



# briefing paper



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**Women in politics & public leadership**

**Briefing Paper No 6/2011**

by Talina Drabsch

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# Women in politics and public leadership

**by**

Talina Drabsch

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## SUMMARY

The number of women in senior political roles and in positions of leadership within the public sector is growing. In September 2011, four of the nine heads of government in Australia (Queensland, Tasmania, the ACT and the Commonwealth) are women. Australia has a female Governor-General and NSW has a female Governor. A number of parliaments have had female presiding officers as well as female Clerks. However, some have voiced their concern that progress towards equal numbers of men and women amongst Members of Parliament is slowing or even declining.

This paper is the latest in a number of publications by the NSW Parliamentary Library concerning women in parliament. Where relevant, it updates the previous papers but does not revisit in detail many of the issues dealt with earlier, such as the barriers preventing greater entry of women into politics, the various strategies available for improving the descriptive representation of women, and media portrayal of female politicians. The scope of this paper is broader than earlier papers in that it also considers women in positions of leadership within the public sector and those serving on government boards and committees. The debate surrounding the use of quotas to improve gender equality in the composition of boards and committees is briefly discussed in this context.

**Section two** (pp 4-10) of this paper provides an updated timeline of significant milestones and some of the major advances toward the more equal participation of women in parliament.

There are currently 34 female Members of the NSW Parliament. A statistical overview of women currently serving as Members of Parliament in NSW and in other parliaments throughout Australia may be found in **section three** (pp 11-19). Information is also provided on female Ministers and female office holders within the NSW and Commonwealth parliaments. Australia is currently ranked 38<sup>th</sup> in the world in terms of the proportion of members of the lower house of the national parliament that are women (falling from 33<sup>rd</sup> in 2007). A table showing the top 38 rankings and the proportion of female members of each parliament, together with the 2007 results, is also located in section three.

**Section four** (pp 20-21) of this paper considers leadership within the public sector. The public sector in NSW is the largest employer of women in NSW and it has more female than male employees. However, this does not translate to senior positions within the public service where the majority of positions are held by men. A brief overview of the Commonwealth public sector is also presented in this section.

The issue of the imbalance in the gender composition of government boards and committees has received attention of late, with various governments announcing strategies to improve the number of women serving as board and committee members. Information on this issue in NSW and at the Commonwealth level is provided in **section five** (pp 22-26).





## 1 INTRODUCTION

The NSW Parliamentary Library published the briefing paper [Women, Parliament and the Media](#) by Talina Drabsch in 2007. In the time since then, the core issues and debates concerning women in politics have remained largely the same. However, a number of significant milestones in the political arena have been reached in the interim, including Australia's first female Governor-General and Prime Minister, and NSW has had its first female Premier. In September 2011, four of the nine heads of government in Australia (Queensland, Tasmania, the ACT and the Commonwealth) are women. Professor Marie Bashir continues to serve as Governor of NSW. Observing events at the national level, Tony Smith says:

In just a few years, Her Excellency [Quentin Bryce] had become Australia's first female federal Head of State, the first to appoint a female Prime Minister and the first to authorise an election called by a female Prime Minister. In the space of a few months, Ms Gillard has become Australia's first female Head of Government and the first female to lead a major party in an election campaign. *These achievements have produced some powerful symbolic moments* (author's emphasis)...<sup>1</sup>

The manner in which female politicians are depicted in the media, and how women in leadership choose to present themselves, continues to spark debate. Controversy was recently provoked by the appearance of Kate Ellis MP on the cover of *Sunday Life* in *The Sun-Herald* on 26 June 2011. The Herald subsequently received a number of letters concerning the appropriateness or otherwise of Ms Ellis' dress, stiletto heels, and make-up.<sup>2</sup> Ms Ellis, in reply, noted that the clothes worn on the cover were no different to what she wears to the office every day. She has previously stated that:

We accept that we need to have a more diverse parliament but quite often we want to get people and then fit them into the existing mould of what parliamentarians have always looked like.<sup>3</sup>

Jacqueline Maley also commented:

Gillard has been criticised for not wearing flattering enough clothes. Ellis is now criticised for wearing clothes that are too flattering. So perhaps we should set out a prescription for female politicians, so they don't stuff up again: your clothes must be neat and pleasing to the eye, but never sexy.<sup>4</sup>

One of the issues involved in the above debate concerns the idea of gender

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<sup>1</sup> T Smith, 'Candidate gender in the 2010 Australian Federal Election', Democratic Audit Discussion Paper 1/10, August 2010.

<sup>2</sup> N Reilly, 'What's wrong with this picture?', *Sunday Life – The Sun-Herald*, 24/7/11.

<sup>3</sup> N Reilly, 'What's wrong with this picture?', *Sunday Life – The Sun-Herald*, 24/7/11.

<sup>4</sup> N Reilly, 'What's wrong with this picture?', *Sunday Life – The Sun-Herald*, 24/7/11.

neutrality in politics, as discussed by Crawford and Pini. They found that many female politicians aim for neutrality in their dress so as to minimise their sexuality and blend in with the existing norm.<sup>5</sup> They contrast this with those who 'claim their rightful place', that is, dress in a less neutral manner and thus:

do not perform their sexuality/gender in a manner acceptable to the organisation. Instead, these women challenge and critique those organisational discourses and processes associated with hegemonic masculinity. In doing so, however, such women risk censure, condemnation and derision.<sup>6</sup>

The type of media attention afforded to female politicians in Australia has been noted in international circles. The Inter-Parliamentary Union's annual summary of women in parliaments throughout the world commented in 2010 that:

The election of Australia's first woman prime minister, Julia Gillard, met with a media frenzy and a common focus on her flame-coloured hair and choice of attire.<sup>7</sup>

Of course there are times when male politicians receive negative media attention, where the focus is not on their policies or the main issues of the day. Some male politicians have attracted media comment for the wearing of attire outside the relatively narrow range of clothing traditionally worn by Members of Parliament, from Al Grassby's flamboyant suits and ties, Paul Keating's wearing of Ermenegildo Zegna suits, to the parodying of Peter Debnam and Tony Abbott in their swimmers. But that is only to hint at a much larger subject of analysis. The issues associated with the manner in which politicians of either gender are portrayed by the media, and the differences in this portrayal, are as varied as they are complex.

Production of the satire 'At home with Julia' by the ABC prompted the *Sydney Morning Herald* to print an article on 30 July 2011 debating 'Is Julia Gillard's home life fair game for parody?'.<sup>8</sup> Eva Cox's contribution suggests the particular dangers that may be associated with a certain style of media focus on a female politician and how those dangers are not present for a male politician. She warns that 'In the dismal political climate, I fear that such a send-up may undermine the still fragile legitimacy of women in positions of power'.<sup>9</sup>

For further discussion of the relationship between politicians and the media see section four of [Women, Parliament and the Media](#).

