Zonta Australia
Zonta Says NOW Think Tank
JANUARY 2026 UPDATE

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Overview Effect



Welcome to 2026. As a new year begins, Australia has a new Australian of the Year: astronaut **Katherine Bennell-Pegg**, the first person trained as an astronaut under the Australian flag. She hasn't yet gone to space, but she has already given us a powerful way of seeing our world.

Katherine speaks about the Overview Effect — that moment when astronauts look back at Earth and see *"the thin blue line of air that bends around the horizon – within it, all life as we know it has evolved"*. From space, our planet's fragility is undeniable, and astronauts return, she says, *"compelled to protect it, understand it and nurture it"*.

We don't need to leave Earth to see that reality here in Australia. This summer's intense heatwave was made five times more likely by climate change, according to the World Weather Attribution analysis. At the same time, Australia's climate response remains a Jekyll-and-Hyde story. The Climate Change Authority warns emissions cuts must double by 2030 and triple by the early 2030s to meet our targets, yet 34 new coal and gas projects have been approved since 2022.

The Overview Effect reminds us: there is no "elsewhere". This is the only atmosphere we have — and all of us have a part to play to protect it.

As life settles back into routine after the summer break, this edition of the Zonta Says NOW UPDATE helps you catch up — and look ahead. We preview our February Think Tank, where we'll welcome Dr Margaret Moreton, CEO of Gender and Disaster Australia, for a timely conversation on gender-smart disaster action. You'll also find updates on Climate Action Week Sydney, an invitation to add your voice to the Zonta Says NOW Virtual Art Gallery, highlights from recent Think Tanks, and stories celebrating women leading climate action across Australia.

There is a lot happening — and every article is an invitation to learn, connect, and take action.

Keep breathing, keep smiling, and have fun!

Carole
Carole Theobald
Chair, Zonta Says NOW Working Group
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When Disasters Hit, Gender Matters



This summer's heatwaves and fires have shown just how vulnerable our communities can be and that disasters don't affect everyone equally. Women, men, and LGBTIQA+ people experience crises differently, and traditional gender roles can put some at greater risk, often while caring for others.

At our Australian Think Tank on **Saturday 14 February**, *Dr Margaret Moreton, CEO of Gender and Disaster Australia,* will share practical insights from decades of research and the award-winning Lessons in Disaster training. She'll

show how applying a gender lens before, during, and after crises can prevent harm, reduce violence, and build stronger, more resilient communities.

Don’t miss this chance to hear from a national expert. Join us, bring your questions, and discover how gender-smart disaster action can make a real difference to you and your community.

Members and guests are welcome — and please help us spread the word by sharing the flyer [pdf] [jpeg]!

Check your times:
THINK TANK Saturday 14 February
WA 1.00–2.30 pm | NT 2.30–4.00 pm | Qld 3.00–4.30 pm | SA 3.30–5.00 pm | Vic/Tas/NSW/ACT 4.00–5.30 pm | NZ 6.00–7.30 pm

Register for February Australian Think Tank

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Share Your Voice in the Virtual Art Gallery



A striking black parrot in a backyard can tell a powerful story — and so can your artwork. Take inspiration from *“Backyard Abundance”* by Eva-Marie Seeto, Zonta Club of Blackall Range. Eva-Marie explains: *“Protecting and restoring wildlife habitat can start at home…everyone has a role to play in restoring Earth’s critical resources.”* Her description shows that the story behind the art can be just as powerful as the art itself.

The Zonta Says NOW Virtual Art Gallery invites Zontians and their families to express their vision and feelings about the world today and the future we hope to create. This is not a competition; it’s about sharing creativity and passion.

Paint, draw, photograph, knit, sew, film, dance, or compose a song — you are limited only by your imagination.

Submit your work by International Women’s Day on 8 March, to be included in the 2026 Collection, launching on Earth Day, 22 April.

While thinking about Earth Day, ask your club: what could you do to inspire gender-equal climate action? Could you host a women in STEM event or co-host an intergenerational discussion with a Z and Golden Z Club? Let your creativity flow as you plan your contribution to the Virtual Art Gallery!

Zonta Says NOW Virtual Art Gallery Entry details

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Working with our Allies



Zonta Says NOW is proud to collaborate with our allies — 1 Million Women (1MW), Gender and Disaster Australia (GADAus), Women's Climate Congress (WCC), and Women's Environmental Leadership Australia (WELA) — to deliver a full-day event at Climate Action Week Sydney on **Tuesday 10 March** in the Great Hall of the University of Technology, Sydney.

Women Creating Climate Futures: gender equality for climate justice explores how inclusive leadership and women's voices are essential to climate action. The day moves from understanding why women's voices matter, to examining how women create change, to questioning who holds power and how it can be transformed — finishing with shared decisions on what to take forward. We are currently confirming speakers and details will be uploaded soon at Climate Action Week Sydney.

