Working with Women Alliance

GENVIC GENDER EQUITY VICTORIA

WEAVING CHANGE 2026

DISCUSSION REPORT: WHAT EMERGED FROM A DAY OF COLLECTIVE SENSE-MAKING

Held at the Queen Victoria Women's Centre, 24 April 2026

Hosted by Gender Equity Victoria and thee Working for Women's Alliance

Foreword

Weaving Change was convened as a deliberate experiment in unconference methodology – bringing together women working across gender equality, prevention of gender-based violence, disability advocacy, migrant women's organising, economic justice, climate, technology and academia to set the agenda themselves. There was no pre-set program, no keynote, no panel of pre-determined experts. Instead, participants pitched the conversations they most needed to have, and the day's structure emerged from those pitches.

This report draws together what was said, what emerged, what didn't emerge, and what participants identified as the work ahead. It is not a synthesis that smooths over difference. The day surfaced real tension as well as real alignment, and this report tries to hold both.

Across the ten thematic sessions and the closing reflections, a consistent analytical posture emerged. Participants moved repeatedly from individual framings to structural ones, from inclusion language to power language, and from naming problems to interrogating the systems that produce them. That posture – patient, rigorous, refusing the easy frame – is itself one of the most important outcomes of the day.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Weaving Change brought together participants across the women's health, gender equality, prevention, justice, disability, migrant women's, climate and technology sectors for a single day of participant-led conversation. Ten thematic sessions ran across the day – Intersectionality, Burnout, Disability, Economic Security, Gender-Based Violence, Leadership, Migrant Women, Sex and Gender, Tech/IT/AI, Collective Action – together with a session on Climate as a frontier issue.

Five cross-cutting findings emerged.

First, the sector is analytically mature and structurally constrained. Participants demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of how systems of power, patriarchy, racism, capitalism, ableism and xenophobia interact to produce gendered inequality. The barrier is not understanding. It is the gap between that understanding and the funding, infrastructure, governance and coordination required to act on it at scale.

Second, "inclusion" is no longer the right frame. Across multiple sessions – Migrant Women, Disability, Sex and Gender, Leadership – participants explicitly rejected inclusion language as insufficient. The reframing was consistent: this is about redistribution of power, voice and authority, not addition of seats at an unchanged table.

Third, burnout is a structural issue, not an individual one. Participants located workforce attrition in funding precarity, organisational expectations, perfectionism as cultural norm, and the inherent demands of values-driven work. Self-care framings were explicitly named as inadequate.

Fourth, the sector is fragmented in ways that limit collective power. The Collective Action and Economic Security sessions in particular surfaced the fracture between feminist organisations, the union movement, academia, community organisations and government, and identified funding structures themselves as a driver of competition rather than collaboration.

Fifth, there is real appetite for something different. A "feminist Town Square," structural quotas for migrant women, transformative justice models, pro-social AI, doughnut economics, dismantling capitalism, redefining leadership as a verb – participants were not short of ambition. What is missing is the infrastructure to turn that ambition into coordinated action.

The closing circle summed it up: **"We know what we want. We just don't know how to do it."**

This report develops these findings in turn.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

Weaving Change used an unconference format. Participants were invited to pitch sessions on the morning of the day, articulating who they were, what they wanted to discuss, and why it mattered. Pitches were clustered into thematic streams and run as facilitated conversations.

Each session captured:

- Pitches – who proposed the session and why
- Key takeaways – what participants identified as most important
- What emerged – substantive content of the discussion
- What didn't emerge – gaps, absences, things participants noticed were not said
- How might we… – action-oriented questions and proposals

This report draws directly from the raw documentation of those sessions and from the closing reflections circle, where participants named what had crystallised for them over the day.

A note on the data: some pitch cards were partially illegible and have been interpreted cautiously, with uncertainty flagged in the original write-ups. Themes presented here are grounded in what participants explicitly said, not extrapolated.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Before turning to individual sessions, six themes recurred across the day with sufficient frequency and force to warrant treatment in their own right.

Power, not identity

The most consistent analytical move across the day was the shift from identity to structure. The Migrant Women session articulated this most sharply – "'Migrant' is not an identity. It is a way of being positioned within structures of place and power." The Intersectionality session reinforced it: intersectionality "is a power analysis – it is a systems analysis about access barriers to power," and is misapplied when it becomes a vocabulary for describing people rather than a tool for analysing oppression. The Disability session named the risk that intersectional language "can become a form of victim blaming and situating the problem in the person." The Sex and Gender session identified transphobia as "a key anti-feminist advocacy tactic" – locating sex and gender debates within political strategy rather than personal belief.

Across all of these, participants resisted the dilution of structural analysis into individualised frameworks.

