

MINUTES OF STATUS OF WOMEN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 6 MAY 2025

- Present: Mayor, Councillor Cr Christine Kay (Chairperson)
Councillor Kim Wheatley (Deputy Mayor)
Roweena Allabush, Community Member
Michele Bell, Community Member
Adrienne Bennett, Community Member
Leanne Fry, Community Member – online
Unis Goh, Community Member
Arti Kumria, Community Member
Peta-Jane Maynard, Community Member
Madeleine Steel, Community Member
Karthika Sivarajan, Community Member – online
- Staff Present: Director Community, Janice Bevan
Manager Community Development, Danny Houseas
Community Development Officer, Kim Harris
Community Development Officer, Nick Goryl
Administration Officer Community Development, Wendy Hou
- Others Present: Guest Speaker, Sonia Casanova, Chief executive Officer, Dressed for Success
- Apologies: General Manager, David Marshall
Councillor Indu Balachandran (Deputy Chairperson)
Samantha Bing, Community Member
Angela Budai, Community Member
Jessica Stone-Herbert, Community Member
Jebby Phillips, Community Member
Susan Parker, Community Member

The Meeting commenced at 1:10 PM

WELCOME BY CHAIRPERSON

Mayor Christine Kay opened the meeting and welcomed new community member Leanne Fry.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

No matters arising.

NOTING OF MINUTES

Minutes of Status of Women's Advisory Committee

File: S13683

Meeting held 11 February 2025

Minutes numbered SWAC02 To SWAC03

RECOMMENDATION:

That Minutes numbered SWAC02 To SWAC03 circulated to Councillors were taken as read and confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings of the Meeting.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Dressed For Success - Guest Speaker

File: S13683

Vide: GB.1

Guest Speaker - Sonia Casanova, Chief Executive Officer, Dressed for Success

Chief Executive Officer from Dressed for Success to address the Status of Women's Advisory Committee.

Sonia Casanova presented an overview of Dressed for Success, a global organisation established in New York and now operating in 143 countries, including NSW for the past 15 years. The charity focuses on empowering women towards financial independence by providing professional attire for job interviews and important life events. It also offers career support through services like resume building, LinkedIn profile creation, and interview coaching.

Dressed for Success operates four boutiques offering face-to-face consultations, with online services available for women in remote areas. Over 50% of the women seeking support are educated, with diverse backgrounds, including the unemployed, homeless, older women returning to work, and those advancing in their careers. While women can self-refer, most are referred by other services. The charity relies on 300 volunteers and additional fundraising and clothing donations to maintain its free services. Committee members have suggested the following ideas on how Dressed for Success could be supported:

- Connect with Council's Nett Zero Champions to organise clothing donations.
- Connect with local Rotary clubs
- Contact Kirribilli and Inner West markets to organise for unsold designer markets clothing be donated to Dressed for Success.

RECOMMENDATION:

For members to receive and note the address provided by Sonia Casanova, Chief Executive Officer of Dressed for Success.

International Women's Day (IWD)

File: S13683

Vide: GB.2

To provide the Committee with a review of the 2025 International Women's Day 2025 celebration, and to commence planning for 2026 International Women's Day event.

Power Point presentation by Kim Harris

Summary of Guest Feedback from 33 Survey Responses

- Guests advised the keynote speech by Juanita Phillips, the roundtable discussions, and opportunities to connect with others in the community as the most valuable and inspiring aspects of the event.
- Suggestions for improvement included increasing male participation, enhancing accessibility for people with disabilities, and allowing more time for roundtable discussions.
- Recommended future topics and speakers included: representation from people with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women, greater focus on women's achievements and leadership, and the challenges of balancing multiple roles as a woman.
- The event received an overall rating of 4.32 out of 5. All key elements—keynote speaker, roundtable discussions, overall content, venue, and food and drinks—were rated above 4.0.

Summary of feedback from the round table Discussions:

Q1. What are the most pressing issues facing women in our community today, and how can they be best addressed?

Most common answers included: Connection/loneliness, cost of living, gender Violence, Disrespect, support for the elderly and work life balance.

Q2. How can we work together with men in fostering respectful relationships?

Calling out bad behaviour, role modelling, education and involve men in the conversation.

Q3. How can Ku-ring-gai Council and the community best acknowledge Domestic Violence Remembrance Day on 7 May 2025?

Remembrance garden and memorial installations, public art tribute – i.e. shoes installation or a community led mural, candlelit vigil, community walk and awareness march, sports-based awareness campaign, fundraiser, public event with guest speakers.

