

WOMEN AT WORK



The contribution of women in the NSW Parliament has been significant, delivering positive and lasting outcomes for the development of society, politics and culture. Working with their colleagues in Government and Opposition, they have helped to drive legislative and policy review and reform, and to initiate improved parliamentary practices and procedures. In this section we examine 'women at work' and the ways in which women have acted as community advocates; as driving forces behind parliamentary committees; as leaders and ministers in Executive Government; through networks such as the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Association; and through other programs, projects and networks designed to provide opportunities and encouragement to women who might be seeking an entry into politics.

Community advocates

From adoption practices, to same sex marriage, political donations to disability services, women have used the parliamentary arena to be a voice for their communities and to champion policies close to their hearts. Here are just some of the many ways women in Parliament have sought to deliver outcomes to benefit the community.

HELEN SHAM-HO LIBERAL, THEN INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (1988 - 2003)



Helen Wai-Har Sham-Ho was the first Chinese person elected to an Australian Parliament in any jurisdiction. She was Chair of both the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Privilege and Ethics, and the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3. The latter inquired into policing in Cabramatta, and led to significant changes in policing policies in NSW.

Helen originally entered Parliament as a member of the Liberal Party, but became an Independent in 1998. Born in Hong Kong, Helen migrated to Australia in 1961 and is an inspiration to culturally and linguistically diverse communities across the country. She reflected on her heritage in her inaugural speech: "I represent the aspiration of thousands of Australians who migrated to this country to seek a better way of life, to make their homes in one of the great democracies. Although I am typecast in this role, I like to think that first and foremost I am an ordinary Australian woman who has a great love for this nation."

Helen has served as member and advisor to several cross-cultural organisations and associations including the Australia-Chinese Community Association, the Australian-Chinese Forum of NSW and the Ethnic Affairs Commission.

CLOVER MOORE INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, BLIGH (1988 - 2012)



Clover Moore was elected to the Legislative Assembly as an Independent member in 1998, taking her seat as the member for Bligh. A strong community advocate, Clover successfully introduced a number of Private Members' Bills addressing issues of importance to the community including: small bars; freedom of information laws; tenant's rights; strata reform; making it illegal to incite hatred against members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual and Intersex community; and making same sex adoption legal.

She aspired to an open, accountable government and in 1991 co-authored the NSW Charter of Reform of Government. The Charter was a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government that aimed to enhance parliamentary democracy and encourage an open and transparent system of Government. Key initiatives included a Royal

Commission into police corruption, reform of electoral funding laws, whistleblower protection, greater independence for statutory officers and improved freedom-of-information measures.

During her time in the Assembly, Clover became the first woman to be popularly elected as Lord Mayor of Sydney in 2004: a position she still holds. She resigned from Parliament in 2012 following the enactment of the Local Government Amendment (Members of Parliament Act) 2012, which prevented her from continuing to hold the office of Lord Mayor and member of Parliament.

MEREDITH BURGMANN
LABOR
MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (1991 - 2007)



Elected to the Legislative Council in May 1991, Meredith was a member of several committees and chaired the Standing Committee on Parliamentary Ethics. During this time, she steered the committee through inquiries which dealt with complex matters of procedural fairness, parliamentary freedom of speech, the need to protect the dignity and standing of the House and the importance of protecting individual reputations from damage.

Meredith was elected President of the Legislative Council on 11 May, 1999; the second woman to be elected as a Presiding Officer of the NSW Parliament. She held the position for many years, until her retirement in 2007. A passionate advocate for the Aboriginal community, she introduced a 'Welcome to Country' at the start of each sitting week, ensuring appropriate recognition for the traditional custodians of the land; the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. She also played a lead role in the establishment of the Parliament's Reconciliation Wall; a public exhibition space dedicated to the display of Aboriginal art and the themes of reconciliation with Aboriginal communities in NSW.