Inclusion is insufficient

Closely related, but worth naming separately. Multiple sessions explicitly distinguished inclusion from equity. "Inclusion ≠ equality" (Migrant Women). "Don't need inclusive structures that make me 'the other'" (Migrant Women). "Disability tokenism can erode discussion of inclusion" (Disability). "Representation must be paired with structural change, otherwise inequities persist" (Leadership). The argument is not against inclusion as a goal – it is against treating inclusion as the goal, when the underlying systems of power remain unchanged.

Fragmentation as a structural problem

Participants repeatedly named the sector as fragmented in ways that undermine collective impact. The fracture between feminist organisations and the union movement was explicitly named in Economic Security. The disconnect between academia and community organising was named in Collective Action. The siloing of GBV services from housing, economic security, mental health and justice was named in GBV. Crucially, participants located the cause of fragmentation in funding design – *"funding isn't conducive to collaboration"* – rather than in personal or organisational deficit.

Burnout as systemic risk to the movement itself

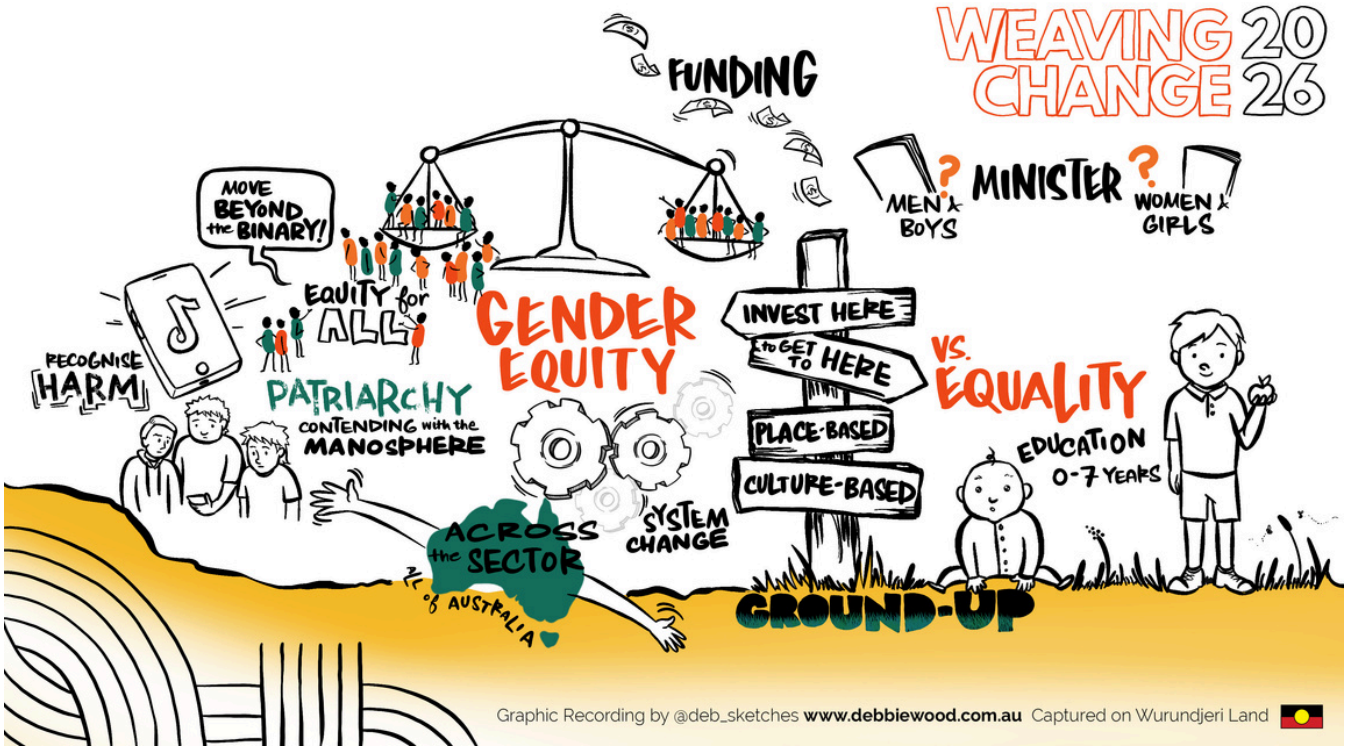
Burnout was raised as an explicit session topic, but the analysis surfaced across the day. Participants framed workforce attrition as a structural risk to the gender equality movement – not as private exhaustion but as collective vulnerability. The drivers identified were funding insecurity, perfectionism as cultural norm, leadership pressure, and the inherent emotional load of values-driven work. The framing was deliberate: *"It is a system issue, not a personal deficit."*

Lived experience as expertise – but at what cost?

Centring lived experience was affirmed across multiple sessions. The Disability session called for co-design with payment for participation. The GBV session called for victim-survivor centred responses. The Migrant Women session emphasised migrant women's expertise. At the same time, participants flagged the risk that lived-experience framings become extractive – "Women burdened with social service tasks"; "Girls have to take on the responsibility of challenging the manosphere." The work, participants insisted, must be resourced, structured and accountable, not relied on as unpaid labour.

