

## Acknowledgement

*National Council of Women of Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Victoria and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. NCWV pays its respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past, present and emerging.*



**NCWV Website:** <https://ncwvic.org.au/>

This is link for our social media LinkedIn profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-council-of-women-victoria-inc/> Members with a LinkedIn account, can like the page and share content that they feel resonates with them.

**QUOTE:** "We celebrate Australia being brought into being as a nation, peacefully and democratically. ... to create a democracy with fairness and justice ... that gives equal rights to all citizens, supported by free discussion ... and to bring into being a commonwealth that supports the health, education and wellbeing of its citizens and communities ... All the people – people who have been here in this land for longer than we can imagine, people who have come to us from all the lands on earth – who should all enjoy that peaceful democracy. In these times we have clear reasons to unite and be proud. ... On this day we should consider the actions that have and will bring us together – for that is our national opportunity." Her Excellency Prof. the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, Governor of Victoria on Australia Day 2026

## From the President, Elida Brereton



Warm greetings to you all. I wish you all a satisfying and healthy 2026 and hope that this year brings all NCWV Members, Affiliates and friends many enjoyable, relevant, educational and helpful experiences that enrich our lives. Vice-President Pam Hammond and I were invited to represent NCWV at Government House, with others, at an Australia Day reception.

We were introduced to the Governor of Victoria, NCWV Patron. We had a short, positive chat with her, mentioning our delight at her hosting the forthcoming NCWV Women's Health Forum on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.



**NCWV's celebration of Australian Women in Aviation**, many of them pioneers in this male-dominated field, was held in the Pioneer Women's Memorial Garden on Sunday February 1<sup>st</sup>. Our four speakers were all outstanding in both their careers in aviation and their presentations to the 60+ NCWV members, and friends gathered there for the ceremony.

**Adrianne Fleming OAM** introduced her fellow aviators as well as speaking herself. All present felt honoured to hear the stories of these and other brave and accomplished women who succeeded in this challenging profession. **See report p.2**

I want to thank the organisers of this major NCWV annual event, Pam Hammond and Ronniel Milliken, for their hard work. I thank June Anderson for providing the sound system, and Guosheng Chen for organising the wonderful children's choir and opera singer Ms Yu. I thank Elisabeth Newman AM for the lovely Australian native flowers, laid at the NCWV plaque, and I thank members who signed us in and greeted us, all who brought food to share, and all who assisted with the physical setting up and pulling down ---especially the hardworking men related to Pam, Ronniel, Cassandra and Irene, as well as the Hammond photographers! Thank you all who came to this beautiful but quite hidden setting.

**Sarah Barnbrook** continues to receive international and national invitations to speak around the world and we are extremely proud of her and appreciate her hard work for NCWV. Her field of work is highly relevant to young people in particular, to carers, to women, and to all of us. **See report p.7**

**Dr Deborah Towns OAM** is working hard as author and editor of our NCWV publication featuring brief biographies of notable women, born in Victoria or working/worked here across their lifespan, who have made a difference in health. The working party for this compilation has been meeting regularly. This book will be unique in its approach and contents and will be a professionally produced resource available to purchase by us and people far beyond NCWV.

The **NCWV Women's Health Forum** being hosted at Government House by Her Excellency on **Tuesday March 3<sup>rd</sup>** will be attended by guests invited by Government House only, NCWV has nominated up to 100 people with the speakers chosen and invited by Dr Cassandra Szoek, our Health Adviser. The event should be a major promotion of NCWV and of health issues faced by women and what needs to be done, especially via government funding and priorities of health departments. I thank Cassandra and the working group that has been assisting her with this event.

**Robyn Byrne OAM, Convenor of Standing Committees** was my proxy at the recent NCWA Board Strategy Meeting. She was an asset with her sharing of specialised knowledge she possesses about certain policies and processes.

**New Members** are always welcome and it is pleasing that we have quite a few names of women interested in joining NCWV and in contributing to our endeavours. Please invite women who will be good members and to whom we can offer friendship and involvement that benefit women and girls particularly, to consider applying for membership.

See website: <https://ncwvic.org.au/membership.html>

At the start of another year I thank you for your loyalty and for your attendance at our monthly meetings, because we need as many informed and wise contributors to our work as possible. Please make sure that our monthly **Newsletter**, produced so faithfully by our editor Pam Hammond, is distributed as widely as possible.



## **NCWV Annual Pioneer Women's Ceremony 2026 Sunday February 1<sup>st</sup>, 11:00am, at the Pioneer Women's Memorial Garden, King's Domain .**

**Celebrating Pioneer Women in Aviation:**

***Let's Add Some Pink in Aviation.***

We celebrated the achievements of the Australian women who have contributed to the development of the industry. Women played an important role in the founding of Australia's aviation industry and continue to do so, as we heard. Speakers were:

## **Captain Deborah Lawrie AM (formerly Wardley).**



Deborah currently flies with Virgin Australia. She was inducted into the Victorian Honor Roll of Women in 2001, received the Master Air Pilot award in 2017 and was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2019 and in 2022 inducted into the Australian Aviation Hall of Fame.

In 2023 Sydney Airport named, in her honour, a flyover connecting International and Domestic terminals. At the opening Captain Lawrie said *"If someone had said to me way back when I was 25, taking on Ansett in the High Court to become a commercial airline pilot, that one day there would be a flyover into Sydney Airport named after me, I would have thought they were mad"*.

**Fight for Flight:** Deborah Lawrie learned to fly at the age of 16 after her father took up flying as a hobby when she was 14. For her 16th birthday, he offered her two flying lessons. Deb hated the first lesson. As a teenager in a dress, the aircraft seat configuration/ adjustments weren't designed with women or girls in mind, and she quickly realised that flying was far harder than it looked. Despite this, she took a second lesson. Going solo was considered the pinnacle of flying, and Deb decided she had to achieve it to prove—to herself—that she could do it.

Because she had to pay for further lessons herself, Deb worked multiple jobs and could only afford one lesson per month. After 11 lessons, spread across 11 months, she flew solo.

Deborah went on to teach flying at Moorabbin Airport while also working as a school teacher. She had a science degree and effectively ran two careers in parallel. Eventually, she realised she needed to stop teaching and commit to flying full time if she was to become an airline pilot like those she was training.