In 1993 Meredith introduced the annual Ernie Awards: a fun but serious initiative highlight issues of sexism in politics, business and the community.

LIZ KEROHAN
LIBERAL
MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, CAMDEN (1991 - 2003)



A big part of the role of a member of the Legislative Assembly is to support the interests of constituents. The former member for Camden, the late Dr Liz Kernohan MP, was an exemplary political and community leader. An active member of the community for more than 35 years prior to her election, Liz was a popular and well-respected figure. As an alderman and Mayor, she understood the values and needs of her community. Her election in 1991 won the marginal seat back for the Liberal Party and allowed the Coalition to retain Government with a hung Parliament.

Liz was elected time and again with increasing margins. She represented Camden during a time of great social change, as the town became subject to the pressures of urban development. Despite the fact that land releases and housing estates were changing the area dramatically, she continued to work with the community and government to ensure Camden's historic and rural roots were retained. She was also an advocate for regional services, a better hospital and more public transport.

Liz was known for putting the needs of the community before party and personal interests, and her death in 2004 was met with great shock and sadness. "The story of Liz is not so much about a member of Parliament but about a woman who was passionate about her constituency and her community," said the Hon Craig Knowles, Minister for Infrastructure and Planning and Natural Resources in 2004.

LEE RHIANNON
GREENS
MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (1999 - 2010)



Lee Rhiannon represented the Greens in the Legislative Council, before being elected to a position in the Australian Senate. She campaigned tirelessly for the reform of political donations and electoral funding laws.

In 2001, she launched the Greens NSW 'Democracy for Sale' project to increase transparency around corporate donations made to political parties. The website provides the public with accessible data relating to donations made by individuals and categories of donors including property developers, the finance sector and clubs and hotels, advancing Lee's aim to "highlight the impact of political donations on the democratic process."

Her campaigning contributed to the establishment of the 2008 Upper House Inquiry into Electoral and Political Party Funding in New South Wales and subsequent reforms including the prohibition of political donations from property developers, tobacco and alcohol and gambling entities.

PAM ALLAN
LABOR
MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, WENTWORTHVILLE (1999 - 2010)



Pam Allan came to the Parliament having spent many years dedicated to the community of Parramatta; first as a school teacher and an official in the NSW Teacher's Federation and later as a councillor on Parramatta City Council. She was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1988 as the member for Wentworthville.

As a teacher, she was involved in “encouraging women and girls to participate in our education system; to fight for equal opportunity in the system; and to ensure that courses were developed to meet the needs of girls in our schools.” She took these ideals to the Parliament, where she served as Shadow Minister for Planning, Environment and Women's Affairs from 1988 to 1995 and as the first woman Minister for Environment from 1995 to 1999. She spoke at length in the Chamber about the need to increase the number of women in politics and presented ideas to introduce family friendly hours in Parliament and to make the precinct more accessible to women and parents with young children.

As Minister for Environment, she introduced the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*; was a key part of legislative efforts towards the conservation and protection of threatened species. She also served on the board of Keep Australia Beautiful and chaired the organisation from 2000 to 2006.

PATRICIA FORSYTHE
LIBERAL
MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (1999 - 2006)



Within the Legislative Council, Patricia Forsythe held a number of positions including as Shadow Minister for Community Services, Disability Services and Ageing and Shadow Minister for the Status of Women. She was passionate about advocating for her portfolio responsibilities and sought to forge stronger relationships between the community sector and the Parliament. The former Director of the Council of Social Service of NSW, Mr Gary Moore stated:

“Patricia has consulted extensively and effectively across the NSW community and has been prepared to listen carefully and consider the views about policies and programs put to her. Patricia has forcefully advocated the interest of vulnerable children, disadvantaged families and people with disabilities.”

Patricia continues to serve the community, through senior appointments to the Hunter Development Corporation, Hunter Medical Research Institution, Council of Macquarie University and the Advisory Board of UTS Business School. She is currently the Executive Director of the Sydney Business Chamber and serves on the board of several Government and Not-for-Profit organisations.

