

INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DAY 21 YEARS
OF IMPACT
ILLAWARRA

- | EMPOWERING WOMEN
- | STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY
- | STEWARDING SYSTEMS CHANGE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Nanganbi njini (Hello we) the International Women's Day Illawarra Committee acknowledges the Dharawal-speaking peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters and skies on which we live, work and gather. We pay our deep respects to Elders past and present, and honour the enduring cultures, knowledge systems and leadership that continue to hold and shape this Country.

We acknowledge the ongoing and intergenerational impacts of colonisation, and we recognise the unbroken matriarchal connections, and relationships that are interwoven across Country and give this place its living identity.

We offer respect to Bubara Geera, known today as Mount Keira – Bubara Geera. For thousands of generations, this Ngabu Grandmother Mountain has been a place of learning, storying, nurturing, and guidance. She reminds women of our responsibility to listen carefully, to share knowledge with care, and to act with foresight for those yet to come.

It is from the Matriarchal spirit of Country, of knowledge held in relationship, of community responsibility, and of care for future generations that the International Women's Day Illawarra Committee draws its inspiration.

We walk forward together in the spirit of truth-telling, committed to strengthening connected communities, advancing equity, and reducing inequality, gender disparity and social harm through collective action grounded in respect, reciprocity and responsibility.



Statement on Language and Cultural Authority:

The Illawarra International Women's Day Committee respectfully acknowledges the importance of language. Our acknowledgement was developed in partnership with Cultural Custodians, whose guidance ensured the language used is locally grounded, culturally informed and reflective of ongoing connection to Country.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS

This Impact Report has been prepared with care and commitment by members of the International Women's Day Illawarra committee, drawing on more than two decades of organisational knowledge, records, and reflection. The report was authored on a pro bono basis by two committee members, with guidance from the Chair and Patron, and informed by contributions from current and former committee members, partners, and volunteers.

REPORT LEAD AUTHORS & DESIGN TEAM

Sarah Lisle - Founder & Director, M.I.C.A | Moral Imagination Cooperative Australia

Bianca Hunt - Founder & Director, FLW Connect

Waples Marketing Group - Art Direction & Graphic Design

REPORTING PERIOD: 2005 - 2026

PREPARED FOR: 21ST
ANNIVERSARY OF
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S
DAY ILLAWARRA

ISSUED: FRIDAY 6 MARCH 2026

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MESSAGE FROM CO-FOUNDERS PATRON AND CHAIR

The inaugural International Women's Day Luncheon held in 2006 was the first of its kind in the Illawarra. As co-founders we wanted a platform where we could celebrate the achievements of women in our community and, at the same time, advocate for gender equality and the rights and safety for all women and girls.

The event has now become a trusted and respected regional platform for advocacy, leadership and tangible community investment in women empowerment. It stands as a powerful expression of what is possible when a community comes together with purpose.

We are immensely proud of what has been achieved in these two decades. It reflects the strength, generosity and leadership of women in our community.

This report is both a celebration of achievements as well as an acknowledgement of the collective efforts and contributions of the volunteers who have served on the International Women's Day (IWD) Illawarra Committee and of our partners, sponsors, speakers and supporters who have made our success possible.

As you read this report we hope you will also recognise the part your unwavering support over 21 years has played in the impact IWD Illawarra has had in our community. We thank you all.

Despite our achievements we still have a way to go. We will continue to stand together to eliminate violence against women, to achieve gender equality and to listen to the voices of all women and girls, never forgetting the perspectives of the most marginalised.

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR CONTINUED PARTNERSHIP
WITH US; OUR STRENGTH AND SUCCESS DEPEND ON IT.**





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IWD Illawarra is a community-led, Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) registered not-for-profit grounded in stewardship, collective leadership and place-based action. Governed through a strong accountability framework and delivered by a 100 per cent volunteer committee, the organisation is guided by a clear commitment to maximise social return on investment by directing the majority of funds raised back into outcomes for women and girls across the Illawarra.

Over more than two decades, IWD Illawarra has evolved from raising awareness to delivering action. Guided by its Gender Framework which connects global, national and state priorities with local community needs, the organisation translates commitments to gender equality into practical, place-based outcomes. Through scholarships, Major Project funding and community grants, IWD Illawarra has supported initiatives across health, education, disability, arts, culture and social services, strengthening local organisations and contributing to more inclusive, connected communities.

Since its establishment in 2005, IWD Illawarra has grown significantly in scale, reach and influence. Attendance at the annual flagship event has increased from fewer than 250 participants in its early years to consistently approaching 1,000 attendees in recent years. Sustained sponsorship growth and strong cross-sector partnerships have enabled the reinvestment of more than \$683,800 directly back into the Illawarra. This includes 98 scholarships valued at over \$220,000 and funding for more than 30 community organisations delivering frontline services in areas such as women's health, domestic and family violence, mental health, leadership and community wellbeing.

Beyond funding, IWD Illawarra plays a vital convening and advocacy role. Through high-profile speakers, media engagement and community dialogue, the organisation has amplified conversations about gender equality, safety, economic participation and

leadership representation, helping ensure these issues remain visible and embedded within the region's social and civic landscape.

The work of IWD Illawarra aligns with global, national and state priorities to advance gender equality and reduce inequality. In particular, it supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Delivered locally and shaped by community leadership, this work contributes to broader efforts across Australia to improve women's safety, economic security, leadership participation and wellbeing.

As IWD Illawarra enters its next decade, it does so with a clear focus on deepening impact, strengthening partnerships and continuing to respond to emerging community needs. This Impact Report reflects both a strong foundation and an ongoing commitment to collective responsibility, setting the context for why gender equality matters in the Illawarra, and why sustained, locally led action remains essential.

While this report highlights the positive outcomes of long-term community investment, it also sits within a broader policy context that recognises gender equality as central to safety, economic security and community wellbeing. NSW and Commonwealth Government strategies emphasise the need to address gendered violence, strengthen women's economic participation and reduce structural disadvantage through place-based responses. Understanding how these priorities intersect with the lived realities of women in the Illawarra is critical to ensuring local action remains relevant, aligned and impactful. Detailed alignment with ESG principles, public policy and the UN Sustainable Development Goals is provided in Appendix B. The following section explores why gender equality matters in the Illawarra and why continued, community-led investment is essential to achieving lasting change.

IWD ILLAWARRA INTRODUCTION

IWD Illawarra has been more than an annual event. It has been a sustained catalyst platform for progress, guided by an inclusive mindset that recognises and values diversity, bringing together community, business, government and allies to advance gender equality and social wellbeing across the Illawarra.

What began as a local celebration has evolved into a trusted regional movement. Intentionally inclusive from the outset, IWD Illawarra has welcomed women of all ages, cultures and backgrounds, alongside partners from diverse sectors. This diversity has strengthened our work, creating safe spaces for dialogue, amplifying unheard voices, and fostering connections that extend well beyond a single day.

Central to this story is the enduring spirit of IWD Illawarra, held and carried forward by successive generations of committee members. As stewardship continues to pass from one generation to the next, this report sets a clear foundation for continued relevance, inclusion and impact in the years ahead. At the heart of IWD Illawarra is a model of stewardship spirit, the collective responsibility of successive generations of volunteers, partners and community leaders to care for, strengthen and carry forward the movement in service of women, community and place.

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY ILLAWARRA

Established in 2005, IWD Illawarra is a volunteer-led, community-driven initiative aligned with global International Women's Day principles and grounded in place-based action across the Illawarra region, including Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and the Shoalhaven. For more than two decades, IWD Illawarra has provided a trusted platform that brings together community, business, government and allies to advance gender equality through advocacy, investment and collective action.



OUR PURPOSE

To advance gender equality in the Illawarra by investing in women, amplifying diverse voices, and supporting initiatives that deliver measurable and lasting community outcomes.

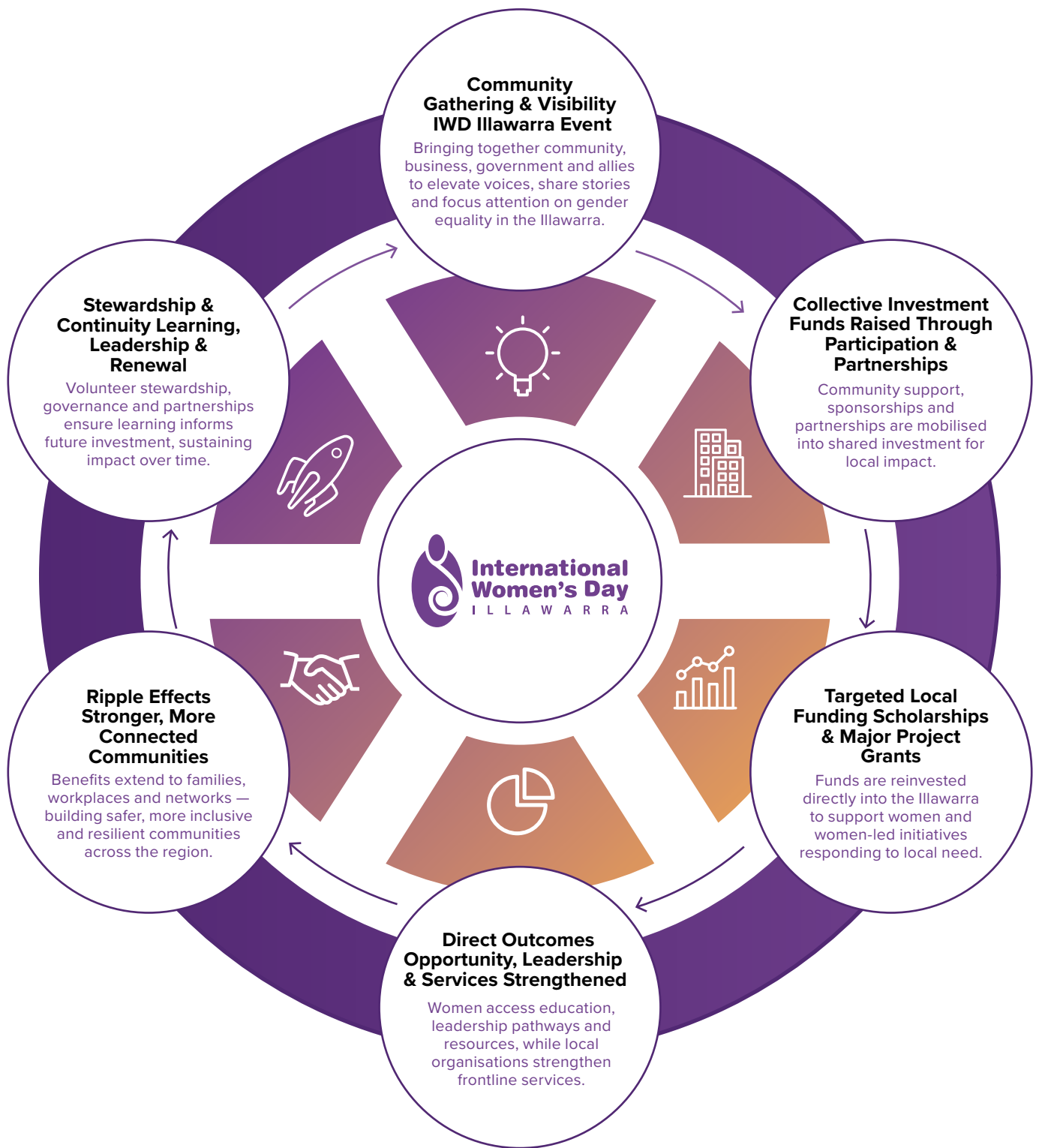
THE IWD ILLAWARRA GENDER FRAMEWORK

The IWD Illawarra Gender Framework explains how we decide what to support and why it matters. It helps us connect local, community-led projects with broader commitments to gender equality, while staying grounded in the lived experiences of women in the Illawarra.

The framework brings together global, national and state priorities, including international women's rights principles and social responsibility standards, to guide our decisions, partnerships and investments. This ensures our work is practical, inclusive, and focused on creating real, lasting change for women and the wider community. (Further detail is provided in Appendix 2.)