At the time, she was repeatedly told she was wasting her time and would never be hired as an airline pilot. She was encouraged to be "happy with what she had" at Moorabbin. It was particularly frustrating to see many of the men she trained move on into airline roles. When Deborah finally secured an interview with senior airline captains, she was asked how many babies she planned to have and who would look after them. The concern was that she would leave the job. She was sent for psychological testing—a sign she had progressed far into the interview process—and was rated as "highly recommended." Despite this, she was rejected.

Deborah's fiancé at the time, pointed out that new Equal Opportunity legislation had been introduced in Victoria. Fay Marles AM, Victoria's first Equal Opportunity Commissioner, raised the issue with Sir Reginald Ansett, who reportedly stated: *no woman would ever set foot in one of his aircraft*. Deb was warned that pursuing legal action could be unpleasant.



The court case lasted more than a year and reached the High Court, as it involved federal law. The High Court ruled that Victoria's law prevailed. Deborah flew for Ansett for 10 years. Even after this decision, some within the profession continued efforts to force her out.

After the pilots' strike in 1989, Deb took up a position with KLM, in the Netherlands, relocating with her 22-month-old son. She rebuilt her career there over 16 years, also working as a flight safety investigator and serving on numerous international aviation committees—roles she continues today alongside flying. When her son reached Year 12, Deb returned home, worked for Jetstar, based in Christchurch, returned to Australia with Tigerair, where she became a Check and Training Captain, a role she loved.

When COVID hit, Tigerair shut down and Deb lost her job. She transitioned into the Virgin seniority group. In 2022, after not flying for two and a half years and just 300 hours short of 20,000 total flying hours, Virgin offered her work. She travelled to Italy for six weeks of training. During this time, a 34-year-old male trainee pilot told her, *"You have no idea how much value you add,"* a comment she described as a deeply meaningful endorsement.

Deborah also shared examples of gender-based exclusion throughout her career, including being deliberately excluded from sharing a taxi by a senior captain while travelling with a group of male pilots. She was once invited to an annual retirement dinner that had historically been men-only, with no wives or partners present. That evening, she was the only woman among 250 men. Senior pilots invited her to join their table and welcomed her warmly,

Today, women make up approximately 8% of pilots at Virgin, 7.5% at Qantas, similarly globally. Captain Lawrie, aged 72, is the longest-serving female pilot in the World.

**Kathy Mexted is the author of two books on Australian women who fly.** Her first book features 10 Australian women who fly fixed wing aeroplanes. This begins with Nancy Bird in the 1930s, through to the modern day. It includes a chapter on Deborah Lawrie's time fighting for the right to fly with a major Australian airline, winning the battle against Sir Reginald Ansett in the High Court. Kathy discussed two early Australian women who flew and inspired generations to come.

**Early Inspiration:** Kathy was in Year 12 when Deborah's court case was happening in 1979. She only knew one other pilot, her tall and rather forbidding school librarian. Ansett was giving Deb a hard time, and the librarian was giving Kathy a hard time, so the only real flying influence she had was local flights with her Dad in his four-seat Archer, and some hair-raising experiences with crop duster pilots. Growing up in Finley in the Riverina hearing the sound of the agriculture planes taking off for work at 5am reverberated around the tiny town at dawn.

Her Dad handed her the controls one day saying *"You seem to be enjoying that. If you wanna learn to fly, I'll pay for it..."* *"I'd only just learnt to crash the ute so I didn't think I should be in charge of an aeroplane."*



Kathy was working in Singapore RAAF when a friend suggested she join the Air Force. *"Excitedly I suggested they could teach me to fly"* and for a few seconds he shared that joy, then his face dropped and he said, almost as though he couldn't believe it either, *"Oh. They don't have any women pilots"*.

Kathy put it on the back burner coming back to it in 1991 when her Dad graciously allowed her to pay for it! She got her private pilot's licence. Unlike the other three speakers, Kathy did not pursue a commercial career because she felt it was too late. She graduated with one other woman and 25 men.

By the time Mexted wrote *Australian Women Pilots*, five years ago, CASA informed her that there were about 31,000 licensed Australian pilots of which about 2,000 were women.

When considering who to include, Kathy felt it was important to go right back to the beginning — to Nancy Bird — arguably one of the most well-known Australian Aviatrixes, and to explain who she was and why we cared. The short answer is that Nancy was the 11<sup>th</sup> Australian woman to get a commercial licence and the first one to use it since 1930s.

There were others around at the same time and in 1950 they formed the Australian Women Pilots Association (AWPA), with Nancy at the helm, who actively encouraged women to fly all her life, she was ahead of her time. Nancy's legacy and good work served to assist those who followed, including Kathy.

Both the publishers and Kathy were surprised at the level of interest in the book, both from older readers, and particularly the younger women coming through the ranks now. *It's important to share these stories and to let the younger ones know that they're not alone.* Kathy said

She needed to be strategic, to write an inspiring yarn without creating a fairytale, to write about women right through to the modern day, to span the generations, the types of flying they did, and the geography of the country.

Kathy knew she had to include Nancy. She was the first female pilot in New Guinea in the 1950s. There were engine failures, forced landings, headhunters and guns. She was 88 when she told this yarn, Kathy was so glad she was there to hear it.

While Nancy was flying in the outback during the 1930s, **Lores Bonney** flew herself to England and then to South Africa. **Freda Thompson**, a Melbourne girl who went to school in Toorak, saw an aeroplane fly over the houses. In 1934 she hopped into her open cockpit wood and fabric biplane, with one small bag and a thermos of water, and flew herself solo from England to Australia in ten-hour hops.

*"I reckon about 20 minutes is long enough in one of those things!"* said Kathy.

During the war she was involved with various women's military corps and after the war circumnavigated Australia and flew up to New Guinea. Freda was a champion pilot with 47 trophies from aerobatics and derbies. And although she never sought a commercial career, she championed those who did, right up to the day of Deb flying in the Freda Thompson annual Women-only Race Around the Bay. Freda lived until her 80s and was a visible presence at Moorabbin for the next girls.

