Zonta Australia
Zonta Says NOW Think Tank
SEPTEMBER UPDATE

In this September UPDATE:

- Facing up to Reality
- Australia's Climate Reality Check
- Australia's Climate Ambition
- October Think Tank
- How does Australia Fare?
- What are our Allies doing?

Facing Up to Reality



Have you ever looked an emu in the eye? They don't blink, they just stare until you face up to reality. That's how climate action feels right now – unavoidable and demanding our attention.

At our last Zonta Says NOW Working Group meeting, we agreed it makes sense to send UPDATES every two months. Our Think Tanks already cover international, national, and club news, so this shift avoids doubling up and helps us live our message of sustainability – starting with how we value our own time.

September has been an especially busy month. All three Australian Zonta Districts held their conferences, and I had the privilege of hosting a disaster preparedness workshop at the D23 Conference in Devonport, alongside

colleagues from the Tasmanian Red Cross. When a keynote speaker had to cancel due to illness, I stepped in to speak about Zonta Says NOW, building around my 'email sign off' theme: *keep breathing* (we all share the same air, and we're polluting it with greenhouse gases), *keep smiling* (Australia has everything it needs to lead the world in sustainability), and *have fun* (because climate action reduces stress).

I apologise for this late UPDATE. Life threw me a curveball when my husband, who is immune-compromised, came home from Tasmania with Influenza A, spent time in hospital and is still bed-ridden. It reminded me of Zonta's golden rule: family first, then work, then Zonta. Sometimes we simply have to face reality and slow down.

In this UPDATE, we'll explore Australia's first national climate risk assessment, describe the new 2035 emissions target, entice you to register for the Australian October Think Tank with Charlotte Sterrett from the World Wildlife Fund, look at how Australia is performing against the Sustainable Development Goals and share what our allies are up to.

Remember that if you know someone that is interested in gender-equal climate justice, please encourage them to join our Intercontinental and Australian mailing lists.

Keep breathing, keep smiling, and have fun!

Carole
Carole Theobald
Chair, Zonta Says NOW Working Group
zontasaysnow.org.au

Back to top

Australia's Climate Reality Check



Australia's first National Climate Risk Assessment is out—and it makes for sobering reading. The message is simple: climate risks are here, they're growing, and we need to be ready.

By 2050, around 1.5 million Australians could be directly affected by rising seas. By 2090, that number could double to over 3 million, with coastal communities in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania most at risk from flooding, storm surges, and erosion. Even cities like Perth and

Adelaide will face serious pressures, from more frequent heatwaves and prolonged droughts to challenges for water supplies, infrastructure, and urban planning.

Heatwaves are set to get longer, hotter, and far more frequent. By the 2050s, Sydney, Brisbane, and Melbourne could see 20–30 extra days of dangerous heat each year, while northern Australia will swelter even more. Inland droughts will intensify, affecting farming regions and rural communities across the country.

The assessment, prepared by the Australian Climate Service for the Department of Climate Change, provides a roadmap for a National Adaptation Plan—guiding how communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems can prepare.

Disasters don't affect everyone equally. Women often face greater financial hardship after crises, and violence against women rises during and after disasters, making gender-responsive planning essential.

Australia now has the evidence. The question is: will we act in time?

Read the National Climate Risk Assessment

Back to top

Australia's Climate Ambition



Australia has just submitted its second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the United Nations—our official climate action plan under the Paris Agreement. It's our promise to the world on how we'll reduce emissions and help limit global warming.

Our new target? A 62–70 per cent reduction in emissions by 2035 compared with 2005 levels. This aligns with the Climate Change Authority's Targets Advice, though slighly less than the 75 per cent recommended by the Climate Council. Still, the government calls it an "ambitious and achievable" goal.

NDCs are more than numbers—they're Australia's commitment to global climate action. Every five years, countries update them to show progress and ambition. Falling behind isn't an option.

Alongside the NDC, the government released a Net Zero Plan, outlining how we'll transition efficiently to net zero emissions. The plan highlights opportunities for women in industries critical to the transition, showing climate action and gender equity can go hand in hand.

In New York, Minister Chris Bowen showcased Australia's clean energy strides to the Insiders program and reaffirmed Australia's bid to co-host COP31, in Adelaide, with a Pacific island nation in 2026.

Australia has set its target. Now the real work begins.

Read the Nationally Determined Contribution

Back to top

October Australian Think Tank



Our Intercontinental and Australian Think Tanks continue to inspire action. In September, the Intercontinental Think Tank focused on how plastics impact your health and the environment. Did you know that plastics have been found in most parts of the body including in sperm? Check out the slides and videos here.