BARBARA PERRY
LABOR
MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, AUBURN (2001 - 2015)



Barbara Mazzel Anne Perry was the first woman of Lebanese origin to be elected to the NSW Legislative Assembly, and the first woman to win the seat of Auburn. A former councillor, she had a strong understanding of the needs and views of her community, and this was reflected in her being elected in a by-election on 8 September 2001 and re-elected at the 2003, 2007 and 2011 state elections.

“I entered politics for the very simple reason that I love the place where I was born and I wanted to advocate on its behalf. I did not grow up wanting to be a politician,” she has said.

Following the 2007 election, Barbara was appointed Minister for Juvenile Justice, Minister for Western Sydney and Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship. In December 2009, she was appointed as Minister for Local Government and Minister Assisting the Minister for Mental Health, taking on the additional responsibility of Minister for Juvenile Justice in June 2010. Perry retained these portfolios until Labor was defeated at the 2011 election.

Barbara also contributed to policy development and review through committees. She chaired the Committee on Children and Young People, which tabled significant reports on inquiries into children, young people and the built environment and the work of the Commission for Children and Young People.

PENNY SHARPE
LABOR
MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (2005 - Present)



The Hon Penny Sharpe has represented the Labor Party in the Legislative Council since 2005 and is recognised as the first lesbian to serve in the NSW Parliament, although she always argues that she is not necessarily the first lesbian to be elected to the NSW Parliament, just the first to admit it. Since being elected, she has been at the forefront of arguing for the rights, care, wellbeing and equality of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) community and has a special interest in LGBTI parents and their children. When Labor was in Government Penny took up the case for parenting rights for lesbian couples and furthered the work to remove discrimination against same sex couples in all areas of NSW law.

With Independent Clover Moore, Penny co-sponsored and steered the Adoption Amendment (Same Sex Couples) Bill through the Legislative Council, and also worked to establish one of the first anti-bullying strategies within NSW public schools, called 'Proud Schools.'

After the push for marriage equality in the Federal Parliament stalled, Penny was a founding member of the cross party working group in the NSW Parliament on marriage equality, introducing the first Same Sex Marriage Equality Bill into the Legislative Council.

Outside the Parliament, she established the annual GLORIAS; an awards event highlighting, naming and shaming public homophobia and transphobia. In her inaugural speech, she said "I joined the Labor Party when I was 19 for the very simple reason that I wanted to change the world immediately. It is taking a little longer than I expected."

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A watching brief

The core functions of an effective Parliament – legislating, scrutinising, inquiring into issues and giving constituents a voice – depend on strong accountability mechanisms and a committee system that provides every opportunity to examine policy and hold government accountable. An effective Parliament holds a ‘watching brief’ over the Executive Government.

Women parliamentarians are among those who shaped the development of today’s modern legislature and have stewarded the Parliament’s committees through some of the most contentious inquiries in NSW. Under their leadership, parliamentary committees have shone light on Executive Government and led to improvements in public sector accountability and the delivery of services to the community. Their legacy has been and continues to be wide-ranging and lasting. Here are just some examples of women who have held the ‘watching brief’.

Committees and communities

ANN SYMONDS

LABOR

MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (1982 - 1998)



Entering the Legislative Council in 1982, Ann Symonds AO developed a reputation as a determined and effective advocate; especially in relation to policy areas affecting women and children. Her time as Chair of the Social Issues Committee was particularly productive, and she led inquiries into some of the most contentious and challenging policy problems of the day, including the treatment of people with Hepatitis C, and the children of imprisoned parents.

The first report of the Social Issues Committee on Accessing Adoption Information led to changes to the law in 1990, enabling adoptees and birth parents to obtain identifying information with the support of the Post Adoption Research Centre.