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<sup>5</sup> M Crawford and B Pini, 'The Australian Parliament: A gendered organisation', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 64(1) 2011, p 97.

<sup>6</sup> M Crawford and B Pini, 'The Australian Parliament: A gendered organisation', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 64(1) 2011, p 98.

<sup>7</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in Parliament: The year in perspective*, 2010, p 5.

<sup>8</sup> 30/7/11.

<sup>9</sup> 'Is Julia Gillard's home life fair game for parody?', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30/6/11.

This paper updates some of the statistics and other data associated with women in political life in Australia. However, it broadens its scope to consider the position of women in the public sector, assessing the extent to which women are reaching the upper echelons of the executive service. The Australian Human Rights Commission has identified women in leadership as one of five key priority areas in achieving gender equality.<sup>10</sup> The issue of women serving on boards, whether government or in the private sector, has been gaining momentum, with a number of developments in this area in recent years. This has led to further discussion on the necessity and/or desirability of quotas to facilitate greater gender equality in the identity of board members. This paper accordingly revisits the issue of quotas and affirmative action but discussion is limited to the context of governmental boards and committees. The various strategies used to increase the number of women in parliament, including quotas, were explored in section five of [Women, Parliament and the Media](#).

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<sup>10</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, 'Gender Equality Blueprint 2010'. Available from [www.hreoc.gov.au](http://www.hreoc.gov.au)

## 2 TIMELINE

*This section is reproduced and updated from section two of Women, Parliament and the Media, NSW Parliamentary Library Briefing Paper No 5/2007. The timeline particularly focuses on major events for women in politics in NSW.*

As the nineteenth century ended and the twentieth began, Australia was a pioneer for the rights of women, being the first country to grant women both the right to vote and to stand for election to its national parliament, having done so in 1902.<sup>11</sup> In 1894, South Australia was the first colony in Australia to give women the right to vote and stand for parliament. It was also the first parliament in the world to permit women to stand for election. Women in NSW were provided with the right to vote in 1902 but it was not until 1918 that women could stand for election to the Legislative Assembly and 1926 before they could be appointed to the Legislative Council.<sup>12</sup> Millicent Preston Stanley of the United Australia Party was the first woman to be elected to the NSW Parliament in 1925. However, a woman was not elected to the federal Parliament until 1943, 'making Australia the Western democracy with the longest gap between when women were given the right to run and when the first woman was elected to parliament'.<sup>13</sup>

Much has changed since then and female parliamentarians are now a common occurrence. The following timeline marks some of the major events and advances toward the more equal participation of women in parliament. Whilst the first women elected to parliament in the six States all represented the Liberal Party (or its predecessors), the first women to reach the pinnacle of head of government have represented the ALP.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Whilst New Zealand had given women the right to vote in 1893, it was not until 1919 that women had the right to stand for election. Nonetheless, a woman was elected to the New Zealand Parliament a number of years before women entered the Australian Parliament. Enid Lyons and Dorothy Tangney were the first women to enter the Australian Parliament in 1943 whereas the first woman was elected to the New Zealand Parliament in 1933.

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that, between 1856 and 1934, Members of the Legislative Council were appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Executive Council. They were initially appointed for a period of five years, but, after 1861 they were appointed for life. In 1934, the system changed to one of indirect election, with Members of the Legislative Council elected for 12 years by Members of both Houses of Parliament acting as an Electoral College. The Legislative Council has been a directly elected Chamber since 1978, with Members elected by the people of NSW by a system of proportional representation. It has been fully popularly elected since 1984. See NSW Legislative Council Fact Sheet 1: A Brief History of the Legislative Council of New South Wales and D Clune and G Griffith, *Decision and Deliberation: The Parliament of New South Wales 1856-2003*, The Federation Press, Sydney, 2006 for more information.

<sup>13</sup> J Kaminsky and T J White, 'Electoral systems and women's representation in Australia', *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 45(2) April 2007, p 191.

<sup>14</sup> M Grey, *Challenging women: towards equality in the Parliament of Victoria*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2009, p 107.

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- 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, gains a seat in the Legislative Assembly.
- 1926** The NSW *Constitution (Amendment) Act* establishes the right of women to sit in the Legislative Council.
- 1931** Catherine Green (ALP) and Ellen Webster (ALP), appointed as the first female 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 female Alderman in NSW (Newtown 1929-48) and also the first female 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 female members.
- 1962** Eileen (Mabel) Furley, first Liberal woman elected to the NSW Legislative Council (by indirect election).
-

- 1966** Dame Annabelle Rankin, the first woman Federal Minister.
- 1973** Mary Meillon, first Liberal woman elected to the NSW Legislative Assembly.  
Edna Roper becomes Deputy Leader of the ALP in the Legislative Council.
- 1974** Joan Child (Vic) the first Labor woman elected to the House of Representatives.
- 1976** Senator Margaret Guilfoyle (Liberal party – Vic), first female 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 directly 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).  
Shirley McKerrow becomes the Federal President of the National Party, the first woman president of any political party.
- 1983** Jeanette McHugh (ALP), the first woman from NSW elected to the Federal House of Representatives.  
Susan Ryan (ACT), the first Labor female 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 female 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 female 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 female Independents 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.
- 1990** Carmen Lawrence (ALP) becomes the first female Premier of Western Australia.  
Joan Kirner (ALP) becomes the first female Premier of Victoria.

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**1992** Jan Davis becomes the first female Clerk of the Legislative Council of South Australia.

**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 *Weekend Australian* April 8-9.

Kate Carnell (Lib) becomes the second female Chief Minister of the ACT.

Senator Margaret Reid (Liberal party – ACT), was elected Deputy-President of the Senate in May.

**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 women had 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 22 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.

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**2000** Women lead the Opposition in NSW (Kerry Chikarovski), Tasmania (Sue Napier) and the Northern Territory (Clare Martin).

**2001** Natasha Stott-Despoja becomes the fifth female leader of the Australian Democrats.

Clare Martin (ALP) becomes the first female Chief Minister of the Northern Territory.

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 at the federal level.

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.

**2004** Carmen Lawrence becomes the first female National President of the Australian Labor Party after being elected in 2003. She is also the first President to be directly elected by party members.

Lyn Allison becomes the sixth female leader of the Australian Democrats.

Following the federal election in October, the number of women in the House of Representatives fell slightly to 37 (24.7%).

