Gender and Climate Change
Submission on the progress of implementation of activities under the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan

March 2024
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Introduction

Australia welcomes the opportunity to share information on its progress on the implementation of the activities contained in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Gender Action Plan (GAP), in line with Decisions 3/CP.25, 24/CP.27 and 15/CP.28.

Australia provides this submission to enhance the visibility and profile of our gender-responsive climate policies, strategies, and actions, and to reflect on the progress that Australia has made at a national level, and in our region. We look forward to building on our contributions to advancing gender-responsive climate action in the UNFCCC, and the final review of the Gender Action Plan.

Background

Australia is committed to demonstrating leadership on the nexus between climate change and gender equality, and ensuring an inclusive, equitable, and gender-responsive transition of the economy and workforce to a renewable and climate-resilient future. Australia continues to advocate for the full, equal, and meaningful diverse participation and leadership in international climate processes, and recognises the unique contributions of women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and youth in national, regional, and domestic climate change action.

Women, girls, and marginalised gender identities are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to persistent structural inequalities – but are also powerful agents of transformative change. Gender equality is both a fundamental human right and a powerful engine of economic and social development, critical to advancing ambitious action on climate change. Australia recognises that gender-responsive approaches to mitigation, adaptation, and resilience efforts lead to equitable long-term outcomes, and can drive continued progress towards ambitious climate actions.

Australia’s first National Strategy for Gender Equality was released in March 2024 – Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality outlines Australia’s ambitious agenda to drive enduring and impactful gender-responsive policy actions, guided by six principles for gender equality:

- **Gender equality is a human right.** It is necessary for the dignity and full potential of all people.
- **Gender equality benefits everyone.** And everyone is responsible for bringing about change.
- **Efforts to drive gender equality must be inclusive and intersectional.**
- **Efforts to drive gender equality for First Nations Australians must be led by First Nations Australians.**
- **Action on gender equality must be evidence-based and informed by lived experience.**
- **Gender equality must be considered from the outset, and must include diverse representation in decision-making, design and implementation of solutions.**
Australia’s National Strategy also sets out five priority areas for action – addressing gender-based violence, unpaid and paid care, economic equality and security, health, and leadership, representation, and decision-making. The Strategy explicitly notes the importance of ensuring that women can lead action on climate change and are represented in disaster and crisis mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery efforts, including in leadership and advisory positions.

Australia understands that government alone cannot change individual attitudes, and that the collective action of communities, workplaces and individuals is needed to address the barriers that hold us back from making gains towards gender equality and retaining this progress into the future. To this end, the Strategy has been released in an accessible easy-to-read format, to ensure that people and groups from across society, including advocacy groups, businesses, unions, and civil society, are able to engage and participate in whole-of-society actions to progress gender equality.

Australia’s National Strategy is underpinned by our longstanding international commitments to human rights and gender equality, and our steadfast and ongoing commitment to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. Our International Gender Equality Strategy will be launched in 2024, and will prioritise gender-responsive international action. It will complement a new International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy and an LGBTQIA+ Human Rights Engagement Strategy.

Our International Gender Equality Strategy will integrate climate into the implementation of Australia’s Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021-31. These strategies will guide holistic community action to achieve a gender-equal society as we transition to net-zero, recognising gender equality is a central consideration to Australia’s foreign policy, international development, humanitarian action, trade, and security efforts.

Australia’s commitment to gender equality and climate action is central to our International Development Program, and we have recently established new targets that will ensure our international assistance tackles climate impacts and improves the lives of women and girls. At least half of all new bilateral and regional investments are required to have a climate change objective from 2024-25, and 80 per cent of investments will be required to consider gender equality. All new investments over $3 million must include gender equality objectives. We will invest more in locally led solutions, and building genuine, respectful partnerships to support community organisations.

Domestic programs and initiatives – including whole-of-government gender-responsive budgeting supported by the Women’s Budget Statement and the Office for Women – aim to advance gender equality within Australia, increase women’s role in responding to and mitigating climate change and increase the capacity of women to absorb climate-related shocks and disasters, as well as driving women’s leadership, representation and decision-making on climate.