**Mardi Gething** was hot on the heels of these women. She was born in Melbourne, went to England as an 18-year-old to be presented at court. She convinced her father to forget about that and divert the funds to a British aero club - she ditched a date with the King of England to take flying lessons!

A few years later she was one of only 166 women who flew with the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) during World War 2. This group would collect new aircraft from the factories, which were usually on the coast of England, and fly them to the safety of the camouflaged air bases inland.

While fighter pilots only fly one type of aeroplane at a time, the ATA pilots had to fly anything from a basic trainer up to a heavy bomber or flying boat. They had no armaments or radios, and so they relied on a basic map and their knowledge of the countryside. It was dangerous and difficult work, and three years after she passed away, all the remaining ATA members were invited to Downing Street to receive a special veterans medal. During her two years with ATA she ferried 42 different types of aeroplane on around 600 flights.

Back in Australia, she was recognised for her outstanding achievements in gliding as an instructor and a record breaker. Surprisingly, despite her achievements during WW2, it took another 43 years for the Australian Air Force to allow women pilots, which Kathy suspects was in part forced by Deb Wardley's 1980 High Court victory.

### **Davida Forshaw, Director, National Board for Women in Aviation Aerospace**



Davida has spent her career balancing the high-stakes world of the flight deck with a deep interest in leadership and people. Her journey began in 1979 at Moorabbin Airport, where she started flying aged 16. As one of Australia's first female jet pilots, she has flown aircraft from majestic B747 Jumbo, Airbus A330 to the magnificent Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

Davida is also a passionate advocate for the advancement of young women in the aviation industry, as their participation is crucial for the future of the field. She is dedicated to amplifying the stories of women who break barriers, a mission exemplified by her work with the short

film *Breaking Glass*, which achieved the Gold Screen Award at the *Cannes Young Directors Festival*.

**Breaking Glass:** In her address, Davida highlighted the persistent gender gap in the aviation industry where female representation has remained stagnant at just 6% for decades, despite significant progress in other high-stakes fields like medicine and space exploration. She debunks myths regarding women's interest or suitability for flight by showcasing the legacy of pioneers like Nancy Bird-Walton and the thousands of women who applied for the [Women Airforce Service Pilots \(WASP\) program](#) (1942–1944) in World War 2.

Davida proposed a cultural shift from the individualistic *Maverick* archetype toward a collaborative approach inspired by Nancy Bird-Walton's meticulous planning and high emotional intelligence. Davida argued that these *feminine* traits are actually *essential, hard safety skills* required for modern Threat and Error Management. Ultimately, she framed diversity as an existential business necessity for an industry facing a massive pilot shortage, calling for an aviation culture that recognises women as pilots in their own right.

### **Adrianne Fleming OAM, Pilot and Head of Operations and CASA Flight Examiner for Tristar Aviation,**

Adrianne has held various state and national positions in the Australian Women Pilots' Association, encouraging women to pursue their aviation dreams. She received the 2012 Nancy Bird-Walton Award for the most noteworthy contribution to aviation in Australasia, and the Order of Australia Honour for services to the Aviation industry in 2016.

**How Far We've Come:** What is the definition of a pioneer? A FIRST, a person who applies a new method and creates a new pathway, changes how people think and view something. We have heard from and about some of those women today. One other common thread is Moorabbin Airport, it has seen thousands of take-offs, but some of the most important journeys have happened quietly on the ground- especially for the women in aviation.

Adrianne dreamed of becoming a pilot from the age of 6. There were no aviators in her family or circle of friends only aeroplanes flying overhead and a dream to fly. Until one day when she saw on the news that a woman pilot was fighting a man for the right to fly for his company. This piqued her interest and riled her sense of justice. Now you know the story, but at the time, all she could do was gather the morning and afternoon newspapers for updates on the case. She asked her mother "*What if I want to be a pilot and they won't let me fly their aeroplanes*" Her response "*I am sure they will have changed rules by then but if not, we'll fight them too*" That one sentence made everything possible. The dream could happen. Adrianne's first flight was to Ireland to visit relatives, a very long flight with lots of take offs and landings, which cemented her resolve to be a pilot. At 13yrs, I saved some money to take a joy flight in a Cessna 172.

Adrianne calling her grandfather, was met with "*What do you want?*" She said "*I have booked us a joy flight this afternoon but you will need to drive us to Moorabbin airport.*"



That day she promised him that when she became a pilot he would be her first passenger (she did so 8 years later)

School wasn't that much fun, as she was that strange girl who wanted to be a pilot. School reports were littered with '*Adrianne has the tendency to daydream*', little did they know it was likely because there was an aeroplane flying overhead and she was thinking about flying it.

Roll forward to the end of secondary school, Adrianne studied maths and physics like all the books said was needed to be a pilot. It came to the part of the year when you are required to fill in a preference card for university. There were no pilot courses so she left the card blank. The Year 12 coordinator and vice principal of the school called Adrianne to her desk, explaining that she needed to fill in the preference card for university. Her response was that she didn't want to go to university. She asked what was it that Adrianne wanted to do? She said become a pilot.

Well! She let out a sigh and said "*Oh, you must mean air hostess as women aren't pilots*". Adrianne couldn't believe what she was hearing, this was considered a progressive girls school and where had she been, as Deborah Lawrie had been flying for the major airlines for over 8 years. Needless to say, she was not discouraged by this, she was probably even more determined.

After school Adrianne needed money and time to learn to fly so enrolled in fire technology- she knew firefighters had 2 days on 2 days off and 10 weeks annual leave. This was a huge lesson in how male dominated industries work. Adrianne was the only woman and the first female to graduate. She landed a role as a flight data officer in the Melbourne ATC radar centre. Her first pay cheque took her to Moorabbin airport to have her first flying lesson.

Over 40 years earlier, **Beth Garret**, took her first flying lesson at Moorabbin Airport. She worked as a secretary and saved her money for flying lessons. Flying was her priority, she was very frugal, so she bought a suit from the Myer bargain basement which she wore to work each day for three years. She completed her Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) and became a flight instructor and the first woman in Australia to hold an Airline Transport Pilot Licence. She worked for a commuter airline called Southern Airlines. In later years she became the first female pilot for the Royal Flying Doctor Service finishing her flying career at the Cairns base.