HOW WE CREATE IMPACT (Our Theory of Change) IWD Illawarra advances gender equality by convening community, mobilising collective investment, and reinvesting locally through scholarships and partnerships that create sustained social impact across the Illawarra. This approach ensures advocacy is matched with action, and that community participation translates into meaningful, measurable outcomes delivered with fiscal responsibility and strong social return for women in the Illawarra.





IWD Illawarra transforms community participation into lasting social impact through local reinvestment and stewardship. This approach is guided by the IWD Illawarra Gender Framework, which aligns local action with broader gender equality commitments (see *Appendix B*).

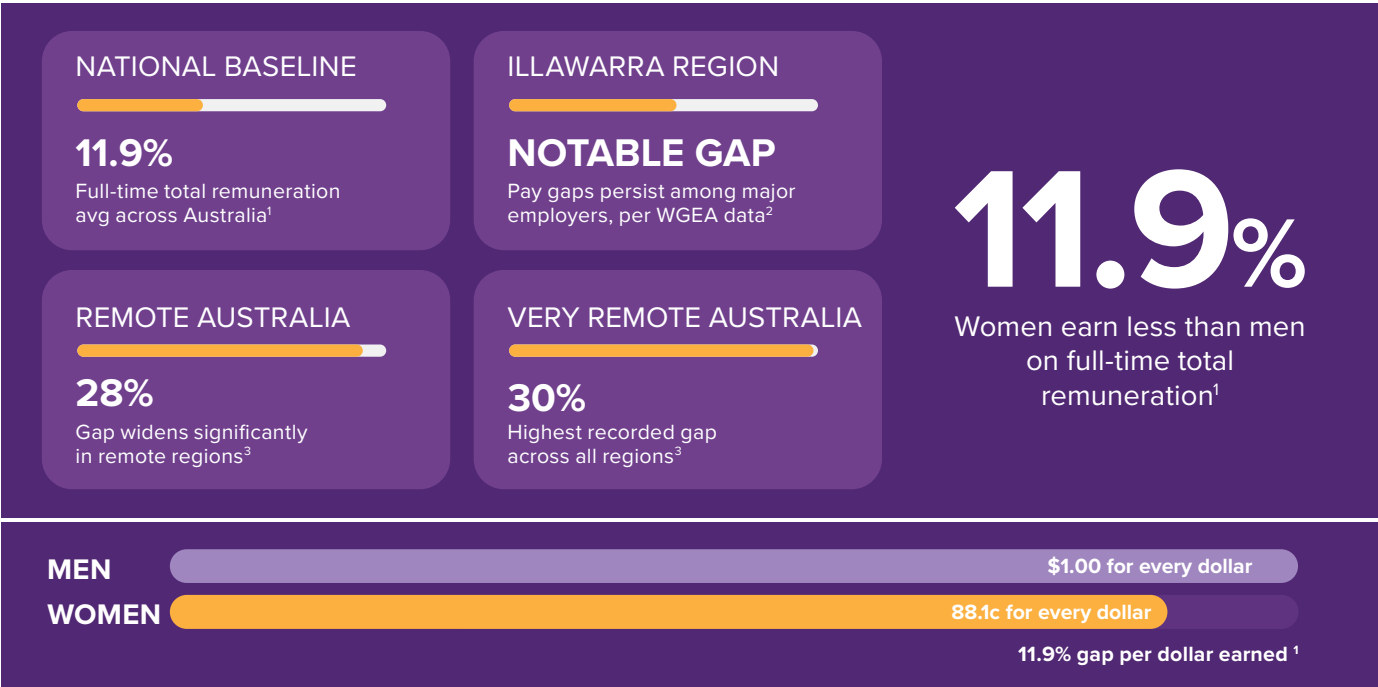
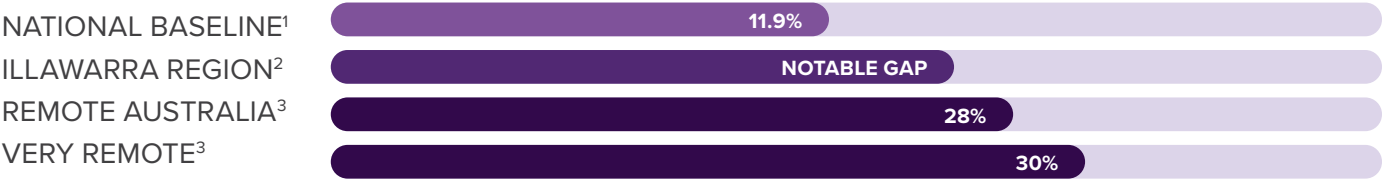
WHY GENDER EQUALITY MATTERS IN THE ILLAWARRA

PERSISTENT GAPS REQUIRE PLACE-BASED ACTION

Women continue to face structural barriers to safety, economic security, leadership and inclusion. These challenges are often shaped by intersecting factors such as race, age, disability, caring

responsibilities and cultural background. Progress requires sustained, deliberate and community-led action — gender equality is not a “done deal”. The IWD Illawarra Gender Framework guides how local action is prioritised and how community investment is directed.

GENDER PAY GAP WIDENS WITH REMOTENESS - WHERE DOES YOUR REGION SIT?



ACROSS AUSTRALIA & REGIONAL CONTEXT

ACROSS AUSTRALIA

Women earn on average **11.9% less than men** on full-time total remuneration. This reflects long-standing structural inequities across industries, occupations and career pathways — also evident at a regional level. WGEA data confirms pay gaps persist among major Illawarra employers.

REGIONAL AND REMOTE

In remote areas the gap rises above **28%**; in very remote locations it reaches nearly **30%**. For women in regional communities, lower earnings compound over time: reduced superannuation, financial insecurity, and higher workforce attrition.

SOURCES:
1. ABS, Employee Earnings & Hours, May 2025 (cat. 6306.0, rel. Jan 2026) & Average Weekly Earnings, Nov 2025 (cat. 6302.0, rel. Feb 2026). National GPG 11.9%; 88¢/dollar.
2. WGEA, Employer Gender Pay Gaps Data Explorer, 2024–25 Employer Census. wgea.gov.au/Data-Explorer
3. ABS, Employee Earnings & Hours, May 2023 (cat. 6306.0). Remoteness-classified gender pay gap from microdata: Remote 28%+; Very Remote ~30%.



UNPAID CARING RESPONSIBILITIES

Women in Australia continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care work. On average, women undertake **4 hrs 53 min** of unpaid care each day, compared with **3 hrs 52 min** for men — **over 1 hour more every day**.⁴

DAILY UNPAID CARE HOURS — WOMEN VS MEN⁴



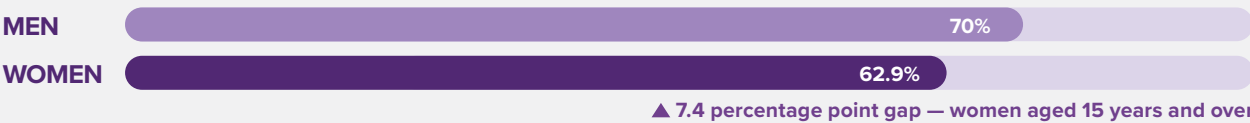
7+ hours more per week. This imbalance is most pronounced for women with young children, those in lower-income households, and single mothers. Unpaid caring responsibilities often result in part-time work, interrupted careers and reduced long-term financial security.

Unpaid care is essential to the functioning of families and communities, yet it remains largely invisible in economic systems. Addressing gender inequality requires recognising, valuing and redistributing this work more fairly.

WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

WOMEN VS MEN (NSW)

NSW WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION RATE — 2024⁵



These gaps are shaped by pay inequality, limited flexibility, caring responsibilities and unequal access to secure employment. In regional areas like the Illawarra, fewer employment options and wider pay gaps can further restrict women’s economic security and progression.

For women with intersecting identities, including culturally and racially marginalised women and women with caring responsibilities, these barriers are often amplified.

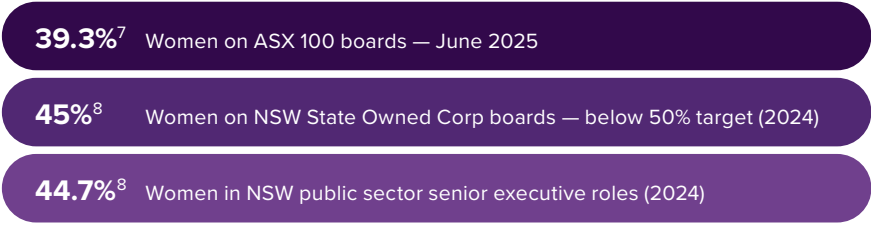
AUSTRALIA’S FULL-TIME GENDER PAY GAP — NOVEMBER 2025⁶



SOURCES:
4. ABS, How Australians Use Their Time, 2024. Time Use Survey, Aug–Oct 2024, published Dec 2025. Females 4 hrs 53 min/day unpaid work; males 3 hrs 52 min/day.
5. NSW Government Women NSW, NSW Women’s Strategy 2025 Report Card (src: ABS LFS Detailed, Nov 2024). Women 62.6%, men 70.0%, aged 15+.
6. ABS, Average Weekly Earnings, Nov 2025 (cat. 6302.0, rel. 26 Feb 2026) via WGEA. Men \$2,147.80; women \$1,900.60; gap \$247.20/wk; AWOTE measure.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

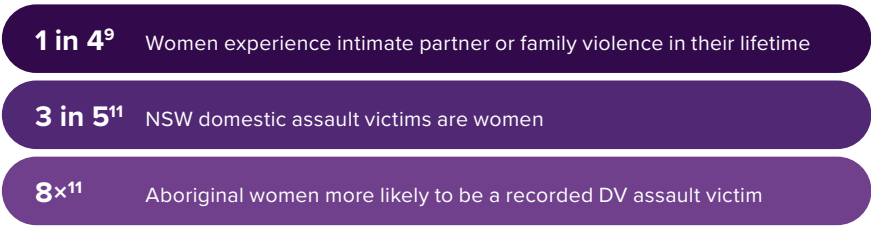
While there has been progress in women’s representation in leadership, significant gaps remain. Across NSW, women are still under-represented in senior leadership and board roles, particularly women from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds.



Statewide data shows that while women now hold a growing share of board positions, only a small proportion are held by culturally and racially marginalised women — highlighting persistent intersectional barriers, including biased leadership norms and unequal access to influential networks. Inclusive leadership matters: when decision-making reflects community diversity, outcomes are stronger and fairer.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE - LOCAL PRESSURES

Gender inequality is closely linked to safety. Nationally, **1 in 4 women** experience violence by an intimate partner or family



member in their lifetime.⁹ In the Illawarra, NSW Police data records a sustained level of domestic and family violence incidents, placing ongoing pressure on frontline services.¹⁰ Women account for **3 in 5 domestic assault victims** across NSW, with Aboriginal women **8 times more likely** to be recorded as a victim.¹¹

INTERSECTIONAL BARRIERS

Gender inequality is not experienced the same way by all women. Barriers are often shaped by multiple intersecting factors — race, age, disability, caring responsibilities, income, and cultural background. Women facing multiple forms of disadvantage encounter compounding barriers to safety, economic security, leadership and participation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, particularly those with caring

responsibilities, often experience heightened disadvantage alongside strong cultural and community obligations.

Addressing gender inequality in the Illawarra requires recognising this complexity. An effective response must centre lived experience, reduce barriers where they are greatest, and ensure that progress includes all women, not just some.



SOURCES:
7. AICD, Gender Diversity Snapshot, June 2025. ASX 100: 39.3% women directors; ASX 200: 38.1%; ASX 300: 37.5%.
8. NSW Women NSW, Women’s Strategy 2025 Report Card (src: NSW Premier’s Dept Workforce Profile 2024). NSW SOC boards 45%; senior execs 44.7%; managers 43.3%.
9. ABS, Personal Safety Survey 2021–22 (cat. 4906.0). 1 in 4 women (27%) experienced intimate partner or family violence since age 15.
10. BOCSAR, NSW Trends in Domestic & Family Violence, Quarterly Report to June 2025; LGA crime tables: bocsar.nsw.gov.au
11. BOCSAR, Domestic Violence Statistics, NSW Police recorded data 2023. 3 in 5 DV assault victims are women; Aboriginal women 8x more likely to be a victim.



DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

SDG ALIGNMENT: SDG - GENDER EQUALITY | SDG 10 - REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Diversity, equity and inclusion are central to the purpose and practice of International Women’s Day Illawarra. From its earliest years, the organisation has recognised that gender equality cannot be advanced in isolation, and that women’s experiences are shaped by culture, identity, ability, age, socio-economic circumstance and lived experience. This understanding informs how IWD Illawarra designs its programs, allocates funding and uses its platform.

Over 21 years, this commitment has been reflected through deliberate investment in initiatives supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, LGBTQI+ communities, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women with disability, older women, young women, and women experiencing vulnerability due to violence, housing insecurity or health challenges. These investments recognise that equity requires tailored responses meeting women where they are, rather than applying one-size-fits-all solutions.

The annual International Women’s Day Illawarra event is intentionally designed as an inclusive civic

space, bringing together participants from across sectors, backgrounds and generations. Accessible venues, tiered ticket pricing, student access and a diverse keynote program support broad participation, while the stories shared on stage reflect a wide range of lived experiences.

Scholarship and Major Project funding further embed inclusion by prioritising opportunity for women who may otherwise face barriers to participation or advancement. By supporting education, creative practice, cultural safety, health and community leadership initiatives, IWD Illawarra contributes to change that extends beyond individual recipients to families, workplaces and community networks.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are not treated as fixed outcomes, but as an ongoing commitment to listening, reflection and adaptation. As the Illawarra continues to evolve, IWD Illawarra remains focused on ensuring its platform is representative, responsive and relevant amplifying voices too often unheard and strengthening outcomes for the whole community.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION IN PRACTICE

International Women’s Day Illawarra embeds inclusion through action, including:

01

Targeted community investment:

in organisations supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, women with disability, and women experiencing vulnerability.

02

Accessible participation

through venue selection, tiered ticket pricing and student access

03

and leadership
Inclusive storytelling

via diverse keynote speakers and lived - experience voices on stage

04

Equitable funding pathways

through scholarships and Major Projects that reduce barriers to education, leadership and community participation



21+
YEARS OF
IMPACT

21-YEAR TIMELINE: A REGIONAL MOVEMENT WITH IMPACT

International Women's Day Illawarra turns global conversations about gender equality into practical, place-based action. Guided by the IWD Illawarra Gender Framework, the organisation grounds its work in community connection, lived experience and shared responsibility. From the outset, relationships have been central to impact. Early events elevated local women, community leaders, advocates and change-makers whose stories reflected everyday life in the Illawarra. These voices-built trust and relevance, ensuring gender equality was discussed in ways that mattered locally. As the platform grew, IWD Illawarra welcomed nationally recognised Australian women alongside local speakers. This growth strengthened connections between local and national perspectives, amplifying regional

voices and linking Illawarra experiences to wider movements for change. Local voices have always remained at the heart of this work.

Each year, International Women's Day themes guide IWD Illawarra's focus. They shape programming, speaker selection and investment decisions, helping the organisation respond to emerging issues while staying true to its purpose. Global themes are not adopted symbolically but translated into locally meaningful action. The timeline that follows traces this journey, showing how relationships, leadership and community investment have deepened over time, and how a regional movement continues to deliver lasting impact through connection, collaboration and care.

► HOW TO READ THE TIMELINE

The timeline uses a set of icons and markers to show how IWD Illawarra's work aligns local action with broader gender equality goals.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 'SDGS'

SDGS	WHAT IT SIGNALS
► SDG 5 - GENDER EQUALITY	Advancing women's leadership, safety, participation and opportunity
► SDG 10 - REDUCED INEQUALITIES	Addressing structural and overlapping disadvantage through local investment
► SDG 17 - PARTNERSHIPS	COLLABORATION ACROSS COMMUNITY, BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT

THESE INDICATORS SHOW HOW COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES CONTRIBUTE TO GLOBAL GOALS THROUGH PLACE-BASED ACTION.

► Impact Themes Across the Timeline

IMPACT THEME	WHAT IT REPRESENTS
FOUNDATION & CAPACITY	Building skills, confidence, education and early opportunity
VISIBILITY & VOICE	Elevating lived experience, leadership and advocacy
INNOVATION & LEADERSHIP	Supporting women-led initiatives and new ways of working
CONNECTION & COLLABORATION	Strengthening networks, partnerships and shared effort
SAFETY & WELLBEING	Supporting responses to violence, health and care needs
STEWARDSHIP & CONTINUITY	Volunteer leadership, governance and intergenerational handover

ANNUAL THEMES

UNITED NATIONS IWD THEMES 2005-2010

2005 Gender Equality Beyond 2005; Building a More Secure Future UN SOURCE →	2006 Women in Decision-making UN SOURCE →	2007 Ending Impunity for Violence Against Women and Girls UN SOURCE →
2008 Investing in Women and Girls UN SOURCE →	2009 Women and Men United to End Violence Against Women and Girls UN SOURCE →	2010 Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities: Progress for All UN SOURCE →

International Women's Day Illawarra was established in 2005 to create a local platform that recognised women's contributions, elevated conversations about gender equality, and translated community participation into practical local benefit. The inaugural event in 2006 attracted around 250 attendees, signalling strong regional interest in meaningful dialogue on women's issues. From the outset, the model was community-driven, volunteer-led and values-based, with a clear commitment to reinvesting funds raised back into the Illawarra. During these formative years, IWD Illawarra featured a mix of local and nationally recognised women whose leadership reflected the issues of the time, decision-making, economic opportunity, safety and equality. Speakers and panel contributors came from public service, business, sport, aviation and community leadership, grounding global conversations in lived local experience. Among these early contributors was Dr Margaret Gardiner, whose leadership and advocacy left a lasting mark on the organisation. Although Dr Gardiner has since passed, her impact continues through the Dr Margaret Gardiner Scholarship for Medical Researchers, which supports women advancing medical research and reflects the enduring impact of early leadership.

International Women's Day themes during this period focused on gender equality beyond rhetoric, women in decision-making, and ending violence against women and girls. These themes

shaped early priorities and programming, helping IWD Illawarra respond to emerging issues while remaining grounded in community need. Early scholarships and community investment demonstrated how collective action could deliver real outcomes. As one early recipient reflected:

"I think I share a bit of her determination. Maybe I'll absorb some of her magic. Madison's \$1,000 scholarship will go directly toward new running shoes and travelli costs to train in Wollongong -removing the practical barriers standing between her and her athletic ambitions."

Madison Rutter, 2009 Kerryn McCann scholarship recipient

"Aunty Mary has been a very powerful role model in my life."

Rhonda Cruse, 2009 Aunty Mary David scholarship recipient

Rhonda chose to donate her \$1,000 scholarship to the Elder's group she worked alongside — honouring Aunty Mary's long-held wish for them to own a sewing machine and continuing a legacy of community care.

These early years established the foundations that continue to define IWD Illawarra, credibility, collaboration and action and set the course for sustained, place-based impact in the decades that followed.

ANNUAL THEMES

UNITED NATIONS IWD THEMES 2011-2015

2011 Equal Access to Education, Training, and Science and Technology: Pathway to Decent Work for Women UN SOURCE →	2012 Empower Rural Women, End Poverty, and Hunger UN SOURCE →	2013 A Promise is a Promise: Time for Action to End Violence Against Women UN SOURCE →
2014 Equality for Women is Progress for All UN SOURCE →	2015 Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity: Picture it! UN SOURCE →	

Between 2011 and 2015, International Women's Day Illawarra grew from a successful annual event into a recognised regional movement. Attendance increased, partnerships strengthened, and the organisation's profile expanded across the Illawarra. During this period, IWD Illawarra welcomed a growing mix of nationally recognised Australian women.

Speakers from media, sport, publishing and advocacy helped amplify conversations about gender equality, while keeping them grounded in community experience.

Scholarship programs expanded, increasing investment in women's education, leadership and opportunity. Engagement from local businesses,

"The scholarship allowed me the opportunity to continue my passion with the support of the local community. I was fortunate to receive my award from members of Kerryn McCanns family - Kerry had been a club mate at Kembla Joggers and an inspiration throughout my career."

Madeline Heiner, 2014 Kerryn McCann scholarship recipient

sponsors and media also grew, strengthening the organisation's ability to mobilise collective support and reinvest it locally. Annual themes focused on education, empowerment, ending violence against women and equality, helping shape programming and priorities in response to emerging issues.

"Thanks to the Cate Stevenson scholarship for Education, Business & Community Service I was able to study a governance qualification, which was at the time financially well out of reach, during a 10-year career break to care for my disabled daughter Gracie. It enabled me to be a better performing Chairperson for Interchange Illawarra. A role I still hold to this day. I hope Cate would be proud of me, and I am honoured to carry on her incredible legacy."

Susan Wallis, 2015 Cate Stevenson scholarship recipient

By the mid-2010s, cumulative funds raised had reached a significant milestone, demonstrating IWD Illawarra's capacity to turn advocacy into measurable community outcomes. The range of scholarship recipients and beneficiaries broadened, reflecting the diverse experiences of women across the Illawarra.

ANNUAL THEMES

UNITED NATIONS IWD THEMES 2016-2019

2016 Planet 50–50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality UN SOURCE →	2017 Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030 UN SOURCE →
2018 Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives UN SOURCE →	2019 Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change UN SOURCE →

From 2016, International Women's Day Illawarra moved into a period of increased influence and scale. Events regularly attracted hundreds of participants from across business, government, education and the community sector. Nationally recognised speakers and facilitated forums deepened conversations about leadership, equality, safety and systemic change, shifting the focus from awareness to action.

During this period, scholarship categories expanded and Major Project funding was introduced, supporting women-led initiatives across domestic and family violence, mental health, multicultural inclusion, disability and youth services.

Annual International Women's Day themes emphasised equality, innovation and leadership, reinforcing IWD Illawarra's growing role as a regional platform for long-term, place-based impact.

"The IWDI scholarship was an incredible honour as well as a critical support in my early fencing career. It helped me to experience fencing on the international circuit, and I am still fencing competitively today so thank you for all the support I received."

Courtney Buchanan,
2016 Kerry'n McCann scholarship recipient

"The Beryl Lewis scholarship for older women, allowed me to take an advanced computer course that taught me the skills I have used in my volunteer work for the Older Women's Network, (OWN), Illawarra Wellness Centre in Coniston as well as the OWN group that meet in the Corrimal Library, designing brochures, promotional material and writing up their quarterly newsletters."

Barbara Malcolm, 2016 Beryl Lewis scholarship recipient

"This scholarship gave me the ability to continue to chase my goals in a sport that has little funding. It also gave me a confidence boost that I was on the right track and to keep going."

Stephanie Power, 2018 Kerry'n McCann scholarship recipient

"It is because of the scholarship that I was able to continue my work supporting clients with mental health challenges"

Melissa Maddison (nee Zammit)
2019 Cate Stevenson scholarship recipient

The inaugural Gracie Wallis Scholarship supported me in continuing my studies by assisting with educational expenses and essential equipment. I am extremely proud and honoured to be the first recipient and sincerely grateful for the opportunity and encouragement this scholarship represents."

Mecenzi Howard, 2019 Grace Wallis scholarship recipient

ANNUAL THEMES

UNITED NATIONS IWD THEMES 2020 -2021

2020 I am Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights

[UN SOURCE →](#)

2021 Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world

[UN SOURCE →](#)

The onset of COVID-19 created unprecedented disruption. International Women's Day Illawarra responded by adapting delivery without losing purpose, sustaining scholarships and maintaining community connection at a time when women were disproportionately affected by job loss, economic insecurity and increased caring responsibilities.

Rather than pause, the organisation pivoted, demonstrating resilience, organisational maturity and continued relevance. Events and conversations reflected global International Women's Day themes focused on equality, leadership and recovery in a changing world. Nationally recognised leaders and advocates brought clarity, courage and hope during a period of uncertainty, reinforcing the importance of strong, values-led leadership.