Finally, Australia takes an intersectional approach that recognises the leadership and critical role of First Nations women and girls in responding to the climate crisis and increasing adaptation action. The Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women’s Voices) Report and Implementation Framework both provide significant detail on the importance of connection to Land and Country for First Nations women, and the crucial role of First Nation women in climate justice solutions. The Wiyi Yani U Thangani Institute for First Nations Gender Justice was launched in March 2024 at the Australian National University, modelling best practice First Nations women-led governance and co-design.
Australia’s implementation of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan (GAP)

Australia’s support for gender-responsive climate action spans a diverse range of activities, both domestically and internationally, within each priority area below. Some activities may span several priority areas, and this submission builds upon Australia’s previous submission to the mid-term review of the GAP provided in March 2022, reflecting policy approaches to progressing gender equality and ambitious actions to address climate change.

Priority Area A: Capacity building, knowledge management and communication

Australia stands with Pacific women and girls in responding to the climate crisis and undertakes a range of activities that support building gender-responsive capacity in our region in key climate-related fields. Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is investing in enhancing capability of staff and partners in responding to the gender equality and climate nexus, through new guidance and good practice notes to enable investment designers to meet dual requirements for gender equality and climate outcomes across sectoral programming. This will be accompanied by new training and capacity building. Australia collaborated with Global Affairs Canada and the Asian Development Bank to inform the development of an innovative and interactive learning platform on the nexus between the gender and green agendas, which was launched at CSW68.

Under the umbrella of the Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Program, Australia engages in a range of climate resilience and adaptation projects across the region, supporting governments and other stakeholders to compile reports, review, and analyse the policy and financial environment or draft policies to ensure gender mainstreaming within climate resilience.

Pacific Women Lead is Australia’s regional gender program to ensure that Pacific women and girls, in all their diversity, are safe and equitably share in resources, opportunities and decision-making, with men and boys. Through this program, Australia supports the Women’s Environment and Development Organisation, and their delivery of multi-tiered training and travel support program for Pacific women climate negotiators – as well as effective operationalisation of the role of UNFCCC National Gender and Climate Change Focal Points across Pacific Island Countries. More than one hundred women from fourteen countries across the Pacific have participated in the program since its inception in 2017, and there are now nominated focal points from Fiji, Kiribati, and Papua New Guinea.

Women’s Weather Watch in Vanuatu supports a hub of young women to lead Women Wetem Weta, a technology-based information and communications system focused on weather and disaster monitoring. The Ni-Vanuatu Women Leading Solutions to Climate Change project is seeking to empower women (including women with disabilities) to lead agroecology solutions to protect forests and grasslands and indirectly marine environments and will strengthen the capacity of women organised in economic hubs to practice agroecology, increasing their access to training and resources and engagement with decision makers.
The Young Women’s Climate Action Initiative by the Australia Pacific Climate Partnership (APCP) team looks to engage young Pacific women in policy forums and national meteorological services to build skills and expertise. Women’s Resilience to Disasters (WRD) Program, which supports Pacific women and girls in Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu to lead on disaster prevention, preparedness, and recovery. Australian Humanitarian Partnership’s Disaster READY program, which improves capacity of government and other stakeholders to consider gender in disaster risk and resilience and climate change adaptation plans and strategies.

Australia is also collaborating with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on a regional advocacy campaign calling for collective efforts to protect fundamental rights threatened by the impacts of the climate crisis. This initiative works to highlight the impact of climate disasters on women, girls, and at-risk populations, and encourage greater dialogue, closer collaboration, and a call-to-action for increased investments in inclusive and gender-responsive climate action.

The Women’s International Network on Disaster Risk Reduction, and its Knowledge Hub, works from the community to the global level to advocate for and strengthen women’s meaningful participation and leadership related to all aspects of climate and disaster risk.

