



Australian Government

Department of the  
Prime Minister and Cabinet

Office for Women

A large, stylized circular graphic composed of several segments in shades of blue, green, and light blue, arranged in a circular pattern around the central text.

Report of the  
Australian Government  
Delegation to the  
61<sup>st</sup> Session of the  
United Nations

**COMMISSION ON THE  
STATUS OF WOMEN**

## **Report of the Australian Government Delegation to the 61st Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women**

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## FOREWORD



As the Minister for Women, I am committed to the Australian Government's ongoing work to supporting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls both domestically and internationally.

Gender equality is a priority for the Australian Government. We have placed it at the forefront of our Human Rights Council campaign, and it is at the centre of our foreign policy, aid program and economic diplomacy.

As a global leader in gender equality, the Government has set a target committing at least 80 per cent of all aid investments to address gender issues in their implementation. This investment recognises that empowering women is critical to supporting economic growth, reducing poverty and increasing development and security.

Domestically, Australia is prioritising efforts to end violence against women and girls, advance women's economic empowerment and strengthen women's participation in leadership and decision-making.

The priority theme of the 61st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) was women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work. This theme aligns with Australia's focus on strengthening women's economic security by boosting workforce participation. Australia has prioritised increasing women's workforce participation – currently the gap between men's and women's workforce participation is at a record low of 11 per cent. This reflects our increased investment in child care and our work to ensure women have the skills and support to work in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) industries.

I was delighted to share Australia's experience in making progress towards gender equality. I spoke to our efforts to tackle violence against women and their children. This included the importance of harnessing technology to protect and empower women, at Australia's side event on Preventing Violence in the Digital Age.

Australia also hosted a side event to discuss the importance of economically empowering Indigenous women and providing them with independence and choice in which experiences from Australia, Canada and New Zealand were shared.

Australia has a longstanding commitment to the inclusion of civil society and national human rights institutions at the Commission. I was pleased to support three civil society representatives join the official Australian delegation to CSW61. Their commitment and contribution to Australia's engagement at the Commission of advancing gender equality and the role of civil society was commendable.

I was also pleased to be joined on the delegation by Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls, Dr Sharman Stone, and the Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Kate Jenkins. Australia's position at the forefront of global efforts to realise gender equality was strengthened by their participation.

The work of the CSW continues to be important to accelerating the full and equal realisation of human rights for women and girls. I am proud to have led Australia's delegation that contributed to a successful CSW61.

# THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (the Commission) is a global policy-making body that is dedicated to advancing gender equality and the rights of women and girls across the world. Each year, representatives of United Nations (UN) Member States gather at the UN Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide. At each session, the Commission negotiates Agreed Conclusions. The Agreed Conclusions drive the policy recommendations applicable to governments, regional and international organisations (including the UN system), civil society organisations and the private sector among others.

More information on the function and history of the Commission can be found at: [www.unwomen.org/en/csw](http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw).

UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, was created in July 2010, and became operational on 1 January 2011.

## COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

The Commission has 45 member countries. Members are elected for four-year terms based on equitable geographical distribution (13 members from Africa, 11 from Asia, 9 from Latin America and the Caribbean; 8 from Western Europe and other States; and 4 from Eastern Europe). These members are elected by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and comprise one representative from each of the 45 Member States.

Australia announced our candidacy to serve as a member of the Commission for the 2019-2023 term at the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission. This reflects our longstanding commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Australia, if successful, will use its membership to advance gender equality, and the realisation of human rights for all women and girls. Australia will use its membership to pursue inclusive sustainable development, ending all forms of violence against women and girls, the economic empowerment of women, and empower women's voices and participation in decision-making. Australia will prioritise practical actions to secure gender equality where progress is slow. We will use this opportunity to advocate for the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as a critical enabler to realising the ambitious and universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## AUSTRALIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMISSION

Australia was one of the 15 founding members of the Commission and has served as a member five times. Australia last served from 1993 to 1996. The Australian Government sends a delegation to the Commission each year to promote Australia's priorities for gender equality and highlight practical solutions to some of the most pressing challenges to realising gender equality. Australia is active in negotiating the Agreed Conclusions to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and progress international commitments for gender equality. The Australian Government is proud to support non-government delegates as part of the Australian delegation to the Commission. Our support is longstanding. Australia has included non-government delegates since 1999 and this year, three non-government representatives participated in the delegation.



*Australian civil society and delegation officials at the Australian Civil Society at CSW61 Reception hosted by Minister Cash and Ambassador Bird.*

*Source: Australian Human Rights Commission*



# 61<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW61)

At CSW61, representatives from Member States, UN entities and ECOSOC accredited non-government organisations (NGOs) gathered to consider global progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate robust policies that promote gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide.

The priority theme for CSW61 was women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work. CSW61 also evaluated the progress in the implementation of the Agreed Conclusions from the 58th session, challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls. Australia was pleased to consider the empowerment of Indigenous women as the focus area for the session.

## WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE CHANGING WORLD OF WORK

Based on the current rate of change, the global economic gap between men and women will not close for another 170 years. This gap has widened since 2013. The Commission's consideration of women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work is critical to local, regional and international efforts to realise gender equality and inclusive sustainable development and prosperity.

In her opening statement to the Commission, UN Women's Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka affirmed the role of the Commission as a barometer of progress towards gender equality. The work of the Commission has contributed to effective policy and programs to redress economic inequality.

The Commission considered the ways in which technology and innovation can be harnessed to accelerate women's economic empowerment. Australia participated in the Ministerial roundtable affirming the importance of universal digital literacy to ensure women and girls can both participate in, and benefit from, innovation and advances in technology. The under-representation of women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education was discussed, with participants calling for accelerating efforts to redress low participation in these fields.

The Commission acknowledged that informal work is a major contribution to national economies. People engaged in informal work practices are often more vulnerable, with reduced access to social protection and labour rights. Women engaged in informal work experience compounding challenges, particularly exposure to violence and harassment in unregulated workplaces. Unpaid domestic work, predominantly undertaken by women and girls, is limiting opportunities for economic independence.

## CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

At the 58th session (CSW58) in 2014, Member States agreed that the Millennium Development Goals increased global attention to gender equality accelerating the achievement of crucial enablers to gender equality. However, the Commission acknowledged deep concern that progress for women and girls across all the Millennium Development Goals remained slow and uneven. Importantly, the Commission agreed that gender equality was required to progress commitments for all the Millennium Development Goals.

A series of interactive dialogues held at CSW61 included 11 Member States presenting voluntary presentations on their experiences, successes and lessons learnt in implementing the Millennium Development Goals.

The dialogue affirmed the importance of the full and equal realisation of human rights for women and girls for achieving progress across the breadth of the Sustainable Development Goals. It also affirmed the need to accelerate the gender-responsive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Report of the Secretary General from CSW61 summarises the impact, trends and challenges facing Member States in relation to implementing the Agreed Conclusions from CSW58.

A copy of the Secretary General's Report can be found at:

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw61-2017/official-documents>



*Ms Hatfield Dodds, Ambassador Bird, Ms Jenkins, Ms Shaw, Minister Cash, Ambassador Stone, Ms Wilson, Ms Cedar.  
Source: Australian civil society representatives on the official Australian delegation to CSW61*

## EMPOWERMENT OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action recognises the differential discrimination and barriers Indigenous women face. On 16 March 2017, the Commission welcomed the focus on the empowerment of Indigenous women. This was an important milestone for the Commission in advancing the rights of Indigenous peoples and recognition of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Participants called for further attention to this topic at the Commission, including as a future priority theme. The focus on Indigenous women's empowerment is important to advancing the pledge in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind.

A report of the proceedings on the focus area can be found at:

<http://undocs.org/E/CN.6/2017/12>

# THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DELEGATION TO CSW61

Since the establishment of the Commission in 1946, Australia has formally participated in the annual CSW sessions through the work carried out by the official Australian Government delegation. Australian Government delegations to the Commission have actively engaged in negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions (formal outcomes document) and resolutions, hosted and spoken at a range of events, developed relationships with like-minded countries, and pursued Australia's agenda in relation to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Engagement in these proceedings enables Australia to:

- Advocate for the full and equal realisation of human rights for women;
- Showcase Australia's gender equality initiatives internationally;
- Engage with civil society to ensure better outcomes for women in Australia and globally; and
- Strengthen and build relationships with like-minded countries and near neighbours.

In 2017, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Women, led Australia's official delegation to CSW61. Minister Cash invited Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls, Dr Sharman Stone and the Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Ms Kate Jenkins to join the delegation. The Minister also invited three civil society delegates to join the Australian delegation: Ms Jahna Cedar, Ms Leann Wilson and Ms Elizabeth Shaw. For the first time, Australia's official delegation included two Indigenous representatives. Australia is considered a global leader progressing gender equality and women's empowerment. Australia's high-level representation at CSW61 was well received by UN Women, Member States and civil society. Australia received commendation for our commitment to gender equality and our ongoing support for civil society's participation in the work of the Commission.



*Ms Wilson and Ms Cedar.*

*Source: Australia civil society representatives on the official Australian delegation to CSW61*

## OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION TO CSW61

### **Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash**

Minister for Women

### **Her Excellency Dr Sharman Stone**

Ambassador for Women and Girls

### **Ms Kate Jenkins**

Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner

### **Ms Lin Hatfield Dodds**

Deputy Secretary

Domestic Policy, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

### **Ms Amanda McIntyre**

First Assistant Secretary

Office for Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

### **Ms Sarah Goulding**

A/g Assistant Secretary and Principal Sector Specialist Gender

Gender Equality Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

### **Ms Rachael Farrell**

Director

Office for Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

### **Ms Jahna Cedar**

Executive Officer, Gumala Aboriginal Corporation

### **Ms Leann Wilson**

Executive Director, Business Development and Innovation, Regional Economic Solutions

### **Ms Elizabeth Shaw**

President UN Women Australia, Manager KPMG Advisory Services

## REPORT BY DR SHARMAN STONE, AUSTRALIA'S AMBASSADOR FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

It was my pleasure to attend the 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61), supporting our Minister for Women, Michaelia Cash. CSW61 was my first multilateral engagement as Australia's new Ambassador for Women and Girls. It was an excellent opportunity for me, together with the rest of Australia's delegation, to engage in a range of high level discussions and forums in relation to women's economic empowerment and the changing world of work, the theme of CSW61.

This was only the second CSW since Australia launched its *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy*, which outlines the approach Australia takes, across the breadth of its international engagement, to empower women and girls.

I used CSW61 to showcase Australia's efforts including investments to strengthen the economic empowerment of women, expanding financial inclusion, training opportunities for females with small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and impact investing in female-owned businesses. Of course, additional income alone does not achieve economic empowerment for a woman if she must surrender her earnings, or her unpaid household responsibilities and subservient social status remain unchanged. We also know that engaging with, and changing the behaviours of, her partner and her community are necessary if she is to avoid escalating violence or harm due to her financial empowerment.

CSW61 brought together key change agents from across the globe that can positively influence women's experience in the workplace – the level of respect and remuneration, access to quality training and jobs, and measures to promote leadership. The private sector is a key player in supporting the economic empowerment of women and girls, and growth and globalisation can provide opportunities to reduce inequality between men and women. However, these alone will not achieve equality for women in the world of work. What is also needed is political will, the right policy settings by governments, inclusive growth and social structures to allow women and girls to effectively engage in education, training and work. My advocacy at CSW was to urge all actors to do the right thing.

At CSW61 I spoke at many side and parallel events, including: the *Global Equal Pay Coalition*; *Ending Violence Against Women: Prevention and Response in the World of Work*; *Unlocking Finance for Public and Private Gender Responsive Investments*; and supporting our own Sex Discrimination Commissioner (Kate Jenkins) in a session on the *Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Promoting and Protecting Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work*.

