

JESSIE STREET  
NATIONAL WOMEN'S  
LIBRARY  
STRATEGY  
2026 - 2030



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD: MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR	1
AT A GLANCE: OUR STRATEGY	2
WHAT WE'VE LEARNED: RESILIENCE AND RENEWAL	3
WHY WE'RE HERE: OUR VISION, MISSION AND GOALS	5
WHERE WE ARE NOW – SWOT ANALYSIS	7
WHAT'S NEXT: OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2026-2030	10
HOW WE'LL MAKE IT HAPPEN: ROADMAP	25

# FOREWORD: MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Libraries have always been places of discovery and connection - places where stories are preserved, shared, and reimagined across generations. Specialist libraries, such as the Jessie Street National Women's Library, play a unique role in Australia's cultural landscape. Through their carefully curated collections, they provide access to stories and experiences that enrich our understanding of society and inspire learning across communities.

The Jessie Street National Women's Library holds a singular place in Sydney's cultural and educational precinct. From its home in Ultimo, the Library preserves and shares the histories, voices, and creative contributions of Australian women - ensuring these stories remain part of our national memory.

The Library also honours the legacy of Jessie Street - a tireless advocate for equality, peace, and social justice. Her vision of a fairer, more inclusive society continues to inspire our work, as we collect, preserve, and share the diverse histories of Australian women with current and future generations.

This Strategy sets our direction for 2026 to 2030. It builds on the resilience and dedication of our Library community and outlines practical steps to strengthen our foundations and expand our reach. Above all, it reflects our shared commitment to ensuring that women's histories are valued, visible, and accessible - through our collection, our programs, and our cultural life.

On behalf of the Board, I thank our members, volunteers, and supporters who sustain the Library's work; our partners in the cultural and educational sectors who share our mission; and the City of Sydney, whose ongoing support enables the Library to thrive as part of the city's creative and community life.

Together, we will continue to shape a Library that welcomes all who seek to learn from the past and contribute to a more equitable future.



Christine Yeats  
Chair, Jessie Street National Women's Library

# AT A GLANCE: OUR STRATEGY

This strategy outlines the Jessie Street National Women's Library's direction for 2026–2030.

It reflects the collective insight of our Library community — members, volunteers, and Board representatives — and provides a clear roadmap to support our core purpose: to collect, preserve, and promote awareness of Australian women's cultural heritage, enabling learning, research, and communication across the community.

As part of this process, we looked closely at the Library's work from 2018 to 2024 — what worked well, what stalled, and what we learned. This reflection drew on operational data and the generous input of those who engage with the Library every day. Their insights revealed the Library's resilience during a time of disruption and change, from the pandemic to infrastructure challenges. Despite these pressures, JSNWL remained active and responsive — hosting events online, supporting researchers, growing its digital presence, and sustaining community connections. These experiences have shaped the priorities of this Strategy, ensuring it is grounded in both experience and opportunity.

To focus our efforts, the Strategy is organised around two interlinked streams that work together to sustain the organisation and expand its reach.

- **Stream 1: Cornerstones** — strengthening the foundations that enable success (including finances, people, systems, and spaces).
- **Stream 2: Activity Focus** — expanding JSNWL's reach, relevance, and visibility through programs, partnerships, and broader access to the collection.

By progressing these two streams in parallel, JSNWL can ensure it remains a resilient, trusted institution while expanding its contribution to sharing diverse women's histories with members, researchers, and the wider public.

# WHAT WE'VE LEARNED: RESILIENCE AND RENEWAL

The past few years have tested the Library's resilience and adaptability. From the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic to essential building works, we've continued to safeguard women's histories and stay connected with our community. As we plan for the years ahead, we have drawn on the experiences and insights of our volunteers, members, and Board. Their reflections have shaped the priorities of the 2026–2030 Strategy and ensured it builds on both experience and aspiration.

## How We Reflected

This reflection draws on both data and lived experience. To prepare for the 2026–2030 Strategy, we reviewed:

- JSNWL newsletters, annual reports, City of Sydney Accommodation Grant Reviews, Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) annual information statements, and business plans from 2018–2024
- Key financial and operational data on membership trends, visitor numbers, events, and bequests
- Reflections shared by volunteers and Board members at the 3 June 2025 Strategy Day
- Additional feedback received from JSNWL volunteers and members following the 3 June 2025 Strategy Day

## What We're Proud Of

- Maintaining community connection throughout COVID-19
- Responsible stewardship of bequests, ensuring long-term stability
- Expanding digital capacity, including progress on our Digitisation Strategy
- Building partnerships across the cultural and heritage sector
- Supporting student placements and emerging professionals
- Delivering popular events such as the Annual Luncheon and Lunch Hour Talks

## What We're Focusing On Next

- Choosing simple, sustainable systems that suit a volunteer-based organisation
- Continuing to deliver signature events that connect, inspire, and fundraise
- Strengthening membership and volunteer engagement through flexible new models
- Expanding digital access so members across Australia can participate and connect
- Engaging younger audiences and fostering intergenerational connections

- Staying alert to developments across the Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAM) sector to inform future priorities and services
- Continuing to deepen Indigenous cultural awareness and respectful collection practices
- Supporting student placements through skilled volunteer supervision
- Strengthening the Library's profile and reach through traditional and digital media
- Making the most of Library spaces for research, displays, events, and community use
- Continuing to share women's histories, ensuring our mission remains vibrant and relevant





# WHY WE'RE HERE: OUR VISION, MISSION AND GOALS

## Our Vision: The future we strive for

A future where the histories, voices, and contributions of Australian women are preserved, valued, and shared — inspiring learning, social justice, and connection across generations and communities.

