
Towards a new NSW Women's Strategy

Discussion paper

May 2022



A new strategy for women in NSW

The NSW Women's Strategy 2018–2022 set a clear path for progress

The current NSW Women's Strategy (the current Strategy) is coming to an end, after four years of significant progress and achievement. That strategy set a goal of:

Advancing economic and social equality in NSW

The Strategy also set a vision that:

Women and girls in NSW have full access to opportunity and choice, their diversity is recognised, they are valued for their contribution and are able to participate in all aspects of life freely and safely.

Women and girls in NSW are supported by government and the community to achieve this vision.

A turbulent four years, encompassing progress and social change

In the four years since the current Strategy was released, there has been significant action by the NSW Government and the broader community in advancing women's economic opportunities and social equality.

There has been progress towards greater gender parity with increases in the representation of women in Parliament, on boards and in the NSW public service. There has also been greater accountability for harassment, workplace discrimination and sexual violence in the public consciousness.

The current Strategy also straddled a time of many devastating events, from drought, bushfires and flooding to the health and social impacts of COVID. These events often had a disproportionate impact on women, with an increase in their share of caring responsibilities and their overrepresentation in industries hardest hit by the pandemic

Refreshing our direction: how to have your say on the new Strategy

We are now leading statewide consultation with the people of NSW to shape the direction and priorities of the next NSW Women's Strategy. Getting the Strategy right relies on input from a wide range of women.

This Discussion Paper sets out our thoughts on the key directions for women. The Paper includes 14 consultation questions; we will use the answers to shape the priorities of the Strategy.

You can have your say about what is important for the next NSW Women's Strategy in any of the following ways:

- Complete the online survey at the 'Have Your Say' website. This survey includes all the consultation questions in this Discussion Paper and includes the multiple choice options. Answer as many or as few as you would like.
- Answer our 'Quick Poll' questions on the 'Have Your Say' website.
- If you have a disability or require translation or other support to have your say, email us at womennsw@dpc.nsw.gov.au and someone will be in contact with you.
- Keep an eye out for public consultation sessions, which will be promoted on the 'Have Your Say' website, on our [website](#), and through partners. Each consultation has a cap on the number of participants.
- In limited cases we can accept submissions. If you would like to make a submission, email us at womennsw@dpc.nsw.gov.au to let us know.

All contributions must be received by 5:00pm on Monday 20 June 2022.

Making progress

The NSW Women's Strategy 2018–2022 represented a period of significant investment in women and girls.

In the two-year period from FY20-FY22 the NSW Government invested:

- \$10 million over two years for the **Return to Work Program**, whereby NSW women who have been without work for an extended period will be able to apply for grants of up to \$5,000 to help cover the costs of returning to work
- \$17 million for **targeted investment in the care economy** – early childhood, community services, social housing, aged care, disability care and personal support – in order to support job growth and improve worker quality
- \$17 million for a package for in-home care for pregnant women who are suffering from **hyperemesis gravidarum** (severe morning sickness) to better understand and treat the condition
- \$22.4 million over four years to fund Tresillian and Karitane including funding for **six new Regional Family Care Centres** with Tresillian nurses and a Gidget Foundation **mental health clinician**.

The NSW Government also invested in related initiatives that made a significant difference for women including:

- an extra \$60 million over two years to **strengthen frontline domestic and sexual violence services** across NSW
- an extra \$32.5 million over four years to expand the **Staying Home Leaving Violence** program across the state to assist victim-survivors
- \$56.1 million over four years to appoint **eight extra magistrates** to ensure more hearings and quicker access to justice to support women through the courts, reducing the impact on families, victims and witnesses
- \$538 million investment over four years to **reduce domestic violence re-offending and support women's safety** through early intervention, victim support and perpetrator interventions
- \$57 million expansion of the successful **Together Home** program over two years. The program, open to all but particularly supporting women, involves securing homes from the private rental market and delivers intensive tailored supports to meet the complex needs of the people in the program. It will provide an **additional 250 households with leasing and wrap-around support services for two years**, and funding towards the construction of **100 new dwellings** for people who require long term housing support at the end of the program.

