WOMEN PEACE & SECURITY
Government-Civil Society Dialogue 2023 Report

ABOUT US

The Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security ('the Coalition') is a non-partisan and independent coalition of civil society organisations, networks and individuals working to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda in Australia, Asia and the Pacific region and globally. The Coalition brings together activists, feminists, practitioners, humanitarian actors and those with first-hand experience working on issues relating to women, peace and security. Coalition members have wide-ranging expertise in gender and peace.

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AUSTRALIAN WPS COALITION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, the Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security (the "Coalition") brought together government implementing agencies and civil society, including women's rights organisations, WPS experts and advocates, to discuss opportunities and challenges in driving implementation of Australia's Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021–2031 (WPS NAP). This report provides an overview and outlines clear recommendations that emerged from the convening.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Strengthen intergovernmental agency coordination and implementation of the WPS agenda**, including institutionalising the WPS NAP across government, to promote peace and security in both international and domestic contexts.

2. **Increase Australia's commitment to and enhance understanding and support for critical, under prioritised and multifaceted WPS issues**, including Climate, Peace and Security, First Nations and LGBTQI+ perspectives on WPS, as well as linkages with domestic refugees and asylum seekers in Australia.

3. **Prioritise the socialisation of the WPS Agenda and Australia's NAP** through public engagement initiatives and by broadening engagement with civil society and other relevant stakeholders on NAP implementation.

4. **Build on and invest in learning from decades of CSO knowledge and engagement on WPS** and continue to strengthen trusted and long-term relationships with civil society.

5. **Support CSO actors to better harness Australia's domestic strengths, experience, networks, and expertise** while creating more space for diverse stakeholders to engage in the WPS conversation.

6. **Commit to strengthening WPS NAP impact and accountability** through establishing consultation forums with communities and improving approaches to monitoring, evaluation and learning.

SECTION 1:
INTRODUCTION

On November 22, 2023 the Australian Civil Society Coalition on Women, Peace and Security hosted the Women Peace and Security Government-Civil Society Dialogue 2023 ('the Dialogue') in Canberra, Australia in collaboration with ACMC and DFAT.

The aim of the Dialogue was to provide a platform for Australia's Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021–2031 implementing agencies and civil society, including women's rights organisations, WPS experts and advocates to discuss opportunities and challenges in driving implementation of the WPS NAP.

The 2023 Dialogue built on over a decade of conversation and collaboration between the Australian Government and civil society, supported through the WPS Coalition, on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325[1] and the broader WPS agenda. It reflects the vital contribution of civil society organisations towards Australia's efforts in advancing WPS and supporting the development of both of Australia's WPS NAPs.

The objectives of the Dialogue were to:

- showcase findings from the Coalition's civil society consultations and research;

- exchange knowledge on emerging WPS research, expertise and good practice;

- strengthen whole of government accountability of Australia's WPS NAP and discuss the government's progress towards the plan's outcomes; and

- generate recommendations for further cross-sector implementation and engagement on WPS policy and practice.

The UN Secretary General urged the international community that "*today we are on a knife's edge*" and that there could be "*no more stalling*."

The Dialogue focused on three areas for discussion:

1. Driving Implementation of Australia's National Action Plan on WPS;

2. First Nations perspectives on WPS; and

3. Climate, Peace and Security.

Driving Implementation of Australia's National Action Plan on WPS provided a forum for the government agencies to share updates on the first two years of implementation of the Australian WPS NAP 2021–2031 ahead of the release of the forthcoming 2023 Progress Report.

The two topics for the thematic sessions, **First Nations perspectives on WPS** and **Climate, Peace and Security,** were selected and informed by the priorities identified in the Coalition's consultations with diverse women in Australia, reflected in the Roundtable summary and recommendations for action (March 2023), consultation findings (December 2022) and research undertaken on behalf of the Coalition, which explored First Nations perspectives on the WPS agenda in Australia (March 2023).

The themes reflect issues of critical importance for Australia's community of WPS practitioners, advocates, partners and allies and merit further consideration and prioritisation within Australia's WPS NAP implementation.

The Dialogue featured moderated panel discussions and breakout sessions where participants actively exchanged knowledge on WPS research, best practices and emerging issues, and discussed government accountability (See Appendix).

The Dialogue was attended by over sixty representatives, reflecting diverse perspectives from a variety of civil society organisations, academia, and government implementing agencies.

1 See: https://wpscoalition.org/wps-resources/.

BACKGROUND: INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE WPS AGENDA

Australia's Second WPS NAP 2021–2031[2] is underpinned by the four pillars of UNSCR 1325 – participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery. UNSCR 1325 is the historic first resolution confirming a global commitment to women's full involvement in peace and security. It serves as a critical foundation for ensuring a gender perspective is integral to peace building, peacekeeping and responses to conflict. To date the UN has adopted ten resolutions which form part of the WPS agenda.

Australia's Second WPS NAP covers ten years, and identifies four key outcomes:

1. supporting women's meaningful participation and needs in peace processes;

2. reducing sexual and gender-based violence;

3. supporting resilience, crisis, and security, law and justice efforts to meet the needs and rights of all women and girls; and

4. demonstrating leadership and accountability for WPS.

The NAP is implemented by the following departments and agencies:

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DAT);
- Defence;
- Home Affairs;
- Australian Federal Police (AFP); and
- Australian Civil-Military Centre.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The Dialogue provided an important opportunity to reflect on the context in which we live and work. There could not be a more critical time for taking further action on the WPS agenda – globally, regionally and locally. This is clearly illustrated by UN Secretary General Guterres in his 2023 WPS Report on 25 October 2023, at the UNSC Open Debate on WPS (a week prior to the 23rd anniversary of the UNSCR 1325), which details that:[3]

- Around the globe there are nearly 200 armed conflicts and situations of organised violence, increasing authoritarianism and misogyny; a growing climate and food crisis and ongoing impacts of COVID-19.

- Conflicts continue with devastating impacts for civilians in Sudan, Ukraine, Haiti, Kosovo, the Sahel, Myanmar, Afghanistan and beyond, along with an escalating crisis in the Middle East.

- Women are increasingly at risk in conflicts with 614 million women and girls in conflict areas (2022), which is 50% more than in 2017; and 117.2 million people estimated to be forcibly displaced and stateless by 2023.

- Women remain absent from peace processes: only one out of eighteen peace processes was signed or witnessed by women, and women make up only 16% of peace negotiators.

The UN Secretary General urged the international community that "today we are on a knife's edge" and that there could be "no more stalling". Guterres highlighted the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls during conflict, repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration, and post conflict reconstruction; and called for critical, urgent action around the four pillars of UNSCR 1325.