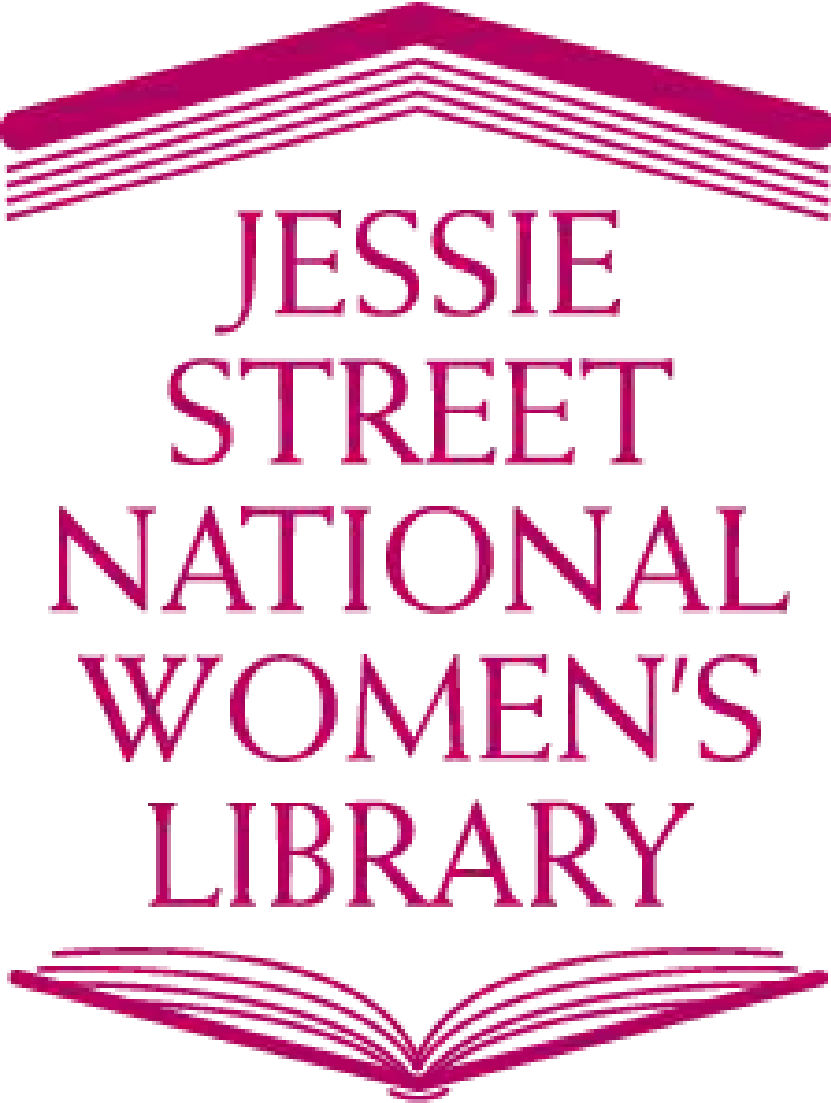
## Our Mission: What we do to make this happen

We collect, preserve, and promote the histories of Australian women, making them accessible to all through our collections, programs, and partnerships. We support learning and research and foster greater public awareness of women's contributions to Australian society.



# OUR PURPOSE

The JSNWL Constitution sets out the Library's enduring purpose:  
*To provide for the Australian community a specialist library which collects, preserves, and promotes the awareness of the cultural heritage of Australian women, facilitating learning, research and communication*



### **Collect and preserve:**

Maintain a professionally managed research library of works by and about Australian women

### **Promote awareness**

Raise public awareness of the cultural heritage of Australian women, ensuring their stories are part of Australia's cultural narrative

### **Facilitate learning, research and communication**

Provide access to resources that support study, reflection and the creation of new knowledge about women's histories and contributions

### **Support social justice, international friendship and peace**

Jessie Street's legacy, including advocacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the international friendship movement

# WHERE WE ARE NOW – SWOT ANALYSIS

The 2026–2030 Strategy is grounded in a clear assessment of the Library’s current position - informed by community insights, operational data, and reflections from the 2025 Strategy Day. A key part of this process was a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), helping us identify what we do well, where we face challenges, and what’s on the horizon. This analysis provided a foundation for identifying the strategic priorities for the next five years. It helped to ensure that our strategy is grounded in the Library’s lived experience, practical realities, and aspirational goals - equipping JSNWL to remain a trusted, sustainable, and relevant institution in a changing world.

## UNDERSTANDING STRENGTHS



What the Library does well and can build on - including our unique collection, dedicated volunteer community, and strong partnerships.



## IDENTIFYING WEAKNESSES



Internal areas that may limit our ability to achieve our goals -such as space constraints, volunteer capacity, and gaps in governance processes.

## SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES



External trends and developments that we can use to expand our reach and impact - including growing interest in women’s histories and digital engagement

## DEALING WITH THREATS

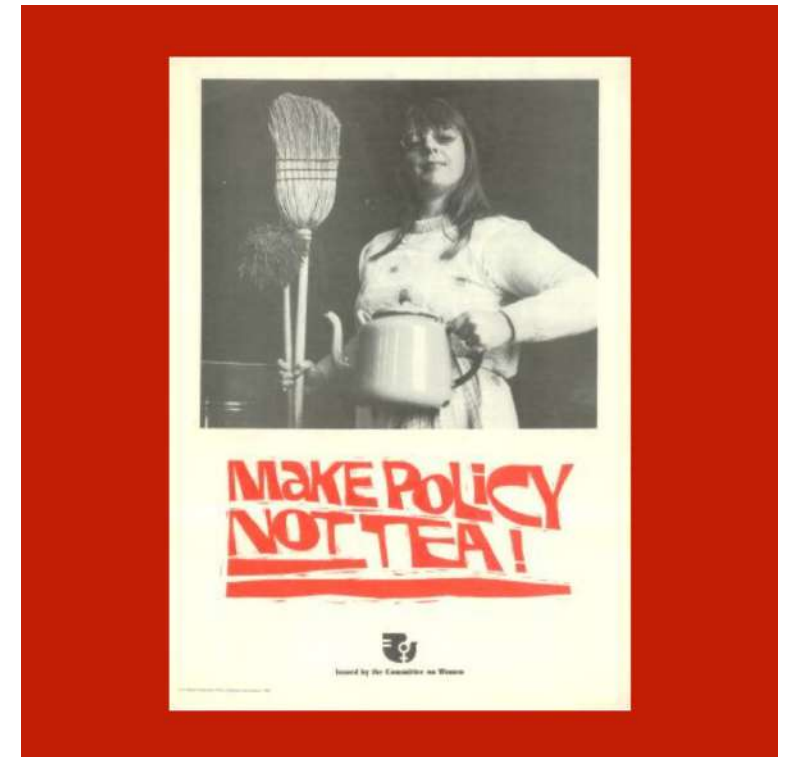


External risks and challenges that could affect our sustainability or operations - including broader shifts in volunteering patterns and funding environments.

## Strong Foundations

We are:

- **Resilient and adaptable**, having maintained operations and community engagement through major disruptions.
- **Trusted and sustainable**, supported by generous bequests and careful financial stewardship.
- **Home to a unique collection**, nationally recognised for documenting the lives and experiences of Australian women.
- **Respected within the GLAM sector**, with enduring partnerships across galleries, libraries, archives and museums.
- **Supported by skilled volunteers and strong leadership**, who bring expertise, commitment, and shared purpose.
- **Active in digital innovation**, with a developing Digitisation Strategy
- **Connected through events and programs** such as the Annual Luncheon and Lunch Hour Talks



## Building for the Future

Looking ahead, we recognise several internal areas that will guide our future priorities:

- **Exploring creative ways to use space** to enhance collection care, volunteer activities, and community access.
- **Nurturing a vibrant volunteer community** where experience and fresh perspectives come together.
- **Strengthening membership engagement**, especially for those outside Sydney.
- **Updating governance processes and operational systems** to reduce reliance on key individuals.
- **Expanding the Library's visibility and reach** through stronger media and digital engagement.



