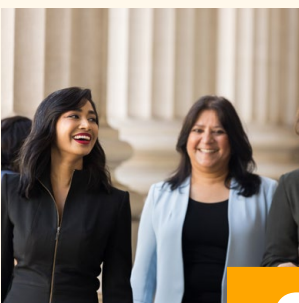
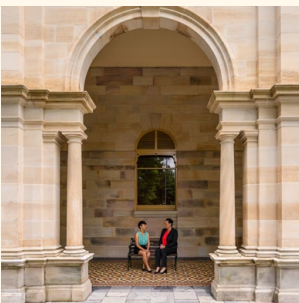


PATHWAYS TO POLITICS FOR WOMEN



**CELEBRATING
10 YEARS OF IMPACT**



Acknowledgement of Country

Pathways to Politics for Women acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways on which our programs take place across Australia, and we pay our deepest respects to Elders past and present.

We especially acknowledge the First Nations women who have shared their wisdom and leadership throughout the program, and those who continue to lead and inspire within their communities. We honour the enduring leadership of First Nations Australian women, and their vital role in shaping and sustaining this country for tens of thousands of years.





ABOUT PATHWAYS TO POLITICS FOR WOMEN

Since 2016, Pathways to Politics for Women has been working to increase the number of women in Australian politics by equipping diverse women to boldly embrace their political ambitions, thrive as leaders and make a profound contribution to society.

In the last 10 years Pathways to Politics has helped hundreds of women to run for office, achieving 92 electoral successes nationally across the political spectrum and at all levels of government.

Through comprehensive practical training, workshops, mentoring and career-long support, Pathways to Politics provides unparalleled expertise for women who are serious about driving change through political leadership.

The proudly non-partisan programs are uniquely designed in collaboration with eight leading universities across Australia, tailored to each local context.

Programs are open to women across Australia. Participation is fully funded through the generous support of philanthropic and university partners.

Pathways to Politics embraces an inclusive definition of 'women', acknowledging the diversity of women we work with and aim to support, including cisgender and transgender women, and non-binary people.

Australia's most comprehensive and award-winning political training

Participants gain first-hand insights from prominent politicians, advisors, speechwriters and media trainers, giving them confidence and clarity about their future in politics.

Practical workshops and exercises cover topics including:

- political vision
- campaign planning
- preselection
- media training
- speechwriting and delivering a speech in parliament
- leadership skills

After completing the program, participants become part of a powerful, diverse network of Pathways to Politics alums – gaining access to one-to-one mentoring, masterclasses and networking opportunities that continue to fuel their political journeys.

Founding partners



University partners



Pathways to Politics for Women

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF IMPACT

Introduction: A decade of impact	3
The growth of Pathways to Politics for Women	6
Counting the change: Our impact in numbers	8
Key milestones: A visual timeline	12
Seven alums across five parties:	14
Building a collaborative culture in the Victorian Parliament	
The 10 best things about Pathways to Politics for Women	16
According to our alum community	
Making up for lost time	19
Strengthening political pathways for First Nations women	20
“You can’t be what you can’t see”:	22
Our alums in Federal Parliament	
Making politics safer for women	23
Disrupting the way we do politics	24
“Different sides, same goal”:	26
Building stronger political networks for women	
Reflecting our culturally diverse society	28
Creating pathways to Mayoralty	30
Joining forces to change the face of politics globally	32
Our people	33

A decade of impact



Pathways to Politics National Co-Convenors Dr Meredith Martin and Sarah Buckley, and Pathways to Politics Founder Carol Schwartz AO

Introduction from our Founder



CAROL SCHWARTZ AO
PATHWAYS TO POLITICS FOUNDER

For decades I've been driven by a belief in the value of more women in leadership. Equal representation strengthens decision-making, improves collaboration, and ensures leadership reflects the communities it serves. At its heart, it's about building a stronger, more resilient democracy.

My proudest example of this is founding **Pathways to Politics for Women**. Back in 2013, Julie Bishop was the only woman sitting at the Federal Cabinet table – our premier decision-making table. I remember feeling outraged at that imbalance and determined to change it.

Pathways to Politics provides practical training, mentoring, workshops and long-term support to women across the political spectrum. Inspired by the Harvard Kennedy School's *From Harvard Square to the Oval Office* practicum, it was the first Australian initiative of its kind – proudly non-partisan and fully focused on political gender parity.



A decade of impact

The inaugural program was launched in 2016 by the Trawalla Foundation, Women's Leadership Institute Australia, and our amazing founding partner the University of Melbourne. I proposed the concept to then Vice Chancellor Professor Glyn Davis AC, and we had a pilot program up within six months!

The University of Melbourne has remained a committed partner for over a decade, and I am truly grateful for their leadership and expertise. I also want to extend my deep thanks to the exceptional National Co-Convenors of Pathways to Politics, Sarah Buckley and Dr Meredith Martin. Meredith has been critical to Pathways to Politics since day one, and together Sarah and Meredith have successfully co-led the complex national expansion of the Pathways to Politics model.

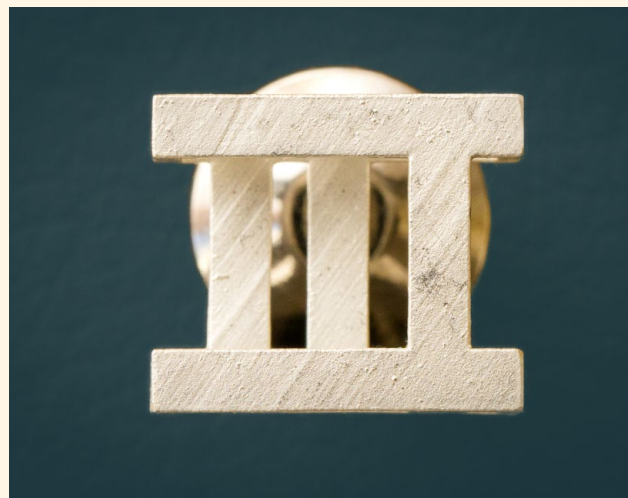
Since 2016, Pathways to Politics has gone from strength to strength. We are now truly national, with a unique and place-based model via eight university partners across every state and territory. I want to acknowledge our wonderful partners and the program teams at the University of Melbourne, QUT, UNSW, Charles Darwin University, the University of Adelaide, University of Canberra, University of Tasmania, and The University of Western Australia. Their collective commitment is to be congratulated, especially the inter-university collaboration that has become the hallmark of our brilliant national network.

The results speak for themselves. This year, 156 extraordinary women participated in the program, joining a network of 600 alums. A third have already sought preselection or run for office, leading to 92 electoral successes so far at federal, state and local levels. Today, three alums sit in Federal Parliament, seven serve in the Victorian Parliament, three in the Queensland Parliament, one in the Western Australian Parliament, one in the Northern Territory Parliament, and 49 on local councils across the country.

I am passionate about how we continue to support Pathways to Politics alums so that they feel safe and thrive in our parliaments. We have an engaged and supportive alum community, a generous political network of mentors, targeted masterclasses, specialist training with the eSafety Commission, access to tools like Social Protect to help women stay safe online, and involvement in a range of systems change initiatives.

I feel immensely proud of what has been achieved in our first decade – Pathways to Politics is genuinely changing the face of Australian politics. And we're only just getting started – I have no doubt that the future of Australian leadership will be stronger, fairer and more representative because of these outstanding women being in our parliaments and councils.

Carol Schwartz AO
Pathways to Politics Founder



Designed exclusively for Pathways to Politics, our alums wear this pin with pride. Amongst the symbolic pillars of democracy, one pillar stands boldly at the forefront. This has both individual and collective meaning – representing each woman embracing their political future, and our united ambition to redress the gender imbalance in our parliaments. The pin serves as a powerful reminder that, together, we are changing the face of Australian politics.

When women lead authentically, the benefits extend to society as a whole.

Analysis by the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at King's College London (founded by the Hon Julia Gillard AC) and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy reviewed over 500 studies on women in politics.

The findings are clear: when women lead authentically, the benefits extend beyond women and girls to society as a whole. Women bring collaborative, inclusive approaches to political arenas often marked by division, focus on critical issues affecting the most vulnerable, and work diligently to represent their constituents.

Greater female representation is also linked to reduced corruption, and improved quality and consistency in public service delivery. This evidence underscores why supporting women into political leadership is essential for stronger, more effective governance.