Meanwhile, our allies are taking action across Australia:

- ***1 Million Women's*** latest newsletter promotes mending and cites the WRAP report that shows how repairing clothes can reduce emissions e.g., Fixing a hole in a cotton t-shirt saves you 7.5kg of emissions, equivalent to ironing for 25 hours. The 1 Million Women Annual Survey is underway – so please complete it as it helps guide policy and advocacy work. Learn more: 1 MW
- ***Gender and Disaster Australia*** (GADAus) delivers training to reduce gendered harm before, during, and after disasters. Upcoming *Lessons in Disaster* include Geelong (24 Feb), Melbourne (25 Feb), and Sydney (4 Mar). Don't forget that you can meet their CEO, **Dr Margaret Moreton**, at our 14 February Australian Think Tank. Learn more: GADAus

- ***Women's Climate Congress*** (WCC) is planning its 2026 events, including member forums, online climate conversations, and book clubs. The first book club event (2 Feb) will discuss *Rethinking Our World: An Invitation to Rescue Our Future by Maja Göpel*. Learn more: WCC
- ***Women's Environmental Leadership Australia*** (WELA) supports women and gender-diverse leaders through workshops such as *Tools for Changemakers: Design Your 2026* (10 Feb, $45) and the *WELA 101 Welcome Session* (25 Feb, free), building resilience, networks, and leadership to navigate climate disruption. Learn more: WELA Events

By working together, we are amplifying our voices to build a better world for women and girls.

Climate Action Week Sydney

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Standing up for Climate Justice



At the December Zonta Says NOW Australian Think Tank, members explored *Standing Up for Climate Justice* with **Nicki Lees**, special counsel at Maurice Blackburn Lawyers. To protect cultural privacy, Nicki's presentation has not been shared. She highlighted cases involving First Nations women — one challenging a nuclear waste dump on sacred land, another securing clean drinking water. The key message: listening to First Nations women and respecting traditional knowledge is essential for meaningful action.

Nicki emphasized that advocacy goes beyond legal judgments — creative approaches, collaboration, and storytelling are vital tools. Her presentation highlighted the resilience and strength of the women she works with, and the importance of humility, understanding, and ethical engagement when supporting communities.

In breakout rooms, members shared their own work with First Nations women, including initiatives by the Zonta Club of Melbourne on Yarra and the Zonta Club of Perth, both offering awards for Indigenous women.

Nicki also shared other work she has undertaken using AI to support legal cases. For example, she worked with asylum seekers, turning witness

statements into images to strengthen court submissions. See Exhibit A-i The Refugee Account for more on this fascinating use of AI.

Think Tanks are where we can share ideas, hear from inspiring speakers, and connect with each other — come join the conversation and encourage others too!

Australian Think Tank recordings and slides

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Celebrating Women Taking Climate Action



Across Australia, Zonta districts are recognising women who are turning climate concern into real-world action — and this year, two district awards deserve the spotlight.

First, congratulations to **Sally Quinn**, **the 2025 District 23 Women Taking Climate Action Award recipient** (valued at $1,000). District 23 spans WA, NT, SA, Victoria and Tasmania, and Sally's work exemplifies climate leadership with heart and impact.

As co-founder and CEO of Green Collect, she has led a social enterprise that reuses, recycles and repurposes more than 150 tonnes of unwanted items every year since 2005, while creating employment pathways for refugees, people transitioning out of homelessness, and those affected by the justice system.

Last year alone, Green Collect prevented 1.15 million kilograms of CO_2 emissions, saved 17 million megajoules of energy, and conserved over 558,000 litres of water. Truly inspiring work — congratulations, Sally.

Now, a call to action for District 22 Zontians. **Applications are open for the 2026 District 22 Women in Climate Action Award**, a $10,000 award

supporting women leading impactful climate action across Queensland and the Northern Rivers.

This award is designed to spotlight women driving change in science, policy, education, industry and community initiatives — and to inspire the next generation of girls to step into climate leadership.

If you know a woman doing extraordinary climate work in Queensland or the Northern Rivers, please encourage her to apply — or consider nominating her yourself**. Applications close 26 June.**

District 22 Women in Climate Action Award - Application Form

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Sustainable Cities - January Intercontinental Think Tank



If you missed the January Intercontinental Think Tank, hosted by Asia and Oceania, you missed an inspiring session exploring how cities can lead a just and climate-resilient future. Zontians from across the region came together to hear two exceptional speakers share practical insights from the frontlines of sustainable urban transformation.

Huey Yoong, Head of Implementation for C40 Cities in East and Southeast Asia and Oceania, unpacked the Inclusive Climate Action Wheel, showing how climate impacts compound when factors such as gender, poverty, and race intersect and why targeted, inclusive responses are essential. Members were captivated by real-world examples from cities like Quezon City and Kuala Lumpur, learning how trust, governance, and culture shape what works locally.

Krista Milne, Director of Climate Change and City Resilience and co-Chief Heat Officer for the City of Melbourne, brought together Melbourne's approach to extreme heat, renewable energy, urban greening, and water-sensitive design. Her emphasis on supporting vulnerable communities and addressing gendered climate impacts resonated strongly with participants, many of whom are now exploring how to apply these strategies in their own councils and clubs.

The session's videos and slides are now available to view online. Watch the presentations, see the practical examples, and bring these lessons back to your club and community.

January Intercontinental Think Tank, slides and video

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