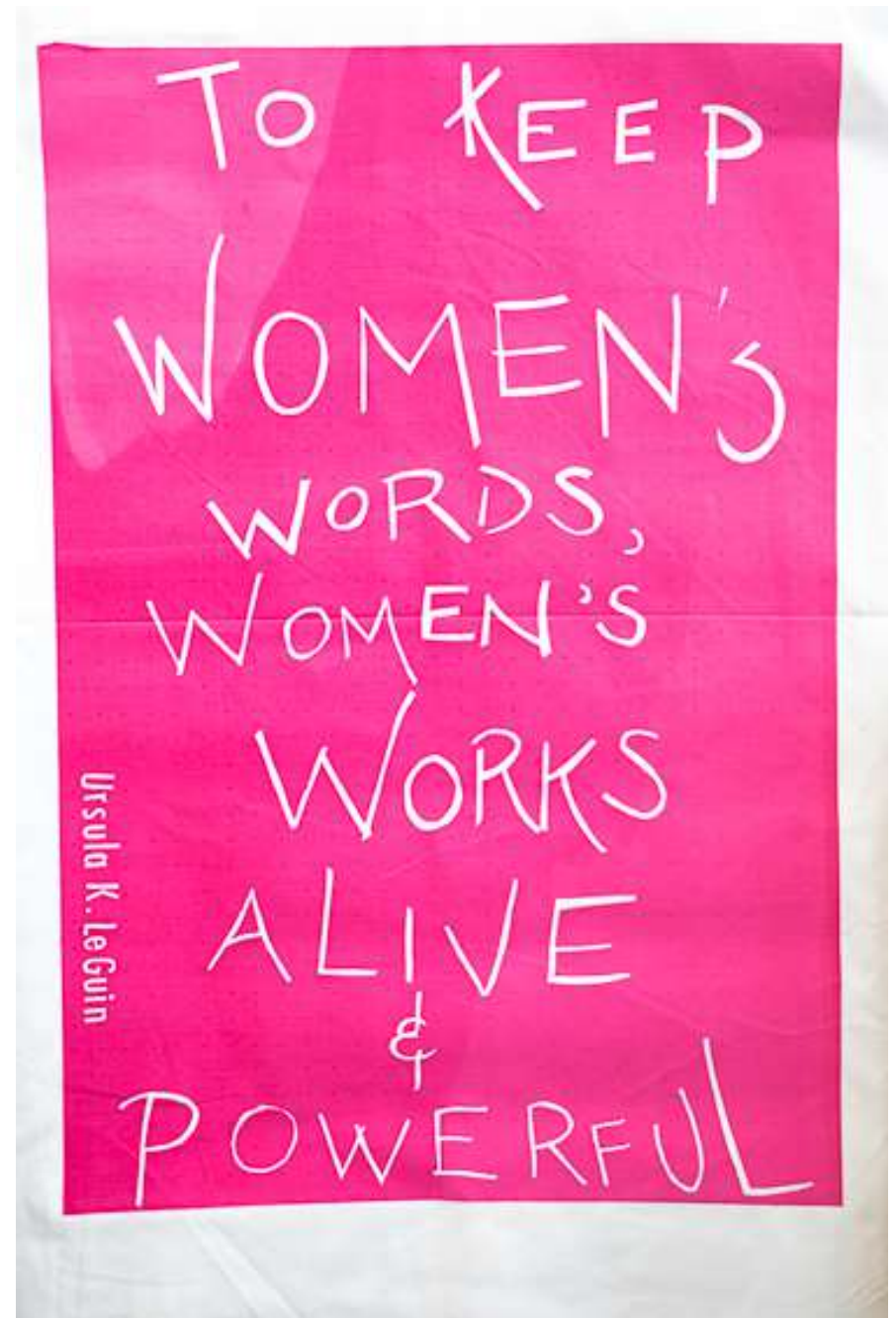
## Pathways Forward

The external environment offers many opportunities:

- **Growing public interest** in women's and feminist history.
- **New possibilities for digital storytelling**, online access, and virtual events.
- **Expanding partnerships and creative collaborations** across the GLAM sector and beyond.
- **Positioning the Library as a welcoming cultural "third space"** — a place for learning, connection, and reflection.
- **Completing a Significance Assessment**, which will help articulate the historical, cultural, and social importance of the Library's collection. This process will strengthen how we share women's stories and highlight the Library's enduring role in preserving and celebrating Australia's women's history.

## Changing Landscapes

The Library's work is shaped by a shifting environment. Across Australia, volunteering is evolving — cost-of-living pressures, later retirement, and changing lifestyles mean fewer people have time to volunteer in traditional ways. Many now seek short-term, flexible opportunities or ways to contribute remotely. At the same time, Sydney itself is changing, with increased urban density and rising costs placing new pressures on community organisations. Within this landscape, JSNWL will continue to plan carefully for the future: maintaining secure and affordable premises, using its space creatively, and adapting to new ways of engaging volunteers and communities.



# WHAT'S NEXT: OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2026-2030

This diagram depicts the two interwoven streams of the Jessie Street National Women's Library 2026–2030 Strategy—the seven core activities that bring our mission to life and the five organisational cornerstones that sustain them



# Stream 1: Cornerstones: Strengthening Organisational Foundations



To deliver our 2026–2030 goals, JSNWL will strengthen five organisational cornerstones: Finances, People, Skills & Processes, Spaces, and IT Systems.

Together they create a strong foundation that builds resilience, sustains day-to-day work, and expand our capacity to share diverse women’s histories.

## CORNERSTONE 1: FINANCES



Strategy	Why this matters?
Manage bequests to support JSNWL’s long-term sustainability	Bequests provide critical long-term funding. Managing them well safeguards the Library’s independence and allows for thoughtful, planned investment in key projects.
Increase and Diversify revenue streams	Relying on a single income source is risky. Diversifying income strengthens financial resilience and supports day-to-day operations.
Sustain key partnerships and funding opportunities	Grants and subsidies reduce financial pressure and help fund projects that would not be possible through donations or membership alone.
Maintain strong cost management and financial oversight	Prudent financial management protects the Library from unexpected costs and enables it to invest strategically when opportunities arise.

