she gives.

MEDIA RELEASE 24 FEBRUARY 2026

Women hold the key to unlocking greater philanthropy on the cusp of Australia's $5.4 trillion wealth transfer

Australian women are emerging as a defining force in the next era of philanthropy, with new national research highlighting the need for the sector to evolve with women's growing economic influence and unlock their potential to address some of the country's most pressing challenges.

Landmark research released by the She Gives campaign — and officially launched today at a reception hosted by Governor-General Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC — reveals women already shape much of Australia's charitable decision-making and are set to control the majority of the nation's $5.4 trillion wealth transfer, significantly expanding their influence over where money flows in the decades ahead.

While philanthropy is often associated with high-profile male benefactors and large-scale donations, the research finds the sector now has a defining opportunity to modernise its pathways — and its culture — to unlock women's giving at scale, becoming more accessible, collaborative and aligned with how women choose to engage.

The report, *She Gives: Growing Women's Giving in Australia*, is the largest mixed-methods study of women's giving ever conducted nationally and the second-largest Australian study of giving overall. Based on independent analysis by the Centre for Social Impact (CSI) at the University of Western Australia and drawing on insights from more than 2,000 women across the country, it positions women as a central economic and social force shaping how generosity is practised, sustained and grown across Australian society.

According to the report, the combination of existing decision-making power and rapidly growing economic influence represents one of the most significant — and underutilised — levers to strengthen Australia's culture of giving at a time of rising community need and increasing pressure on government spending.

Among the key findings:

- Women are highly influential in philanthropic giving, with more than 60% of women who live with a partner saying they always or usually make household giving decisions.
- More than 80% of women in philanthropic networks and 64% of women nationally say they want to give more. Financial security and feeling overwhelmed by the number of requests featured in top barriers to giving.
- Women's top reasons for giving include: they care about the cause, they want to make a difference, they trust the organisation or they want to give back. Societal expectations and tax incentives featured amongst the lowest motivations for giving.
- While nearly half of women in philanthropic networks engage in structured giving including foundations, trusts or collective giving, just 6% of women in the broader national sample do so.
- Women want to have greater knowledge and confidence; financial literacy, role modelling and storytelling were identified as enablers.

The report suggests expanding awareness of and access to structured giving represents a significant opportunity to strengthen confidence, strategy and long-term impact. It outlines three priorities to grow women's giving at scale:

1. **Recognise women's crucial role in giving**, including greater recognition and visibility in national honours and media coverage to ensure women's contributions are accurately reflected in Australia's public narrative.
2. **Strengthen collective and community-based models**, recognising that many women prefer to give collaboratively and that shared approaches can mobilise greater impact.
3. **Build the capacity of the ecosystem to support women's philanthropic ambitions**, including tailored capability development for financial advisers to better support women's giving ambitions and clearer, more accessible pathways into structured giving.

In her foreword for *She Gives: Growing Women's Giving in Australia*, **the Governor-General** described the research as both a celebration and a call to action.

"Australia's history is rich with the contributions of women whose acts of service, generosity and care have strengthened our communities," she said. "By studying their stories, She Gives helps Australian women tell a national story where the diversity, power and strength of women's giving are visible and valued.

"The insights captured in the She Gives research form the basis of three important recommendations, including the need for wider recognition of women's crucial role in giving. As Chancellor of the Order of Australia, I am deeply committed to raising awareness of the opportunity of our national honours system as a means of recognising exceptional Australian women for their outstanding contributions and generosity."

The Australian Government has set a national goal to double giving by 2030, recognising that despite being one of the world's wealthiest nations, Australians gave $13.4 billion to charity in the 2022 financial year, representing just 0.81% of GDP — less than half the level of New Zealand[i]. Only 53% of Australians with a taxable income over $1 million give to charity and claim a tax deduction, compared with 90% in the US[iv].

She Gives founder **Melissa Smith** said the scale of opportunity was significant as women are gaining greater economic power, education and equality – three key predicators to growth of giving. Whilst significant barriers and inequalities remain, despite these women are demonstrating extraordinary leadership, power and generosity through their giving.

"With a generational wealth shift underway, the question is not whether women will shape the future of giving but whether our systems are ready to support them," Ms Smith said. "Australia's community sector is facing sustained demand pressures while public funding environments remain constrained. This research shows the vastly unrealised potential of women's giving; it is already powerful, scalable and far from fully realised. By modernising our structures, strengthening collaboration and building capability across the ecosystem, we can unlock one of the most significant growth opportunities for philanthropy in Australia today."