Backlash and contested terrain

Participants identified that the field operates in increasingly contested political space. The Sex and Gender session named organised far-right backlash against feminism as a research and strategy priority. The Tech/IT/AI session identified anti-rights movements amplified through digital platforms. The GBV session named the misogynistic "manosphere" as actively shaping young men's worldviews. These are not framed as side issues. They are framed as defining features of the current operating environment.



SESSION FINDINGS

The sections that follow summarise each session, drawing on the participant pitches, discussion content and synthesis statements developed for the day. They are designed to be read in sequence, but each stands on its own for use in advocacy, briefing or sector communication.

1. Intersectionality

Three pitches converged on a single question: how do we move intersectionality from concept to practice? Aisy pitched a session on embedding ideas in local context and avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches. Bob offered a session on data, noting that current data systems cannot capture the complexity intersectionality demands. Deborah and Virginia pitched intersectionality as a feminist agenda grounded in power and privilege analysis.

The session surfaced a persistent gap between conceptual recognition and operational practice. Participants articulated intersectionality as fundamentally a power analysis – "a systems analysis about access barriers to power" – and were clear that confusing it with diversity and inclusion strips it of its analytical force. "People don't take the time to deeply understand intersectionality." "Many organisations talk about it but don't implement it." "There is a risk of it being used as a label without meaning."

Complexity was identified as both intersectionality's strength and the barrier to its application. Participants noted that the field has the concept but lacks the tools – frameworks, shared approaches, data systems – to apply it consistently across organisations.

The session also surfaced uncomfortable truths about power within the gender equality movement itself. "How might we get white women to loosen their grip on feminism?" was raised explicitly as a question, naming the dynamic that intersectional analysis must also turn inward.

What this means. The field is at a methodological pivot point. Intersectionality matters; the work is figuring out how to do it well, consistently and measurably. This requires investment in practical tools, capability-building, shared frameworks and the willingness to challenge dominant power within feminist practice itself.

2. Burnout

Madi pitched the session with a direct question: "I see so many of my colleagues calling it quits. How can we stop this?"

The discussion rejected individualised framings of burnout from the outset. Participants located its drivers in funding instability, organisational expectations misaligned with available resources, perfectionism as cultural and structural norm, and the inherent emotional and political demands of gender equality and social justice work. Burnout, participants said, is "a system issue, not a personal deficit."

Specific structural drivers were named:

- Short-term funding cycles producing workforce churn
- High-performance expectations without commensurate resourcing
- Leadership accountability and emotional labour
- Blurred personal and professional boundaries inherent to values-driven work
- Hidden labour – the "mules" who carry organisational and sectoral weight invisibly

Participants identified collective care, recognition and connection as protective factors – but were careful not to substitute these for structural reform. *"Don't accept 'it's just the way it is.'" "In funding applications → call out impacts of volatility in funding."*

The most striking framing came from the synthesis: burnout is not private exhaustion. It is a collective, systemic risk to the movement itself, and demands a movement-level response.

What this means. Workforce sustainability is a strategic priority for the gender equality sector, not a wellbeing afterthought. It requires longer funding cycles, organisational responsibility for collective care, recognition of hidden labour, and a culture shift away from perfectionism as performance standard.

3. Disability

Julie pitched a session asking how the gender equality movement can take the voices and needs of disabled women seriously – noting that approximately 20% of women identify as having disability, and yet are routinely excluded from decision-making, policy, workplaces and services.

The session positioned disability as a core but under-integrated dimension of intersectional gender equality. Participants were direct: "Gender equality movement hasn't been inclusive." "Disability has been under-represented." "Intersectionality not applied."

Several specific themes emerged:

- Disability pride as reframing. Participants emphasised the shift from deficit-based or problematising approaches to identity-affirming framings. This is contested terrain – pride-based and problem-based approaches coexist uneasily across systems.
- Universal design over the 80/20 rule. Current systems assume a default user and require people with disability to adapt. Inclusion requires system redesign, not retrofitting.
- Co-design with payment for participation. Lived experience is expertise. It must be resourced as such.
- The intersection of disability and class. Participants explicitly identified this as a missing conversation within intersectional practice.
- Invisible disabilities. Participants raised the need to account for disabilities not visibly apparent, and the experiences of women navigating systems that assume visibility.

Tokenism was named as an active risk – *"Disability tokenism can erode discussion of inclusion"* – alongside the observation that fear of doing the work imperfectly often leads to inaction. *"There is hesitation to do anything for fear of not doing it right (or it being too hard)."*

What this means. Disability inclusion in the gender equality sector requires structural integration, not awareness. The work involves universal design, co-design with payment, better data, capability-building across the sector, and explicit attention to the intersection of disability with class and other structural factors.