The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) formally partnered with Sea Women of Melanesia, a foundation that equips women in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands with training, skills, equipment, and resources to help Indigenous communities create and manage marine reserves around their own coral reefs, particular those under threat from climate impacts.

Domestically, Australia is investing in the organisational capability uplift of the Australian Public Service (APS) to better deliver gender-responsive budgeting and policy development. The APS Capability Reinvestment Fund is improving gender impact by equipping Australian policymakers with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to engage in gender analysis across various public policy fields, and build understanding of concepts and methodologies to identify and address the differential impact of policies and their funding on men, women and those identifying as non-binary.

Priority Area B: Gender balance, participation, and women’s leadership

Australia promotes gender balance, participation and leadership of women through a range of whole-of-government programs and initiatives, including our Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Annual Report, and through grant programs such as the Women in Public Office Grant to equip and encourage more women to enter politics. These initiatives increase the number and diversity of women involved in climate policy development and decision-making and encourage the participation of women from under-represented communities.

Internationally, Australia’s Ambassador for Gender Equality is the lead advocate for Australia’s work on gender equality and the human rights of women and girls. The current Ambassador, Ms Stephanie Copus Campbell AM, was appointed in December 2022. Ambassador Campbell engages in international advocacy, public diplomacy, and outreach in support of Australian Government policies and programs to advance gender equality, including the participation of women in decision-making and leadership.
Australia is committed to ensuring women are equally represented in its delegations to the UNFCCC, and at COP28, 60 per cent of the Australian delegation were women. Australia supports women in leadership roles within the UNFCCC, including as negotiation co-facilitators and as representatives on constituted bodies. In recent years, Australian women were lead negotiators on topics including Article 6, transparency, finance, loss and damage, agriculture, and mitigation, as well as on the Bureau. Australia provided a substantial number of Party overflow badges to non-party delegates, with over 40% being issued to women from across civil society, business, industry, and academia.

In 2023, Australia delivered the COP28 Travel Support Grant Program, which supported the travel of individuals from underrepresented groups – including First Nations Australians and youth – to attend and contribute to Australia’s inclusive engagement, including through the Australian COP28 Pavilion. This program was delivered with a gender-responsive approach, and more than half the delegates supported were women. Australia also established a Climate Change and COP28 Youth Advisory Group to bring the voices of young people, including young women and girls, to COP28.

Australia has committed to work towards equal pay, leadership, and opportunities for women in the clean energy sector by 2030 under the Equal by 30 campaign. In December 2022, the Australian Government added five additional commitments to its endorsement of the campaign, which included the creation of a Women in Energy Roundtable for industry to promote and share equality initiatives and policies and building a Women in Energy Resources Hub. Other commitments include promotion of gender balance within Australia’s Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) leadership roles to demonstrate public sector leadership, driving practical actions towards equality-based policies within industry and work across government agencies, and expanding engagement across domestic and international forums within the energy sector.

Australia has also launched a chapter of the Ambassadors Program, under the Equality in Energy Transitions Initiative, an initiative developed by the Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) and the International Energy Agency (IEA). Australia has named three ambassadors to attract and inspire the next generation of women leaders in the clean energy sector. The program provides a unique opportunity to interact with a driven group of proactive and highly qualified women, men, and non-binary individuals, aligning with broader efforts to promote gender equality.

To celebrate International Women’s Day in 2023, Minister for Climate Change and Energy Chris Bowen hosted the inaugural Women in Energy and Climate Symposium at Australian Parliament House. Women from across the energy and climate sectors spoke about how gender equality and diversity will help Australia achieve its energy and climate ambitions.

The Australian Government continues to increase representation of women and girls in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) through a range of programs and initiatives, including the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE)’s Elevate Program. Increased representation of women in STEM enhances industry productivity, diversifies, and transforms our economy, and helps meet current and future workforce needs, including those relating to the clean energy transition.