I highlighted the strong policy levers in place in Australia to support increased participation of women in the economy and efforts to improve gender pay equality. Australia has some strong achievements to showcase, such as increased female leadership on government boards. But like many other countries, much remains to be done. Participation in these events encourages a rich exchange of ideas and experiences that help us work together in an interconnected, global economy to get development outcomes and gender equality in the world of work right for women and girls everywhere.

For the first time, Australia's official delegation included two Indigenous representatives. It is imperative that Indigenous women have access to the same calibre of education, training and employment as their non-Indigenous peers. Ensuring the experiences and voices of Indigenous women are heard and respected is so important.

Another often forgotten group in events like the Commission on the Status of Women is young people, so I made sure to use my time there to both hear from and represent the voices of young people. I met with youth representatives from Australia, the Pacific, the Commonwealth (Commonwealth Youth and Gender Equality Network) and across the globe through the World YWCA.

I met many of the partners Australia works with to achieve gender equality. My meetings ranged from discussions with UN Women working to improve the security of women selling produce in the markets, to discussions with UN-Habitat around upgrading slums, to UN Capital Development Fund on the use of new digital technologies to allow women access to banking services and bank accounts for the first time, and women in humanitarian crises with UN Development Fund. I also spoke on behalf of Australia at a session showcasing a new partnership Australia has commenced with Women's World Banking bringing digital and other banking services to women across Asia.

Australia is one of a handful of countries to have a dedicated Ambassador for Women and Girls and, despite the shut down of the UN due to poor weather, we managed to get together to strengthen our relationships and to share ideas. In this small group – namely, the Finnish Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues, H.E. Anne Lammila; the Swedish Ambassador for Gender Equality and Coordinator of Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy, Anne Bernes; the Netherlands Ambassador on Women's Rights, Susan Blankart; and the UK's new Special Envoy for Gender Equality, Joanne Roper – we discussed the challenges and opportunities we encounter as advocates for gender equality.

Gender equality, in the world of work and beyond, is a challenge we must continue to tackle head on. Australia has made an unequivocal commitment to address the persistent issues that lie behind and reinforce gender inequality, particularly ending violence against women. As Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls I will take forward our best efforts to improve the lives of women and girls across the globe, and ensure that the commitments Australia made at CSW61 turn into a reality.





*Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls, Dr Sharman Stone at the launch of the Global Equal Pay Platform of Champions.  
Source: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*



*Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins at the Asia-Pacific Non-Government Organisation Dialogue.  
Source: Australian Human Rights Commission*



## REPORT BY MS KATE JENKINS, SEX DISCRIMINATION COMMISSIONER, AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

I was honoured to attend the 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) as a member of the Australian Government Delegation.

The priority theme of this year's CSW session was on the advancement of women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work, and the focus was the empowerment of Indigenous women. Both themes were clearly identified as priorities for Australia during my recent consultations for the report "A conversation in gender equality"<sup>1</sup>.

This was my first year attending CSW and I was pleased to support the Australian Government delegation and Australian civil society delegates to expand our impact in the international arena, and build relationships to help improve gender equality in Australia. My priorities included:

- Sharing Australia's experiences and learning from other States' best practice in increasing women's economic security and Indigenous women's empowerment; and
- Advocating for independent participation status for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) at CSW.

### *Women's economic security and Indigenous women's empowerment*

Australia had a strong and positive presence at CSW61, organising high quality side events on key gender equality issues. I observed Australia's high standing as a leader in the advancement of women's economic empowerment, including through the work of the Australian Human Rights Commission over many years. I attended events and meetings with representatives from other States to learn from their experiences. I shared Australian successes and challenges and gained insights on increasing women's economic participation, including through: equal pay; reducing gender-segregated industries and workplaces; recognising and valuing unpaid work; improving data collection and working alongside men to achieve gender equality.

I was struck by the wisdom and leadership demonstrated through the stories of Australian Indigenous women, including Leann Wilson and Keira Jenkins at the Australian Side Event *Indigenous Women's Empowerment* and Sarah Burr at the YWCA Breakfast hosted by Minister Cash. Effective teamwork between Government, NGOs and Indigenous women led to important language on Indigenous women's empowerment in the final Agreed Conclusions.

### *Independent Participation of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)*

I appreciated the opportunity to work with the Australian Government and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) to maintain strong recognition of NHRIs and seek further steps towards their enhanced participation at CSW in the Agreed Conclusions. Australia's support of independent participation rights for NHRIs at CSW is consistent with Australia's candidacy to serve on the Human Rights Council for the 2018-20 term.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/conversation-gender-equality-2017>

As part of my advocacy for NHRI participation, I supported the very popular side event co-hosted by the Permanent Missions of Afghanistan, Australia, Chile, Costa Rica, Germany, Morocco, New Zealand, Qatar and the UK, 'The role of NHRIs in enhancing women's economic participation in the changing world of work'.

Ultimately, in the Agreed Conclusions we achieved recognition of the contribution of NHRIs in promoting the economic empowerment of women and their full and productive employment and decent work (paragraph 13) and continued consideration of how to enhance participation rights of 'A Status NHRIs' at CSW (paragraph 43).

#### *Civil Society Contribution*

This year there was a strong contingent of committed and talented NGO representatives attending CSW and sharing their expertise at a range of events. The Australian NGOs actively engaged in CSW and made a profound contribution to promoting gender equality and women's and girls' human rights. The three civil society delegates in the Government delegation, Leann Wilson, Jahna Cedar and Beth Shaw, played a critical role in bringing the authentic grassroots voices to the issues discussed. I hosted an Asia Pacific NGOs dialogue where Australian NGOs and government delegates were privileged to hear the specific challenges faced by women and girls in the Asia-Pacific, reminding us of the important role Australia has to advocate for women in our region.