4. Economic Security

Four pitches converged on a structural analysis of women's economic inequality. Elin pitched the "pipeline illusion" – that women enter the workforce but drop out mid-career not because of personal choice but because the system is not designed for them. Nisa Heq pitched women's economic security and the world of work. Kerrie L pitched enterprise agreements and industrial mechanisms as a structural lever. Rai pitched poverty and economic justice with a stark framing: "Because without money women can't be free, safe or make choices."

This was one of the most structurally grounded sessions of the day. Participants reframed economic security as not participation but power – material, industrial and systemic.

Key themes:

- Capitalism undervalues care. The economic system is designed to externalise the care economy onto women's unpaid labour. Economic security cannot be addressed without centring care and redistributing unpaid work.
- The fracture between feminist organisations and the union movement was named explicitly as a strategic weakness.
- Leadership representation is insufficient on its own. "Women's leadership and economic security – there is still a significant disconnect between these two issues."
- Life-course inequity. Participants particularly identified older women's economic security and the superannuation gap as priorities.
- The casualisation/gig economy intersects with increasing care load to produce compounding insecurity.
- Alternative economic models – universal basic income, doughnut economics, wellbeing frameworks – were raised as live options, not theoretical curiosities.

Participants also named gaps. There is no cohesive narrative bringing economic issues together. There is no clear pathway from the Working for Women Strategy to implementation. Housing, cost of living, rural service access and the care economy are not adequately integrated into economic security frameworks.

Financial literacy was raised as both a structural concern (the absence of literacy is itself a form of disempowerment) and a prevention strategy, particularly in relation to economic abuse.

What this means. Economic security work requires moving from fragmented program responses to coherent, system-level reform that addresses labour, care, income and financial systems simultaneously, alongside stronger coordination between feminist organisations and the union movement and clearer implementation pathways for existing strategies.

5. Gender-Based Violence

Four pitches addressed system architecture, accountability and policy positioning. Micaela asked whether it is time for a Minister for Gender Equality in Victoria. Bianca pitched a national commitment to ending the crisis of GBV. Chloe Watts pitched homelessness and gendered violence at their intersection. Kat Hampton pitched accountability to women and girls in the context of growing work with men.

This was a session in which the field critiqued itself. Participants identified the response to GBV as fragmented, siloed and underwhelming – and named that fragmentation as a structural feature, not an accident.

Specific findings:

- Response misalignment. GBV is a systemic issue produced by patriarchy and power, but responses remain siloed across services, sectors and jurisdictions.
- The over-reliance on NGO service responses. Participants noted that services are stretched, access is uneven, and broader system engagement is missing.
- Contradictory laws affecting victim-survivors and children. Family law, criminal law, family violence law and child protection systems do not align, producing harm in the gaps.
- Early intervention is the consensus lever but is underdeveloped. Violence begins in childhood. School-based prevention, respectful relationships education and role modelling were affirmed but identified as inconsistently delivered.
- The gendered burden on women and girls. Participants named the dynamic where women and girls are expected to drive prevention work – *"Girls have to take on the responsibility of challenging the manosphere"* – as itself reproducing inequity.
- Working with men requires nuance. *"Are boys okay?"* was raised as a serious question. Participants identified that boys' mental health needs are real and unmet, while insisting that work with boys and men must remain accountable to women and girls.
- Transformative justice over punitive responses. Participants questioned whether criminal justice and policing can deliver the kind of change needed, and pointed to transformative justice models as an alternative.
- GBV is connected to housing, economic insecurity and mental health. The integration of these systems is missing. *"80% of women who have been victims of family violence have been unemployed long-term."*
- Cultural and community responses. Participants flagged the harm of generalising "migrant and refugee" communities as more violent, and called for culturally responsive rather than stigmatising approaches.

What this means. GBV responses require system-wide reform connecting social, economic and justice systems. The work involves resolving structural contradictions in law and policy, reducing the disproportionate burden on women and girls, engaging boys and men in more nuanced ways, and developing transformative justice models alongside existing responses.

6. Leadership

Three pitches converged on the question of what leadership for gender equality looks like and who gets to do it. Penny pitched change strategies – "because this is like a civil war, we need to think structurally and strategically." Tathra pitched leadership maturity and "weaving our wisdom" – leadership as human, collective, inclusive. Bridie pitched upskilling senior leaders to be genuine gender equality champions, noting that leaders often have good intentions but lack capability.

The session sat between two distinct propositions: reforming existing leaders, and reimagining leadership entirely. Both held energy across the room.