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2 Australia's second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021–2031) (dfat.gov.au). Appendix 2 provides a Summary of the WPS NAP from p. 10.

3 UN Secretary General. Women, Peace and Security Report. S2023/725. 28 Sept 2023.

CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT AND AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

WPS Coalition's history of engagement with Australia's NAP

Australian and international civil society organisations (CSOs) have long been active in supporting the WPS agenda and were instrumental in pushing for and shaping UNSCR 1325. In Australia, NGOs and CSOs led advocacy and programs around WPS well before the First Australian WPS NAP (2012–2019). In 2008 a network of CSOs played a substantial and constructive role in providing recommendations for the development of the First NAP.[4]

In 2013, the network formed the Australian Civil Society Coalition on WPS and launched the first Annual Civil Society Dialogue on WPS, to monitor the implementation of the WPS NAP. During the First NAP the Coalition actively engaged across the WPS agenda with the annual Civil Society – Government Dialogues during 2013–2018[5], and contributed to the development of the Second NAP. Coalition civil society representatives participated on the NAP Working Group and interdepartmental committees, contributing to laying the foundation for a "strong partnership between civil society and government."[6]

Civil society engagement with Australia's Second WPS NAP

The Second NAP identifies strengthening partnerships with Australian civil society "across two key functions – advice and accountability," including Dialogues, discussions on progress, best practice, research, Shadow Reports and "new partnerships to support whole of government implementation", with Australian Civil-Military Centre to lead collaboration with Australian civil society.

The 2023 Dialogue is the first formal Dialogue on the NAP process since the launch of the Second NAP. It has been informed by the work of the Coalition over 2022–2023 to promote the advancement of WPS globally, regionally and locally.[7]

Two major programs have framed this work:

1) Building partnerships and networks with WPS Civil Society in Asia-Pacific

By providing a platform for direct engagement and sharing priorities of women's civil society in Afghanistan, Myanmar and Ukraine and diaspora groups for peacebuilding and advancing WPS agenda, the Coalition has been able to identify and amplify women's voices and increase the visibility of women's experiences. This has enabled the Coalition to find innovative ways to advance the WPS agenda by supporting partners working in conflict affected countries, and by creating valuable insights for advocacy and collaboration. Key efforts have included policy briefs to inform the Australian Government and civil society on ways to enhance support for feminist CSO initiatives across these countries.[8]

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4 https://wpscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/First_Aus_NAP_on_WPS.pdf
5 2013–2018 Dialogue Reports. WPS Resources - Women, Peace & Security Coalition (wpscoalition.org)
6 Australia's second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021–2031) (dfat.gov.au) p. 55.
7 However, other CSO dialogues and workshops on other themes did occur in 2021 and 2022.
8 See: Events – Women, Peace & Security Coalition (wpscoalition.org)

2) Roundtable: What do peace and security mean to diverse women in Australia?

During October 2022 to March 2023 the Coalition conducted a series of civil society Listening Circles and Roundtables to understand **What do peace and security mean to diverse women in Australia?**

Five priorities emerged from the consultations, which were to:

- Enable all Australians to achieve peace, security and their inalienable rights

- Reposition Australia as a global and regional peacemaker rather than a strategic partner

- Rebalance priorities and restructure departments and processes to enable Australia to become a world leader in global diplomacy, peacebuilding and mediation

- Respect and recognise the agency of diverse women, girls and gender diverse people and enable those most impacted to lead

- Position Australia at the forefront of global efforts to address climate change and insecurity

These priorities and recommendations for action encapsulate the diversity of perspectives of the WPS agenda, specifically around:

- meanings and understandings of "human security", lived experiences, peace, and the role of Australia in the world;

- the links between local and global experiences of insecurity, crisis and conflict;

- intersectional and intergenerational understandings of insecurity based on personal lived experiences; and

- the importance for local responses to insecurity to be resourced, and to support the agency and leadership of those most impacted by insecurity.

The Coalition also supported a research initiative: Centering First Nations perspectives in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Australia: Recommendations for Action, undertaken by Professor Sandra Creamer.

The Coalition's work over 2022–2023 including the recommendations from the Roundtable Report and First Nations WPS research have all contributed to informing the themes of this 2023 Dialogue.

Participants in both the consultation and roundtable advocated for action that recognises and responds to following three themes:

1. **Interconnectedness:** participants wanted to see much more done to address the links between insecurity and crises at the local, national and international levels, as well as to address the compounding and intersecting nature of insecurity, crises and conflict.

2. **Intersectionality and intergenerationality:** with calls for more attention to be given to diverse women's different understandings of insecurity and how these are impacted by personal experience of intersecting and overlapping forms of oppression on the basis of race, age, class, visa status and other characteristics.

3. **Localisation and agency:** ensuring that those most impacted by insecurity, particularly those whose insecurity is compounded by marginalisation, have the space and resources to safely lead response

SECTION 2:
WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY GOVERNMENT-CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE 2023: OVERVIEW

SESSION 1:

Driving Implementation of Australia's National Action Plan on WPS

The Dialogue began with a panel presentation by government agencies on the Second Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021–2031. The panel provided a forum for government agencies to share their contributions and progress towards the outcomes of Australia's WPS NAP, the WPS agenda more broadly and future initiatives.

Panellists were asked to reflect on and respond to the following questions:

1. What are the key factors challenging implementation and why? What are some options for addressing these?

2. What are the opportunities for greater collaboration across civil society and government, and how can these be achieved?

3. What are the key learnings from the first two years of NAP implementation and what should the focus be for 2024–2026?

Agency updates on progress and challenges to implementation were provided by the:

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade;
- Australian Federal Police;
- Department of Home Affairs and Australian Border Force;
- Department of Defence; and
- Australian Civil-Military Centre.

This section provides a summary of agency updates. A comprehensive NAP 2023 Progress Report covering the period FYI 2021–2023 is anticipated shortly.

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) approaches its implementation of the WPS Agenda through programming, policy and partnership efforts, which include new WPS investments, multilateral advocacy and strategic partner dialogues, bilateral and multilateral meetings and civil society engagement.

Initiatives highlighted include supporting women leaders playing crucial roles in conflict resolution and mediation through the establishment of the Pacific Women's Mediator's Network and supporting the South East Asia Women Mediators and setting up a Gender Justice Practice Hub to improve access to justice for women and girls in fragile and conflict-affected states in partnership with Legal Action Worldwide. DFAT has also increased international advocacy on WPS through inaugural Strategic Dialogues on Gender Equality with the United Kingdom and United States.

Opportunities for greater collaboration across civil society and government identified by DFAT included increasing engagement on WPS with senior government leaders, championing a strong connection between civil society and government, maintaining a consistent and permanent budget, financing for civil society and better knowledge and network sharing between civil society and government.