The NSW Women's Strategy works alongside a range of other strategies, including the following:

- NSW Women's Health Framework
- Her Sport Her Way
- NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023
- NSW Carers Strategy: Caring in NSW 2020-2030
- Ageing well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021-2031
- Women in Trades Strategy – NSW Trade Pathways Program 2021–2024
- Social Impact Investment Policy
- NSW Veteran's Strategy
- NSW Service Plan for People with Eating Disorders 2021-25
- Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024
- NSW Response to the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children (*in development*)

- NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-2021

Other key achievements from the NSW Women's Strategy 2018–2022 include:

- Developing the **NSW Women's Financial Toolkit**, which is a one-stop-shop for reliable online resources, toolkits and advice to assist women with a range of support services on managing everyday finances, dealing with unexpected life events and financial planning for future wellbeing.
- Launching the **NSW Gender Equality Dashboard** in 2021, which offers up-to-date statistics on topics such as the gender pay gap, maternal health and higher education completions for use by policy makers, researchers and anyone interested in exploring change.
- Establishing **NSW Women's Week**, which builds on International Women's Day to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women and girls, and promote gender equality.
- Launching the **NSW Women's Health Framework 2019** which sets out the strategic directions for NSW Health to deliver services and foster environments that help women and girls in NSW to meet their physical, emotional, social and economic potential.
- Launching **Her Sport Her Way**, a four-year strategy that aims to build a stronger sport sector where women and girls are valued, recognised and have equal choices and opportunities to lead and participate.
- Delivering the **Daughters and Dads Active and Empowered**, a NSW-wide lifestyle program targeting fathers as agents of change to improve their daughters' physical activity levels, sports skills and socio-emotional wellbeing.
- Delivering an **image-based abuse social media campaign**, in partnership with the e-Safety Commissioner. The campaign educates parents and young people, and offers an eSafety Toolkit with information and resources.
- Reaching **50:50 gender parity in membership of arts, screen and cultural advisory committees** convened by Create NSW.
- Delivering **video communication-based training resources** for services working with Aboriginal families and young people who are patients.
- In the two year period from FY20-FY22 the NSW Government invested \$57.4m to establish a Trades Pathways Skills Centre and new programs streams including Women in Trades. Women in Trades is a champion for women in trades and ensures trade pathways for women are informed, accessible and supported from beginning to end

Towards gender equality

The intent of women's strategies from around Australia and the rest of the world is to create societies in which there is gender equality.

The focus of the new Strategy will be on increasing women's economic opportunities and participation in society.

The NSW Government will continue to progress important issues from previous strategies as well as including emerging issues that require new responses. Part of achieving this objective means thinking more broadly about the impact of gender on our expectations of individuals, the way we shape our policy and the investment decisions we make.

Guiding principles

The new NSW Women's Strategy is guided by a range of considerations:

Intersectionality	When people belong to multiple groups, for example older women who live in rural locations, their experiences overlap. When we consider how to improve outcomes for women and girls, we are often working towards improving outcomes for specific subsections of women and girls, who have worse outcomes. The concept of communities of focus below highlights some communities where intersectionality can multiply disadvantage.
Meaningful input	The Strategy will be guided by three key sources of input: feedback from women and girls in consultations; key findings in research; and the experiences of those who work in service systems with women and girls.
Partnerships	The Strategy will reflect the enduring need to work in a coordinated way across all sectors. We will work with the Commonwealth Government, local government, the corporate sector, not-for-profit sector and geographic and communities.
Immediate and longer-term	The Strategy will include measures that focus on achieving immediate change, as well as those that work to shift the structures that perpetuate economic and social inequality.

Focus communities

The *NSW Women's Health Framework*¹ introduced the concept of focus communities – that is, the communities whose women and girls may be more vulnerable. This concept is important for the next Women's Strategy, because while a Women's Strategy has to improve outcomes for all women and girls, it is particularly important that we improve outcomes for those who are most vulnerable. In the context of the next Women's Strategy, we have identified the following focus communities:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls (this Discussion Paper refers to Aboriginal women and girls to encompass Indigenous women and girls)
- Women from culturally diverse communities
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+)
- Women and girls living with disability
- Women and girls living in regional, rural and remote areas
- Women and girls experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage
- Carers
- Older women
- Young women
- Women veterans (and the women partners of veterans and service members)
- Women and girls in contact with the criminal justice system.