## CORNERSTONE 2: PEOPLE



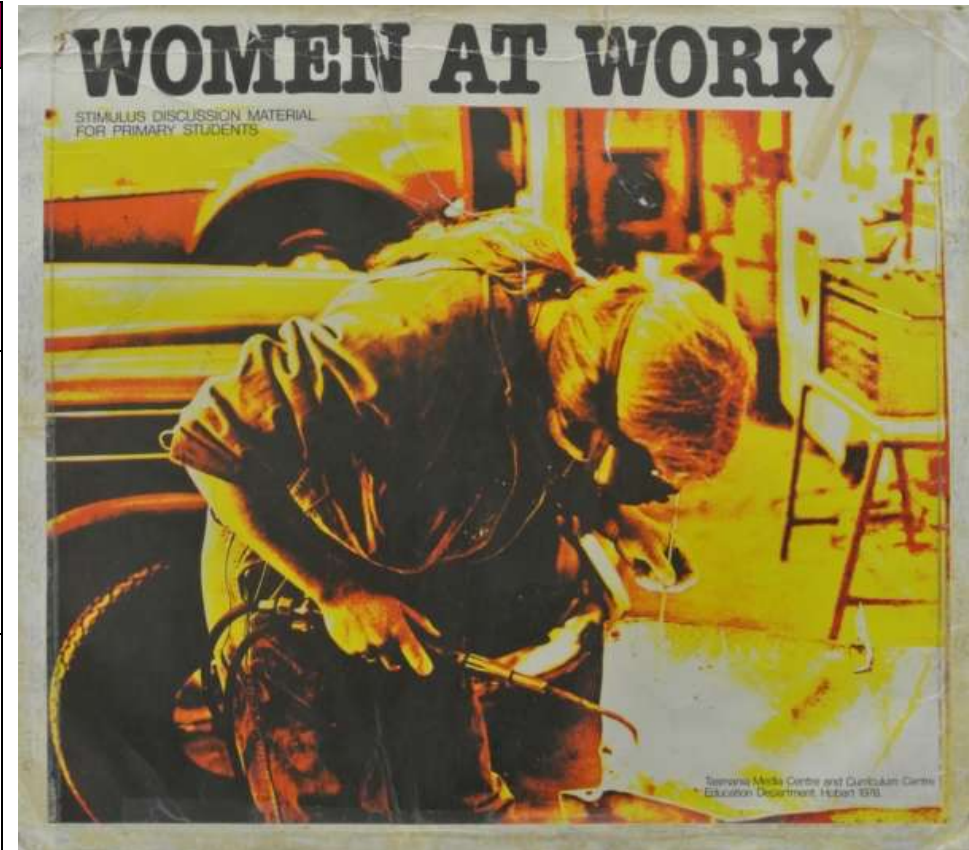
Strategy	Why this matters?
Strengthen Collaborative leadership and governance culture	Collaborative leadership fosters shared responsibility and draws on the skills and experiences of many.
Reduce key person dependencies through effective succession and resource planning.	This protects the Library from operational risks and supports continuity through change.
Establish and maintain a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator role	A dedicated Volunteer Coordinator provides leadership and continuity, ensuring a positive volunteer experience.
Offer flexible and inclusive volunteer opportunities	Flexible volunteer roles make it easier for people from diverse backgrounds and circumstances to contribute.
Develop volunteer mentoring and support structures	Mentoring helps new volunteers build confidence and skills, while providing experienced volunteers with meaningful leadership opportunities.



## CORNERSTONE 3: SKILLS AND PROCESSES



Strategy	Why this matters?
Update governance roles and expectations	Clear role descriptions help everyone understand their responsibilities, improving accountability, communication, and shared leadership.
Update Volunteer Handbook	An up-to-date Volunteer Handbook ensures new and existing volunteers are welcomed, supported, and equipped to contribute meaningfully.
Strengthen operational delivery through effective support structures	Committees and working groups spread the workload, build resilience, and ensure key projects and tasks are managed effectively.



## CORNERSTONE 4: SPACES



Strategy	Why this matters?
Strengthen JSNWL's role within the education and arts precinct	Active participation in the precinct builds the Library's cultural relevance, creates partnerships, and strengthens local community ties.
Increase visibility through small-scale in-house displays and digital outreach	Small displays and digital storytelling help raise the Library's profile and engage new audiences despite space limitations.
Maximise use of Library space for multiple purposes	Thoughtful space management helps the Library support multiple user groups and maintain a welcoming and functional environment.
Maintain strong commitment to a physical library presence	A physical space provides a tangible home for the collection, volunteer activity, and community connection.

## CORNERSTONE 5: IT SYSTEMS




Strategy	Why this matters?
Maintain reliable server infrastructure and IT support	Reliable IT infrastructure ensures that the Library's operations and access to collections remain stable and secure.
Adopt and maintain well-supported IT systems	Well-supported systems reduce technical risks, improve usability for volunteers, and ensure sustainability over time.
Strengthen digital collection management systems	As the digital collection grows, strong management systems are essential to preserve and provide access to digital assets.

## Stream 2: Activity Focus: Expanding Reach and Impact

JJSNWL’s core purpose is to collect, preserve, and share the diverse histories, contributions, and experiences of Australian women. These activities are at the heart of the Library’s work — the ways we bring our purpose to life in service of our members, researchers, partners, and the wider community. They represent the programs, partnerships, and services that connect people to women’s histories and build public awareness. While the Cornerstones provide the organisational foundations to sustain our work, the Activity Focus stream reflects our ambitions for engagement, education, and community building. Together, they ensure the Library remains a vibrant, trusted space for learning and connection

The following priorities will guide JSNWL’s activity planning for 2026-2030.

ACTIVITY 1: SAFEGUARDING AND SHARING THE COLLECTION		
Strategy	Why this matters?	
Undertake a <b>Significance Assessment</b> to document the value of the collection, promote its importance, and support future grant applications.	A Significance Assessment formally recognises the Library’s unique holdings, supports preservation efforts, and strengthens funding applications.	
Recruit <b>experienced archivists and librarians</b> to support collection management and cataloguing.	Skilled archivists and librarians are essential for maintaining professional standards in managing and preserving the collection.	
Continue to <b>enhance the online catalogue</b> as a key platform for public access to JSNWL’s unique resources.	The online catalogue is a vital access point for researchers and the public, extending the Library’s reach nationally and internationally.	
Use <b>collection-based content to drive social media engagement</b> and attract new library visitors, researchers, members.	Sharing stories from the collection promotes awareness, drives engagement, and invites new audiences to explore the Library.	

## ACTIVITY 2: DELIVERING EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

Strategy	Why this matters?
<p>Continue the <b>Annual Luncheon as a signature event</b>, supporting fundraising, community engagement, and profile-raising.</p>	<p>The Annual Luncheon is a cornerstone event that strengthens community ties, raises essential funds, and highlights the Library's role in preserving women's histories.</p>
<p>Maintain the <b>Lunch Hour Talks series</b> as a key forum for promoting diverse women's experiences and histories.</p>	<p>Lunch Hour Talks create a platform for sharing women's voices and engaging the public in conversations about history, activism, and culture.</p>
<p>Develop an <b>annual events calendar</b> that reflects the diversity of women's experiences across topics and speakers.</p>	<p>A diverse, planned calendar ensures broad engagement and keeps the Library's public program vibrant and relevant.</p>



## ACTIVITY 3: SUPPORTING LEARNING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

### Strategy

Continue to develop the TAFE / Charles Sturt internship and placement programs to build sector capacity and strengthen JSNWL's volunteer pipeline.

Support research by international and national researchers through targeted library services and access.