**2005** Chris McDiven becomes the first female Federal President of the Liberal Party.

**2006** In February, the Therapeutic Goods Amendment (Repeal of Ministerial responsibility for approval of RU486) Bill 2006 ('the RU486 Bill') is passed by the Federal Parliament. The Bill was supported by four female senators from a cross-section of parties: Lyn Allison (Democrat), Claire Moore (Labor), Fiona Nash (Nationals) and Judith Troeth (Liberal).

Linda Burney is selected as a future Federal President of the Australian Labor Party. She is to serve her term in 2009.

Mia Betjeman becomes the first female Clerk of the Legislative Council of Western Australia.

**2007** Linda Burney (ALP) becomes the first Indigenous Australian to serve as a Minister in the NSW Government. She is appointed as Minister for Fair Trading, Minister for Youth and Minister for Volunteering.

Kristina Keneally (ALP) is appointed as the Minister for Ageing and the Minister for Disabilities. She becomes the first US-born NSW Cabinet Minister.

Jillian Skinner (LIB) becomes Deputy Leader of the NSW Liberal Party.

Anna Bligh (ALP) becomes the first female Premier of Queensland.

Julie Bishop (LIB) becomes the first female Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party of Australia.

Julia Gillard (ALP) becomes the first female Deputy Prime Minister of Australia.

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Lynn Lovelock becomes the first female Clerk of the Legislative Council of NSW.

**2008** Carmel Tebbutt (ALP) becomes Deputy Leader of the NSW Labor Party.

Quentin Bryce becomes the first female Governor General of Australia.

Linda Burney commences her term as National President of the ALP.

**2009** Kristina Keneally (ALP) becomes the first female Premier of NSW and the fourth female Premier of an Australian State.

Rosemary Laing becomes the first female Clerk of the Senate.

**2010** Julia Gillard (ALP) becomes the first female Prime Minister of Australia.

**2011** Lara Giddings (ALP) becomes the first female Premier of Tasmania.

Katy Gallagher (ALP) becomes the third female Chief Minister of the ACT.

Linda Burney (ALP) becomes the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in NSW.

Shelley Hancock elected as the first female Speaker of the NSW Parliament.

Whilst numerous milestones have been reached, it remains a matter of debate whether sufficient progress has been made. Crawford and Pini, in their study of male Members of the Commonwealth Parliament, identified the existence of three discourses amongst the subject Members concerning gender equity in the Parliament.<sup>15</sup>

1. The parliament is gendered as masculine, but this is unavoidable. For example, the long sitting hours and the need to spend extended periods in Canberra. Crawford and Pini note elsewhere that the way in which parliament is structured results in women being seen as 'the other' – 'The logic is that workers have no or limited reproductive/family responsibilities, and if they do, these do not and should not impinge on the world of paid work'.<sup>16</sup>
2. The parliament is gendered as feminine and women are actually advantaged.
3. Parliament is gender neutral and gender is irrelevant.

Crawford and Pini accordingly argue that:

Because the discourses favoured by the male politicians assume that gender inequality is either a physiological inevitability, an issue for men or irrelevant, they render it problematic for women politicians to speak about discrimination or to argue the need for affirmative action programs.... the discourses the men champion make it possible for

<sup>15</sup> M Crawford and B Pini, 'Gender equality in national politics: The views of Australian male politicians', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 45(4) December 2010, p 612.

<sup>16</sup> M Crawford and B Pini, 'The Australian Parliament: A gendered organisation', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 64(1) 2011, p 93.

the male politicians to absent themselves from any need to change themselves or from working to change the institutions, practices and discourses of politics. This is because inequality in political representation by gender is a natural outcome of biological destiny, a problem for men rather than women or non-existent.<sup>17</sup>

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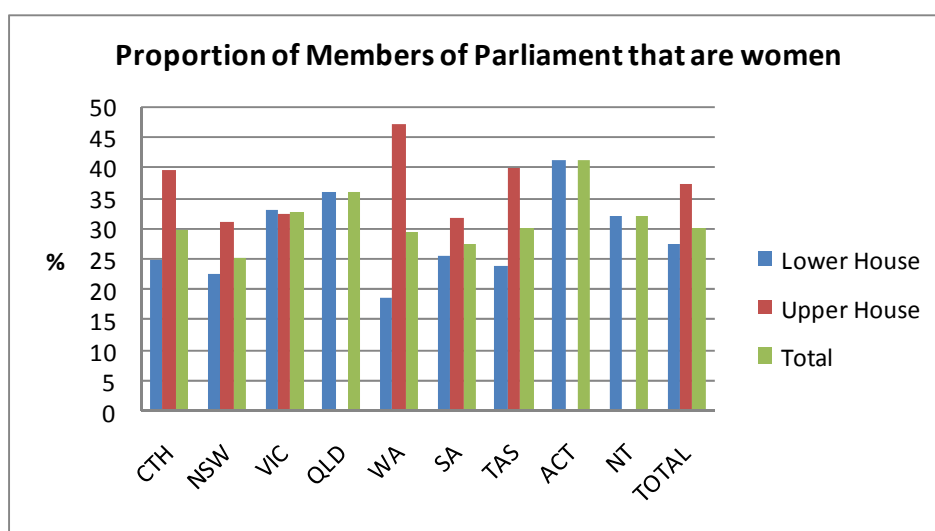
<sup>17</sup>

M Crawford and B Pini, 'Gender equality in national politics: The views of Australian male politicians', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 45(4) December 2010, p 618.

### 3 STATISTICAL OVERVIEW OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

Some have voiced concern that progress towards the equal representation of women amongst parliamentarians appears to have stagnated in recent years, that the expected momentum thought to be gained by achieving a 'critical mass' of 30% has not eventuated. Indeed for Senator Judith Troeth, 'In federal politics, concern is no longer about a lack of progression, but arresting a slide to regression'.<sup>18</sup> Tony Smith has voiced similar concerns regarding stagnation in progression towards equal gender representation in NSW politics.<sup>19</sup>

The graph below compares the parliaments in Australia in terms of the percentage of female Members. It shows that the proportion of MPs that are women is lower in NSW than in any other parliament in Australia when both Houses of Parliament are combined or if restricted to the Upper House. The Western Australian Parliament is the only jurisdiction with a smaller proportion of women in its Lower House than NSW. The current proportion of female Members of the NSW Legislative Assembly is the lowest it has been since prior to the 2003 election.<sup>20</sup>



Source: Janet Wilson, [Composition of Australian Parliaments by Party and Gender, as at 1 July 2011](#), Commonwealth Parliamentary Library.