(Women Political Leaders: The Impact of Gender on Democracy, GIWL and Westminster Foundation for Democracy, 2020)

Introduction from the National Co-Convenors



SARAH BUCKLEY



DR MEREDITH MARTIN

We're so excited to share this publication celebrating Pathways to Politics for Women's first 10 years of impact. Over the past decade, we've worked tirelessly to equip women to boldly embrace their political ambitions, thrive as leaders and make a profound contribution to society.

This report is both a celebration of what's been achieved and a tribute to the incredible people who made it possible – our Founder, our inspiring alum community, our eight university partners, mentors, speakers and supporters right across the political spectrum. We hope you enjoy reading the articles and interviews that help bring this to life.

We owe much to Carol Schwartz AO, whose vision and determination made Pathways to Politics possible. Driven by both outrage and purpose, Carol refused to accept the glaring absence of women in our Federal Cabinet and beyond. Instead of simply lamenting the lack of female representation, she turned that frustration into action! Carol's foresight, courage, and relentless commitment is now changing the face of Australian politics.

The inaugural program was launched with the University of Melbourne in 2016, and the program has grown stronger with each year since. As the National Co-Convenors of Pathways to Politics we have proudly co-led this uniquely collaborative, place-based model built over the last 10 years.

Our national Pathways to Politics team spans the University of Melbourne, Women's Leadership Institute Australia and the Trawalla Foundation. We work with eight outstanding university partners: University of Melbourne, QUT, UNSW, Charles Darwin University, the University of Adelaide, University of Canberra, The University of Western Australia and University of Tasmania. We are so grateful to our amazing colleagues across these institutions. This genuinely collaborative and innovative approach has been central to the impact we've achieved together so far.

We're hugely appreciative of the hundreds of amazing political champions and subject matter experts who ensure our cohorts and alums can access the knowledge and advice they need. We have deeply committed politicians from across the political spectrum contributing via our advisory/steering committees in every state and territory, candidly presenting into programs and alum masterclasses, and providing impactful one-to-one mentoring for alums.

Most importantly – we have an incredible alum community who are the heart of Pathways to Politics. Their ongoing political journeys offer hope, confidence and inspiration. By stepping forward, representing their communities and shifting the political landscape, they are demonstrating what's possible when women equally lead in public life.

As you read this report, we hope you share our pride in what's been achieved – and our excitement for the decade ahead as we continue backing women with ambition, supporting their journeys, and celebrating the change they will create in politics and beyond.

Sarah Buckley

National Co-Convenor, CEO of the Trawalla Foundation and Chief of Staff for Carol Schwartz AO

Dr Meredith Martin

National Co-Convenor and Director of the Victorian Pathways to Politics program

The growth of Pathways to Politics for Women

SARAH BUCKLEY AND DR MEREDITH MARTIN

Over the past 10 years, Pathways to Politics for Women has grown from a bold idea into a national movement.

Inspired by the Harvard Kennedy School's *From Harvard Square to the Oval Office* practicum – with their founding director Victoria Budson generously sharing her insights – Pathways to Politics launched with remarkable momentum.

Then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, Professor Glyn Davis AC, was approached by Carol Schwartz AO to partner in establishing the program. Thanks to the leadership of Dr Meredith Martin and Nicholas Reece (now Lord Mayor of Melbourne), the University developed and delivered the pilot to 24 participants in just six months – an extraordinary achievement.

For its first three years, the program ran only in Victoria – yet its strong appeal drew participants from interstate who flew in to attend.



Inaugural cohort with Prof Margaret Sheil AO, Prof Glyn Davis AC, Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO, Carol Schwartz AO

The inaugural 2016 cohort has made a significant impact, with alumni including:

- **Cr Dr Olivia Ball**
(City of Melbourne)
- **Cr Libby Buckingham**
(City of Port Phillip)
- **Dr Wesa Chau**
(Executive Director Per Capita and Advisory Board Member, DFAT National Foundation for Australia-China Relations)
- **Dr Sarah Mansfield MLC**
(Member for Western Victoria)
- **Susanne Newton**
(former Mayor of Darebin)
- **Bridget Vallance MP**
(Member for Evelyn)



The growth of Pathways to Politics for Women

In 2020, when former University of Melbourne Provost Prof Margaret Sheil AO became Vice-Chancellor of QUT, she championed the program's expansion to Queensland. This marked the start of the national place-based model, and the commencement of our national alum mentoring initiative. The program has since grown steadily across Australia, reaching UNSW in 2021, Charles Darwin University in 2022, the University of Adelaide and University of Canberra in 2023, and The University of Western Australia and University of Tasmania in 2024.

Pathways to Politics is a unique model, intentionally designed to leverage expertise of partner universities while reflecting local political contexts and participant needs, guided by Advisory Committees in each state and territory. This collaborative approach has allowed us to expand nationally and foster a vibrant community of alums, political champions, expert presenters and mentors – while keeping the program locally relevant and tailored.

Thanks to our Rural and Regional Access Partner, the Minderoo Foundation, travel and accommodation are being offered nationally from 2025 for all rural and regional participants, ensuring women from all corners of the country can access the program.

10 years on, Pathways to Politics is a proven model for change – cultivating a vibrant, diverse community of female political leaders across Australia. □

Our Pathways to Politics Principles

1. A non-partisan approach to build a critical mass of diverse women across all sides of politics
2. Active encouragement and support for diverse candidates, including First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, rural and regional, LGBTQIA+, socially disadvantaged backgrounds and other equity categories
3. Inclusive and respectful spaces to foster a positive cohort experience
4. Practical skill building in areas such as campaigning, speechwriting and policy development
5. Access to diverse leading political voices who share honest experiences of public office
6. Bolstering participants' confidence and belief in their potential
7. Designing experiences that build cohort trust, networks and friendships
8. Facilitating an ongoing, active alum community
9. Delivering via an inter-university collaborative approach, with state and territory program teams and national support
10. Providing knowledge and practical tools to help alums feel safer and supported to thrive in politics
11. Contributing to national and international initiatives focused on strengthening women's representation in politics

2025 Western Australian cohort, Parliament of Western Australia



Counting the change

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

ELECTORAL IMPACT

(Data drawn from electoral cycles 2016–2025)

Pathways to Politics for Women is changing the face of Australian politics

In the past decade...

92

electoral successes
at local, state and federal
levels of government

(including alums successful
in multiple electoral cycles)

6

Federal
(ALP, Liberal)



16

State/Territory
(Animal Justice Party,
Country Liberal Party, Greens,
ALP, Liberal, LNP, Nationals)



70

Local Government
(Greens, Independent,
ALP, Liberal, LNP)



In 2025

64

alums are currently serving in
our parliaments and councils

28

alums ran in the federal
election, with **three elected**

In 2024

120 alums ran in state, territory and
local elections across Victoria, New
South Wales, Queensland, Northern
Territory and the ACT, with 49 elected
– a **41% success rate**



Significant numbers of alums have run for public office

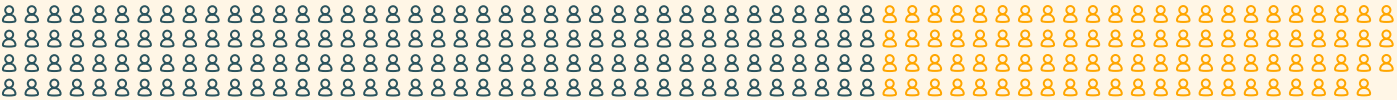
247

total electoral runs by Pathways to Politics alums

with a

37%

success rate



And intention to run remains high

Our alums show a clear
commitment to running for
public office

(Data drawn from post program surveys 2016–2024,
2025 programs still underway)