There are opportunities to connect with regional and international fora e.g. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Pacific Community, Pacific Women Lead, Blue Pacific Strategy, and utilising the 2023 review of the NAP to capture new and emerging issues was also noted.

Challenges facing the Department in NAP implementation have included navigating differences in other countries' gender equality priorities, including the differential understanding of WPS language across regions and countries in which DFAT works (also highlighted as an opportunity to learn from others, and build capabilities with partners); responding to the gender equality pushback and the rise of anti-rights movement; monitoring and evaluation; moving beyond capacity building; working in silos, the domestic application of an outward facing NAP, and ensuring the NAP can respond to emerging issues.

AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) highlighted that they play a key role in advancing WPS in the Pacific and South Asia regions, and also implement the agenda domestically through efforts to increase women's representation in the service. This includes working with police services in Vanuatu through the Be the Change Program to increase women's participation and representation in the local police force by addressing harmful gender norms. The agency is also working in Timor-Leste, where it undertook a gender audit in partnership with Timor-Leste police, which led to the creation of a sexual harassment prevention working group.

The AFP has contributed assistance to Tonga in responding to the volcano eruption and tsunami and the COVID pandemic through the provision of dignity kits. Challenges identified by the AFP in implementation include women's under-representation in the police across the Pacific, especially at senior levels and the need to create more opportunities to collaborate with other government departments, including in the Pacific region, and to ensure gender training is effectively implemented.

DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS AND AUSTRALIAN BORDER FORCE

Implementation of the WPS NAP at the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) is led by the International Division, which play a central role in connecting many of the important functions of the Department – whether they be customs, countering violent extremism or the refugee and humanitarian program – to women and girls, gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

The Department has been expanded to include the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). The Department highlighted its contribution in the first years of implementation to support WPS NAP Outcome 1: women and girl's meaningful participation and needs in conflict prevention and peace processes. This has been done through the Pacific Women's Professional Development Program (PWPDP), a partnership with the Oceania Customs Organisation and RMIT University's Transnational Security Centre which works to enhance women leadership in the Pacific in the customs and border space.

Other accomplishments shared included contributions towards Outcome 2: ending sexual and gender-based violence through the expansion of Family Violence provisions in Australia's migration legislation, which aims to ensure those seeking permanent residence do not remain in violent relationships to obtain residency status. The Department has also made contributions in the area of national emergency disaster management, which has included analysing how women and girls experience disasters and building an evidence base, as well as implementing the Sendai Framework with a focus on gender implementation.

Challenges identified by the Department included impacts as a result of changes in government machinery, including transfer of functions for human trafficking and modern slavery, child abuse policy and transnational crime to the Attorney General's Department, which is not a NAP implementing partner. The Department also highlighted efforts to harmonise its WPS work and to co-deliver initiatives with other agencies and noted its interest to move beyond a conventional security lens and adapting implementation to the domestic context.

DEPARTMENT DEFENCE

The Department of Defence's implementation of the WPS NAP occurs through its Gender, Peace and Security Mandate (2020 – 2030). It was developed ahead of the second NAP and outlines the Department's goals and NAP outcomes and reflects a "one Defence" approach by aiming to integrate GPS across all operations. This is undertaken through six lines of effort (LOE):

- LOE 1: Policy and Doctrine;
- LOE 2: Education and Training;
- LOE 3: Personnel;
- LOE 4: Mission Readiness and Effects;
- LOE 5: International Engagement; and
- LOE 6: Governance and Reporting.

The Department highlighted two achievements in the first two years of implementation. First, the deployment of a Strategic Gender Advisor in responding domestically to COVID-19, and second, the Department's ongoing involvement in its flagship regional activity, the Indo-Pacific Endeavour (IPE), which has included organising 20 WPS activities across 13 countries, reaching over 500 people with through the delivery of education, training and networking opportunities.

The Department of Defence also noted the variations in interpretations of WPS as an ongoing challenge. Another challenge identified was the perception that the Department focuses its efforts on increasing women's participation in the military sector, creating a risk that work on integrating a gender perspective in operations is being minimised. It was noted that this leads to the incorrect assumption that recruitment and retention of women is the sole objective of its WPS work. Opportunities identified include the domains of space and cybersecurity; including preventing technology-facilitated gender-based violence and the risk of conflict in space, noting that these are areas of opportunity where Australia can act as a global leader.

AUSTRALIAN CIVIL-MILITARY CENTRE

The Australian Civil Military Centre (ACMC) works to support the development of national civil-military-police capabilities, administered by the Department of Defence. ACMC approaches implementation of the WPS NAP through: 1) taking a lead role in facilitating collaboration with Australian civil society and supporting their engagement with government and; 2) by contributing to various LOES indicated under the Department of Defence's GPS Mandate. For example, it has promoted a shared understanding of WPS through the provision of workshops and training with CSOs and government, including on protection of civilians. It has also worked with Pacific partners on disaster management as well as through research and knowledge building via research programs like the Same Space Different Mandates project and Australian Deployed Women (2021). As ACMC explained, the rapid evolution of WPS priorities presents a challenge, which requires capacity building initiatives to remain timely and agile enough to respond to new situations.

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SESSION 2:

First Nations perspectives on WPS

The second panel on First Nations Perspective on WPS showcased research by Indigenous scholars on opportunities to enhance First Nations perspectives as part of Australia's commitment to implementing the WPS Agenda. This included findings showcased by **Professor Sandra Creamer** on her research as presented in: *Women, Peace and Security: Aligning the WPS agenda with the priorities of First Nations women in Australia Report* and doctoral research by PhD candidate **Julie Ballangarry** on synergies between and opportunities presented by an Indigenous Foreign Policy in Australia and the WPS Agenda. It was noted that the global trend in the adoption of a Feminist Foreign Policy can support this approach.

The panel was moderated by Professor Sara Davies of Griffith University, a member of the Coalition Steering Committee, and included remarks by **Australia's Ambassador for First Nations Peoples, Justin Mohamed**. The panel provided an opportunity to learn and reflect on the importance of recognising the strengths of First Nations women and integrating a domestic and First Nations focus into the implementation of the WPS agenda.

> *"Security is paramount, we all need to feel safe and secure within our homes… Which encompasses physical and psychological safety."*

Professor Sandra Creamer

In her presentation, Professor Creamer highlighted key findings of her research exploring the question of what peace and security mean to First Nations women in Australia. This included an extensive consultation process with 50 Indigenous women including grassroots organisations, academics, mothers and grandmothers from urban, remote and rural communities. In reporting back her findings, Professor Creamer emphasised the importance of achieving balance between genders and ensuring inclusion efforts also address the needs of men and gender diverse communities. She also underscored that Australia's Indigenous community is not homogenous, nor are all of their priorities the same.