The next Zonta Says NOW Australia Think Tank will be on Saturday 11 October. Our guest speaker, Charlotte Sterrett from the World Wildlife Fund-Australia, will take us inside the *Climate Resilient by Nature* (CRxN) initiative—a partnership with the Australian Government that restores ecosystems, supports livelihoods, and builds climate resilience across the Indo-Pacific.

Launched in 2021, CRxN collaborates with communities to conserve critical habitats, generate sustainable income opportunities, and prepare for climate-related shocks. Charlotte will share how women and local communities are

driving change and show how nature-based solutions can make a real difference.

Join fellow Zontians for an inspiring session filled with valuable insights, innovative ideas, and opportunities to take action. Register today and be part of this empowering discussion!

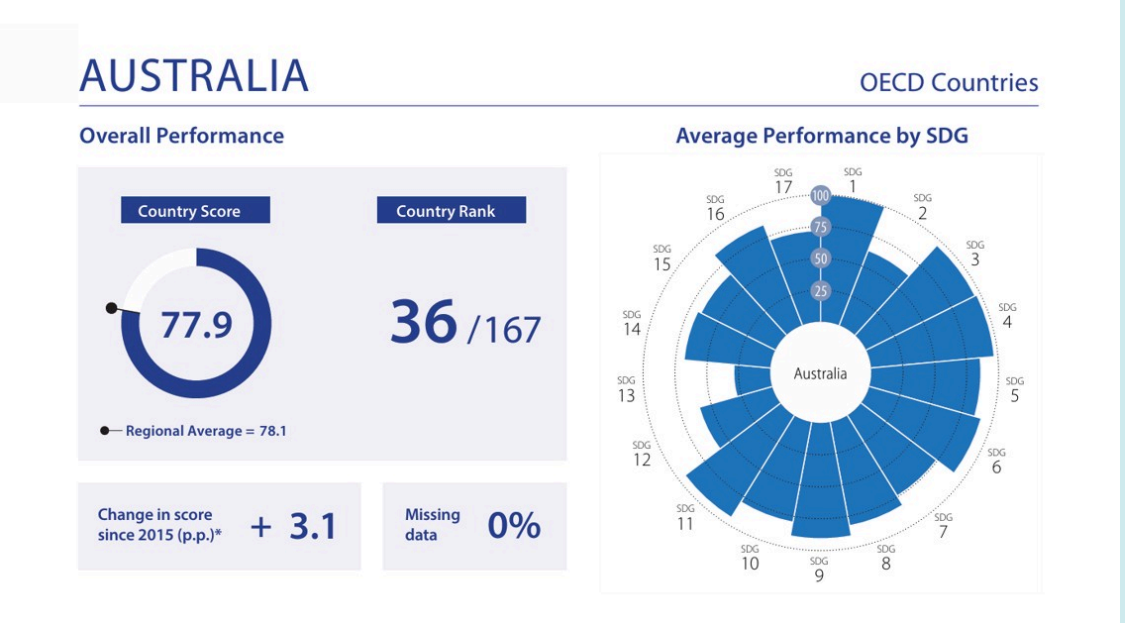
Saturday 11 October Meeting Times:
Western Australia: 1:00–2:30 pm
Northern Territory: 2:30–4.00 pm
South Australia: 3:30–5:00 pm
ACT/New South Wales/Queensland/Tasmania/Victoria: 4:00–5:30pm
New Zealand: 6:00–7:30 pm

Please share the event flyers (JPEG and PDF) and invite friends, fellow members, and young women leaders in your community.

Register for the October Australian Think Tank

Back to top

How does Australia Fare?



UN Women recently released *The Gender Snapshot 2025* report that mapped global progress against the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and also against the six priority actions identified in the *Beijing+30 Action Agenda* which include digital revolution, freedom from poverty, zero violence, equal decision-making, peace and security, and climate justice. A new dashboard was recently launched to show where priority actions are being taken around the world.

Closer to home, Australia is making strides towards achieiving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but the latest report show there's still a long way to go.

The *Sustainable Developoment Report 2025* (page 80) ranks Australia 36th out of 167 countries on the SDGs, with a score of 77.9—respectable, but not where a wealthy, developed nation should be. As can be seen from the diagram above, challenges remain in areas like *SDG2 zero hunger* (driven by

obesity and nitrogen management issues), *SDG12 responsible consumption* (low recycling rates), *SDG13 climate action* (emissions and carbon pricing), *SDG15 life on land* (species survival), and *SDG17 partnerships for the goals* (international aid and financial transparency). On the *International Spillover Index*, Australia scores slightly below the OECD average.