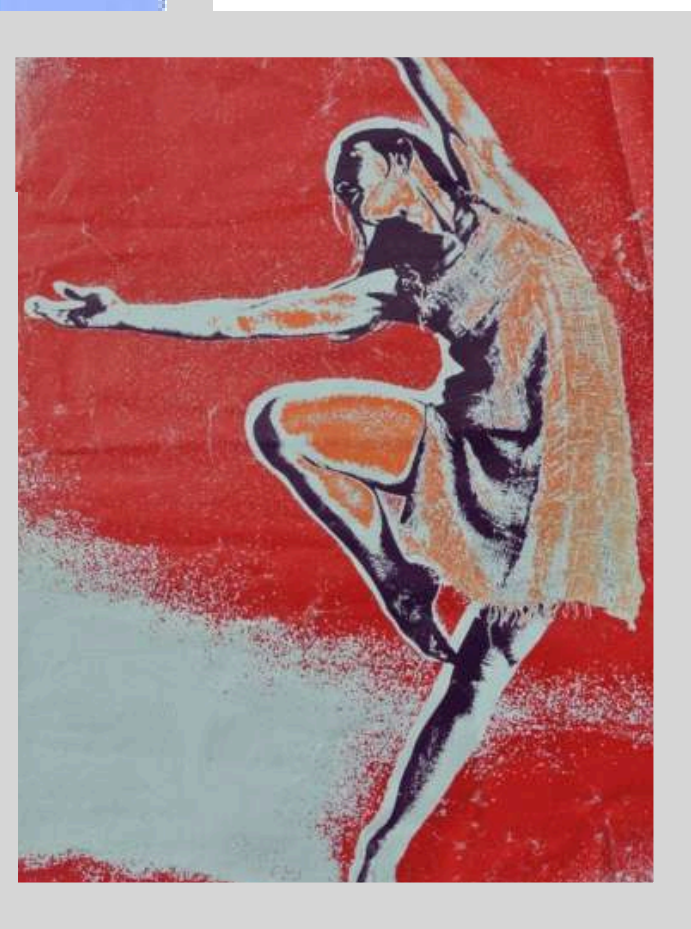
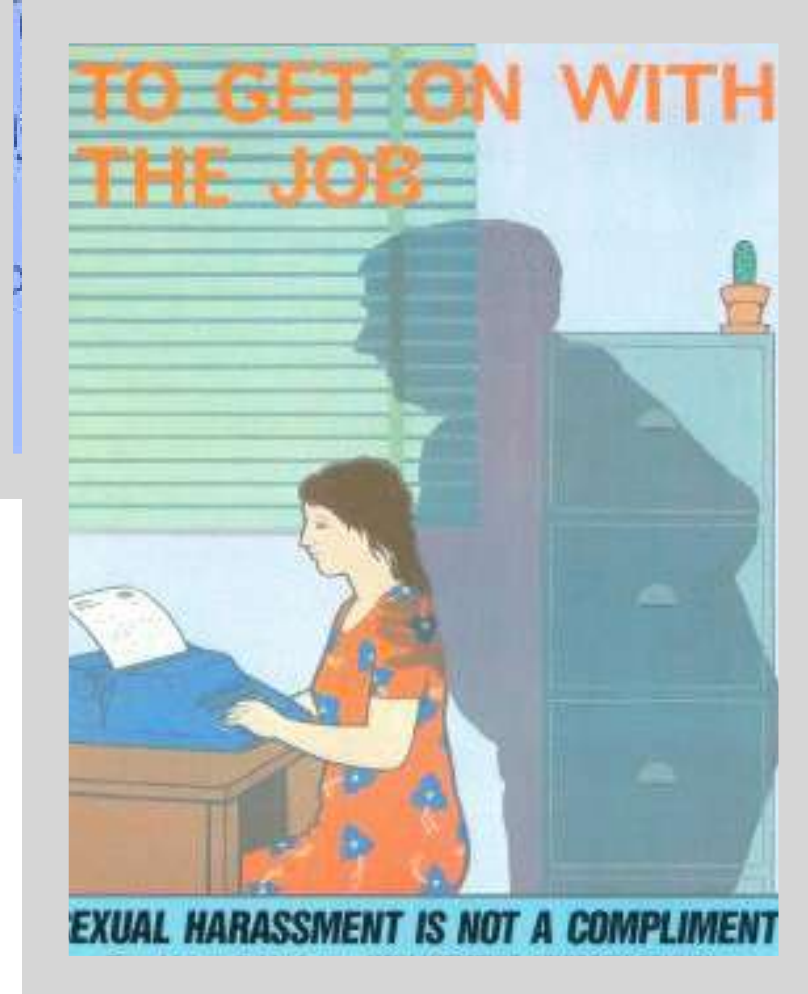
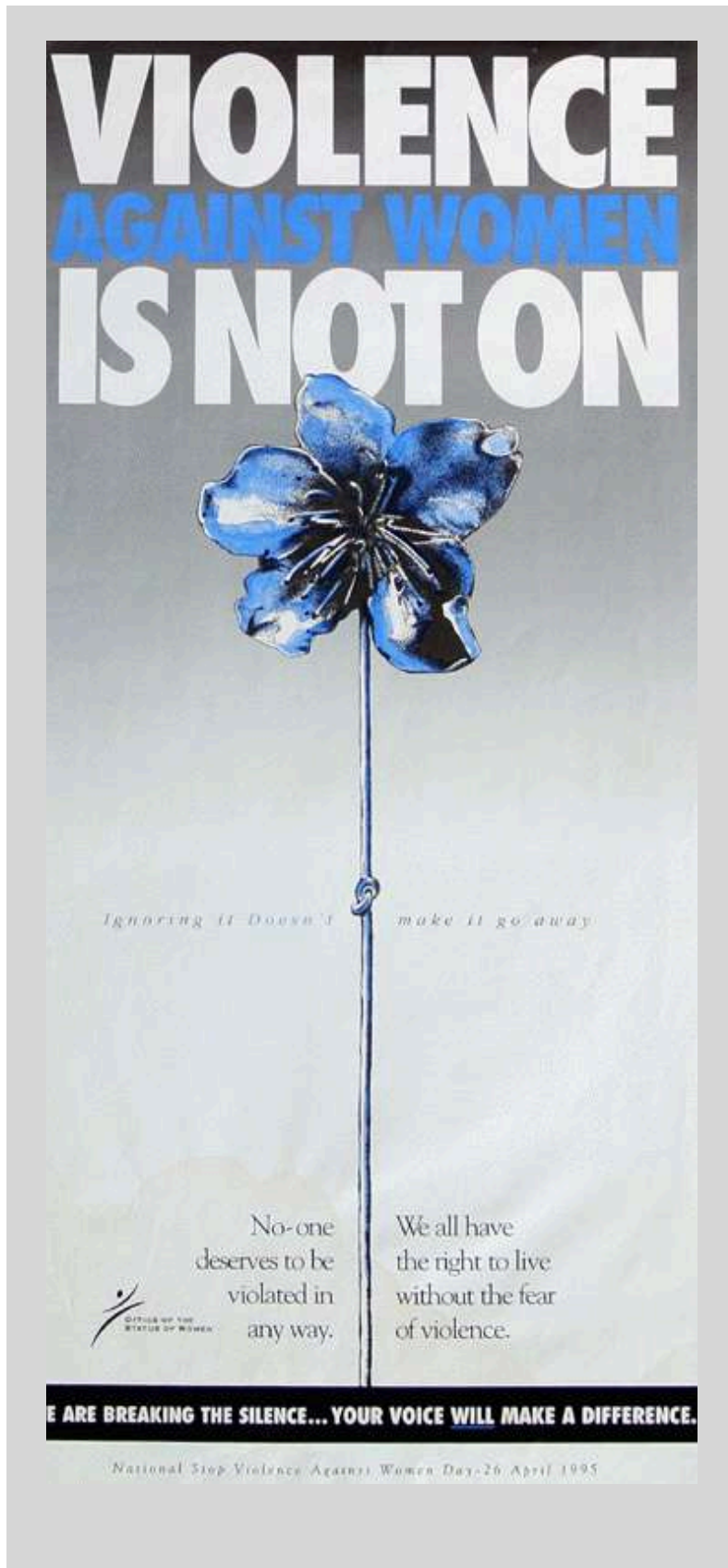
### Why this matters?