A key theme that emerged from her research with diverse communities was the need for discussion on the security of Indigenous women to expand beyond a focus only on domestic and family violence and to encompass a more holistic understanding of women's security needs. Two specific security needs were highlighted by Professor Creamer in relation to the ongoing housing and financial security facing Indigenous women as a result of restrictive policies relating to access to land tenure, inadequate infrastructure and amenities, all of which are failing to meet the needs of Indigenous women.

As Professor Creamer emphasised: "Security is paramount, we all need to feel safe and secure within our homes… Which encompasses physical and psychological safety." In regard to financial security, she noted that many women, especially in remote communities, continue to face restrictions on access to basic amenities, such as cash and equal pay.

Professor Creamer's remarks were followed by PhD Candidate Julie Ballangarry, whose research focuses on public policy, Indigenous affairs, and inclusive approaches to policymaking process. In sharing her reflections, Ballangarry underscored that [Australia] "cannot have a feminist approach without centring First Nations perspectives and knowledge. It is inadequate without it," and that adopting such an approach is an opportunity for Australia to move forward as a nation that better reflects its true identity.

As Ballangarry explained, this requires an approach that integrates Indigenous understandings of relationality and caring for Country ("Kin and Country"), which can be understood as human rights and climate, and weaving this understanding throughout Australia's foreign policy. However, any effort to do so requires genuine engagement with First Nations people and their knowledge, and ensuring a meaningful role for First Nations people in the design process, including in determining foreign policy priorities.

Supporting Indigenous engagement in foreign policy, including with the WPS Agenda, requires more than increasing the number of women of colour, for instance in staffing. Instead, she emphasised the need for structural reform that establishes culturally appropriate spaces for engagement and the sharing of perspectives, as well as a move towards decolonising policies and processes.

Ballangarry also emphasised the significance of domestic and foreign policy alignment: "We present ourselves by what we do, and how we act at home," highlighting that Australia's ongoing colonising practices continue to have a disproportionate impact, which have the effect of contributing to the marginalisation of Indigenous people in Australia, who face a lack of respect for their basic rights. She noted that this decreases their safety and stability in their environment and financial prospects. In this regard, Australia continues to exist as a conflicted society.

Like the participants in Professor Creamer's research, Ballangarry emphasised the need for truth telling, and that support for Indigenous people in Australia must be synonymous with this process in order to support reconciliation. Highlighting that "our society can't flourish unless Indigenous women flourish," reiterating the security concerns raised by Professor Creamer and emphasising that water insecurity, lack of resources for teachers in Indigenous communities and access to basic income for some remote Indigenous communities contributes to insecurity.

The presentations by Professor Creamer and Julie Ballangarry were well received by Ambassador for **First Nations People, Justin Mohamed**, who reiterated the diversity of understandings of peace and security for First Nations women and girls, while also celebrating and recognising their resilience. Ambassador Mohamed acknowledged that many sectors, including health, education and business remain unsafe places for women and girls, and the ongoing challenge to change institutions that, from their establishment, were not intended to support the best interests of First Nations people. Ambassador Mohamed closed by underscoring the importance of further research to enhance the inclusion of First Nations women's voice both domestically and internationally and to deepen understanding on these important issues, as reflected by the work of both researchers.

> *"Australia cannot have a feminist approach without centring First Nations perspectives and knowledge. It is inadequate without it."*
>
> **Julie Ballangarry**

SESSION 3:
Climate, Peace and Security

The third panel on Climate, Peace and Security featured a discussion by Fiji feminist peacebuilder **Sharon Bhagwan Rolls**, representing the Pacific Women's Mediator Network (PWMN) and **David Dutton**, Assistant Secretary, Climate and Environmental Diplomacy Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and was moderated by Michelle Higelin, Executive Director at ActionAid Australia and Co-Chair of the Coalition.

The session provided an opportunity to discuss context-specific and locally led approaches by Pacific Island civil society organisations in responding to the nexus of climate, gender, peace and security challenges facing their communities, and to explore opportunities for further government and civil society collaborations on climate-related security initiatives in the Pacific region.

The panel also served to contribute ideas to support the Australian government in leveraging the NAP on WPS 2021–2031 to respond to the gendered climate-related security challenges in the region and position itself at the forefront of integrating gender, climate and insecurity challenges[9] to realise the full implementation of the WPS agenda.[10]

> **"Women in the Pacific region are at the forefront of climate change and face a "trauma of insecurities."**
>
> **Sharon Bhagwan Rolls**

Panellists were invited to respond to the following questions:

- How are we seeing climate change undermine peace and security and gender equality in the region? How is this being reflected in DFAT's new international development strategy?

- Where are there opportunities to elevate the WPS agenda as a tool for responding to the gendered impacts of climate change? How are Pacific Island women already working at the climate and security nexus, and what can we learn from this in progressing Australia's NAP?

- How is the Australian government tackling the intersection of gender and climate, and where are the opportunities to grow this focus?

- How can we strengthen the perspective of First Nations and local voices when looking at the threat of climate change?

- What are some of the challenges we need to overcome to take a more comprehensive approach to climate change from a WPS lens?

As Bhagwan Rolls underscored, women in the Pacific region are at the forefront of climate change and face a "trauma of insecurities." They are responding to immediate climate-induced disasters, including recent devastating cyclones, as well as the slow onset of droughts and severe water shortages that are impacting islands across the region.

The onset of COVID-19 only intensified the crisis. Climate security, however, is not only a Pacific issue but a global crisis, which is reflected in the prioritisation of environmental policy across civil society organisations working in the peace sector, including through the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC); PWMN is part of GPPAC.

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9   As recommended in: https://wpscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Roundtable-Report-Final.pdf

10 "As the international community accelerates policymaking, programming and investments to address climate-related security risks in fragile contexts, this is a critical gap": https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Gender-climate-and-security-en.pdf

As Bhagwan Rolls explained: climate change is having wide scale social and economic impacts which, when reduced to a macroeconomic issue for instance, through a focus on loss and damage, fails to respond to the particular challenges of people and communities who are most impacted. For example, in working with women from the first village in Fiji to be relocated as a result of climate change, women, often in their senior years, were facing loss of culture, identity and a sense of well-being. This also resulted in reduced access to natural resources such as land and water, which threatened the production of Pacific Islands crafts and therefore women's livelihoods and the island's culture.

Integrating WPS across the climate agenda is a means to reach the most marginalised and affected by climate change. For instance, the Pacific is the region in the world with the lowest rating of women in decision-making, both within and outside of government and as a result, they are often not part of the conversation defining peace and security policy. Bhagwan Rolls underscored the importance of advancing women's leadership not only in climate and security but in political spaces as a whole.

