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**Women in Parliament:
The Current Situation**

by

Talina Drabsch

Briefing Paper No 9/03

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Briefing Paper is an update to two papers previously published by the Parliamentary Library. *Women in Parliament* by Marie Swain was released in 1995 and was subsequently updated in 1997. Whilst this paper revisits some of the issues addressed in the earlier papers, its focus is on any post-1997 developments. It also surveys the literature published in recent years.

It begins by examining the numbers of women in Australian parliaments, particularly in NSW and at federal level (Section 2 pp 1-14). The extent to which women are represented in various political parties is measured, as is their involvement in more senior political positions. This paper explores why women remain underrepresented despite numerous national and global initiatives to improve the number of women parliamentarians (Section 3 pp 14-17). The question of why women should feature in greater numbers is briefly addressed (Section 4 pp 17-21). However, due to increased acceptance of the need for more women parliamentarians greater attention is given to various strategies for improving numbers (Section 5 pp 21-27).

Research has indicated that political parties frequently present the greatest obstacle to women being elected due to their preselection procedures. Accordingly, the strategies adopted by individual parties to boost the number of female members are examined (Section 6 pp 27-34).

Australia currently ranks 23rd in an international list of the proportion of female members of the lower house of parliament of each state. Reference is made to the strategies adopted by countries with a greater number of women parliamentarians, and also to initiatives developed by countries where dramatic improvement has occurred in the last decade (Section 7 pp 34-41).

A table of federal women ministers since 1996 is included as Appendix A. A table of federal women shadow ministers since 1996 is included as Appendix B. The *Charter for Political Reform* released by Women Into Politics Inc is attached as Appendix C.

1 INTRODUCTION

This Briefing Paper is an update to two papers previously published by the Parliamentary Library. *Women in Parliament* by Marie Swain was released in 1995 and was subsequently updated in 1997.¹ Whilst this paper revisits some of the issues addressed in the earlier papers, its focus is primarily on post-1997 developments. It also surveys the literature published in recent years.

Women in Australia have had the opportunity to stand for election to the federal Parliament since 1902. Despite the fact that Australia was the first country in the world where women had both the right to vote and the right to stand for election, a woman was not elected to federal parliament for another forty-one years. Women are still significantly underrepresented in Australian parliaments, constituting only 25.3% of members of the House of Representatives. Whilst the proportion of female members has improved, few women have attained ministerial positions and other leadership roles. The underrepresentation of women is not an experience unique to Australia. Consequently, talk of the gap between the *de jure* right of women to participate in the democratic process and their *de facto* participation has emerged throughout the world.²

2 FACTS AND FIGURES

The following table is reproduced from Briefing Paper No 1/97 and provides an overview of milestones achieved regarding the entry of women into parliament.

1894	South Australia (SA), the first Australian State to give women the right to vote and enter Parliament.
1902	Women gain the right to vote and stand for the Federal Parliament. In this year women in New South Wales (NSW) also gained the right to vote. However it took another 16 years before they gained the right to stand for the Legislative Assembly and 24 for the Legislative Council.
1908	Victoria is the last State in Australia to give women the vote.
1918	NSW women gain the right to stand for the Legislative Assembly.
1921	With her election to the Western Australian House of Representatives, Edith Cowan (Nationalist), became the first woman elected to any Australian Parliament.
1923	Victoria, again the last State, allows women to stand for Parliament.
1925	Millicent Preston Stanley (United Australia Party), the first woman elected to the NSW Parliament, where she gained a seat in the Legislative Assembly.
1926	The NSW <i>Constitution (Amendment) Act</i> establishes the right of women to sit in the Legislative

¹ Briefing Paper No 19/95 *Women in Parliament* by Marie Swain and Briefing Paper No 1/97 *Women in Parliament: An Update* by Marie Swain.

² Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Group, *Barriers to Women's Participation in Parliament: Report of a Task Force of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Group*, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Secretariat, London, 1996, p 3.

	Council.
1931	Catherine Green (ALP) and Ellen Webster (ALP), first women members of the NSW Legislative Council.
1939	Mary Quirk (ALP), elected to the seat of Balmain in the NSW Legislative Assembly was the first woman to receive party endorsement for a 'safe' seat.
1943	Dame Enid Lyons (United Australia Party – Tas) first woman elected to the Federal Parliament's House of Representatives. Dorothy Tangney (Labor Party – WA), first woman elected to the Senate.
1944	Lillian Fowler (Lang Labor) was elected to the seat of Newtown in the NSW Legislative Assembly. She was the first woman Alderman in NSW (Newtown 1929-48) and also the first woman Mayor in Australia (Newtown 1938-39).
1947	Dame Annabelle Rankin, the first Liberal party woman elected to the Senate. She was the first woman to hold the office of Whip in the Federal Parliament. (Opposition Whip in 1947 and Government Whip from 1951-1966).
1949	Dame Enid Lyons, first woman in Federal Cabinet. She was the Vice-President of the Executive Council.
1959	Attempts were still being made as late as this to prevent women entering Parliament. In an action brought by Frank Chapman and Arthur Cockington, Jessie Cooper and Margaret Scott (the Liberal party and Labor party candidates respectively, running for the Legislative Council in the South Australian election), had to show that they were 'persons' under the Constitution to be eligible to stand. The South Australian Supreme Court found in their favour and Jessie Cooper went on to win a seat in the Legislative Council. It is interesting to note that while South Australia was the first state to give women the right to vote and the right to be elected to Parliament, it was the last Parliament in Australia to actually have women members.
1962	Eileen (Mabel) Furley, first Liberal woman elected to the NSW Legislative Council.
1966	Dame Annabelle Rankin, the first woman Federal Minister.
1973	Mary Meillon, first Liberal woman elected to the NSW Legislative Assembly.
1974	Joan Child (Vic) the first Labor woman elected to the House of Representatives.
1976	Senator Margaret Guilfoyle (Liberal party – Vic), first woman Cabinet member in the Federal Parliament.
1981	ALP Conference adopts national principle to increase representation in the House of Representatives. Elisabeth Kirkby (Australian Democrats) first woman from a non-major party elected to the NSW Legislative Council. Franca Arena (ALP), the first woman from a non-English speaking background elected to the NSW Parliament (Legislative Council).
1983	Jeanette McHugh (ALP), the first woman from NSW elected to the Federal House of Representatives. Susan Ryan (ACT), the first Labor woman Federal Minister.

	Rosemary Foot (Liberal Party – NSW), the first woman to be elected Deputy Leader of a Parliamentary Party.
1984	Judy Jakins first National party woman elected to the New South Wales Legislative Council. Janice Crosio, first woman Cabinet Minister in NSW (Minister for Natural Resources 1984-86).
1985	Wendy Machin, first National party woman elected to the NSW Legislative Assembly.
1986	Joan Child, first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives. Janine Haines (Australian Democrats – SA) first woman to lead an Australian political party.
1987	Bronwyn Bishop (Liberal party), first woman from NSW to be elected to the Senate.
1988	Three women from a non-major party elected to the NSW Legislative Assembly – Dawn Fraser (Ind), Clover Moore (Ind) and Robyn Read (Ind). Helen Sham-Ho (Liberal party), first woman from an Asian background elected to the NSW Parliament (Legislative Council).
1989	Rosemary Follett (ALP-ACT), first woman to head a State/Territory Government.
1993	In May the Senate passed a resolution that the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters (JSCEM) would conduct an Inquiry into Women, Elections and Parliament. The JSCEM handed down its Report in May 1993. In December the Commonwealth/State Ministers Conference on the Status of Women called for a discussion paper on Women and Parliaments in Australia and New Zealand. The project was assigned to the Government Services Division of Coopers and Lybrand Consultants.
1994	At the ALP National Conference held in September, the party voted to support the resolution that women would be preselected to 35% of winnable seats by 2002. The Coopers and Lybrand Report was endorsed by both Liberal and Labor State and Federal Ministers with responsibility for women's affairs. It was released in October for public comment.
1995	In March a booklet entitled 'Every woman's guide to getting into politics' was put out by the Office of the Status of Women. In keeping with the recommendation made in the Report by the JSCEM that it 'monitor developments in the area of the participation by women in the electoral process' an advertisement calling for 'information on any strategies, policies and programmes that are being developed or implemented to assist women in achieving greater participation in the electoral process' was placed in the <i>Weekend Australian</i> April 8-9. Senator Margaret Reid (Liberal party – ACT), was elected Deputy-President in May. She was the first woman presiding officer in the Senate.
1996	The March election resulted in the highest number (23 – 15.5%) of women ever elected to the Federal Parliament. At this election, De-Anne Kelly (QLD) became the first National Party woman elected to the House of Representatives. In August 1996 Senator Margaret Reid was elected President of the Senate.

	For the first time, women were elected as Presidents of both the NSW Young Liberal movement (Gladys Berejiklian) and NSW Young Labor (Liz McNamara) in the same year. A woman, Joanna Woods, was also elected to the position of Secretary in NSW Young Labor, the first time in the organisation's history that woman have held both these executive positions.
1997	Meg Lees becomes the fourth female leader of the Australian Democrats, following Janine Haines, Janet Powell and Cheryl Kernot.
1998	Following the October election for Federal Parliament, the number of women in the House of Representatives increased from 23 to 33 (22.3%). Virginia Chadwick (Lib) elected as first female President of the Legislative Council. Kerry Chikarovski becomes leader of the NSW Liberal Party, the first woman to lead a major political party in NSW.
2000	Women lead the Opposition in NSW (Kerry Chikarovski), Tasmania and the Northern Territory.
2001	Natasha Stott-Despoja becomes the fifth female leader of the Australian Democrats. Marie Bashir becomes the first woman to be appointed Governor of NSW. Following the federal election in November, the number of women in the House of Representatives increased to 38 (25.3%).
2002	Jenny Macklin is elected as Deputy Leader of the ALP – first woman to hold such a position in either of the two major parties. The ALP increases its affirmative action target to 40% by 2012 at the National Rules Conference in October 2002.
2003	Linda Burney (ALP) becomes the first Indigenous Australian to be elected to the Parliament of NSW.

Whilst women in Australia have had the opportunity to stand for election since 1902, the number of women in Australian parliaments is disproportionate to the number of women in the general community. Inspection of some of the facts and figures pertaining to the representation of women at various levels of parliament may assist with defining the under-representation of women. The Commission of the European Communities identified nine indicators for measuring the progress of the number of women at the decision-making level of a country.³ Some of the indicators that may assist analysis of the situation in Australia include:

- The proportion of women in the lower house of each Parliament (state and federal);
- The existence of policies that promote a balanced participation in political elections;

³ Commission of the European Communities, *Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee on the Implementation of Council Recommendation 96/694 of 2nd December 1996 on the Balanced Participation of Women and Men in the Decision-making Process*, Brussels, 7 March 2000, p 7. A copy of the Report may be downloaded from http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/rpt/en_rpt_month_2000_03.html Accessed 7/4/03.

- The proportion of women in the national Government; and
- The number of women senior/junior ministers in the different portfolios.

The following table provides an overview of the number of women in the lower houses of parliaments throughout Australia as at 10 April 2003:

	Female Members	Male Members	Percentage Female
Commonwealth Parliament			
House of Representatives	38	112	25.3%
Senate	22	54	28.9%
Total	60	166	26.5%
State/Territory Parliaments			
New South Wales	23	70	24.7%*
Queensland	33	56	37.1%
South Australia	16	31	34%
Tasmania	6	19	24%
Victoria	27	61	30.7%
Western Australia	13	44	22.8%
Australian Capital Territory	7	10	41.2%
Northern Territory	7	18	28%
Total	132	308	30%

Source: Information about members obtained from the Parliamentary website for each State and Territory.

* The seat of Londonderry in NSW is to be contested on 31 May 2003 following the death of ALP candidate Jim Anderson on 22 March 2003. The seat is likely to remain a Labor constituency.

As evidenced by the above table, the number of female politicians in the NSW Legislative Assembly (24.7%) is comparable to the proportion of women in the House of Representatives (25.3%). However, the average percentage of women in parliaments across the States and Territories is 30%. Accordingly, NSW is below average when compared to the number of female parliamentarians in other jurisdictions. The Australian Capital Territory has the greatest level of female representation at 41.2%. Only Tasmania and Western Australia have a lower proportion of women members than NSW at 24% and 22.8% respectively.

