



ADVISORS
REPORTS

ENVIRONMENT REPORT



Along with many other countries Australia has set ambitious targets to reach net zero emissions. Given the Australian Energy Market Operator expects coal plants which supplied 28.7% of Australian domestic energy consumption in 2020-21, to mainly be retired by 2035, there is a need to develop sufficient and reliable replacements. Various pathways to transition towards net zero were considered in a report available on the NCWQ website www.ncwq.org.au. In particular, renewables which could be underpinned by reliable baseload power, on demand power and storage were canvassed.

A number of aspects to be taken into account included:

- stability and reliability
- life of components e.g. nuclear small modular reactors, solar panels, wind turbines
- end of life disposal
- emission from resources
- availability of fuel sources
- disposal, management and use of waste
- legislation and licensing
- need and use of water.

It is concluded that comprehensive feasibility studies are needed to assess, on merit over a long time run, mixes of power sources for generation, storage and transmission to end user, considering the benefits, limitations and costs with different mixes. For generation renewables (wind, solar) could be underpinned by reliable baseload power (nuclear), on demand power (gas in the short term, pumped hydro) with storage e.g. hydrogen, lithium batteries.

As a matter of urgency, bipartisan support should be sought for developing a successful energy transition that includes a mix of renewables underpinned by reliable baseload power, on demand power and storage.

Details are available in a more fully documented report with references on the [NCWQ website](#).

Pat Pepper, NCWQ Environment Advisor, B.Sc. M.Sc. Ph.D

SDGs 7,11,12,13

HEALTH REPORT



We are exceedingly pleased with the reception of our recommendations leading to the new Commonwealth Practice Payment which will provide students with \$319.50 a week when they are on clinical and professional placements.

Those eligible will include people studying teaching, nursing, midwifery and social work.

The money is to help students who often have to give up work to undertake their placements and so are left out of pocket. The government's Universities Accord report recommended the issue should be addressed, as did the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce.

A mentor in the early years of my career in Queensland, would say in reference to the womb during a gynaecology surgery "Jeni, behold the Seat of All Humanity".

And it is with the same reverence Dr Yogesh Chadha (of the Royal Brisbane & Women's Hospital – RBWH) imbued upon me, that I deliver my inaugural Health report for Health 2023-2024.

The Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI) In Healthcare

AI is transforming the way we think about health and wellness. The use of digital technology has grown exponentially in healthcare since the pandemic. It has also brought new ethical issues. The US, EU and now Australia have led the way the use of AI is legislated. From 1 July 2024, all clinical decision-making software is mandated to follow the guidelines and standards set by the Therapeutic Goods Administration at the Department of Health and Aged Care.

Furthermore, software deemed to be Class IIb, for health professionals, and Class III for patients, require an application for assessment to be listed in the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG).

The intention of the Department of Health remains ensuring every person in Australia who needs, or is advised to use software with AI, is provided with an avenue to vet the quality and integrity of the it before its use.

With the rise in the incidence of chronic diseases in Australia from 2015 (35%) to a reported 46% over the last 9 years, innovation has come to the fore as the next hope to reverse and prevent the rise.

The First Femtech Unicorn

July 2024 - Flo, a UK-based company which created a purely female digital health application, became the first femtech company to be valued at over a billion US dollars.

The application which is reportedly used by over seventy million women each month and has over five million paid users including women living in Australia.

There has been controversy around the all-male founding team of the company, receiving support that blazed a trail through the market where women in the industry continue to not receive the same level of support. Many women had developed or had been part of the development of similar products preceding the arrival of Flo. They report mixed emotions at the success of Flo. Many say they were told the market for femtech was "too niche" to reach such a valuation as they were denied funding for their innovation.

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The Queensland Women and Girls' Health Strategy 2023

August 2024 - The Council was privileged to welcome two Managers for the Unit that developed the Strategy – Lisa MacArthur-Day and Shellee Valentine - for an official briefing.

The research that preceded the development of the Strategy was integral to informing the actions needed to meet the WHO Health Equity Goals for the priority communities:

- First Nations women and girls
- culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women and girls
- women and girls with disability
- members of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) communities
- women and girls living in rural and remote areas
- women and girls in contact with the justice system, including women in custody.

It is our intention to submit a response to the Strategy. Our Advocacy hub is still in the process of reviewing the research that went into developing the Strategy before we look at the Strategy itself. We should be better equipped to consider the initiatives eventuating from the outcomes published in the study.

The report included a statement of nearly \$250 million of new investments over the period to 2027-28 to address health inequity for women and girls. The Government is anticipated to spend more than \$1 billion over the next 5 years on women and girls' health and wellbeing programs in addition to new services to better meet their needs.

We welcome this much needed funding into the Women and Girls' Health sector and look forward to supporting the initiatives.

Qld joins NSW with coercive control laws

April 2024 - This move by the Queensland Parliament is a massive step in the right direction to support the mental health of Women and Girls who are the recipients of the majority of domestic violence orders (DVOs) in Queensland. 77% of DVOs are aimed at safeguarding women and 73% of perpetrators identified as male.

Coercive control will be a criminal offence in Queensland from 26 May 2025.

It will be illegal for an adult to use abusive behaviors towards their current, or former, intimate partner, family member, or informal (unpaid) carer with the intention to control or coerce them.