Bhagwan Rolls reinforced the importance of ensuring WPS remains situated within the peace, development and humanitarian nexus, rather than as a security issue. Other opportunities for WPS integration in climate response include disaster management through the Sendai Framework, which requires looking at WPS beyond the lens of a deployment issue.

While effective responses are vital, investments in prevention, mediation, and dialogue are crucial and reflect a peacebuilding approach to climate, security and gender challenges. WPS must be integrated into climate change financing and infrastructure beyond traditional means. For example, the Blue Pacific Strategy and Pacific Security Pillars are examples which discuss the role of traditional leaders and who should be at the table when defining climate security for and with Pacific Island people.

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE (DFAT)

The government has increased its climate focus, as reflected in the new DFAT International Development Policy released in August 2023 that includes new climate and gender targets and provides an opportunity to systematically integrate climate throughout the Department's work. This will ensure Australian development assistance will tackle climate impacts and improve the lives of women and girls. DFAT recognises that women's and girls' human rights must be the centre of our collective efforts to address climate change.

DFAT acknowledged an increasingly clearer understanding across government that climate change is creating security issues, which are and will continue to have an impact in national security and policy. In particular, climate change is exacerbating instability, increasing disasters, impacting ecosystems and food security, including in fragile and conflict affected states with less capacity to adapt to impacts of climate change. DFAT acknowledged a clear prioritisation from government on climate and gender, with mandates and resources being dedicated to engage in this work, while also recognising this is a significant body of work that is evolving and will take time to develop. The WPS agenda was recognised as a potential accelerator of progress and highly relevant to further discussions.

Following the panel, Dialogue participants were invited to reflect on the panel themes and speaker remarks, and to consider:

1. What has been learned that can be brought forward as part of the implementation of the NAP?

2. How can we strengthen commitments to address climate change and First Nations perspectives in the WPS Agenda?

SECTION 3:
KEY THEMES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Section Three provides a summary of the Key Themes and Recommendations which emerged from Dialogue discussions. They reflect recommendations to strengthen accountability of Australia's WPS NAP, opportunities for future cross-sector implementation and engagement on WPS policy and practice, and suggestions to promote increased alignment of Australia's efforts with emerging WPS research, expertise and good practice. These recommendations are informed by the panel presentations showcasing implementation updates, civil society experience, consultation, research, and recommendations generated by the civil society roundtable discussions.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Strengthen intergovernmental agency coordination and implementation of the WPS agenda, to promote peace and security in both international and domestic contexts.

Dialogue participants made clear that the WPS agenda and "security" have different meanings and interpretations across different contexts, regions, countries, civil society and government (including across NAP implementing agencies) in Australia and internationally. This presents both an opportunity and a challenge, as it can provide scope for greater policy cohesion between domestic and external priorities. At the same time, it can also skew the focus, for example, towards military or securitised, rather than a human security and peacebuilding approach, which is reflected in the work of the Coalition. As the 2015 Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 emphasised: "The women, peace and security agenda is about ending conflict, not about making conflict safer for women."[11]

ACTIONS:

- Increase opportunities for inter-agency government coordination and engagement on the WPS NAP and enhance ministerial buy-in across agencies for the WPS agenda.

- Demonstrate Australia's commitment to comprehensive implementation of WPS by funding WPS specific initiatives across all NAP implementing agencies and establishing a WPS funding envelope within government.

- Government NAP implementing agencies should work towards harmonising the understanding of WPS across NAP implementation, while acknowledging diverse interpretations of security and its impact on different societies. Implementing agencies should avoid the "securitisation" of the WPS agenda, noting that the WPS agenda is an agenda for peace.

- Build the capacity and deepen the understanding of WPS issues and expertise across government departments through increased access to high quality training, education opportunities and socialisation with CSOs and women leaders, with the aim to instil a broader understanding of gender equality amongst policymakers and practitioners. This is essential for working in diverse cultural contexts and improving the lived realities of women, especially across the Pacific.

- Develop improved WPS implementation processes targeting structural reform. For example, participants recommended that guidelines be developed to inform how different departments work together in humanitarian response contexts to advance the WPS agenda; i.e. what is required in military, and police deployments that can be institutionalised to support WPS NAP goals?

- Take action to implement the WPS NAP internationally and domestically. Dialogue participants emphasised the need for Australia to further domesticate the WPS NAP and better link international and domestic WPS priorities and policy agendas.[12] The Government should aim for enhanced policy coherence and complementarity between domestic and international agendas, instead of working from a siloed approach. For example, by creating more parallels between the goals of the WPS NAP and programs such as ending violence against women in Australia, refugees and asylum seekers, trade and arms exports and climate change.

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11 See: https://wps.unwomen.org/preventing/
12 As reported in the 2019 Dialogue: https://wpscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/sixth-report.pdf

RECOMMENDATION 2

Increase Australia's commitment to and enhance understanding and support for critical, under prioritised and multifaceted WPS issues, including Climate, Peace and Security, First Nations and LGBTQI+ perspectives on WPS, as well as linkages with domestic refugees and asylum seekers in Australia.

Participants emphasised that Australia has an opportunity and is uniquely positioned to make progress towards and advance key, under prioritised and emerging WPS issues through its NAP implementation both domestically and internationally. Ensuring greater foreign and domestic policy cohesion while increasing the focus on a domestic approach will enhance Australia's regard as a potential leader or, at a minimum, a strong voice in advancing these important issues.

This will require an investment in government of Australia WPS knowledge and expertise beyond a superficial level and strengthening senior leadership buy-in and understanding of the more nuanced areas of the WPS agenda, which challenge the traditional security paradigm. The attendance and participation of the First Nations Ambassador at the Dialogue is a strong example of Australia taking a positive step forward (See also Recommendation 1).

However, participants also urged the government to actively reflect on its own domestic policy before "giving lessons" and seeking to influence WPS agenda abroad. As civil society has reiterated in numerous previous dialogues with government, Australia is itself a site for the WPS agenda, especially when considering the particular insecurity faced by Indigenous and marginalised communities.

ACTIONS:

Climate, Gender, Peace and Security

The climate, security, peace and gender nexus, a theme of the dialogue, is a key area where Australia should play a much bigger role, develop specialised knowledge and expertise and most importantly, commit concrete actions as part of the WPS NAP. Although there is a growing body of research and practice on this nexus, there is a need for further research that reflects clear connections between these areas, and more, for knowledge on the topic to be institutionalised to influence policy and practice.

Participants also emphasised that it is at the local level that the nexus of climate, gender, peace and security is best understood. However, despite this knowledge it is not apparent within government nor being applied in traditional policy paradigms.