89%

intend to run over
the next 10 years

74%

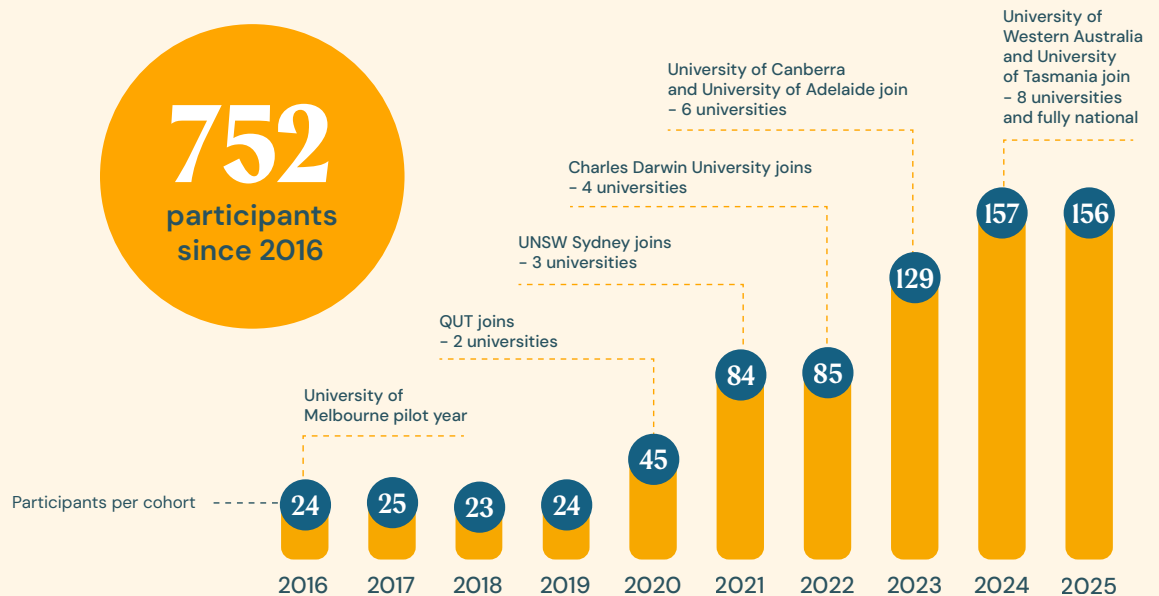
intend to run over
the next 5 years

OUR PARTICIPANTS

(Data drawn from 2016–2025 participant applications)

Our alum community is growing rapidly
– and reflects the diversity of communities across Australia

We have
expanded to
every state
and territory

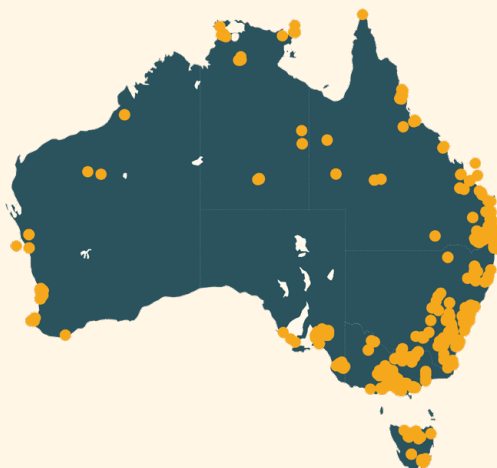


Pathways to Politics
is proudly
non-partisan

(Data drawn from multiple sources –
last known party affiliation 2016–2025)



Our participants
come from all across
Australia



Thanks to our Rural and Regional Access Partner **Minderoo Foundation**, travel and accommodation bursaries are available for all rural and regional participants, ensuring women from all corners of the country can access the program.

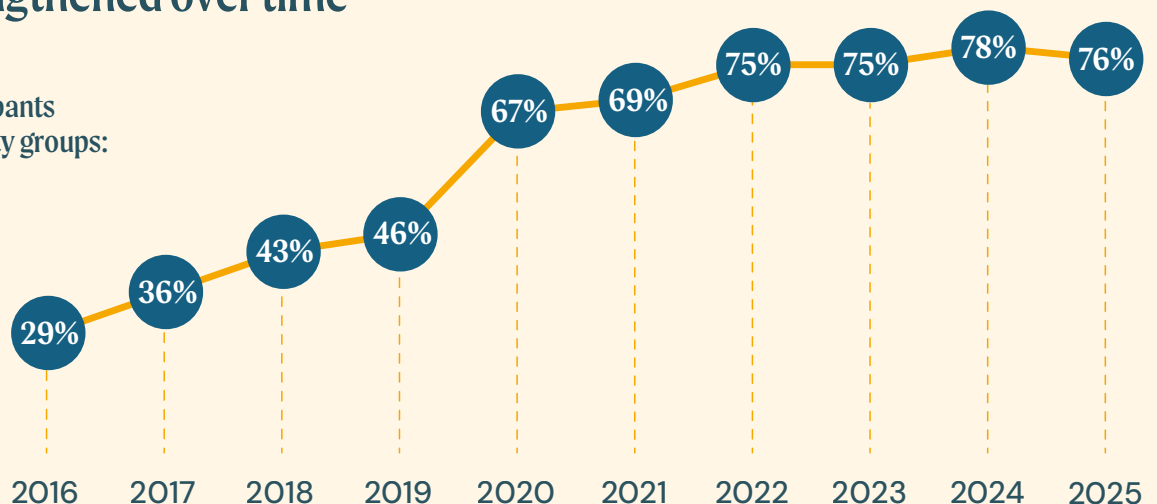
This partnership was piloted in WA in 2024 and expanded to every state and territory in 2025.

Our participants reflect a diversity of backgrounds and experiences

	Over the last decade:	In 2025:
 Regional, rural and remote	24%	32%
 Culturally and linguistically diverse	30%	28%
 LGBTQIA+	11%	19%
 Disability/chronic medical condition	10%	15%
 Difficult personal circumstances	9%	13%
 Socio-economic disadvantage	11%	10%
 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	6%	5%
 Refugee background	3%	3%

Diverse representation matters – and has strengthened over time

Proportion of participants identifying with equity groups:



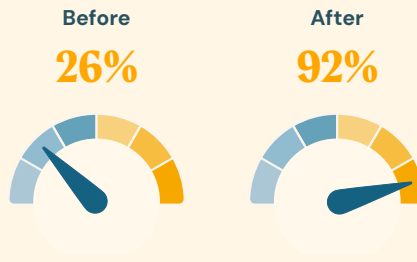
Pathways to Politics for Women consistently strengthens readiness to run for public office

Building readiness to run

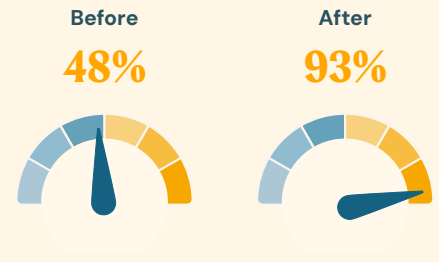
We ask participants before and after the program how prepared they feel to run for office, and what they see as the biggest barriers.

Their insights help us continually strengthen the program and refine the post-program support we offer — from mentoring and masterclasses to networking and practical tools.

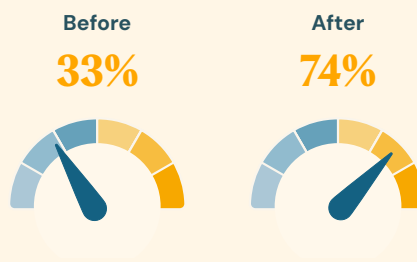
Knowledge



Practical skills



Networks and connections



Strengthening networks beyond the program through one-to-one mentoring

Running annually since 2020, our mentoring program is designed to empower and support alums who plan to run for office in the next five years through one-to-one guidance from an experienced political mentor.

150+

mentor matches since 2020

Addressing barriers to running for office

Before the program, our participants told us that their top 3 barriers to running were...

- 1 Financial constraints
- 2 Employment conflicts
- 3 Possibility of social media trolling/harassment

By the end of the program, social media trolling had fallen from the top three barriers – reflecting our ongoing efforts to address this challenge through practical measures such as social media training, eSafety Commission Social Media Self-Defense training, and in 2025, free access to the Social Protect app.