2.1 Female Premiers and Chief Ministers

Women are slowly making their way into the upper echelons of government. There have been five female Premiers and Chief Ministers in Australia. See table below.

Name	Party	Position	State/Territory	Term
Rosemary Follett	ALP	Chief Minister	Australian Capital Territory	11/5/89-5/12/89
Carmen Lawrence	ALP	Premier	Western Australia	12/2/90-16/2/93
Joan Kirner	ALP	Premier	Victoria	10/8/90-6/10/92
Kate Carnell	LIB	Chief Minister	Australian Capital Territory	6/6/91-13/3/95
Clare Martin	ALP	Chief Minister	Northern Territory	17/8/01-present

2.2 Federal Parliament

2.2.1 *House of Representatives*⁴

There are currently 38 female members of the House of Representatives out of a total of 150 members (25.3%). This represents the greatest proportion of women in Australia's national parliament thus far. Whilst women are still under-represented, the percentage of women parliamentarians has improved from 2.4% in 1980, when only three of the 125 members were female. In 1990, 6.8% of members of the lower House were women (10 out of 148). Following the March election in 1996, the proportion improved to 15.5% (23 out of 148) and has increased in each of the subsequent elections (22.3% or 33/148 following the October 1998 election and 25.3% or 38/150 following the November 2001 election).

Currently, the Labor party has the greatest number of female members with 20 out of its 64 representatives (31.3%). 16 of the 68 Liberal members are female (23.5%) as are two of the 14 National members (14.3%).

2.2.2 *Senate*

Women have traditionally been better represented in the Senate than the House of Representatives. Australian senators are elected using the proportional representation electoral system that has been found to have a positive effect on the number of female parliamentarians worldwide. At present, 22 of the 76 (28.9%) senators are women. Whilst the proportion of women is higher in the Upper House, the numbers have not consistently improved over the years as in May 1997, 25 of the 76 (32.9%) senators were women.

As in the House of Representatives, the greatest proportion of women is found in the Labor Party. 11 of 28 Labor senators are women (39.3%) compared to seven out of 31 Liberal senators (22.6%). None of the four National senators are women. Women have traditionally been well represented in the Australian Democrats, for example, there were five female Senators out of a total of seven Democrats (71.4%) in 1996. However, the number of women has subsequently dropped to the present two out of seven Democrats in the Senate (28.6%).

⁴ The statistics in sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 were obtained from the Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library website, 'The Number of Women in Parliament', <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/parl/hist/noswomen.htm> Accessed 8/4/03.

Women members of Federal Parliament 1980-2003

Party	House	1980	1983	1984	1987	1990	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Labor	Senate	4/26	7/30	7/35	5/32	4/32	7/30	9/28	9/28	9/29	9/29	9/28	11/28	11/28
		15.4%	23.3%	20%	15.6%	12.5%	23.3%	32.1%	32.1%	31%	31%	32.1%	39.3%	39.3%
	House of Representatives	3/51	6/75	7/82	8/86	7/78	4/49	4/49	16/67	16/67	17/66	20/65	20/65	20/64
		5.9%	8%	8.5%	9.3%	9%	8.2%	8.2%	23.9%	23.9%	25.7%	30.8%	30.8%	31.3%
	Total	7	13	14	13	11	11	13	25	25	26	29	31	31
Liberal	Senate	3/29	4/24	5/28	7/27	7/27	6/30	10/31	10/31	9/31	9/31	9/31	8/31	7/31
		10.3%	16.7%	17.9%	25.9%	25.9%	20%	32.3%	32.3%	29%	29%	29%	25.8%	22.6%
	House of Representatives	0/54	0/33	1/45	1/43	3/55	17/76	17/76	15/64	15/64	15/64	16/68	16/68	16/68
				2.2%	2.3%	5.5%	22.4%	22.4%	23.4%	23.4%	23.4%	23.5%	23.5%	23.5%
	Total	3	4	6	8	10	23	27	25	24	24	25	24	23
National	Senate	0/6	1/4	1/6	1/7	1/7	0/6	0/6	0/6	0/4	0/4	0/4	0/4	0/4
			25%	16.7%	14.3%	14.3%								
	House of Representatives	0/20	0/17	0/21	0/19	0/14	1/18	1/18	2/16	2/16	2/16	2/14	2/14	2/14
							5.6%	5.6%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%	14.3%	14.3%	14.3%
	Total	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Democrats	Senate	0/2	1/5	1/6	3/7	3/7	4/7	5/7	4/7	4/9	4/9	4/9	3/8	2/7
			20%	16.7%	42.9%	42.9%	57.1%	71.4%	57.1%	44.4%	44.4%	44.4%	37.5%	28.6%
	House of Representatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	0	1	1	3	3	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	2
Greens	Senate	0	0	0	0	0	2/2	1/2	1/2	0/1	0/1	0/1	1/2	1/2
	House of Representatives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0/1
	Total	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
Others	Senate	0	0	0	1/3	2/3	0/1	0/2	0/2	0/2	0/2	0/2	0/2	1/4
	House of Representatives	0	0	0	0	0/1	1/5	1/5	0/1	0/1	0/2	0/3	0/3	0/3
	Total	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	Senate	7/64	13/64	14/76	17/76	17/76	19/76	25/76	24/76	22/76	22/76	22/76	23/76	22/76
		10.9%	20.3%	18.4%	22.4%	22.4%	25%	32.9%	31.6%	28.9%	28.9%	28.9%	30.3%	28.9%
	House of Representatives	3/125	6/125	8/148	9/148	10/148	23/148	23/148	33/148	33/148	34/148	38/150	38/150	38/150
		2.4%	4.8%	5.4%	6.1%	6.8%	15.5%	15.5%	22.3%	22.3%	23%	25.3%	25.3%	

Source: Parliament of Australia. Parliamentary Library, 'The Number of Women in Parliament', <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/parl/hist/noswomen.htm> Accessed 8/4/03.

2.3 Federal Ministers

2.3.1 Government

One of the indicators of an improvement in the representation of women is an increase in the number of female Ministers and the relative prestige of the portfolio allocated to them. There are currently four females out of a total of 30 Government Ministers (13.3%). Amanda Vanstone and Kay Patterson are Cabinet members and have the portfolios of *Family and Community Services* and *Health and Ageing* respectively. Danna Vale is the Minister for *Veterans' Affairs* and the Minister *Assisting the Minister for Defence*. Helen Coonan is the Minister for *Revenue and Assistant Treasurer*.

Six of the 11 Parliamentary Secretaries are women (Jackie Kelly, Chris Gallus, Fran Bailey, Sharman Stone, Judith Troeth and Trish Worth).

A table of women Federal Ministers since 1996 is included as Appendix A.

2.3.2 Opposition

There are currently five female shadow Ministers out of a total of 30 (16.7%):

- Jenny Macklin
Deputy Leader of the Opposition
Shadow Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Science
- Kate Lundy
Shadow Minister for Information Technology and Sport
- Julia Gillard
Shadow Minister for Population and Immigration
Shadow Minister for Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs
- Nicola Roxon
Shadow Minister for Children and Youth
Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader of the Opposition on the Status of Women
- Annette Ellis
Shadow Minister for Ageing and Seniors
Shadow Minister Assisting the Minister for Family and Community Services on Disabilities

Two of the ten Labor Parliamentary Secretaries are women (Kirsten Livermore and Michelle O'Byrne).

The gender of a politician can play an important role in the allocation of ministries. Van Acker has suggested that women are sometimes allocated particular portfolios in order to

soften the image of parties with harsh economic policies.⁵ She gives the federal example of the transfer of Jocelyn Newman from Shadow Minister for Defence to Minister for Social Security, and Amanda Vanstone from Attorney-General to Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs following the 1996 election when their new portfolios were targeted for massive spending cuts.⁶

See Appendix B for a table of female shadow Ministers since 1996.

2.4 NSW Parliament

2.4.1 *Members of Parliament*

The number of women in the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council in NSW is gradually improving. The number of women in the Legislative Assembly was 16 out of 99 (16.2%) members as at May 1996. The corresponding number of women in the Legislative Council was 14 out of a total of 42 (33.3%) members. By 2002, the situation had improved to 19 out of 93 (19%) in the Legislative Assembly. However, the number of women in the Legislative Council had fallen to 10 out of 42 members (24%).

The election in NSW on 22 March 2003 saw a further increase in the number of women parliamentarians. A total of 23 women were elected to the Legislative Assembly, raising the proportion of female members to the highest thus far at 25%.⁷ Women constituted sixteen of the 54 ALP members elected (29.6%), five of the 20 Liberal members (25%), and one of the 12 National members (16.7%). One female Independent was also elected.

Current female members of the Parliament of NSW

Party	Name	House
Labor Party	Pamela Allan	LA (Wentworthville)
	Marie Andrews	LA (Peats)
	Diane Beamer	LA (Mulgoa)
	Meredith Burgmann	LC
	Linda Burney	LA (Canterbury)
	Jan Burnswoods	LC
	Cherie Burton	LA (Kogarah)
	Angela D'Amore	LA (Drummoyne)
	Amanda Fazio	LC
	Tanya Gadiel	LA (Parramatta)
	Kayee Griffin	LC

⁵ Van Acker E, *Different Voices: Gender and Politics in Australia*, Macmillan Education Australia, South Yarra, 1999, p 79.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jim Anderson's seat of Londonderry is to be contested on 31 May 2003 following his death on election day 2003. It has been classified as a safe Labor seat.

	Noreen Hay	LA (Wollongong)
	Virginia Judge	LA (Strathfield)
	Kristina Keneally	LA (Heffron)
	Reba Meagher	LA (Cabramatta)
	Alison Megarrity	LA (Menai)
	Sandra Nori	LA (Port Jackson)
	Karyn Paluzzano	LA (Penrith)
	Barbara Perry	LA (Auburn)
	Christine Robertson	LC
	Marianne Saliba	LA (Illawarra)
	Carmel Tebbutt	LC
Liberal Party	Gladys Berejiklian	LA (Willoughby)
	Catherine Cusack	LC
	Patricia Forsythe	LC
	Shelley Hancock	LA (South Coast)
	Judy Hopwood	LA (Hornsby)
	Robyn Parker	LC
	Peta Seaton	LA (Southern Highlands)
	Jillian Skinner	LA (North Shore)
National Party	Jenny Gardiner	LC
	Katrina Hodgkinson	LA (Burrunjuck)
	Melinda Pavey	LC
The Greens	Sylvia Hale	LC
	Lee Rhiannon	LC
Independents	Clover Moore	LA (Bligh)

The electorates on whose behalf the seven new female Labor members of the Legislative Assembly were elected, were all classified as either very safe or safe Labor seats prior to the election.⁸ Two new female Liberal members of the Legislative Assembly were also elected at the 2003 election: Gladys Berejiklian won the safe Liberal seat of Willoughby, and Shelley Hancock was elected on behalf of the marginal Labor seat of South Coast. In the past, parties have been criticised for failing to preselect women as candidates for winnable seats. Commentary following the 1996 federal election speculated that the large entry of Liberal women into the House of Representatives was due to the landslide victory of the Coalition as many of the women were candidates for marginal seats.⁹ The results of the 2003 election in NSW may indicate a greater willingness, at least amongst the Labor Party, to select female candidates for safe seats.

The number of women in the Legislative Council following the 2003 election has increased to 13 out of a total of 42 members (31%). Six of the eighteen Labor members are women (33.3%) as are five of the 13 members of the Coalition (38.5%). The Greens, however,

⁸ Linda Burney (Canterbury), Kristina Keneally (Heffron), Noreen Hay (Wollongong), Angela D'Amore (Drummoyne), Virginia Judge (Strathfield), Karen Paluzzano (Penrith) and Tanya Gadiel (Parramatta).

⁹ Briefing Paper No 1/97, n 1, p 13.

have the largest proportion of women with two out of three Green seats (66.7%).

Therefore, there are a total of 36 female members across both Houses (26.7%). 22 of the 72 Labor members are women (30.6%) and 11 Coalition members are female out of a total of 45 seats (24.4%).