#### *Australia's country statement*

Australia's country statement, delivered by Australia's Minister for Women, Michaelia Cash, was a strong statement of support addressing gender equality, promoting and protecting women's and girls' human rights, taking strong action to eliminate violence against women and recognising the work of NHRIs. The country statement also noted the opportunity and risk that technology and innovation provides for women's economic participation and the need to ensure women and girls are equal participants and benefactors of the changing world of work. Minister Cash acknowledged the pivotal leadership role Indigenous women play in their communities and as contributors to the economy and confirmed Australia's commitment to providing opportunities for Australia's Indigenous peoples.

I was pleased to support Ambassador Gillian Bird and the talented Australian negotiating team from the Australian Permanent Mission to the United Nations to pursue these priorities in the Agreed Conclusions.

The Australian Human Rights Commission is grateful to the Australian Government for the opportunity to attend CSW61 as part of the Australian delegation. It was an honour to be part of such an effective delegation and to work together to achieve significant recognition of NHRIs at CSW.

## REPORT BY CIVIL SOCIETY DELEGATES

We were deeply honoured to be selected as non-government delegates and were incredibly grateful for the opportunity to both learn about policy-making on a global level and play a role in ensuring diverse voices were heard in negotiations.

CSW's focus area was the 'Empowerment of Indigenous Women' and the Australian Government selected Indigenous women as two of the three NGO delegates: Elizabeth (Beth) Shaw – the President of UN Women Australia and Manager KPMG Advisory Services; Jahna Cedar – the Executive Officer at Gumala Aboriginal Corporation; and Leann Wilson – the Executive Director of Business Development and Innovation for Regional Economic Solutions.

Jahna hoped to learn best practice and tried and tested programs which could benefit Indigenous Australians whilst advocating for strong language that would advance international commitment to empowering and engaging with the Australian First Nations people. Leann was most looking forward to the opportunity to meet with women from around the world and in particular other Indigenous women to share and learn from each other's experiences and wisdom. Beth, having attended CSW on previous occasions as a civil society representative, was particularly keen to learn about how language is negotiated in multilateral settings from the government perspective.

Including civil society delegates on the official government delegation is not a practice uniformly adopted by governments around the world and is something Australia should be proud to visibly lead on. At a time when the advocacy space for civil society organisations is shrinking, the role the Australian Government can play in encouraging other delegations to include civil society representatives in their delegations will be instrumental in strengthening the Agreed Conclusions in years to come.

It was particularly special to be part of the Australian Government delegation this year, with Australia's candidacy for a term on the Human Rights Council and the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Australia playing a strong leadership role on the international stage is an important opportunity to advance progress on human rights and strengthen our own domestic policies and frameworks.

### *Pre-Departure*

In preparation for our attendance at CSW61, we reached out to previous non-government delegates, consulted with Australian civil society organisations, participated in the pre-departure briefing day organised by the Equality Rights Alliance and provided input into both the zero draft and the compilation draft of the Agreed Conclusions.

### *During CSW61*

Given all that was underfoot, it was important for 'Team Australia' (wearing our gold kangaroo lapel pins!) to divide and conquer, speaking at side events, participating in regional caucuses and networking with counterparts from around the world. The focus of our engagement was promoting priorities including the importance of Indigenous women participating in all levels of decision-making and the economy, Australia's commitment to global gender equality and the participation rights of independent National Human Rights Institutions at CSW.

Beth was particularly interested in what leading countries were doing to increase women's economic empowerment. Living in Western Australia, which is home to the highest gender pay gap in Australia, she was also interested in policy and initiatives seeking to decrease and eliminate the gender pay gap.

Her activities included:

- Discussing the role of the private sector in increasing women's workforce participation and advancement into leadership roles;
- Learning about legislative efforts to tackle the gender pay gap; and
- Discussing the impact violence against women has on women's workforce participation and what the government and private sector can do to keep women safe and ensure their economic security.

Leann took a real interest in what developed nations could learn from emerging nations such as those in Africa and Asia, for example strategies to increase women's participation in engineering. Leann's contribution at CSW61 boldly reinforced UN Women's long-standing commitment to Indigenous Women, particularly commitments identified in the 'Strategy for Inclusion and Visibility of Indigenous Women'.

Her activities included:

- Learning about climate change and the fragility of ecosystems around the world and the importance of community-based monitoring systems in strengthening communities and capturing cultural knowledge;
- Discussing opportunities of Intercultural Approaches/Sensitivities embracing principles of mutual respect and valuing local knowledge systems, local language and music, art and dance;
- Discussions of 'Restrictive Cultural Traditions' often keeping women from acquiring the resources to earn substantial (if any) income; and
- Partaking in two speaking opportunities including a panel session with New Zealand and Canada discussing First Nations' perspectives and an invitation from the NGO sectors to speak at a morning briefing to provide an assessment of CSW from an Indigenous perspective.

Jahna is a passionate agent of change and advocates for self-determination and empowerment of Indigenous communities. She was proud to hear Minister Cash acknowledge on an international stage that Indigenous women face greater social and economic marginalisation. Jahna affirms that we cannot change where we are, without acknowledging our reality; Australia should be proud that we are the home to the world's oldest living culture that embraces multiculturalism and diversity, whilst working hard for equality and reconciliation.

Jahna's activities during CSW61 included:

- Learning about Indigenous empowerment on an international stage, including through participating in meetings at the Ecuadorian Mission and Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations;
- Discussion on Indigenous empowerment with the Secretariat of the Permanent Forum of Indigenous People who spoke about the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of Indigenous women and girls; and
- Learning of the lack of direct political party participation of Indigenous women. It is Jahna's dream for Australia's reality to include an Indigenous specific seat in parliament that represents his/her constituents (being the views of Indigenous Australia), whilst not aligned to any particular party.

As CSO delegates, we were also interested in how the Australian Government could help advance issues from our region, including those raised by civil society in the Pacific. We actively participated in the Pacific caucuses and the Asia-Pacific Roundtable chaired by Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner. The Roundtable was an opportunity for us to better understand the issues facing women and girls in our region and support civil society efforts to include language in the Agreed Conclusions that recognised these challenges.