Despite extensive civil society and academic work in the area, the under prioritisation and lack of depth in Australia's WPS NAP on the subject points to the need to explore and find strategies to disseminate research and practice more widely. Participants emphasised that, especially in government circles, this is an area of opportunity for greater knowledge, expertise and especially leadership. Australia should seek to enhance its expertise in this area and ensure findings are integrated into government planning and policy.

The Australian government should also:

- Recognise and prioritise the knowledge and perspectives of First Nations peoples in responding to climate change, including by elevating Indigenous science and traditional knowledge in policy and decision-making processes.[13]

- Critically consider how it discusses its climate security efforts in international fora to better align with gender, climate, peace and security priorities.

- Ensure implementation of the WPS NAP recognises the impact of climate change on the (in)security of women and girls, for instance, by ensuring migration and refugee pathways reflect and are informed by gender analysis.

The gender, climate, peace and security nexus is also an area for international and domestic policy alignment and cohesion. Specific care should also be given to avoiding the "securitisation" of Australia's climate response.[14] Instead, Australia should ensure those most affected are defining climate security, and that the country's response is grounded in a human security and peace building perspective. This requires investing in climate change and disaster prevention and preparedness, mediation and dialogue work, and not only reactions.

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13 See recommendation #4 in: https://wpscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/First-Nations-Consultation-Summary-and-Policy-Paper-2.pdf
14 For more on "securitisation of WPS," including climate, see: https://theglobalobservatory.org/2022/10/the-securitization-of-gender-a-primer/

LGBTQI+ people in conflict and humanitarian contexts

Participants identified the need to better mainstream the particular perspectives, strengths, resilience and vulnerabilities of LGBTQI+ people in conflict and humanitarian contexts.

- Australia should prioritise working with civil society partners engaged in dialogue with these groups and support efforts to collect and safely disseminate data and research to ensure their experiences are captured and inform Australia's WPS policy responses.

- Participants also emphasised that in the Australian context, structural reform is needed to facilitate greater inclusion for Indigenous and LGBTIQ+ people to achieve change in WPS spaces. These include within Government departments and organisations. Acknowledging these challenges as part of the WPS NAP implementation is an essential first step in making process.

First Nations and WPS

As highlighted by UN Women, "Indigenous women have made remarkable contributions to the women, peace and security agenda, and have pioneered innovative approaches to conflict prevention and justice." Yet despite this, the experiences and perspectives of First Nations women have not previously been integrated into Australia's implementation of the WPS agenda. Moreover, as one participant emphasised: "Patriarchal society endures. The WPS Agenda also reflects a patriarchal colonial lens… the WPS agenda is not just about having more women in the role," highlighting that decolonial and feminist approaches should inform Australia's ambitions towards improved NAP implementation and engagement with the WPS Agenda.

- Australia should review the WPS NAP to address the various issues facing First Nations women as outlined in Professor Creamer's research and emphasised in the Dialogue, including housing and land security.[15]

- Prioritise an inclusive policymaking process and support genuine, and meaningful engagement of Indigenous peoples and communities with the WPS agenda.

- Support the meaningful participation of First Nations women in Federal, State and local level decision-making, to shape and strengthen policies and laws that build security and peace for all people in Australia.[16]

- Ensure social services and programs are well-resourced, culturally appropriate and delivered in partnership with First Nations women/peoples, including education in remote and rural communities.[17]

- Support opportunities for further research and critical dialogue on First Nations Perspectives on WPS and how these findings can translate into implementation.

Flexibility and adaptability:

- Agility and flexibility in implementation will be pivotal over the next 8 years of WPS NAP implementation, as new priorities, including cyber, artificial intelligence and climate change create further challenges to peace and security.

> "Patriarchal society endures. The WPS Agenda also reflects a patriarchal colonial lens… the WPS agenda is not just about having more women in the role."

15 See Recommendations #5 and #9: https://wpscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/First-Nations-Consultation-Summary-and-Policy-Paper-2.pdf
16 See Recommendation #4: https://wpscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/First-Nations-Consultation-Summary-and-Policy-Paper-2.pdf
17 See Recommendation #8: https://wpscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/First-Nations-Consultation-Summary-and-Policy-Paper-2.pdf

RECOMMENDATION 3

Prioritise the socialisation of the WPS Agenda and Australia's WPS NAP through public engagement initiatives and by broadening engagement with civil society and other relevant stakeholders on implementation.

Public disclosure and dialogue are critical to ensuring Australian society understands and supports the government's WPS commitments. It is an essential accountability mechanism and component of securing Australia's position as a global WPS Champion. Despite Australia's strong network of WPS activists and academics working across the country and renowned WPS education opportunities, participants expressed concern about the general level of knowledge writ large of the WPS NAP, including amongst civil servants not necessarily working within implementing agencies. Youth in particular, including the large number of students studying WPS at Australian educational institutions, were identified as stakeholders that Australia should enhance engagement with and an under engaged group, especially at the university levels.

ACTIONS:

- The Government of Australia should look for continual opportunities to tap into, convene and resource the work of Australia's WPS community, in order to help elevate the national discussion on the WPS NAP. This could include, for example, a budget specifically for public engagement initiatives, and efforts to create strategic partnerships with the media to raise issues pertaining to the WPS agenda with the Australian public.

- Resourcing and co-convening opportunities for further knowledge exchanges across relevant sectors, such as conferences, speaking engagements, and identifying ambassadors and focal points to elevate the national conversation on WPS are ways that Australia can increase national dialogue on the WPS NAP and Agenda.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Build on and invest in learning from decades of CSO knowledge and engagement on WPS and continue to strengthen trusted and long-term relationships with civil society.

Australia is fortunate to have a strong, well-represented community of WPS practitioners, researchers and advocates with decades of experience advancing the WPS agenda. While the Coalition and partners recognise the importance of increasing representation and amplifying marginalised voices in the space (see also Recommendation 5), the cross-sector WPS community working in and outside Australia is a key asset that the Government of Australia can work in closer collaboration to support WPS NAP implementation. However, while many government representatives enthusiastically engaged in the dialogue and were willing to share their experiences and knowledge, some participants noted that others seemed reluctant to share implementation challenges, admit lack of WPS knowledge and to learn from CSOs.

The Coalition acknowledges and celebrates the strong participation of government representatives at the Dialogue. However, feedback from some civil society partners indicated that a compressed schedule left insufficient time for substantive discussions. Others suggested that an optional, informal, networking opportunity would have been beneficial. It was clear both from civil society and government that Australia's WPS community is eager to convene, strengthen and grow its network and create greater opportunities for information sharing, engagement, and collaboration across sectors. Both civil society and government representatives commended Australia's WPS expertise, while lamenting that opportunities for convening and sharing detailed information about implementation experiences and lessons learned were limited, and reflected the reality of working in silos.