Shaping our next strategy

A key principle for the next Strategy is to have meaningful input from a range of sources. The approach we have adopted has already been shaped through discussions with a range of key stakeholders, who advised us on areas of focus and potential priorities, potential opportunities for change and who we should consult with. Responses to this Discussion Paper will be an important input to the Strategy.



Hearing from women and girls

The voices of women and girls, their direct experiences and priorities, are paramount in shaping the Strategy. We are doing this in a range of ways:

- Deep consultation with a range of women and girls in focus groups covering communities across NSW
- Broad consultation with as many women as possible through the *Have Your Say* survey with responses to this Discussion Paper and shorter social media questions
- A comprehensive review of existing consultation reportsⁱⁱ, to ensure that we capture important messages that women and girls have already given.



Reviewing the evidence

Evidence gives us another way to establish the most important gaps for women and girls, and the areas we could tackle.

We are looking at evidence in a range of ways:

- A review of the performance of women for key indicators from the NSW Women's Gender Equality Dashboard
- A broader review of material from around Australia and the world, including strategies and initiatives, key concerns and responses
- A review of the NSW Women's Strategy 2018–2022 to identify successes, gaps, and future priorities.



Those who work with women and girls

Across a wide service system, there are many organisations with a particular interest in the outcomes for women and girls, and who have gained insights from working closely with women and girls.

We will consult with those who work with women and girls across a range of areas including:

- Focus communities including older women, young women, Aboriginal women, LGBTIQ+ women, women from culturally diverse backgrounds, and women living with disability
- Themed areas including health, housing and homelessness, rights and justice, education, and local government.

About the pillars

The 2018–2022 Strategy established three focus areas. These ‘pillars’ are summarised below. We have used the pillars to structure this discussion paper because these areas remain important. However, we expect that the content underneath each of the pillars will respond to our findings.



1. Economic opportunity and advancement

- Improving women’s financial wellbeing and security.
- Supporting diverse and flexible employment opportunities for women and girls.
- Creating employment opportunities across occupations and industries where women remain underrepresented.



2. Health and wellbeing

- Promoting and supporting a holistic approach to women’s health across the lifespan.
- Addressing health needs to maximise women’s and girls’ physical, social and economic potential.



3. Participation and empowerment

- Supporting women’s engagement through social networks, access to information.
- Building confidence using diverse representations of women and girls.

Updating the pillars and their priorities

The following pages go into these pillars in more detail. For each of the pillars we have included:

- A description of what the pillar aims to address
- What the 2018–2022 Strategy highlighted as focus areas
- Key statistics or other facts that inform how we think about changes and current priorities
- Consultation questions for you to answer.

We have also included some quotes from women who contributed to the Women’s Economic Opportunity Review.

Consultation questions

1. Since 2018, which improvements in gender equality in NSW have been most important for you?
2. Since 2018, which programs, partnerships or initiatives have made a difference for women and girls in NSW? If you know, tell us who ran them.
3. Which are the most important issues that need to be addressed to create a positive future for women and girls?

Pillar 1: Economic opportunity and advancement



Improving women's financial wellbeing and security.

Supporting diverse and flexible employment opportunities for women and girls.

Creating employment opportunities across occupations and industries where women remain under-represented.

Economic opportunity is fundamentally about the way women and girls conceive of their careers, participate in the economy and optimise their earning potential through the widest range of job types possible. The 2021-22 NSW Intergenerational Report identified that although women's participation is projected to increase, it is nonetheless expected to remain below that of men. If women's participation is increased to be the same as men's over the next 20 years, the economy in 2060-61 would be eight per cent larger (measured in today's dollars), the equivalent of \$22,000 more annual income per household. The NSW Government's Women's Economic Opportunities Review will consider how to improve women's economic participation and propose reform opportunities to address structural and non-structural barriers to entry and participation, and support parents to be able to balance work and life.