Internships and placements support the next generation of GLAM sector professionals while introducing new volunteers to JSNWL's work.

Providing research support promotes the use of the Library's unique collections and contributes to scholarly work on women's histories.



SUPPORTING  
LEARNING  
AND CAPACITY  
BUILDING



## The Jessie Street National Women's Library poster collection

This visually striking collection documents over four decades of feminist and political activism, with posters dating primarily from the 1970s to the early 2000s. It captures the voices, messages, and design styles of women's movements across Australia and internationally. Themes include reproductive rights, peace activism, LGBTQI+ rights, domestic violence prevention, women in politics, union solidarity, and international feminist campaigns.

## ACTIVITY 4: CREATING AND SHARING CONTENT

### Strategy

Use collection highlights as a basis for storytelling content and blogposts.

Audit and format recorded lectures to make them available online where appropriate.

Provide opportunities for members to contribute content related to women's stories from biographies to 'On this day' history items.

Contribute to exhibitions both within JSNWL and externally, using them to promote the collection and share women's stories.

Develop YouTube content showcasing Library items, women's stories, and the Library's cultural space.

### Why this matters?

Sharing stories online helps make the Library's collections more accessible and relevant to broader audiences.

Making past talks accessible online extends their reach and builds the Library's digital content library.

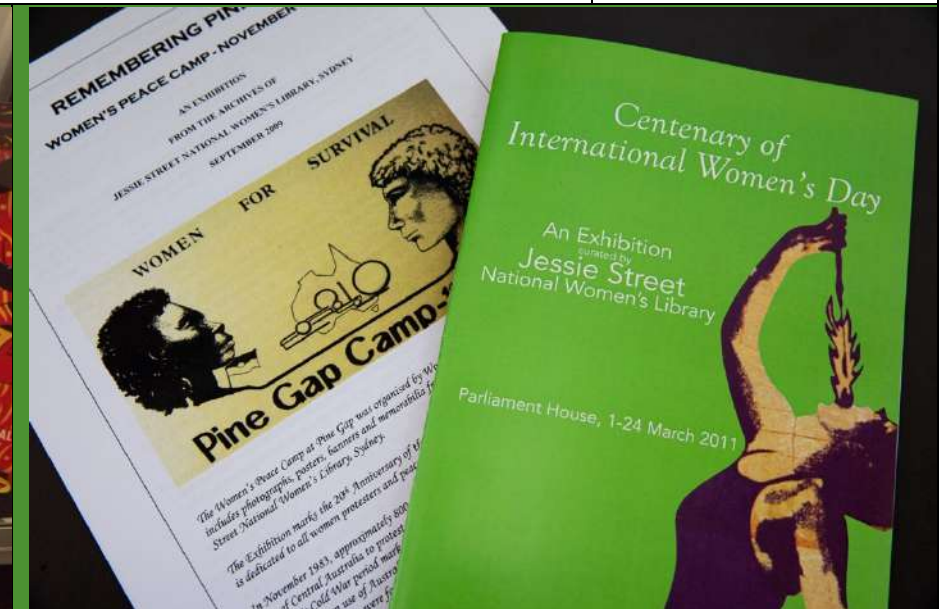
Member contributions strengthen community engagement and bring new perspectives to the Library's storytelling.

Exhibitions showcase the collection and connect the Library with wider audiences and cultural partners.

YouTube allows the Library to share stories widely and reach new audiences



CREATING AND  
SHARING  
CONTENT



## Jessie Street National Women's Library, Badge Collection

The Jessie Street National Women's Library badge collection features over 500 badges and pins, primarily from feminist campaigns, political movements, peace activism, and LGBTQI+ rights, spanning the 1970s to early 2000s. These wearable protest symbols reflect grassroots organising and the intersectional nature of feminist activism in Australia and internationally.



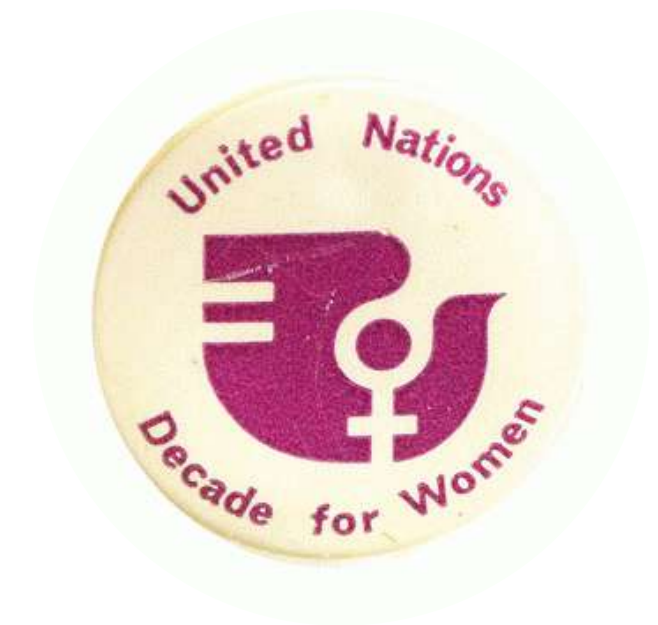
BENEATH EVERY WOMAN'S CURVE  
LIES A MUSCLE



BGF HAPPY MARDI GRAS : SYDNEY  
GAY & LESBIAN MARDI GRAS 1995.



