



# Illawarra Region Report



## Purpose for our visit

**Commissioner Micaela Cronin joined NSW Women's Safety Commissioner Hannah Tonkin for a two-day visit to the Illawarra region, meeting with frontline services, community leaders and advocates working to end domestic, family and sexual violence.**

The visit included the Women's Regional Roundtable hosted by the Illawarra Women's Health Centre and Illawarra Women's Trauma Recovery Centre, a visit to the Gawura Aboriginal Corporation, and participation in the NSW Anti-Slavery Forum. Together, these engagements highlighted the strength of community-led solutions, the importance of listening to lived experience, and the shared drivers of gender-based violence and exploitation.

# Who we engaged with

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## Women's Regional Roundtable — Shellharbour

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Hosted at the Illawarra Women's Trauma Recovery Centre, the Roundtable brought together more than a dozen local representatives from health, housing, multicultural and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs), as well as women with lived experience.

### Discussions explored:

- Domestic, family and sexual violence prevention and response
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led approaches
- Housing and accommodation
- Health, wellbeing and disability
- Culturally and linguistically diverse perspectives
- The criminal legal system

Participants highlighted the urgent demand for crisis accommodation and recovery supports, the need for culturally safe, community-led approaches – particularly for First Nations women – and the importance of sustained funding and workforce capability to ensure trauma-informed service delivery.

Commissioners Cronin and Tonkin reflected on the importance of embedding lived experience in system design, coordinating service responses, and acting on the recommendations already known to make a difference, as outlined in the Commission's Yearly Report to Parliament.

## Visit to Gawura Aboriginal Corporation

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The Commissioners then visited Gawura Aboriginal Corporation, an Aboriginal community-led organisation delivering culturally grounded programs for people in the Illawarra.

### Programs discussed included:

- Brothers Against Domestic Violence (BADV) – a men's healing and accountability group.

- ChangeV – a 12-module Men's Behaviour Change Program delivered through a cultural lens.
- Illawarra Koori Men's Support Group and Nana Nhawa Women's Support Group – safe spaces for healing, connection and service linkage.

The visit reinforced the leadership role of ACCOs in driving local solutions and healing-centred responses.

## Anti-Slavery Forum — Wollongong (5–6 November 2025)

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The Commissioners participated in the NSW Anti-Slavery Forum hosted by Dr James Cockayne, NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner, at the Novotel Wollongong Northbeach. This fourth edition of the forum centred on the theme “Building Freedom Together: Remedy and Healing – Listening to Survivors.” It brought together leaders, advocates, survivors, and system actors from across Australia and internationally to explore how justice, recovery, and prevention can be achieved through shared responsibility and survivor-led change.

Commissioner Micaela Cronin delivered a keynote address reflecting on how domestic, family and sexual violence intersects with modern slavery, and what each field can learn from the other.

She highlighted the shared drivers of power, control and inequality, and the importance of building systems that are responsive, integrated, and informed by lived experience.

Sessions throughout the forum focused on strengthening service capacity, fostering survivor engagement, and embedding healing and remedy within policy and practice frameworks. Participants discussed the need for consistent cross-government accountability, improved pathways to justice, and long-term investment in recovery and prevention efforts.

## Reflections and next steps

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**The visit reinforced that prevention, recovery and justice are deeply interconnected across domestic and family violence, sexual violence, as well as modern slavery. The Commission’s participation reflected its growing role in connecting these systems and promoting a shared, survivor-informed approach to reform.**

Insights from the Illawarra engagements will inform the Commission’s ongoing work to:

- Strengthen collaboration on prevention and healing frameworks,
- Build capability across frontline and adjacent workforces to identify and respond to exploitation,
- Embed survivor leadership and co-design in all national and local initiatives, and

- Align national frameworks including the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children and anti-slavery strategies to ensure coherence in monitoring, remedy and action planning.

The emphasis on remedy, healing and the voices of people with lived experience strongly complements the Commission’s mission to ensure that all people affected by violence, coercion or exploitation are heard, supported and empowered to shape the systems that serve them.

**We sincerely thank everyone who generously shared their time and insights with us.**