For scholarship recipients, community support remained a powerful source of confidence and momentum:

"You might think in your eyes that you're not doing anything particularly amazing, but to other people you might be an inspiration."

Maggie Khan, Rising Star Scholarship recipient

"The Creative Spirit scholarship assisted me in continuing to pursue my passion & ignited my courage to take new steps forward in my creative pathway. Viva La Creativity!"

Neisha Murphy, Creative Spirit Award recipient

"The IWD scholarship enabled me to race in more competitions interstate that I otherwise couldn't have afforded. By competing in these higher-level races, I was able to better my times, and this helped me obtain my Track and Field Scholarship in the USA."

Tayissa Buchanan, 2021 Kerry McCann scholarship recipient

"The scholarship gave me access to opportunities I otherwise wouldn't have been able to pursue, which helped establish my career. It allowed me to attend a prestigious conference, and that extra momentum also led on to further recognition, such as the 2021 NSW Young Woman of the Year award."

Samantha J.Wade,
2020 Dr Margaret Gardiner scholarship recipient

This period strengthened trust with partners and affirmed IWD Illawarra's role as a steady, trusted presence, even in times of disruption.

ANNUAL THEMES

UNITED NATIONS IWD THEMES 2011-2015

2022 Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow

[UN SOURCE →](#)

2023 DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality

[UN SOURCE →](#)

2024 Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives

[UN SOURCE →](#)

With the return of in-person events, International Women's Day Illawarra experienced a strong resurgence. Engagement rebounded sharply, with attendance reaching new highs (1,000+ participants) and the program delivering some of its most powerful moments to date.

High-profile keynote speakers were complemented by strong local voices, creating events that were both inspiring and grounded in lived experience. Annual International Women's Day themes focused on sustainability, innovation and investment in women, shaping programming and reinforcing the link between visibility, leadership and long-term progress.

Demand for scholarships increased, reflecting both growing awareness of IWD Illawarra's impact

and rising community need. Investment in women's education, creativity and leadership continued to translate recognition into opportunity.

As one Creative Spirit Scholarship recipient reflected:

"It's amazing to have this recognition, and to create an opportunity to bring more of the work I'm doing back here to share with the Illawarra community."

Ali Gordon, Creative Spirit Scholarship recipient
Source: Illawarra Mercury

The impact of this period extended beyond individual recipients, strengthening families, organisations and community networks, and deepening IWD Illawarra's role as a connector, convener and catalyst for regional change.

ANNUAL THEMES

UNITED NATIONS IWD THEMES 2022 -2023

2025 For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment

[UN SOURCE →](#)

2026 Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls

[UN SOURCE →](#)

Twenty-one years marks more than longevity for International Women's Day Illawarra. It reflects sustained relevance, community trust and measurable impact built through long-term stewardship and collective action.

Recent events continued to bring nationally recognised advocates together with community voices, reinforcing IWD Illawarra's role as a platform that connects lived experience with leadership and action. International Women's Day themes

"I am grateful to receive this scholarship in the name of Cate Stevenson... this support means I can do more with my work and give back to my community."

Professor Deirdre McGhee, 2025 Cate Stevenson IWD Scholarship recipient

during this period focused on rights, justice and empowerment for all women and girls, reinforcing a continued commitment to equity and inclusion.

RIPPLES OF IMPACT

STUDENT BRUNCH | STUDENT LEADERS

In the early years, an initiative with Wollongong City Council brought local school leaders together to extend conversations about gender equality to the next generation. Building on this idea, long-standing committee member Enola King championed the creation of the Student Brunch, launched in partnership with BlueScope WIN Community Partners.

The Student Brunch reflects International Women's Day Illawarra's long-term commitment to investing in young people as future leaders, decision-makers and community contributors. Delivered as a recurring initiative, it brings together students, educators, community leaders and industry professionals to create an early experience of visibility, possibility and belonging.

Why it matters: Gender inequality does not begin in the workplace; it is shaped much earlier. The Student Brunch engages students at a critical point in their education, helping expand aspirations and challenge assumptions about leadership, careers and success.



WHAT IT DELIVERS OVER TIME

- Exposure to diverse local women role models across industries and leadership roles.
- Increased confidence, voice and ambition among participating students.
- Stronger school–community–industry connections across the Illawarra.
- A visible, place-based pipeline of future women leaders.

Beyond the day: The Student Brunch is not a one-off event. It represents a long-term investment grounded in early intervention, consistent role-modelling and intergenerational connection — reflecting IWD Illawarra's belief that lasting gender equality is built over time.

"The aim is to motivate young women to reach their full potential, drawing inspiration from remarkable women across a range of fields, such as community work, education, engineering, law, and business"

Enola King, Committee Member

Across IWD Illawarra's 21-year history, the Student Brunch stands as a clear example of how small, targeted initiatives can create lasting ripple effects across individuals, schools and the wider community.

Each year, student leaders also play an active role in supporting the event, from volunteering to fundraising, reinforcing leadership through participation and contribution.

PATRON OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Patron Outreach Program was established during the COVID-19 pandemic, in response to growing need across the community and a desire to strengthen advocacy beyond the annual event. Guided by the role of a Patron under Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission principles, the program focuses on raising awareness, connecting people and mobilising support where it is most needed. It provides a practical way to extend the influence of International Women’s Day Illawarra through trusted leadership and relationships.

The program brings together Patrons, committee members and local businesses to help “connect the dots” linking community organisations with

resources, support and funding for ongoing activities and initiatives. This includes support for women experiencing vulnerability, including those in refugee communities and supported housing. Through the generosity of local businesses and the commitment of volunteers, the Patron Outreach Program has helped extend impact beyond formal events, responding to emerging needs and strengthening community-led solutions.

Beyond the initiative: The Patron Outreach Program reflects IWD Illawarra’s belief that impact grows through stewardship, collaboration and shared responsibility. By leveraging leadership, trust and local networks, the program demonstrates how advocacy can translate into practical support, creating ripple effects that reach well beyond a single moment or event.

IMPACT PATHWAY: FROM COMMUNITY GATHERING TO LASTING CHANGE

Community Gathering & Visibility Annual IWD Illawarra Event - Convening women, community organisations, business, government and allies - Elevating lived experience, leadership and advocacy - Connecting global gender equality conversations to local realities	Collective Investment Funds Raised through Sponsorships & Ticket sales - Community trust and engagement translated into financial resources - Shared responsibility for advancing gender equality Ticket sales contribute to impact	Targeted Local Funding Scholarships & Major Project Grants - Reinvestment of funds directly back into the Illawarra - Focus on women and women-led initiatives responding to local need
Direct Outcomes Individual & Organisational Impact - Increased access to education and leadership pathways - Strengthened women-led services addressing health, safety and wellbeing - Enhanced confidence, skills and participation	Ripple Effects Across the Region Long-Term Community Impact - Stronger families and safer communities More inclusive leadership and decision-making - Expanded networks and future leaders Wider understanding of issues affecting women	Stewardship & Continuity Volunteer Leadership, Governance & Learning - Intergenerational handover of responsibility Feedback informs future investment and programming - Sustained relevance and trust



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT AND BENEFICIARIES

International Women's Day Illawarra has grown from a single luncheon into one of the Illawarra's most significant annual community events. This growth reflects strong volunteer leadership, trusted partnerships, compelling speakers and a consistent commitment to reinvesting proceeds back into the region.

Planning began in 2005, with the inaugural luncheon held in 2006. Early events attracted strong attendance and sponsorship support, establishing confidence among community, business and partners. By 2008, participation had grown steadily and sponsorship contributions had more than doubled, signalling increasing local trust in both the event and its purpose.

From 2009 to 2014, growth continued at a measured and sustainable pace. Attendance increased, sponsorship strengthened and venues reached capacity, enabling greater funds to be directed toward scholarships and community beneficiaries. Participation was deliberately balanced with accessibility, ensuring growth translated into impact. A significant shift occurred from 2015 onwards. Attendance exceeded 800 participants for the first time, prompting a move to the WIN Entertainment Centre and marking IWD Illawarra's transition into a large-scale regional platform. Sponsorship revenue increased substantially, enabling the expansion of scholarship programs and the introduction of Major Project funding.

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

Over 21 Years of Community-Led Impact

ATTENDANCE:



From 250 attendees (2006) to nearly 1,000 participants annually in recent years

SPONSORSHIP & FUNDRAISING:



From early seed sponsorship to \$150,000+ raised annually (2023–2025)

SCALE OF INVESTMENT:



More than \$683,800 reinvested into the Illawarra through \$220,000 in scholarships & community funding

LONGEVITY:



21 consecutive years of volunteer-led delivery and reinvestment

Between 2016 and 2019, the event consolidated its position as a flagship date on the Illawarra calendar. Attendance remained consistently high, sponsorship grew strongly, and the scale and reach of community investment increased accordingly.

The years 2020 to 2022 demonstrated resilience and relevance. Despite widespread disruption, attendance remained strong and sponsorship reached record levels, allowing IWD Illawarra to respond to heightened community need through expanded investment in scholarships, women-led initiatives and frontline services. From 2023 to 2025, the event has continued to operate at scale, with attendance approaching 1,000 participants and annual sponsorship exceeding \$150,000.

While ticket pricing has evolved to reflect demand and quality, accessible student pricing has been maintained to support inclusion and future participation. Across 21 years, the story is clear: as community participation and partnership have grown, so too has IWD Illawarra's ability to deliver tangible outcomes. Attendance and sponsorship are not ends in themselves, they are the means through which collective support is transformed into scholarships awarded, organisations strengthened and lives positively impacted across the Illawarra.

Alignment with the Gender Framework

This sustained growth directly supports:



Together, these elements reflect how IWD Illawarra aligns community participation with long-term, place-based social impact.

WHAT GROWTH ENABLED

Sustained growth in attendance, sponsorship and community support has enabled International Women's Day Illawarra to:

Expand scholarship offerings, supporting women at pivotal stages of education, leadership and career development

Introduce and grow Major Project funding, investing in women-led, place-based initiatives addressing safety, health, wellbeing and inclusion

Increase the scale and diversity of community beneficiaries, responding to emerging local needs

Strengthen partnerships across community, business and government, amplifying collective impact

Growth has not been an end in itself, it has been the mechanism through which community trust is converted into opportunity, services strengthened and long-term outcomes delivered.

