MEDIA STATEMENT

NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR AUSTRALIAN WOMEN

For Immediate Release:

21 June 2026

SDA Amendment Bill is a threat to all women

Feminists, women's organisations and community coalitions have united to express their opposition to the Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sex-based Rights) Bill 2026, tabled in the Federal Parliament last week by the Nationals' Alison Penfold MP.

This is the second attempt in less than a year to weaken the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth), and it comes at a time when women's rights are under pressure on multiple fronts, with Bills before the NSW and SA Parliaments and a disallowance motion in Queensland all seeking to limit abortion care.

Nineteen organisations are raising their voices in concern about the latest attack on the Sex Discrimination Act, which seeks to limit protection to discrimination by defining men and women only by their physical characteristics, imposing a strict sex binary and allowing people to establish 'women-only' places and services without any justification needed.

Sally Moyle, Chair of the National Foundation for Australian Women said "For generations, feminists have been fighting for recognition of the complexity of our lives. This Bill strikes at the core of gender equality by narrowly defining women. It risks taking us back to a time when an idealised definition of 'the woman' only allowed us to be caregivers defined by our reproductive function, who should not own property and were not suited to leadership, capable of rational thought or physically strong."

Dr Gemma Killen, Executive Director of the Working with Women Alliance said "The Sex Discrimination Act is the cornerstone of gender equality in Australia, and we do not want to see it weakened. We do not want a situation where women are judged as 'not female enough' to deserve protection or access to women-only spaces, just because they might look or sound different to the feminine stereotype."

Sandra Creamer, CEO of the Australian Women's Health Alliance, said "Women

often experience discrimination that has nothing to do with our bodies. Whenever we are overlooked for promotion or sacked from a job because we are married or talked over in a meeting it's not because of our chromosomes. It's because of deep-rooted ideas about what a woman can be and how much she is worth. We need the SDA to cover discrimination that goes well beyond our bodies."

Clea Smith, CEO of Tradeswomen Australia, said: "Women and gender diverse people continue to face barriers to entering, staying and progressing in many industries. At a time when Australia needs more people participating in skilled trades and technical careers, we should be removing barriers, not creating new ones. This Bill risks making participation harder for people who already face discrimination and exclusion in workplaces and training environments."

Kylie Beckett-Cole of Not In Our Name Australia said "Narrowing the definition of womanhood does not protect women; it does the reverse. It encourages looks-based scrutiny and policing of our bodies and spaces. We support fairness for all, where attention and resources are focussed on the real issues affecting women rather than on harmful and outdated fearmongering."

Kay Anastassiadis, National Convenor of the Women's Electoral Lobby said "The Coalition's Bill is an attack on fairness and is out of step with what women want. Everyone deserves dignity and the right to be judged on their merits instead of irrelevant assumptions about their identity. We don't want a situation where women are being judged as 'not female enough' to enter a women-only space, just because they might look or sound different to the stereotype."

Elena Rosenman, Chair, of the Women's Legal Services Australia said: "The Sex Discrimination Act provides critical protection for women, trans and gender diverse people and people who are intersex. This Bill would weaken these protections and take us back to a time where gender norms were policed - this would be to the detriment of all of us. The Sex Discrimination Act works because it is broad enough to reflect the reality of all women's lives. We urge MPs across Australia to focus on strengthening the protections for all, not creating a two-tiered system where some women are more protected than others."

Instead of accepting the slow, incremental roll back of our rights, now is the time for us all to stand up and advance gender equality and human rights. The nineteen organisations listed at the end of this press release are calling for the Bill to be allowed to lapse and to develop a comprehensive, integrated human rights Act in Australia.

List of endorsing organisations

National Foundation for Australian Women

Australian Women's Health Alliance

Australian Multicultural Women's Alliance

Community Legal Centres Australia

International Women's Development Agency

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance

National Council of Australian Women

National Older Women's Network

National Rural Women's Coalition

Not in Our Name Australia

The Persephone Network

Tradeswomen Australia

WESNET

Women's Electoral Lobby

Women with Disabilities Australia

Women's Health in the Southeast

Women's Legal Services Australia

Working with Women Alliance

Zonta International

ENDS

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Kimberley Gardiner, Media, *Women's Legal Services Australia*, 0437 435 777

About the National Foundation for Australian Women

NFAW is a leading advocate for gender equality in Australia, independent of party politics and dedicated to promoting and protecting women's rights through policy advocacy, research, and education.

Community Legal Centres
Australia