Key themes:

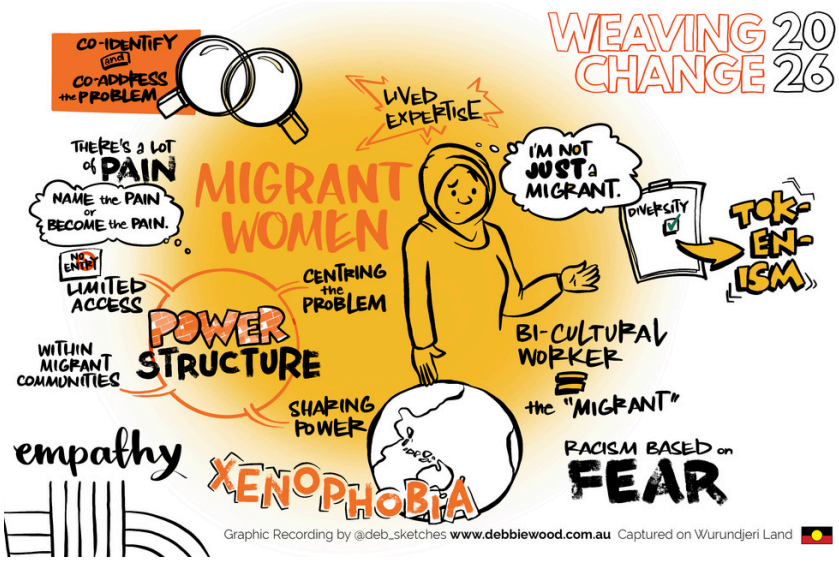
- Leadership is structurally produced. Who leads is determined by systems, structures, funding models and institutional norms – not individual capability.
- Leadership is a verb, not a model. "Leadership is a collective function." Participants moved away from hierarchical, individualistic framings toward relational and distributed leadership.
- Representation alone is insufficient. "Women are often coached and qualified but not given leadership roles." The barrier is selection, not pipeline.
- Glass ceilings, plural. Participants named the additional ceilings facing migrant women, women with disability and other structurally excluded groups.
- Leadership burnout and what gets rewarded. Cultural norms valuing overwork and individualism reinforce exclusion. "Leadership part-time should be standard."
- Allies matter, but accountability matters more. "Engage men in leadership" – alongside "recognise internal/lateral violence" and "stop blaming women for system barriers."
- Funding gender equality like infrastructure. Participants explicitly proposed treating gender equality work as core public infrastructure rather than discretionary investment.

Notable absences: the session did not produce clarity on quotas and targets linked to KPIs, governance mechanisms, or specific accountability frameworks – these were named as gaps rather than developed.

What this means. Leadership transformation requires redistribution of power, not just expanded participation. The work involves reforming governance and organisational systems, aligning investment and measurement frameworks with equity outcomes, engaging allies, and developing leadership approaches grounded in lived experience and intergenerational support.

7. Migrant Women

Three pitches called for centring migrant, Muslim and Black women – and reframing the work from inclusion to redistribution of voice and authority. Ashni/Juliana pitched the absence of mechanisms for migrant women to be heard. Uzma Rubab and Sana Baig pitched the connection between feminism and Muslim women, naming the gap. Wennie pitched including Black voices and confronting the whiteness of feminism.



This was perhaps the sharpest reframing of the day. Participants explicitly rejected identity-based framings: "'Migrant' is not an identity. It is a way of being positioned within structures of place and power."

Specific findings:

- The problem is structural, not personal. Patriarchy and xenophobia are the systems that produce exclusion. Naming "migrant women" as a category cannot be the limit of the analysis.
- Inclusion can reproduce othering. "Don't need inclusive structures that make me 'the other.'" Presence without influence is not equity.
- Layered marginalisation. Participants articulated marginalisation as cumulative – bias, structural exclusion and trauma compounding across systems.
- Migrant ≠ one story. Strong recognition that migrant communities are not homogeneous, and that programs and policy assuming homogeneity reproduce harm.
- Glass ceilings, with additional ceilings. "Bi-cultural worker" vs "community engagement staff" – hierarchies embedded in roles signal where migrant women are positioned within organisations.
- White feminism as part of the problem. Participants were clear: dominant feminist frameworks can themselves reproduce hierarchy and exclusion.
- Mechanisms must change, not just attitudes. Targeted quotas – for migrant women specifically – were proposed as structural levers. Intergenerational dialogue, power-sharing and learning from global feminist traditions (Egyptian feminism was raised as an example) were named as forward strategies.

What this means. Equity for migrant women requires redistribution of power, voice and authority – not improved inclusion within unchanged structures. The work involves targeted structural mechanisms, culturally responsive systems, critical reflexivity within feminist practice itself, and intentional intergenerational and cross-cultural learning.