2018–2022 focus areas

Government board and committee representation

Access to childcare

Re-entry to workforce for carers and mothers

STEM visibility and career pathways

Women in arts and cultural industries

Women entrepreneurs

Women in construction and trades

Thinking about change and priorities

- Participation in the workforce remains the primary way for accessing economic independence, yet the proportion of women in the labour force continues to be lower than men with 60.9% of women versus 70% of men. Women are more than twice as likely to be in part-time work than men (41.8% vs 19.8%)ⁱⁱⁱ. The employment pay gap at 14.5% is slightly lower than the 10-year average^{iv}.
- Women in some focus communities have greater challenges engaging in the workforce, including Aboriginal women. 51.5% of Aboriginal women are in the labour force, compared to 65% of Aboriginal men^v. CALD women also have lower workforce participation rates, with 47.3% compared to 69.5% of CALD men^{vi}. Aboriginal women experience greater disadvantage in the workplace, where they encounter racism and lack of support in culturally unsafe workplaces. In the UTS and Diversity Council of Australia *Gari Yala Gendered Insights* reports, only one in four Aboriginal women said they felt supported when they experienced racism in the workplace^{vii}.
- Aboriginal women entrepreneurs are leaders in building new Aboriginal businesses, with one in four Aboriginal businesses being owned and operated by Aboriginal women^{viii}. Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) highlighted the importance of employment and the ways in which Aboriginal women are a force for change for economic opportunities and wellbeing as they support employment and culturally safe workplaces for Aboriginal women and men^{ix}.

- Girls continue to have high academic performance, with secondary school completions 15% higher than boys. We have seen amazing improvements over time in the participation of high-school aged girls and university-aged women in STEM subjects, but females are less likely to study science STEM in Years 11 and 12^x and as undergraduates^{xi}. New programs are focusing on how to engage and retain women who graduate with degrees in STEM from university in STEM fields^{xii}.
- Female entrepreneurs and start-ups are on the rise in Australia, with new university-led initiatives, new government funding and private investments focused on boosting female funders^{xiii}. Australia has an active and vibrant networking community to build up women in business. This area has been a focus in the Women's Economic Opportunity review.
- Access to childcare remains a central issue for women, linked to both labour participation for women and more overall advantage in a local community^{xiv}.
- Pay gaps, coupled with time out of the workforce for parenting, caring and other responsibilities, compound to create a serious deficit in the amount of superannuation many women have. Women have around two-thirds of the superannuation savings as men^{xv}.
- The proportion of domestic labour contributed by males declined across the COVID period. During COVID, mothers and single parents (the majority of whom are women) were more likely to have increased childcare and domestic labour responsibilities and they were more likely to leave the labour force, impacting both the lifetime earning gap and superannuation^{xvi}.

Consultation questions

The recently completed NSW Women's Economic Opportunity Review (WEOR) has held broad and deep conversations on issues of economic opportunity and advancement. The WEOR explored issues such as:

- Support for women to enter, re-enter and stay in the workforce
- Create the opportunities and conditions for women to succeed in the workforce
- Improve women's economic security throughout their lifetime
- Support female entrepreneurs to start and run their own business.

Rather than repeating that work, we have chosen to rely on the Review findings, and are only lightly touching on those issues in this Discussion Paper and related consultations.

Pillar 2: Health and wellbeing



Promoting and supporting a holistic approach to women's and girls' health across the lifespan.

Addressing health needs to maximise women's physical, social and economic potential.

Health and wellbeing deliver quality of life and underpins social and economic participation. And while the women of NSW live longer and healthier lives than their predecessors, and many health indicators are showing an upward trend, there are still areas we can improve.