ACTIONS:

- Some of this reluctance could be addressed by creating more opportunities to build connections between civil society and implementing partners, with a focus on sustainability and continuity of relationships and improved handover during government staffing transitions. Ensuring institutional knowledge is passed on as civil servants transition into new roles or leave the public service is essential to avoid the feeling that the conversation is "starting over" each time, and that progress is sustainable and can inform deep engagements. This is unfortunately the case in the transition between the First and Second WPS NAPs.

- Ensuring civil society, with its breadth of expertise, programming, international and domestic reach and networks can influence the government's agenda is essential to ensuring Australia continues to build on and learn from experience gained both from the previous NAPs, but also from the wider, global WPS community which civil society and academia are actively engaged.

- Increasing opportunities for knowledge sharing on lessons learned and best practices amongst government practitioners could also contribute to greater transparency, engagement and willingness to learn. For example, participants emphasised the need for enhanced government involvement with civil society in Australia, and asked how are diverse women's movements informing AFP domestic efforts; are disability rights groups engaged; and how would this impact the domestic WPS context?

- Feedback from civil society Dialogue participants indicated a strong interest to hear directly from civil servants regarding the work of their respective departments on the implementation of Australia's WPS NAP. The desire for regular and meaningful discussion on implementation acknowledges the limitations when information regarding progress and challenges are reduced to what is relayed in a formal reporting mechanism every third year in a ten-year NAP program, and does not allow for the personal reflections of implementers.

- Dialogue participations are eager to move beyond thematic discussions and re-litigating the basics of the WPS agenda. Instead, future efforts should move towards more complex conversations, innovative partnerships and concrete action to support implementation. This requires ensuring those engaged in WPS work within the government retain a basic level of knowledge and expertise, while investing in the expertise and experience needed to move the scope of discussion towards a strategic and higher level of analysis and engagement. For example, engagement could benefit from pathways for consistent CSO access to senior leaders to discuss NAP implementation, which should be established and maintained.

- Sufficient funds should be allocated for civil society to contribute and advance implementation of WPS NAP, including in research and work at the local level with communities engaged and directly affected by conflict, violence and instability. Funds should also be allocated to support women and civil society organisations to convene and strategise, and for initiatives that enhance diverse women's political participation and leadership.

"Dialogue participations are eager to move beyond thematic discussions and re-litigating the basics of the WPS agenda. Instead, future efforts should move towards more complex conversations, innovative partnerships and concrete action to support implementation."

RECOMMENDATION 5
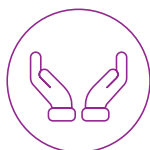
Support CSO actors to better harness Australia's domestic strengths, experience, networks, and expertise while creating more space for diverse stakeholders to engage in the WPS agenda.

Participants emphasised the potential of the WPS Coalition as an organisation that can play a leadership role in bringing in groups and individuals who are not currently engaged with the WPS NAP and agenda. However, effort is needed both from civil society currently working in the WPS space and government to create more inclusive spaces and opportunities for diverse stakeholders to convene and participate. Engaging women from diverse communities is essential to WPS NAP implementation. Greater engagement is needed with communities in Australia impacted by conflict and colonisation. These communities are both sources of the diversity of lived experiences of peace and security and are directly connected to these issues. The civil society Roundtables and Coalition Dialogues have and should continue to facilitate engagement with these groups and individuals, but equally these experiences need to be meaningfully integrated into a broader, policy context and shared with wider government and civil society audiences for further action.

ACTIONS:

- Recognise and enhance inclusion of Australian CSOs as having knowledge and lived experience of the WPS agenda.

- Prioritise engagement that ensures diverse voices are provided deeper and meaningful opportunities to participate, including working with non-traditional interlocutors.

- Establish outreach initiatives to convene and engage youth and support their participation in domestic and global WPS dialogues and leadership development opportunities.

- Enhance engagement with men as allies in NAP implementation. As some participants emphasised, it is important, especially at the government levels, that men are involved in WPS convening and conversation. Systematic transformation requires not only ensuring men are allies, but also developing strategies to support meaningful engagement, including with masculinity.[18]

- Participants emphasised that education, skills, language and opportunity limits who participates in the WPS spaces and initiatives in Australia and the region. To enhance engagement, investing in gender and leadership training for women leaders in marginalised communities across Australia and the region was recommended, while acknowledging the specific strengths and insights these communities already have and can contribute to the domestic WPS discussion.

- Address missing links that connect community organisations working with women and government decision makers is also necessary. Mediating organisations, for example WPS Coalition member Community Migrant Resource Centre (CMRC) can provide direct links to these communities. Enhancing support for grassroots and community level organisations working directly with individuals in Australia to participate in WPS Dialogues, and supporting efforts to connect domestic and international organisations, can potentially help mitigate the risk of conflict and identify early warning signs.

- Explore opportunities to strengthen the international-domestic links and move towards community engagement models to approach domestic emergency management, policy and social cohesion initiatives. This would include more effective engagement with civil society networks in disaster and emergency preparedness and response. Connections between CSOs within communities and regionally are deep and broad. Investment in establishing communication pathways at the community level as a form of emergency preparedness and prevention means flagging early indicators of potential conflict and instability. These networks can help inform government responses to disaster and conflict management in ways that react to local needs. By tapping into CSO networks, within networks, individuals can help share key insights while avoiding the safety and security risks that engaging with government and the international community or spotlight can bring.

- Investing in Australian universities engaging in WPS work contributes to advancing WPS research, teaching and thought leadership. In addition, Australia's world-class institutions can also provide opportunities for transnational education beyond Australia by offering online learning opportunities for a generation of leaders that may be unable to study in Australia (for example, Afghan girls).

18 See https://giwps.georgetown.edu/resource/beyond-engaging-men/

RECOMMENDATION 6

Commit to strengthening WPS NAP impact and accountability through establishing consultation forums with communities and improving approaches to monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Consultation forums with civil society and affected-communities

As participants made clear, there is no one size fits all approach and caution should be had in assuming that priorities and approaches that were successful in one region, or country, or locality even, will have the same effect in other spaces. This reality can be mitigated by creating opportunities for deep listening amongst and with diverse stakeholders, especially at the local level, to ensure different needs are reflected and considered throughout implementation. Australia's WPS NAP should follow the principle "nothing about us, without us" by engaging with and supporting research led by First Nations women and other marginalised communities, including LGBTQI+ communities.

