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MINISTER’S FOREWORD

As the Minister for Women, it was my privilege to lead the Australian Government delegation to the 62nd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62) in New York in March 2018.

Gender equality is a priority for the Australian Government. It is a key pillar of our Human Rights Council 2018-20 membership and a central component to the fundamental rights of women and girls right across the globe.

At CSW62 there was strong commitment by countries to empower all women and girls, especially those who live and work in rural areas. These women and girls are often more economically and socially disadvantaged than rural men and urban men and women.

Beyond CSW62, Australia will continue to strive for gender equality through ongoing national, regional and international efforts. Domestically, the Government is determined to improve women’s economic participation and empowerment, and reduce violence against women and their children. Within our region, we will continue driving change through targeted development assistance to improve access to health, education and justice for women and girls and advance progress against existing APEC objectives for women’s economic empowerment in the Asia-Pacific.

The CSW62 session also provided a platform for nations and civil society to reflect on global progress in improving women’s access to the media and information and communications technologies, and their impact and use as an instrument for advancement and empowerment. I was buoyed that the global community re-committed to focusing efforts on the gender dimensions of media and information and communications technologies, just as Australia does. I am confident that by sharing our best practice examples, such as our efforts to ensure the online safety for women and girls, we can help the world become a safer and more empowered place for all women and girls to thrive.

The Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP
Minister for Women
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 enhancing the rights of women and girls around the world. Every year, representatives of the United Nations (UN) Member States gather at the UN Headquarters in New York to evaluate the progress made on gender equality, identify ongoing challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies designed to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment worldwide. Over the two-week session, representatives showcased local, national and regional programs and strategies striving to empower women and girls and to improve their economic and social status in society.

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.

At each session, the Commission negotiates an Agreed Conclusions outcome. The Agreed Conclusions drive the policy recommendations applicable to governments, regional and international institutions (within the UN system), civil society organisations, the private sector and others. More information on the function and history of the Commission can be found at: www.unwomen.org/en/csw.

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 has been elected to serve as a member of the Commission for the 2019-2023 term. Australia’s membership reflects our longstanding commitment to women’s empowerment and upholds our pledge to advance gender equality and the rights of women and girls as a member of the Human Rights Council, 2018-2020.

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 prosecute 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 national human rights institutions and non-government delegates as part of the official Australian delegation to the Commission. Our support is longstanding. Australia has included non-government delegates since 1999 and this year, two non-government representatives participated in the delegation, along with Australia’s Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner.

The Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP, Minister for Women, presenting Australia’s CSW62 country statement.
THE 62nd SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The 62nd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62) was held in New York from 12 to 24 March 2018. Global representatives from Member States, UN entities and ECOSOC accredited non-government organisations (NGOs) gathered to consider 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 CSW62 focused on the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls. CSW62 also reviewed the progress made against the Agreed Conclusions from the 47th session: the participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women.

Before CSW62, UN Women organised Expert Group Meetings on the themes under consideration. The views of experts from academia and civil society from around the world were sought on the themes. Reports from these meetings can be found at http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw62-2018/official-documents.

CSW62 was opened by the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres GCC GCL, who reiterated his commitment to gender equality, women’s leadership, and the empowerment of women and girls, noting that these objectives are central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Secretary-General also affirmed the role of the Commission as one of the most dynamic intergovernmental bodies at such a pivotal time for the rights of women and girls, calling on delegates to ensure the voices of women and girls everywhere are heard and considered in policy development, particularly in conflict and post-conflict situations.

During CSW62, the Commission held roundtables for Ministers (and equivalents) and other senior representatives, providing a forum for high-level exchange of experiences and good practices as well as an opportunity to present a Country Statement to the Commission. The Commission also held interactive panel sessions on each of the themes considered. These panels allowed experts, UN agencies and other organisations to present information related to each of the themes and for these to be discussed in a broad forum. The official program for CSW62 can be found at http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw62-2018/official-documents.
Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls

Virtually every gender and development indicator for which data are available reveals that, globally, rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women\(^1\). The Commission’s consideration of the empowerment of rural women and girls and the realisation of their human rights and gender equality is essential, particularly given this is necessary for their livelihoods, wellbeing and resilience.

The Commission considered ways in which the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls were being addressed through the full, or potentially accelerated, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Australia participated in Ministerial Roundtables affirming the role of Women’s Alliances and other good practices, including access to education, infrastructure, technology and nutrition, in empowering rural women and girls. The under-representation of women and girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and employment was discussed, with participants calling for accelerating efforts to redress low participation in these fields.

The Commission expressed concern that many rural women and girls continue to be marginalised through economic and social disadvantage, particularly where their access to economic resources, quality education and health-care services are limited. The Commission acknowledged the important role and contribution of rural women and girls as critical agents in enhancing sustainable agriculture (including fisheries) and rural development, which underscores the meaningful progress being made in these areas, particularly to participate in local, regional and international markets.

The participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women

At the 47th session (CSW47) in 2003, Member States agreed that a focus on the gender dimensions of information and communications technologies is essential in order to prevent and combat and adverse impact of the digital revolution on gender equality and the perpetuation of existing inequalities and discrimination, including the sexual exploitation of women. Importantly, the Commission agreed that media and information and communication technologies also offer tools for enhancing women’s full access to the benefits of information and for women’s empowerment and the promotion of gender equality.