2.4.2 *Ministers*

Both the Government and the Opposition have restructured their Cabinet and the allocation of portfolios following the March 2003 election. In 2002 there were three female Labor Ministers – Faye Lo Po (until 11 July 2002), Sandra Nori and Carmel Tebbutt. Following the 2003 election women have been appointed to four of the 21 ministerial positions:

1. Sandra Nori
Minister for Tourism and Sport and Recreation
Minister for Women
2. Diane Beamer
Minister for Juvenile Justice
Minister for Western Sydney
Minister Assisting the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning (Planning Administration)
3. Reba Meagher
Minister for Fair Trading
Minister Assisting the Minister for Commerce
4. Carmel Tebbutt
Minister for Community Services
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Youth

Whilst the number of women in ministerial positions has increased, the Government has been criticised for its failure to select a greater number of women for such positions.¹⁰ The Premier, Hon Bob Carr MP reportedly defended the allocation of portfolios by stating that ‘We’ve gone as far as we can at this stage in promoting women who have got parliamentary experience’.¹¹

Four women have been appointed to the Shadow ministry out of a team of 21.

1. Jillian Skinner
Shadow Minister for Education and Training
Shadow Minister for the Arts

¹⁰ ‘Carr defends his old-boy ministry’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3/4/03, p 8 and ‘Women ignored on Carr’s front bench’, *The Australian Financial Review*, 24/4/03, p 4.

¹¹ ‘Carr defends his old-boy ministry’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3/4/03, p 8.

2. Peta Seaton
Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Planning
Shadow Minister for the Illawarra
Shadow Minister for Reform of Government
3. Katrina Hodgkinson
Shadow Minister for Small Business
Shadow Minister for Fair Trading
4. Catherine Cusack
Shadow Minister for Juvenile Justice
Shadow Minister for Women

There were four female members of the shadow ministry prior to the 2003 election: Kerry Chikarovski, Patricia Forsythe, Jenny Gardiner and Jillian Skinner.

The following table lists all ministerial positions and offices held by women members of the NSW Parliament since 1921, in order of year of first appointment to a position:

Female Ministers and Officeholders in NSW 1921-2003

Name	Party	Portfolios
Edna Roper	ALP	Deputy Leader of the Opposition (1973-1976) Deputy Leader of Government (1976-1978)
Kathleen Anderson	ALP	Government Whip (1976-1981)
Virginia Chadwick	LIB	Opposition Whip (1984-1988) Minister for Family and Community Services (1988-1990) Minister for School Education and Youth Affairs (1990-1992) Minister for Education and Youth Affairs (1992-1993) Minister for Employment and Training (1992-1993) Minister for Education Training and Youth Affairs (1993-1995) Minister for Tourism (1993-1995) Minister Assisting the Premier (1993-1995) President of the Legislative Council (1998-1999)
Rosemary Foot	LIB	Deputy Leader of Opposition (1983-1986)
Janice Crosio	ALP	Minister for Natural Resources (1984-1986) Minister for Local Government (1986-1987) Minister for Water Resources (1986-1987) Assistant Minister for Transport (1987-1988)
Deidre Grusovin	ALP	Minister for Consumer Affairs (1986-1988) Assistant Minister for Health (1986-1988) Minister for Small Business (1987-1988) Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council (1988-1990)
Wendy Machin	NAT	Chairman of Committees (1989-1993)

		Minister for Consumer Affairs (1993-1995) Minister Assisting the Minister for Roads (1993-1995) Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport (1993-1995)
Beryl Evans	LIB	Government Whip (1990-1991)
Anne Cohen	LIB	Chief Secretary (1991-1995) Minister for Administrative Services (1991-1995) Minister Assisting the Premier on the Status of Women (1992)
Kerry Chikarovski	LIB	Minister for Consumer Affairs (1992-1993) Assistant Minister for Education (1992-1993) Minister for Industrial Relations and Employment (1993-1995) Minister for the Status of Women (1993-1995) Leader of the Opposition (1998-2002)
Dorothy Isaksen	ALP	Government Whip (1995-1999)
Pamela Allan	ALP	Minister for the Environment (1995-1999)
Gabrielle Harrison	ALP	Minister for Sport and Recreation (1995-1999)
Faye Lo Po	ALP	Minister for Consumer Affairs (1995) Minister for Women (1995-2002) Minister for Fair Trading (1995-1997) Minister for Community Services (1997-2002) Minister for Ageing (1997-2002) Minister for Disability Services (1997-2002)
Meredith Burgmann	ALP	President of the Legislative Council (1999-
Sandra Nori	ALP	Minister for Small Business (1999-2003) Minister for Tourism (1999-2003) Minister for Women (2002- Minister for Tourism and Sport and Recreation (2003-
Carmel Tebbutt	ALP	Minister for Juvenile Justice (1999-2002) Minister Assisting the Premier on Youth (1999-2003) Minister Assisting the Minister for the Environment (1999-2002) Minister for Community Services (2002- Minister for Ageing (2002- Minister for Disability Services (2002- Minister for Youth (2003-
Diane Beamer	ALP	Minister for Juvenile Justice (2003- Minister for Western Sydney (2003- Minister Assisting the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning (Planning Administration) (2003-
Reba Meagher	ALP	Minister for Fair Trading (2003- Minister Assisting the Minister for Commerce (2003-

Source: NSW Parliament.

As well as increasing in number, female politicians are also becoming an increasingly diversified group. As Van Acker has identified, female politicians are younger than they were in the past, many have combined childbearing with paid employment rather than

commencing their careers after the children have left home, some are divorced and sole parents, and they generally have higher educational qualifications.¹² However, despite the improvement women are still significantly underrepresented in the various parliaments in Australia.

3 WHY IS THERE A COMPARATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF WOMEN IN AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENTS?

Despite Australia being the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote and to stand for election, Australia has subsequently lagged behind in terms of facilitating the actual entry of women into politics. Research has shown that there is an average of five years between women being able to stand for election and the election of a woman to parliament.¹³ The gap for the majority of countries is less than two years. However, it took 41 years after women were permitted to stand for election for a woman to enter the House of Representatives in Australia.

The following have been identified as obstacles discouraging women from entering politics:¹⁴

1. Threshold barriers;
2. Financial barriers;
3. Structural barriers; and
4. Elevation to the Front Bench

3.1 Threshold barriers

The following act as threshold barriers to the entry of women into parliament:¹⁵

- Women are unlikely to choose politics as a career as a result of the socialisation process;
- Many women dislike the manner in which parliamentary proceedings are conducted. Politics is perceived by some as a ‘sleazy business corrupted by money and hunger for power... that demeans those engaged in politics and degrades the national and international standing of the nation’;¹⁶
- The late sitting hours and travel involved make politics a difficult career when many women have family responsibilities;
- Female politicians are scrutinised to a greater extent than their male colleagues; and

¹² Van Acker, n 5, p 78.

¹³ United Nations. Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, *Women in Politics and Decision-Making in the Late Twentieth Century*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht, 1992, p 5.

¹⁴ Briefing Paper No 1/97, n 1, pp 10-21.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Bileski J, *Women’s Charter for Political Reform 2001*, Women Into Politics Inc, Sydney 2001, p 4.

- The portrayal of women politicians by the media can trivialise their role.

3.2 Financial barriers

Women are more likely than men to have spent time out of the workforce or in casual or part-time employment. Therefore some women lack the financial means to actually stand for election.

3.3 Structural barriers

3.3.1 *Role of the major political parties*

Sawer claims that the major political parties in the older parliamentary systems are the greatest barrier to the participation of women in politics as women have not been part of their tradition.¹⁷ Women usually hold few of the key decision-making positions in the major political parties which also inhibits the rate of change.¹⁸ The participation of women has been greater in more recently formed parties such as the Australian Democrats and the Greens.

3.3.2 *Preselection*

The preselection process has been viewed as ‘one of the reasons why women have been kept out of the political process for so long and have not been candidates in safe seats’.¹⁹ Parties have assumed that women are unable to combine a career in politics with family responsibilities.²⁰ Some parties have viewed women as an electoral liability resulting in a hesitancy to select them for winnable seats. Sex discrimination is widespread as many female politicians can recount tales of being asked personal questions by selection committees relating to their marital status and childcare arrangements when male candidates generally are not asked such questions.²¹ Factional allegiances also facilitate the preselection of men for seats because of ‘old boy’ loyalties.²²

The situation has only recently begun to change. Prior to 1990, women were only elected to

¹⁷ Sawer M, ‘A Matter of Simple Justice? Women and Parliamentary Representation’, in Sawer M and Zappala G (eds), *Speaking for the People*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 2001, p 173.

¹⁸ Briefing Paper No 1/97, n 1, p 13.

¹⁹ Van Acker, n 5, p 95.

²⁰ Busby N and MacLeod C, ‘Maintaining a Balance: The Retention of Women MPs in Scotland’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, 55(1), January 2002, p 31.

²¹ Numerous examples of such questions are provided in Henderson A, *Getting Even: Women MPs on Life, Power and Politics*, Harper Collins, Pymble, 1999.

²² Briefing Paper No 1/97, n 1, p 16.

the House of Representatives in seats that had previously been held by the opposition.²³ They were simply not preselected for safe seats. However, as noted earlier, the seven new female Labor members elected to the Parliament of NSW in March 2003 were candidates for seats already held by the Labor party and classified as either safe or very safe Labor seats. The two new female Coalition members of Parliament were preselected for a safe Liberal seat and a marginal Labor seat.

3.3.3 *Voting systems*

Research has shown that electoral systems that make use of proportional representation, multi-member constituencies and party lists encourage a higher level of participation by women in the political sphere.²⁴ Women have generally been better represented in the Senate, where members are elected by proportional representation, than in the lower house.

The United Nations has acknowledged the negative impact that such structural barriers as the ballot system, distribution of seats, and choice of electorate has on the number of women elected to parliament.²⁵

3.4 **Elevation to the Front Bench**

Few women are selected for ministerial positions. In the event they are selected, women are frequently given 'soft' portfolios such as the arts, sports, consumer affairs and community development.²⁶ Such a conclusion is supported by the United Nations who found that stereotyping often confines women to such issues as the environment, children and health and excludes them from responsibility for finance, budgetary control and conflict resolution.²⁷

3.5 **Summary**

The experience of Australian women is mirrored elsewhere. A study of over 400 parliamentary candidates in the United Kingdom found that the most common reasons cited by candidates as an explanation of why there are so few women in parliament include:²⁸

²³ Squires J and Wickham-Jones M, *Women in Parliament: A Comparative Analysis*, Equal Opportunities Commission, Manchester, 2001, p 28.

²⁴ United Kingdom. Equal Opportunities Commission, *Women in Parliament: A Comparative Analysis, Research Findings*, Equal Opportunities Commission, MORI Social Research Institute, Manchester, 2002, p 95.

²⁵ United Nations. Division for the Advancement of Women, *General Recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, General Recommendation No 23, 16th Session, 1997, para 22. A copy of the recommendation is available from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recomm.htm>

²⁶ Briefing Paper No 1/97, n 1, p 19.

²⁷ United Nations. Division for the Advancement of Women, n 25, para 11-12.

²⁸ Elgood J, Vinter L and Williams R, *Man Enough for the Job? A Study of Parliamentary*

- Family commitments or childcare issues (49%);
- Hours of work in Parliament (33%);
- Failure of women to put themselves forward for selection (21%)
- Culture of House of Commons deters women (20%);
- Sex discrimination within parties (17%);
- Adversarial style of politics (14%);
- Failure to encourage women to enter politics (13%);
- Selection process within parties (13%)
- Attitudes of society as a whole (11%); and
- Financial barriers (9%).

Some of the barriers faced by women may be the result of the Australian parliaments being designed with men in mind. The Office of the Status of Women has acknowledged that:

The world of Australian politics as it currently exists has not been designed to be friendly to women. Politics has been made, by and large, by men and for men. The way of interacting is male. The language is male. The agenda-setting is male. The sitting hours reflect men's timetables rather than women's.²⁹

4 WHY SHOULD THERE BE A GREATER REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN?

Sawer has classified arguments advocating the greater representation of women in parliaments into three groups: justice, utility and symbolic arguments.³⁰

4.1 The Justice Argument

Justice arguments focus on the provision of an *equal opportunity* for both sexes to participate in politics. A number of international conventions and instruments emphasise the importance of women participating in public life and the need to facilitate access to the political system. For example, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, the *Convention on the Political Rights of Women*, the *Vienna Declaration* and the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* contain sections supporting the right of women to participate in politics.³¹

Article 7 of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) provides:

State parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against

Candidates, Equal Opportunities Commission, Manchester, 2002, p 95.

²⁹ Australia. Office of the Status of Women, *Every Woman's Guide to Getting into Politics*, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1995, p 22.