PATHWAYS TO POLITICS FOR WOMEN

CELEBRATING
10
YEARS

2005

From *Harvard Square to the Oval Office*, the inspiration for Pathways to Politics, begins at the Women & Public Policy Program at Harvard Kennedy School



2013

Carol Schwartz AO is determined to improve female representation in Australian politics and has the idea for Pathways to Politics

2015

Pathways to Politics launches at Parliament House with founding partners University of Melbourne, Trawalla Foundation and Women's Leadership Institute Australia



2016

- Foundational program begins at the University of Melbourne
- First alums elected: Susanne Newton and Steph Amir elected to Darebin City Council, Victoria



2018

First alums elected to a state parliament: Juliana Addison MP, Kat Theophanous MP and Bridget Vallence MP elected to the Victorian Parliament



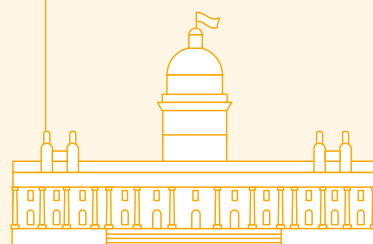
2019

- First step towards national place-based model – QUT program launches and inaugural Queensland cohort commences
- First alum in Federal Parliament: Dr Katie Allen (Victorian alum, 2016) elected as Member for Higgins



2020

- Pathways Alum Mentoring established, providing program alums with one-to-one guidance from experienced political mentors to help boost their readiness to run for office
- Carol Schwartz AO receives the Leading Philanthropist award in recognition of her gender equity work, including Pathways to Politics



2021

- UNSW Sydney program launches



- The Trawalla Foundation, Women's Leadership Institute Australia and the University of Melbourne are awarded the Eve Mahlab AO Gender-wise Philanthropy Award 2021 for Pathways to Politics

2022

- Charles Darwin University program launches
- 6 alums from 5 parties elected to the Victorian Parliament (see page 14)
- UNSW Sydney & Pathways to Politics release the reports *Representing Care: Toward a More Family-Friendly Parliament* and *Managing Misconduct* (see page 24)
- Pathways Knowledge Hub launches – our free online platform providing practical tools, information and inspiration to help women run for public office



2023

- University of Canberra and the University of Adelaide programs launch



- QUT and Pathways to Politics launch countdown to 100 women in the Queensland Parliament (see page 19)
- Launch of Hilma's Network by NSW alum Charlotte Mortlock



2024

- Pathways to Politics becomes fully national with eight university partners
- The University of Western Australia and University of Tasmania programs launch
- University of Adelaide "Women in the House" event as part of its 150 Make History Speaker Series
- 120 alums run for election across Australia, with a 41% success rate (see page 8)



2025

Pathways to Politics celebrates 10 years of impact

and 3 alums succeed at the federal election



Key events: Pathways to Politics

Key events: Examples of broader progress of women's political representation

2007

Senator the Hon Penny Wong becomes first openly LGBTQ+ woman to serve in the Federal Cabinet, and first to be born in Asia

2010

Hon Julia Gillard AC becomes Australia's first female Prime Minister

2013

Hon Julie Bishop appointed Australia's first female Minister for Foreign Affairs – but the only female member of the Federal Cabinet

2015

Hon Lara Giddings AO becomes Tasmania's first female Premier

2018

Sally Capp AO elected as Melbourne's first female Lord Mayor in 30 years

2020

ACT government forms the first majority female cabinet in Australia's history

2021

Set the Standard report into workplace culture in Australian Parliament released, making 28 recommendations to improve the safety and inclusivity of parliamentary workplaces

2022

- Hon Linda Burney becomes first Indigenous woman to hold a ministerial position in the Federal Parliament as Minister for Indigenous Australians
- Record number of women elected to Australian Parliament – 58 in House of Representatives, 43 in Senate
- Gender parity in Federal Cabinet achieved for the first time
- Victorian Parliament reaches gender parity across both chambers

2023

- ALP and Liberal Party expand policies to increase female representation in parliament – ALP aims for 50/50 by 2025, Liberal Party introduces new targets

2025

- The Australian Parliament reaches near-gender parity
- Hon Sussan Ley MP becomes first female leader of the Liberal Party
- A record 46% women elected to the House of Representatives (including 3 Pathways to Politics alums) and 57% women in the Senate





SEVEN ALUMS ACROSS FIVE PARTIES

BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE
CULTURE IN THE
VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT

AN INTERVIEW WITH PATHWAYS TO POLITICS ALUMS
**GAELE BROAD MLC, DR SARAH MANSFIELD MLC
AND GEORGIE PURCELL MLC**

GEORGIE PURCELL MLC:

Something special that comes from being a Pathways to Politics alum is the collegiate camaraderie, knowing we've all been through the program, no matter what side of politics we're on – particularly for Gaelle, Sarah and I, who sit in the same chamber in Parliament.

We know this is backed by evidence too – when women step into leadership roles we work to find common ground where we can, and find pathways forward together.

DR SARAH MANSFIELD MLC:

I really agree with that. Knowing we're all alums, there's that undercurrent there, that we know that we're accountable to each other, and want to show that there's a better standard we can aim for in how we interact. I can say in all honesty, with Georgie and Gaelle, even when we've held strong, opposing views on difficult issues, we've always engaged in civilised debate, both inside and outside the chamber. On those really tough days in Parliament, knowing that your colleagues across the chamber are going to treat you respectfully is really powerful. Pathways to Politics has definitely played a role in that. →



Seven alums of Pathways to Politics currently serve in the Victorian Parliament, representing five different political parties:

- **Juliana Addison MP**
(ALP)
- **Gaelle Broad MP**
(Nationals)
- **Anasina Gray-Barberio MLC**
(Greens)
- **Dr Sarah Mansfield MLC**
(Greens)
- **Georgie Purcell MLC**
(Animal Justice Party)
- **Kat Theophanous MP**
(ALP)
- **Bridget Vallence MP**
(Liberal Party)

SEVEN ALUMS ACROSS FIVE PARTIES

GAELE BROAD MLC:

Maybe it's a reflection on the type of people Pathways to Politics attracts too, people open to different political viewpoints and backgrounds. My 2018 cohort still stays in touch – those relationships last! And early on in Parliament, it was such a good point of connection: "Oh hey, you did the program too?" That shared experience builds trust and respect.

GEORGIE:

Gaelle and I were part of a history-making change – for the first time, all of Northern Victoria is represented by women. It's really meaningful that we share this background.

And I chair an Upper House committee with Sarah and Gaelle as members. Never once has anyone behaved in the way people sometimes assume politicians behave – it's been a really respectful, productive space.

SARAH:

Although there's always a political element, the level of collaboration in the committee work is different. It's a more genuine exploration of ideas. The relationships we've built through Pathways to Politics helps – sometimes it's that informal connection that lets you explore different views respectfully.

GAELE:

That collaboration is crucial in committee work. Of course we have big policy differences – but we often want the same outcomes, just via different approaches. Respect matters.

I did a parliamentary internship as a student 30 years ago, and Parliament was a very different place then. Now, you see so many more women, and that makes a difference.

SARAH:

I agree. We're lucky to be here at this time. Parliament's culture has changed, but there's still a way to go to fully reflect our broader community – especially for people of colour, First Nations people, and others. Some of the structural elements of Parliament still have deeply patriarchal roots. It's not just who's in the room that needs to change – it's how the room functions. Still, the progress we've seen is encouraging. And Pathways to Politics shows that change is possible when it's made a priority.

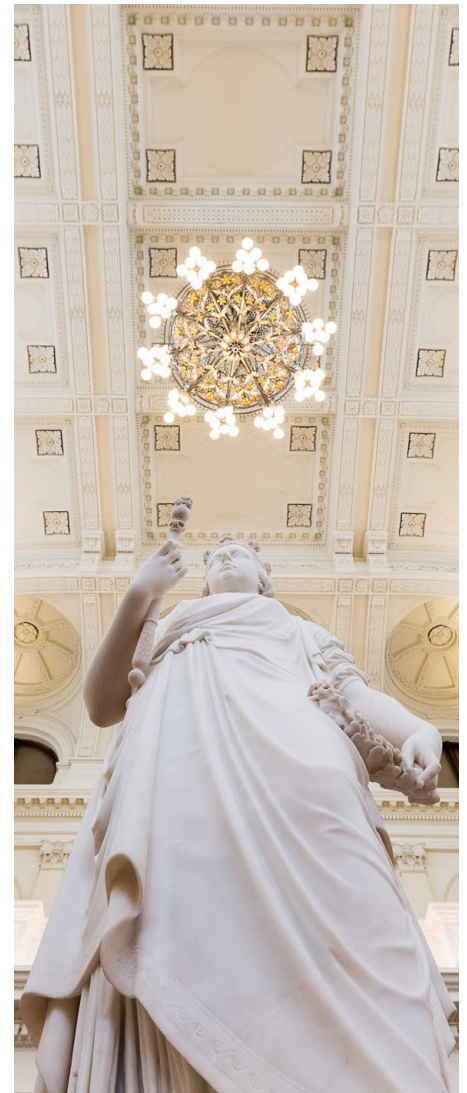
GEORGIE:

Think about how far we've come! Before I was elected, I was a staffer and worried about the culture in Parliament. But my experience has been better than I expected. Women have changed the culture rapidly by calling things out and supporting one another.

We now have gender parity and, for the first time, childcare in the building. These are big changes, and it's no coincidence they've come in a Parliament with more women. Pathways to Politics alums have played a significant role in that.