\(^1\) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *State of Food and Agriculture: Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security* (Rome, 2016), p. 49.
A series of interactive dialogues held at CSW62 included 12 Member States presenting on their experiences, successes and lessons learnt in enhancing women and girls' access and use of media and information and communication technologies. New Zealand's presentation included components from Australia and Canada, with Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls, Dr Sharman Stone’s, response highlighting Australia's progress in addressing the scourge of digital violence in our country.

The dialogue affirmed the importance of the full and equal realisation of human rights for women and girls, including through increasing access to existing media, information and communications technologies, but also their inclusion in decision-making processes and new opportunities created through these technologies. It also recognised the important role the media can play in the achievement of gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment, including through non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive media coverage and by eliminating gender stereotypes in commercial advertisements.

The report of the Secretary-General from CSW62 summarises the impact, trends and challenges facing Member States in relation to implementing the Agreed Conclusions from CSW47. A copy of the Secretary-General’s report can be found at: http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw62-2018/official-documents.
THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DELEGATION TO CSW62

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 CSW 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:

• Provide a principled voice on human rights, particularly the rights of 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 2018, the Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP, Minister for Women, led Australia’s official delegation to CSW62. Minister O’Dwyer presented Australia’s Country Statement, which outlined the Australian Government’s unwavering commitment to advancing gender equality and which paid particular attention to the important need to empower rural, regional and remote women who play such an integral role in bringing economic and social stability to Australian society. Minister O’Dwyer also engaged in series of high-level dialogues and bilateral meetings with her Ministerial colleagues, participated in a suite of CSW side events and met with members of civil society to consider the barriers to achieving gender equality and the strategies required to address and overcome these obstacles. See Annex B for the full text of Australia’s CSW62 Country Statement.

The official CSW62 delegation was again characterised by high-level representation that Australia has garnered a strong and well-respected reputation for in previous sessions. Minister O’Dwyer was joined by Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls, Dr Sharman Stone, Australia’s Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Ms Kate Jenkins, and for the first time the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Ms June Oscar AO. The Minister also invited two representatives from Australian civil society to join the official delegation: Ms Jo Stewart-Rattray and Dr Patricia Hamilton.

The depth and experience of the delegation meant there was ample opportunity to demonstrate Australia’s credentials as a global leader on gender equality, both on a domestic and international level, particularly through our membership of the Human Rights Council (2018-2020 term).

Minister O’Dwyer’s CSW62 program as complete is at Annex A.
Official Australian Delegation to CSW62

- The Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP
  Minister for Women

- Her Excellency Dr Sharman Stone
  Ambassador for Women and Girls

- Ms Kate Jenkins
  Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner

- Ms June Oscar AO
  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

- Ms Trish Bergin
  First Assistant Secretary
  Office for Women, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

- Ms Amy Haddad
  Assistant Secretary and Principal Gender Equality Specialist
  Gender Equality Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- Ms Jo Stewart-Rattray
  Civil Society Delegate

- Dr Patricia Hamilton
  Civil Society Delegate

The delegation was also supported by additional officials from the Office for Women, Department of Foreign Affairs and the Australian Human Rights Commission.
Bilateral meetings

At CSW62, the Minister, the Ambassador for Women and Girls, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner held a range of bilateral meetings with heads of delegations, representatives from non-government organisations and other global ambassadors. Bilateral engagements provided the Australian Government delegation with the opportunity to advance Australia’s priorities in relation to the Agreed Conclusions and to pursue Australia’s agenda in relation to promoting women’s and girls’ human rights and empowerment.

The Minister, with Australia’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Gillian Bird PSM, hosted a lunch for Pacific Minister’s 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, safety and leadership in our region.

In bilateral meetings, the Minister advocated for the elimination of gender based violence, including harmful traditional practices, highlighting the legislative and judicial progress made in Australia. A number of countries expressed interest in Australia’s National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022, which continues to be viewed as international best practice. The Minister also reinforced Australia’s commitment to women’s empowerment as
necessary for economic security, highlighting Australia’s efforts to close gender pay and workforce participation gaps, particularly for those groups of women who experience the greatest barriers in participating in the labour force.

Throughout CSW62, the official Australian civil society delegates delivered daily briefing sessions for Australian civil society representatives. These sessions were an opportunity to share experiences and information about events and the Agreed Conclusions negotiations. The civil society delegates also maintained a strong social media presence throughout CSW62.

**Events hosted by Australia**

In addition to the formal CSW62 program, the Minister hosted and chaired four side events. This was in addition to the delegation members participating in an expansive program of additional side events hosted by UN Agencies, non-government organisations and other UN member states. This broad engagement contributed significantly to Australia’s profile at CSW62.

**Solutions for Online Digital Inclusion** – panellists highlighted Australian examples of how technology supports social inclusion for women and girls living and working in rural, regional and remote Australia. Featuring the work of the Office of the e-Safety Commission, the Telstra Foundation and the National Rural Women’s Coalition (NRWC), discussions focused on initiatives that empower and protect women and girls, to support positive online experiences.

**Male Champions of Change** – this interactive conversation with several senior Australian leaders from business and government, including MYOB, Rio Tinto Australia and the Australian Federal Police, shared stores of impact and change on gender equality within their organisations. The discussion focused on effective strategies to increase women’s representation in non-traditional areas such as policing and STEM, the importance of leadership in tackling everyday sexism and the lessons from workplace responses to domestic violence.

**Women in Leadership: Lessons for Australian Companies** – the panel event presented ground-breaking new research from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency and Business Council of Australia that shows Australian companies that lead in women’s leadership representation do 10 things in common. The panel also included insights from BHP which presented on their progress to achieving gender balance across their workforce, focusing on practical, evidence-based strategies to overcome traditional barriers.