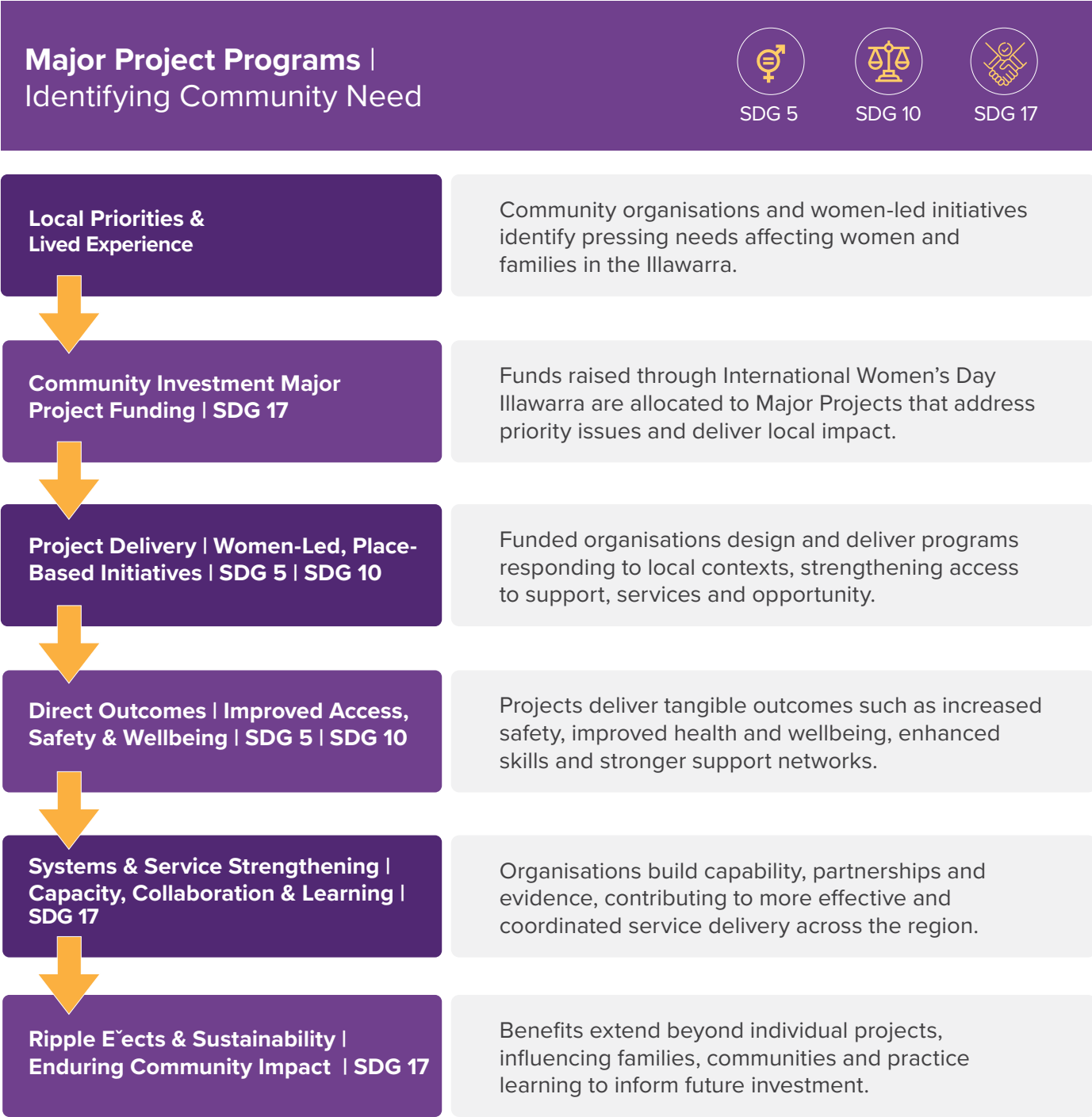


MAJOR BENEFICIARIES

21 YEAR SNAPSHOT

IWDI Major Projects Impact Pathway: Investing in Women, Strengthening Community

Through Major Project funding, International Women’s Day Illawarra invests in women-led, community-driven initiatives that strengthen services, reduce inequality and create lasting impact across the Illawarra.



MAJOR PROJECT FUNDING SUPPORTS WOMEN IN OUR COMMUNITY DELIVERING TANGIBLE OUTCOMES.

At the heart of International Women's Day Illawarra is a clear commitment to reinvesting in the Illawarra community. Funds raised through the annual flagship event are directed to programs and organisations supporting women, children and families at critical points of need.

Major Project funding is a cornerstone of this approach. It supports women-led and women-focused initiatives that deliver practical, on-the-ground outcomes across areas such as women's health, domestic and family violence, mental health, housing security, cultural safety, disability inclusion and community wellbeing. These investments are not one-off contributions. They are strategic, place-based investments designed to strengthen service delivery, extend reach and enable programs that may otherwise remain

unfunded. Over time, Major Project funding has evolved in response to changing community needs, reflecting IWD Illawarra's ongoing responsiveness and stewardship. Alongside Major Projects, IWD Illawarra also adopts a broader community investment approach. Each year, additional funds are distributed to smaller initiatives that deliver meaningful local outcomes, helping support grassroots responses and emerging priorities.

Together, these investments show how IWD Illawarra translates community participation into direct local impact, reinforcing its role as both an advocate for gender equality and a trusted contributor to the Illawarra's social infrastructure. Major project beneficiaries are below.

MAJOR AND MINOR PROJECT BENEFICIARIES IMPACT

YEAR	MAIN BENEFICIARY	AMOUNT
2006	Wollongong Women's Centre	\$10,000.00
2007	Carinya Cottage	\$11,000.00
2008	Carinya Cottage	\$15,000.00
2009	Carinya Cottage	\$15,000.00
2010	Wollongong Women's Refuge	\$15,000.00
2011	Older Women's Network	\$15,000.00
2012	Older Women's Network	\$15,000.00
2013	Illawarra Women's Health Centre (Danielle Miller program)	\$15,000.00
2014	Relationships Australia	\$15,000.00
2015	Relationships Australia	\$15,000.00
2016	Carinya Cottage	\$20,000.00
2017	Illawarra Women's Health Centre	\$15,000.00
2018	SASSHI	\$20,000.00
2019	Illawarra Women's Health Centre	\$20,000.00
2020	The EVE Project	\$15,000.00
2021	SCARF	\$15,000.00
2022	Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation's Deadly Women Deadly Kids Program	\$20,000.00
2023	One Door Mental Health - The Bloom Project	\$20,000.00
2024	Women Illawarra - Mumung program	\$20,000.00
2025	Healthy Cities Illawarra (Cook Chill Chat Program & Illawarra Women's Day of Dance & Culture)	\$20,000.00

After each event, beyond the major projecting funding, fundraising outcomes allowed IWD Illawarra to distribute funds to applicants who applied for lower financial amounts. This commenced in 2009 and is outlined below.

YEAR	ADDITIONAL DONATIONS	AMOUNT
2009	\$1k Illawarra Multicultural Services, \$1k Wollongong Women's Refuge	\$2,000.00
2010	\$1k The Disability Trust, \$1k Wollongong West Street Centre	\$2,000.00
2011	No additional donations made	
2012	\$1,000 Carinya Cottage; \$1,000 Family Services Illawarra.	\$2,000.00
2013	\$1,000 Cheryl Chantler; \$1,000 Carinya Cottage; \$1,000 Family Services Illawarra	\$3,000.00
2014	\$3,000 Big Fat Smile Post Natal Depression initiative	\$3,000.00
2015	\$5,000 Carinya Cottage; \$3,000 Green Bean Natal Wellness Program.	\$8,000.00
2016	\$10,000 Relationships Australia	\$10,000.00
2017	\$4,000 Circus Wow	\$4,000.00
2018	\$2,300 Circus WOW; \$8,000 Illawarra Womens Health Centre; \$5,000 One Door Mental Health; \$3,000 Sisters Cancer Support Group; \$10,000 Big Fat Smile PND Program.	\$28,300.00
2019	\$5,000 Dress for Success Illawarra Branch; \$2,500 Carinya Cottage; \$2,500 Sister's Cancer Support Group; \$500 Out of the Blue; \$500 Circus Wow.	\$11,000.00
2020	\$5,000 One Door Mental Health Illawarra Committee, \$5,000 Sisters' Cancer Support Group, \$5,000 Dress for Success Illawarra Branch, \$5,000 Illawarra Women's Health Centre Inc.	\$20,000.00
2021	\$3000 Wollongong Emergency Housing to support the Dad's and Daughter's program \$3000 One Door Mental Health for their Bloom project (supporting women who have experienced DV); \$3000 to Greenacres for their Relationships, Health & Wellbeing program to be run with Wollongong Women's Centre; \$1000 to the Multiple Births Association for their food service pilot.	\$10,000.00
2022	\$500 One Door Mental Health; \$1,000 SAHSSI; \$4,000 Dress for Success Illawarra branch \$2,000 Salvation Army.	\$7,500.00
2023	\$10,000 Illawarra Women's Health Centre - young women's program, \$5,000 Lighthouse Community Kitchen Circuit Breaker program addressing domestic violence in its early stages, \$5,000 Frame Running Wollongong to allow for 2 frames for children under 5 or a frame plus running costs for the program.	\$20,000.00
2024	No additional donations made	
2025	\$6,500 Wollongong West Street Centre (Self-Care - if you dare). Note project award pre-event, as a highly commended project. No post event supported project.	\$6,500.00
SUBTOTAL		\$137,300.00

IMPACT LOGIC FLOW | ACTIVITIES → OUTPUTS → OUTCOMES

PROJECT YEAR	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES		NOTES / STORIES
2025 – Cook Chill Chat (Healthy Cities Australia)	Increased connection, improved meal skills	Attendance lists, surveys, participant feedback	Sustained social networks, better nutrition habits	Socially isolated women building friendship & skills
2025 – Illawarra Women's Day of Dance & Culture (Healthy Cities Australia)	Cultural celebration participation	Attendance data, staging feedback	Cultural inclusion strengthened, pride boosted	Strong intercultural turnout & visibility
2025 – Self-Care If You Dare (Wollongong West Street Centre)	Improved coping strategies	Pre/post wellbeing tools	Safer recovery pathways, referrals	Women & children trauma support pathways expanded
2024 – Culture Camp & Program for Koori Women (Women Illawarra)	Increased cultural connection & belonging	Participation records, reflections	Stronger identity & intergenerational ties	Indigenous cultural programs & language integration
2023 – DFV Recovery & Social Reconnection (One Door Mental Health)	Increased confidence & social connection	Group session logs, participant interviews	employment & Pathways to independence	Linked to Dress for Success preemployment support
2022 – Deadly Women Deadly Kids Program (Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation)	Re-engagement in cultural & wellbeing activities	Workshop attendance, garden participation	Stronger cultural identity & community bonds	Enhancing Cultural health and storytelling connections of kids and Women
2021 – Lunchbox for Learning (SCARF)	Improved nutrition knowledge	Program evaluations, certificates	Healthier household practices, confidence	Accredited Certificate II in Hospitality component
2020 – Thriving Futures Program (The EVE Project)	Increased workplace skills & confidence	Training progress, accreditations earned	Improved employment prospects & empowerment	Women trained in hospitality & enterprise
2019 – Preventing Violence – Supporting Mothers (Illawarra Women's Health Centre)	Increased parenting confidence	Participation records, pre/post reflections	Healthier mother-son relationships, early intervention	Addressed son-to-mother violence with early support
2018 – Domestic Violence Early Intervention (SAHSSI)	Greater awareness of domestic violence prevention	Engagement stats, school program logs	Reduced DV impacts on children & families	Early intervention programs in schools & refugees
2017 – Pilot Program for Women with Intellectual Disabilities (Illawarra Women's Health Centre)	Increased support access, safety awareness	Participant feedback & service usage	Better understanding of violence & support pathways	Trailblazing work for a largely underserved cohort
2016 – Carinya Cottage Support Program (Salvation Army & Relationships Australia)	Immediate safety & support access	Casework records	Improved economic & life stability	Brokerage fund for school & household needs
2014–15 – Youth Confidence & Health Program (Relationships Australia)	Increased self-esteem & life skills	Workshop outputs, reflections	Resilience building & healthy behaviour	Focus on self-esteem, relationships & stress
2013 – Empowering Young Women of the Illawarra (Illawarra Women's Health Centre)	Increased self-esteem & confidence	Workshop attendance	Stronger youth agency & voice	Year 8 girls gained tools for positive self-image
2011/12 – Wellness Programs for Older Women (Older Women's Network)	Increased fitness & social connection	Activity logs, member feedback	Reduced isolation & improved wellbeing	Programs supported chronic condition management
2010 – Wollongong Women's Refuge Mental Health Support	Improved mental health support access	Service usage records	Ongoing mental health & crisis supports	Funded mental health worker roles
2007–09 – Carinya Cottage Support (Salvation Army)	Immediate safety support	Service usage data	Housing stability & crisis response	Crisis support for women/children in DV

SCHOLARSHIPS OVERVIEW

IWDI SCHOLARSHIP IMPACT PATHWAY: INVESTING IN WOMEN, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY

Stewardship Lens: Scholarships are not one-off transactions; they are investments in people whose impact continues to circulate through the Illawarra.

IWD ILLAWARRA SCHOLARSHIPS



The International Women's Day Illawarra Scholarship Program invests directly in women and girls at pivotal moments in their education, career and leadership pathways.