That should give us hope. Change is possible, and it can happen fast. □

This is an edited version of our interview with Gaelle, Sarah and Georgie.



"We now have gender parity and, for the first time, childcare in the building. These are big changes, and it's no coincidence they've come in a Parliament with more women. Pathways to Politics alums have played a significant role in that."

— Georgie Purcell MLC

10 BEST THINGS ABOUT PATHWAYS TO POLITICS...

ACCORDING TO OUR ALUM COMMUNITY



2025 ACT cohort

1

PRACTICAL SKILL BUILDING

"It was a dynamic platform to explore my strengths, overcome my doubts, and give me the practical skills needed to run a political contest."

— Kat Theophanous MP

"Meaningful learnings in effective communication styles, policy understanding and campaign strategies."

— Cr Penny Wolff

2

BOOSTS CONFIDENCE AND THE BELIEF THAT WE CAN DO IT

"I entered feeling insecure and frightened and left feeling strong, confident and empowered to take my political future seriously."

— Sallee Shepherd

"After completing the program, I know I have a future in politics and now feel confident to step up into leadership roles within my party."

— Taylor-Rose Hull

3

PROGRAM EXPERIENCES THAT BUILD COHORT TRUST, NETWORKS AND FRIENDSHIPS

"The influence and support I received from the other participants sparked something in me."

— Cr Deanne Rioli

"The unwavering camaraderie and genuine friendships formed through the program have been a beacon of strength and an indispensable resource."

— Cr Leanne Patrick

10 BEST THINGS ABOUT PATHWAYS TO POLITICS... ACCORDING TO OUR ALUM COMMUNITY



2025 NSW participants

4

BUILDS CLARITY OF POLITICAL VISION AND PURPOSE

"It's empowered me to see myself within politics, to know that my voice and lived experience has value."

— Neane Carter

"It was an awakening for me...this program transformed me from being a passive to an active participant."

— Lindall Watson

5

ACCESS TO DIVERSE LEADING POLITICAL VOICES

"An unbelievable line up of experts, academics and current and former politicians."

— Georgia Steele

"An incredible array of guest speakers to inspire and guide you to that all important seat at the table."

— Cr Debbie Taylor-Haynes

6

HONEST AND OPEN EXPERIENCES OF PUBLIC OFFICE

"Pathways to Politics was refreshingly candid and explored the good, the bad and the ugly!"

— Cr Susan Yengi

"The program is candid about how challenging it is being in politics, and how women, regardless of political persuasion, experience common challenges, but can work together to break down these barriers."

— Bridget Vallence MP

10 BEST THINGS ABOUT PATHWAYS TO POLITICS... ACCORDING TO OUR ALUM COMMUNITY

7

BOOSTING ELECTION READINESS THROUGH POST-PROGRAM MENTORING

"This program has been instrumental in helping me shape my political career already. The mentoring from somebody who's in it first-hand has been so helpful and really given me the confidence to feel that I can run."

— Casey Miles

"What was critical was the mentoring that we were able to receive afterwards. Without that, I don't think I would have run."

— Cr Sam Choudhury

8

INCLUSIVE AND RESPECTFUL SPACES THAT ENABLE A POSITIVE COHORT EXPERIENCE

"In a room full of powerful women from all walks of life, and all different political spheres, we bared our truths, our passions and our vulnerability to one another. We were able to grow as individuals and as a group."

— Cr Sara Diana Faraj

"It was an incredible mix of people from across the political spectrum and diverse backgrounds, and it created an exceptionally safe and supportive space to share ideas and learn from each other."

— Cr Elisha Lee

9

GENUINELY NON-PARTISAN, SUPPORTING CROSS-PARTY CONNECTIONS

"Pathways to Politics has changed the way I think about politics – it's made me believe that it is possible for diverse perspectives to be included and for everyone's voice to be heard."

— Aneesha Johar

"We've come from all walks of life, and everyone has their own story and their own reason for wanting to make a difference through political leadership. I could never have imagined the way we would connect."

— Ebony Altimira

10

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACTIVE ENCOURAGEMENT OF DIVERSE CANDIDATES

"This program was a game-changer — it empowered me to lead with authenticity, connect with trailblazing women, and envision a future where First Nations leadership is front and centre in Australian politics."

— Dr Rishelle Hume AM

"What made this experience even more remarkable was sharing it with an incredible cohort of powerful, diverse women...opening doors not only to women like me, but also to those from regional communities, young women, people with disability, diverse voices, and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds."

— Cr Ivonne Rodriguez

Making up for lost time

PATHWAYS TO POLITICS ALUMS JOIN FIRST 100 WOMEN IN QUEENSLAND'S PARLIAMENT



PROF VICKY BROWNING

Prof Vicky Browning is Director of the QUT Pathways to Politics program and a Professor in the Faculty of Business and Law, School of Management at QUT. Since it was established in 2020, the QUT program has supported 121 Queensland women to pursue political leadership.

With the countdown on to the last state election – and Queensland on the brink of electing its 100th woman to Parliament – QUT hosted *Q100*, a celebration of the trailblazing women who paved the way and those now shaping the future.

More than 50 current and former female parliamentarians attended, including then-Premier the Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk and Queensland's first female Premier, Anna Bligh AC. Each woman received a commemorative pin engraved with their individual number marking their place in history. What was so notable to me was the sheer joy in the room as women celebrated each other and reconnected, supporting women's political leadership.

To then see 14 of our alums stand for election across the state in 2024, and for three of these remarkable alums to be elected, was a powerful milestone to witness. Their swearing into Parliament helped push us past a long-overdue milestone – more than 100 women elected to the Legislative Assembly.

Being part of the journey to support this achievement is a proud moment for our program – and a clear sign of the impact that can be made when we invest in women's leadership. 



L-R: Queensland alums Dr Barbara O'Shea MP (Member for South Brisbane), Natalie Marr MP (Member for Thuringowa), Bree James MP (Member for Barron River, Assistant Minister for Tourism, Early Learning, Creative Industries and Far North Queensland) were elected to the Queensland Parliament in 2024



L-R: QUT Chancellor Ann Sherry AO, Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk, Hon Grace Grace MP, QUT Vice Chancellor and President Prof Margaret Sheil AO, Q100 event, 2023



Hon Anna Bligh AC, Q100 event, 2023

Strengthening political pathways for First Nations women



KAT HENAWAY
DIRECTOR, POLITICS IN COLOUR

Kat Henaway is Founder and Director of Politics in Colour, and a long-time collaborator with Pathways to Politics. A descendant of the Mer and Mua people of the Torres Strait Islands, she was born and raised in Indigenous communities in North Queensland.

"Making the decision to run" module, Victoria 2025. L-R: Anasina Gray-Barberio MLC (2024 alum), Senator Jana Stewart, Dr Meredith Martin, Jess Wilson MP, Cr Kylie Spears

First Nations women bring perspectives that are essential to our democracy, and I deeply value the work of Pathways to Politics in ensuring their voices are heard.

I'm so proud of this program and honoured to be a part of the journey over the past five years, partnering with Pathways to Politics to help create a supportive, respectful and inclusive space where First Nations women – and women from all backgrounds – can develop the skills and confidence to become the leaders they aspire to be. →

"It is on all of us to continue pushing and driving to get more women into politics, and I think Pathways to Politics does a great job in encouraging and nurturing that growth ... I think it's a really important message to send to culturally and racially marginalised women across the country, and First Nations women, that absolutely Parliament is a place for you."

— **Senator Jana Stewart**
Mutthi Mutthi and Wamba Wamba, Senator for Victoria

Panel conversation



Strengthening political pathways for First Nations women

Our collaboration has focused on strengthening pathways for First Nations and culturally diverse women to pursue political leadership. We've worked to embed cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, and community-led practice into the program's engagement with First Nations communities and prospective participants, and it's been wonderful to see the impact this has already had.

The program is further strengthened by the support of First Nations political leaders across the political spectrum – including the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy, the Hon Ken Wyatt and Senator Jana Stewart – who have generously shared their first-hand experiences of navigating political life with participants. Their guidance, visibility and encouragement are invaluable.

Pathways to Politics has always been authentically inclusive, and a safe space for me and many First Nations and culturally diverse women to participate. I'm thrilled to see so many First Nations women participating in the program – more than 40 across Australia in the first decade. And I'm proud that a growing pipeline has been established, paving the way for many more to follow in the years ahead. □

Sue-Anne Hunter, "Speeches in Parliament" module, Victoria 2023

6%

of Pathways to Politics alums identify as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander (above the 3.8% population parity)

"I can confidently say that it has been a transformative experience ... Thanks to this program, I've acquired valuable knowledge, established meaningful connections, and developed the confidence to lead with courage."

