

*International Women's Day 2026*

# **BALANCE THE SCALES**

**For ALL Women and Girls**

**Balance the Scales** is a promise that every woman and girl – regardless of background or identity – should be safe, heard, and free to shape her own future. Yet in 2026, millions of women and girls across Australia and the world are still denied that fair go. Discriminatory laws, harmful practices, and gender-based violence remains widespread, while structural barriers continue to block access to justice.

These barriers are not inevitable. They are built – and they can be dismantled.

Equality is not about advantage for some; it's about dignity, safety, and fairness for all.

When women and girls stand equal, families are stronger, workplaces are fairer, communities thrive, and society becomes safer for everyone.

**This International Women's Day, let's Balance the Scales together.**

## **First Nations Women**

First Nations women in Australia face unique and complex challenges in accessing justice. Overrepresentation in the criminal justice system, intergenerational trauma, and limited access to culturally safe legal support are just some of the barriers.

Justice for First Nations women must be community-led and grounded in respect for self-determination. By centring First Nations women's voices and leadership, and ensuring communities play an active role as partners in change, we can drive meaningful change and create pathways to justice that are culturally informed and truly inclusive.

## **Access**

Across the globe, women and girls continue to face significant barriers to accessing justice – barriers rooted in discriminatory laws, social stigma, and under-resourced legal systems.

From gender-based violence and discrimination to economic injustice and sexual violence, the challenges are complex and deeply rooted. In Australia, legal protections exist on paper, but the justice system often fails women in practice. Many women face high costs, delays, and limited legal aid. Legal processes can retraumatise, dismiss, or fail to support survivors. Additionally, women from marginalised communities – including First Nations women and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds – face additional disadvantage.

Achieving real justice means transforming our systems – globally and here at home – to be accessible, survivor-centred, and truly responsive to the needs of every woman and girl.

## **Climate**

Climate change is not gender neutral. In the Pacific and across our region, women and girls are on the frontlines of climate impacts – yet are often excluded from legal protections and decision-making. Displacement, loss of land, and increased vulnerability to violence compound the challenges they face.

Australia plays a critical role in supporting regional leadership and resilience, ensuring women's voices – including those from First Nations and culturally diverse backgrounds – shape solutions to both climate and justice challenges. Climate justice is gender justice.

## Join us this International Women's Day

This International Women's Day, UN Women Australia invites you to be part of a national movement for justice. Hear from an extraordinary line-up of leaders, legal experts, advocates, and changemakers who are driving real change for women and girls.

Our 2026 events will showcase trailblazers working to reform legal systems, eliminate discriminatory laws, support survivors, and champion First Nations and Pacific women's justice. You'll hear powerful stories from human rights lawyers, survivor advocates, climate justice leaders, and those shaping Australia's regional role in gender equality.

This is your opportunity to be inspired, to connect with a community committed to action, and to play your part in ensuring justice for every woman and girl.


Find out more at [iwd.net.au](https://iwd.net.au)

## Donate Now

Your support helps UN Women deliver programs that break down barriers to justice for women and girls – here in Australia, across the Pacific, and around the world. Donate today to help eliminate discriminatory laws, support survivors of violence, and drive gender justice where it's needed most. Together, we can **Balance the Scales** for every woman and girl.

[Give A Gift](#)

## Did you know?

-  Globally, **3.9 billion women and girls** live in countries with at least one law restricting their economic opportunities and access to justice.
-  Across Australia, conviction rates for sexual assault cases remain persistently low - with the latest NSW figures revealing just a **7% conviction rate** in 2023, underscoring how justice remains out of reach for most survivors.
-  First Nations women are **34 times** more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence than non-Indigenous women in Australia.
-  **1 in 3 women** worldwide experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, yet most will never seek formal help or justice.
-  Women make up **less than 40%** of judges globally, and in some regions, less than 10%.

**Sources:** World Bank (2025), NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (2025), AIHW (2023), WHO (2023), UN Women (2023).

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