SCHOLARSHIPS | INVESTING IN WOMEN’S FUTURES

Established in 2009, the scholarship program is a cornerstone of International Women’s Day Illawarra’s commitment to advancing opportunity, leadership and equity for women across the region. Guided by the IWD Illawarra Gender Framework, the program translates global commitments to gender equality into practical, place-based support.

Over more than 15 years, 98 scholarships have been awarded, representing an investment of over \$220,000. These scholarships support women and girls at critical points in their education, career development and personal growth moments when targeted assistance can make a decisive difference.

What began as a modest program offering two scholarships has evolved into a structured and highly regarded initiative. In recent years, eight scholarships have been awarded annually, reflecting strong community support and a growing understanding that financial barriers can limit access to education, leadership and opportunity.

As International Women’s Day themes have evolved from access and equality to leadership, safety, inclusion, innovation and justice, so too has the scholarship program. Scholarship values and categories have expanded in response to changing community needs and a deeper awareness that women’s experiences differ across culture, age, ability, life stage and circumstance. This ensures the program remains relevant, inclusive and responsive to the lived realities of women across the Illawarra.

Many scholarships are named in honour of outstanding Illawarra women who achieved distinction in their fields and are no longer with

SCHOLARSHIPS AT A GLANCE INVESTING IN WOMEN’S EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP AND OPPORTUNITY

Established:	2009
Total Scholarships Awarded:	98
Total Investment:	\$220,000+
Annual Scholarships:	FROM 3 ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIPS IN 2005 TO 8 IN 2025

us. Each scholarship carries their legacy forward by supporting the next generation, embedding remembrance, inspiration and forward momentum into the program.

Community partnership continues to strengthen the initiative. The independently funded Gracie Wallis Scholarship, established by her family, has expanded the program without placing additional pressure on event fundraising, demonstrating how shared values and collaboration can amplify community impact.

Collectively, the scholarship program has created ripple effects well beyond individual recipients, supporting families, workplaces and community networks. These scholarships represent more than financial assistance — they signal belief, recognition and sustained investment in women’s potential, carried forward through stewardship and community commitment.



NAMED SCHOLARSHIPS

IWD Illawarra's named scholarships honour women whose lives and contributions continue to inspire future generations.

CATE STEVENSON IWD SCHOLARSHIP FOR WOMEN (EDUCATION, BUSINESS & COMMUNITY SERVICE)

Honours Cate Stevenson, a trailblazing businesswoman and committed community leader. A pioneer in the NSW motor vehicle sales industry, Cate also contributed extensively to local fundraising and community organisations.

KERRYNN MCCANN IWD SCHOLARSHIP FOR WOMEN (SPORT)

Honours Kerryann McCann, one of Australia's most respected athletes and a Commonwealth Games gold medallist. Beyond elite sport, Kerryann was a generous mentor and supporter of young women in athletics.

AUNTY MARY IWD SCHOLARSHIP FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Honours Aunty Mary Davis, an Illawarra Aboriginal Elder known for her tireless advocacy, leadership and commitment to justice. Her legacy reflects strength, determination and community-led change.

CREATIVE SPIRIT IWD SCHOLARSHIP FOR WOMEN

Recognises women working in art, design, music, theatre, photography and other creative fields. Inspired by the Illawarra's vibrant arts community, the scholarship celebrates storytelling, creativity and cultural expression.

THE BERYL LEWIS SCHOLARSHIP FOR OLDER WOMEN (55+)

Honours Beryl Lewis, a lifelong volunteer and advocate for older people. Her work with Warrigal Care helped shape services supporting ageing, dementia care and respite for carers.

THE DR MARGARET GARDINER SCHOLARSHIP FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Honours Dr Margaret Gardiner, a respected Wollongong doctor and breast cancer advocate. Her legacy continues through support for women advancing medical research and health outcomes.

THE GRACIE WALLIS SCHOLARSHIP FOR WOMEN WITH A DISABILITY

Created in memory of Gracie Wallis (2005–2018), this scholarship supports women with disability to pursue their goals. Established by her family, it reflects Gracie's warmth, connection and the belief that difference does not diminish potential.



SPEAKERS & LEADERSHIP | VOICES THAT SHAPED THE CONVERSATION

International Women's Day Illawarra has welcomed speakers whose voices have shaped public conversation about gender equality across the region. From the outset, the approach has been to start local, centring Illawarra women and lived experience, and to grow impact by connecting these voices with broader national conversations. In doing so, keynote speakers have extended the influence of the event well beyond the room, reinforcing gender equality as a shared, cultural and systemic responsibility.

In the early years, high-profile media figures helped bridge local experience with national dialogue, affirming that Illawarra stories belong within wider public conversations. As the event matured, the keynote program broadened in scope and depth, welcoming leaders from sport, health, advocacy, law and public life. This evolution reflected a growing understanding that gender equality is complex and interconnected, shaped by culture, systems and collective leadership.

Several keynote moments marked turning points in this journey. Lisa Wilkinson highlighted the power of visibility and voice in shaping culture and responsibility. Rabia Siddique challenged audiences to think differently about resilience, accountability and moral courage. Grace Tame reinforced the importance of environments where women are supported to speak, be believed and act. At the 20th anniversary event, Rosie Batty underscored the urgency of addressing domestic and family violence through sustained, collective action.

Across the years, speakers such as Rachael Robertson have translated leadership lessons into practical insights for community and organisational life, while future speakers like Jana Pittman reflect an ongoing commitment to voices that bridge lived experience, professional achievement and wellbeing.

Together, the keynote program demonstrates how starting local and growing impact has helped reframe how gender equality is understood in the Illawarra, supporting the event's evolution from a local luncheon into a trusted regional platform for leadership, reflection and action.

FULL SPEAKER LIST: SEE APPENDIX D



WHY SPEAKERS MATTER

At International Women's Day Illawarra, keynote speakers are not selected to entertain, they are chosen to challenge, inform and shift perspective. Each keynote contributes to a broader civic conversation by:

Elevating lived experience and amplifying voices often unheard

Connecting local realities to national and global movements

Reframing leadership, safety and equality as shared responsibilities

Inspiring action, reflection and investment beyond the event itself

Through media coverage, community dialogue and ongoing engagement, keynote messages extend well beyond the room. They shape how issues are understood, discussed and acted upon across the Illawarra, reinforcing the event's role as a platform for both reflection and meaningful change.

PARTNERSHIPS & SPONSORSHIP IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE (ESG) ALIGNMENT AND SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

International Women's Day Illawarra has been sustained by strong partnerships with organisations that share a commitment to gender equality and community wellbeing. From early government and council support through to long-standing corporate and community sponsors, these partnerships have enabled the event to grow in scale and, critically, to reinvest proceeds directly back into the Illawarra.

A defining feature of IWD Illawarra's partnership model is continuity. Many organisations have supported the event across multiple years, with several increasing their contribution over time. This reflects a high level of trust in the organisation's governance, transparency and demonstrated ability to deliver meaningful local

outcomes. As the sponsorship base has grown, it has evolved into a diverse cross-section of sectors, supporting the expansion of scholarships, Major Project funding and community initiatives responding to local need.

"INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY ILLAWARRA HAS BECOME A POWERFUL PLATFORM FOR AMPLIFYING WOMEN'S VOICES AND BRINGING CRITICAL SOCIAL ISSUES INTO THE PUBLIC CONVERSATION."

Regional media coverage

PARTNER IMPACT AT A GLANCE TURNING PARTNERSHIP INTO LOCAL IMPACT

ANNUAL PARTNER INVESTMENT: \$150K
annually through sponsorship and partnerships

SOCIAL RETURN ° REINVESTED INTO:



Scholarships & Business: Supporting women in education and transitions



Community Initiatives: Local grants & Programs responding to identified need



Keynotes & Advocacy: Amplifying lived experience & driving public conversation



Major Projects: Funding large-scale community impact initiative



Media & Storytelling: Broadcast, print and digital reach across the Illawarra

The impact of International Women's Day Illawarra extends well beyond the annual event. Through sustained media engagement, keynote advocacy and community storytelling, the organisation has amplified conversations about gender equality, safety, economic participation and leadership across the Illawarra. Coverage across print, broadcast and digital media has ensured these conversations reach audiences far beyond those in the room.

Voice is central to this impact. By elevating lived experience alongside leadership and advocacy, IWD Illawarra helps shift understanding, challenge silence and build momentum for action. This role sits at the heart of the organisation's Theory of Change: convening community, amplifying voice, mobilising investment and delivering local impact. Through sustained visibility and advocacy, voice becomes a bridge between conversation and action, extending impact into everyday community life.

Detailed alignment with Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and relevant public policy frameworks is outlined in Appendix B.

IWD ILLAWARRA ACKNOWLEDGES THE LONG TERM COMMITMENT OF ITS SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

THEIR SUSTAINED INVESTMENT MAKES THIS WORK POSSIBLE

Many organisations have supported IWD Illawarra across multiple years, with several increasing their contribution over time. This continuity reflects a high level of trust in the organisation's governance, transparency and demonstrated ability to deliver meaningful local outcomes. Partner investment is directly reinvested into scholarships, community initiatives, advocacy and Major Project funding - ensuring every dollar generates lasting impact across the Illawarra.

“Supporting International Women’s Day Illawarra allows us to invest locally in meaningful outcomes for women and the community. The transparency of the model and the tangible impact, particularly through scholarships and community projects, make it a partnership we are proud to sustain.”

- Nicole Kay, Belle Property



COMMITTEES & LEADERSHIP

The spirit of International Women’s Day Illawarra lives in stewardship, carried by leadership and committee members who hold responsibility not for a moment, but for the future.

The spirit of International Women’s Day Illawarra is grounded in stewardship carried by leaders and committee members who hold responsibility not just for an event, but for the future of the community it serves. For 21 years, International Women’s Day Illawarra has been sustained by the generosity, leadership and commitment of volunteers. The organisation is, and has always been, volunteer led. Its impact is made possible

through the collective stewardship of committee members who contribute their time, expertise and networks in service of gender equality and community wellbeing.

Women from across the Illawarra have served on the committee, bringing diverse lived and professional experience spanning business, media, government, education, health, community services and the not-for-profit sector. This diversity strengthens decision-making, ensures a broad understanding of community needs, and reflects the inclusive values at the heart of the IWD Illawarra Gender Framework.

Committee members fulfil governance responsibilities in line with ACNC requirements, overseeing financial stewardship, sponsorship, programming, scholarships, Major Projects and stakeholder engagement. Their contribution extends well beyond the delivery of an annual event it shapes strategy, safeguards integrity and ensures accountability over time.

The volunteer committee model also enables International Women's Day Illawarra to maximise social return on investment. By keeping administrative overheads low, the organisation directs the majority of funds raised back into scholarships, Major Project funding and community initiatives. Over two decades, this model of shared leadership has translated directly into increased local investment and measurable community impact.

Leadership succession and renewal are key strengths of the organisation. New committee members bring fresh perspectives, skills and energy, while experienced leaders provide continuity, mentoring and institutional knowledge. This balance allows IWD Illawarra to evolve in response to changing community needs while remaining grounded in its founding purpose and values.

“VOLUNTEERING WITH IWDI HAS NEVER FELT LIKE ORGANISING AN EVENT. IT HAS FELT LIKE CARING FOR SOMETHING BIGGER THAN ANY ONE OF US; SOMETHING THAT BELONGS TO THE COMMUNITY.”

Collectively, the contribution of volunteers and committee members represents one of International Women's Day Illawarra's greatest assets. Their commitment, integrity and shared sense of responsibility have transformed an annual event into a trusted regional institution.

Looking ahead, the stewardship of volunteer's past, present and future will continue to guide International Women's Day Illawarra with care, accountability and deep connection to the community and place it serves.

Alignment with the Gender Framework and SDGs

THIS MODEL OF COLLECTIVE STEWARDSHIP REFLECTS THE IWD ILLAWARRA GENDER FRAMEWORK IN ACTION AND DIRECTLY SUPPORTS:

SDG 5 – Gender Equality, through women's leadership and shared governance

SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities, by ensuring diverse voices inform decisions and investment

SDG 17 – Partnerships, through collaboration, volunteer leadership and cross-sector expertise

Together, stewardship, governance and diversity strengthen IWD Illawarra's capacity to deliver sustained, place-based impact.



