Women’s Conference inspires many



The SSTUWA’s annual Women’s Conference was held in October. This year’s theme, *Count her in, invest in women, accelerate progress*, was based on the United Nations International Women’s Day theme and one we commemorated earlier on in the year.

Our speakers echoed this theme and included Peta Slocombe, the creator of Australia’s Biggest Mental Health Check-in and co-founder of the One Million Lives initiative; AEU federal women’s officer Emma Lowe and Natasha Short, a Kimberley Aboriginal woman who founded Kimberley Jiyigas to provide business consulting services to Indigenous women.

Peta has a passion for changing the way we think about and manage wellness at work and provided practical ways that women can support each other and build their own capabilities to learn, earn and lead.

She shared her 10 strategies to deal with everyday matters. The one that resonated with me was *“Choose your own gear!”* This strategy is about focusing on what is important at the time without feeling the pressure of everything all at once.

Emma provided an update of current developments in education and gender equity at a federal level and how union members contributed to submissions for federal government enquiries.

One example was the recent AEU submission for the Senate inquiry into menopause. Emma outlined how the federal office received examples from branches of issues around menopause and the very specific workplace requirements of schools and TAFE, as well as the impact upon members transitioning through perimenopause and menopause.

Members fed back after Emma’s session that they had no idea prior as to how individual stories could have such a big impact upon government policy and how important their stories were in the big picture of securing change for women – not only in our union but in society.

Natasha is a descendant of the Jaru people and based in Kununurra. She has been passionate about social change and righting injustices since witnessing a decade of socioeconomic disadvantage within Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley region.

Kimberley Jiyigas has grown into a movement of Kimberley Indigenous women who are passionate about influencing social change and focuses on supporting Aboriginal communities through a circular economy model.

Natasha shared that the three best ways to support Aboriginal women was to recognise them, invite them and engage with them.

Members fed back that the speakers were very informative and engaging, incredibly empowering and inspiring for others and extremely relevant and practical.

“I came away with good strategies to always consider as I grow from strength to strength,” one member said about Peta’s presentation.

Other members said Natasha’s speech was brilliant and inspiring.

“I loved hearing that those disadvantaged silent women are getting their voices and power back,” one member said.

Another commented: “My favourite speaker of the day. So much of what she said resonated with me.”

Aside from the keynote speakers there were workshops at the conference that covered topics such as pre-retirement planning for women, creating safe and supportive educational spaces for LGBTIQ+ staff and students and breaking down the new General Agreements.

Janette Bedwell, SSTUWA women’s officer, facilitated the well-attended pre-retirement planning workshop run by Shelley Tiet from Wealth Management Partners. Janette noted that it was a very informative session, reassuring members that they didn’t need to have millions of dollars to retire. Members were encouraged to use the Australian Government’s free Moneysmart calculator, provided by the ATO, to work out what was required to retire.

The Women’s Conference once again was well-attended and provided our members with an opportunity to meet and exchange stories of resilience and experiences with speakers, workshop presenters and other fabulous women of our union.

It was a day filled with enthusiasm. The vibe of the room was collegial, joyous and celebratory, which was very apt seeing it coincided with World Teachers’ Day on 25 October.

Comments from members included the following:

- “[A] wonderful event. So much to think about and take back to my peers.”
- “My first Women’s Conference and thoroughly enjoyed it.”
- “Always enjoy this day and walk away feeling inspired by strong, empowered women.”
- “Another great conference, a definite favourite of mine and the best way to spend World Teachers’ Day!”
- “Each presenter was well spoken, and the content was highly relevant.”
- “We have been so well cared for today. Thank you. I cannot wait to share what I have learned with my branch...[and] other women.”
- “Nice to get together with friends and have space where, as a teacher, I can receive and not just be a giver.”

Thank you to all staff involved in running the conference, in particular the Education and Training Centre Team, for yet another fantastic day.

We look forward to next year’s Women’s Conference, as well as the theme for International Women’s Day in 2025:*March forward*.



By Sharmila Nagar
Vice President

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
ABN 54 478 094 635 © 2026