³⁰ Sawer M, 'The Representation of Women in Australia: Meaning and Make-Believe', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 55(1), January 2002, p 5.

³¹ United Nations. Division for the Advancement of Women, n 25, para 4.

women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

- (a) to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- (b) to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;
- (c) to participate in non-government organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

Similarly, article 25 of the *International Convention on Civil and Political Rights* states:

Every citizen shall have the right and opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

- (a) to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
- (b) to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;
- (c) to have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

Therefore, the right of women to participate in the political life of their country is an important right repeated throughout a number of conventions. However, the right to stand for election has not always translated to actual participation, as numerous other barriers exist.

4.2 The Utility Argument

Arguments that emphasise the practical benefits of increasing the parliamentary participation of women are utility arguments. The greater participation of women means that the pool of talent from which parliamentarians are drawn is doubled. Consequently, human resources are used more efficiently.³² Including more women enhances the electoral appeal of parties as it decreases the distance between the party and the electorate. Women are also believed to have a positive influence on the standard of parliamentary behaviour as it has been suggested that women politicians adopt a less adversarial role than their male colleagues.³³ However, there is a danger that such arguments may restrict expectations of the way a female politician should behave. Van Acker has cautioned that the expectation that a woman will be less competitive or aggressive in the political arena may make it harder for her to participate as she should not be expected to behave better than her male colleagues nor should she be subject to a different standard.³⁴

³² United Nations. Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, n 13, p xi.

³³ Commonwealth Secretariat, *Women in Politics: Voices from the Commonwealth*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London, 1999, p 5.

³⁴ Van Acker, n 5, p 87.

4.3 The Symbolic Argument

1. Improves the status of women

Greater representation of women in parliament is said to improve the status of women outside the parliament as women are seen as having a role in the public as well as the private sphere.

2. Provides Role Models

Women parliamentarians are also role models and provide an alternative to traditional female roles. Therefore it is hoped that the presence of a greater number of women politicians will increase the aspirations of other women.

3. Legitimises political institutions

Another symbolic argument that has been advanced appeals to the need to have legitimate political institutions. It is feared that the legitimacy of political institutions will be undermined if sections of the community are unable to effectively participate as 'Parliament cannot seriously be regarded as representative when the majority of politicians are white, middle-class men'.³⁵ The 1995 *Beijing Platform for Action* goes further by stressing that 'women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary precondition for women's interests to be taken into account'.³⁶ Women are believed to be able to represent gender concerns more effectively because of their interests and experience.³⁷

Scholars differ as to the level of influence female politicians have on a political system. An Inter-Parliamentary Union study of 200 female parliamentarians from 65 countries found that 89% of the women surveyed believed they had a special responsibility to represent the needs and interests of women.³⁸ However, research has found that policy attitudes are generally determined by party alignment rather than the gender of parliamentarians.³⁹ A study of the Australian Senate between 1987 and 1999 found that whilst women MPs were five times more likely than male members to raise issues in relation to domestic violence and paid maternity/paternity leave, the number of interventions actually decreased following the 1996 election and a change of government despite a simultaneous increase in the number of women.⁴⁰

³⁵ Ibid, p 70.

³⁶ Sawer, n 30, p 8.

³⁷ Commonwealth Secretariat, n 33, p 5.

³⁸ Sawer, n 30, p 8.

³⁹ United Kingdom, Equal Opportunities Commission, n 24, p 7.

⁴⁰ Sawer, n 30, p 8.

An American study has produced similar results. The voting patterns of female members of the National Legislature between 1975 and 1998 were examined to determine whether female representation affected policy outcomes.⁴¹ Voting patterns were examined regarding issues of: the environment and energy; the economy, labour and business; foreign affairs and aid; and women's issues. The results reveal a trend of women voting in a more liberal way than their male colleagues. However, on closer examination it was found that 'party identification played the most significant role in influencing and accounting for the liberalism or conservatism of individuals' votes' and that 'gender accounted least for the liberalism or conservatism of a Congressman's vote'.⁴²

Nevertheless, the entry of women into political life has not been without effect. Issues previously viewed as 'private matters' are increasingly treated as public concerns, for example, abortion, domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, single parenthood, prostitution and women's health.⁴³ This is supported by research conducted in the United Kingdom, where it was found that female members of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly achieved a policy shift because the number of women in those institutions had surpassed the critical mass of 30%.⁴⁴ Likewise, a Symposium conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union found that in countries where women 'already represent a rather high and stable percentage of members of decision-making bodies, some problems facing society are no longer viewed as secondary or "soft" issues; on the contrary, they have been included in Governments' priorities'.⁴⁵ Gender has also been found to influence a member's political style, and their empathy for policies that enable a better balance between work and family.⁴⁶

Greater participation of women in political life is necessary to the health of political institutions. The repercussions of a failure to improve the situation are wide-ranging.

Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Equality in political decision-making performs a leverage function without which it is highly unlikely that a real integration of the equality dimension in government policy-making is feasible... Without the active participation of women and the

⁴¹ Hallett S, 'Truth and Fiction: A Study of the Gender Gap in the National Legislature', *Politics*, 21(3), September 2001, p 186-192.

⁴² *Ibid*, p 191.

⁴³ Van Acker, n 5, p 77.

⁴⁴ Squires and Wickham-Jones, n 23, p 115.

⁴⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union, Inter-Parliamentary Symposium, *The Participation of Women in the Political and Parliamentary Decision-Making Process: Reports and Conclusions*, Reports and Documents, No 16, Geneva, 1989, p 65.

⁴⁶ Zappala G, *Challenges to the Concept and Practice of Political Representation in Australia*, Research Paper No 28, Department of the Parliamentary Library (Cth), 1999 p 7.

incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.⁴⁷

On 12 June 2002, Hon Lee Rhiannon MLC introduced a motion in the Legislative Council regarding the public importance of women in politics. The motion was agreed to on 19 June 2002 and read:⁴⁸

1. That this House celebrates the one hundredth anniversary of the granting of the right of women to vote and to stand as candidates in elections for the Australian Federal Parliament.
2. That this House notes with profound regret that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were excluded from voting until 1962.
3. That this House notes that despite Australian women holding full Commonwealth electoral participation rights for a century equal electoral representation has not been achieved in any House of Parliament.
4. That this House calls on all political parties to develop strategies that support and encourage an increase in the parliamentary representation of women.

5 HOW CAN A GREATER REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN BE ACHIEVED?

The need for more female parliamentarians is an increasingly accepted notion. However, there is no consensus as to the best method for improving the number of women.

The following provides an overview of the different strategies that have been proposed by various groups including:⁴⁹

- The introduction of a quota system for women. For example, the ALP agreed at their National Conference in 1994 that women would be preselected to 35% of winnable seats by 2002. This was increased to 40% by 2012 at the 2002 National Conference.
- Weighted votes – where votes cast for a woman in preselection contests are weighted in her favour.
- Reserved seats – a specific number of parliamentary seats may be set aside for women.
- Direct appointment – individual females are directly appointed to parliament.
- The 'Carlton proposal' - Jim Carlton MP proposed to the House of Representatives

⁴⁷ *Declaration of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women*, Beijing, September 1999, para 181. A copy of the declaration may be downloaded from gopher://gopher.undp.org/00/undocs/gad/A/CONF.177/95_11/20.

⁴⁸ *NSWPD*, 19/6/02, p 3295.

⁴⁹ Briefing Paper No 1/97, n 1, pp 27-36.

in 1993 that the *Commonwealth Electoral Act* be amended so that a male and a female list of candidates would be drawn for each electorate. Accordingly, a male and a female member would be elected to jointly represent the electorate. However, the number of electorates would be halved to ensure the number of members remains the same.

- More general measures such as making changes to the Parliamentary environment (such as the provision of child-care facilities and family friendly sitting hours), providing funding for female candidates and encouraging women to participate in politics by providing training in the skills needed by a politician.

5.1 Affirmative/Positive Action

The merit of positive measures to increase the number of females in parliament is often fiercely debated. However, the Division for the Advancement of Women in the United Nations has noted that ‘failure to achieve full and equal participation of women can be unintentional and the result of outmoded practices and procedures which inadvertently promote men’.⁵⁰ Accordingly, the Division supports the use of temporary special measures such as recruiting, financially assisting and training women candidates, amending electoral procedures, and developing campaigns directed at equal participation in order to improve the level of female representation and thus give full effect to article seven of CEDAW.⁵¹

The major political parties within Australia are divided on the issue of affirmative action. The ALP has employed such measures as committing the party to preselecting women to 35% of winnable seats by 2002. The quota was increased to 40% by 2012 at the ALP’s special national rules conference in October 2002. The Coalition on the other hand firmly opposes the use of targets stressing that whilst they will provide women with an equal opportunity to be elected, all successful candidates are to get there by merit alone. Therefore, the Coalition emphasises the use of seminars and other training programmes to provide women with the skills they need to be elected. However, there is currently some doubt over the legality of the quotas set by the ALP as they possibly offend anti-discrimination legislation.⁵²

The Labour Party in the United Kingdom sought to increase the number of women in parliament in the 1990s by adopting all-women shortlists for half of the seats where an incumbent Labour MP was planning to retire. Women were also shortlisted for half of the seats that the Labour Party deemed they were likely to win from another party in the election. However, two male members of the Labour Party in the United Kingdom sued the Party in 1996 claiming that the use of all women shortlists breached the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975*. It was argued that the Labour Party is a professional body and is therefore subject to section 13(1) of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975* which states:

It is illegal for an authority or body which can confer an authorisation or

⁵⁰ United Nations. Division for the Advancement of Women, n 25, para 15.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² ‘Judge’s warning on Labor quotas’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22/4/03, p 6.

qualification which is needed for, or facilitates, engagement in a particular profession or trade to discriminate against [someone on grounds of sex] in the terms on which it is prepared to confer... that authorisation or qualification or by refusing or deliberately omitting to grant... application for it.⁵³

The industrial tribunal agreed that the Labour Party was bound by section 13 of the Act and accordingly found in favour of the complainants. It noted that whilst members are not in employment,

they are engaged in an occupation which involves public service and for which they receive remuneration from public funds. It is immaterial so far as section 13 is concerned that a person seeking to be considered for approval as an official candidate for a major political party has further hurdles to overcome before he or she can achieve a position as a Member of Parliament... in that sense he is in no different position from a person denied approval by a body under section 13, who does not yet have any particular work to do and who would need selection by others before obtaining such work.⁵⁴

Section 42A was subsequently inserted into the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975* by the *Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002*. This section permits the use of positive measures by political parties so long as they are adopted to reduce inequality in the numbers of women and men elected. See below section 7.8.

Outside of Australia, it has been observed that, in general, women from developing countries support the use of quotas whereas women from western countries do not.⁵⁵ Quotas are seen by some as a means of rapidly increasing the number of female politicians who are subsequently able to act as role models and so encourage other women to be involved.⁵⁶ It may also have the effect of ensuring that there are at least some female members of parliament where there would otherwise be none or be so few that their influence would be negligible.⁵⁷

Research has demonstrated a positive correlation between the implementation of party quotas and the level of female representation within parliaments.⁵⁸ Examination of the 1997 General Election in the United Kingdom and the 1999 elections to the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly of Wales revealed that 'positive action measures are

⁵³ As quoted in Russell M, *Women's Representation in UK Politics: What Can be done within the Law?*, The Constitution Unit, London, p 25.

⁵⁴ *Jepson and Dyas-Elliot v The Labour Party* [1996] IRLR 116 ET as quoted in Russell, n 53, p 26.

⁵⁵ Discussions at the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Group Meeting in Banff 1994 revealed such a divide between developing and westernized nations. Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Group, n 2, p 16.

⁵⁶ Inter-Parliamentary Union, n 45, p 70.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ United Kingdom, Equal Opportunities Commission, n 24, p 3.

one of the most decisive factors in increasing the number of women elected'.⁵⁹ All-women shortlists were used in the Westminster and Scottish elections. Parties also used a positive measure known as 'zipping' in the elections for the Scottish Parliament.

5.1.1 Zipping

Parties within an electoral system that is based on proportional representation may use 'zipping' to increase the number of women in parliament. 'Zipping' involves male and female candidates being placed alternatively on the party list. For example, under such a system, candidates for the NSW Legislative Council would alternate between male and female within each group to encourage a gender balance in the Upper House.