<sup>18</sup> J Troeth, 'Modernising the parliamentary Liberal Party by adopting the organisational wing's quota system for preselections', *Policy Paper*, 23 June 2010.

<sup>19</sup> T Smith, 'Gender goes missing from NSW politics', Democratic Audit of Australia Discussion Paper 8/07.

<sup>20</sup> B Holmes, *2011 NSW Election*, Commonwealth Parliamentary Library Background Note, May 2011, p 23.

### 3.1 NSW Parliament

The table at the bottom of this page lists the female Members of the NSW Parliament, along with the date of their entry to Parliament. 10 of the 34 current female Members of Parliament entered Parliament for the first time following the 2011 NSW election (Robyn Parker entered the Legislative Assembly for the first time in 2011 but as she previously served in the Legislative Council she has been excluded from this calculation).

Of the 46 new Members of the Legislative Assembly (including Robyn Parker), eight are women (17.4%). 39 of the 46 new Members of the Legislative Assembly represent the Liberal or National Parties but only six are women (15.4% of new Coalition members). There are six new Members of the Legislative Assembly who represent the ALP of whom two are women (33.3%). (The additional new Member is Mr Jamie Parker, the Member for Balmain, who represents The Greens).

There are 11 new Members of the Legislative Council (including Mr Steve Whan who previously served in the Legislative Assembly), of whom three are female (27.3%). There are five new Members representing the Coalition of whom two are female (40%). None of the three new Members representing the ALP are female. One of the two new Greens Members is female (50%). (The remaining new MLC is Mr Paul Green of the Christian Democratic Party).

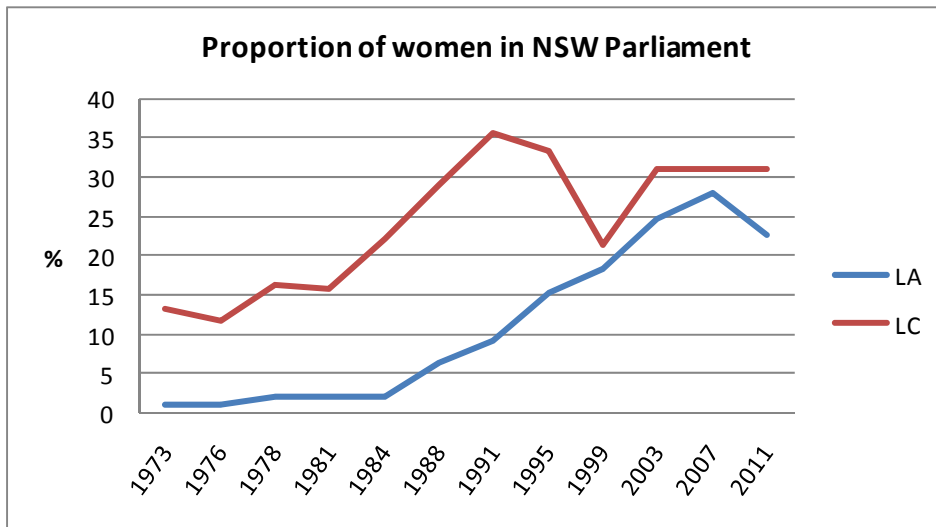
	Name	Electorate	Political Party	Member since
	<b>Legislative Assembly</b>			
1	Gladys Berejiklian	Willoughby	LIB	2003
2	Linda Burney	Canterbury	ALP	2003
3	Cherie Burton	Kogarah	ALP	1999
4	Tanya Davies	Mulgoa	LIB	2011
5	Melanie Gibbons	Menai	LIB	2011
6	Pru Goward	Goulburn	LIB	2007
7	Shelley Hancock	South Coast	LIB	2003
8	Noreen Hay	Wollongong	ALP	2003
9	Katrina Hodgkinson	Burrinjuck	NAT	1999
10	Sonia Hornery	Wallsend	ALP	2007
11	Kristina Keneally	Heffron	ALP	2003
12	Tania Mihailuk	Bankstown	ALP	2011
13	Clover Moore	Sydney	IND	1988
14	Robyn Parker	Maitland	LIB	2011 (member of LC 2003-11)
15	Barbara Perry	Auburn	ALP	2001
16	Roza Sage	Blue Mountains	LIB	2011
17	Jillian Skinner	North Shore	LIB	1994
18	Carmel Tebbutt	Marrickville	ALP	2005 (member of LC 1998-2005)
19	Gabrielle Upton	Vaucluse	LIB	2011
20	Anna Watson	Shellharbour	ALP	2011
21	Leslie Williams	Port Macquarie	NAT	2011

	<b>Legislative Council</b>			
<b>1</b>	Jan Barham		The Greens	2011
<b>2</b>	Sophie Cotsis		ALP	2010
<b>3</b>	Catherine Cusack		LIB	2003
<b>4</b>	Cate Faehrmann		The Greens	2010
<b>5</b>	Amanda Fazio		ALP	2000
<b>6</b>	Marie Ficarra		LIB	2007
<b>7</b>	Jenny Gardiner		NAT	1991
<b>8</b>	Natasha Maclaren-Jones		LIB	2011
<b>9</b>	Sarah Mitchell		NAT	2011
<b>10</b>	Melinda Pavey		NAT	2002
<b>11</b>	Penny Sharpe		ALP	2005
<b>12</b>	Lynda Voltz		ALP	2007
<b>13</b>	Helen Westwood		ALP	2007

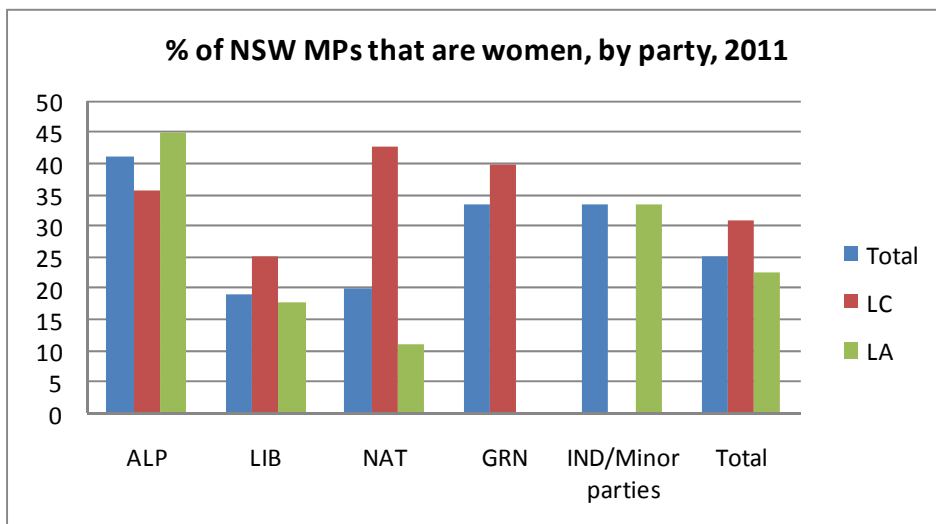
The following graph (overleaf) illustrates the proportion of female Members of the NSW Parliament since 1973. It shows how since 2007 the percentage of female members has either stagnated or declined.