**Bridging the Digital Gender Divide** – this event outlined the preliminary results of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD) stocktake of G20 countries’ digital gender divide, undertaken to address Argentina’s cross-cutting gender priority as part of their 2018 G20 Presidency. The event also allowed participants to share experiences and promote awareness about the challenges of preventing old biases be entrenched in the new economy.
Australia also has a longstanding practice of hosting a range of other events to discuss the challenges and opportunities faced by women and girls in the pursuit of empowerment and the full achievement of their human rights and as networking opportunities to share ideas and stories.

**Annual World YWCA roundtable** – this event hosted young women delegates all of whom are leaders from their communities. The roundtable enables the women to share their experiences and raise issues critical to their empowerment, including poor access to education, participation in the formal economy, the impact of media and advertising on body image, the experiences of young mothers and the need for greater sexual and reproductive health education and everyday sexism.

**Reception for Australian civil society** – this 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.

**The role of the Australian Human Rights Commission in Advancing the Human Rights of Women and Girls** – this joint Australian Government and Australian Human Rights Commission event highlighted the key gender equality initiatives being led by the Commission, including the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women’s Voices) Project led by Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, and the Sex Discrimination Commissioner’s national report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities and fourth periodic national survey.
into workplace sexual harassment. The event also allowed participants to discuss the barriers to economic security and the empowerment of women and girls, particularly vulnerable groups and those living and working in rural, regional and remote Australia.

Australia also participated in a side event exploring National Human Rights Institutions’ Advancement of Gender Equality and the Rights of Rural Women and Girls. The event, co-hosted with the Asia Pacific Forum on National Human Rights Institutions and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, brought together representatives from a number of regional NHRIs to discuss key issues and the work underway to promote and protect the rights of women in girls, particularly those living and working in rural areas.

The Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP, Minister for Women, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations Ms Gillian Bird PSM, Ms María Inés Baqué, Secretary of Public Management and Innovation, Argentina and Mr Andy Wyckoff, Director for Science, Technology and Innovation, OECD.
As Australia's Global Ambassador for Women and Girls, I was proud to attend CSW62 in March 2018. Our delegation was led by Australia’s new Minister for Women, the Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP, a person I have worked with for many years and who I know has a deep commitment to achieving greater equity for women and girls. The theme for this years’ CSW was Empowering Rural Women and Girls.

As a rural woman myself, born in an isolated country town of 400 people and living on the family farm, I experienced the very different life chances and challenges that rural women and girls face. When I was a Member of Australia’s Federal Parliament for 20 years, I represented a rural electorate. It was obvious to me that the challenges rural women and girls face can be met when accurate, disaggregated data identifies these needs, and the communities are engaged and empowered with the help of targeted resources and strategies to address them.

Across our region Australia is a leader in supporting the collection of such data and using it to inform the development of policy, legislation and regulations to meet the needs of all women. Ensuring the needs of rural women and girls are identified, acknowledged and met is one of the key elements of Australia’s aid program as we pursue the SDG goal of “leaving no one behind”.

As I travel through our region, visiting both the cities and capitals as well as the remotest islands or highlands, I always sit down to talk with the rural women. I hear the voices of these rural women, who often face the difficulties of moving produce to markets, the remoteness from health and education facilities, or the impacts of natural disasters. The courage and resilience of these rural women is always inspirational.

So I applaud the CSW team in choosing the rural women theme this year. It facilitated the shining of lights on often forgotten populations far from the infrastructure and opportunities of urban development. Distance creates challenges for delivering services to rural women. New communications and other technologies are helping reduce the tyranny of distance, bringing banking, education, health services and families closer in ways impossible to imagine even a few decades ago. However much remains to be done.

Australia has a proud tradition of supporting a diversity of voices into forums like CSW. During the week I had the pleasure to hear from the group of young women from Asia and the Pacific who, through support from Australia and the World YWCA, could attend CSW to bring their issues and perspective to the table.

It is these young women who will help shape our future, whether in the world of work, the impacts of new technologies or caring responsibilities in families. These young women are challenging the media’s gender stereotyping and cyber bullying. They are challenging intergenerational expectations of them and they understand the importance of working with their male peers to achieve lasting change. I thank these young women for their courage, commitment and willingness to advocate, strongly, for women and girls in the CSW.
I was inspired when joining with the Pacific representatives - the government officials, parliamentarians and civil society representatives - as they considered their approach to the outcome statement of the 62nd Commission. They were rightly determined that issues for their small island nations were not overlooked, being largely rural populations that need to be resilient and sustainable in the face of the challenges of remotesness and climate change, mobility of population, education and health infrastructure deficits.

I commend the impressive leadership of those who were at CSW representing the Pacific and other parts of our region. They were an active and informed force who operated effectively to have their voices heard.

It is important that Australia and our neighbours have a loud and clear voice at CSW given we are all part of the Indo-Asia-Pacific region where there is, globally some of the highest rates of natural disasters, rates of child marriage, intimate partner violence, and ongoing conflicts with women and children being the majority of the displaced and suffering persons.

Australia partners with neighbouring governments in our region and like-minded agencies to address all these issues and more, and so we appreciate the opportunities the CSW in New York presents for comparing strategies and outcomes, and where we can make sure that communities, no matter how small or remote, have their special circumstances acknowledged and their plans and efforts supported.

CSW 2018 provided a safe place for important discussions about creating lasting change for the good. The challenge we have is turning words into action. We have made progress. We must not become complacent about these hard-won outcomes, but protect them, and strive ever harder to ensure the next generations of women and girls enjoy the same life opportunities that may have been theirs had they been born a boy.
I was honoured to attend CSW62 as a member of the Australian Government delegation.