Minderoo Foundation co-founder **Nicola Forrest AO** said: "Throughout history, women have driven change quietly and persistently, often without recognition. Today, we have the opportunity to amplify that impact by ensuring women can lead in shaping solutions. Women bring lived experience,

empathy, and collaboration to the way we give. That diversity of thought is essential if we want to tackle complex challenges and create lasting change. When women lead in giving, entire communities benefit."

Over the past 18 months, She Gives has convened women across the country through national roundtables and shared more than 140 stories from leading women in giving — including The Hon. Julia Gillard AC, Georgina Byron AM, Tanya Hosch AM, Carrie Bickmore OAM and Melissa Doyle AM — and emerging changemakers, reflecting the cultural richness of Australia.

Together, the report and campaign lay the foundation for a new chapter in Australian philanthropy in which women's leadership, influence and generosity are fully recognised and supported to drive lasting social change.

Please view the full report **here**.

Contributing quotes include:

Leah Armstrong, She Gives First Nations advisor: "The She Gives Report is a powerful first – making space for First Nations women voices, sharing the truth of what they give, what they carry, and the impact their care and leadership has across our communities."

Tanya Hosch AM, Director of the Goodes O'Loughlin Foundation (GO Foundation) and chair for the Advisory Committee for the Centre for Indigenous People and Work (UTS): "There are many reasons the She Gives Report is important. What excites me most is the way it broadens and deepens our understanding of philanthropy — recognising the different focus areas that motivate women's giving and leadership, and the many diverse ways women give, including through community service. I hope the evidence in this report encourages more women to see themselves reflected in it and to recognise the value and impact of the contribution they are already making."

Prof. Leanne Lester, Research Manager for the Centre for Social Impact at UWA: "Women are poised to inherit the majority of Australia's private wealth, yet our philanthropy system still reflects outdated assumptions about who gives and how. Our research shows women are already shaping Australia's culture of generosity — but often within structures not built with them in mind. If we are serious about growing giving nationally, the opportunity is structural: we must design systems that recognise and support the full spectrum of women's contributions."

Karen Brittain, Executive Officer of WA-based collective giving group, 100 Women: "The report reaffirms the belief that when women give intentionally and collaboratively - in all its forms - the impact is profound, both for the giver and for the communities she supports. Western Australia has a progressive giving culture. Perth is home to four collaborative giving funds with strong female participation, and many of our State's largest family foundations are steered by women. This report shines a welcoming light on the growing influence of female-led philanthropy across Australia. It acknowledges the momentum, celebrates the leadership, and strengthens the case for expanding collective giving nationwide."

Carol Schwartz AO, chair of the Trawalla Foundation and She Gives Advisory Group member: "Women have always given — with care, courage and commitment — but too often their leadership has gone unrecognised. This research shows what becomes possible when women step fully into their power as givers, with the confidence, visibility and support to shape lasting change. With a generational wealth transfer underway, this is a powerful moment for more women to get involved, explore new ways of giving and help build a more inclusive, ambitious and impactful culture of

philanthropy in Australia."

Georgina Byron AM, Snow Foundation CEO and She Gives Advisory Group member: "Women have always shaped generosity in Australia — often quietly and without fanfare. This research confirms what many of us see every day: women are influencing decisions, mobilising networks and giving deeply to the causes they care about. It is no surprise that many prioritise gender equality — particularly women's health and domestic and family violence. At a time of unprecedented demand on charities, recognising and fostering women's giving is critical to strengthening Australia's response to rising community need. Initiatives such as Sydney Women's Fund show that when women are supported to give strategically and collectively, their impact grows, and there is significant opportunity to expand and enable more women's funds and collaborative giving."

Ann Sherry AO, Queensland University of Technology chancellor, Queensland Airports Limited chair and UNICEF Australia chair: "This important research highlights something I have seen firsthand across business, universities, and my own giving journey: women are deeply committed to making a difference. Many already shape charitable decisions within their families and networks. More are stepping into significant economic influence. Australia's philanthropic structures were not deliberately designed for today's economic reality, where women are increasingly business owners, investors and inheritors of significant wealth. Nor were they designed with collaborative, relational giving models in mind. This research highlights a clear path forward. The opportunity before us is not to persuade women to give more. It is to modernise the system around them so it better reflects how they choose to engage."

Melanie Cooper AM, Chair, Coopers Foundation: "Australian women are driving significant change across philanthropy and business, with female-led ventures and giving on the rise—yet there remains untapped potential. Research conducted by the She Gives Campaign recommends supporting recognition, philanthropic sector capacity, and collaboration to meet this potential."