Ann had many successes during her 16 years as a member of the Legislative Council, and is still campaigning for important causes including Shine For Kids (children of prisoners), the Miranda Project (an approach to crime prevention targeting women with complex needs) and the Drug Law Reform Foundation. In recognition of her significant service to social justice and to the Parliament Ann was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 2015.

“I have a feeling we will still be lobbied by her and have our arms twisted by her, because she will continue to fight for the causes she believes in,” said fellow member of the Legislative Council Michael Egan at the time of Ann’s retirement in 1998.

Decision-making under the spotlight

JENNY GARDINER

NATIONALS

MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (1991 - 2015)

ROBYN PARKER

LIBERAL

MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (2003 - 2011)

In NSW, the Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committees (GPSCs) are well known for their record of scrutiny. Unlike other committees, GPSCs have the power to launch their own inquiries and are often led by a non-government chair. Two members of the Legislative Council – Jenny Gardiner and Robyn Parker – took on the daunting task of chairing GPSCs through some of their most provocative, controversial and public inquiries.



First elected in 1991, Jenny Gardiner served as a member for almost 24 years before her retirement in 2015. As chair of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 4, she oversaw inquiries into state planning and infrastructure. This included the controversial approval and then closure of the Designer Outlets (Orange Grove) Centre in Liverpool; the Badgerys Creek land dealing and planning decisions; and the Pacific Highway upgrades. Her work helped generate reform to protocols for lobbying, political donations and election funding.

Jenny was a member of the Privileges Committee, the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption and also held the office of Deputy President of the Legislative Council.



Robyn Parker served as a member of the Legislative Council from 2003-2011, before becoming the member for Maitland in the Legislative Assembly until 2015. In addition to serving as the Minister for the Environment and a Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education and Aboriginal Affairs, Robyn was chair of the General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2. This committee attracted a lot of attention for its inquiry into the NSW Ambulance Service, which exposed the extremely high rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm, poor mental health and even suicides within the Service.

On her last day in the Council, Robyn reflected that “the committee process is democracy at its best.”

Impartiality under pressure

AMANDA FAZIO

LABOR

MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (2000 - 2015)



Amanda Fazio was a member of the Legislative Council from 2000-2015, during which time she became the third woman to serve as President (2009-2011). She also held many other positions, including as Chair of Committees and Opposition Whip.

As President, Amanda was subject to the unique pressures of maintaining impartiality at all times. “It was the role of the President,” she said, “to protect the rights of both the Parliament as an institution and the rights and privileges of members. There is and never should be any party political bias from any Presiding Officer.”

In late 2010 and early 2011, Amanda played a pivotal role in the so-called Gentrader inquiry, when General Purpose Standing Committee No. 1 sought to inquire into the sale of the State’s electricity assets by the former Labor Government. Amanda accepted the advice of the Clerk, Lynn Lovelock, that the committee could continue to sit despite the controversial decision by the Government to prorogue Parliament in an attempt to prevent the hearings. She later also took the difficult decision not to issue warrants for the arrest of several witnesses who had refused to attend, on the basis of fairness to the witnesses.

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Executive women

Although the first female member was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1925 and the first woman was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1931, it would be another 53 years before a woman gained a position in Cabinet. This was the trailblazing Janice Crosio, who in 1984 achieved an historic appointment as the first woman to be a Minister in the NSW Parliament, as Minister for Natural Resources.

Over the years women have increasingly occupied leadership roles in the Executive, administering major portfolios, proving their ability to pioneer change and reform, and to run Government. Since Janice's appointment, 26 women have served as Ministers in the NSW Parliament. There have been 11 women ministers in Liberal/National Coalition Governments and 16 in Labor Governments.

Seven women have held the portfolios of Consumer Affairs, Family and Community Services and Women, eight have held Fair Trading and three have held the Health portfolio. There have been no women in NSW appointed as Ministers of Finance, Justice, Police, Regional Development/State Development, Roads, Maritime and Freight or Veterans Affairs.