It was particularly significant to have my colleague, June Oscar AO, the first women to be appointed to the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, attend CSW as part of the Australian Government delegation for the first time. It is essential that Indigenous women are visible in forums such as CSW, and that their individual and collective voices are heard in these international fora.

The priority theme of this year’s CSW session was challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls, and the review theme was participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women. Both of these themes align with my priorities outlined in my report. Unleashing the power of gender equality, published in November 2017\(^2\).

It was an incredibly valuable opportunity to support the work of the Australian Government and to promote the work of the Commission in advancing the rights of women and girls in rural, regional and remote Australia.

Australia made a strong and positive impact at CSW62, and I observed Australia’s high standing as a leader in the advancement of all women’s and girls’ human rights in rural, regional and remote areas, both in Australia and at the international level.

For the Commission, and the Australian Government more generally, there were substantial positive outcomes from CSW62. The joint Australian Government and Commission side event was an important opportunity to highlight the key gender equality initiatives being led by the Commission, including the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women’s Voices) Project led by June Oscar, our national report on sexual assault and sexual harassment at Australian universities: Change the course, and our fourth periodic national sexual harassment survey, which is currently out in the field. These projects generated significant discussion.

Gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls

In addition to the joint Australian Government and Commission side event, I spoke about the key challenges facing women and girls in rural, regional and remote Australia at the New Zealand Ministry of Women’s event, and a side event hosted by the republic of Malta discussing setting standards against gender based violence.

What particularly resonated with me were the stories from young women who spoke at the World YWCA Global Ambassadors breakfast hosted by Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls, Dr Sharman Stone. These young women spoke of diverse issues, including the role of technology in impacting on body image, the role of women in post-disaster efforts and

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resilience, the experiences of young mothers and the need for greater sexual and reproductive health education.

From my meetings, discussions and observations throughout the week, it was clear that Australia is leading on a number of issues, such as the prevention of violence against women and their children through a strong national framework driven by key partners such as Our Watch, ANROWS, the eSafety Commissioner and the work of the Commission.

CSW62 also provided an opportunity to showcase the Male Champions of Change initiative to an international audience, including highlighting the practical actions for engaging power, men and across sectors on gender equality. The Male Champion of Change side event, supported by the Australian Government, generated significant interest at CSW and filled the 500 person capacity venue.

Another important Australian Government side event spotlighted the role of business and the value of workplace gender data collected by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

**Independent participation of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)**
I acknowledge Australia’s continued strong leadership and advocacy on the independent participation of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) at CSW.

The work of NHRIs is incredibly important in highlighting gaps in human rights protections for women and girls, holding perpetrators of human rights abuses against women and girls to account, and providing independent advice regarding the development of laws, programs and policies to better protect the human rights of women and girls. In their cooperation with the United Nations, NHRIs can enrich the human rights debate and contribute to ensuring the international sphere is aware of the human rights situations on the ground.

The Australian Government’s ongoing commitment to their independent participation at CSW is greatly valued.

I also acknowledge the work of the Asia Pacific Forum, in partnership with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, in bringing together representatives from a number of NHRIs in the region for the CSW62 side event, to showcase the critical work of NHRIs in promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls in rural areas. It was a privilege to be part of this event and highlight the work of the Commission, alongside representatives from NHRIs in Afghanistan and the Philippines, and to reflect on how our independent standing and expertise can contribute to the work of CSW.

**Civil society contribution**
As in previous years, there was a strong contingent of committed and talented NGO representatives attending CSW (including, this year, the full board of the NRWC) and sharing their expertise at a range of events, and in particular providing critical advice during the negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions.

I acknowledge Australia’s commitment to fund representatives of Australian civil society to attend CSW as part of the Australian Government delegation. The two representatives, Dr Pat Hamilton and Ms Jo Stewart-Rattray, played a crucial role in ensuring that the voices of
Australian civil society were heard, in advocating for the advancement of human rights of all women and girls.

**Australia’s country statement**

Australia’s country statement, delivered by the Minister for Women, the Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP, was a strong statement in acknowledging the crucial role that rural communities play in Australia's economic and social stability. In particular, the Minister acknowledged the contribution of rural women to the ongoing growth and sustainability of Australian society, and their role in building and maintain the resilience of their communities.

Minister O’Dwyer also noted the role of technology in driving greater equality and empowerment for rural women and girls, and this is a particular issue that I am keen to explore further in my role.

The Australian Human Rights Commission is grateful to the Australian Government for the opportunity to attend CSW62 as part of the Australian delegation. It was a privilege to work alongside all of the representatives on the Australian Government delegation to CSW62 and I commend their significant contributions to the negotiations and outcomes, and in particular, the strong leadership and support of the Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP, Minister for Women.

*Sex Discrimination Commissioner Ms Kate Jenkins, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Ms June Oscar AO and Global YWCA delegates at the YWCA Roundtable.*
It was a privilege to attend CSW62 as a member of the Australian Government delegation. As the first woman to be appointed to the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, I have made it a priority of my five-year term to focus on the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.

It is essential that Indigenous women are visible in international forums such as CSW, and that our individual and collective voices are heard. On our journey to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, if we leave anyone behind, we will all be left behind. In this vein, I wish to acknowledge my colleague Kate Jenkins, Sex Discrimination Commissioner, who joined me on the Australian Government delegation to CSW62. It is vital for Indigenous and non-Indigenous women to work together in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls – Kate exemplified this solidarity and support.