Moorabbin Airport has been part of many aviator stories and is as important now as it was then to the creation of pilots and flight training. Just over a quarter of commercial pilots in Australia train out of that airport. After gaining her CPL, she completed flight instructor training, the same year as she and her husband founded their flight training school at Moorabbin and she gave birth to their first son. By the time her second child arrived, she was well practised at managing a business and breast feeding between flights.



Ronnieth, Adrianne, Amy Crevola (past trainee), Julie Stevens

Adrianne looked back on those times as just she did. It was not until a couple of years after her third child was born she had a female pilot come up to her with her 3 year old and thanked Adrianne for being such a great role model, as there were now many working pilot mothers. Progress happens when one woman showing up matters more than we think, making it easier for the next. In 36 years flying much has changed.

A young girl growing up who wants to be a pilot need only google and find organisations such as the Australian Women Pilot's Association, founded by Nancy Bird-Walton. Adrianne said: "*I am fortunate to have known Nancy, but my coming across the organisation was by chance as I heard her interviewed on the radio. Nancy advocated for women and for aviation both of which I hold close to my own heart. Many of our lives have been shaped for the better because this one woman decided to set up the Women Pilots' Association*"

Back to the girl with the dream to fly. Today we have aviation high schools, there's Girls in Aviation, Cool Aeronautics, Girls Engineering in the Skies, Open cockpit days, many career events now that feature aviation and pilot training. Multiple scholarships through AWPAA <https://awpa.org.au/scholarships-awards/> and WAI, Programs at school where there is an introduction to flying. VET Aviation at school where students can learn to fly in years 11 and 12, or they can complete that university preference card to go to university where there are HECs places for degree courses including a commercial pilot licence, or cadet pilot programs with extra sponsorship for women and flight school programs, so they don't need to be quite as frugal as Beth and wear the same outfit for 3 years. Opportunities are out there and up for the taking.

Adrianne ended saying "*We have come a long way and I am grateful for those women who have gone before to help make my path a little smoother and I hope I too may have done my small part in that also. But we are not at 50% and I don't know if we will ever be, but it is worth the try. I tell a story in my book about a student wishing to be a pilot and when she approached the teacher, the teacher says you need to join the Airforce. This is a great, rather than why do you want to do that. **We as adults need to ensure that we become enablers not inhibitors**". "When I look down the end of the Moorabbin runway today, I see possibilities, the future is bright, but we must remain engaged and ensure we empower those that dream to fly".*

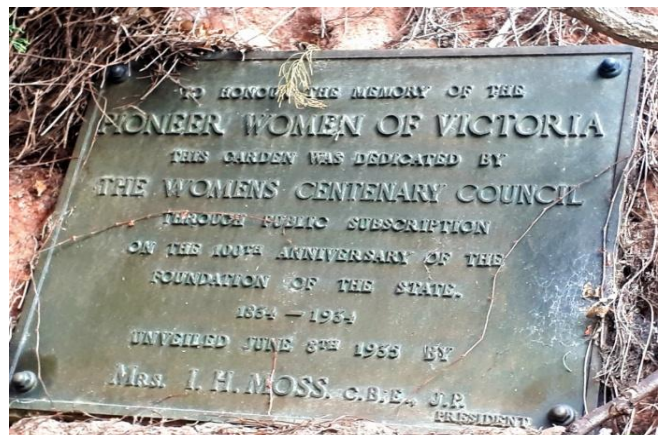




Kathy Mexted, Adrienne Fleming, Deborah Lawrie, Davida Forshaw Speakers with Vice-President Pam H and President Elida



Official Party placing Australian Native flowers, supplied by Elisabeth, near the commemorative plaque on the left of the Grotto



During our ceremony, our videographer received an urgent call to get back to the ZOO as Iris, the Giraffe had gone into labour! Next day the announcement: **Melbourne Zoo has welcomed another male giraffe calf.** First-time mum Iris and dad Klintun have welcomed their (not so) little one, making this the second giraffe born at the zoo in almost 20 years.



## NCWV February Council Meeting, Ross House, Flinders Lane & ZOOM, 12:15pm. 5 Feb. 2026

**Speaker: Sarah Barnbrook, Human Rights, Youth, ICT and Communications NCWV Adviser, and the Founder and CEO of Away From Keyboard Inc.**



Sarah is an international award-winning advocate, and an accredited United Nations delegate. Her work sits at the intersection of technology, human rights, and gender equality, focusing on preventing digital harm and promoting ethical, human-centred innovation.

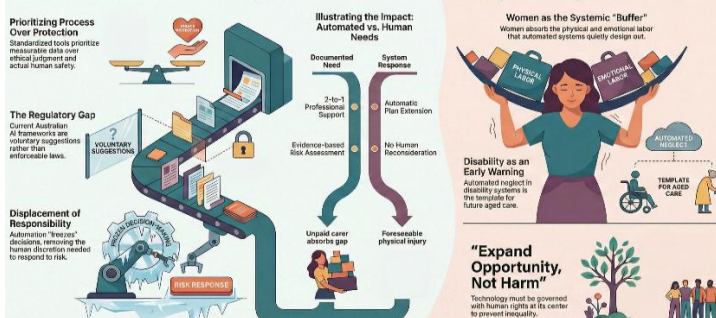
### ***Hidden Costs to Women of Automation in Care Systems***

Sarah explored growing concerns about how automated and standardised assessment tools in the NDIS are shifting risk and responsibility onto women, particularly unpaid carers, whose bodies, health, and labour are quietly absorbing system failure. While currently used in disability support, these tools reflect a broader trend toward automation in social and care systems, raising serious questions about dignity, safety, accountability, and women's rights. I-CAN (Instrument for the Classification of Support Needs) is, in theory a tool to collect functional capacity information and ensure consistency, in reality it prioritises what can be easily measured over what is actually required. It determines what level of support is 'reasonable' before a human planner is even engaged!

The impact is that human discretion is not considered when calculating risks. Sarah quoted her own experience with high needs family members. The NDIS support was one carer when two were required, so she needed to 'fill the gap' putting herself in physical/emotional harm and she now has a permanent injury. Evidence was provided that there needed to be two carers, but human discretion was removed from appeal and plan was automatically extended without change, prioritising cost containment. Sarah was not requesting additional support because caring is difficult, but because it is medically unsafe.