8. Sex and Gender

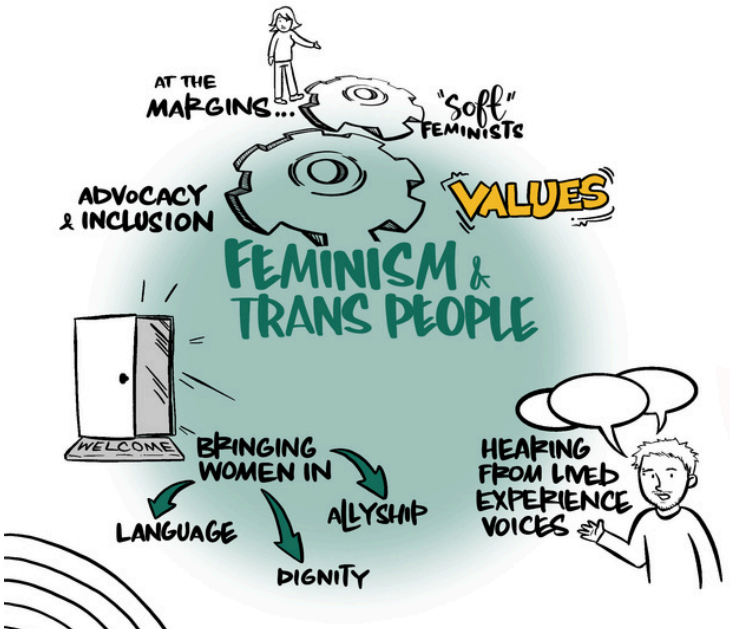
Two pitches occupied this terrain. Renee, Helen and Amy offered new research on feminist backlash and far-right attacks on the women's movement. Bob #2 pitched a session on defining sex and gender, with the disarming rationale: "Nobody knows this."

This was acknowledged as contested space and was handled carefully. The session sat at what the synthesis described as a "defensive and strategic frontier" – the movement being challenged externally and grappling with internal ambiguity.

Key findings:

- Low understanding and fear close down conversation. "Very low understanding of gender diversity." "Fear closes down conversations."
- The sector is not yet good at complexity. This was named honestly as a campaign capability gap.
- Curiosity as method. Participants identified curiosity and questions as the way to bring people along, rather than ideological positioning.
- Trans and gender diverse perspectives are not yet fully integrated into feminist analysis. This was named as a gap, not a settled position.
- Feminism is evolving from "women and girls" to power and justice. This shift toward structural framing was identified as productive and ongoing.
- Transphobia as anti-feminist tactic. Participants explicitly identified transphobia as a strategic vector for anti-feminist mobilisation, particularly by the far right. This locates sex/gender debates within political strategy.
- Cis women have a role. "Ensure that cis women lead the fight for trans women – don't leave them out."

What this means. The sector requires capability building to engage with complexity, trust-based relationships that allow difficult conversations, and active allyship and leadership across cis/trans lines – all while recognising that backlash dynamics are shaping the terrain politically and require evidence-based response.



9. Tech, IT and AI

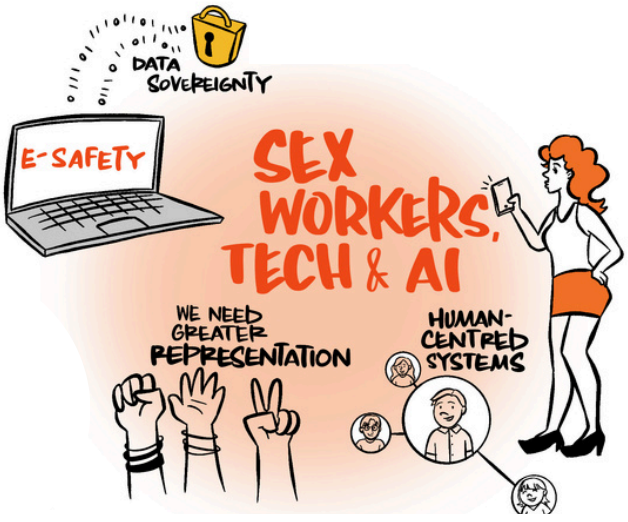
Three pitches addressed power in digital systems. Caitlin McGrane pitched digital rights and feminism, naming AI, online misogyny, the tech oligarchy and online safety as priorities for feminist advocacy. Jenna and Mish from Scarlet Alliance pitched sex workers as scapegoats – naming the way current online safety policy undermines the rights and safety of sex workers and, by extension, all women. Kate L pitched countering anti-rights movements in an AI context.

Participants treated technology as a site of power, not as a neutral tool.

Key findings:

- AI is not neutral. Existing biases are embedded in data, algorithms and system design. Women are underrepresented and misrepresented in training data – the "women anomaly" where women appear as outliers in data dominated by male defaults.
- Representation in design is structural. "We need more women in the room to design the future of AI."
- Data sovereignty is a power issue. Participants connected data control to colonising dynamics and to national autonomy. Taiwan's approach to data and digital sovereignty was raised as a reference point.
- Regulation is double-edged. Participants were politically literate about the way "online safety" framings can be used to harm marginalised groups – particularly sex workers – under the guise of protection.
- Big Tech oligarchy. Concentration of economic and political power in a small number of tech actors limits democratic control over the systems shaping daily life.
- Capability and trust gaps. People lack confidence and understanding to engage with AI; rapid pace of change exacerbates the digital divide.
- Pro-social AI is possible. Participants expressed strong interest in human-centred, pro-social AI designed with intentional focus on equity and social good.
- Specific advocacy targets. Evolving the role of the e-Safety Commissioner, briefing ministers on the impacts of online safety regulation on women, and policy positions on data sovereignty were named as concrete next steps.