2018–2022 focus areas

Coordinating, integrating and delivering health services

Older women and housing instability

Accessing housing assistance

Transitioning out of social housing

Health and wellbeing of mothers and babies

Young women who self-harm

Thinking about change and priorities

- Overall health is dependent on the right nutrition, physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight and limiting use of alcohol and other drugs. Yet obesity rates are at their highest, exercise rates are near their lowest, and women's smoking rates are the highest since 2012.
- The NSW Women's Health Framework recognises that Aboriginal women's health outcomes are impacted by historical circumstances combined with socioeconomic factors, environmental factors, lack of access to primary health care and specific health risk factors. Aboriginal women experience more than three times the hospitalisation rates for heart attack and for smoking-attributable conditions than non-Aboriginal women ^{xvii}.
- There are some health conditions that predominantly affect women, including but limited to reproductive health, endometriosis, pelvic health, menopause and breast and uterine cancer, dementia and arthritis.
- The invisibility of women in medical research impacts on our understanding of medical conditions, effectiveness of treatments, and restricts advancements in women's health.
- Mental health and wellbeing go hand-in-hand with physical health and lifespan and building resilience can support improved life outcomes. The National Survey of Health and Wellbeing found that women experience higher rates of mental disorders (22% compared with 18%), anxiety (18% and 11% respectively) and affective disorders (7.1% and 5.3% respectively) ^{xviii}.
- Healthy intimate and social relationships play a key role in women's health and wellbeing. However, issues such as intimate partner violence against women persist, with close to 80% of the female victims of homicide having been killed by a person in a domestic relationship ^{xix}. Violence against women and girls leads to immediate and long-term negative health effects. Bullying is an issue across all domains, but particularly for young women and women in the workplace.
- Feelings of personal safety and the experience of violence have been changing over time, but experiences vary amongst different women and the types of violence. The 2016 ABS Personal Safety Survey found that significantly fewer women in NSW reported feeling unsafe taking public transport, although more than one in four women still report feeling unsafe waiting for public transport ^{xx}.
- Some forms of violence are more prevalent for women. The ABS Survey found that 15.4% of all women in NSW experienced sexual harassment in the previous year.

- The ABS Survey also found that some women are more likely to experience physical violence – women who are not in the labour force (1.6 times more likely), 18- to 34-year-old women (1.5 times more likely), and women with disability (1.4 times more likely)^{xxi}.
- The *Gari Yala Gendered Insights* reports found Aboriginal women carers are more vulnerable as they also experience the challenges of carers in the workplace. Aboriginal women carers were the group most likely to report lack of support when experiencing racism in the workplace^{xxii}.
- Women are affected by housing issues at different stages as their housing needs and financial capacity changes. Older women are particularly, and increasingly, vulnerable to insecure housing. Between 2014-15 and 2020-21, the number of women over the age of 60 years accessing homelessness services more than doubled, an increase of 118%^{xxiii}.

Consultation questions

4. How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect key areas of your life?
5. How has COVID-19 changed your priorities?
6. To improve your health and wellbeing, what support do you need the most?
7. Which health issues would you like to see more research and information on for women?
8. How well do workplaces manage health and related issues for women?
9. What else could be done to create safe and respectful workplaces that support gender equality?

Pillar 3: Participation and empowerment



Supporting women's engagement through social networks, access to information.
Building confidence using diverse representations of women and girls.

The participation and empowerment pillar is broad in intent, ranging from the levels of representation of women in key leadership roles to visibility in public life; from participation in sport and other social activities to access to secure social networks. This pillar considers how we change the forces that are currently leading to negative attitudes towards women and girls and change the conversation publicly to enable women to safely engage in public and economic life. This pillar also includes a special consideration of the focus communities.