WOMEN IN UNIONS STRONGER  
TOGETHER



UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF WOMEN

## ACTIVITY 5: BUILDING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Strategy	Why this matters?
<p>Build intergenerational, geographic, physical, and virtual connections through events, programs, and online platforms.</p>	<p>Diverse connections broaden the Library's reach and relevance, creating a more inclusive community of supporters.</p>
<p>Strengthen partnerships within the GLAM sector; share information and contribute to broader sector initiatives.</p>	<p>Collaborating with other cultural organisations amplifies the Library's impact and builds sector leadership.</p>
<p>Deepen engagement with the City of Sydney and position the Library as a valued 'third space' within the education and arts precinct.</p>	<p>Strengthening local ties ensures the Library's place within the city's cultural life.</p>

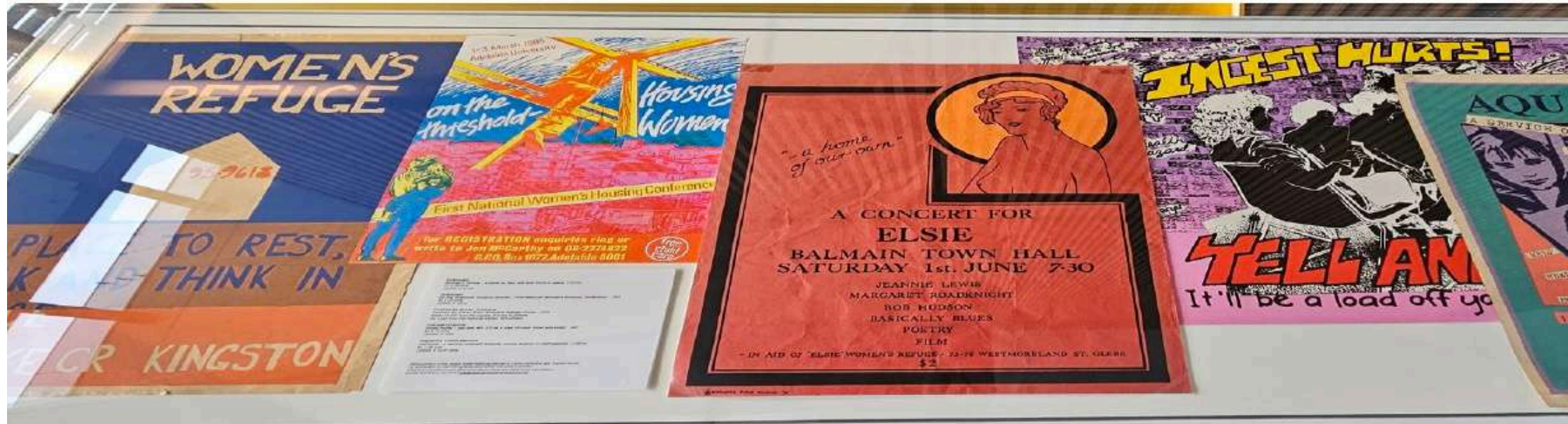


## ACTIVITY 6: GROWING MEMBERSHIP AND SERVICES

Strategy	Why this matters?
Continue to deliver valued membership services, including events, newsletters, and library access.	Providing meaningful membership benefits builds loyalty, supports fundraising, and keeps members connected to the Library's mission and work.
Expand national reach through online events and access to recorded lectures.	Online initiatives allow members across Australia to participate in the Library's activities and feel part of a connected, national community.
Develop our website to make it easier for members to engage, renew membership, join, and explore Library stories.	A user-friendly website improves member engagement, supports membership growth, and promotes the Library's content.

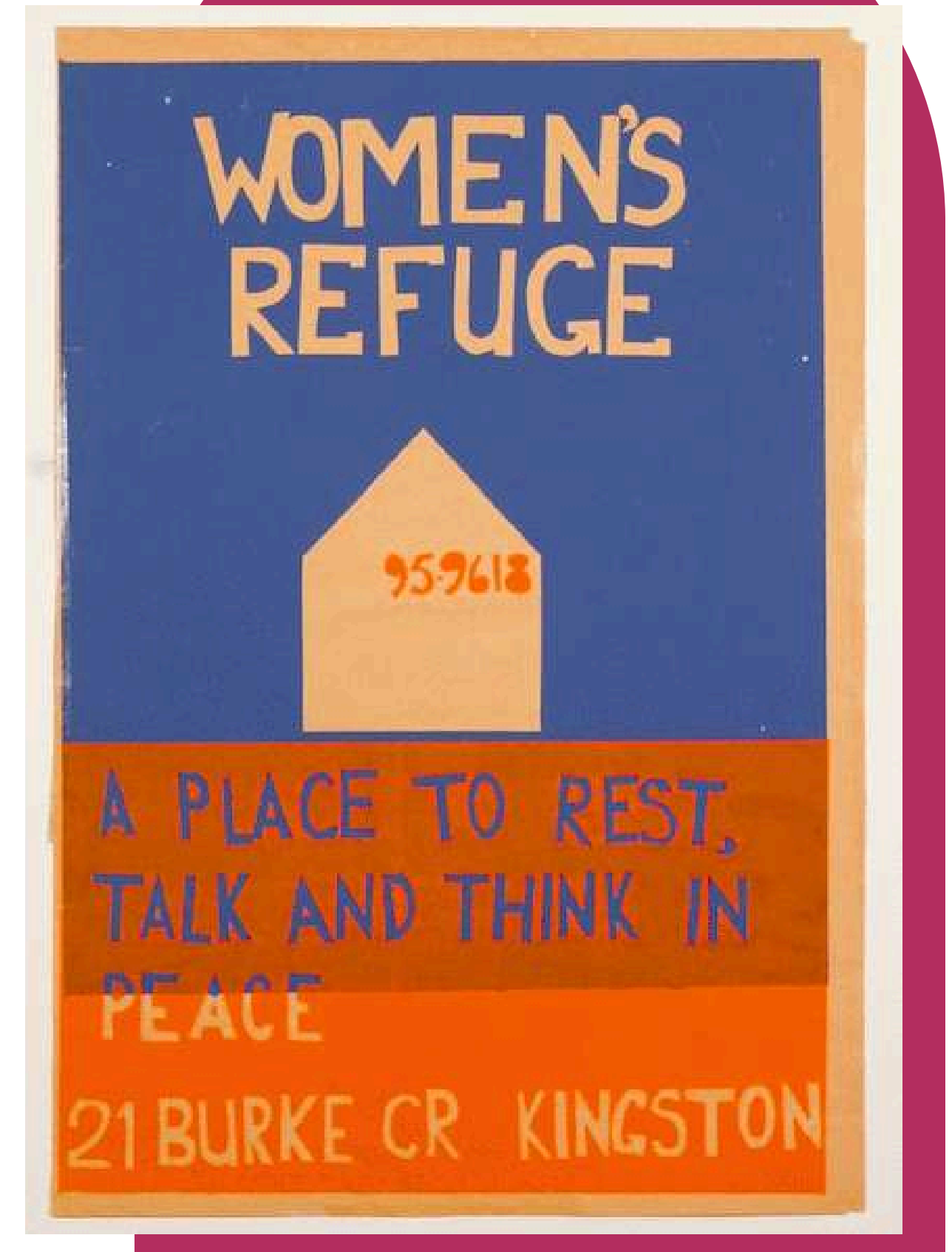


## Sharing Our Collection: Elsie 50th Anniversary Conference



**Overview:** In March 2024, the Library contributed to the Elsie 50th Anniversary Conference at UTS, chaired by Anne Summers. This national event reflected on five decades of refuge activism, recognising both pioneers and ongoing challenges in preventing domestic violence.