— Sue-Anne Hunter

Wurundjeri and Ngurai Illum Wurrung,
National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Children and Young People (2023 alum)



“You can’t be what you can’t see”

OUR ALUMS SERVING AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

We’re proud to be part of the growing momentum for more diverse representation in the Australian Parliament.

Gender parity is finally within reach following the 2025 election, with women now holding 57% of Senate seats and 46% of House of Representatives seats.

28

alums ran in the
2025 federal
election

Our alums in Federal Parliament:

Dr Katie Allen – our first alum elected to Federal Parliament, Katie served as the Liberal Member for Higgins from 2019–2022.



Mary Doyle MP – made history in 2023 with her Aston by-election win, the first woman to hold the seat. Re-elected as the ALP Member for Aston in 2025.



Sarah Witty MP – elected ALP Member for Melbourne in 2025.



“We need more women in government and in the ministry because women change the conversation. You can’t be what you can’t see. That’s why the Pathways to Politics program is so important – it provides a window into the experience of those who have been politically successful.”

— Dr Katie Allen
Former Federal Member for Higgins

“Pathways to Politics is a wonderful program that inspires women across the country ... from different backgrounds and different life experiences, to put their hand up to represent their community.”

— Sally Sitou MP
Federal Member for Reid

Sally Sitou MP – elected ALP Member for Reid in 2022 and re-elected in 2025.



Making politics safer for women



SARAH BUCKLEY

PATHWAYS TO
POLITICS FOR WOMEN
NATIONAL CO-CONVENOR

In our work with Pathways to Politics, we've become increasingly concerned about the safety challenges women face in public life – from everyday sexism and online abuse to physical threats. The toll is very real, both for them and their families, often leaving women feeling unsupported and isolated. Understandably, this can affect their decision to run or to recontest.

Our work is deeply informed by what we hear from our alum community – through the experiences they share with us, and via a dedicated safety reference group.

Building a critical mass of diverse female leaders is vital to our democracy, but the onus to address these safety challenges shouldn't fall on individuals. Systemic reforms are urgently needed, in Australia and internationally. Achieving them will require concerted effort and sustained commitment over time. In the meantime, our priority is to equip our alums with practical support.

Our publicly available Knowledge Hub provides resources, including eSafety guidance and toolkits. In partnership with the world leading eSafety Commissioner, we deliver Social Media Self-Defence training to build skills and confidence against online abuse. We've also invested in Social Protect, an app that instantly deletes abusive comments. Alums have described it as transformative, giving them a greater sense of safety and the space to focus on leading change. □

Our initiatives include...

- Social Media Self-Defence training provided to 200+ alums
- Free access to Social Protect for our entire alum community
- Freely available safety resources on our Knowledge Hub
- Civility training built into our programs

Pathways to Politics alums, L-R: Cr Susan Yengi, Sarah Jefford, Tina Samardzija, Georgie Purcell MLC



DISRUPTING THE WAY WE DO POLITICS

WHY PROF ROSALIND DIXON BELIEVES
STRUCTURAL REFORM IS VITAL TO CREATING
WORKPLACES WHERE WOMEN WANT TO LEAD



PROF ROSALIND DIXON

Prof Rosalind Dixon is Director of the UNSW Pathways to Politics for Women program, a Professor of Law at UNSW, and Co-Director, UNSW Gender Equality Hub.



Pathways to Politics embodies the spirit of doing things differently in many ways: empowering women from all backgrounds and changing the face of our parliaments and councils across the country.

We work to train our alums to bring respect, collaboration and their whole selves to politics – in a way that will make for more constructive and positive forms of democratic discourse and practice.

And as a national team, we work tirelessly with our alums and supporters to influence policy change for the better – including around care and representation, and how we manage misconduct in parliaments as workplaces. Central to this work have been my collaborations with members of the NSW Parliament, where together we've spearheaded efforts to create safer and fairer parliamentary workplaces. →

Attendees at the launch of the *Representing Care* report, 2022, including: the Hon Jodie Harrison MP, the Hon Courtney Houssos MLC, Liesl Tesch MP and Prof Rosalind Dixon

DISRUPTING THE WAY WE DO POLITICS

That means childcare in our parliaments, family-friendly hours and standing rules, less alcohol in our nation's peak workplace, and a greater use of technology to allow rural and remote communities, and those with care responsibilities, to attend parliament and committee hearings remotely. It also means having complaints processes and policies that take racism, sexism and homophobia seriously.

All this work is crucially important to promoting fairness in our political system and ensuring that politics is a career open to all women – including those from culturally diverse, and geographically and economically marginalised backgrounds. It helps shore up public confidence in our system of government, as truly representative of the community that it serves. And it promotes better policymaking informed by the lived experience of all of our community.

Without our collective work and support, we also risk leaving politics to be a lonely and daunting path, filled with structural obstacles – rather than the structural supports diverse women need to survive and thrive in our politics. □

Advocating for structural reform

- *Managing Misconduct: A Principled Response to Behavioural Misconduct in Constitutionally Significant Workplaces*, 2022 by Prof Gabrielle Appleby, Prof Rosalind Dixon and Prabha Nandagopal, produced by UNSW Sydney in partnership with Pathways to Politics for Women.
- *Representing Care: Toward a More Family-Friendly Parliament*, 2022 by Prof Rosalind Dixon, Kate Jackson and Matthew McLeod, produced by UNSW Sydney in partnership with Pathways to Politics for Women.



Pathways to Politics alum Harriet Dawson with daughter, "Speeches in Parliament" module, ACT 2024

“Different sides, same goal”

BUILDING STRONGER POLITICAL NETWORKS FOR WOMEN

AN INTERVIEW WITH PATHWAYS TO POLITICS ALUMS
PAMELA ANDERSON AND CHARLOTTE MORTLOCK

“My vision for the next generation of women is that it’s going to be easier, and there’ll be more women represented across *all* parties.”

— **Pamela Anderson**
CEO, EMILY’s List Australia

PAMELA:

I honestly can’t remember how Charlotte and I met, but we connected quickly and developed a friendship, which is fantastic – two women from different sides, but the same goal: more women in politics.

CHARLOTTE:

While it might seem very different to the public, we have a lot in common. We both have this very unique insight into how difficult politics can be for women. That mutual understanding helped us bond quickly and it built respect. We both want Australia’s democracy to be the best it can be, and that means we want our opponents to be as good as they can be as well.

PAMELA:

It’s not the first time Labor and Liberal women have worked together for the same outcome, there’s a history – the private member’s bill on RU486 is a great example. So that legacy flows into this relationship. We have a lot more in common than we don’t!

CHARLOTTE:

For me, Pathways to Politics reaffirmed how many talented women there are from all political stripes, and showed the pipeline is strong. Politics can be lonely, and Pathways to Politics made me feel less alone. It surrounded me with people who understood the challenges and could rally around me.



PAMELA ANDERSON
IS CEO OF EMILY’S LIST AUSTRALIA
AND AN ALUM OF OUR 2021 VICTORIAN PROGRAM

“EMILY’s List Australia has been going since the late ‘90s, founded by Joan Kirner, Julia Gillard and others who saw too few women in the political pipeline. We support Labor’s progressive women through endorsement, as well as advocating for issues including reproductive rights, childcare, diversity, gender equity and respect. We’re a membership-based organisation, external to the Labor Party, and proud to have driven Labor’s quotas.”

CHARLOTTE MORTLOCK
IS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER OF HILMA’S
NETWORK, AND AN ALUM OF OUR 2022 NSW PROGRAM

“Hilma’s Network recruits, supports and promotes Liberal women. We focus on grassroots recruitment because major parties can’t reflect society until their membership does. We host curated events to bring women in, headhunt candidates, and support women already in government through upskilling, training and strategy.”



“Different sides, same goal”

PAMELA:

I agree, and Pathways to Politics is a great way to expand your network beyond your own party too. It helps build bridges to help you work across the aisle. My vision for the next generation of women is that it's going to be easier, and there'll be more women represented across *all* parties. We won't still be fighting the same fights our grandmothers fought.

Networks like Hilma's, EMILY's List and Pathways to Politics are vital for building a pipeline and preparing women for political life.

CHARLOTTE:

I'd echo that – I want it easier, and more constructive. We've been in a rut, and I really want our political sphere, in Australian politics and globally, to enter into a new stage. I hope Pamela and I working together shows that you can put aside political stripes and work together to lift up the next generation.