Planning for International Women's Day (IWD) 2026

Members were invited to nominate themselves if they were interested in joining a subcommittee to assist with the planning and delivery of the 2026 International Women's Day (IWD) celebration.

Ideas and suggestions from Committee members for IWD 2026:

- Feature multiple guest speakers or a panel format with short presentations followed by audience Q&A.
- Consider morning tea instead of a lunchtime event.
- Increase participation by inviting more school students to attend.

- Highlight and give a voice to local heroes and inspiring women in various fields, Suggested speakers include:
 - **Ming Long** – Business Leader
 - **Emily Granger** – Cardiothoracic Surgeon
 - **Sonia Casanova** – CEO, *Dress for Success*

RECOMMENDATION:

For members of the Status of Women’s Advisory Committee to receive and note the survey results from the 2025 International Women’s Day event, and to commence planning for the 2026 IWD celebration.

Ku-ring-gai Council Women’s Leadership and Inspiration Award 2025

File: S13683

Vide: GB.3

To provide the Status of Women’s Advisory Committee with an overview of the Ku-ring-gai Council Women’s Leadership and Inspiration Award.

The Ku-ring-gai Women’s Leadership and Inspiration Award has been developed to formally recognise outstanding contributions by women who demonstrate exceptional leadership and a commitment to advancing gender equality within the community. The award seeks to elevate the visibility of women’s impact across diverse sectors and inspire broader social and structural change.

The award framework encompasses a broad and inclusive definition of leadership, ranging from grassroots advocacy to economic empowerment, and highlights the importance of lived experience in shaping community outcomes. A transparent assessment process has been established, guided by five core criteria: category alignment, depth of impact, innovation, sustainability, and personal values.

The selection panel will be chaired by the Status of Women’s Advisory Committee Chair, with up to three Committee members and relevant staff participating in an advisory capacity. The process excludes self-nominations and current elected officials or Council staff.

Subject to Council endorsement of the nomination guidelines and selection criteria at the Ordinary Meeting of Council on 20 May, the Award will be launched in 2025, with promotion through Council’s communication channels to ensure broad community awareness and engagement.

RECOMMENDATION:

That members of the Status of Women’s Advisory Committee receive and note the overview of the Ku-ring-gai Council Women’s Leadership and Inspiration Award.

OTHER BUSINESS

General Business and Committee Discussion

1. National Domestic Violence Remembrance Day Commemoration 7 May 2025 - Kim Harris
 - Committee members are invited to attend tomorrow’s commemoration to remember people who have lost their life due to Family and Domestic Violence. Commencing at 11am at St Ives Village Green, The Mayor will unveil the purple seat and planting of Tibouchina tree, followed by the Hummingsong Choir and morning tea.

2. DV Action Plan update – Kim Harris
 - NAPCAN, the provider of Love Bites training, is partnering with Council to offer free training for up to 25 participants in their new Love Bites Senior Trauma Responsive program over two days in June.
 - Domestic and family violence education for the Mandarin and Korean community will be held in August and September 2025 in partnership with CASS.
 - Face to face Family and Domestic Violence Awareness training sessions for indoor and outdoor council staff Tuesday 6 and Wednesday 7 May 2025.
3. Homeless Persons Week – Unis Goh
For the August 2025 meeting, invite two guest speakers:
 - A representative from Mission Australia to discuss their new Health and Access Program (HEAP), which provides homelessness crisis and prevention services in Ku-ring-gai.
 - A speaker from Homes for Older Women (HOW), an organization helping women over 55 facing housing insecurity by connecting them with compassionate homeowners offering affordable rental accommodations.
 - Committee member shared that there has been a 31% increase in homeless women, the fastest growing cohort.
 - There has been a 20% rise in homeless working women.
4. How can woman be supported in our community. Ways to create networks of support and trust across ages and cultures. Madeleine Steel – **Deferred to next the meeting.**
5. How to best engage our new Federal MP in issues affecting women and girls in Ku-ring-gai - Arti Kumria - **Deferred to next the meeting.**
6. How can the Committee help Council in making an impact to the wellbeing of the women in Ku-ring-gai - Unis Goh - **Deferred to next the meeting.**
7. Encouraging women in Ku-ring-gai to run for Council at the next elections. – Councillor Indu Balachandran - **Deferred to the next meeting.**
8. Future agenda item – Menopause Forum– Mayor Christine Kay

FUTURE MEETING DATES:

- Tuesday, 5 August 2025 at 10am
- Tuesday, 4 November 2025 at 6pm

The Meeting closed at 2.29pm