**Our Contribution:** A curated selection of 1970's - 1990's women's political posters from the Library's collection featured in the exhibition's visual history display. These posters — addressing themes such as domestic violence, refuge activism, and feminist solidarity — formed a powerful backdrop to panel discussions and public storytelling.



## ACTIVITY 7: RAISING PUBLIC PROFILE AND BRAND AWARENESS

Strategy	Why this matters?
<p><b>Develop strategic content across platforms</b> (e.g. Instagram, YouTube) to promote the Library's role and work.</p>	<p>Strategic content creation increases awareness of the Library's purpose, attracts new audiences, and strengthens community engagement beyond the physical space.</p>
<p><b>Produce a regular eNewsletter</b> to promote Library events and activities, share links to blogs and external resources, and provide timely updates -distinct from the printed Newsletter, which contains longer stories and features.</p>	<p>A regular eNewsletter will keep members and supporters informed and connected, builds a sense of community, and drives participation in Library activities. It allows for timely, cost-effective communication with a wide audience.</p>
<p><b>Clarify and promote JSNWL's unique brand and identity</b> through consistent use of logo, colours and design across all promotional activities, social media and website.</p>	<p>A clear and consistent brand builds public recognition, strengthens the Library's professional image, and differentiates JSNWL from other organisations. It supports fundraising, partnerships, and membership growth.</p>



# HOW WE'LL MAKE IT HAPPEN: ROADMAP

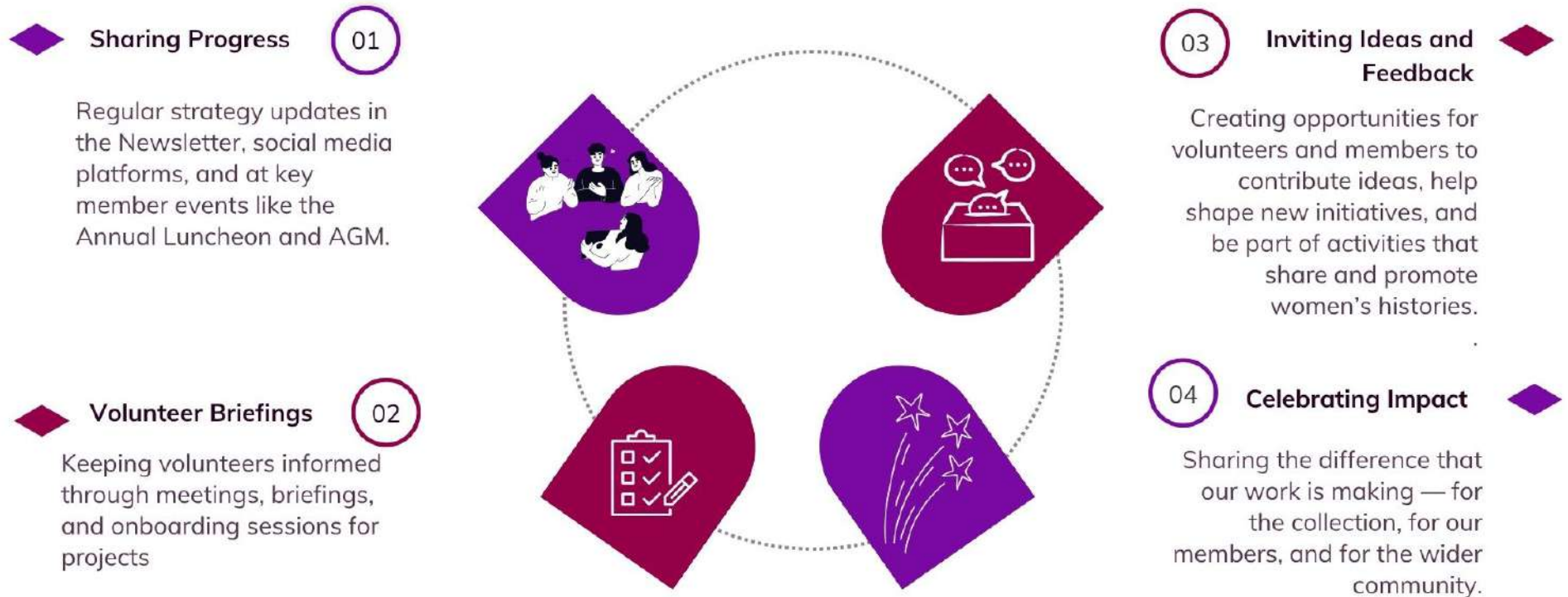
This Strategy is anchored in the Library's purpose - collecting, preserving, and sharing Australian women's histories - and sets out a clear, practical roadmap to turn our vision into action. It will be reviewed annually to reflect progress and adapt to changing needs.



# Volunteer and Member Engagement - Communicating Progress and Involving Our Community



**VOLUNTEERS AND MEMBERS ARE AT THE HEART OF THE LIBRARY'S WORK. WE WILL KEEP OUR COMMUNITY INFORMED AND INVOLVED AS THE STRATEGY UNFOLDS.**



# Planning and Review Cycles

Our planning and review process will stay clear and practical, designed to support how we work together as a volunteer-led organisation.

- **Annual Plan:** Each year, we will outline the key projects and activities that put our Strategy into action.
- **Mid-Year Check-In:** A simple pause to see what's going well, what needs adjusting, and where we can lend extra support.
- **Year-End Reflection:** We'll celebrate achievements, note challenges, and record what we've learned for the year ahead.
- **Five-Year Review:** In 2030, we'll look back on this Strategy, reflect on its impact, and plan the next stage of JSNWL's story.

Together, volunteers, members, and friends of the Library will continue to shape a space where women's stories are preserved, shared, and celebrated.





To our Members, Volunteers, Contributors, and Supporters

As we bring our 2026–2030 Strategy to life, your involvement continues to make all the difference.

Through your support you help us care for the collection, welcome researchers, run programs, and share women's histories in all their diversity.

Together, we honour Jessie Street's legacy and ensure the Library remains a living space for learning, connection, and change.



Email: [info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au](mailto:info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au)

Website: <https://nationalwomenslibrary.org.au/>

The Jessie Street National Women's Library is a registered charity in Australia and is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient.

