

Impact Insights

5th World Conference of Women's Shelters (5WCWS) 2025 – Sydney

The 5th World Conference of Women's Shelters (5WCWS), held in Sydney in September 2025, brought together over 1,200 delegates from 61 countries, including grassroots practitioners, advocates, researchers, policymakers, and individuals with lived experience.

Business Events Sydney (BESydney), in collaboration with the University of Technology Sydney, Business School surveyed delegates attending the conference to evaluate the personal, professional, and sector-wide benefits generated by the event.

140 survey responses

67% international

21% interstate

12% NSW

39% gender-based violence specialists

31% practitioners

8% academics

22% other

41% late career

36% mid career

23% early career

Key Findings



Significant professional and personal benefits

Delegates reported a renewed sense of purpose, strengthened networks, and increased confidence in the global significance of their work. Exposure to international best practice and innovative strategies inspired new approaches to service delivery.



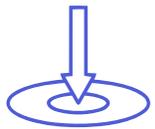
Knowledge and practice development

Participants gained insights into emerging trends such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence, trauma-informed care, and male engagement programmes. Many indicated that these learnings will inform policy, practice, and advocacy in their home countries.



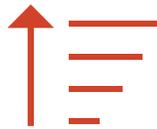
Collaboration and policy dialogue

The conference fostered cross-border partnerships, research collaborations, and dialogue on systemic reforms. Outcomes included commitments to adopt new frameworks and strengthen multi-sector protocols, particularly in disaster-prone regions.



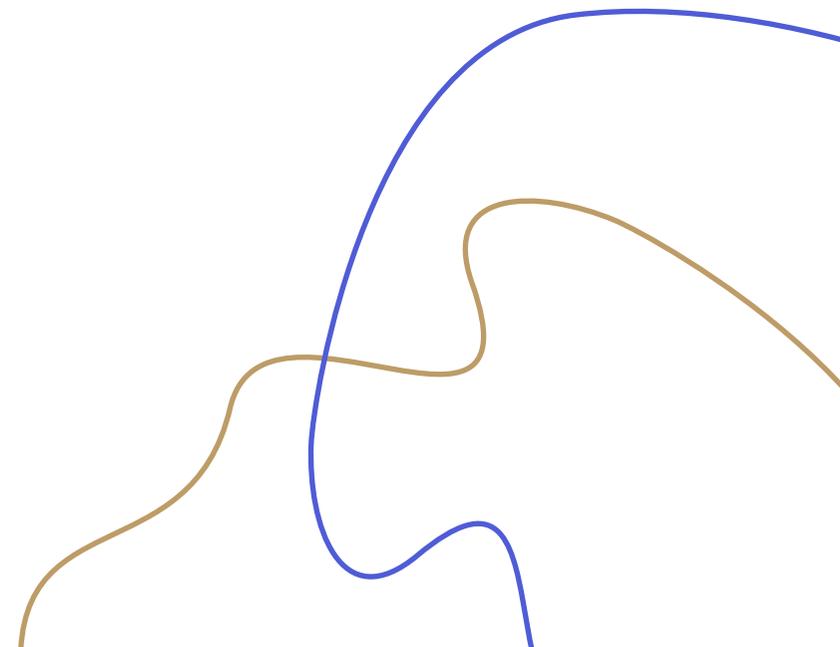
Regional impact

The Oceania Caucus reinforced solidarity and highlighted shared challenges, while emphasising the need for coordinated action and resource-sharing across the region.



Top priorities for future support

Respondents identified sustainable funding, capacity-building, government engagement, and improved housing options as critical to advancing their work.



Event Impacts

Delegates were presented with a series of statements, and asked to rate the conference performance impacts on a scale of 1 to 5. Delegates overwhelmingly agreed or strongly agreed that the conference enabled/contributed to:

Positive change in the sector

93%

The conference provided insights into the latest developments in my field.

“The Economic Abuse session highlighted AU EARG innovations, and a presentation about a survey of family lawyers to work towards reforming the Family Court in the Netherlands. I am keen to replicate these in NZ.”

90%

I feel inspired to explore new ways of working.

“Hearing stories and seeing the different approaches other countries take to support women and families gave me a whole new appreciation for the global scale of these issues. It made me think beyond just the numbers and budgets. I left feeling more connected to the bigger picture and inspired to look for ways finance can help make a real impact.”

88%

Networking opportunities facilitated connections with experts in my field.