For the Commission, and the Australian Government more generally, there were substantial positive outcomes from CSW62. The inclusion of civil society representatives and the Commission on the Government delegation to CSW62 demonstrated the strong relationship between the Australian government, civil society and NHRLs at CSW. Australia was also able to highlight its ongoing commitment to global gender equality and its best practice approaches to enhancing the economic and social outcomes of women in Australia through the joint Australian Government and Commission side event. This event was an important opportunity to outline the Commission’s partnership with the Australian Government in undertaking consultations to understand the barriers to economic security and empowerment for women in rural, regional and remote Australia. In particular, it highlighted the key gender equality initiatives being led by the Commission: the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women’s Voices) Project and the fourth periodic national survey into workplace sexual harassment.

As the Social Justice Commissioner, one of the key positive outcomes from my participation at CSW62 was the opportunity to promote the important work of the Commission in advancing the rights of women and girls in rural, regional and remote Australia. In particular, my attendance at CSW62 allowed me to showcase a project, which I believe can offer inspiration and hope to Indigenous women and girls across the world: the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women’s Voices) project. Together through this project, the Commission and the Australian Government are leading the way globally in opening the space for Indigenous women and girls to speak freely and safely on matters that affect them and their communities.

I also wish to commend the level of interaction and engagement the delegation had with Gillian Bird, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and the staff at the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations. The opportunity to establish contacts with the Mission staff was very worthwhile and will be an important resource into the future for both the Commission and the Mission.
Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls

I am passionate about achieving gender equality and the empowerment of Indigenous women and girls in rural, regional and remote areas. The CSW62 priority and review themes allowed me to highlight the challenges that affect rural, regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, but also the important contributions they make to achieving gender equality and contributing to a rich, vibrant and diverse Australia. The role of technology plays a crucial role in supporting Indigenous women in this area.

In addition to the joint Australian Government and Commission side event, I spoke about the key challenges, strengths and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls at the joint side-event led by the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF) and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). At this side event, I highlighted the extreme invisibility of Indigenous women’s voices in rural and remote areas. I also noted that one of the key objectives of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women’s Voices) project is to ensure that the voices of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women – rural, regional, remote and urban – are heard, so that meaningful decisions can be made and effective action taken to make positive change for Indigenous women and girls.

I note that Australia’s country statement, delivered by the Minister for Women, the Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP, made a strong statement about acknowledging the crucial role that rural communities play in Australia’s economic and social stability. In particular, I welcome Minister O’Dwyer’s statement that governments must respond to the needs of all women, especially rural women in all their diversity, including Indigenous women.

I was particularly impressed by the young women who attended the World YWCA Global Ambassadors breakfast hosted by Australia’s Ambassador for Women and Girls, Dr Sharman Stone. This program is an important initiative to support young women being agents of change about issues that affect them. I hope that more Indigenous women will have the opportunity to be a part of this program in the future.

Partnerships with Indigenous women around the world

One of the most important outcomes from my attendance at CSW62 was the opportunity to speak with Indigenous women from around the world and to share ideas and experiences with them about achieving gender equality and the empowerment of Indigenous women and girls. From my conversations with Indigenous women, I was able to identify challenges and opportunities that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls share with Indigenous women and girls in other countries. This mutual exchange of ideas and experiences enriched my own knowledge, and provided me with new ideas of how I can work to better promote and protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls in Australia. I was particularly affected by the Canadian Government Side Event on barriers to justice for Indigenous women and girls, which focused on the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This is an issue that I believe requires further attention in Australia.

Civil society and the independent participation of national human rights institutions

I acknowledge Australia’s continued strong leadership and advocacy on the independent participation of NHRI at CSW. The Australian Government’s ongoing commitment to the
independent participation of NHRIs at CSW is greatly valued. In particular, I note the importance of my inclusion on the Australian Government delegation, as the first woman to be appointed to the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. Through my participation in the delegation, I was able to offer the perspective of an Indigenous woman at a wide range of events that the Australian Government had organised. Without my participation, the voice of Indigenous women would have been largely absent from these events. The participation of Indigenous women, in particular those from rural, regional and remote areas, is a space where we can seek to improve participation. The voices of Indigenous women must be present in all forums that discuss the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women – not only at forums that focus specifically on the rights of Indigenous women.

I also acknowledge the strong participation of Australian civil society representatives at CSW62, and the critical advice they provide during the negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions. I also acknowledge Australia’s commitment to funding two Australian civil society representatives – Dr Pat Hamilton and Ms Jo Stewart-Rattray – to attend CSW as part of the Australian Government delegation. In a climate of shrinking civil society participation in UN processes, the inclusion of civil society representatives in government delegations is vital. I commend Australia for its leadership in this area, as it is one of the select States that ensure civil society representatives play an active role in the Government delegation.

Lastly, I acknowledge the important work of APF in enhancing the participation of NHRIs at meetings of international human rights mechanisms and bodies. In particular, I commend APF’s work, in partnership with GANHRI, in bringing together representatives from a number of NHRIs in the region for the CSW62 side event on NHRIs advancing gender equality and the rights of women and girls living in rural areas. This event provided an opportunity to reflect on the important role of NHRIs in promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls in rural areas, as well as how NHRIs can contribute to CSW more broadly.

The Australian Human Rights Commission is grateful to the Australian Government for the opportunity to attend CSW62 as part of the Australian Government delegation. It was a privilege be a part of the delegation and I commend each member of the delegation for the contributions they made. In particular, I acknowledge the strong leadership and support of the Minister for Women, the Hon Kelly O’Dwyer MP.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Ms June Oscar AO, Ms Tia Oros Peters, Shiwi Nation, Betty Lyons, Onodaga Nation and Deborah Sanchez, Chumash Tohono Oodham Nation, at the Indigenous Women’s Caucus.