The legislation has passed with bipartisan support and will require free and voluntary agreement to take part in sexual activity. A news report published by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) revealed that 97% of intimate partner violence stems from coercive control.

The WHO has reported Intimate partner violence (IPV) as a public health concern that has been linked with long-term mental health consequences including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, alcohol and substance use disorders, as well as thoughts of suicide.

Coercive control is a form of abuse where the main goal is to degrade, isolate, and deprive a person of their rights to physical security, dignity, and respect. This places the victim in a state of terror and entrapment, and includes tactics such as monitoring movements, social isolation, and restriction of access to financial resources, employment, education, or medical care.

Studies reported that coercive control was associated with increased parental mental ill-health, poorer family functioning, harsher parenting, higher levels of child abuse, and strained parent-child relationships.

Children are often psychologically manipulated as tools for the perpetrator and are co-victims of the coercive control. They develop mental ill-health due to an increased risk of them internalising and externalising problems, having limited access to socialising opportunities, increased involvement in bullying (victims or perpetrators), poorer perinatal outcomes, limited access to healthcare, and increased risk of mortality.

We hope to support increasing the awareness of women and girls in the state of Queensland to the presence of these laws. We will help to support informational initiatives to skills all women and girls to better recognise the signs, symptoms and unhealthy patterns of behaviour in relationships. We will support awareness of where to seek help.

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Queensland increases the limit on financial assist offered through Victims Assist for victims of domestic violence to \$120,000

November 2023 - The Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, the Honourable Yvette D'Ath released a statement reporting a major increase in assistance to victims of crime passed by parliament. The Reform package to better support victims of crime and their families increased the maximum financial assistance for primary victims from up to \$75,000 to up to \$120,000. Victims of sexual violence will also be eligible for greater payments, with special assistance increasing across all categories.

This is phenomenal news for victims and their families in their recovery from the adverse effects of domestic and family violence.

In addition to support with accessing counselling and medical expenses necessary for recovery, victims may also access financial assistance for income lost as a direct result of the violence.

I would like to thank NCWQ for welcoming me to the Advisory Board as the Health Advisor for the state of Queensland.

It is an honour to serve in this capacity. The responsibilities are not ones I intend to take lightly. It is my intention to use my understanding of the current health systems to increase the support given to the betterment of the Women and Girls' Health in the state of Queensland.

2024-2025 will see us respond to The Queensland Women and Girl's Health Strategy 2032 and monitor the progress of the initiative to ensure we are achieving the WHO Health Equity Goals for Women and Girls in Queensland.

We will prepare for the enactment of the Coercive Control Laws ahead of 26 March 2025. And we will continue to support the Bursary Program which supports the stream of young women and girls aspiring to a Career in Health.

I look forward to supporting the Council with the Health Portfolio.

Dr Jeni Wellington, LRCPI LRCSI MB BCH BAO



EDUCATION REPORT



Girls and STEM

STEM is science, technology, engineering and mathematics)

Both State and National governments are still promoting programmes that encourage girls to plan a career in STEM. 'Learning a STEM subject gives students – from school to technical and further education through to university – opportunities to pursue fulfilling careers and make real differences locally, nationally and internationally' (1). The Queensland Women in STEM Prize is still running. 'Presented by Queensland Museum and the Queensland Government, QWiSP recognises and celebrates women who are making a difference to the world in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM).(2)



Women in STEM Prize winners 2023 (2)

Although women's role in STEM has been recognised there are still many problems to overcome including the final result when women have a career in a STEM - the Gender Pay Gap still exists. (3) 'In 2023, the pay gap between women's and men's full-time total remuneration (which includes discretionary pay) in STEM industries was \$26,420, or 16%. This pay gap is slightly lower than it was in 2022, when it was \$27,012 (17%).' (3, 4). The battle continues.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence is 'revolutising' education. It can provide tutorial assistance for students as well as assist teachers to prepare lessons (5). We must recognize that it is here and help students and teachers learn how to make best use of AI as well as being aware of privacy and security concerns. The Australian Government now has produced an Australian Framework for Generative Artificial Intelligence in Schools. (6)

Social Media

Currently the Australian Government is considering ways to prevent children under 16 to access Social Media platforms such as Tik Tok. The current age is 13. Is this even possible. Many sites simply ask the user to give their age but users can easily lie. The government is currently funding a trial of ways to ensure that underage children cannot access Social Media. These include:

- User-provided Age verification e. g. passport or driver's licence
- Verified parental consent (e.g. parents would need to provide such as a driver's licence)
- Age estimation using behavioural data (e.g. Analysis of online behaviour using AI)
- Age estimation using biometrics (e.g. facial scanning) (7)

Is this the way forward?

'Social media platforms provide vital pathways for young people to engage with peers and seek information for school, work and personal needs. For example, YouTube and LinkedIn are critical professional development and networking tools, often used in education.

Would a social media ban only target specific tools, or apply to all platforms, regardless of purpose?'(6) Using Social Media should be part of their education.

We educate children to live in our world. They need to know how to do this. They need to learn to recognise 'fake news' and what to do if they fall prey to a scammer or are bullied online. The problems will not magically disappear when they turn 16. 'Social media – as with television, internet and other media content – are best explored by children with the support of parents, teachers and other caregivers to guide their use.' (8)

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