#### **The Hidden Cost of Automation: How Technology Shifts the Burden of Care onto Women**

##### **The Problem: Automation Over Advocacy**



Often unpaid carers (usually women) absorb the physical and emotional load that automated systems design out. Reliance on unpaid carers is unsustainable, medically unsafe, places people at risk of harm & economic security.

Technology must be governed with human rights at its centre to prevent inequality.

Sarah recommended a Carer Forum to hear I-CAN and automated systems experiences with written, audio/video, and live participation. Members are invited to consider whether NCWV has a role in listening first to women carrying this burden and shaping a response that recognises emerging technology as something that can entrench inequality when care, complexity, and human judgment are designed.

Sarah also recommended that NCWV establish an advisory role that includes a Carer and a Disability Adviser portfolio.

Response needs to come from Carer Forum evidence, NCWV analysis prior to public advocacy, to demonstrate that we view this as a human rights concern, not a technical inconvenience.



Some attendees at the Council Meeting, ZOOM and Ross House

### **IWD 2026 Women's Health Panel, 3 March, 5 – 7.30pm**

The Governor of Victoria, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, is hosting the NCWV at Government House where there will be a panel of eminent women working in women's health, an invitation only event. NCWV acknowledges the significant advances in focus on women's health since the 2020-2030 National Women's Health Policy was launched in 2020 setting out five pillars

- Reproductive health (female preponderant conditions),
- Mums & Babies,
- Mental Health in Women,
- Chronic Diseases in Women and
- Healthy Ageing

Through our expert members we have made submissions to Senate Inquiries into *Pain in Women* and on *Perimenopause*. Australia includes a number of recognised world leaders in women's health. NCWV members include the Victorian Medical Women's Society, AMWF, AMA etc..

The event will be videoed, then played at an event at RMIT, date will be confirmed. We are also developing a publication **'Leaders in Women Health'**.

**NCWV March Council Meeting, Ross House, 5 March, 5:15pm and by ZOOM. **NOTE the time.****

**Our Speaker: Kerry Pell - *Navigating Life After Prison***

Kerry Pell in 2009, while employed as an engineer, volunteered with Prison Network (PN) at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, Victoria's maximum-security women's prison. PN has journeyed with women in and beyond prison for nearly 80 years. They provide support, fostering courage to help them navigate positive pathways. Kerry initially assisted with a weekly art and craft program - a creative space where women rebuild confidence, identity and connection.

Meeting women in custody, hearing their stories and, at times, supporting them after release disrupted her career plans. A growing passion for people doing life tough, led her to complete a Master of Social Work at RMIT in 2014. Teaching in secure settings (Thomas Embling Hospital, Parkville Youth Justice and Metropolitan Remand Centre) as well as work with St Kilda Gatehouse - supporting women reliant on street-based sex-work confirmed her desire to work with people on the margins of society



After graduation, Kerry worked in residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation before returning to Prison Network as a Senior Support Worker and later a board member.

In 2016, she contributed to the development of Stable One's Winter Shelter program, which uses church buildings and volunteers to provide meals, companionship and shelter for people experiencing homelessness. The model has since been replicated in 12 locations across Australia. In 2020, Kerry became the Executive Officer of Whitehorse Churches Care uniting churches to respond together to local needs.

A highlight was creating a community space in Forest Hill Chase shopping centre, staffed by 100 volunteers and offering groups such as art, music and language classes. Over 400 people use the space each week. In the 2025 survey, the majority of respondents reported increased social connection and improved mental health since engaging with the space.

Kerry now works as the Impact and Engagement Coordinator for Prison Network as well as Community Engagement Coordinator for Ashburton Baptist Church. **We look forward to seeing you and friends on 5 March, 5:00pm, Ross House**

## **ADVISER NEWS**

**Environment Adviser - Pam Robinson AM**

**New Year with an Environmental Focus**

For a Happy New Year with an environmental focus, action-orientated commitments are called for. Actions that emphasize protecting the planet, promoting sustainability, and taking eco-friendly actions like reducing waste, increasing recycling and pledging to protect biodiversity, restore habitats and fight climate change.

On the 6 January the most current **Climate Council** Newsletter came out. The Climate Council is funded by tax-deductible donations from the public, philanthropic foundations and major donors remaining 100% independent and receiving no government funding for its core work. The Council is made up of eminent members who have a range of expertise and provide science-based information. The focus of the January missive was from Climate Council Councillor, Greg Mullins AO, AFSM, former Commissioner of Fire & Rescue NSW, and regarding fires – fires in urban and rural areas, locations with urban bushland interface. I recommend you have a read. <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/resources/experts-sound-alarm-for-australia-on-urban-fire-risk-like-la/>

**Devastating Fires in Victoria**



Victoria has in the past few weeks recorded very high temperatures – highest in some places ever and other places highest for many, many years. The veracity of fires has been part of climate change discussions over many years, knowing such speed and heat would never have been experienced before. Sadly, this scenario has come to pass. Indeed, We know many of the locations that have been destroyed, whether by times lived in the areas hardest hit or when visiting. As a former CFA Volunteer my heart goes out to what crews are facing. Brigades crewed by locals, those who are facing frightening and dangerous conditions, some of whom have been fighting fires only to come home to find their property ravaged.



Very sadly, multiple fires have devastated many in several locations across the State: loss of their homes, sheds, livestock, businesses, as well as loss of loved wildlife and native vegetation. Many plantings that individuals and groups such as Landcare have planted over many years, are gone. The terms 'Leave' or 'Take Shelter' are a call out as fires tear through more locations. You will all be following the News.

As the NCWV Environment Adviser, I wish to convey our deepest sympathy to all who are living through various losses by the current devastating fires and whilst you need us to stay away at this time, know we are thinking about you all and we will ensure that we support you in whatever way we can in the days and months ahead. Whether through organisations we already belong to or where we hear of a 'call out' for support.

During 2026 there are various specific days that we can participate in, days that provide a chance to be part of and meet new people – days that go beyond what we can individually undertake to do with our own personal commitment. Here are three early in the year days of action that we can join, and there are many local sites in our municipalities.