The Hon Kelly O'Dwyer MP, Minister for Women with Australia’s civil society delegates Ms Jo Stewart-Rattray and Dr Patricia Hamilton.
As the two non-government civil society delegates selected to represent women and girls living in rural Australia, we are deeply grateful to the Australian Government and the Office for Women for the opportunity to both learn from, and contribute to, the diverse voices in the negotiations concerning the CSW62 priority focus: “Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls” and the review theme of “Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women”.

It was an amazing feeling and an extraordinarily unique experience for us to be seated in the General Assembly of the United Nations as part of the Australian Government’s delegation. Most member states of the United Nations have not adopted the practice of including civil society delegates on the official government delegation – a practice, we believe, is essential as it brings the voices of, and keeps the focus on, grass roots women and girls to the global dialogue on improving the lives of women and girls living in rural communities. We were fortunate to share our experience with the first New Zealand civil society delegate in a decade and hope that other nations will follow Australia’s leadership in this practice.

Why do thousands of people attend CSW every year? It is not only to hold member states to account on their progress on gender equality. Many delegates take the opportunity to make connections across the world as they share their experiences and resources and showcase the best practices their country is achieving. The support of the Australian Civil Society contingent who were in the halls for as long as we were in the negotiation rooms was overwhelming. To walk out and see those smiling faces ready with language, sustenance and sometimes a hug was remarkable and something we were both thankful for.

What were our experiences? We have found it difficult to capture our experiences at CSW62 in a limited space. Each day a different memory sparks another discussion as we share with family and friends and each day we could write a different report.

Pat Hamilton

It was always my dream to represent my country on the International stage – CSW62 gave me that privilege. My preparation for participating in the event started 8 years ago as part of the National Women’s Alliances when we planned our input into the government’s zero draft by attending briefings via teleconferences and webinars, responding to papers, and gathering information concerning the needs of rural women and girls. It is so important that rural, remote and regional women have a voice in shaping the decision-making and policy responses that affect them. This year we thank the Equality Rights Alliance and NRWC for hosting our pre-departure events.

My involvement in CSW62 was in two parts. The first five days involved participating in Minister Kelly O’Dwyer’s program and meeting the official Australian Government delegation (the reports of these amazing women highlight the depth of these powerful women who are
making a difference in achieving gender equality for women and girls in Australia). From the opening ceremony, through the statements from each country, the thought provoking parallel and side events, there were so many highlights and so many opportunities to share the stories of the diversity of life experiences as each of us resolved to do more and to do better to make a difference in achieving gender equality. Then the second part – the intensity of the achievement of the agreed conclusions by the member states.

My head keeps buzzing as I heard commitment after commitment to achieving gender equality. Over many decades, I have built on the achievements of women. Although progress is very slow, there is progress. I have observed. I have listened. I have learnt. It is important to act. Being involved with different causes has helped me broaden my horizons and reach as I work hard to improve the lives of women and girls through engagement and action.

Jo Stewart-Rattray

As a seven-year-old from the Australian bush I had a dream that I wanted to go to the United Nations and make a difference for people around the world. That dream was realised the moment I walked onto the floor of the General Assembly of the United Nations. My preparation for such an event meant a lot of reading and reaching out to those who had greater experience than I in diplomacy and in the world of agreed language.

Some of the highlights for me were participating in the incredible range of side events; attending Delegation Morning musters which taught me so much about the logistics required behind the scenes; and attending, and sometimes leading, afternoon debriefs with Civil Society where the challenge was to fit a day’s experience into half an hour!

It meant a great deal to come out of the negotiation room, often late at night or in the wee small hours, to see the civil society representatives there in the hallways with never flagging energy and commitment, warm smiles and on occasion, what felt like a lifesaving cuppa. After a long trip home and jetlag I have a sense of achievement and deep contentment; together with a strong desire to stay involved in the sector to continue the work that commenced for me with the lead up to CSW62.

Once you have seen, and been a part of, the big-ticket items being negotiated, there seems no point in going back to ‘sweating the small stuff’. Someone came up to me on my first day back in the office to tell me that a team member was 3 minutes late for a meeting. A trivial event that put my two weeks at UNHQ right in the forefront and made me realise that we had done important work on the global stage on the journey towards empowering rural women and girls.

This opportunity has definitely been a life changing experience for me. If one young girl has the opportunity to dream big and realise that dream as I have mine, any struggle that I may have had with gender bias and discrimination has been worth it.

We have learned much from our different experiences as we worked tirelessly to reach, engage and connect with civil society to advocate for rural, remote and regional Australian women and girls. CSW62 was a very vital, inspiring and motivating way to reach the agreed conclusions by 193 nations through the consistency, tenacity and patience of the facilitator and the consultative negotiations of government representatives. Agreed language matters –
and so does the intent of how words are delivered. Language is not just semantics. Language has political power and is the lifeline that can transform the way we think and act.

We have had an awesome experience and trust that, in some small way, we have made a difference to positively address the specific needs and challenges faced by rural women and girls in accessing services, resources and in achieving gender equality. Our gratitude to the Australian Government and the Office for Women for giving us the privilege to participate in CSW62 is unending. Our deep appreciation and thanks to the civil society organisation representatives that supported us through their input, feedback, support and providing the language – you made our task much easier and more rewarding.