2018–2022 focus areas

Celebrating achievements of NSW women

Support for networking, information and services

Online safety

Women in Sport Strategy Her Sport Her Way

Multicultural principle

Key points

- There have been clear gains in the representation of women in public leadership, in NSW Parliament, local government, and in the public service. Women now hold one in three seats in the NSW Parliament^{xxiv} and make up 42% of all senior executives in the NSW public service, a 5% increase since 2017^{xxv}.
- Similarly, there have been significant gains in women's leadership on boards, where 1 in 3 directors in ASX 300 companies are women, an increase from the 1 in 5 female directors in the ASX 500 several years ago^{xxvi}. There are still industries where the representation of women lags behind that of men, such as in higher education (35% of professors are women^{xxvii}), law firms (33% of principals are women^{xxviii}) and arts, film and media where men are more likely to be in full-time roles (64%) and to hold more senior positions (e.g., directors)^{xxix}.
- Extensive use of social media has exposed many women to vicious attacks, compromising their safety. Three in ten women surveyed in 2018 said they'd experienced online abuse or harassment, and 37% of those women said that the experience had made them feel that their physical safety was threatened^{xxx}.
- Women in the focus communities identified in this Discussion Paper can often draw on individual and community strengths and abilities; these can form a foundation for future investment and advancement. For Aboriginal women, the Wiyi Yani U Thangani report raised women's voices in celebrating their strengths, their connections to land, culture, and communities. The report shared women speaking "with great pride of carrying the knowledge and heritage of matriarchal lines that reach back over millennia." Women in Aboriginal families and communities are carers and leaders and are fundamental to the wellbeing and improvements in social and economic outcomes for their people and communities^{xxxi}.
- Women in focus communities can also experience compounded disadvantage as a result of intersectionality. For example,
 - Women in prison are a particularly vulnerable group. Aboriginal women are overrepresented, with 32% of women in prison being Aboriginal. Rates of incarceration are also growing amongst Aboriginal women, including a 49% increase in sentencing of Aboriginal women compared with 6% increase for non-Aboriginal women.^{xxxii} 24% of all women in prison reported having a disability^{xxxiii}.
 - Women from CALD backgrounds, including migrants and refugees, can face different challenges, including navigating cultural expectations, and challenges accessing services due to language barriers. Women on temporary visas are particularly vulnerable.

- Women with disability are less likely to be in paid employment and are paid less than men with disability and women without disability^{xxxiv}.

Consultation questions

10. What could be done to ensure diverse women and girl's voices are heard?
11. What could be done to change attitudes towards women and girls, especially to challenge stereotypes and overcome biases?
12. What could men and boys do to contribute to gender equality in NSW?
13. What else is important to include in the strategy?

Consultation and beyond

We are heading into a period of intense consultation, with a plan to release the next Strategy in the latter part of 2022.

May to mid-June	Consultation
Mid-June to July	Analyse the responses Prepare proposals
Later 2022	Prepare and release the next Strategy

Have your say...in a nutshell

This Discussion Paper has 13 questions. Some of the questions are open ended while others are multiple choice. When we use the term 'we', we mean governments, the private sector and the broader community. The complete list of questions is as follows:

1. Since 2018, which improvements in gender equality in NSW have been most important for you? [multiple choice]
2. Since 2018, which programs, partnerships or initiatives have made a difference for women and girls in NSW? If you know, tell us who ran them. [open ended]
3. Which are the most important issues that need to be addressed to create a positive future for women and girls? [multiple choice]
4. How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect key areas of your life? [multiple choice]
5. How has COVID-19 changed your priorities? [multiple choice]
6. To improve your health and wellbeing, what support do you need the most? [multiple choice]
7. Which health issues would you like to see more research and information on for women? [multiple choice]
8. How well do workplaces manage health and related issues for women? [multiple choice]
9. What else could be done to create safe and respectful workplaces that support gender equality? [open ended]
10. What could be done to ensure diverse women and girl's voices are heard? [open ended]
11. What could be done to change attitudes towards women and girls, especially to challenge stereotypes and overcome biases? [open ended]
12. What could men and boys do to contribute to gender equality in NSW? [open ended]
13. What else is important to include in the strategy? [open ended]

A reminder of how to have your say

You can have your say about what is important for the next NSW Women's Strategy in any of the following ways:

- Complete the online survey at the 'Have Your Say' website. This survey includes all the consultation questions in this Discussion Paper, and includes the multiple choice options. Answer as many or as few as you would like.
- Answer our 'Quick Poll' questions on the 'Have Your Say' website.
- If you have a disability or require translation or other support to have your say, email us at womennsw@dpc.nsw.gov.au and someone will be in contact with you.
- Keep an eye out for public consultation sessions, which will be promoted on the Have Your Say website, [our website](#), and through partners. Each consultation has a cap on the number of participants.
- In limited cases we can accept submissions. If you would like to make a submission, email us at womennsw@dpc.nsw.gov.au to let us know.

All contributions must be received by 5:00pm on Monday 20 June 2022.

A guide to acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CALD	Cultural and linguistically diverse
COVID	COVID-19, the coronavirus
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer, and others
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
WEOR	Women's Economic Opportunities Review
WNSW	Women New South Wales

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