5.1.2 Twinning

Twinning is more complex and involves the pairing of electorates of similar status in terms of the relative safety of those seats. Two candidates for each party are selected, one male and one female, to represent the 'twinned' constituencies. Each are subsequently allocated one of the 'twinned' electorates. However, the implementation of such a scheme would be extremely difficult in practice, particularly given the number of members who have represented their electorate for some time.

5.2 Encouraging women to participate

5.2.1 Changes to the parliamentary environment

Sawer believes that parliaments need to be redesigned to 'unpick the masculine bias' and create structures that are also sensitive to the needs of women.⁶⁰ Therefore it has been suggested that parliaments institute childcare centres available to members and introduce family-friendly sitting hours. Such features are standard in the national parliaments of countries with a significant number of female parliamentarians.⁶¹ The unwillingness of parliaments to implement such changes has been criticised on grounds that,

the rejection of attempts to conciliate family responsibilities and working arrangements echoes the past treatment of part-time workers with lower levels of employment protection and work-related benefits on the spurious basis that reduced hours indicate a reduced commitment to the job.⁶²

It has been argued that women will be encouraged to enter politics if it becomes increasingly based on 'consultation and consensus-seeking and less on power-broking and

⁵⁹ Elgood et al, n 28, p 128.

⁶⁰ Sawer, n 30, p 13.

⁶¹ Sawer M, 'Women and government in Australia', *2001 Year Book Australia*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2001, p 75.

⁶² Busby and MacLeod, n 20, p 35.

head-kicking'.⁶³ Simply rearranging the seating within parliaments might go some way towards promoting a less aggressive style of politics. This was found to be the case in Sweden where parliamentarians sit according to region rather than political party.⁶⁴

By way of caution, Sawer stresses that simply increasing the number of women in parliament will not ensure that women are adequately represented.⁶⁵ Similarly, Van Acker argues that the presence of additional women will be insufficient unless existing political institutions are completely revised.⁶⁶

5.2.2 *Special funding for female candidates*

As women are more likely to spend time out of the workforce or in part-time or casual employment, lack of finances may be a very real barrier to a political career. The need for special funding for female candidates has been recognised by some groups such as 'Emily's List', which provides funds to female Labor candidates who are pro-choice regarding abortion, pro-equal rights and pro-childcare. 'Emily's List' stands for 'Early Money is Like Yeast – it makes the dough rise' and is based on the notion that early financial support is one of the most effective ways of assisting a candidate for election. It is jointly convened by Joan Kirner and Cheryl Davenport to assist female Labor candidates in each state and territory by providing mentoring, training and financial support. It is based on 'Emily's List USA'. An 'Emily's List' also operates in the United Kingdom. See section 6.1.2.

5.2.3 *Women Support Groups*

The support of family and friends is particularly important to many female parliamentarians. Over 400 parliamentary candidates were interviewed as part of a study in the United Kingdom that found women were more inclined to talk in their interview about their personal life in conjunction with their political career.⁶⁷ Men, on the other hand, tended to consider their political career in isolation from other facets of their life.

A number of support groups for female politicians have been established in Australia. Women Into Politics Inc is a coalition of various women's groups that was founded in 1992 to 'work towards increasing the numbers of women in our parliaments and in all areas of Australian public life'.⁶⁸ 'Emily's List' and the National Labor Women's Network were

⁶³ Sawer, n 30, p 7.

⁶⁴ Sawer, n 17 p 182.

⁶⁵ Sawer, n 30, p 17.

⁶⁶ Van Acker, n 5, p 92.

⁶⁷ Elgood et al, n 28, p ix.

⁶⁸ Bileski, n 16, p 4. Women into Politics Inc includes such organizations as the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women (NSW Division), Australian Federation of University Women (NSW), Central Coordinating Committee of Spokeswomen, EEO Practitioners Association, Organisation of Hellenic and Hellenic-Cypriot Women of Australia, National Women's Justice Coalition, War Widows Guild of Australia (NSW),

developed to support the needs of female members of the ALP. Similarly, the Liberal Women's Forum and Women's Council sponsor the development of female Liberal politicians.

5.3 Changes to the electoral system

Proportional representation appears to facilitate the entry of women into parliament. Globally, national parliaments where women represent over 30% of members use proportional representation as their electoral system. This pattern is repeated in Australia. In both the federal and NSW parliaments, proportional representation is used to elect members of the upper house whilst the preferential system is used for the lower house. In NSW, women constitute 31% of members of the Legislative Council compared to 25% of members of the Legislative Assembly. This is mirrored in the federal parliament where 28.9% of Senators are women whereas only 25.3% of members of the House of Representatives are female.

Sawer has suggested a number of reasons why proportional representation has such an effect:⁶⁹

- There is an incentive for parties to present a balanced ticket to appeal to different sections of the electorate;
- There is pressure to provide places for different intra-party elements, including women's sections;
- It is easier to introduce quotas in a proportional representation system than in a system where there is only one place to be filled; and
- There is a contagion effect of one party introducing quotas due to electoral competition.

The repercussions of a change to a more widespread use of proportional representation may extend to improving the behaviour of parliamentarians. As well as increasing the number of women, proportional representation usually facilitates the election of minor parties, so multi-party bargaining may take place rather than the usual confrontation between two parties.⁷⁰ Consequently, the major parties may not support a change in the electoral system.⁷¹

5.4 Joint promotion of good government and women in parliament

Women Into Politics Inc argues that the need for more women in parliament is intertwined

Women and the Australian Church, Women in Science Enquiry Network, Women Lawyers Association of NSW, Women's Electoral Lobby (NSW) and Young Women's Christian Association.

⁶⁹ Sawer, n 17, p 173.

⁷⁰ Sawer, n 30, p 7.

⁷¹ Sawer, n 17, p 173.

with the need for good government.⁷² Therefore, they ought to be jointly promoted in order to be effective. A *Charter for Political Reform* (see Appendix C) was released by Women Into Politics containing various strategies for achieving political equality for women, regulating the influence of money in politics, changing the parliamentary system of remuneration and entitlements, changing the system of parliamentary representation, examining the relevance of a bill of rights in relation to equality for women, and enhancing public participation in politics through the formation of People's Conventions.

5.5 International support

A Symposium convened by the Inter-Parliamentary Union recognised that international support was needed for the level of female representation to improve in national parliaments.⁷³ Amongst other things, the Symposium recommended that the Inter-Parliamentary Union continue to monitor the distribution of seats between women and men in parliaments and that a working group be established to develop objectives and programmes to increase the representation of women to 50%.⁷⁴

5.6 Summary

The balanced participation of women in politics will most effectively be achieved by combining a number of strategies. Affirmative action measures such as the use of quotas, 'zipping' and 'twinning' have resulted in a substantial improvement in the representation of women amongst parliamentarians. Women can be encouraged to participate in the electoral system by adapting the parliamentary environment to meet the needs of both men and women. The establishment of support groups for female politicians and the provision of special funding for candidates may also assist. Proportional representation has been shown to be a more inclusive electoral system and the need for good government and more women representatives are related issues and therefore need to be jointly promoted. Finally, as the underrepresentation of women is a global issue, international research and monitoring of numbers is likely to encourage the entry of women into politics.

6 WHAT ARE THE POSITIONS OF THE VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES?

As most members of Australian parliaments are elected because they belong to a particular political party, it follows that political parties have a significant role to play in determining the level of female representation in Australia.⁷⁵ Evidence of this may be seen in the uneven distribution of women between the parties. Following the 1996 Federal election, there were 79 ALP members across both houses, 11 of whom were female (13.9%). 24 of the 130 Coalition members of both houses were female (18.5%). There has been a

⁷² Bileski, n 16, p 4.

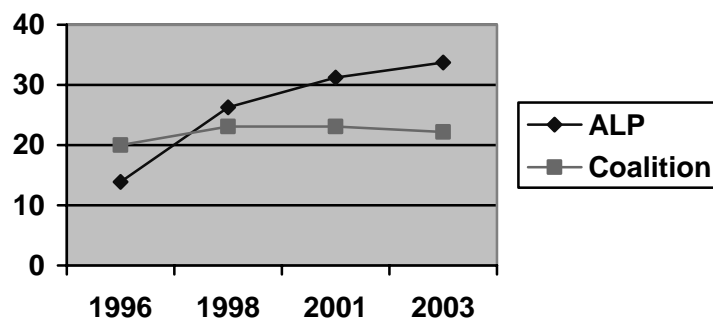
⁷³ The Symposium was attended by delegates from 66 states, however, Australia was not represented.

⁷⁴ Inter-Parliamentary Union, n 45, p 72.

⁷⁵ Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Group, n 2, p 18.

substantial improvement in the number of women since that time. Women constituted 31 of the 93 ALP members of both Houses as at 26 July 2002 (33.3%). However, whilst the proportion of female Coalition parliamentarians has risen it is at a much smaller rate as only 26 of the 117 Coalition members of both houses at the same date were female (22.2%).

Percentage of party members that are women in the federal Parliament



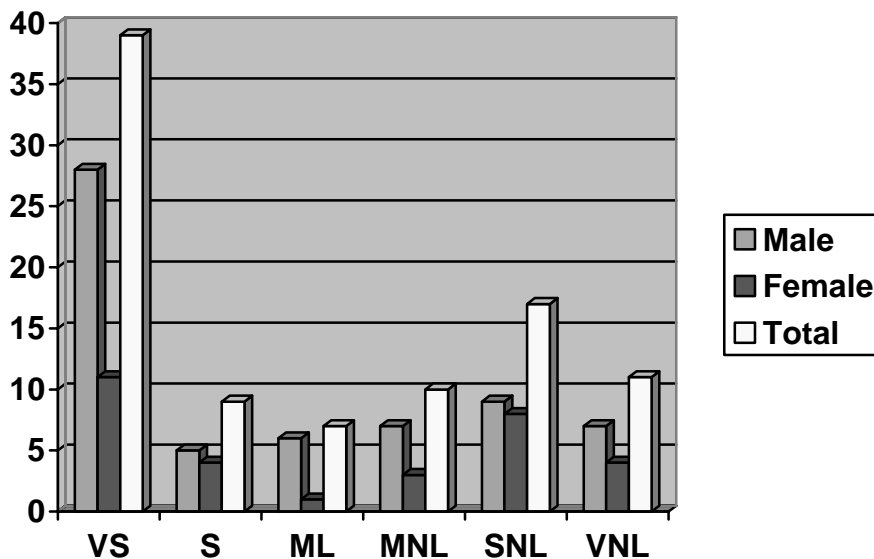
The number of women in the Parliament of NSW has also increased. However, the difference between the parties is not as stark as at the federal level. In December 1996, 16 of the 67 ALP parliamentarians (23.9%) and 10 of the 63 Coalition members (15.9%) were women across both Houses.⁷⁶ Following the 2003 election, women now constitute 22 of the 72 ALP members of both Houses (30.6%) and 11 of the 45 Coalition members (24.4%).

6.1 Australian Labor Party

In 1994 it was agreed at the National Conference for the ALP that women were to be preselected as candidates to 35% of Federal parliamentary seats if in Government or 35% of seats required to win government if in opposition by 2002. The target was raised to 40% at the ALP Special Rules Conference in October 2002. For the NSW elections in March 2003, men were preselected to 28 of the 39 seats classified as 'very safe' for the Labor Party. Men were also selected as candidates for five of the nine 'safe' ALP seats. Six men and one woman were candidates for marginal ALP seats and seven men and three women were selected for marginal non-ALP seats. Figure One illustrates the distribution of electorates between the sexes following preselection of ALP candidates for the 2003 election.

⁷⁶ Wendy Machin of the National Party resigned from her seat of Port Macquarie on 28 August 1996.

Figure 1



Note: VS = very safe Labor seat, S = Safe Labor, ML = Marginal Labor, MNL = Marginal non-Labor, SNL = Safe non-Labor, VNL = Very Safe non-Labor.