Friendships and connections have been made that deserve nurturing after the event and a continuing involvement.

Australian civil society delegate Dr Patricia Hamilton, National Women’s Alliance representatives and broader Australian civil society delegates discussing the progress of the CSW62 Agreed Conclusion negotiations.
OUTCOMES OF CSW62

Similar to previous years, CSW62 was a success. The delegation’s broad participation across the official CSW62 program and side events, and advocacy with counterparts and civil society on Australia’s priorities for CSW62 enhanced our global reputation for our determined pursuit of women’s empowerment, safety and prosperity. The Minister delivered clear messages on the significant role that rural women play to the economic and social stability of Australian society, highlighting specifically the resilience of women leaders and the realities for women facing multiple and competing forms of disadvantage. The Minister also reaffirmed Australia’s ongoing commitment to its Human Rights Council pledge to advance global gender equality and to maintaining the important relationship between government, civil society and our national human rights institutions.

Agreed Conclusions

The Agreed Conclusions from CSW62 recognises the importance of lifting rural women and girls out of poverty and in ensuring their human rights. The document expresses concern about the increasing challenges that are exacerbating the disadvantages and inequalities that rural women and girls face – from humanitarian emergencies and armed conflicts to the adverse impacts of climate change. The Agreed Conclusions emphasised that rural women and girls are essential to sustainable development, and their rights and empowerment needs to be prioritised. A broad range of concrete next steps and recommendations were outlined in the Agreed Conclusions and this strong outcome provides a roadmap on next steps that governments and the non-government sectors can undertake to support the realisation of rural women’s rights and address their needs.

CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

The Office for Women disseminates information regarding the Commissions 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

National Women’s Alliances

As part of their core work the 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 the larger joint international engagement project.

For CSW62, the NRWC and the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) took the lead on this project and delivered:

- A preliminary working meeting for civil society on 19 October 2018;
- Written submissions to the Office for Women on the National Women’s Alliances’ priorities in relation to the government’s engagement and areas of focus at CSW62;
- A pre-departure briefing for civil society representatives on 16 February 2018; and
- An international engagement forum to debrief civil society about CSW62 on 13 April 2018.

REPORT BY THE NATIONAL WOMEN’S ALLIANCES

The priority and review themes for CSW62 provided an excellent opportunity for the National Women’s Alliances to build international advocacy capacity among a range of rural women’s organisations from across Australia. Led by the NRWC and ERA, the National Women’s Alliances coordinated the production of a submission to the Australian Government on language priorities for women in rural and remote areas in October. The National Women’s Alliances also coordinated the participation of more than 60 Australian NGO representatives from a range of organisations to ensure effective communication and cooperation in the ground in New York. Support for NGO representatives included a pre-departure training and strategy forum held in Melbourne in February and a post-return report back forum in Sydney in April, both of which were well attended and brought together NGO representatives with staff from the Office for Women and the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Among the Australian NGO representatives in New York were delegates from four Alliances (Australian Women Against Violence Alliance, ERA, Economic Security 4 Women and the NRWC), with a record first-time team of 9 women in the NRWC delegation, including Chief Executive Officer Keli McDonald and all eight Board members. Many representatives self-funded their participation, recognising that CSW is a key opportunity to influence global policy.
and shape the future of the world for all girls and women, as well as sending a strong message of our commitment to the issues confronting rural, regional and remote women in Australia.

The National Women’s Alliances were a strong presence in the parallel event program with a range of events, including E-Learning Advances Rural Women (NRWC) and Storytelling strengthens Resilience against Domestic Violence (NRWC), 'They Say I Ruin Families': Women’s Human Rights Defenders Experience of Backlash (AWAVA) and Grace Under Fire: Sexual Harassment and Violence in Rural Australia (AWAVA), Bridging the Gap: Voluntary National Reporting to advance women’s rights (eS4W), Women’s Access, Participation and Portrayal in ITC and Media (eS4W) and Expanding Space: Protecting the Role of CSOs at CSW (ERA). NRWC President Alwyn Friedersdorff also participated in the Australian Government Side Event entitled Solutions for Safer Digital Inclusion.

The NRWC and ERA delegates also focused on supporting the Australian Government Delegation members in language negotiations, bringing the findings of our submission consultations directly into the negotiations for the Agreed Conclusions. After more than 100 hours of often challenging debate, the negotiators emerged with consensus agreement on every paragraph of the Agreed Conclusions for the first time in 5 years. There were solid paragraphs on unpaid care and women’s leadership, our first paragraph on women human rights defenders, recognition of the need to address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, some good references to the diversity of women and new commitments on addressing reproductive health disparities, maternal mortality and the health workforce. There was also good language on climate change and natural disasters, food security including agriculture and fisheries, the role of women in peace building and the importance of the role that rural women play. As has become usual, there were strong attacks on language about women’s human rights, especially sexual rights and deep opposition to language about sexual orientation and gender identity. Progressive States (including Australia) did a good job of defending previous language about sexual and reproductive health.
Equality Rights Alliance workshop participants discussing Women Human Rights Defenders
## ANNEX A - Minister’s Official CSW62 Program