**February 14** National Regenerative Agricultural Day [+national regenerative agricultural day 2026 dates - Search](#) (where farmers, foodies and families come together to raise awareness around regenerative agriculture and the benefits of helping heal the land and our waterways)

**March 1** Clean Up Australia Day ... for locations see <https://www.cleanup.org.au/>

**March 28** Earth Hour (Lights off for an hour during 8.30pm and 9.30pm). In its 20<sup>th</sup> year. <https://www.earthhour.org.au/>

**Global Landcare:** Late 2025, I attended on Zoom the Annual General Meeting of Global Landcare. Landcare, started in Victoria (1986) developed into a National Landcare driven program in 1989. Over the past 15 years plus, through wonderful support of many people who have volunteered their skills, time and finance have developed Landcare in several countries. Those who, with their institutions and students, have participated and learnt from Landcare in Australia. It was wonderful to see in the 'All Welcome' Zoom, we had listed: 4.30pm - Melbourne; 8.30am – Uganda and Kenya; 10.30am - Pakistan; 11.30am – Bangladesh; 3.30pm – Brisbane; 5.30pm Suva, Fiji; 6.30pm – Auckland.

Like our National Council of Women Australia, with our branches, Landcare is also developing wonderful international relationships – all of whom know such connections assist with achieving global wellbeing, understanding and support for world peace. <https://globallandcare.org/>

## Education Adviser: Pam Hammond

The International Day of Women and Girls in Science, celebrated annually on **February 11**, recognises the critical role women and girls play in science and technology. Established by the UN General Assembly in 2015, this day promotes full, equal access to, and participation in, STEM fields for women and girls to advance gender equality.

On this day, we acknowledge **Professor Lidia Morawska, Queensland University of Technology physicist** and internationally renowned air quality expert who was awarded Australia's top prize for scientific research. She received the coveted [\\$250,000 Prime Minister's Prize for Science for her pioneering work](#) in the study of air quality, which provided vital insight during the Covid-19 pandemic. Lidia's research was recognised for redefining the science of air quality and reshaped policy advice to improve how the world mitigates health risks of air pollution.

**Mrs Paula Taylor, Assistant Director at the Academy of Future Skills, ACT Education Directorate**, was awarded the Prime Minister's Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Primary School for her role in transforming STEM education in ACT. She worked with more than 10,000 students and 480 classroom teachers, bringing real-life learning experiences that engage students of all abilities and inspire a lifelong passion for science.

## The HomePlate Project

For many older Australians, eating well isn't just about what's on the plate, it's about navigating daily challenges.

The HomePlate Project is listening to older Australians living at home who are sharing their lived experiences and practical insights to making eating at home easier and more enjoyable.

If you want to get involved, sign up to our Newsletter! The Pantry Post. Press Release:

<https://maggiebeerfoundation.org.au/homeplateproject/>

<https://maggiebeerfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Maggie-Beer-Foundation-Launches-The-HomePlate-Project-to-Improve-Food-and-Well-being-for-Older-Australians-Living-at-Home.pdf>

## Human Rights | Youth | ICT | Communications Adviser: Sarah Barnbrook

### Women-led global collaboration on internet harms includes NCWV: Strengthening local advocacy through international leadership and human rights expertise

In December, Sarah Barnbrook, Human Rights and Technology Adviser to the National Council of Women of Victoria (NCWV), was invited by Ann Davison, National President of the National Council of Women of Great Britain, to participate in an international research group focused on addressing internet harms.

The first meeting, held on 12 December, brought together women leaders and senior experts from around the world, spanning medical, academic, safeguarding, legal, political, and consumer fields. The group shared evidence, lived experience, and solutions, agreeing that the online environment must be addressed as a public health, safeguarding, legal, and consumer protection issue.

The discussions reinforced the importance of women-led expertise in shaping safer digital environments. Participants highlighted how online abuse and misogyny limit women's participation in public life, while under-regulation and excessive screen exposure affect children's wellbeing and development. At the same time, the meeting was forward-looking, focused on prevention, accountability, and practical pathways for reform.

Following the meeting, Sarah Barnbrook submitted a statement drawing on both policy expertise and lived experience. Her contribution emphasised how vulnerability compounds risk for women and children online, the growing prevalence of technology-facilitated gender-based violence and coercive control, and the importance of designing digital systems that prioritise safety, dignity, and wellbeing. This work directly informs NCWV's advocacy in Victoria, strengthening our ability to respond to emerging digital risks with clarity and authority.

Building on this momentum, Ann Davison has invited international collaborators to assist in organising a high-level international seminar on Commonwealth action against internet harms, to be hosted at Marlborough House in London. Proposed for April or May, the seminar aims to support coordinated action across Commonwealth nations to improve regulation, strengthen safeguards, and hold technology platforms accountable.

In addition, Penny Rankin, National President of the National Council of Women of Canada, has requested a meeting with Sarah Barnbrook during her upcoming visit to Canada. This meeting will further strengthen international relationships and knowledge-sharing, ensuring NCWV remains connected to global best practice while advocating for local solutions.

These engagements reflect NCWV's growing influence in global conversations on internet harms and ensure that international learning directly informs local advocacy in Victoria. By contributing to policy discussions beyond Australia and bringing those insights back to NCWV, Sarah Barnbrook supports more informed, effective advocacy for safer online environments and stronger protections for women and girls. This work helps ensure that emerging technologies are addressed through a human rights lens, strengthening equality, safety, and inclusion for communities across Victoria.

## OTHER NEWS

### Trust for Nature, February Newsletter

We've heard directly from many of the landholders impacted by the devastating fires – including some who have spent decades caring for some of the state's most vulnerable ecosystems.

**Sadly, we have now learned that the number of conservation covenants impacted by the fires this month has risen to 55. And across Victoria, more than 132 registered private land conservation sites, a Trust for Nature reserve and up to 100 properties registered through Land for Wildlife.**

On Friday 9 January, around 160 hectares of Fiona Murdoch's (Mallee Conservation) 500-hectare conservation covenant southeast of Mildura burned. *"We've got trees hundreds of years old that have burned. It's irreplaceable,"* Fiona told us. The fires damaged 4 km of the electric fence, destroyed 53 hectares of revegetation, and burnt critical habitat for the endangered Mallee Bronze Azure Butterfly. Fiona's story is one example of what so many landholders are facing right now. These are incredible places, cared for by people who devote their lives to protecting nature. We are raising funds to support them. Every dollar raised in our [Bushfire Recovery Appeal](#) will go directly to landholders for habitat recovery.