In 2009, history was made for women in NSW when Kristina Keneally became the State's 42nd Premier. Kristina also made history with Carmel Tebbutt remaining as the Deputy Premier. Together they formed Australia's first all-female team to lead a government in Australia: an achievement only recently repeated at state level in Queensland.

In 2016 the current Cabinet contains five women, two of whom are the first to be appointed as Treasurer and Attorney-General. This is consistent with the increasing number of women holding Cabinet positions in other jurisdictions within Australia, including the Northern Territory (5) and Victoria (10). Women in the NSW Cabinet currently occupy the following positions: Treasurer (the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian MP, Member for Willoughby, who was also the first female Transport Minister); Health (the Hon. Jillian Skinner MP, Member for the North Shore); Attorney General (the Hon. Gabrielle Upton MP, Member for Vacluse); Family and Community Services (the Hon. Pru Goward MP, Member for Goulburn); and Early Childhood Education, Aboriginal Affairs and Assistant Minister for Education (the Hon. Leslie Williams MP, Member for Port Macquarie). All of these executive women are notable for their achievements at the highest levels of government. Yet the gender balance is still far from equal, and women remain under-represented on Cabinets in Australia and elsewhere in the world.

The first leadership team: in their own words

THE HON KRISTINA KENEALLY

MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (2003-2011), AND PREMIER NSW (2009-2011)



From December 2009 until March 2011, Kristina Keneally led the then Labor Government, serving as the State's 42nd Premier. As Premier, Kristina threw her government's support behind the Equal Pay Test Case before the Fair Work Commission. She also oversaw the biggest expansion of disability services in the state's history, through the historic partnership program Stronger Together.

Kristina was also the State's first female Minister for Planning. In that role, as well as Premier, she drove the master planning and design for Barangaroo, including the headland park, Wynyard Walk and the relocation of the passenger cruise terminal to White Bay.

As Chair of the Council for the Australian Federation, Kristina played a key role in negotiating the National Health Reform Agreement.

Her government also lowered public transport fares, introduced social impact bonds, and was

the first administration in NSW history to successfully complete privatisation of part of the electricity network.

During her time as Premier the Parliament also approved legislation to allow same sex couples to adopt children. Labor MPs had a conscience vote and Kristina strongly supported the bill.

The Keneally government lost the 2011 election following a period of 16 years of Labor in government in NSW. Kristina left office with the NSW Budget in surplus and its AAA credit rating intact.

THE HON CARMEL TEBBUTT

MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (1998 - 2005), MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (2005-2015) AND DEPUTY PREMIER NSW (2008-2011)



A member of the NSW Parliament for 17 years, Carmel Tebbutt was the first woman to hold the position of Deputy Premier in NSW. In 1998 Carmel became a member of the Legislative Council, moving to the Legislative Assembly in 2005 after winning a by election for the seat of Marrickville. She held the portfolios of Juvenile Justice, Community Services, Youth, Disability Services, Education, Climate Change and the Environment, Commerce and Health.

Carmel had a strong commitment to social justice and the important role Government plays in strengthening communities. As Minister for Juvenile Justice and Community Services, she saw firsthand the fallout wreaked by poverty, domestic violence, and drug and alcohol abuse and successfully advocated for the largest ever funding boost for child protection and family support services. This included new early intervention services to improve the life chances of disadvantaged children and young people. She also strengthened education and support services in detention centres and backed innovative diversionary programs like youth justice conferencing.

A trust fund was also established to repay historic wages for Aboriginal people.

Following her 2005 appointment as Minister for Education, Carmel delivered initiatives such as reduced class sizes in the early years, simplified school reports, the Best Start program to support children making the transition to school and a significant investment in upgrading school facilities.

After the 2007 election, Carmel stepped back to spend more time with her young son, returning to the Ministry in late 2008 as Deputy Premier and Minister for Climate Change and the Environment. In this portfolio Carmel established a solar energy feed-in tariff scheme, a mandatory energy efficiency target and commenced the regional assessment process for the river red gum forests, protecting 100,000 hectares of these ancient trees.