6.1.1 National Labor Women's Network

The ALP launched the National Labor Women's Network at Labor's National Conference in 1998 to provide 'a forum to increase the number of women active within the Labor Party, facilitate and develop relationships between the state Labor women organisations and the national Network, as well as supporting the development of skills that assist women to participate in the ALP at all levels'.⁷⁷ It is the first official Labor women's organisation to exist since the National Labor Women's Organisation was abolished in 1984. The National Executive of the Labor Women's Network sponsors a national Political Experience Program for women in the ALP to provide them with an opportunity to be exposed to an environment that allows them to apply their skills in a more political way.⁷⁸ Sawyer claims that the Labor Women's Network was established as part of an attempt by the ALP to neutralise Emily's List and consequently ensure party control over the entry of women into parliament.⁷⁹

6.1.2 Emily's List

Emily's List was formed in 1996 to provide support and funds for female Labor candidates

⁷⁷ Australian Labor Party, 'Labor Women', <http://www.alp.org.au/about/women.html> Accessed 20 March 2003.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Sawyer, n 17, p 176.

who are pro-choice regarding abortion, pro-equal rights and pro-childcare.⁸⁰ It aims to fill the gap between the preselection and election of women by providing financial assistance, training and mentoring support to endorsed candidates in both state and federal elections.⁸¹ In the March 2003 NSW election, Emily's List supported 19 female candidates for the Legislative Assembly, seven of whom were elected as members.⁸² At the federal level, 16 members of the House of Representatives⁸³ and seven Senators⁸⁴ received support from Emily's List.

6.1.3 National Labor Women's Conference 2002

The National Labor Women's Conference – Women Setting the Agenda – was held in Canberra on 27 and 28 April 2002. A number of resolutions were produced by the conference including:⁸⁵

- The promotion of women into positions of leadership in all areas of the party is the key to the party being democratic and truly representative;
- A call upon the National Secretariat to create a position of a full-time women's organiser based in the national office to facilitate women's policy, campaigning, and activism at a national level. They are to monitor affirmative action targets and initiate and implement regular and systemic gender gap research;
- A call for the Labor Federal Parliamentary Caucus to ensure that the Minister and/or Shadow Minister for Women sits in Cabinet or in Shadow Cabinet.
- 50% women on party committees;
- Concern that the National Executive Sub-Committee on Conscience Voting does not include any women;
- That the state and territory branches adopt a mentoring programme for women, which targets women on all levels of the party and builds on successful existing programmes such as Emily's List and The Victorian Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition;

⁸⁰ Van Acker, n 5, p 99.

⁸¹ Emily's List Australia, <http://www.emilyslist.org.au> Accessed 19 March 2003.

⁸² Emily's List supported the following successful candidates: Linda Burney (Canterbury), Angela D'Amore (Drummoyne), Alison Megarrity (Menai), Karyn Paluzzano (Penrith), Noreen Hay (Wollongong), Sandra Nori (Port Jackson) and Marianne Saliba (Illawarra). Financial support was not sought by Noreen Hay, Sandra Nori or Marianne Saliba, however, they were endorsed by Emily's List.

⁸³ Ann Corcoran (Isaacs), Jennie George (Throsby), Julia Gillard (Lalor), Sharon Grierson (Newcastle), Jill Hall (Shortland), Julia Irwin (Fowler), Sharryn Jackson (Hasluck), Catherine King (Ballarat), Dr Carmen Lawrence (Fremantle), Kirsten Livermore (Capricornia), Jenny Macklin (Jaga Jaga), Jann McFarlane (Stirling), Michelle O'Byrne (Bass), Tanya Plibersek (Sydney) and Maria Vamvakinou (Calwell).

⁸⁴ Trish Cossin (NT), Linda Kirk (SA), Kate Lundy (ACT), Su Mackay (Tas), Jan McLucas (Qld), Claire Moore (Qld) and Penny Wong (SA).

⁸⁵ Mow K, 'Resolutions', National Labor Women's Conference 2002 – *Women Setting the Agenda*, Canberra, 27 and 28 April 2002.

- Participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

6.1.4 Percentage of ALP Women in the Lower House of Parliament in each jurisdiction as at 10 April 2003

Parliament	Most recent election	Percentage of ALP members that are women
South Australia	10 February 2002	45.5%
Queensland	17 February 2001	41%
Victoria	30 November 2002	38.7%
Commonwealth	10 November 2001	31.3%
Northern Territory	18 August 2001	31%
New South Wales	22 March 2003	29.6%
Tasmania	20 July 2002	28.6%
ACT	20 October 2001	25%
Western Australia	10 February 2001	25%

6.2 Liberal/National Parties

The Liberal Party is quick to distance itself from the Labor practice of setting quotas as a means of improving the number of women in parliament. It prefers to use such strategies as mentoring, networking programs, and skills seminars.

6.2.1 *Federal Women's Committee*⁸⁶

Each Division of the Liberal Party is represented on the Federal Women's Committee. It supports and encourages women by facilitating programs that develop the skills women need for the preselection process. The Committee is represented on the Liberal Party's Federal Executive and on the Advisory Committee on Federal Policy.

6.2.2 *Liberal Women's Forum*⁸⁷

The Liberal Women's Forum was established in 1993 as 'a political network for more women in Parliament'. It aims 'to raise the profile of women candidates as serious choices in preselection; to encourage women to join and be active in the Liberal Party, and to assist them in establishing credibility and build winning campaigns for selection in both safe Liberal and winnable marginal seats'.

The strategy of the Forum is clearly defined. Its aim is to 'get a critical mass of women standing for preselection, then a critical mass of preselected women candidates in winnable seats, then a critical mass of experienced women MPs, then a critical mass of women MPs

⁸⁶ See Liberal Party of Australia, 'Women in the Party', http://www.nsw.liberal.org.au/women/federal_women_committee.cfm Accessed 19 March 2003.

⁸⁷ Liberal Party of Australia, 'Liberal Women's Forum', http://www.nsw.liberal.org.au/women/liberal_women_forum.cfm Accessed 19 March 2003.

with portfolios – shadow or real’.⁸⁸ It hopes to achieve this by conducting networking sessions, training seminars and a mentoring program.

6.2.3 Women’s Council⁸⁹

The Council is the peak body for women within the NSW Division of the Liberal Party. Its object is to bring more women into the Party, nurture its current members and bring issues of concern to women to the Liberal debate.

Whilst the proportion of women amongst Liberal members of the House of Representatives is currently at its highest (23.5%), the percentage of female Liberal senators has actually fallen from 32.3% in October 1998 to its present 22.6%.

6.2.4 National Party

The NSW National Party launched an Action Plan for Women in 1995 to increase the parliamentary representation of women by targeting those who are interested in a parliamentary career, encouraging women to fully participate in the political process and to take on office-bearing roles.⁹⁰ The National Party conducts workshops and seminars to provide women with an opportunity to develop the necessary skills for achieving preselection, such as public-speaking. The National Party’s Women’s Federal Council consists of two delegates from each of the state parties and ‘considers issues, undertakes research and presents motions and papers for consideration by other Federal Committees of the Party’.⁹¹ The Council is currently conducting research on how to encourage women to enter politics.

Women are better represented in the National Party in NSW Parliament than at the federal level. There are currently three female National members of the NSW Parliament – one in the Legislative Assembly and two in the Legislative Council, whereas there are only two female National members of the House of Representatives, and none in the Senate.

6.2.5 NSW Election 2003

For the NSW elections in March 2003, men were preselected to 10 of the 11 seats classified as ‘very safe’ for the Coalition. A further 13 men were selected as candidates for safe Coalition seats, out of the 14 seats available. Five men and three women were candidates for marginal Coalition seats and five men and four women were selected for marginal non-

⁸⁸ Henderson, n 21, p 66.

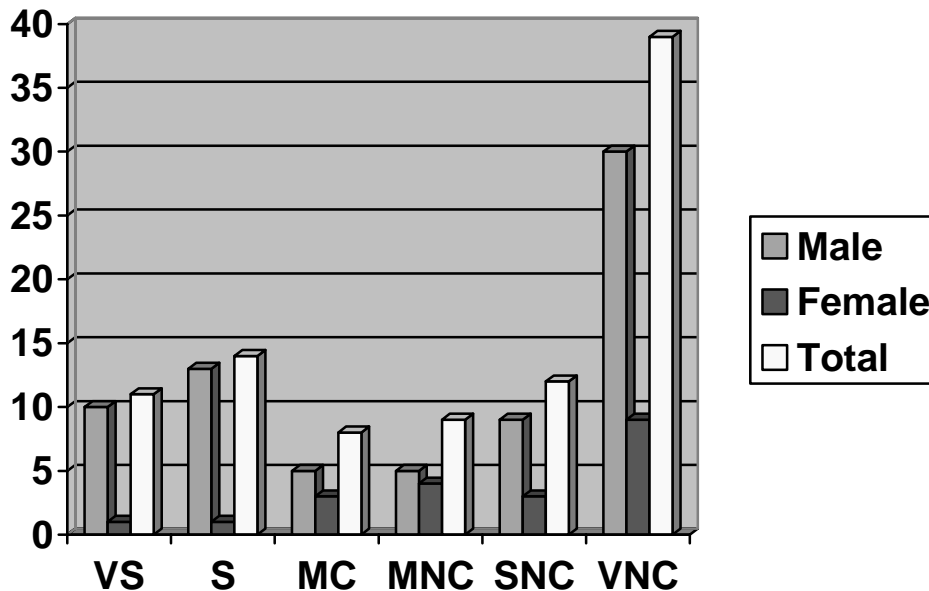
⁸⁹ Liberal Party of Australia, ‘Women’s Council’, http://www.nsw.liberal.org.au/women/women_council.cfm Accessed 19 March 2003

⁹⁰ NSW Nationals, ‘Women Shaping Policy’, http://nsw.nationalparty.org/html/woman_at_work.cfm Accessed 20 March 2003.

⁹¹ National Party of Australia, ‘Women’, <http://www.nationalparty.org/women/index.htm> Accessed 5 May 2003.

Coalition seats. Figure 2 illustrates the disparity between the preselection of male and female Coalition candidates according to the relative safety of seats.

Figure 2



Note: VS = very safe Coalition seat, S = Safe Coalition, MC = Marginal Coalition, MNC = Marginal non-Coalition, SNC = Safe non-Coalition, VNC = Very Safe non-Coalition.

6.2.6 Percentage of Liberal/National Women in the Lower House of Parliament in each jurisdiction as at 10 April 2003

Parliament	Most recent election	Percentage of Liberal and National members that are women
ACT	20 October 2001	33.3%
South Australia	10 February 2002	28.6%
Commonwealth	10 November 2001	22%
Northern Territory	18 August 2001	20%
New South Wales	22 March 2003	18.8%
Tasmania	20 July 2002	14.3%
Western Australia	10 February 2001	14.3%
Queensland	17 February 2001	13.3%
Victoria	30 November 2002	12.5%

6.3 Greens

Women are generally well-represented amongst the NSW Greens and Australian Greens. Two of the three Green members of the Legislative Council in NSW are women, and one of the two Senators for the federal parliament is a woman. The need for the sharing of power between the sexes is enshrined in clause 1.4 of the Constitution of the Greens NSW:

In all the activities and appointments of the Greens NSW, attempts shall be made to ensure that there is at least 50% representation by women and by members from

outside metropolitan Sydney and representation by minority and disadvantaged groups.⁹²

6.4 Australian Democrats

Women have traditionally been well-represented in the Australian Democrats. There have been five women amongst its Federal party leaders. Lyn Allison is currently the Deputy Parliamentary Leader. In 1981, Elisabeth Kirkby became the first Democrat elected to the NSW Parliament. However, the proportion of women amongst its parliamentarians has fallen in recent times. In NSW, the Democrat member of the Legislative Council is a male.

In the federal Senate, there are only two women out of seven senators, following the resignation of Meg Lees who now sits as an Independent senator for South Australia.

7 HOW DOES THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE COMPARE TO THAT OF OTHER COUNTRIES?

The under-representation of women in parliament is not an experience unique to Australia. As at 28 March 2003 approximately 15.2% of parliamentarians were women throughout the world.⁹³ Australia is currently in 23rd position with 25.3% of members of the House of Representatives being women. Whilst women are still a long way from constituting half of all parliamentarians in Australia, considerable progress has been made. In 1991, only 6.7% of the members of the House of Representatives were women. This increased to 15.5% following the change of government in 1996, and increased again in 1999 to 23.6%.

However, Australia falls significantly behind the Nordic countries where women form 45.3% of the Swedish parliament, 38% in Denmark, 36.7% in the Netherlands, 36.5% in Finland and 36.4% in Norway. Nevertheless, women in Australia are faring better than in the United Kingdom (currently ranked 49th with 17.9%) and United States of America (currently ranked 59th with 14.3%).

The following table ranks the top 30 countries according to the percentage of women in the lower house of the national parliament. The last seven countries in the table have been included by way of interest and to aid comparison.