PAMELA:

And bring back constructive debate. Disagreeing doesn't mean you dislike someone, it's healthy. That's something Pathways to Politics provides, by helping break down silos – people who “aren't supposed” to get along can build trust, just pick up the phone and get things done by having a real conversation.

CHARLOTTE:

And the more we normalise that collaboration and demystify politics, the stronger our democracy will be.

“I hope Pamela and I working together shows that you can put aside political stripes and work together to lift up the next generation.”

— Charlotte Mortlock
Director and Founder,
Hilma's Network

This is an edited version of our interview with Charlotte and Pamela.

2021 Victorian cohort





Members of the 2024 NSW cohort

Reflecting our culturally diverse society:

UNDERSTANDING THE BARRIERS TO REPRESENTATION
– AND BUILDING PATHWAYS THAT LEAD TO LASTING CHANGE

Australia now has the most culturally diverse Federal Parliament in its history – an important step towards true representation of our communities.

Yet the unfortunate reality is that culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women continue to face systemic barriers as they work to make their voices heard in politics. In 2024, we set out to understand their journeys more deeply, engaging Stacey Ong (a Women's Leadership Institute Australia Fellow and Founder of One Red Step) to research the role of race, culture and intersectionality in shaping women's pathways into politics.

As part of her work, Stacey spoke with Pathways to Politics Directors and alums from our longest-standing programs in NSW, Queensland and Victoria, with the aim to understand the barriers and enablers for CALD women at each stage of their political journey, and to identify practical ways we can support them. →

"This well-thought-out program is pivotal in driving change and elevating the presence of women in Australian politics. As a migrant woman actively engaged in politics, I am particularly delighted to witness the program's accessibility to women from diverse backgrounds, including those with culturally diverse and migrant experiences."

— Seema Abdullah
Former Mayor, Greater Shepparton City Council

Reflecting our culturally diverse society

From the beginning, Pathways to Politics has been intentional about inclusivity. We've partnered with Politics in Colour, run targeted outreach, profiled the experiences of CALD alums and worked to create culturally safe learning environments. These efforts are paying off: our cohorts consistently include more CALD women than population averages, and participation continues to grow.

But our research still shows that CALD alums are three times less likely to seek preselection and 10 times less likely to win preselection at the state and territory level. The barriers lie in access: entrenched networks, gatekeeping preselection and cultures that question rather than welcome difference. Alums describe racism, limited networks, financial strain, concerns about cultural safety, self-doubt and the pressure of being seen only as "the CALD candidate."

Once on the ballot, success rates are strong – especially in local government. Those who have succeeded point to mentorship, peer support, community encouragement and self-belief.

Pathways to Politics will keep doing all that we can: growing partnerships, strengthening networks, building peer support, and embedding explicit recognition of racism alongside practical strategies to address it.

Lasting change requires that this commitment is matched across all of our political institutions. When this happens, Australia's most culturally diverse parliament will no longer be seen as an exception, but as the beginning of a new norm. □

When they do run for election, CALD alums have been as successful as the rest of the cohort in winning*.

However, at the state/territory level, CALD alums are...

3×

Less likely to seek preselection compared to the rest of the cohort

10×

Less likely to win preselection

* data from the last five years



Leading by example

To highlight just a few of our many inspiring Culturally and Linguistically Diverse alums...

- **Sally Sitou MP**
bringing fresh perspective to the Federal Parliament
- **Anasina Gray-Barberio MLC**
the first Pasefika woman elected to the Victorian Parliament
- **Cr Samantha Choudhury** (City of Stonnington)
Cr Yolanda Kanyai (City of Palmerston)
Cr Elisha Lee (City of Monash)
Cr Susan Yengi (Maribyrnong City Council)
Cr Li Zhang (City of Glen Eira)
breaking new ground in local government
- **Dr Wesa Chau** and **Michelle Lim**
nationally recognised advocates amplifying diverse voices
- **Abiola Akinbiyi**
Victorian Honour Roll inductee and the first African woman in 50 years to Chair the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria

Staff and alums, Government House Victoria, 2024



CREATING PATHWAYS TO MAYORALTY

WHY JENNA DAVEY-BURNS BELIEVES IN BUILDING STRONG PATHWAYS TO MAYORALTY FOR WOMEN

In the 30 years since Kingston Council was established, there had never been two women in the top two roles of Mayor and Deputy Mayor, and only five female Mayors. I was determined to change that. In November of 2023, alongside a highly respected, exceptionally skilled lawyer, Tracey Davies, I led the first ever all female leadership team to the helm of Kingston Council.

Creating pathways to the Mayoralty starts with visibility. Young women, girls, trans and non-binary people seeing that women from all walks of life can be in the top job. I made sure during my time to speak out on equity and to make sure our Junior Mayor program was highlighted.

It is critically important that women pursue Mayoral roles because equitable decision making, fair policy direction and representative community outcomes are all driven from the top. The shifting landscape of female representation in politics is being driven by Pathways to Politics, helping create the ripple effect of women smashing through barriers and overcoming hurdles.

The most meaningful outcome from my time as Mayor? Being able to demonstrate that leaders can be kind, inclusive and impactful. ☐



JENNA DAVEY-BURNS

Jenna Davey-Burns is former Mayor of City of Kingston in Victoria. She is an alum of our 2019 program, and was mentored by former Lord Mayor of Melbourne Sally Capp AO as part of our inaugural alum mentoring program.

“From the very first session, being truly inspired by outstanding women, to being elected Deputy Mayor and then Mayor, Pathways to Politics has been an enormous part of my life. Without it and the generosity of the Trawalla Foundation, I wouldn’t have been able to achieve historic moments like the first all-female leadership team for Kingston Council. Pathways is forging a new future for women, and we are all part of that momentous change.”

Photograph (L-R): Kingston Junior Mayor Alexandra Shewan, Deputy Mayor Tracey Davies, Deputy Junior Mayor Vanessa Comarmond, and Mayor Jenna Davey-Burns

CREATING PATHWAYS TO MAYORALTY

Pathways to Politics has equipped alums to step into Mayoral roles across councils in the Northern Territory, Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales.

- **Jenna Davey-Burns**, City of Kingston, Victoria: Mayor 2023–2024; Deputy Mayor 2021–2022; Council term 2020–2024.
- **Cr Margot Davis**, Glenn Innes Severn Council, NSW; Mayor 2024–present.
- **Cr Amy Eden**, Cairns Regional Council, Queensland: Mayor 2024–present, Council term 2020–present; second ever female Mayor of Cairns.
- **Cr Asta Hill**, Alice Springs Town Council, Northern Territory: Mayor 2025–present.
- **Cr Jos Mitchell**, Redland City Council, Queensland: Mayor 2024–present.
- **Susanne Newton**, Darebin City Council, Victoria; Council term 2016–2024; Mayor 2023–24; Deputy Mayor 2022–23; joint-first Pathways to Politics alum elected to public office.
- **Angelica Panopoulos**, City of Merri-bek, Victoria: Mayor 2022–23; Council term 2020–24; youngest ever Mayor of Merri-bek at age 23.
- **Tina Samardzija**, City of Monash, Victoria: Mayor 2022–23; Deputy Mayor 2021–22; Council term 2020–2024.
- **Cr Debbie Taylor-Haynes**, Bayside City Council, Victoria: Mayor 2025–present; Deputy Mayor 2024–2025.

58 alums

have been elected as
local councillors

9

have been Mayors

42 municipalities

across Australia have
been represented by
Pathways to Politics alums

Mayor of Alice Springs Cr Asta Hill (2023 alum) with the Hon Vicki O'Halloran AO CVO, Patron of the Northern Territory Pathways to Politics program and former Northern Territory Administrator



Joining forces to change the face of politics globally

Women remain significantly underrepresented in politics globally – in 2025, they hold just 27% of parliamentary seats, with only seven countries achieving gender parity.

Pathways to Politics stands alongside a dynamic global movement working to change this. Through collaboration with organisations including WomenLEAD, Better Politics Foundation, Women Political Leaders and the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Network, we exchange expertise and strategies addressing barriers to women's participation. We also connect and share with peer funders such as Pivotal Ventures, Barbara Lee Family Foundation (recently closed after 25 years) and Colmena Fund, and many likeminded programs globally – including our original inspiration, *From Harvard Square to the Oval Office*.