### SUNDAY 11TH MARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.00 – 15.30</td>
<td>Meeting with Ambassador Gillian Bird PSM, Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.30 – 17.30</td>
<td>Australian Government Delegation briefing with Ambassador Gillian Bird PSM, Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.45 – 18.00</td>
<td>Meeting with Civil Society Delegates, Ms Jo Stewart-Rattray and Dr Pat Hamilton</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.00 – 19.30</td>
<td>Reception for Australian Government Delegation and Australian Civil Society representatives, co-hosted by Minister O’Dwyer and Ambassador Bird</td>
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### MONDAY 12TH MARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.00 – 11.30</td>
<td>62nd Commission of the Status of Women Opening Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30 – 12.00</td>
<td>Bilateral Meeting with Republic of Turkey (Minister of Family and Social Policy, Dr Fatma Betül Sayan Kaya, MD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00 – 12.45</td>
<td>Return to 62nd Commission of the Status of Women Opening Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.15 – 14.30</td>
<td>- Pacific Islands Forum Statement, delivered by Samoa</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.00 – 16.30</td>
<td>Pacific Leaders’ Lunch, co-hosted by Minister O’Dwyer and Ambassador Bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.30 – 17.00</td>
<td>Ministerial Roundtable A: Good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including access to education, infrastructure, technology and nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.30 – 17.00</td>
<td>Bilateral Meeting with Argentina (Executive Director of the National Institute of Women, Ms Fabiana Tuñez)</td>
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### TUESDAY 13TH MARCH

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.00 – 11.30</td>
<td>High-level Interactive Ministerial Dialogue: Building alliances to achieve gender equality and empower rural women and girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.45 – 11.15</td>
<td>Bilateral Meeting with Liechtenstein (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Culture, Dr Aurelia Frick MD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.30 – 12.00</td>
<td>Bilateral Meeting with the United Kingdom (Minister for Equalities, Baroness Susan Williams)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.00 – 12.35</td>
<td>Deliver Australia’s Country Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.35 – 13.00</td>
<td>Bilateral Meeting with New Zealand (Minister for Women, the Hon Julie-Anne Genter MP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00 – 2.30</td>
<td>Australian side event: Solutions for Online Digital Inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.45 – 18.00</td>
<td>Australian side event: Male Champions of Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.00 – 19.15</td>
<td>New Zealand hosted reception event: Suffrage 125</td>
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### WEDNESDAY 14TH MARCH

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.15 – 2.30</td>
<td>Australian side event: Women in Leadership – Lessons from Australian Companies</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.30 – 20.00</td>
<td>Australian side event: Bridging the Digital Gender Divide – OECD’s G20 stocktake preliminary results</td>
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Corporate Women Directors International hosted lunch event – Women on Boards

Minister O’Dwyer also undertook an official program as part of her Revenue and Financial Services portfolio responsibilities, separate to CSW62.
ANNEX B – Australia’s Country Statement

Madam Chair, right across the world, every woman and girl should be free to exercise her freedoms, her choices, and realise her rights. This includes her right to live free from violence, her right to control her own body, to go to school, to participate fully and freely in political processes and to earn equal pay for equal work.

As Governments, we must respond to the needs of all women, especially rural women in all their diversity, including indigenous women, migrant women, women with disabilities and LGBTI women.

In Australia, rural communities are fundamental to our economic and social stability, providing much of the food we eat, the energy that runs our households, and our industries.

One in three Australian women reside in rural areas. The contribution of these women to the ongoing growth and sustainability of our society is crucial. Rural women are our teachers, doctors, nurses, officials and our Parliamentarians. They run successful businesses and farms, and are at the forefront of innovation and research.

Women also play a leading role in building and maintaining the resilience of their communities, particularly those communities that experience greater vulnerability to disasters and shocks.

Our policies and institutional responses are designed to take into account the intersecting experiences and needs of rural women in all their diversity.

Despite the positive role rural women and girls play in Australia, we also recognise that they face a range of different challenges and disadvantages compared to their urban counterparts. And for many women and girls, a life in a rural community can be marred by multiple and competing forms of disadvantage and discrimination.

Rural women and girls continue to receive unequal opportunities to men and have unequal access to economic resources. Women maintain the burden of caring responsibilities, thereby inhibiting their ability to exercise choice. Productive land passes primarily to men, despite the reality that the majority of agricultural producers are women.

Chair, our responses also recognise that technology will play a central role in driving greater equality and empowerment for rural women and girls. Access to technology is crucial for women and girls, especially those in rural areas. Technology is increasingly relied upon to support the delivery of essential services to rural communities, like health, schooling and justice services. It is essential to the economic independence of women, and as an avenue to communicate with support services, family and friends.
It is also essential, Madam Chair, that the increase in access to technology does not permit an increase in technological abuse. Unfortunately, in many cases, women experience abuse and violence when technology is used to harass, control and stalk.

Australia has responded to this threat by creating the Office of the eSafety Commissioner which provides valuable resources to women and girls to manage their online engagement and provide support in dealing with online harassment and abuse through initiatives such as the image-based abuse portal.

Chair, I am proud of the commitment Australia has shown to enrich and empower the lives of women and girls across the region and around the world.

Australia is committed to the full realisation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to ensuring that the 2030 Agenda implements a gender mainstreaming approach across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

As a member of the Human Rights Council and candidate for membership to the Commission, Australia commits to magnifying the call for global equality and justice, working in collaboration with our national human rights institutions and civil society organisations, including rural human rights defenders.

These institutions are integral in raising and representing the voices of women and girls the world over. Our work is dependent upon their undying passion and support.

I am proud that Australia’s Sex Discrimination Commissioner and – for the first time – Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner – have joined me at CSW62 this year, along with two representatives of civil society on the Australian Government’s delegation, along with our Ambassador for Women and Girls.

Madame Chair, Australia sees a bright and hopeful future for women and girls of all backgrounds. In collaboration with our global and domestic partners, we will continue to lobby with unwavering for the rights of all women and their freedom to choose, including rural women and girls.

Thank you.