Some of the barriers women may face in seeking election to Parliament were identified in section three of *Women in Parliament: The Current Situation* by Talina Drabsch, NSW Parliamentary Library Briefing Paper No 9/03. They include:

- Threshold barriers – the socialisation process may discourage women to consider politics as a career; the manner in which parliament is conducted may be a deterrent; the difficulties in balancing sitting hours and associated travel with caring responsibilities; the way in which some female politicians are portrayed by the media; and the scrutiny of some female politicians may be greater than that of their male colleagues (although this may have become less of an issue as female politicians are more commonplace).
- Financial barriers – may be present as the result of time spent out of the workforce or in part-time/casual work.
- Structural barriers – political parties may lack a tradition of female involvement; the preselection process (whether women are preselected for safe seats); and the voting system used (electoral systems based on proportional representation and multi-member constituencies have generally resulted in greater numbers of female parliamentarians).
- Elevation to the front bench – fewer women are generally selected for ministerial positions and stereotyping may confine women to such issues as health, the environment and children and exclude them from economic portfolios.



The following graph compares the gender composition of the current NSW Parliament, by political party and House of Parliament. 11 of the 21 current female Members of the Legislative Assembly belong to the Coalition, nine represent the ALP and one is an Independent. Six of the 13 female Members of the Legislative Council belong to the Coalition, five are from the ALP and two represent The Greens. Overall, the ALP has the greatest proportion of female Parliamentarians followed by The Greens. With the exception of the ALP, women form a greater proportion of party representatives in the Legislative Council rather than the Legislative Assembly. This is mirrored in the Upper Houses of the other Parliaments in Australia, except in Victoria.



## 3.2 Ministers and office holders

### 3.2.1 New South Wales

In NSW, there are 22 Ministers in the Coalition Government of whom five are female (22.7%). In the Shadow Ministry, six of the sixteen Shadow Ministers are female (37.5%). The following table lists each of the female Ministers/Shadow Ministers and their respective Ministries/Shadow Ministries.

GOVERNMENT		OPPOSITION	
Jillian Skinner	Health Medical Research	Linda Burney (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)	Planning Infrastructure and Heritage Sport and Recreation The Hunter The Central Coast
Gladys Berejiklian	Transport	Carmel Tebbutt	Education and Training
Katrina Hodgkinson	Primary Industries Small Business	Penny Sharpe	Transport
Pru Goward	Women Family and Community Services	Barbara Perry	Family and Community Services Aboriginal Affairs Ageing Disability Services
Robyn Parker	Environment Heritage	Cherie Burton	Fair Trading Healthy Lifestyles Volunteering and Youth
		Sophie Cotsis	Citizenship and Communities Local Government Industrial Relations Status of Women

Three of the 13 Parliamentary Secretaries are women, namely:

- Marie Ficarra
- Melinda Pavey
- Gabrielle Upton

The following table notes the names of those women who are Office Holders in the current NSW Parliament. Shelley Hancock is the first woman to serve as Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly.

Government		Opposition	
Shelley Hancock	Speaker	Sonia Hornery	Acting Speaker
Melanie Gibbons	Acting Speaker	Helen Westwood	Temporary Chair of Committees
Jenny Gardiner	Deputy President and Chair of Committees	Amanda Fazio	Opposition Whip in the Legislative Council
Natasha Maclaren-Jones	Temporary Chair of Committees	Lynda Voltz	Deputy Opposition Whip in the Legislative Council
Sarah Mitchell	Temporary Chair of Committees		

### 3.2.2 Commonwealth

Four of the 20 Cabinet Ministers in the Australian Government are women (20%). An additional two Ministers are in the Outer Ministry, with the result that overall six of the 30 Ministers in the Gillard Government are women (20%).

Two of the 20 Shadow Cabinet Ministers are women (10%) with another four in the Outer Shadow Ministry, making a total of six women in the Shadow Ministry. However, given there are 32 Shadow Ministers, the proportion that are women falls to 18.8%.



Location	Name	Ministry
<b>Cabinet</b>	Julia Gillard	Prime Minister
	Nicola Roxon	Health and Ageing
	Jenny Macklin	Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
	Penny Wong	Finance and Deregulation
<b>Outer Ministry</b>	Tanya Plibersek	Social Inclusion Human Services
	Kate Ellis	Employment Participation and Childcare Status of Women
<b>Shadow Cabinet Ministry</b>	Julie Bishop (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)	Foreign Affairs Trade
	Sophie Mirabella	Innovation, Industry and Science
<b>Shadow Outer Ministry</b>	Sussan Ley	Employment Participation Childcare and Early Childhood Learning
	Marise Payne	Indigenous Development and Employment COAG Housing
	Bronwyn Bishop	Shadow Special Minister of State Seniors
	Concetta Fierravanti-Wells	Ageing Mental Health

### 3.3 International parliaments

19.3% of parliamentarians throughout the world were women as at 30 June 2011 (19.5% of Lower/Single House members and 18.3% of Upper House members). The table below ranks national parliaments by the proportion of members that are women, and compares the result in 2011 with that of 2007. In the top seven countries, more than 40% of parliamentarians are female. Australia is in 38<sup>th</sup> position at 24.7% compared to a ranking of 33<sup>rd</sup> in 2007. Canada was also ranked 38<sup>th</sup> with 24.7% of its national parliament being women (up from a ranking of 49<sup>th</sup> in 2007). The United Kingdom was ranked 48<sup>th</sup> and the US was 70<sup>th</sup> with 22% and 16.7% of their national parliaments respectively constituted by women.

Many countries use quotas to boost the representation of women in parliament. Quotas of some kind are used by 83% of countries in which women constitute at least 30% of the Members of the Lower House of their National Parliament.<sup>21</sup> The Quota Project ([www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org)), a global database of quotas for women in relation to political participation, found that quotas were in use in 97 of 189 countries, including constitutional, electoral and party quotas.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> UK House of Commons, *Speaker's Conference (on Parliamentary Representation)*, January 2010, p 53.

<sup>22</sup> UK House of Commons, *Speaker's Conference (on Parliamentary Representation)*, January 2010, p 52.

