of a relationship where violence may emerge connecting them with support services, stepping in before the situation escalates.

The sector has been calling for such a model for years. It is imperative that at least a trial be undertaken in Western Australia. NCWWA has written to the Minister for Child Protection Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and the Shadow Minister calling for a trial of the co-responder model in Western Australia.

#### **Assisted Reproductive and Technology Bill 2025:**

The Western Australian Parliament recently debated and passed in the Legislative Assembly the Assisted Reproductive Technology Bill 2025. A number of NCWWA members and others in the community have been in contact about some significant aspects of the legislation. It is disappointing to see that the legislation has been introduced at this time when the Australian Law Reform Commission is due to report mid-next year on the review of surrogacy laws.

The major issues of concern about the Bill are that it fails to strengthen protection for women who become surrogates. A young woman can be just eighteen years of age (not 25 as in some other Australian State legislation) and removes the requirement that a surrogate must have been a mother. The Bill increases the commodification of women and commercial surrogacy.

In November Consideration in Detail of the Bill will continue in the Legislative Council. Unfortunately a Motion proposed by the Hon Michelle Hoffman MLC referring the Bill to a Committee was lost. There will be amendments to the Bill including three key amendments suggested by a number of Members of Parliament including increasing the age at which a woman can be a surrogate from 18 years of age to 25 years of age and including a requirement that a woman has had to have had a baby before becoming a surrogate. Another proposed amendment I understand is a very important one is making it a condition that all people involved in a surrogacy arrangement pass a criminal check.

### **Vorasidenib:**

NCWWA recently wrote to the Federal Health Minister again about the life-saving medication Vorasidenib, a targeted cancer therapy for patients with a recurrent brain tumour post initial resection of IDH-mutant low -grade gliomas) being listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). The medication was originally made available through a compassionate access program in Western Australian and other State and Territories for patients who were likely to respond well to the treatment. That program has now ceased and those on the trial which has been life changing for them now have no access to the cost prohibitive medication. Vorasidenib was registered in Australia over twelve months ago and Servier Pharmaceuticals has applied for it to be listed on the PBS.

### **OPAN Report:**

A new report reveals persistent challenges continue to face older Australians. OPAN (Older Persons Advocacy Network) National Aged Care Advocacy Program Presenting Issues July 2024- June 2025 states that wait-times to be allocated approval for Home-Care Packages is dire and has blown out considerably in the twelve months to June 2025. Difficulties for older people in securing a residential aged bed if the person has dementia or high behavioural support needs also continues to be major problem as does service delivery for Home-Care Packages and residential Aged Care.

Financial issues continue to be top issue with some older Australians not given clear and transparent information about their aged care fees and charges by some providers. The report also states lengthy delays, lack of communication and contradictory advice from some service providers about the provision of assisted technology.

### **Social Media Age Restriction:**

From 10 December 2025 many social media platforms won't be allowed to let Australians under 16 years of age create or keep accounts. It's a big change and there is a lot of confusion about the proposed changes. The age restrictions will likely apply to Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X and YouTube as well as other platforms. Apparently, those under 16 will still be able to see publicly available media content that doesn't require logging into an account.

### **Lithium Batteries:**

A threat is emerging with larger scale home and car lithium batteries. Australian insurers are sounding the alarm about a dramatic surge in lithium-ion battery fire claims. One major company has reported a 440 per cent increase in such claims between 2020 and 2023 with associated costs increasing by 900 per cent. This is not just an insurance issue it is a public safety issue. Battery related fires have been cited as a key factor in one company's 9.4 per cent rise in home insurance premiums for 2024-2025. As such those that don't own an e-bike or e-scooter or a solar battery system are also footing the bill through higher premiums. Electric Vehicle owners are also discovering the cost of significantly higher insurance premiums.



At the end of the life cycle lithium-ion batteries pose yet another challenge for the waste and recycling sector. Insurers are increasingly reluctant to underwrite risks in the waste sector due to the rise in fires at recycling facilities.

### **Paddy Firstenberg Memorial Award**

A special thank you to Marianne Langsford who attended the Girl Guides WA 2025 Annual Youth and Adult Awards Ceremony held recently to present the Paddy Firstenberg Memorial Award (PFMA) on behalf of NCWWA. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend as I had another event on the same afternoon. Congratulations to Rhiannon Manning who is the 2025 PFMA recipient. More information about Rhiannon's contribution to Leadership is in this Newsletter.

Robyn Nolan

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## PADDY FIRSTENBERG MEMORIAL AWARD 2025

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### **Rhiannon Manning**

Rhiannon has been a Youth and Adult Member of GGWA and has shown strong Leadership qualities over the past decade.

As a youth member, Rhiannon earned the BP and Queen's Guide Awards and volunteered as a Junior Leader for 3 years, from 2016 – 2018.

Rhiannon was also a Committee member of the GGWA Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) for 6 years, from 2016 - 2022. During this time, she served as secretary, and helped organise the YAC garage sale, YAC disco night, the 14+ Picnic in the Park, a 14+ Dinner/games night and a Community Connection stall at Cyril Jackson Senior High School. As a YAC member, Rhiannon also participated in and supported a number of GGWA State and regional events.



In 2018, Rhiannon was part of the "Girls take over WA Parliament" programme, where she worked with Hon. Simone McGurk. Online news articles quote Rhiannon as saying "Girls Takeover is about leading a change for young women. It gives me the opportunity to talk about important issues that are affecting our young women of today and I am excited to be a part of this experience."

From February to June 2018, Rhiannon completed the 'Getting into Governance' GGA programme, and subsequently served as a voting member of the GGWA Board for 4 years, from 2019 – 2023.

Rhiannon has volunteered within Guiding as a Unit Helper from 2019-2020, a Leader-in-Training from 2021-2024 and a Guide Leader from late 2024.

Rhiannon also staffed on the 2023 Kani-Karrung National Jamboree, running activities within the STEM Programme, and she obtained GGWA Archery qualifications in 2025.

Congratulations Rhiannon Manning – a very worthy recipient of the Paddy Firstenberg Memorial Award 2025.

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### NCWWA MEMBERSHIP FEES

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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.