Carmel was Health Minister from 2009 until the election in 2011, during which time the National Health Reform Agreement was signed. She was also responsible for an extensive hospital upgrade program, additional nurses, improved cancer treatment facilities and legislation for a permanent medically supervised injecting room.

Expanding cabinet leadership: in their own words

THE HON GLADYS BEREJKLIAN, MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (2003 - Present). TREASURER AND MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (2015 - Present)



Gladys Berejikian currently serves as the first female NSW Treasurer, during a time of outstanding economic strength for the State. Prior to becoming Treasurer, Gladys was the State's first female Transport Minister. She is proud to have overseen the rollout of the Opal electronic ticketing system and the start of major transformative transport projects including Sydney Metro and the expansion of light rail.

Since coming to Government in 2011, the Liberals and Nationals have worked hard to take the State's economy from last placed to the strongest in the nation. The NSW economy has been experiencing its strongest growth since the Sydney Olympics. The Government's fiscal responsibility and asset recycling have helped deliver Budget surpluses and, for the first time in history, zero net debt. At the same time the Government has been able to invest record amounts in an unprecedented infrastructure program and ensure everyone across the State has access to world class services. The Government's commitment to investing in infrastructure right across the State has encouraged private investment and jobs creation, making the NSW economy the economic powerhouse of the nation.

As Treasurer, Gladys also has implemented innovative funding models, such as the social benefit bond program: a collaborative program between government, private sector investment and not for profit organisations that brings together the expertise and resources needed to keep families together and reduce the number of children entering out-of-home care. In addition to the expansion of the social impact investment program, during her first two years as Treasurer Gladys

oversaw a wide-ranging package of reforms including, for example, the leasing of Transgrid and Ausgrid, and the Financial Management Transformation to enable real-time monitoring by government of spending and performance evaluation.

Gladys's commitment to increasing the representation of women in senior management roles is reflected in the number of women she appointed to government boards during her first year as Treasurer: a total 46 per cent of appointments to government boards, six of whom were chairs.

Gladys's parliamentary career has included membership of the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee and while in Opposition she held the Shadow portfolios of Mental Health, Youth Affairs, Cancer and Medical Research and Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader on Ethnic Affairs.

THE HON GABRIELLE UPTON
MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (2011 - Present) AND ATTORNEY GENERAL NSW (2015 - Present)



Gabrielle Upton was appointed NSW Attorney General on 2 April 2015 and is the first woman to serve as the State's first law officer.

As Attorney General, Gabrielle has delivered additional District Court Judges and Magistrates as well as better services for victims including women, children and victims of domestic and sexual violence. Her contribution includes a series of ground breaking firsts for the State.

The Attorney is especially proud to have appointed two specialist District Court Judges to hear child sexual assault matters. Judges Trail and Girdham were sworn in on August 2015. She has also appointed 50 'children's champions': trained professionals who assist child victims to communicate with police and the courts.

Working alongside Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian and the other Justice Ministers, the Attorney was able to secure an extra \$570 million in the 2016-17 State Budget for reform initiatives. A major focus is tackling the long-standing criminal trial backlog in the District Court.

The Attorney also works to improve justice services for victims of domestic violence. For example, victims are now able to deliver their evidence via video in court for the first time in Australia: a measure that protects victims from the traumatic experience of facing their perpetrator in the court room.

In March 2016, NSW became the first State to introduce model laws that hold domestic violence perpetrators accountable across Australia. The sharing of information is vital when combatting domestic violence, particularly when people can easily move across borders to escape prosecution.

Another first in NSW was the creation in May 2016 of the Court Consultation Committee. The Committee, chaired by the Chief Justice the Hon Tom Bathurst AC, brings together the heads of court jurisdiction and leaders of the profession for regular meetings with the Attorney to promote better outcomes across all courts and tribunals.