Libby Prell, Chair of Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation: "Women understand that timing is everything. When Alice Springs lost its local paper, we lost sight of ourselves. That moment became a seed for change. Our Community Foundation rallied the community to give, partnering with Today Media Group to launch *The Centralian Today* and establishing Australia's first explicitly intercultural Community Foundation. In 2025, She Gives was another seed. The serendipity of timing is not lost on me. It felt entirely fitting that the final She Gives research session was hosted by our Foundation in the heart of Australia. Melissa and her team have inspired and encouraged our journey of giving in the centre of the country. And this is only the beginning."

Other relevant data includes:

- Women's contributions extend well beyond financial donations. 90% of women in philanthropic networks and 39% of women nationally reported volunteering in the past year.
- Women now own one-third of all small businesses, with female entrepreneurship growing three times faster than that of men[ii]. Female-founded businesses are projected to inject up to $135 billion into the Australian economy, if barriers to growth are addressed[iii].
- The Australian Government has set a national goal to double giving by 2030, recognising that although we are one of the world's wealthiest nations, Australians donated 0.75% of their income on average in 2024 compared to 1.04% for people globally.[iv]
- The number of female millionaires is growing faster than men (5.7% vs. 3.6%), with Australia's

richest 75 women holding a combined $179.59 billion (up 19% from the previous year)[v].

- Australians gave $13.4 billion to charity in 2022 financial year, representing 0.81% of Australia's GDP – less than half of what New Zealanders gave (1.84%) and below the UK (0.96%), Canada (1%) and the US (2.1%).[vi]
- Only 53% of Australians with a taxable income over $1 million give to charity and claim a tax deduction, compared with 90% in the US[vii] and only 1% of Australian inheritances are left to charities as bequests, compared with 3.7% in the UK.[viii]

She Gives is grateful for the wisdom and guidance of its advisory group:

- Clare Ainsworth Herschell *(Founder of Groundswell)*
- Georgina Byron AM (*CEO of the Snow Foundation, Chair of Sydney Women's Fund Advisory Group and Co-Chair of Deadly Hearts Limited)*
- Natalie Egleton (*CEO of the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal)*
- Caitriona Fay (*Managing Partner of Perpetual Private's Social Investment businesses and ESG Strategy, founding board member of GiveOUT)*
- Tanya Hosch AM *(Director of the Goodes O'Loughlin Foundation (GO Foundation) and chair for the Advisory Committee for the Centre for Indigenous People and Work (UTS).*
- *Michelle Lin (CEO of Vermillion Foundation)*
- Paula McLean (A *founding trustee of McLean Foundation)*
- Amanda Miller OAM (*Co-founder of Impact Generation Partners*)
- Professor Kristy Muir (CEO of the Paul Ramsay Foundation)
- Carol Schwartz AO (f*ounding Chair of both Trawalla Foundation and Women's Leadership Institute Australia)*
- Melissa Smith *(CEO, Noble Ambition & Founder, She Gives)*
- Deanne Weir *(Founder of WeirAnderson.com and WeirAnderson Films)*

With thanks to our Supporting Partners

Major Supporting Partners

She Gives is grateful to these organisations for their significant founding support

Perpetual | FAIRGROUND | MINDEROO FOUNDATION | Bell Family Foundation

Supporting Partners

She Gives is grateful to these organisations for their significant founding support

NOBLE AMBITION | McLean FOUNDATION | Snow Foundation | ningana trust | WeirAnderson FOUNDATION

Media Contact: Pia Akerman – 0412 346 746

---

[i] Flatau, P., Lester, L., Brown, J.T., Kyron, M., Callis, Z., & Muir, K. (2022). *High Net Wealth Giving in Australia: A Review of the Evidence*, Centre for Social Impact: UNSW and UWA. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25916/ranq-n886

[ii] Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (2023) Small Business Matters,

[iii] Boston Consulting Group (2019) 'Want to Boost the Global Economy by $5 Trillion? Support Women as Entrepreneurs'. As cited in Women's Economic Equality Taskforce (2023) A ten year plan to unleash the full capacity and contribution of women to the Australian economy.

[iv] Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) (2025) *CAF World Giving Report 2025*, https://www.worldgivingreport.org/donor-insights

[v] Australian Financial Review (AFR) (2025) Australia's 75 richest women now control a record $179b, https://www.afr.com/wealth/people/australia-s-75-richest-women-now-control-a-record-179b-20250227-p5lfr2

[vi] Flatau, P., Lester, L., Brown, J.T., Kyron, M., Callis, Z., & Muir, K. (2022). *High Net Wealth Giving in Australia: A Review of the Evidence*, Centre for Social Impact: UNSW and UWA. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25916/ranq-n886

[vii] Ibid.

[viii] JBWere (2024) *The Bequest Report*, https://www.jbwere.com.au/content/dam/jbwere/documents/campaigns/JBWere-Bequest-Report.pdf