Engaging with more Pacific NGOs prior to CSW in future years may help amplify voices from the Pacific, in particular around their advocacy on the impacts of climate change.

Ensuring the voices of civil society were heard in government negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions was the primary focus for us during our time at CSW61. Good communications – timely, targeted and through multiple channels – was fundamental. We set up a dedicated email address, an email list, a Facebook page, several WhatsApp groups and tweeted at #CSW61Aus. We also held daily briefings throughout the entire CSW, with an email update for those who could not attend.

There was also an inspirational presentation by Hannah Woodward from Girl Guides Australia, to the General Assembly, who presented the Youth Declaration on behalf of the Youth Forum for CSW. Australia is a strong supporter of youth, which was also demonstrated in hosting a World YWCA Breakfast, for young women leaders from around the world. We heard heart wrenching, inspirational and passionate stories about people wanting and working hard for change.

We were alarmed when UN building officials limited civil society access to negotiations. An open dialogue between governments and civil society has delivered critical progress towards gender equality throughout the Commission's history, and all member states need to ensure civil society access in future years. It was also concerning that a number of activists planning to attend CSW

were denied visas to travel to the United States, given the importance of CSW hearing from women and men from all over the world.

### *Negotiating Agreed Conclusions*

It was not an easy environment in which to negotiate Agreed Conclusions. Progress towards gender equality globally is sadly often a case of one step forward, two steps back. Ensuring that advancing gender equality remains a key pillar of Australia's engagement in multilateral settings and bilateral relationships is imperative to advancing the rights of millions of women and girls around the world.

Despite difficult negotiations, the Agreed Conclusions set a global ambition to close the gender pay gap, redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, provide affordable childcare, enable men and women to access paid parental leave and end violence against women and their harassment in the workplace. The Agreed Conclusions recognise the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination on women, with important standalone paragraphs on rural women, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, migrant women and women and girls of African descent.

Importantly, the Agreed Conclusions recognise the link between sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and women's economic empowerment. SRHR remains a highly contested area in many countries and regions, and Australia will need to continue to be vigilant in ensuring its ongoing inclusion and prioritise strengthening this language in the future.

One of the greatest advances in language was the work led by the Australian delegation on the rights of Indigenous women. Jahna and Leann played a significant role in helping to achieve this conclusion (with research and input on language, whilst providing 'grassroots' feedback from community) and were extremely grateful for the collective effort and support in being able to achieve this outcome in order for others to now build upon it.

### *Post CSW61*

There is always more work to be done. Australia will have the opportunity in future years to fight for greater recognition of the important role of NHRIs, the inclusion of strong language on sexual orientation, Indigenous empowerment, gender identity and expression, the impact of climate change (in collaboration with voices from our region), ways to integrate the voice of Youth CSW and the elevation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Australia's CSW candidacy reflects the Government's commitment to providing global leadership on gender equality issues. If elected, Australia will have the opportunity to push for commitment on key issues where progress is slow and the challenges persistent.

Australia is widely recognised as a leader in many areas of the CSW Agenda. Domestically, we should continue to demonstrate ambition in our implementation of the Agreed Conclusions. We should also be ambitious on those levers that accelerate progress towards gender equality that didn't make it into the final text, such as ensuring tax systems do not negatively impact upon women's workforce participation and increasing funding to our Human Rights Commission.

### *Individual Reflections*

The best part of Leann's experience was being acknowledged as a multidimensional First Nations descendent who brings intellect, guidance and wisdom to the Australian Government negotiations at the United Nations. She also praises the opportunity to be a part of consensus decision-making processes and has a refreshed and renewed appreciation of the important role civil society and its delegates play across the globe. As a result of this experience, Leann is reminded and grateful to the legacy of First Nations Women and those women of civil society whose shoulders she stands upon and will continue her purpose in adding to Australia's collective legacy.

For Beth, the highlight was working alongside the brilliant, passionate and courageous NGO delegates to support our government negotiating the strongest possible Agreed Conclusions. Whether it was midday or midnight, Australian civil society was always on hand to offer advice, research, support (and cupcakes)! When back in Australia, Beth is keen to support civil society and the next non-government delegates to develop effective ways of working with international civil society organisations to influence those governments seeking to erode women's rights and halt progress towards gender equality.

The highlight of Jahna's time at CSW was the effort by Australian negotiators (with the tremendous support by CSOs) to have Agreed Conclusions that specifically speak to Indigenous empowerment, for the first time in CSW history. Jahna is now committed to using the knowledge she obtained in New York, to implement practices and projects that will self-determine and empower Indigenous communities through inclusive consultation and ownership. The Australian Government is committed to higher representation of Indigenous women in senior levels, which is something that Jahna also advocates and strives for. As an Indigenous Australian woman, Jahna is proud and acknowledges Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar, as one example of a strong warrior creating a path and legacy for our countries next generation.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the Office for Women and DFAT for this amazing experience. We are forever grateful to the Australian civil society organisations that worked tirelessly in providing language, feedback and support, including the previous year's CSO delegates of the Australian Government delegation for a thorough handover.

The views expressed here are those of the civil society delegates. They do not necessarily represent the position of the Government or the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.



*Ms Jahna Cedar, Ms Leann Wilson and Ms Elizabeth Shaw outside the United Nations building New York during CSW61.*

*Source: Australian civil society representatives on Australia's official delegation to CSW61*



# AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DELEGATION PROGRAM

Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Women, led a successful delegation to CSW61. The delegation comprehensively represented the Australian Government's priorities for gender equality and women's empowerment. The Minister represented Australia in the official proceedings, met with her counterparts and civil society representatives to share Australian experiences in progressing gender equality in both a domestic and international context. This included: the challenges facing Australian women, particularly sexual and gender-based violence; the gender pay gap; occupational segregation; and empowerment strategies that reflect the diversity of Australian women, among others.