A telling sticky note: "Think about personal data like your blood – up to you who you give it away to."



What this means. AI and digital systems are reproducing and amplifying gendered inequality. Without intentional intervention, this will deepen. The work involves representation in design, data sovereignty, regulatory reform calibrated to protect rather than harm marginalised groups, capability-building across the sector, and active investment in pro-social, human-centred alternatives.

10. Collective Action

Three pitches addressed the question of how the sector organises itself. Sarah Edith pitched a session on taking academia out of silos and echo chambers to build alliances with policymakers, practitioners and communities. Helen pitched "building our town square" – a stronger form of connection and support than traditional patriarchal leadership models can offer. Usha and Sarah pitched activating a collective – bringing energies together, sharing stories, programming impact. This was, in the synthesis's framing, the most strategic session of the day. It was about the infrastructure of the movement itself.

Key findings:

- Strong appetite for a values-based, connected movement. Participants were aligned on the value of working collectively.
- Fragmentation is the barrier, not commitment. The sector lacks visibility of itself – who is doing what, where, with whom. Silos exist between academia and community, between sectors, and within funding streams.
- Infrastructure is missing. A "feminist Town Square" was the recurring metaphor – a shared space, both physical and structural, that enables coordination and dialogue.
- Sector mapping as a starting point. Participants identified mapping as a practical first step toward coordinated action.
- Funding inhibits collaboration. "Funding isn't conducive to collaboration." Current funding structures reinforce competition between organisations rather than supporting joint work.
- Lived experience must be embedded in collective action. "Collective action includes women with lived experience."
- Strategic and political development is the gap. Relational and values alignment is strong; political strategy, leverage analysis and articulation of "upside" are less developed.

What this means. The sector is in a formation stage for collective action – high in values alignment, low in coordinating infrastructure. Advancing this work requires intentional investment in connection infrastructure, sector mapping, funding models that support rather than fragment collaboration, and strategic capability-building alongside continued commitment to inclusion and visibility.

11. Climate

Wennie pitched gender and climate – connecting climate change to women's health and gender-based violence, with the specific framing that GBV increases as climate impacts intensify.

This was a frontier session – participants identified climate as a risk multiplier for existing gendered inequalities, but the work of integrating climate into gender equality practice is still emerging.

Key findings:

- Climate is gendered. Impacts are unequally distributed. This needs to be made visible and articulated more clearly.
- Climate is overlooked and deprioritised within existing gender equality work. It sits outside core agendas rather than being embedded in them.
- Translation gap. Communicating global climate issues into local community contexts is difficult, and participants identified a real challenge of accessibility and relevance.
- Climate is not yet embedded in organisational practice. It is treated as external to core business rather than as a structural feature of the operating environment.
- From awareness to action. The gap is not understanding – it is activation. Engagement, implementation and accountability mechanisms are underdeveloped.
- Reaching beyond existing audiences. Climate engagement risks remaining limited to those already convinced, unless there is deliberate work to broaden reach.

What this means. Climate is a frontier issue for the gender equality sector, requiring gender-responsive framing, embedding within organisational practice, stronger accountability mechanisms, and deliberate effort to reach beyond existing audiences. The work is at an early integration stage and warrants intentional investment.

CLOSING REFLECTIONS

The closing circle was – by participants' own accounts – one of the most generative parts of the day. A selection of what was said, drawn directly from the closing reflections:

"We know what we want. We just don't know how to do it."

"The unconference does not end today. It restarts tomorrow with all of us."

"We need to get better at talking to other people, rather than preaching to the choir. We need to bring in the moveable middle."

"The power of coming together in person and working together and having a yarn without an agenda."

"Biggest learning is everyone wants change."

"Intersectionality can become a form of victim blaming and situating the problem in the person. We confuse intersectionality with complexity. The challenge is to work with complexity."

"How do we hold true to the individual lived experience that we all have and hold – and how do we zoom out to the systems? The skill of being able to hold the two with love and care."

"In the migrant women's group – it's not about my identity, but about the structures of power that oppress us."

"Want to do more about weaving in intersectionality into everything that I do, rather than a separate thing. It is part of our knowledge and work, not separate."

"Time. Thinking about the future. Excited to talk with others, but thinking about future-proofing from where we are today. And thinking about the past and the intergenerational trauma that is yet to be unpacked."

The reflections were a deliberate practice of meaning-making – and they identified, in plain terms, what the day had produced: deeper understanding, real connection, and an honest articulation of the gap between knowing and doing.

DISCUSSION: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE SECTOR?

Reading across the eleven sessions, four propositions emerge for sector consideration.