⁹² A copy of the Constitution of the NSW Greens may be downloaded from their website <http://www.nsw.greens.org.au/about/about.html>

⁹³ International Parliamentary Union, 'Women in National Parliaments', <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm> Accessed 17 April 2003.

**Percentage of Women in the National Parliament (Lower House only) in 2003
as compared to 1991**

2003 Rank	Country	2003	1991
1	Sweden	45.3	38.1
2	Denmark	38	33
3	Finland	37.5	38.5
4	Netherlands	36.7	21.3
5	Norway	36.4	35.8
6	Cuba	36	33.9
7	Costa Rica	35.1	12.3
8	Iceland	34.9	23.8
9	Austria	33.9	21.8
10	Germany	32.2	20.4
11	Argentina	30.7	4.7
12	Mozambique	30	15.7
13	South Africa	29.8	2.6
14	Seychelles	29.4	16
15	New Zealand	28.3	16.5
15	Spain	28.3	14.6
16	Vietnam	27.3	17.7
17	Grenada	26.7	13.3
18	Namibia	26.4	6.9
19	Bulgaria	26.2	8.5
20	Dem Rep of East Timor	26.1	n/a
21	Turkmenistan	26	4.6
22	Rwanda	25.7	17.1
23	Australia	25.3	6.7
24	Uganda	24.7	12.2
25	Belgium	23.3	8.5
26	Switzerland	23	14
27	Lao People's Democratic Republic	22.9	6.3
28	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	22.7	9.5
29	United Rep of Tanzania	22.3	11
30	Eritrea	22	*
31	China	21.8	21.3
36	Canada	20.6	13.2
49	United Kingdom	17.9	6.3
59	United States of America	14.3	6.4
65	France	12.2	5.7
89	Greece	8.7	5.3
97	Japan	7.3	2.3

* Eritrea did not become independent until 24 May 1993. Following the first elections in February 1994, women constituted 14.7% of the national parliament.

Source: 'Women in National Parliaments', International Parliamentary Union, as at 28 March 2003, www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm Accessed 17 April 2003. Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in Parliaments 1945-1995 A World Statistical Survey*, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva, 1995.

It is evident from the table that the proportion of women in the national parliament has substantially improved in both South Africa (discussed below) and Argentina. The increase in Argentina from 4.7% in 1991 to 30.7% in 2003 is due to the introduction of an electoral law that requires 30% of candidates to be women.⁹⁴

7.1 Beijing Platform for Action and Beijing Plus Five Outcome

The under-representation of women is an international issue. Throughout the 1990s, the term 'democratic-deficit' was employed in relation to the poor representation of women in parliaments. The 'democratic-deficit' subsequently became an important issue for many international organisations.⁹⁵ The United Nations Fourth Conference on Women was held in Beijing in 1995. One of the 12 critical areas of concern noted in the Beijing Platform for Action developed at the conference was the need for power and decision-making to be shared.⁹⁶ The Platform for Action is an agreement between the signatory nations to achieve equality for women across 12 critical areas.

The Beijing Plus Five Outcome document was formulated at the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly between 5 and 9 June 2000. Individual countries were required to report on their progress in relation to the Beijing Platform for Action. The Australian Government subsequently developed the Beijing Plus Five Action Plan which outlines measures to further progress the Platform for Action in the years 2001-2005. Strategies include working with government agencies, promoting women's involvement, encouraging the participation of business and the community, forums, best practices and benchmarking.⁹⁷

7.2 United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women

As well as concern over the need for more women parliamentarians in general, effort has been devoted to developing strategies that improve the number of women in senior political positions. The following were noted by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women as measures adopted by countries to ensure the equal participation of women in senior cabinet and administrative positions:⁹⁸

- A rule whereby when potential appointees are equally qualified, preference will be given to a woman nominee;

⁹⁴ Russell M, n 53, p 54.

⁹⁵ Sawer, n 30, p 9.

⁹⁶ Sawer, n 61, p 75.

⁹⁷ A copy of Australia's Plus Five Action Plan 2001-2005 may be downloaded from the website for the Office of the Status of Women <http://www.osw.dpmc.gov.au/index.html>

⁹⁸ United Nations. Division for the Advancement of Women, n 25, para 29.

- A rule that neither sex should constitute less than 40% of the members of a public body;
- A quota for women members of cabinet and for appointment to public office;
- Consultation with women's organisations to ensure that qualified women are nominated for membership in public bodies and offices and the development and maintenance of registers of such women in order to facilitate the nomination of women for appointment to public bodies and posts.

7.3 European Union

The European Union regards the under-representation of women as a serious issue, 'The persistent under-representation of women in all areas of decision-making marks a fundamental democratic deficit which requires Community level action'.⁹⁹ Accordingly, the European Commission developed the following strategy to improve the gender balance in decision-making throughout the Union:¹⁰⁰

- Encourage the development of networking of elected women at European, national, regional and local levels, by encouraging the networking of Parliamentary committees on equal opportunities for women and men in the EU Member States and in the European Parliament;
- Promote an awareness of gender discrimination and the need for a gender balance in civic education;
- Assess the influence of electoral systems, legislation, quotas, targets and other measures on gender balance in elected political bodies;
- Support schemes to enhance developing countries' institutional and operational capacities for integrating gender issues at national and local level and in civil society, including legislative and administrative actions on equal rights for women and men;
- Monitor improvements in the gender composition of committees and expert groups set up by the Commission;
- Promote the implementation of Council Recommendation 96/694¹⁰¹ and monitor its follow-up;
- Conduct awareness-raising activities addressed to citizens on the need for a gender balance both in elected public bodies and inside the political parties' structures as well as to encourage women to become politically active with a particular view to the European Parliament elections in 2004.

⁹⁹ European Union, Gender Equality, Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005). Available from http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/equ_opp/strategy/3_2_en.html Accessed 7 April 2003.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Recommendation 96/694 is annexed to: Commission of the European Communities, *Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee on the Implementation of Council Recommendation 96/694 of 2nd December 1996 on the Balanced Participation of Women and Men in the Decision-Making Process*, Brussels, 7 March 2000. A copy of the report may be downloaded from http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/rpt/en_rpt_month_2000_03.html

7.4 Belgium¹⁰²

Belgium passed a law in 1994 requiring that women comprise a minimum of 25% of all party lists for election. In 1999, the requirement was increased to 33%. However the effect of the law has been limited as there is no requirement regarding where women are to be placed on the list. Belgium is currently ranked in 25th position with women only constituting 23.3% of members of its lower house.

7.5 Canada

Women are significantly under-represented in the Canadian parliament, the proportion of women having only increased from 13.2% in 1991 to 20.6% in 2003. They are currently ranked by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 36th position regarding the percentage of women in parliament. Research has shown that the following factors have contributed to the under-representation of women in Canadian politics:¹⁰³

- The nature of the political and electoral system;
- The status of women in society;
- Media depictions of female politicians;
- Political party attitudes and policies;
- The availability of financial, human and other resources; and
- The constraints imposed by family responsibilities.

7.6 New Zealand

New Zealand was the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote in 1893. Nevertheless, women were not permitted to stand for election until 1919. The number of women in New Zealand politics significantly improved following the change in 1996 from a single-member electoral system to a mixed member proportional system.¹⁰⁴ As a result the number of female, Maori and Pacific Islander representatives in the New Zealand parliament has increased.¹⁰⁵

7.7 South Africa

Until 1994, few women were members of parliament in South Africa. The advent of non-racial elections had the effect of substantially improving the number of female politicians from 2.6% in 1991 to its current level of 29.8%. The rights of women have been formalised in the new Constitution that prohibits discrimination on grounds of 'race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status'.¹⁰⁶ An Equity Clause is included in the Bill of

¹⁰² Squires and Wickham-Jones, n 23, p v.

¹⁰³ Commonwealth Secretariat, n 33, p 39.

¹⁰⁴ Sawyer, n 17, p 173.

¹⁰⁵ Zappala, n 46, p 19.

¹⁰⁶ Commonwealth Secretariat, n 33, p 122.

Rights and provides for affirmative action and the right to health care, basic education and adequate housing.¹⁰⁷

7.8 United Kingdom

Women have had the right to stand for election to the House of Commons since 1918. However, the proportion of female members has traditionally been low and whilst progress has been made, women only constitute 17.9% of members of Parliament. Nevertheless, there has been substantial improvement in recent years, as the number of women in parliament doubled to 120 following the 1997 general election (women previously constituted only 9% of members).¹⁰⁸ However, female members were not evenly distributed across the parties as 80% of women belonged to the Labour Party.¹⁰⁹ The number of women has remained fairly constant since 1997 despite a slight fall to 118 women elected in the 2001 elections.

The entry of such a relatively large number of female politicians to the House of Commons is due in part to the landslide victory of the Labour Party in 1997. Nevertheless, credit must also be given to the policies adopted by the Labour Party to encourage the election of women. Women were shortlisted by the Labour Party between 1993 and 1996 for half of the seats where either an incumbent Labour MP had retired or it was likely that the Labour Party would win the seat from the opposition.¹¹⁰ However, the positive measures adopted by the Labour Party ceased when two male members of the Labour Party successfully sued the party arguing that the allocation of half of the winnable seats to women was in breach of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1975*.¹¹¹

The *Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Bill* was subsequently introduced in the House of Commons in October 2001.¹¹² The Act was assented to in February 2002 and permits, but does not require, political parties to introduce positive action strategies. The Act enjoyed easy passage through parliament and most arguments advanced in support of it were based on the justice argument (see section 4.1). Childs notes,

That members premised their arguments in support of the Bill on the justice argument – the least contentious concept of representation – might, of course, have been strategic. The justice argument does not carry with it other conceptions of representation, in particular, the attendant assumption that women representatives

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Squires and Wickham-Jones, n 23, p 48.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p 50.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p xi.

¹¹¹ Russell, n 53, p 5.

¹¹² Childs S, 'Concepts of Representation and the Passage of the *Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Bill*', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 8(3) Autumn 2002, pp 90-108.

will make a difference and ‘act for’ women. Thus, mainstream conceptions of representation, such as party or constituency representation (the dominant concepts of representation in the British political system) are not disturbed. As a consequence MPs and Peers might have felt that it was a ‘safe’ argument to articulate in support of women’s political presence.¹¹³

Whilst the proportion of female parliamentarians is higher in Australia, women have tended to be appointed to senior positions at a greater rate in the United Kingdom. Women held one third of ministerial positions, including six out of 22 positions in Cabinet, prior to the 2001 general election. This improved to seven Cabinet portfolios and 23 ministerial positions (32.6%) following the 2001 election.¹¹⁴

7.9 Scotland

One of the priorities when the Scottish Parliament was established in 1999 was to improve access to the political system. Consequently, the Consultative Steering Group developed the Standing Orders for the Parliament based on four key principles:¹¹⁵

1. The sharing of power
2. Accountability
3. Access and participation
4. Equal opportunities.

The following recommendations were subsequently made:¹¹⁶

- Standing orders to allow for cooptions in an advisory capacity to committees where there is an under-representation of women;
- Social, economic and cultural barriers to be removed;
- Working hours are to be compatible with family responsibilities and childcare support is to be provided.

These recommendations have been implemented in a number of ways.¹¹⁷ Parliament has adopted family-friendly hours. It sits between 2.30pm and 5.30pm on Mondays, between 9.30am and 5.30pm Tuesday to Thursday, and from 9.30am to 12.30 pm on Fridays. An Equal Opportunities Committee has also been established with a mandate ‘to consider and report on matters relating to equal opportunities and upon the observance of equal opportunities within the parliament’. Seating has been arranged in the shape of a horseshoe as in the European parliaments, rather than having the opposition seated across from each other.

¹¹³ Ibid, p 105.

¹¹⁴ Squires and Wickham-Jones, n 23, p 53.

¹¹⁵ Busby and MacLeod, n 20, p 33.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p 32.

¹¹⁷ Sawer, n 30, p 17.

The success of such initiatives is seen in the relatively high proportion of female parliamentarians in Scotland. 37% of Members of the Scottish Parliament are women with 50% of the female members belonging to the Labour Party.¹¹⁸ This is in stark contrast to the level of female representation in 1992 where only 10% of Scottish members of the Westminster parliament were women.¹¹⁹ The influence of political parties in determining the number of female politicians was recognised and subsequently harnessed in Scotland. An Electoral Contract was developed for the 1999 elections that required parties to nominate an equal number of male and female candidates as well as ensuring that a fair number of winnable seats were allocated to female candidates.¹²⁰ The Labour Party used 'zipping' to encourage the election of women in 1999.¹²¹

8 CONCLUSION

The number of women in Australian parliaments has improved since 1997. However, the increase in the number of women has not been evenly distributed across the political parties. The ALP has adopted affirmative action measures to encourage more women to enter a political career whereas the Liberal and National parties have supported the use of networking and skills seminars. However, the legality of positive measures such as quotas has come into question.