ACTIONS:

- Create structures for more regular and deeper consultation processes: establish a subcommittee within the WPS NAP Implementation Working Group that works on community consultations, engagement and risk assessments. The subcommittee would fulfil the purpose of enhancing government accountability while providing timely feedback and insight on the effects of government programmes.

- Establish a First Nations-Pacific Islanders WPS subcommittee that acknowledges diversity, including SOGI diversity. This body would act to inform WPS NAP implementation and support Australia in developing expertise and understanding of significant WPS issues at home and across the region. For instance, by providing timely information on programming successes, challenges, best practices and partnership opportunities.

- Establish a cross-sector, regional WPS consultation group to strengthen diverse civil society engagement with the NAP and provide opportunities to leverage the region's expertise and experience.

- Engage with diverse women when measuring success and ensure knowledge from engagements is not only translated up but across organisations and NAP implementing departments.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

The WPS NAP is being implemented at a time when Australia and the world are grappling with overlapping conflicts and crises. The WPS NAP provides a road map that can guide government action when faced with competing priorities and track progress of Australia's contributions. However, barriers to effective reporting and measuring results such as inefficiencies in the monitoring framework continue to undermine the ability of Australia to demonstrate its implementation progress and may hinder reflection and the ability to adjust in real time, if usable data and stories of progress remain unavailable or are substantially delayed in their release.

ACTIONS:

To remedy this, Australia should:

- Re-evaluate its approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning of the WPS NAP. Despite the framework and commitments to outcomes, progress remains activity oriented. Working with civil society, who have a breadth of expertise in results-based management, provides an opportunity to improve Australia's approach.

- Ensure lessons learned in the implementation process are captured and disseminated, both within and across government but also in focus countries and with civil society partners.

- Consider how to track the impact and achievement of Australia's WPS NAP towards UN resolutions in the long term.

- Recognise and acknowledge the important work happening at the local levels and support opportunities for reflection and learning across organisations.

- Consider how to monitor and capture the reversal of progress and roll back of rights when tracking WPS implementation.

- Continue to improve efforts to apply and learn from intersectional data collection and analysis.

SECTION 4:
CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

The Women Peace and Security Government-Civil Society Dialogue continues to prove itself as an indispensable forum for identifying opportunities for increased coordination, information sharing and collaboration across Australia's WPS community. By providing a direct link between government, civil society, academia and community members, the Dialogue plays an important role in contributing to and enhancing Australia's WPS NAP implementation efforts.

The recommendations reflected in this report demonstrate the breadth of knowledge and expertise that were both brought by stakeholders to the convening, and those that emerged and were co-created through the opportunity to share and discuss opportunities, challenges and priorities across sectors. The Coalition looks forward to delving deeper into the issues raised and, significantly, in taking clear action where identified.

However, as the report makes clear, many of the recommendations are not new and are reflected in the 5th Dialogue Report (2017) *Listening to Women's Voices* and 6th – *Looking forward to the 2nd NAP*. These recommendations provide both a road map to support Australia's ongoing implementation of the WPS NAP, while also highlighting areas which have proved consistently resistant to change, whether due to lack of dedicated resources, capacity or meaningful prioritisation and commitment.

The Coalition remains ready and willing to support Government implementing agencies in making progress across these particularly challenging areas and appreciates the constructive process to deliver feedback as facilitated through the annual Dialogues.

A key area of ongoing concern is budgeting for the WPS NAP. In Australia, like elsewhere, funding WPS initiatives remains a critical challenge for implementation.[19] Few NAPs include allocated budgets, further stalling progress on the WPS agenda and calling into question whether WPS is being sufficiently prioritised. Without an allocated budget and specific funds for WPS the transformative potential of WPS NAPs may be undermined. The Coalition reiterates its call for Australia to support its ambitions as a global WPS advocate and leader through the provision of funds for the NAP, as civil society and academics have repeatedly urged over the years.[20]

At the same time, the recommendations in this report and complimentary findings from the Learning Circles and Dialogues continue to provide new insights by shedding light on emerging and under-prioritised issues where Australia should focus its efforts.

As the Dialogue made clear, civil society and other stakeholders expect and are eager to support Australia in increasing its ambition, scope and commitments as part of the second WPS NAP, for instance, in assuming a leadership role in the responding to emerging climate, gender and security threats and in ensuring Australia's WPS policy design and implementation processes prioritise the peace and security of First Nations Peoples, gender diverse people and most-affected communities.

Central to the Coalition's advocacy and accountability role, however, is the availability of timely and relevant feedback on government activities. While the detailed accounts by implementing agencies at the Dialogue shed light on new initiatives and important government implementation progress, the Coalition eagerly awaits the release of the forthcoming 2023 Progress Report and encourages the government to follow the reporting schedule as outlined in the WPS NAP for future reporting commitments.

> "The Coalition reiterates its call for Australia to support its ambitions as a global WPS advocate and leader through the provision of funds for the NAP, as civil society and academics have repeatedly urged over the years."

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19 See: https://www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans_Report_Final_Web.pdf , p. 14, citing: Coomaraswamy et al. Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace, 246; Goldberg, D., A. Fal, E. Kamler, S. Khan, R. Stanger, E.V. Chowdhury, and K. Yzique (2015) 'Global report: Civil society organization (CSO) survey for the Global Study on Women, Peace and Security CSO Perspectives on UNSCR 1325 implementation 15 years after adoption', 62.

20 See: https://www.wpsnaps.org/app/uploads/2020/03/Twenty-Years-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-National-Action-Plans_Report_Final_Web.pdf, p.16

Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021–2031

Aim   Australia will make the most of the transformative potential of the Women, Peace and Security agenda by placing women's meaningful participation at the centre of all our efforts to protect and promote women's and girls' human rights, prevent and resolve conflict, and establish enduring peace.

Principles

A 'do no harm' approach	Gender mainstreaming
A human rights-based approach	Recognising and responding to diverse experiences

Outcomes

1.
Supporting women's meaningful participation and needs in peace processes

Increasing women's participation in conflict prevention

Increasing women's participation in all peace processes

2.
Reducing sexual and gender-based violence

Reducing harmful gender norms

Increasing women and girls' safety and security

Increasing access to justice

3.
Supporting resilience, crisis, and security, law and justice efforts to meet the needs and rights of all women and girls

Security, law and justice responses

Preventing and countering violent extremism

Humanitarian action, stabilisation and disaster management

4.
Demonstrating leadership and accountability for WPS

Australia demonstrates global leadership

Australia demonstrates accountability for results

We will strengthen implementation by:

- increasing women's participation and leadership in the peace and security sector
- building knowledge and capabilities
- using evidence-based approaches
- strengthening our partnership with civil society

Implementation plans are delivered by:

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Department of Defence

Department of Home Affairs

Australian Federal Police

Australian Civil-Military Centre