71 remarkable women have been and continue to bring the spirit of stewardship, making their contribution to the impact over the 21 years. A huge thank you to:

PAST & PRESENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Rebecca Armstrong
Monika Armstrong
Sharon Arrow
Sarah Baddams
Amina Bello
Robyn Bignell
Victoria Black
Alexandra Blake
Nicole Bouverie
Amy Bray
Tania Brown
Jessica Brown
Keryn Calcraft
Emily Clinton
Natalie Croker
Janine Cullen OAM
Tia Davis
Suzanna De Ornelas
Neryl East
Rebecca Forbes
Rachel Foster
Dr Margaret Gardiner
Patricia Hamilton
Melanie Hart
Kylie-ann Haynes
Rachael Heald
Sue Hegarty

Judith Henderson
Wendy Hewitt
Holly Howell
Angela Howes
Bianca Hunt
Amanda Jacobs
Janice Kershaw
Melissa Kesby
Enola King
Julia King
Kate Kofod
Diana Kovacevic
Joanne Kowalczyk
Kristine Laird
Sarah Lisle
Kerryn McCann
Nikki McCarthy Hicks
Donna McLean
Amber Morrissey
Anita Mulrooney
Jodie Murrell
Julz Najjar
Leanne Newsham
Emily O'Keefe
Rosita O'Keefe
Angela O'Toole
Glenda Papac

Cathy Pepper
Paige Pollard
Liz Quirk
Cassy Ristic
Katrina Rowlands
Angie Ruperto
Madeline Ryan
Elise Sinclair
Mira Speer
Selena Stevens
Melanie Taylor
Robyn te Velde
Maria Thomson
Vicki Tiegs OAM
Tessa Tohmey
Michelle Towns
Alex Tynan
Helen Volk
Nicole Walker
Megan Waters
Amanda Watson
Nina Watts
Erryn Whiteman
Karemie Williams
Lauren Wise

LOOKING FORWARD | CALL TO ACTION

LET'S CONTINUE TOGETHER

Looking Ahead: As a volunteer-led, ACNC-registered not-for-profit, International Women's Day Illawarra remains committed to strong governance, accountability and stewardship. Over the next decade, the organisation will strengthen impact measurement, transparent reporting and

leadership succession to ensure resilience and continuity. Guided by community, partnership and purpose, IWD Illawarra will continue to translate collective support into meaningful, place-based action, contributing to a more equitable, inclusive and resilient Illawarra for generations to come.

CALL TO ACTION

SDG 5 | Gender Equality: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

You can contribute by:

- Paying it forward — purchasing tickets or tables for women, students or community members to attend
- Supporting scholarships that invest in women's education, leadership and opportunity
- Amplifying women's voices, stories and achievements through your networks
- Advocating for safe, inclusive and equitable workplaces and communities

Impact created: Women supported · Leadership strengthened · Opportunity expanded

SDG 10 | Reduced Inequalities: Reduce inequality within and among communities

You can contribute by:

- Supporting initiatives that remove barriers for women experiencing systemic disadvantage
- Partnering with IWDI to fund targeted, place-based community projects
- Ensuring inclusive participation through accessible events and pricing
- Championing equity, representation and inclusion in your organisation and community

Impact created: Barriers reduced · Inclusion strengthened · Opportunity shared more broadly

SDG 17 | Partnerships for the Goals: Strengthen partnerships to deliver shared solutions

You can contribute by:

- Partnering with IWDI as a sponsor, collaborator or a community ally
- Aligning organisational ESG and social impact priorities with IWDI's local investment model
- Using your platform to amplify advocacy and collective action
- Committing to long-term collaboration grounded in shared values

Impact created: Collective investment · Stronger networks · Sustainable, shared outcomes

Together, We Continue. By acting locally and partnering purposefully, individuals and organisations help turn global goals into meaningful, lasting impact for women and communities across the Illawarra

APPENDIX A | KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

THIS APPENDIX PROVIDES PLAIN-ENGLISH EXPLANATIONS OF KEY TERMS USED THROUGHOUT THIS REPORT TO SUPPORT CLARITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND SHARED UNDERSTANDING.

GENDER EQUALITY: Fairness in rights, opportunities and outcomes for people of all genders, recognising that different supports may be needed to achieve equity.

EQUITY: Providing people with the support they need based on their circumstances, rather than treating everyone the same.

INTERSECTIONALITY: The way different aspects of a person's identity — such as gender, culture, age, disability or income — combine to shape their experiences and access to opportunity.

DIVERSITY: The range of differences among people, including culture, background, age, ability, identity and lived experience.

INCLUSION: Creating environments where people feel welcome, respected and able to participate fully.

GENDER FRAMEWORK (IWD ILLAWARRA): A guiding approach that connects global goals, government priorities and local community needs to inform decisions, investment and impact.

PLACE-BASED ACTION: Initiatives designed in and for a specific community, shaped by local needs, relationships and lived experience.

LIVED EXPERIENCE: Knowledge gained through direct personal experience, valued alongside professional and academic expertise.

STEWARDSHIP: The responsible care and management of resources, relationships and purpose over time, with a focus on long-term benefit.

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI): The social value created through investment, measured by the positive outcomes for people and communities.

MAJOR PROJECTS: Targeted funding provided by IWD Illawarra to support women-led or women-focused initiatives delivering measurable community outcomes.

SCHOLARSHIPS: Financial support provided to women and girls to enable education, training, creative practice, leadership development or career progression.

Advocacy: Actions that raise awareness, influence attitudes and support positive social change.

ESG (ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE): A framework used by organisations to assess social impact, ethical governance and long-term sustainability.

SDGS (SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS): United Nations goals that provide a shared global framework for addressing social, economic and environmental challenges.

ACNC The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, the national regulator for charities.

APPENDIX B | IWDI GENDER FRAMEWORK & POLICY ALIGNMENT

Purpose of this Appendix

This appendix outlines the policy, strategy and values frameworks that guide the work of International Women's Day Illawarra (IWD Illawarra). It provides transparency and accountability by demonstrating how local, community-led action aligns with broader gender equality commitments at state, national and global levels, while allowing the main report to remain focused, engaging and accessible.

B1

Overview of the IWD Illawarra Gender Framework

The IWD Illawarra Gender Framework brings together global, national and state commitments to gender equality with local priorities, lived experience and community leadership. It provides a consistent lens for decision-making, investment and impact assessment. The framework ensures that IWD Illawarra's initiatives are purposeful, inclusive and grounded in place, translating policy intent into practical outcomes that respond to the evolving needs of the Illawarra community.

B2

Alignment with the NSW Women's Strategy 2023–26

Policy Context: The NSW Women's Strategy 2023–26 is a whole-of-government framework designed to improve the economic, social and physical wellbeing of women and girls across New South Wales. It sets a clear direction for advancing gender equality through coordinated action.

NSW Women's Strategy — Priority Areas

The Strategy identifies three core areas for action:

- Economic opportunity and advancement

- Participation and empowerment

- Health and wellbeing

HOW IWD ILLAWARRA CONTRIBUTES:

IWD Illawarra contributes to these priorities through a locally grounded model that translates policy intent into practical community outcomes.

Specifically, IWD Illawarra:

- Supports economic opportunity and advancement by investing in education, leadership development and professional pathways through scholarships and targeted initiatives
- Enhances health and wellbeing by funding community projects that address safety, mental health, cultural connection and resilience
- Promotes participation and empowerment by amplifying women's voices through community platforms, high-profile speakers, civic dialogue and leadership visibility

This alignment demonstrates how place-based investment can complement and strengthen statewide action toward gender equality.



POLICY ALIGNMENT SUMMARY

NSW WOMEN'S STRATEGY PRIORITY	IWD ILLAWARRA CONTRIBUTION
Economic opportunity & advancement	Scholarships, leadership investment, career pathways
Health & wellbeing	Funding for wellbeing, safety and community support initiatives
Participation & empowerment	Community convening, voice amplification, leadership platforms



SDG 5 — Gender Equality

Gender equality is central to IWD Illawarra's mission. Through flagship events, scholarship programs and Major Project funding, the organisation invests in women's education, leadership, safety and economic participation. By amplifying women's voices and supporting women-led initiatives, IWD Illawarra delivers tangible, place-based action aligned with the intent of SDG 5.



SDG 10 — Reduced Inequalities

IWD Illawarra recognises that inequality is experienced unevenly and is often shaped by intersecting factors such as age, disability, cultural background, socio-economic circumstance, sexuality and health. In response, the organisation deliberately directs funding and opportunity toward women experiencing structural disadvantage. Inclusive program design and targeted community investment help reduce barriers and promote equity and social inclusion across the Illawarra.



SDG 17 — Partnerships for the Goals

Partnership is fundamental to IWD Illawarra's impact. Collaboration across community organisations, business, education providers, sponsors, volunteers and individuals enables shared responsibility and collective action. This approach reflects the intent of SDG 17, recognising that complex social challenges require coordinated effort and long-term commitment.

Together, these SDG alignments demonstrate how local action can contribute to global goals while remaining grounded in community context.

B3

Connection to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Since 2019, IWD Illawarra has used the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to articulate and strengthen the impact of its work at a local level. The SDGs provide a shared global language for social progress, while allowing flexibility for community-led action.

B4

Organisational Values

IWD Illawarra's work is guided by a commitment to:

- **Equity and inclusion** — recognising diversity and addressing structural disadvantage
- **Community leadership** — valuing lived experience, local knowledge and shared responsibility
- **Collaboration** — working across sectors to achieve stronger outcomes
- **Integrity and accountability** — stewarding resources responsibly and transparently

These values inform how decisions are made, how partnerships are formed, and how impact is delivered.

B5

Mission and Organisational Context

Mission:

International Women's Day Illawarra advances gender equality across the region by investing in women, amplifying diverse voices, and mobilising community, business and partners to deliver measurable social impact.

Organisational Context:

Aligned with UN Women and global International Women's Day principles, IWD Illawarra operates as an independent, community-led not-for-profit organisation. Originally established as an Incorporated Association and now registered with the ACNC, the organisation is underpinned by strong governance, accountability and volunteer stewardship. Through advocacy, scholarships and targeted community investment, IWD Illawarra strengthens local organisations, supports women and girls, and contributes to a safer, more inclusive and equitable Illawarra.

B6

The Spirit of IWD Illawarra

The spirit of International Women's Day Illawarra is one of stewardship — carried forward by successive generations of volunteers, grounded in place, and committed to advancing equity through collective action for the benefit of current and future generations.

B7

ESG Alignment and Social Return on Investment

IWD Illawarra's partnership model delivers measurable social value aligned with Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) priorities, with a strong emphasis on long-term community outcomes rather than transactional engagement.

From an ESG perspective:

Social: advancing gender equality, inclusion, wellbeing and workforce participation

Governance: independent not-for-profit status, ACNC registration, transparent financial management and consistent reinvestment of surplus funds into community outcomes

A distinguishing feature of the model is the high level of repeat and long-term sponsorship. Many partners have increased their investment over time, signalling confidence in governance, stewardship and demonstrated impact.

Collectively, sponsorship represents a high-impact ESG investment, converting partner support into direct, place-based social outcomes for the Illawarra.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP ALIGNMENT WITH THE UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

ESG Focus Area	SDG Alignment	How Partnership with IWDI Contributes	Evidence of Impact
Gender Equality & Inclusion	SDG 5 – Gender Equality	Investment supports women's leadership, education and visibility through scholarships, keynote platforms and advocacy	Investment supports women's leadership, education and visibility through scholarships, keynote platforms and advocacy
Social Equity & Access	SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities	Targeted reinvestment reduces barriers for women experiencing disadvantage, including CALD women, women with disability and women facing socio-economic barriers	Community grants · Diverse beneficiary profiles · Place-based outcomes
Partnerships & Shared Value	SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals	Cross-sector collaboration enables shared social outcomes through long-term sponsorship and community engagement	Multi-year sponsorships · Repeat partners · Co-investment model
Governance & Accountability	ESG Governance	Independent not-for-profit structure, ACNC registration and transparent reinvestment model	Annual reporting · Volunteer governance · Reinvestment of surplus funds

Partnership with International Women's Day Illawarra provides a clear, traceable pathway from ESG investment to measurable local social impact.