**% of members of national parliaments that are women  
(Lower or single House)**

Rank	Country	%	% in 2007	Rank in 2007
1	Rwanda	56.3	48.8	1
2	Andorra	53.6	28.6	23
3	Sweden	45	47.3	2
4	South Africa	44.5	32.8	13
5	Cuba	43.2	36.0	8
6	Iceland	42.9	33.3	12
7	Finland	42.5	38.0	4
8	Norway	39.6	37.9	5
9	Belgium	39.3	34.7	11
"	Netherlands	39.3	36.7	7
10	Mozambique	39.2	34.8	10
11	Angola	38.6	15.0	72
"	Costa Rica	38.6	38.6	3
12	Argentina	38.5	35.0	9
13	Denmark	38	36.9	6
14	Spain	36.6	36.0	8
15	United Republic of Tanzania	36	30.4	17
16	Uganda	34.9	29.8	18
17	New Zealand	33.6	32.2	14
18	Nepal	33.2	5.9	120
19	Germany	32.8	31.6	15
20	Ecuador	32.3	25.0	31
21	Burundi	32.1	30.5	16
22	Belarus	31.8	29.1	21
23	The FYR of Macedonia	30.9	28.3	24
24	Guyana	30	29.0	22
25	Timor-Leste	29.2	25.3	29
26	Switzerland	29	25.0	31
27	Trinidad and Tobago	28.6	19.4	53
28	Austria	27.9	32.2	14
29	Ethiopia	27.8	21.9	41
30	Afghanistan	27.7	27.3	25
31	Portugal	26.5	21.3	44
32	Mexico	26.2	22.6	38
33	Monaco	26.1	20.8	47
34	Sudan	25.6	17.8	60
35	Bolivia	25.4	16.9	64
36	Iraq	25.2	25.5	28
37	Lao People's Democratic Republic	25	25.2	30
38	Australia	24.7	24.7	33
"	Canada	24.7	20.8	47

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, ['Women in National Parliaments \(as at 30 June 2011\)'](#).

### 3.3.1 Global Gender Gap Index 2010

The World Economic Forum produces a [Global Gender Gap Report](#) which provides an assessment of national gender gaps in the areas of economics, politics, education and health. Countries are then ranked in such a way that comparisons may be made. Australia was ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> in 2010, as shown in the following table, which ranks in order of the best scores.

1	Iceland
2	Norway
3	Finland
4	Sweden
5	New Zealand
6	Ireland
7	Denmark
8	Lesotho
9	Philippines
10	Switzerland
11	Spain
12	South Africa
13	Germany
14	Belgium
15	United Kingdom
16	Sri Lanka
17	Netherlands
18	Latvia
19	United States
20	Canada
21	Trinidad and Tobago
22	Mozambique
23	Australia

Source: World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2010*, p 8.

When limited to the Asia and Pacific Region, Australia is in fourth position, behind New Zealand, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

One of the four pillars used to determine the ranking is political empowerment, which is concerned with the gap between men and women in political decision-making at the highest levels. It measures: the ratio of women to men in ministry positions; the ratio of women to men in parliamentary positions; and the ratio of women to men in terms of the number of years in executive office as the Prime Minister or President in the last fifty years. When ranked in relation to political empowerment, Australia falls to 39<sup>th</sup> position. New Zealand is ranked 8<sup>th</sup>.

## 4 LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The importance of women being in positions of leadership has been recognised by Elizabeth Broderick, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner. The *2010 Gender Equality Blueprint* published by the Australian Human Rights Commission includes recommendations for improving gender equality in five key priority areas. One of these is the promotion of women in leadership. Recommendation 7 states:

To strengthen the representation of women at decision-making levels:

- a minimum target of 40% representation of each gender on all Australian Government Boards within three years should be set, publicly announced and progress should be reported annually.
- a minimum gender equality target in the Senior Executive Service in the Australian Public Service should be set, publicly announced and progress should be reported annually.
- all publicly listed companies providing goods or services to the Australian Government should be certified by the Equal Opportunity in the Workplace Agency.
- a target of 40% representation of each gender on all publicly listed Boards in Australia, to be achieved over five years should be promoted. If progress is not made, the Australian Government should consider legislating to require publicly listed companies and other large employers to achieve a mandatory gender diversity quota of a minimum of 40% of both genders within a specified timeframe, failing which penalties will be imposed.

### 4.1 New South Wales

The public sector is the largest employer of women in NSW, employing 15% of working women. In 2009, 232,259 women were employed in the NSW public sector. Not only is the public sector the largest employer of women, it is also dominated by women – 60.9% of NSW public sector employees are female.<sup>23</sup>

Three of the nine current Director-Generals in NSW are women, namely:

- Ms Pam Christie – Acting Director-General of the Department of Education and Communities.
- Ms Jennifer Mason – Director General of the Department of Family and Community Services.
- Dr Mary Foley – Director General of the Department of Health.

However, women are under-represented in the senior echelons and consideration has been given to some of the obstacles hindering the rise of women through the ranks. A benchmark was accordingly set by the NSW Office for Women's Policy to increase the proportion of women in senior positions from 28% to 35% in 2012.<sup>24</sup> The publication, *Making the public sector work better for*

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<sup>23</sup> NSW Office for Women's Policy, *Profile of Women's Employment in NSW: Trends and Issues*, 2011.

<sup>24</sup> NSW Office for Women's Policy, *Making the public sector work better for women*, NSW

*women 2008-2012*, by the NSW Office for Women's Policy outlines numerous strategies designed to achieve this. It 'sets the framework for agencies to be more proactive in attracting and retaining talented staff, developing and promoting existing staff, and being flexible in their approach to workforce design and service delivery'.

## 4.2 Commonwealth

In 2010, 57.8% of Commonwealth Public Service employees were women. However, as in NSW, the proportion of employees that are women diminishes when analysis is limited to the upper end of the hierarchy, with only 37% of members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) being women.<sup>25</sup>

The number of women in senior positions varies amongst the portfolios. The large agencies with the highest representation of women at senior classifications are:<sup>26</sup>

- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations – 58.5%
- Department of Health and Ageing – 54.2%
- Medicare – 53.3%
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs – 53.0% .

In contrast, large agencies with a relatively low proportion of women at senior levels include:

- ASIC – 0%.
- Bureau of Meteorology – 11.1%
- Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance) – 23.5%.

Women also account for a greater proportion of part-time employees (13.7% of employees are part-time) – 20.9% of women employed are part-time compared to 4% of men. Part-time employment is most common in the 30 to 44 years age bracket with almost 30% of women in this group being part-time compared to 4.5% of men the same age.<sup>27</sup>

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Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission, *2010 Gender Equality Blueprint*, 2010, p 16.