The depth and experience in the delegation meant there was ample opportunity to demonstrate Australia's credentials as a global leader on gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. Australia's candidacy to serve as a member of the Human Rights Council for the term 2018-2020 includes commitments to progress gender equality. Throughout the Commission, Australia demonstrated ongoing commitment to gender equality, women's economic empowerment and Indigenous women. The delegation demonstrated Australia's willingness to share national experiences and desire to learn from others, to strengthen global best practice and accelerate the realisation of gender equality.

The Minister's program was designed in consultation with a number of stakeholders to ensure it reflected the Government's agenda for advancing gender equality. The Minister highlighted Australia's efforts to promote and protect human rights, including for women and girls, with particular reference to our candidacy for the Human Rights Council; end violence against women and girls, through innovative prevention programs; secure women's economic empowerment and address remaining structural barriers to equality. In addition to official CSW61 events, the Minister participated in bilateral meetings with other heads of delegations, representatives of UN agencies and global ambassadors for gender equality, and spoke at several side and parallel events.

A copy of the Minister's programme is at Annex A.

## OFFICIAL CSW61 PROCEEDINGS

CSW61 was opened on 13 March 2017 by the new United Nations Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres. In his first opening address to the Commission, the Secretary-General declared his determination to place the UN at the forefront of the global movement to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The Secretary-General spoke to the opportunity of women's economic empowerment to shape global prosperity free from discrimination and inequality.

The Secretary General's full opening remarks at CSW61 can be found at:

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-03-13/commission-status-women-remarks>

As part of CSW61, each country presented a Country Statement to the Commission. These statements outline a country's priorities for the session and highlight examples of good practice relating to the priority theme. The Minister delivered Australia's Country Statement to the Commission on 15 March 2017. The Minister reaffirmed Australia's commitment to women's economic inclusion as critical to realising gender equality. The Minister reaffirmed our commitment to promote and protect human rights reflecting on Australia's candidacy to serve as member of the Human Rights Council and on the Commission for the Status of Women. The Minister was resolute in the Australian Government's commitment to building stronger economies through the inclusion of Australian women and eliminating all forms of violence against all women as a prerequisite to the full and equal realisation of their human rights. Australia is proud of our longstanding commitment to civil society. The Minister called on other Member States to look to how they could better support civil society, and the enhanced participation of National Human Rights Institutions in the proceedings of the Commission.

See Annex B for the full text of Australia's Country Statement.

Other Country Statements can be found at:

<http://papersmart.unmeetings.org/ecosoc/csw/csw61/statements/>

As part of the official CSW61 program, a series of high level plenary sessions, including roundtables and panels, were held to examine issues relating to the priority and review themes.

The official program for CSW61 can be found at:

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw61-2017/official-meetings>



*Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations, Gillian Bird PSM, Ambassador for Women and Girls, Dr Sharman Stone, and Minister for Women, Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash.  
Source: Rochelle White, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*

## BILATERAL MEETINGS


At CSW61, the Minister, the Ambassador for Women and Girls and the Sex Discrimination Commissioner held a range of bilateral meetings with heads of delegations, representatives from UN agencies and other global ambassadors. These meetings provide an opportunity to share best practice on some of the most intractable challenges to realising gender equality.


The Minister, with Australia's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Gillian Bird PSM, hosted a lunch for Pacific Ministers and Heads of Delegation. Pacific engagement at the Commission is important to Australia, providing a significant opportunity to discuss the challenges to women's economic empowerment and gender equality in our region.


The Minister undertook an extensive program of bilateral meetings. In these meetings, the Minister highlighted Australia's human rights credentials, spoke to Australian experience in closing gender pay gaps and the provision of early learning for children. A strong interest in Australia's experience implementing strategies to end all forms of violence against women and girls reaffirmed Australia's standing at the forefront of global efforts to end this violation of human rights.


## EVENTS HOSTED BY AUSTRALIA

In addition to the formal CSW61 program, Australia hosted a side event and two parallel events and in addition participated in an expansive program of side events. This engagement contributed significantly to our profile at CSW61. Australia is at the forefront of international dialogue on the persistent and pervasive challenges to gender equality.

 ***Preventing Violence against Women and Girls in the Digital and Technological Age*** — building on the dialogue at CSW59 and CSW60, panellists examined the interactions between technology and gender-based violence. Discussions at the event focused on how technology is both a tool to prevent violence against women, as well as an enabler that facilitates harassment and abuse. Discussions centred on policy solutions to make technology a safe space for women and to end impunity for perpetrators of violence against women and girls online. The Minister opened and chaired this event.

 ***National Action on Indigenous Women's Economic Empowerment*** — the panel event of Indigenous women showcased best practice in international efforts to close gender gaps and empower Indigenous women. The panel included Indigenous women from Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The panel discussed the experiences and expertise of Indigenous women in driving innovative and disruptive policy change. The Minister opened and chaired this event.

 ***Workforce Participation: The future of work and the promotion of flexibility to help working families*** — the panel event explored the structural barriers to women's participation in the workforce, including child-care, parental leave and incentives built into taxation. Participants discussed innovative approaches to supporting women to become entrepreneurs and pursue careers in growth industries. Discussion also explored flexible employment systems and supporting men and women into non-traditional roles. The Minister opened and chaired this event.

 ***Annual World YWCA roundtable*** — Australia has a longstanding practice of hosting a roundtable event with the World YWCA. This event traditionally opens Australia's CSW program. This year the Minister hosted more than 30 young women delegates all of whom are leaders from their communities. The roundtable is an opportunity for the young women to share their experiences and raise issues critical to their empowerment, for example poor access to education, child, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation and participation in the formal economy. The Minister and the Ambassador reaffirmed their ongoing commitment to addressing these issues and our support for the World YWCA's young women's leadership program.