The need for more women in parliament is recognised by a number of significant international organisations, with policies and initiatives subsequently developed to facilitate the participation of women. Countries where women constitute over 30% of parliamentarians generally have employed some form of affirmative action strategy to encourage the entry of women and use proportional representation as their electoral system.

Despite efforts to remove the obstacles that deter women from considering a political career, a number of threshold, financial and structural barriers remain. Therefore, the most effective strategies for increasing the number of female parliamentarians will simultaneously address a number of these issues.

¹¹⁸ Busby and MacLeod, n 20, p 30.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p 32.

¹²⁰ Squires and Wickham-Jones, n 23, p 55.

¹²¹ Busby and MacLeod, n 20, p 30.

Appendix A: Federal Women Ministers since 1996
(Italics denote portfolio held by Cabinet member)

Minister	11/3/1996	9/10/1997	21/10/1998	30/1/2001	26/11/01→
Jocelyn Newman	<i>Minister for Social Security</i> <i>Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women</i>	<i>Minister for Social Security</i>	<i>Minister for Family and Community Services</i>		
Amanda Vanstone	<i>Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs</i>	Minister for Justice	Minister for Justice and Customs	<i>Minister for Family and Community Services</i>	<i>Minister for Family and Community Services</i>
Judi Moylan	Minister for Family Services	Minister for the Status of Women			
Bronwyn Bishop	Minister for Defence Industry, Science and Personnel	Minister for Defence Industry, Science and Personnel	Minister for Aged Care	Minister for Aged Care	
Kay Patterson					<i>Minister for Health and Ageing</i>
Danna Vale					Minister for Veterans Affairs Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence
Helen Coonan					Minister for Revenue Assistant Treasurer
Jackie Kelly			Minister for Sport and Tourism Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Sydney 2000 Games	Minister for Sport and Tourism	

Appendix B: Federal Women Shadow Ministers since 1996

Minister	20/3/96	27/3/97	26/8/97	20/10/98	3/10/99	5/9/00	23/11/01	23/8/02	5/12/02	18/2/03
Carmen Lawrence	Shadow Minister for the Environment Shadow Minister for the Arts Assistant to the Leader of the Opposition on the Status of Women	Shadow Minister for the Environment Shadow Minister for the Arts Assistant to the Leader of the Opposition on the Status of Women				Shadow Minister for the Status of Women Shadow Minister for Industry, Innovation and Technology	Shadow Minister for the Status of Women Shadow Minister for the Arts Shadow Minister for Reconciliation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs	Shadow Minister for the Status of Women Shadow Minister for the Arts Shadow Minister for Reconciliation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs		
Jenny Macklin	Shadow Minister for the Aged, Family and Community Services	Shadow Minister for Social Security, the Aged and Family Services	Shadow Minister for Social Security and the Aged Assistant to the Leader of the Opposition on the Status of Women	Shadow Minister for the Status of Women Shadow Minister for Health	Shadow Minister for the Status of Women Shadow Minister for Health	Shadow Minister for Health	Deputy Leader of the Opposition Shadow Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Science	Deputy Leader of the Opposition Shadow Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Science	Shadow Minister for the Status of Women Deputy Leader of the Opposition Shadow Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Science	Deputy Leader of the Opposition Shadow Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Science.
Belinda Neal	Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs	Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs and Local Government	Shadow Minister for Consumer Affairs, Local Government,							

	Assistant to the Shadow Minister for Health		Housing and Childcare							
Cheryl Kernot				Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Services	Shadow Minister for Employment and Training	Shadow Minister for Employment and Training				
Kate Lundy				Shadow Minister for Sport and Youth Affairs Shadow Minister Assisting the Shadow Minister for Industry and Technology on IT	Shadow Minister for Sport and Youth Affairs Shadow Minister Assisting the Shadow Minister for Industry and Technology on IT	Shadow Minister for Sport and Youth Affairs Shadow Minister Assisting the Shadow Minister for Industry and Technology on IT	Shadow Minister for IT and Sport	Shadow Minister for IT and Sport	Shadow Minister for IT and Sport	Shadow Minister for IT and Sport
Sue Mackay				Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government	Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government	Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government				

Julia Gillard							Shadow Minister for Population and Immigration	Shadow Minister for Population and Immigration	Shadow Minister for Population and Immigration	Shadow Minister for Population and Immigration Shadow Minister for Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs
Nicola Roxon							Shadow Minister for Children and Youth	Shadow Minister for Children and Youth	Shadow Minister for Children and Youth	Shadow Minister for Children and Youth Shadow Minister Assisting the Leader of the Opposition on the Status of Women
Annette Ellis								Shadow Minister for Ageing and Seniors Shadow Minister Assisting the Minister for Family and Community Services on Disabilities	Shadow Minister for Ageing and Seniors Shadow Minister Assisting the Minister for Family and Community Services on Disabilities	Shadow Minister for Ageing and Seniors Shadow Minister Assisting the Minister for Family and Community Services on Disabilities

Appendix C: *Women's Charter for Political Reform 2001 – Summary*
Women Into Politics, Sydney, 2001.

Women's Charter for Political Reform Summary

1. POLITICAL EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

1.1 The Commonwealth Sex and Race Discrimination Acts should be amended to apply specifically to political parties.

1.2 The Commonwealth Electoral Act should be amended to:

1. 2.1 provide for the appointment of three additional Electoral Commissioners - one appointed on the recommendation of the Australian Bar Association, and two appointed on the recommendation of the Australasian Political Studies Association, to include one with expertise on sex discrimination issues - to provide advice, to represent the interests of voters, and to ensure the integrity of the electoral process;

1.2.2 require the political parties to incorporate natural justice and anti-discrimination principles in their rules, procedures and practices and to comply with Australia's commitments under the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Article 7;

1.2.2 require the political parties to incorporate natural justice and anti-discrimination

1.2.3 require the political parties to show cause why they have failed to have nominate approximately equal numbers of women and men as candidates for pre-selection in winnable seats at each election, with penalties for failure to comply;;

1.2.4 penalise political parties which do not pre-select equal numbers of women as candidates for winnable seats (that is, seats with a margin of 5% either way). The penalty should be a 5% reduction in their public funding for every 5% (or part thereof) that they fall short of pre-selecting 45% of women or men;

1.2.5 to require the Australian Electoral Commission, in consultation with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, to assist the political parties in reforming their pre-selection rules and procedures to ensure that fairness and equity prevail.

1.3 Cabinet and Shadow Cabinets should be approximately 50% male and 50% female as a matter of equity. The parties should be required to implement this reform over two elections.

1.4. Each parliament should establish a standing committee with a mandate to . examine the impact on Australian women of all proposed domestic policies, programs and legislation; and to examine the impact of Australia's foreign aid and international treaty policies and programs on women world wide.

2. REGULATING THE INFLUENCE OF MONEY IN POLITICS

2.1 The Commonwealth Electoral Act should be amended to:

2.1.1 require the Australian Electoral Commission to oversee the financial management and the organisational processes of the political parties, just as consumer affairs

departments oversee consumer and voluntary organisations and the Australian Securities Commission oversees business;

2.1.2 require political parties, and their individual state branches, not only to report annually to the Australian Electoral Commission, but to publish audited and detailed accounts of all income, including donations, and expenditure in publicly accessible places such as their websites and the print media;

2.2 The following reforms should be legislated and implemented to control the influence of money in electioneering and in political life:

2.2.1 public funding of elections and electioneering should be substantially increased and accompanied by increased accountability and decreased private funding;

2.2.2 the giving and receiving of direct donations or donations through a third party to political parties for any purpose should be restricted by law to a specified amount, say \$1,000 per annum for individuals and \$10,000 per annum for companies, corporations, organisations and unions, and any monies above such sums or gifts in kind of similar value should be considered a bribe and a criminal offence;

2.2.3 all donations should be registered with the Australian Electoral Commission within 21 days of the receipt of the donation by the party, and the Commission should be required to publish the lists of donations on their website and also in the print media at least quarterly;

2.2.4 payments for access to a serving politician, or payments to serving politicians for appearances at public functions, other than for documented costs, should be illegal and the receiving of payments for these purposes should be a criminal offence, for which the penalty should be exclusion from the parliament and from elected public office for a period of ten years.

2.3 As a consequence of their public funding, political parties should be required to develop a civics education program, inviting public and especially female and young people's participation in the political process, advertising their regular meetings and encouraging members and the public to join in debating the political issues of the day.

3. CHANGING THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM OF REMUNERATION AND ENTITLEMENTS

3.1 A national independent statutory Conduct, Privileges and Remuneration Commission, consisting of a lawyer nominated by the Australian Bar Association, an expert on financial accountability nominated by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia, and an expert on superannuation nominated by the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia, should be established with the powers to:

3.1.1 decide on and administer both House and Senate remuneration, superannuation, allowances, the register of property and pecuniary interests of members, privileges, entitlements and facilities for parliamentarians;

3.1.2 investigate standards of probity, political lobbying and size and circumstances of donations; investigate abuses of and enforce penalties for breaches of executive power, financial misconduct and the abuse of parliamentary entitlements.

3.1.3 investigate abuses of and enforce penalties for breaches of executive power, financial misconduct and the abuse of parliamentary entitlements.

4. CHANGING THE SYSTEM OF PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

4.1 Proportional representation must be maintained where it already exists. In addition, in Houses where proportional representation does not currently exist, it should be introduced. Women have historically gained better representation at elections where a proportional representation system is used. Alternatively, a multi-member electoral system should be instituted where proportional representation does not currently exist, such that parliaments more will more accurately reflect and the male/female composition of the population and the wishes of both majority and minority voters.

4.2 Lower house parliamentary terms in all our parliaments should be uniformly set at a fixed term of four years, and upper house terms should be no more than two lower house parliamentary terms. As the Australian Constitution prescribes a maximum term of three years, the question of a federal four-year term should be put to the people at the same time as the next federal election.

4.3 The parliamentary terms of office for MPs should be limited to three consecutive terms in the lower houses and two consecutive terms in the upper houses, except where the Member or Senator is a current Minister or current Shadow Minister.

4.4 Parliamentary practices should be reformed to make our parliaments more family friendly and to allow parliamentarians to lead a more normal private life, through the following reforms:

4.4.1 the provision of in-house childcare for the children of both parliamentarians and parliamentary staff;

4.4.2 parliamentary sitting hours should be brought into line with normal working hours and family routines;

4.4.3 parliamentary sessions should be longer and aligned to school and tertiary institution holidays where possible.

4.5 Parliamentary leaders should take responsibility for improving the level of political discourse and behaviour in our parliaments, for reducing personal attacks, sexist language and ill-mannered behaviour, and for improving the overall level of political debate in and outside the Parliament.

5. THE BILL OF RIGHTS DEBATE & ITS RELEVANCE TO EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

5.1 The Australian Government should legislate a Bill of Rights which:

5.1.1 has overriding powers to encompass rights that have been enunciated in various UN instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;

5.1.2 includes an equality right for women;

5.1.3 explicitly protects substantive equality rather than formal equality;

5.1.4 recognises rights in relation to sexual orientation;

5.1.5 contains provisions for special measures to address inequality in society;

5.1.6 operates in the private as well as in the public sphere.

5.2 The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission should be empowered to oversee the implementation, and to enforce penalties for...breaches, of the legislation, and should be adequately funded to facilitate human rights education and to provide for free access to the courts for victims of breaches of their human rights.

6. PEOPLE'S CONVENTIONS - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRACY

6.1 People's Conventions should be held during every second parliamentary term, or more often if there is a special identified need, such as a renewal of the debate on a republic, for the purpose of making recommendations to the Federal Government for changes to the Constitution, to our political institutions and to public policy.

6.2 Any registered voter should be eligible for nomination to the People's Conventions.

6.3 Election of delegates to conventions should be simultaneous with the Federal Elections, and all serving politicians of any parliament should be excluded from nomination as a delegate to a People's Convention.

6.4 Matters agreed to by a two-thirds majority of delegates at a Conventions should be referred to parliament for action.

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