<sup>26</sup> Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2009-10*, p 184.

<sup>27</sup> Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2009-10*, p 179.

## 5 GOVERNMENT BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

There has been debate recently over the merit of introducing quotas or targets for government boards and committees, including the publication in 2010 of a consultation paper on this issue by the NSW Office for Women's Policy. These debates are not only occurring in the Australian context. For example, Michel Barnier, the European Commissioner for Internal Market and Services, recently indicated that he wants to impose mandatory gender quotas for bank boards so that at least 30% of each gender is represented.<sup>28</sup>

The table below summarises the approach taken to improving the gender divide on government boards and committees within Australia.

Jurisdiction	Approach taken
NSW	50% of all new appointments to government boards and committees to be women by the end of 2012.
VIC	50% of all new appointments are to be female.
QLD	50% of all new appointments are to be female.
SA	Target of 50% representation – s 36A <i>Acts Interpretation Act 1915</i> requires those making appointments to boards, committees and other bodies under legislation to include at least one man and one woman on the nomination list, and as far as practicable to nominate equal numbers of men and women.
TAS	Target of 50% representation.
WA	-
ACT	The ACT Women's Plan 2010-2015 commits the Government to achieve and maintain a 50:50 gender balance on boards and committees.
NT	-
CTH	Minimum of 40% representation of each gender on Australian Government boards by 2015.

Source: Australian Institute of Company Directors, 'Representation of women on government boards', [www.companydirectors.com.au](http://www.companydirectors.com.au)

### 5.1 New South Wales

37% of NSW Government board and committee positions were occupied by women in 2010. This places them well ahead of the private sector, where, for example, 10% of directors of ASX200 companies are women. The NSW Office for Women's Policy released a consultation paper in 2010 containing strategies to increase the proportion of women on NSW Government boards and committees (including governing boards, advisory boards, advisory councils and quasi judicial boards/tribunals).<sup>29</sup> Strategies already in place by the NSW Government to improve the representation of women include:

- NSW Government Register for Boards and Committees

<sup>28</sup> J Treanor, 'EU calls for women to make up one-third of bank directors', *The Guardian*, 21/6/11.

<sup>29</sup> NSW Office for Women's Policy, *Consultation Paper on Strategies to Increase the Proportion of Women on NSW Government Boards and Committees*, 2010.

- The Making the Public Sector Work Better for Women 2008-2012 strategy '.
- The Lucy Mentoring Program – a university based program which aims to encourage the development of women who will become future leaders given the right opportunities and support.

Potential options suggested in the consultation paper are:

1. Setting a 50% target by 2012 of new appointments to boards and committees overall being women.
2. Requirement to consult NSW Government Register for Boards and Committees.
3. Requirement to nominate at least one person from each gender.
4. Requirement to declare a board's or committee's existing gender ratio when making nominations.
5. Expanding women on Boards information on the Department of Premier and Cabinet' Boards and Committees website/OFWP's website.
6. Establishment of a database or list recording details of new appointments to a NSW Government board or committee.
7. Family friendly guidelines eg attendance at meetings and functions, leave arrangements, provision of facilities, meeting times and locations, travel and accommodation arrangements.
8. Legislation.
9. Timeframe – 24 months for target to be met, otherwise legislation introduced to achieve gender equality.

The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), in its submission replying to the NSW Office for Women's Policy's consultation paper, noted the proportion of women on top public company boards around the world:

- New Zealand 12.1%
- Canada 14%
- Ireland 14.1%
- United States 15.2%
- South Africa 15.5%
- Finland 23.4%
- Sweden 23.9%

They also recognised that women in Australia are much better represented on the boards of not-for-profit organisations than they are on publicly listed company boards. The AICD then highlighted some of the key initiatives Company Directors have introduced in the private sector to improve board diversity:

- Mentoring program – in April 2010, AICD launched the ASX200 Chairmen's Mentoring Program where 56 senior listed company chairmen and directors mentor 63 women over 12 months. It was the largest program of its kind in the world.

- Scholarship program – board ready women will be able to complete courses such as the Company Directors Course or Mastering the Boardroom Program.
- Online director jobs board.
- Director search database – enables boards and recruitment firms to search and identify directors for board positions.
- ASX Corporate Governance Council's guidelines on diversity.
- Free diversity handbook – explains the new diversity recommendations in the ASX Guidelines as well as practical tips.
- New diversity website and online information service.
- Diversity recommendations – In the past, AICD has announced recommendations for boards to adopt, and report on, diversity policies and goals for the board and senior management, and recommendations for greater transparency in board selection processes and reporting.
- Education – AICD has spoken at a number of events on the topic of board diversity and has run workshops aimed at assisting directors with their careers and in finding board positions.
- New publication on board composition and selection.
- Monitoring statistics.

However, the AICD was quick to emphasise the importance of merit being retained as the primary basis for appointment in both the private and the public sector:

As in the private sector, directors and members of NSW Government boards and committees should be selected and appointed on the basis of merit. The skills and experience sought in a new director or member should be driven by the needs of the particular board/committee and of the relevant governmental agency/department. In accordance with principles of good governance, addressing any gender imbalance on the board or committee should only ever be a secondary consideration.

The AICD was also not in favour of a 50% target being set by the Government for public sector boards:

We do not believe that setting a mandatory target or quota as a way of increasing board diversity on government or non-government boards and committees is appropriate... such approaches are wrong in principle, have difficulties in practice, are tokenistic and are counterproductive to the end goal.

The AICD argued that a better option was for boards and committees to set measurable objectives on a case by case basis. Nonetheless, it did believe there was some merit in the suggestion that there be a requirement to nominate at least one person from each gender where reasonably practicable. It also suggested that the NSW Government consider introducing networking functions and events.

On 1 February 2011, then Minister for Women Jodi McKay announced a range of initiatives designed to ensure that 50% of new appointments to Government



boards and committees are women by the end of 2012.<sup>30</sup> According to Ms McKay, 'The new rules mean agencies will need to regularly report on progress, and more resources will be made available to encourage women to nominate for NSW Government boards and committees, including "how to" guides, information sheets and case studies'. The initiatives include:

- Target of 50% of new appointments across all NSW Government boards and committees to be women by December 2012.
- Agencies will be required to:
  - Consult the NSW Government Register for Boards and Committees and/or outline other strategies undertaken to seek female candidates when nominating appointments.
  - Indicate the gender composition of the relevant entity when recommending appointments to Cabinet;
  - Include in their annual reports actions they are undertaking to increase the gender diversity on the boards and committees and the gender composition of the entities they administer.
- The NSW Government will:
  - Publically release quarterly reports on the number of women appointed to boards and committees
  - Enhance the Register to boost the number and diversity of candidates.
  - Enhance information on the Government's Boards and Committees website to include 'how to' guides, info sheets and case studies to encourage more women to nominate.
  - Review the impact of the new policy at the end of 2012.