Closing the gender gap in the legal profession is another focus. Five years ago, female Senior Counsel received only 13% of all NSW Government briefs. Under the Attorney's leadership, this figure has now increased to almost 40%.

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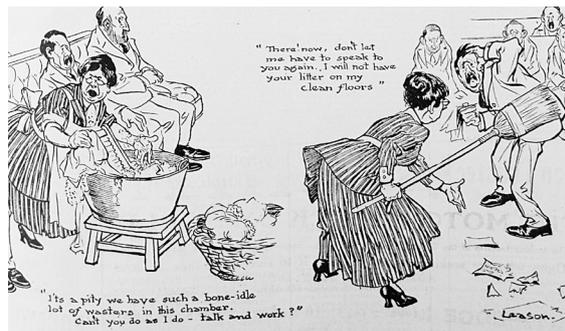


Image and representation

The ways in which women in politics have been presented, discussed and critiqued is a sometimes controversial subject; particularly where commentators have tried, with varying degrees of success, to reconcile the view of women as wives, mothers and home-makers with that of women as leaders in business, politics and the community.

Early political cartoons provide insight into a time not so long ago when women's skills were considered far more suited to the domestic household than the Houses of Parliament. According to an article in 1920s Punch "the lady who would rush into Parliament is one who has missed her chance in the marriage market."

Although attitudes have changed, many parliamentarians lament the fact that they are still fielding questions about their personal and professional choices; more so than their male colleagues. A woman's fashion, marital status, sexuality, motherhood and family life are popular topics in the media and other public forums. Former Leader of the Opposition, Kerry Chikarovski, recalls her experience. "I asked my male colleagues...are you described as a father of three?... their answer is no...the time must come when our personal life, what we are wearing, is of no interest."



Catherine Cusack MLC, former Chair of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Association, has spoken at length about the impact that public scrutiny can have on current and future parliamentarians. "There is a real sense that women are under siege and that women are going backwards," she told the Herald. It's a view shared by women such as former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who weathered intense and often negative scrutiny throughout her career. "Until we can

shed that stereotype that women, leadership and likeability don't go together, we will be putting the baggage of that on to the women who do emerge," she has said.

This exhibition is testament to the extraordinary contribution that women can make to the political life of the nation. But there is still a long way to go before equal recognition is achieved within the institution and the communities it represents.

Until then, there are many positive examples of women who are working to overcome gendered politics. Launched in 1993 by Meredith Burgmann MLC, the annual Ernie Awards are an inventive expose of gender inequality. Each year, over 300 women from politics, business and the community come together to judge the most sexist remarks made by public figures. While the spirit is largely tongue-in-cheek, the event has increasingly attracted attention from the media and other commentators. "What began as a joke has morphed into a fun but deadly attack on Australian male sexism," say organisers.

The format has been mirrored by another parliamentary initiative: the GLORIAS, sometimes referred to as the gay Ernies. Established in 2010 by Penny Sharpe MLC, the GLORIAS aim to shine a light on "the outrageous, ignorant and plainly ridiculous public comments made about LGBTI people in our community every day."



Leading by example

Millicent Preston Stanley once said “it is to woman we must look for woman’s advancement; then Australia will no doubt accord us as high a place in the politics of our nation as our achievements justify.” And today’s women in Parliament are doing much to ensure that others are inspired to pursue careers in politics, business or community leadership.

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Association



The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Association (CWP) is a network of women parliamentarians in all State and Territory legislatures, committed to the advancement of women in Australian politics. Chaired by the Hon Michelle O’Byrne MP from the Tasmanian Parliament, the CWP is championed in NSW by Jenny Aitchison MP and by former Chair, the Hon Catherine Cusack MLC.

In May 2016, the NSW CWP launched ‘Stepping Up’: a program designed to connect current and former members with young professional women, empowering the next generation of political and community leaders. The association also contributes to women’s issues through their support of charities such as the National Breast Cancer Foundation and White Ribbon Australia.