In 2022, the Australian Government commissioned an independent Pathway to Diversity in STEM Review. The independent review panel made 11 detailed recommendations on how the government,
industry and academic sectors can support more women, and people from other under-represented
groups, to participate in STEM education and careers. Recommendations will inform future action to
create gender diversity in STEM careers, including in the clean energy workforce.

Australia’s Indigenous Protected Areas supports Traditional Owners to care for land and sea Country
and build resilience to the effects of climate change, including by undertaking cultural burning.
Through the Indigenous Rangers Program we are investing in women working on Country to ensure
sacred women’s sites, Law/Lore, knowledge and songs are maintained and protected. The rangers
program provides an avenue for building resilience to climate change through strengthening
Indigenous governance, two-way knowledge sharing, and improving adaptive capacity. Currently,
Indigenous women represent around a third of those employed as rangers, the Australian
Government has committed to working towards gender equality in ranger positions by the end of the
decade. Work continues in 2024 with a national expansion of the Indigenous Rangers Program
prioritising the increase in women rangers or women ranger groups.

Priority Area C: Coherence

Ensuring that policy frameworks and programs work together to enhance our efforts to drive gender-
responsive climate action is key to progress towards gender equality. Australia engages across the
UNFCCC and other international forums, as well as through bilateral engagements with partner
countries to support these efforts. Through our membership on the Standing Committee on Finance
(SCF), we advocated for the 2024 SCF Forum to focus on “Accelerating climate action and resilience
through gender-responsive finance” to support action and implementation of the GAP.

Australia addressed violence against women and girls in the context of climate change and the
Women, Peace, and Security agenda in our National Statement at the 50th Session of the Human
Rights Council, and actively engaged at the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women
(CSW67). We acknowledge the strong connection between the impacts of the climate crisis, and
global peace and security, and have reaffirmed the recognition of the disproportionate gendered
impact on women and girls.

Australia welcomed the opportunity to join with the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security
in an October 2023 Statement to the UN Security Council Open Debate which emphasized
unwavering support and urgent action to redouble efforts to protect and promote women’s human
rights and ensure their full, equal and meaningful and safe participation and leadership in all aspects
of peace and security.

Australia also works across a range of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and their
associated gender frameworks to ensure we are enhancing gender-responsive actions through
coherent approaches. This includes alignment with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk
Reduction 2015-2030 and its Gender Action Plan as a key vehicle to help achieve gender-responsive
disaster risk reduction and to accelerate Sendai Framework implementation, set to be launched in
the margins of the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68). Australia is also
committed to delivering support and promoting the gender responsive implementation of the
Convention on Biological Diversity’s Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, as outlined in
the **Gender Plan of Action**, noting the clear interlinkages between climate change and other global environmental priorities, including biodiversity.

Australia also advances work through other regional multilateral bodies. In 2023, Australia, worked with other APEC countries (Canada, New Zealand, the Philippines and Peru) to successfully put forward a proposal to Develop a **Gender Equality Budgeting Toolkit** project within APEC. This project is building capacity among APEC economies to implement and improve gender responsive budgeting among through knowledge-sharing workshops and a toolkit. This project will build knowledge of participants to understand gender-responsive budgeting and equip participants to improve domestic budgeting practices and analysis.

Australia also engages on gender equality through dialogues with bilateral partners, which also cover the nexus with climate change. For example, the **Australia-U.S. Strategic Dialogue on Gender Equality** saw Australia and the US outline their priorities and agree to work together on actions related to the gender-climate nexus. This includes strengthening women's roles in climate decision-making and in implementation of climate adaptation and disaster resilience building efforts, scaling gender-inclusive and equitable climate finance solutions, and enabling participation of women-led groups and civil society in national and international climate fora, including at COP.

The **Australia-United Kingdom Strategic Dialogue on Gender Equality** recognises the importance of protecting, promoting and fulfilling human rights at the core of international norms through partnership and collaboration that makes progress towards, and mitigates risks to achievement of, gender equality – including on climate change, through addressing gender-based violence and responding to the impacts of climate change, gender-lens investing and climate-smart investments.