From sharing insights with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and parliamentary delegations from Thailand, India, Bangladesh and Fiji, to contributing at the 2025 United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York, and connecting our alums to global leadership opportunities, we're building solidarity across borders – recognising that advancing women in politics is a shared global responsibility and critical to strengthening democracies.



Pathways to Politics alum Neane Carter at the Leadership Excellence in Politics (LEIP) program in Geneva, 2025. Both Neane and fellow alum Angelica Ojinnaka-Psillakis (2024) were nominated by Pathways to Politics to participate in this prestigious global training, which is coordinated by the Better Politics Foundation, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Kofi Annan Foundation and NexusVesting.



NSW Pathways to Politics Director Prof Rosalind Dixon and the Hon Dr Zainab Gimba MP, member of the Nigerian Parliament, at the 2024 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference.



National Co-Convenors Dr Meredith Martin and Sarah Buckley with Vanathi Srinivasan, an elected Member of the Legislative Assembly in Tamil Nadu and President of the Bharatiya Janata Party Women's Wing.

Australia's global ranking

Source:
World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2025*.

19th

For political empowerment,
Australia is ranked 19th out of 146 countries

30th

Ranked 30th for
Women in parliaments

8th

Ranked 8th for
Women in ministerial positions



Our people

Pathways to Politics brings together leading universities from across Australia in a unique national collaboration. Led by National Co-Convenors Sarah Buckley and Dr Meredith Martin, the national model provides a collective framework for program delivery and facilitates the exchange of expertise across programs.

Each state and territory program receives additional strategic guidance from a local Steering or Advisory Committee, bringing together university leaders, politicians, and Pathways to Politics alums. In addition to the members on the following pages, each Committee includes the local Program Director and Sarah Buckley.

We are deeply grateful to all Committee members for generously sharing their insights and expertise to support the development and transformative impact of Pathways to Politics.

National team:

Led by founding partners the **Trawalla Foundation**, **Women's Leadership Institute Australia** and the **University of Melbourne**, our national team drives strategy, innovation and alum engagement, and supports university partners across Australia to deliver impactful programs and alum mentoring.

Trawalla Foundation and Women's Leadership Institute Australia

- Sarah Buckley, National Co-Convenor, Pathways to Politics for Women, CEO Trawalla Foundation and Chief of Staff for Carol Schwartz AO
- Tessa Zajac, Project and Communications Officer

Victoria University of Melbourne Staff

- Dr Meredith Martin, Program Director and National Co-Convenor, Pathways to Politics for Women
- Erin O'Loughlin, Project Coordinator
- Rachel Brown, Content and Communications Coordinator

Advisory Committee (2025)

- Carol Schwartz AO, Founder, Pathways to Politics for Women
- Prof Nicola Phillips, Executive Sponsor and Provost, University of Melbourne
- Dr Katie Allen, former Member for Higgins (2017 alum)
- Pamela Anderson, CEO EMILY's List Australia (2021 alum)
- Dr Wesa Chau, Executive Director, Per Capita (2016 alum)
- Susanne Newton, former Mayor of Darebin City Council (2016 alum)
- Stacey Ong, Executive Director, One Red Step
- Bridget Vallence MP, Member for Evelyn (2016 alum)

Our people

Queensland QUT

Staff

- Prof Vicky Browning, Program Director
- Rachel Britton, Program Coordinator

Advisory Committee (2025)

- Sarah Campbell, Senior Advancement Manager, QUT
- Hon Dr Mary Crawford AM, former Member for Forde
- Sally Dillon, Communications and Content Manager, R&D (2020 alum)
- Ufficiale Hon Teresa Gambaro, former Member for Petrie and Brisbane
- Linda Lavarch, former Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, Attorney-General and Minister of Justice
- Margaret de Wit OAM, former President, Local Government Association of Queensland
- Prof Robina Xavier, Provost, QUT

New South Wales UNSW Sydney

Staff

- Prof Rosalind Dixon, Program Director
- Dr Elisabeth Perham, Co-Director
- Marian Iskander, Assistant Director

Advisory Board (2025)

- Helen Dalton MP, Member for Murray
- Hon Courtney Houssos MLC, Member of the NSW Legislative Council, Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, Minister for Natural Resources
- Jenny Leong MP, Member for Newtown
- Prof Justine Nolan, Director of the Australian Human Rights Institute and Professor in the Faculty of Law and Justice at UNSW Sydney
- Prof Carla Treloar, Centre for Social Research in Health and Social Policy Research Centre and Professor in the Faculty of Arts, Design & Architecture at UNSW Sydney
- Hon Gabrielle Upton, former Member for Vacluse
- Hon Leslie Williams, former Member for Port Macquarie

Northern Territory Charles Darwin University

Staff

- Prof Ruth Wallace, Program Director
- Karen Carroll, Program Coordinator

Patron

- Hon Vicki O'Halloran AO CVO, former Northern Territory Administrator

Advisory Committee (2025)

- Melanie Mayo, Associate Director Government Relations, Charles Darwin University
- Lauren Jane Moss, former Member for Casuarina
- Cr Athina Pascoe-Bell, Mayor of Palmerston

Australian Capital Territory University of Canberra

Staff

- A/Prof Leonora Risse, Program Director
- Romaisha Tauseef, Program Officer

Steering Committee (2025)

- Dr Jane Alver, Centre for Environmental Governance, University of Canberra
- Prof Raechel Johns, Faculty of Business, Government and Law, University of Canberra
- Prof Chris Wallace, Faculty of Business, Government and Law, University of Canberra

Advisory Committee

- Trish Bergin (Chair), former Co-Director of the 50/50 by 2030 Foundation, University of Canberra
- Meredith Edwards AM, Emerita Professor, University of Canberra
- Elizabeth Lee MP, Member for Kurrajong, ACT Legislative Assembly
- Prof Maree Meredith, past Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Leadership, University of Canberra
- Rachel Stephen-Smith MP, Member for Kurrajong, ACT Legislative Assembly and ACT Minister for Health, Mental Health, Finance and the Public Service

Our people

South Australia University of Adelaide

Staff

- Dr Peta Spyrou, Program Director
- Emily Chambers, Senior Program Coordinator

Advisory Committee (2025)

- Hon Connie Bonaros MLC, SA Legislative Council
- Hon Dr Susan Close MP, former Deputy Premier of South Australia
- Prof Jessica Gallagher, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement), University of Adelaide
- Leah Grantham, former South Australian Liberal Party Vice-President, Chief of Staff, Babcock Australia & New Zealand
- Senator Sarah Hanson-Young, Senator for South Australia
- Prof Lisa Hill, Professor of Politics, University of Adelaide
- Hon Michelle Lensink MLC, SA Legislative Council
- Prof John Williams AM, Provost, University of Adelaide

Tasmania University of Tasmania

Staff

- Kate Huntington, Executive Sponsor and Convenor
- Katy Cooper, Program Director and Facilitator
- Tania Heideman, Program Manager
- Dr Rob Hortle, Program Academic Advisor

Advisory Committee (2025)

- Hon Lara Giddings AO, former Premier of Tasmania
- Danielle Kidd, program alum
- Christine Milne AO, former Senator for Tasmania
- Hon Sarah Courtney, former Member for Bass

Western Australia The University of Western Australia

Staff

- Clare Feenan, Program Manager
- Prof David Gilchrist, Research Director, UWA Public Policy Institute
- A/Prof Paul Maginn, Director, UWA Public Policy Institute
- Prof Anna Nowak, Executive Sponsor and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)

Advisory Committee (2025)

- Cr Karen Chappell AM JP, President, WA Local Government Association
- Senator Dorinda Cox, Senator for WA
- Hon Mia Davies, former Member for Central Wheatbelt
- Emily Fogarty, Executive Officer, Office of Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
- Hon Liza Harvey OAM, former Member for Scarborough
- Liz Kerr, Deputy Clerk, Parliament of Western Australia
- Cr Lynn Maclaren, City of Albany, former Member of the WA Legislative Council
- Paula Rodgers, CEO, Committee for Perth
- Hon Dr Katrina Stratton MLC, Member of the WA Legislative Council





2025 Pathways to Politics cohorts (L-R, top to bottom): ACT, Victoria, NSW, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia



Pathways to Politics alums, 10 year anniversary celebration, Government House of Victoria 2025



“We need programs like Pathways to Politics, that special energy that happens when women come together to support each other, to learn from each other, to make sure that they’re ready to step forward into the political world.”

— **Hon Julia Gillard AC**
27th Prime Minister of Australia



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