 ***Reception for Australian Civil Society*** — The Minister and the Australian Ambassador to the United Nations, Ms Gillian Bird PSM, hosted the annual reception for the Australian Government delegation and Australian civil society representatives. The event provided an opportunity for civil society representatives to meet with members of the delegation to discuss a range of issues of importance to Australian women and girls.

- 🌐 **Asia-Pacific NGO Representatives Dialogue** — Hosted by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, the dialogue presented an opportunity for engagement between Government, NGO and NHRI representatives on current issues relating to women's and girls' human rights and gender equality in our region. The Commissioner facilitated a discussion with Asia-Pacific NGOs on their priorities for the work of the Commission and the Australian Government delegation communicated Australia's priorities for gender equality in the region.

## CO-HOSTED EVENTS

Australia also co-hosted several side events with other like-minded countries.

- 🌐 **The role of National Human Rights Institutions promoting and protecting women's economic participation in the changing world of work** — National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) are uniquely placed to protect and promote the human rights of women to economic participation. Participants discussed the role of NHRIs in challenging the adverse social norms and gender stereotypes that affect women's ability to participate in the economy on equal standing to men. Panellists outlined the urgent action required to accelerate progress to women's economic empowerment and the contribution NHRIs can make to the work of the Commission.
- 🌐 **Working to Improve our own Future: Strengthening networks of women with disabilities in humanitarian action** — Organisations of women with disabilities can play a critical role in reaching women and girls with disabilities affected by crisis and conflict. Discussion at this panel event covered how women's organisations can bridge the development-humanitarian divide in an emergency and strengthen resilience in protracted crises.

## OUTCOMES OF CSW61

The delegation's participation in CSW61 events and advocacy contributed to Australia's international profile at the forefront of efforts to accelerate the realisation of gender equality and women's empowerment. The Minister delivered clear messages on the importance of addressing the gap in women's economic participation and empowerment, including the need to increase women's workforce participation and economic security, leveraging Australia's recent G20 commitments, and the importance of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

### AGREED CONCLUSIONS

The CSW61 Agreed Conclusions took more than 100 hours to negotiate. The document is a powerful analysis of the existing gender gaps in women's access to economic rights, participation in the economy and benefit from the economy. Australia is proud to have worked collaboratively in negotiations to secure strong outcomes for women and girls, including:

- Securing reference to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and new language on Indigenous women's economic empowerment;
- Commitments addressing occupational segregation, the participation of women in non-traditional sectors such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics;
- Securing reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a key instrument in the realisation of gender equality and the inclusive realisation of women's economic empowerment;
- Acknowledging 'multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination', crucial to addressing the differential and compounding discrimination exhibited across identities; and
- Continued effort by the Secretariat of the Commission to enhance the participation of National Human Rights Institutions at the next session of the Commission.

A copy of the Agreed Conclusions can be found here: <http://undocs.org/en/E/CN.6/2017/L.5>.

### RESOLUTION ON PREVENTING AND ELIMINATING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

The Resolution on Preventing and Eliminating Sexual Harassment in the Workplace was an opportunity to reaffirm the promotion and protection of human rights, ensuring the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women in the workplace. Australia co-sponsored the resolution along with several other States.

## CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

The Office for Women disseminates information regarding the Commission's processes and upcoming CSW sessions to its stakeholders. Individuals can be included on the mailing list by contacting the Office for Women at: [womensbranchinternational@pmc.gov.au](mailto:womensbranchinternational@pmc.gov.au).

## NATIONAL WOMEN'S ALLIANCES

As part of their core work the five National Women's Alliances are expected to engage and collaborate with each other and the Australian Government on the Commission's processes, as part of a larger joint international engagement project.

For CSW61, the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) in conjunction with Economic Security 4 Women (eS4W) took the lead and delivered:

- A pre-departure briefing for civil society representatives in February 2017;
- A written submission to the Office for Women on the National Women's Alliances' priorities in relation to the government's engagement at CSW61; and
- An International Engagement forum to debrief about CSW61 outcomes on 25 April 2017.

### Report from Civil Society on their Engagement at CSW61

The Commission on the Status of Women continues to be both a challenging and invigorating space for civil society.

The NGO CSW, which takes place primarily through parallel events, is a key avenue to assert a strong and vibrant civil society presence at CSW. This year, the National Women's Alliances were deeply engaged in the work of connecting, sharing and learning through NGO CSW. Below are just some of the events run by the National Women's Alliances.

eS4W organised a side event on Workforce Participation – the Future of Work and the Promotion of Flexibility to help Families and a parallel event on Fostering Greater Economic Empowerment for Women and Girls.

AWAVA organised parallel events on Technology Facilitated Abuse, Women's Work and Financial Empowerment and Strengthening Spaces Working to End Violence Against Women and a side event on Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls in the Digital and Technological Age to facilitate increased participation in education and work.

The National Women's Alliances also continued our liaison role between Australian NGO delegates and the Australian Government delegation, working with the Office for Women on the pre-departure forum in February and assisting with email and social media communication during CSW.

When it comes to the capacity for civil society to directly influence the Agreed Conclusions process and outcomes, we rely heavily on the role of civil society delegates on government delegations. In this respect, we applaud the decision to have three civil society delegates on the Australian Government delegation, as they provided a critical conduit between civil society and government throughout the period of negotiations.

Our thanks to the Australian Government delegation, particularly the NGO delegates Leann Wilson, Jahna Cedar and Elizabeth Shaw for helping to facilitate communications. Thanks also to the Australian NGO representatives, who were active and diligent in bringing the voices of Australian women to CSW.

This model of including civil society delegates on government delegations goes some way to combat the narrowing opportunities for civil society participation at CSW. The National Women's Alliances are keen to work with our international networks to showcase this model of civil society engagement with a view to increasing the number of government delegations with a civil society presence.