ALIGNMENT WITH PUBLIC POLICY AND SDGS

Public Policy Priority	SDG Alignment	Contribution Through IWDI	Community Outcomes
Advancing Gender Equality	SDG 5 – Gender Equality	Platform for advocacy, leadership development and investment in women's education and participation	Increased leadership capability · Improved access to opportunity
Reducing Structural Inequality	SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities	Targeted funding for women experiencing intersectional disadvantage through scholarships and Major Projects	Strengthened frontline services · Improved equity of access
Community Wellbeing & Safety	SDG 5 · SDG 10	Support for women-led initiatives addressing health, safety, wellbeing and violence prevention	Safer communities · Improved service coordination
Cross-Sector Collaboration	SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals	Convening community, business and government to deliver shared outcomes	Collective impact · Regional collaboration
Good Governance & Stewardship	Enabling Principle	Volunteer-led governance, accountability and reinvestment of funds into community outcomes	Trusted delivery · Long-term sustainability

International Women's Day Illawarra translates global commitments into place-based action aligned with regional priorities and community needs.

APPENDIX C | IWID SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

1. Kerryyn McCann award - Sports

2. Aunty Mary award - Indigenous

3. Cate Stevenson award – Business, Education & Community Service

4. Creative Spirit award – Arts (est. 2013)

5. Beryl Lewis award (previously Rayna Bernhorster award) – Older Women (est. 2015)

6. Dr Margaret Gardiner award – Medical research (est. 2018)

7. Grace Wallis Award – Disability (est. 2019)

8. Rising Star Award (15-21 years) (est. 2025)



2009: \$1000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Madison Rutter (cross country / mountain runner)
2. Rhonda Cruse (20 years representing Aboriginal community)
3. Stephanie (pseudonym Lee used) 11yr William Campbell Foundation foster child with talent for singing)

2010: \$1000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Chloe Tighe (distance runner)
2. Lorraine Brown (artist, mentor and educator)
3. Elizabeth Lual (Sudanese refugee and support group volunteer)

2011: \$1000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Jessica Simpson (triathlete / ironman)
2. Tina McGhie (IAC board member – voluntary)
3. Georgia Luke (14yo scout leader)

2012: \$2000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Sarah Carli (hurdles athlete)
2. June Lowe (established the Illawarra Aboriginal community Based Working group)
3. Mignon Lee-Wardon (artist / festival organiser)

2013: \$2000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Jessica Hull (middle distance / cross country)
2. Sharralyn Robinson (CEO IALC)
3. Shaniece Ignato (filmmaker)
4. Lorraine Vargas (artist)

2014: \$2000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Madeline Heiner (middle distance runner)
2. Sheree Rankmore (event/festival coordinator)
3. Tayla Leigh Howard (volunteer and student)
4. Melissa Ritchie (painter)

2015: \$2000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Jayde Bagnall (kayaking athlete)
2. Jane Strang (native habitats and ecosystems)
3. Susan Wallis (fundraiser and disability advocate)
4. Chloe Higgins (Wollongong Writers Festival Founder)
5. Georgina Ball (16yo student for educational advancement)

2016: \$2000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Courtney Buchanan (fencing athlete)
2. Maddyson Wright (academic achievement)
3. Christine Okonoski (community service volunteer)
4. Summer Harris (documentary/filmmaker)
5. Barbara Malcolm (82yo seniors volunteer /set up Illawarra OWN Wellness Centre)

2017: \$2000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Chloe Heffernan (cyclist athlete)
2. Michelle Rush (DV survivor and educator)
3. Sarah Lisle (Junior Chamber International (JCI) Illawarra president, community advocate)
4. Lucy Mills (singer/songwriter)
5. Libby Bloxham (sculptor and creator of The Bubbles Ball fundraiser)

2018: \$2000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Stephanie Power (sprinter athlete)
2. Selai Storer (Barnardos South Coast Indigenous Playgroups facilitator)
3. Jessica Faustini (environmental science)
4. Natalie Gartshore (dance)
5. Josephine Mason (70yo retired nurse / volunteer)
6. Dr Kara Vine-Perrow (Targeted Cancer Therapeutics Research Laboratory group leader)

2019: \$2000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Brea De Jonge (powerlifting)
2. Trichelle Andy (university student)
3. Melissa Zammit (women's counsellor, healer and mentor)
4. Tameka Corderoy (painter)
5. Annette Holmes (Foster carer)
6. Carolyn Hollis (brain cancer)
7. Macenzi Howard (Paralympian – Boccia; founder local boccia club)

2020: \$2000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Sarah Carli (hurdles)
2. Denise Willis (Aboriginal Educational Officer)
3. Beatrice Kabahire & Anastazia Niyitunga (refugees / cleaning business)
4. Corrine Zingler-Humphries (creates dolls)
5. Maggie Sydenham (77yo university student and self-published author)
6. Samantha Wade (pancreatic cancer)
7. Kristen Bristow (start-up ironing business)

2021: \$2000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Tayissa Buchanan (800m runner – Australian All Schools U15 champion (800m))
2. Bianca Hunt (respected community role model and suicide prevention awareness advocate)
3. Doll Tewari (DV survivor working in women's refuges and on policy against human trafficking)
4. Neisha Murphy (variety entertainer, circus performer and director)
5. Margaret Ewart (Foster carer)
6. Ashleigh Hope (breast cancer research) 7) Amanda Hunt (DV survivor working with deaf community, particularly those who have experienced DV)
7. Amanda Hunt (DV survivor working with deaf community, particularly those who have experienced DV)

2022: \$2000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Jasmine Locke (sprint kayaker)
2. Catherine Moyle (community advocate and Dep Chair ILALC)
3. Shannon Fox (lifesaver, 1st female club captain for Wollongong City SLSC / raises awareness for deaf community)
4. Diana McLaren (artist/performer/comedian)
5. Lynette Bailey (charity work and affordable housing advocate)
6. Dr Ann-Katrin Piper (brain and stomach cancer Gresearch)
7. Kora Naughton (country music singer/songwriter)

2023: \$2000 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Danika Matos (football / soccer)
2. Dr Jodi Edwards (established Shellharbour Aboriginal Youth Association, finalist NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Yr (2023)
3. Rebecca Moulds (disability focus worker assisting vulnerable women in DV situations)
4. Anne Lehmann-Kuit (music, artistic director for KidsFest in Shellharbour)
5. Jo-Anne Gray (PHD studies / aged care educator)
6. Chelsea Penney (Glioblastoma / brain cancer research)
7. Megan Neil (mature age university student. Megan had Kippel-feil syndrome and died in 2025)

2024: \$2500 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Delta Amidzovski (hurdler and long jumper)
2. Sheree Rankmore (IAMS board member and community volunteer)
3. Jessica Roppa (RN with projects to improve mental health presentations in the ED, volunteer)
4. Ellie Taylor (belly dancer, researcher, advocate for family violence awareness)
5. Susan Goldrick (actor/director, elder clowning in dementia wards)
6. Elahe Minaei (cancer immunology ad immunotherapy research)
7. Imogen Alton cyclist / medical student)
8. Isabella Coleman (medical student / footballer)

2025: \$2500 SCHOLARSHIPS

1. Imogen Alton (cyclist and medical student)
2. Evelyn Rankmore (DV worker, Aboriginal psychotherapy student)
3. Deirdre McGhee (academic, researcher on breast related issues in female athletes and active women)
4. Ali Gordon (theatre maker / therapeutic clown)
5. Jo Pye (life coach)
6. Farhannah Aly (researcher in AI technology to improve care for older people with neck and head cancer)
7. (The Wallis family awarded two scholarships)
- 7a. Katie Day (Deaflympics as member of Australian deaf women's soccer team)
- 7b. Madeline Ramsey (Crossfit)
9. Maggie Khan (university student publishing a policy on domestic women's issues in Australia, attended UN Commission on Status of Women in 2025)



APPENDIX D | IWDI SPEAKERS & EMCEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

SPEAKERS	
2006	Speaker: Margaret Swierainga - Committee Secretary to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Intelligence and Security. Panel: Rebecca Borgo, Dr Neryl East, Elise Pascoe, Dr Margaret Gardiner
2007	Terry Hawkins - motivator/ business personnel trainer
2008	Anne McKevitt - entrepreneur
2009	Jane Flemming - heptathlete / dual Olympian
2010	Janine Shephard - aerobatic pilot / author
2011	Ita Buttrose AO, OBE - media personality
2012	Wendy Harmer - comedian
2013	Layne Beachley - world champion surfer
2014	Kirstie Clements - author and former Vogue ed-in-chief
2015	Speaker: Lisa Wilkinson - media personality Performance: Mary "Effie" Coustas Panel: Melva Crouch, Nikki Gemmel, Deb Wallace, Nieves Murray - facilitated by Kerri-Anne Kennerley
2016	Speaker: Tara Moss - novelist Forum: Deb Tozer, Gwen Wilson, Judge Tom Altobelli, Dr Michael Flood facilitated by MC Kerri-Anne Kennerley



SPEAKERS

2017	Speaker: Magda Szubanski - comedian, Q&A with audience Panel: Tanya Brown, Nicki Bowman, Warwick Shanks, Richard Howson - on gender equality
2018	Jessica Rowe OA - television journalist / author
2019	Rabia Siddique - criminal and human rights lawyer
2020	Rachel Robertson - Antarctic expedition leader
2021	Speaker: Grace Tame - 2021 Aus of the Year / advocate for childhood sexual assault survivors, Deborah Wallace - Det Supt / author, interviewed by Stella Lauri- WIN News Q&A: Amber Sherlock, Britt Chhen, Jane de Graf - 9 Network personalities Performance: Mary "Effie" Coustas
2022	Speaker: Emma McKeon - Olympic swimmer Fireside chat: Sarah Carli - Olympic hurdler & Melissa Perrine - Paralympic skier Performance: Mahalia Barnes - singer
2023	Amna Karra-Hassan - Founder West Sydney's first AFL women's team
2024	Dr Gill Hicks AM, MBE - London subway bombing survivor / peace advocate
2025	Rosie Batty - Australian of the Year and domestic violence advocate, Anna Polyviou - chef, curated desserts and interviewed by Bella Leone - i98fm DJ
2026	Dr Jana Pittman - Dual summer/winter Olympian, doctor



SPEAKERS

ALIGN TO SDGS & IMPACT INDICATOR

	THEME	WHAT IT SIGNALS
	SDG 5 – Gender Equality	Leadership, voice, representation
	Safety & Justice	Violence prevention, survivor advocacy, accountability
	Voice & Visibility	Storytelling, media influence, public discourse
	Leadership & Resilience	Decision-making, courage, adaptive leadership
	SDG 17 – Collective Action	Community mobilisation, partnerships

EMCEE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

International Women's Day Illawarra also extends sincere thanks to our emcees, whose professionalism, warmth and skill have been central to shaping the tone and flow of the annual event. Through thoughtful facilitation, the emcee creates a respectful and inclusive space for speakers, scholarship recipients and community

voices to be heard, ensuring stories are honoured and messages resonate. This contribution plays an important role in transforming the event from a program of speakers into a shared community experience, and we are grateful for their ongoing commitment to the spirit and purpose of International Women's Day Illawarra.

2006: Susie Elelman	2013: Amy Duggan	2020: Amy Duggan
2007: Amy Duggan	2014: Amy Duggan	2021: Amy Duggan
2008: Erica Hodge	2015: Bianca Dye	2022: Amy Duggan
2009: Erica Hodge	2016: Kerri-Anne Kennerley	2023: Amy Duggan
2010: Amy Duggan	2017: Amy Duggan	2024: Belinda Russell
2011: Amy Duggan	2018: Amy Duggan	2025: Amy Duggan
2012: Amy Duggan	2019: Amy Duggan	2026: Amy Duggan

