

Dear Senator Wong

On behalf of Zonta Australia, part of a global leading human rights organisation [Zonta International](#), we advocate for women's and girls' rights. I write to express our deep concern and to call for a reaffirmed commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 (SDG5), which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a catalyst for sustainable development. Ensuring equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, strengthens communities, drives innovation, and accelerates collective progress toward a more just and sustainable world. Furthermore, gender equality is a cornerstone for achieving peace and security worldwide.

Since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, Zonta International has dedicated its global service and advocacy efforts to advancing SDG5. However, achieving gender equality is more critical than ever, especially in light of recent challenges and setbacks. At a time when progress toward equality is being threatened, it is imperative to reaffirm that true, long-lasting development cannot be achieved without the full participation and empowerment of women and girls.

Australia has demonstrated a commitment to the SDGs, integrating them into national policies and reporting mechanisms. The 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper underscores Australia's dedication to the 2030 Agenda, emphasising the nation's responsibility to contribute to global efforts in reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development. According to the Sustainable Development Report 2024, Australia has achieved 21 of the 124 SDG targets for which comparable data are available, with an additional five targets projected to be met by 2030.

While Australia performs well in health (SDG 3) and education (SDG 4), significant challenges remain, particularly in the areas of gender equality (SDG 5), climate action (SDG 13), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), and reducing inequalities (SDG 10). Notably, no country, including Australia, is currently on track to fully achieve SDG5 by 2030. Efforts to address environmental concerns, economic disparities, and gender inequalities require urgent attention to ensure progress continues.

As the global community gathers for the annual Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York this week, we are disheartened to learn of the United States' recent denouncement of the SDGs, particularly its withdrawal from commitments related to gender equality. The SDGs, which have been endorsed by nearly every nation, provide a crucial framework for inclusive development, human dignity, and a better future for all.

The decision of the United States to step back from its SDG commitments risks undermining decades of progress and weakens global solidarity in addressing shared challenges. In this

context, Zonta Australia urges Australia to stand firm in its commitment to the SDGs and to play a leadership role in advocating for gender equality at both national and international levels.

We call on the Australian Government to:

1. Reaffirm its commitment to the SDGs, with a strong emphasis on achieving SDG5.
2. Strengthen climate policies by implementing more aggressive strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and investing in renewable energy sources.
3. Promote sustainable practices by encouraging industries to adopt responsible production methods and consumers to engage in environmentally friendly consumption.
4. Address economic inequality by developing policies that promote equitable economic growth and ensure that benefits are distributed fairly across all segments of society.
5. Enhance gender equality efforts by implementing comprehensive measures to close gender gaps in various sectors and ensuring equal opportunities and outcomes for all genders.

The time to act is now. We must not allow decades of progress to be undone. We urge you and the Australian Government to stand up, speak out, and take decisive action to ensure that gender equality remains a priority in global development efforts. Our shared future depends on it.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your response and to working together in advancing the rights and opportunities of women and girls in Australia and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

Bridget Mather PSM

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