**Priority Area D: Gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation**

The Australian Government is building understanding of impacts of climate change and barriers to advancing gender-responsive climate action and sharing best practice efforts in international and regional fora. A gender-responsive transition to net zero offers a system change in which individuals and communities are strengthened, with far-reaching impacts for people of all genders and equity across societies.

At COP28 Australia endorsed the **Gender-responsive Just Transitions and Climate Action Partnership at COP28** and is committed to driving work to strengthen all women’s and girls’ leadership and meaningful participation, decision making, capacities, and livelihoods in climate action to achieve gender equality.

Australia’s **National Adaptation Plan (NAP)** will mainstream adaptation action, drive a substantial uplift in private sector investment, and establish support for people and communities in disproportionately vulnerable situations. Development of the NAP will engage women’s groups and national women and gender institutions, and those disproportionately affected by climate impacts and ensure that adaptation addresses equity and human rights, such as gender-responsive adaptation, intergenerational equity, and equity for people with a disability.
The Australian Government also recognises that climate change is a significant threat to public health and wellbeing, and that its impacts disproportionately impact certain population groups. Australia’s first National Health and Climate Strategy sets out a whole-of-government plan for addressing the health and wellbeing impacts of climate change, whilst also addressing the contribution of the health system. The Strategy commits to supporting healthy, climate-resilient communities – including for women and other population groups in vulnerable situations due to climate change.

Internationally, we are embedding gender-responsive implementation of a climate action through our Development Policy – Performance and Delivery Framework, including to provide funding to Women’s Equality Organisations and institutions, and ensuring that our support is driven by context-specific analysis, including on climate change, gender equality, disability and social inclusion as well as barriers to economic growth through our Country and Regional Development Partnership Plans.

At the program level, this includes support for The Market for Change Program which upgraded the Luganville Market House in Vanuatu, where majority of the vendors were local women. Re-designing the marketplace increased women’s preparedness and recovery capacity, which supported local economy and strengthened community resilience.

Our ongoing support of the Water for Women ($159.9 million, 2018-25) program has supported more than 3.4 million people in 16 Indo-Pacific countries to improve health, gender equality and well-being through climate-resilient and socially inclusive WASH projects. The fund was extended in 2022 for 2.5 years with an additional $36 million and reoriented itself to deliver one hundred per cent climate resilient WASH programs in the extension phase. The program’s key outcomes are around adaptation and climate resilience, while maintaining a strong focus on gender and social inclusion.

The Australia Assists program ($94.7 million globally, 2017-24) deploys technical specialists to work with governments, multilateral agencies and communities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and conflict. A gender specialist is supporting the strengthening of gender responsive disaster response in Solomon Islands.

Priority Area E: Monitoring and reporting

This is Australia’s second submission focused on gender-responsive climate action since the agreement of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan in 2019. Through this report, we contribute to global monitoring and reporting on the implementation of gender-responsive climate action, in addition to a range of other monitoring and reporting process that we undertake domestically and internationally.

Within the transparency framework, Australia’s 8th National Communication on Climate Change details Australia’s progress towards supporting gender equality in Australia and our region. This communication referenced our ‘Do No Harm’ approach, including our policies and strategies relating to climate change action, gender equality, disability-inclusive development, humanitarian assistance, and Indigenous people that support the effective design and implementation of development cooperation.
Australia’s Annual Climate Change Statement requires and enables the government to report on Australia’s progress, action taken, and what additional action is necessary in reducing global emissions to avert the worst impacts of climate change, including impacts on women and other marginalised communities. Diversity in the clean energy workforce is a key reporting line in the Statement. The Australian Government has identified that increasing women’s participation in clean energy industries will help boost economic equality and support the net zero transformation.

Collecting data, and engaging with what the data tells us, is critical to making the invisible visible, measuring progress and holding ourselves accountable for achieving impact. As part of Australia’s new National Gender Equality Strategy, we will release a Status of Women Report Card every International Women’s day to shine a light on where progress is slow, and more effort is needed. This is in addition to Australia’s annual Women’s Budget Statement, which outlines gender-responsive outcomes and gender impact assessment of our policy and programs.