The impact of the fires on biodiversity is wide-reaching:

- Around half of Victoria's threatened species have had important habitat burnt by these fires.
- It's estimated almost 100 species have had substantial areas of their habitat affected, including some critically endangered plants and animals that are only found in these unique places, which have been burnt.

*Image: Mallee Conservation*



## Aboriginal Honour Roll

## Media Release

The State Government is celebrating nine outstanding First Nations leaders inducted into the Victorian Aboriginal Honour Roll, inspiring Victorians with their dedication, service and fierce determination.

In a special ceremony held at Melbourne's Arts Centre, community members gathered alongside Minister for Treaty and First Peoples Natalie Hutchins to celebrate the newest inductees and their lasting impact on communities across the state. This year's inductees represent a rich cross-section of Victorian First Peoples including cultural mentors, a broadcaster, a health advocate, community workers, a basketball coach, and a champion for reconciliation and Treaty.

The nine inductees are:

- Uncle Ricky Graham Baldwin
- Aunty Lou Baulch
- Aunty Iris Bysouth
- Uncle Shane Charles
- Uncle Dennis Fisher
- Aunty Faye Lynam (posthumous)
- Bevan and Letty Nicholls (posthumous)
- Uncle Harry Stewart

Since 2011, the Honour Roll has recognised 158 First Nations people for their achievements across diverse fields including health, education, justice, sport, the arts, community leadership and military service.

The Honour Roll acknowledges the influence of First Nations leaders who have helped create a fairer and better place for all Victorians and provides a platform to celebrate their cultures, languages and excellence.

## Boost To Victoria's Plastic Recycling Capacity

## Media Release

More of Victoria's hard-to-recycle plastics, including soft plastics, will be diverted from landfill and transformed into new products, following a \$4 million investment by the Federal Government, and industry. Four new projects will build the capacity and capability of Victoria's resource recovery sector by increasing plastics recycling by 16,700 tonnes annually. These projects will boost jobs in the Victorian circular economy. The four projects receiving funding are:

- Pact Recycling (Cheltenham) – The bagMUSTER project will recover and recycle bags used to transport seed, fertiliser, pesticides and stockfeed.
- APR (Dandenong) – The soft plastic sorting capacity upgrade will use an infra-red process from Norway to improve sorting and recycling capability including for end-of-life soft plastics.
- Australian Soft Plastics Recycling (Pakenham) – The upgrade to facilities will improve the recycling of low-density polyethylene films, such as pallet wrap collected from supermarket warehouses, by increasing processing capacity and improving the quality of the recycled material.
- RE4ORM (Barnawartha) Facility upgrade will recover low-density plastics for use in manufacturing recycled products.

The \$4 million government investment includes \$1.75 million each from the Victorian Government and Australian Government through the Recycling Modernisation Fund (RMF).

The RMF is supporting states and territories in a one-off boost to Australia's capacity to sort, process and remanufacture waste glass, plastic, tyres, paper and cardboard.

The Australian Government is investing over \$200 million in new and upgraded recycling infrastructure through the RMF, contributing towards \$1 billion of investment with states, territories and industry.

Including these four projects, the RMF is supporting 27 projects in Victoria with \$79 million in joint funding, including \$44.7 million from the Australian Government and \$34.3 million from the Victorian Government.

The projects are expected to add 328,000 tonnes of recycling capacity each year and see \$226.5 million invested in recycling infrastructure in the state.

Round 6 of the Recycling Modernisation Fund will make a further \$4 million in joint funding available to businesses, social enterprises, not-for-profit organisations and local government organisations to further build the capacity and divert waste from landfill into the circular economy.

**Applications close 1 July 2026 or once funding is fully allocated.**

The Australian Government is increasing recycling capacity in Australia by more than 1.4 million tonnes every year while creating over 3300 ongoing and construction jobs, including more than 500 in Victoria.



Dear friends and community,

Early January Victorian multicultural and multifaith leaders came together with the Premier of Victoria, the Hon Jacinta Allan, to stand united against hate and violence. This powerful moment of solidarity sends a clear message: We stand together as one and our communities will not be divided.

Planning is well underway for [Cultural Diversity Week \(CDW\)](#), taking place from 21 to 29 March under the theme *Culture Connects Us All*. The theme reminds us of the power of intercultural exchange to foster understanding, learning and connection. To support your involvement, we've developed a [CDW Stakeholder Kit](#). The kit includes event ideas, promotional tools and guidance on registering your activities.

In the lead-up to Cultural Diversity Week, we'll be featuring a selection of inspiring initiatives shared by community members through [VMConnect](#). If you're planning something special to mark the week, I encourage you to register your event on [VMConnect](#). We'd love to highlight your contribution in future EDMs and inspire others to get involved.

Kind regards, Vivienne, Chair VMC

**Vivienne looks forward to seeing many at community events, particularly at the Lunar New Year celebrations, throughout the first few weeks of February.**



## CDW 2026 – Join the Digital Competition

**From 21 to 29 March**, VMC invites you to bring this year's theme ***Culture connects us all*** to life by creating a short video that showcases how you're learning, celebrating or connecting with another culture.

Your video could feature cooking a cultural dish, learning a new word or phrase, participating in a tradition, or sharing a personal reflection. Be creative and authentic. There are prizes to be won.

Videos should be 30 to 90 seconds long, filmed vertically, and shared on your social media from 1 March 2026.

Don't forget to tag **@multiculturevic** and use **#CDW2026**.

For full details and inspiration, visit the [VMC website](#) to join the diversity conversation.

To register your event on [VMConnect](#) or learn more, visit: <https://www.multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/cultural-diversity-week-victorian-multicultural-commission>



## Submit your film to the Multicultural Film Festival 2026

Whether you're an emerging filmmaker or an experienced creator, VMC wants to hear your story of diversity.