The analytical work has been done.
Across every session, participants demonstrated a structural understanding of the issues. The diagnosis is not the problem. The sector knows that economic security is produced by capitalist structures, that GBV is produced by patriarchy, that AI is produced by political-economic concentration, that disability exclusion is produced by systems designed for a default user, that leadership inequity is produced by governance norms. This level of analytical maturity should be treated as an asset and built on, not re-litigated.

Infrastructure is the binding constraint.
What participants asked for across sessions was infrastructure – funding cycles that allow long-term work, coordination mechanisms that reduce sector fragmentation, governance frameworks for AI, structural quotas that go beyond gender alone, transformative justice systems, universal design embedded by default, payment for co-design participation, a "feminist Town Square" for the movement itself. These are not aspirational. They are the missing scaffolding.

Power needs to be named explicitly.
The most consistent move across the day was from softened framings – inclusion, diversity, participation – to harder ones – power, redistribution, accountability. The sector's communication needs to follow this shift. Naming power directly is more accurate and, evidence from the day suggests, more energising for those doing the work.

The movement is at a coordination threshold.
Multiple sessions identified that the next phase of work is not about more programs but about how the sector relates to itself and to government. Sector mapping, shared spaces, integrated cross-sectoral analysis and the strategic engagement with backlash dynamics all point in the same direction. There is appetite for coordinated action; the question is how to build the infrastructure to enable it.

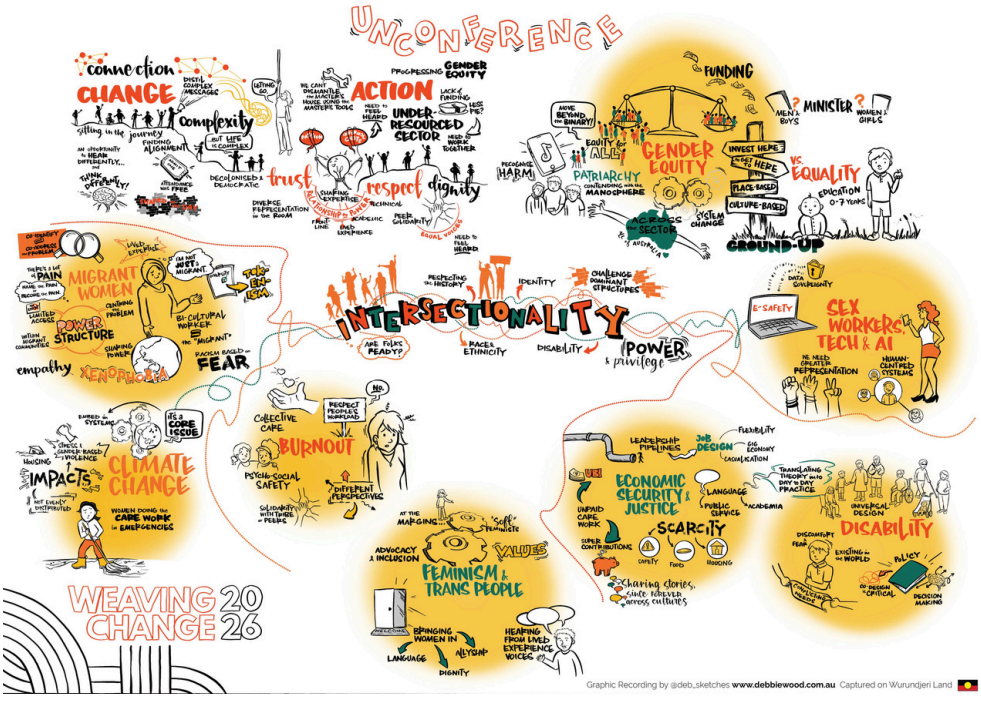
WHAT'S NEXT?

Participants were explicit that Weaving Change is not an event. It is a beginning. "*The unconference does not end today. It restarts tomorrow with all of us.*"

Specific next-step propositions named across sessions include:

- Sector mapping to build visibility of who is doing what across gender equality work
- A "feminist Town Square" – shared space and connection infrastructure for the movement
- Briefings to ministers on impacts of online safety regulation on women
- Policy positions on data sovereignty
- Evolved role for the e-Safety Commissioner
- Targeted structural mechanisms (quotas) for migrant women and women with intersectional barriers
- Investment in capability for working with complexity, particularly on sex and gender
- Workforce sustainability strategy treating burnout as systemic risk
- Integration of climate into organisational and sector practice
- Stronger connection between feminist organisations and the union movement on economic security
- Transformative justice models in GBV response

These are not exhaustive. They are the propositions participants put on the table.

CLOSING NOTE

Weaving Change demonstrated what the gender equality sector looks like when it sets its own agenda. The conversation was rigorous, structural, self-critical and ambitious. It refused easy answers and named real tensions. It did not produce a unified plan, but it produced something more valuable: a shared analysis, real connections, and a clearer picture of the infrastructure the sector needs to build next.