The most recent CWP Conference brought together parliamentarians from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific to participate in a variety of sessions and panels on women’s representation in Parliament, including the value of ‘male champions of change.’ Speakers included Australian of the Year recipient Rosie Batty and Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick.

In June 2016, CWP members hosted four women from Bougainville’s House of Representatives: the Hon Francesca Semoso, Deputy Speaker; the Hon Josephine Getsy, Minister for Community Development; the Hon Marcelline Kokiai and the Hon Isabel Peta. An initiative of the Pacific Women’s Parliamentary Partnerships (PWPP) project, the event encouraged participants to address the economic and social empowerment of women in the Pacific.

For more information, you can visit the CWP website – www.cwpaustralia.com

The Twinning Program



The NSW Parliament is ‘twinned’ with two Pacific parliaments; the Autonomous Region of Bougainville House of Representatives and the National Parliament of Solomon Islands. Under the auspices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Parliament has for the past few years embarked on a program of secondment and visitation; strengthening the institution, building the capacity of staff and fostering important relationships between members and staff.

As with most countries, representation of women in Pacific parliaments is an historic and contemporary challenge. The National Parliament of Solomon Islands currently has one female member of parliament. The Autonomous Region of Bougainville has sought to increase female representation through a ‘reserved seats’ model, dedicating one seat for a woman representative in each of the three regions. In 2015, a woman was elected to an ‘open’ seat; the first since the House of Representatives was established in 2005.

The twinning program has provided some valuable opportunities for members and staff to

share their experiences and to discuss issues of importance to women in the different parliaments and communities. The program has provided both members of Parliament and staff with invaluable professional development opportunities; developing knowledge of parliamentary procedure, committee activities, and work within communities.

Young Women's Leadership Program



Since 2002, the Parliamentary Education team has hosted a targeted program for Year 11 female school students called 'Young Women's Leadership Seminars.' The program seeks students' participation in a broad discussion on what it means to be a leader, and includes a panel discussion with women leaders in politics, business, education and the community; each providing insight into their careers, achievements and challenges.

There have been approximately 4,000 students involved in the program over the last decade. No doubt NSW future female leaders are amongst the past and future participants to this important program!

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Influencing from the outside



Just as women within the Parliament seek to influence government and bring important issues to the fore, so too women within the community seek to bring about meaningful and lasting change. In New South Wales, groups such as the Women’s Electoral Lobby NSW (WEL) have a long history of working with parliamentarians and the community to “promote equality and seek to change attitudes and practices that discriminate against women.”

Founded in 1972, WEL is credited with several major achievements for women in Australia, including:

- Passing of equal pay legislation in 1972
- Legitimation, policy development, legislative reform and community education programs on issues such as equal opportunity, sexual harassment and domestic violence
- Drafting and implementation of state anti-discrimination and federal sex discrimination legislation and
- Rape law reform, which has gradually led to significant amendments to the NSW Crimes Act.

EMILY’s List is another example of an external political network aiming to secure a voice for women in Australian parliaments. Founded in 1996, the organisation provides financial support, mentoring and training to women seeking election to political office. Since 1997 EMILY’s List has supported hundreds of hopeful candidates, with over 210 elected. Equity, childcare, equal pay, diversity and choice are among the network’s core principals. In July 2015, they successfully campaigned for the Australian Labor Party to commit to enshrine 50% of women in winnable seats by 2025.

The Australian Local Government Women’s Association (ALGWA) similarly provides information, guidance and support to women seeking a position; this time within Local Government. Established in 1951, the network works with Councils across Australia to increase participation of women as senior managers and elected representatives.

There are many other organisations and associations – both political and non-political – advocating for the inclusion of women in politics. Their presence demonstrates the importance of women working both within the Parliament and without to drive cultural, political and social change.

A FIT PLACE FOR WOMEN



NSW PARLIAMENT



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