“Met someone doing innovative work in an adjacent field to me, have followed up and will write a paper together in the future.”

88%

Overall, the conference was a catalyst for driving innovation in my sector.

“What other countries are doing made me realize how much we can learn from each other. Since coming back, I’ve shared some of those ideas with my team, and it’s already led to discussions about improving how we support services through funding. It’s not a formal policy change yet, but it’s definitely shifted our thinking and opened the door for better practices.”

85%

New knowledge, ideas or techniques gained at the conference have enhanced my practice.

“I learned a lot of new information relevant to the work I do to enhance daily practice. I made connections with others in our field to enhance practice. I have a deeper understanding of the political and social frameworks that affect this work.”

Personal impacts

93%

Engaging with peers gave me a renewed sense of purpose in my work.

“Came back feeling very excited to share what I learned and a renewed sense of purpose.”

84%

Strengthened networks that will help me navigate the pressures of my role.

“Hearing from others reminds me that we are a global movement, so when I’m discouraged I can lean on others. When I’m ok I can build others up.”

88%

I am more confident in the significance of their work within the global movement.

“Participation in the 5th World Conference of Women’s Shelters allowed me not only to expand my professional knowledge but also to establish new international connections with colleagues from various countries. Moreover, the conference strengthened my confidence that our work has global significance and that the experience of Uzbekistan can also be of interest to international partners. The knowledge and connections gained help us to improve our approaches to supporting women and to enhance our organization’s contribution to the advancement of gender equality.”

Social Impacts of the conference

92%

Deepened awareness of the complex issues surrounding gender-based violence.

“Seeing how different opinions on the same matter still take affect no matter what country, what gender, what ethnicity it is raw and real everywhere globally.”

84%

Facilitated dialogue on changes in policy among stakeholders in my sector.

“The minister in charge of funding shelters in our area was a participant and he was keen to speak to the Australian minister and familiarize himself with initiatives in Australia. This is very positive for us.”

86%

Fostered international collaboration among organisations.

“We developed new sister program collaborations from which we can continue to learn from each other through the connections we’ve made and the ability to reach out.”

73%

Generated outcomes that will support the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

“First Nations people’s fight to survive and have resources needs more support.”

87%

Provided strategies and tools that support the global effort to end violence against women.

“The conference inspired our organization to adopt trauma-informed care principles, leading to change in our policies and procedures. We developed a new protocol for supporting survivors of gender-based violence, enhancing the quality of care and support we provided. This change will positively impact the lives of survivors and their families who access our services.”

Outcomes for Exhibitors and Sponsors

91%

Gained product or service exposure

Networked with clients and/or key industry figures

Improved brand awareness

Increased the recognition of my organization as a contributor to the broader community

Oceania Caucus – the inaugural Oceania Caucus was a strategic impact intention designed as part of the conference

67%

Generated outcomes that will support the work of Oceania-based organisations.

“A significant collaboration and policy practice shift emerged for the Pacific Region. A delegation from about 9 countries attended the Conference. One key change achieved was the Pacific delegation participated in the panel discussion titled ‘Developing National GBV multi-sector service protocols in contexts highly prone to disasters and climate change across pacific’.”

80%

felt more connected to local networks in their country.

50%

felt more connected across Oceania.

90%

of the respondents agreed that they find value in having an Oceania women’s network established after the conference.

Top priorities identified by respondents



Sustainable funding and clear frameworks

“Access to clear, consistent funding frameworks so I can make informed decisions and ensure resources are used effectively.”



Capacity-building and ongoing training (including programmes working with men)

“My top two priorities are to continue receiving training and staying up to date with current policies and regulations within the organisation. This ensures I can provide the best possible support to the women and children we serve.”



Collaboration and networking

“Continued opportunities to connect with other women / professionals in the sector... collaborate and share resources.”



Government engagement and policy support

“First - strong commitment from political leaders.”



Affordable housing options

“Better affordable housing options for clients and more staff in the service I work for.”



Staff wellbeing support

“Support with mental health as a staff member listening, witnessing and supporting women, to avoid vicarious trauma and burnout.”



Public awareness and advocacy

“More money and awareness of the necessity of our work and realisation how big this problem is and how it is all linked together.”

5WCWS catalysed innovation, strengthened solidarity and advanced practical frameworks across regions. Delegates reported tangible changes in practice, policy dialogue and cross-border collaboration — underscoring conferences as catalysts for social change.