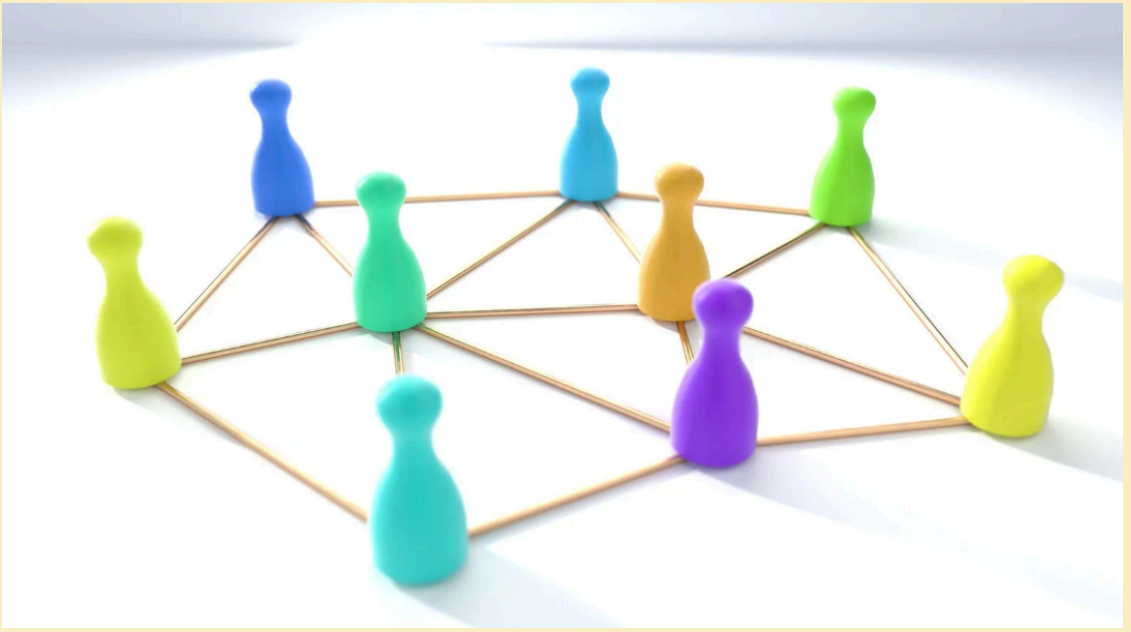
Meanwhile, the *Living in Australia 2025* survey of over 5,000 people highlights shifting community values. Safety, housing, health services, and access to nature—the "Core Four"—remain top priorities, yet liveability ratings are falling, especially in safety and housing affordability.

For women, there's progress in education, with higher Year 12 completion and university qualifications than men. Yet gaps persist in STEM, leadership, workforce participation, pay, and economic security, particularly for carers, single mothers, and older women. Family and domestic violence remains a significant barrier to equity and wellbeing.

Together, these reports paint a clear picture: Australia has achieved much, but addressing structural inequities and sustainability challenges is critical for a fairer, more resilient future.

Back to top

What Are Our Allies Up To?



Our climate and gender allies have been busy—here's a snapshot of what's happening across Australia:

- *Women's Climate Congress (WCC)* – Impact X is hosting a *Women in Sustainability Summit* in Melbourne/Naarm on 11–12 November, focusing on women leading change. Janet Salisbury (founder of WCC) will speak on creating space for women to bring a new agenda rather than just following the status quo. A new podcast from the Victorian Congress held in March is now available. The next Members' Forum is on 22 October, 5–6.30 pm AEDT. Learn more here.
- *Women's Environmental Leadership Australia (WELA)* – Join the session on *Building High-Performing Teams* with Kate MacMaster on 14 October, 9–10.30 am AWST. WELA recently hosted a series of roundtable events around Australia on *Gender, Climate and Environmental Justice*, featuring leaders like Louise Duxbury and Pasanna Mutha-Merennege. Learn more here
- *1 Million Women* is continuing its push to electrify Australian homes. Sign their online policy ask to encourage governments to support one million

households to electrify within three years. Learn more here
- *Gender and Disaster Australia (GADAus)* – Recently launched its new branding at the *Australian Emergency Management Conference* in Perth and is providing free training in Adelaide, Canberra, Wagga Wagga, and Townsville throughout October. Learn more here.

Stay connected, get involved, and see how these allies are driving gender-equal climate action!

Back to top

Zonta Australia
Zonta Says NOW Think Tank
www.zontasaysnow.org.au
info@zontasaysnow.org.au

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