The Australian Government is convening a Gender Data Steering Group to work with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to drive collaboration across government agencies on the collection, sharing and use of gender-disaggregated and intersectional data – to maximise the impact of the Australian Government’s major data holdings as an evidence base for gender equality policy. Measuring What Matters is Australia’s first national wellbeing framework that will track our progress towards a more healthy, secure, sustainable, cohesive, and prosperous Australia. It includes a data dashboard of fifty indicators that are updated annually. These include climate resilience and emissions reduction, as well as indicators on social cohesion and culture.

The STEM Equity Monitor is a national data resource on girls and women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The monitor reports the current state of STEM gender equity in Australia and measures changes and trends, including for education and careers related to clean energy and technology, as well as other areas of climate and environmental science.

The Australian Government is committed to delivering a high quality, effective development program that is responsive to partner needs, achieves results, and is informed by robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning. Australia’s new Performance and Delivery Framework will also drive key reforms and improve the transparency and accountability of our development program. The framework also outlines a reinvigorated approach to country and regional level planning based on deeper consultation with partners and improved monitoring, evaluation, and learning. Australia also continues to report on aid focused on gender equality and women’s empowerment through the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) gender equality policy marker.

Future areas of focus

Australia is committed to the full implementation of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan and promoting gender-responsive and socially inclusive climate action internationally and domestically. Building on progress made to date, Australia will seek increased focus on the following areas in support of a future Work Program on Gender and Climate Change, and a future Gender Action Plan:

1. Increased intersectional approaches, including by empowering and enhancing meaningful representation and participation of First Nations Women and girls, and women with
disabilities, in all levels of climate policy development and decision making, and in Australia’s delegations to the UNFCCC and other climate-related fora.

2. Recognize men and boys’ role in achieving gender equality and engage them as gender equality and climate change champions in the process of developing, implementing, and updating climate policies, plans, strategies, and action, as appropriate, at all levels.

3. Enhancing regional gender equality and climate change collaboration, particularly with the Pacific region at all levels, from government to women-led community organisations, with a focus on tangible implementation of initiatives and locally led solutions for sustainable and supported community impacts that drive long-term equitable outcomes.

4. Promote accessible gender-responsive climate finance opportunities from a wide range of sources to enhance resources for organisations run by women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and persons with disabilities toward more inclusive climate action.

5. Engage and promote the role of the private sector and industry as a catalyst and role model for change in shaping gender-responsive transition plans, including through initiatives and programs that close the gender pay gap, and ensuring women and girls are equipped with the tools and safeguarding to empower them in a gender equal, and net zero society.

6. Refocus and enhance the role of national gender and climate change focal points, including through capacity-building, tools and resources, and knowledge exchange, to focus on implementation and delivery of action through cooperation and collaboration.

7. Strengthen capacity-building efforts across government and relevant stakeholders to mainstream gender and enhance gender-responsive action at the national level in formulating, monitoring, implementing, and reviewing, as appropriate, national climate change policies, plans, strategies, and action, including nationally determined contributions, national adaptation plans, and long-term strategies.

8. Continue to improve coherence and coordination across Australia’s international engagement on gender and climate change, including in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and Human Rights Council, Convention on Biological Diversity, and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), and the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda and across the broader multilateral development and humanitarian system.

9. Ensure that the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) is able to consider gender-responsive implementation of the Paris Agreement through a mirrored agenda item, allowing Parties to consider gender-responsive implementation in current, and emerging, work programs, including the Just Transition Work Programme, the Global Stocktake, and the Mitigation Work Programme.

10. Improve data collection and analysis to enhance Australia’s ability to report meaningfully on the impacts of our gender-responsive climate investments through Australia’s development program, through enhancing monitoring and evaluation (M&E), providing annual updates on Australia’s action to support a future UNFCCC Gender Action Plan.