**Entries close on Tuesday, 10 March.**

[Submit a film](#)





## Preventing Gender and Disability Based Violence, 2-Part Professional Development for Individuals

65% of women and gender diverse people with disabilities have experienced violence. Together, we can prevent it. To learn about how gender and disability inequality drives violence, and how you can prevent it. See session details.

**Part 1: Tuesday 3 March, 10am – 3pm**

**Part 2: Wednesday 4 March, 10am – 3pm**

Both sessions include a lunch break and additional short breaks.

**Location: Online via Zoom**

**Cost: \$350 employed professionals, \$250 student/ concession**

A limited number of subsidised places are available. Please contact [GandD@wdv.org.au](mailto:GandD@wdv.org.au) if cost is a barrier to participating.

To receive an invoice for payment, please select 'offline payment' option when registering.

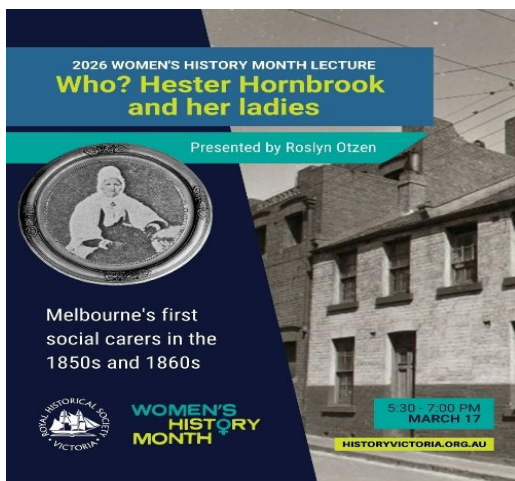
Register online: <https://wwdv.wildapricot.org/event-6509173>.

**Registrations close Monday 16 February.** To ensure WDV can accommodate any access requests, register by this date.

Please see the outlined content for more details. <https://wwdv.wildapricot.org/event-6509173>



## Women's History Month: Who? Hester Hornbrook and her ladies: Melbourne's first social carers 1850s & 1860s



**Date: Friday, 13 February 2026, Time: 5.30 - 7pm**

**Cost: \$10/\$20** [Book your seat](#)

**Event Type: In person and on Zoom**

For Women's History Month 2026, RHSV is delighted to have Roslyn Otzen presenting on Hester Hornbrook, whose work in creating 1850s Melbourne's first social supports saved thousands of people from lives and deaths in misery, and formed the basis of future social support systems in Victoria.

**RHSV Drill Hall, 239 A'Beckett St**

## 2026 Billibellary Indigenous History Lecture presented by Laureate Professor Marcia Langton AO



**February 24 @ 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm**

RHSV is delighted to invite our members and friends to the 5th annual Billibellary Indigenous History Lecture. For 2026, this lecture will be delivered by distinguished academic Professor Marcia Langton AO.

In this lecture, Marcia casts a critical lens on how violent dispossession has been recorded, distorted and used to justify ongoing oppression, using the colonial violence against the Yiman people (her Grandfather's people) in central Queensland as her springboard.

She will focus on the 1857 Horner Bank massacre and explore how the revenge killings against the Yiman, committed without prosecution, shaped the Queensland's Indigenous policy for decades.

**Cost: Members only. Book Tickets: \$10 by ZOOM or in person**

[2026 Billibellary Indigenous History Lecture presented by Laureate Professor Marcia Langton AO - Royal Historical Society of Victoria](#)

**Our Purposes:** *to provide a non-party political, non-sectarian, not-for-profit, umbrella organisation with broadly humanitarian and educational objectives, empowering women and girls; raising awareness of gender equality; act as a voice on issues and concerns of women and girls at State level; develop policies and responses on behalf of women and girls on a State-wide basis; maintain and strengthen the Association's relationship with all members; link with women in Australia and International Council of Women through the National Council of Women of Australia and contribute to the implementation of their plans of action and policies.*

**Our motto:** *The Preamble to the original ICW Constitution said "We, women of all Nations, in the conviction that the good of humanity will be best advanced by greater unity of thought, sympathy and purpose, and that an organised movement will serve to promote the highest good of the family and of the Nation, do hereby band ourselves together in a federation of women of all races, nations and creeds, to further the application of the Golden Rule to society, custom and law: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*



## National Council of Women of Victoria Meeting Dates for 2026

Month	Date	Day	Meeting Type	Time	Method
February	1 <sup>st</sup>	Sunday	Pioneer Women's Ceremony <u>Pioneer Women in Aviation</u>	11:00 – 2:30	Pioneer Women's Memorial Garden
February	5 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	Individual Members & Council Meetings	11:00, 12:15	Ross Hse/ZOOM
February	16	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
March	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Tuesday	Women Health Panel	5:30	Government House
March	5 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	Council Meetings	17:15	Ross Hse/ZOOM
March	16 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
March	19 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
April	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Thursday	Individual Members & Council Meetings	11:00, 12:15	Ross Hse/ZOOM
April	19 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
April	20 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
May	1 <sup>st</sup>	Thursday	Council Meeting	12:00	Ross Hse/ZOOM
May	17 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	RHSV and ZOOM
May	21 <sup>st</sup>	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
June	4 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	Individual Members & Council Meetings	11:00, 12:15	Ross Hse/ZOOM
June	16 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
June	18 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
July	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Thursday	Council Meeting	17:15	Ross Hse/ZOOM
July	20 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
July	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHS
August	6 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	Individual Members Annual Meeting; & Council Meeting	11:00, 12:15	Ross Hse/ZOOM
August	17 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
August	TBC	Friday	My Vote My Voice	9:15	Parliament
August	20 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
September	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Thursday	AGM	12:15	Ross Hse/ZOOM
September	13 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
September	17 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
October	1 <sup>st</sup>	Thursday	Individual Members & Council Meetings	11:00, 12:15	tbc
October	18 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	Standing Committee Meeting	16:30	ZOOM
October	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
November	5 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	Council Meeting	17:15	Ross Hse/ZOOM
November	19 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	Committee Meeting	10:00	RHSV
November	TBC	Thursday	Annual Luncheon	12:00	William Angliss
December	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Thursday	Individual Members & Council Meetings	11:00, 12:15	Ross Hse/ZOOM