### Agreed Conclusions and Language Outcomes

The Agreed Conclusions cover a range of economic empowerment issues from women's rights to economic levers for women's empowerment. The language addresses existing and ongoing issues of gendered economic inequality that are at risk of being entrenched and compounded in the changing world of work. The causes and consequences of gendered pay gaps, gender-based occupational segregation and the need to redistribute unpaid work are all given a central focus. We have also seen significant advances in language on Indigenous women's economic empowerment, virtually unrecognised at previous CSWs.



*Ms. Leann Wilson and Ms. Elizabeth Shaw, Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Ms. Kate Jenkins Ambassador for Women and Girls, Dr Sharman Stone, Minister for Women Michaelia Cash and Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations, Gillian Bird PSM.*

*Source: Lin Hatfield-Dodds, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet*

The views expressed here are those of the civil society delegates. They do not necessarily represent the position of the Government or the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.



# ANNEX A – OFFICIAL CSW61 PROGRAM

## Minister Cash

### Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March

08.30 – 10.30	World YWCA Breakfast
10.30 – 11.00	Meeting with World YWCA
16.00 – 16.30	Meeting with Ambassador Gillian Bird, Permanent Representative to the United Nations
16.30 – 18.00	Delegation briefing with Ambassador Gillian Bird PSM, Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations
18.30 – 19.45	Ambassador Bird and Minister hosted reception for Australian civil society representatives

### Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March

10.00 – 12.00	61 <sup>st</sup> Commission of the Status of Women Opening Session
13.15 – 14.30	Australia hosted Pacific Ministers' Lunch
15.00 – 15.30	Meeting with Canadian Minister for Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Patty Hadju
15.30 – 16.00	Meeting with Cambodia's Minister for Women's Affairs, Dr. Ing Kantha Phavi
16.00 – 16.30	Meeting with Fijian Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Mereseini Vuniwaqa
16.40 – 18.00	Ministerial Roundtable B: Technology and the changing world of work
18.30 – 19.30	Malta and European Union hosted Reception for Heads of Delegation

### Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March

10.00 – 18.00	<i>Due to a snow storm in New York the UN was closed and all meetings cancelled.</i>
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### Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> March

09.30 – 10.00	Meeting with Turkey's Minister of Family and Social Policy, Fatma Batul Sayan Kaya
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## Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> March

10.00 – 10.45	High Level interactive dialogue among Ministers on the priority theme: Building alliances to promote women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work
10.45 – 12.00	Deliver Australia's National Statement
12.00 – 13.00	Deliver Canada, Australia and New Zealand Joint Statement: United Nations Security Council debate on modern slavery
13.15 – 14.30	Australia side event on 'Indigenous Women's Economic Empowerment'
14.35 – 15.00	Meeting with Indonesian Minister for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Yohana S.Yembise
15.00 – 15.30	Meeting with Director Conditions of Work and Employment Programme, International Labour Organisation, Ms Manuela Tomei
15.30 – 16.00	Meeting with Costa Rican Minister for Women, Alejandra Mora Mora
16.10 – 16.15	3 minute symbolic break in session to mark the global gender pay gap
16.15 – 16.30	Meeting with Nauran Minister for Home Affairs, Education, Youth and Land Management, Charmaine Scotty
16.30 – 16.50	Meeting with German Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Manuela Schwesig
17.00 – 17.30	Meeting with Consul-General Nick Minchin
18.15 – 19.15	Deliver remarks at the 'Engage Women, Accelerate Peace – the role of women's organisations in sustaining peace'

## Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March

08.30 – 09.45	Australian side event, 'Preventing violence against women and girls in the digital and technological age to facilitate increased participation in education and work'
10.00 – 11.00	Interactive dialogue on focus area, 'empowerment of Indigenous women'
12.55 – 14.00	Australian side event, 'Workforce participation, the future of work and the promotion of flexibility to help working families'

## ANNEX B – AUSTRALIA'S COUNTRY STATEMENT

Mr. Chair

Australia is committed to the full and equal realisation of women and girls' human rights, to securing substantive gender equality and the empowerment of diverse women socially, politically and economically. I am delighted Australia is seeking to serve as a member of the Commission for the 2019-2023 term.

This complements Australia's candidacy for the Human Rights Council for 2018-20. It is the first time Australia has run for a seat on the Council.

Australia's Human Rights Council candidacy is a measure of our long-standing commitment to promoting and protecting human rights in Australia and around the world – it reflects our liberal democratic values and our identity as an inclusive, diverse and tolerant society, built on migration.

Mr Chair

The Australian Government is committed to women's economic empowerment by ensuring workplace diversity and flexibility, flexible and affordable child care, increasing the incentives for women to work, and getting women into the jobs of the future.

Just as we need to ensure increased participation of women in the economy, we also need to recognise the social and economic impacts of gendered norms.

Access to sexual and reproductive health, including family planning services, is critical for empowering women and girls. These services help women and girls stay healthy, remain in education and participate equally in society and the economy.

The barriers to participation are not the same for all women. Efforts to improve women's economic empowerment need to acknowledge the differing lived experiences and diversity women face.

Alongside economic empowerment, Australia welcomes the empowerment of Indigenous women as an emerging CSW theme.

In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women play leadership roles in their families, communities and as contributors to the economy.

However, Indigenous women often face greater social and economic marginalisation.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women through a range of initiatives to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage, including improving education, participation and safety outcomes.

Mr Chair

Violence against women is a grave violation of human rights, and a barrier to women's participation in their communities and economies.

It is unacceptable in Australia that one woman a week is killed by a current or former partner; one in three women experience physical violence; and one in five women experience sexual violence in their lifetimes.

It is also unacceptable that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than non-Indigenous women.

Australia is committed to keeping women safe. We have implemented a twelve year National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. Significant progress has been made, including finding new ways to tackle technology facilitated abuse.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the importance of diverse participation at CSW. Australia is proud of our longstanding practice of having representatives from Australian civil society organisations on our delegation.

I encourage other nations to do the same.

Australia also supports the inclusion of national human rights institutions at CSW, and Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner joins me in New York.

The empowerment of women and girls is achievable – in this, Australia's commitment is unwavering.

Thank you.