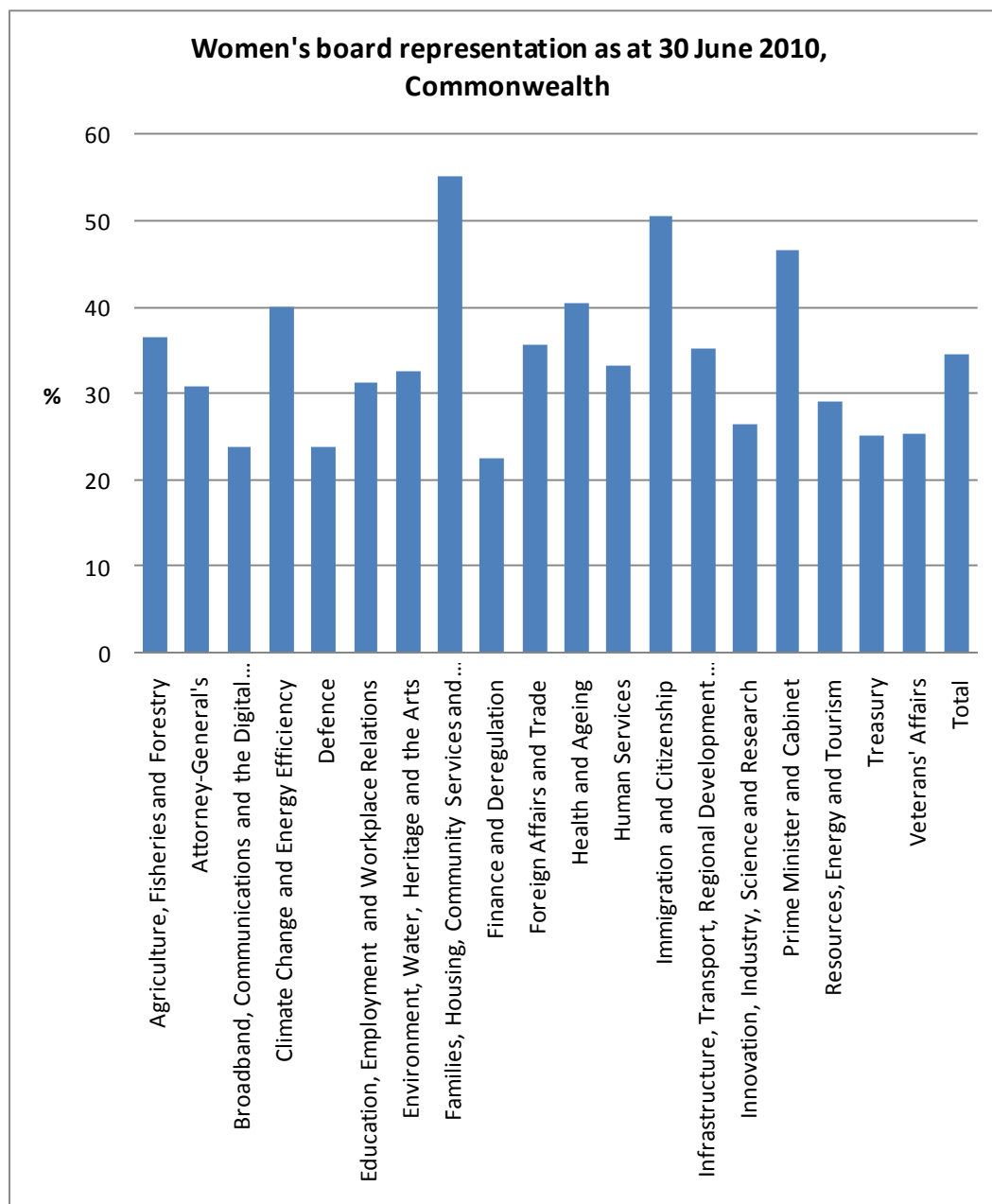
## 5.2 Commonwealth

In late 2010 the Federal Government announced that a target of a minimum of 40% representation of each gender would apply to government boards as a whole. As at 30 June 2010, five portfolios met or exceeded the 40% target (12 out of 19 portfolios improved representation) and women's representation had increased from 33.4% to 34.5% in the 12 months preceding.<sup>31</sup> 83 of 509 boards and bodies had no female board members. 34.9% of new board members appointed in 2009-10 were women.

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<sup>30</sup> J McKay, 'Clear path set for equality on government boards', *Media Release*, 2/3/11.

<sup>31</sup> Australian Government, Office for Women, *Women on Australian Government Boards Report 2009-2010*.



Some of the mechanisms used by the Commonwealth Government to improve gender equity on government boards include:

- AppointWomen – an online register that matches board-ready women with agencies seeking candidates.
- The Australian Public Service Commission's merit and transparency guidelines.
- The Gender Panel – panel members include organisations and individuals with demonstrated expertise and experience in gender analysis in a number of areas.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Many advances have been made towards equal numbers of males and females serving in parliaments, the public sector and on government boards and committees. According to Grey:

The increased numbers of women MPs has had many positive outcomes, for example the creation of new role models of women in public life, some aspects of political culture have been changed and overt resistance to female candidates and politicians has been removed.<sup>32</sup>

Nonetheless, women are still under-represented in many of these areas, especially the higher levels of political leadership and senior public service positions. Some fear that progress has stagnated.

There have been a number of recent initiatives designed to improve the numbers of women reaching the upper echelons of the public service, as well as serving on government boards and committees. But these strategies are not without controversy, particularly in relation to the setting of quotas or targets.

Many believe that the presence of women in these arenas adds value to the organisation as a whole. Karp and Banducci found that 'the number of women in parliament is associated with more positive evaluations of the quality of the democratic process'.<sup>33</sup> Geoff Gallop, the former Premier of Western Australia, argues that female politicians are distinct in a number of ways:<sup>34</sup>

1. They have a real sense that they are standard-bearers for women generally – our political agenda is more balanced as a result.
2. Being in the system places them in a position to hold their male colleagues to account when they openly display prejudice or can't recognise the biases influencing their thinking.
3. Female politicians are generally more emotionally intelligent and practical than their male colleagues.

These benefits could also be said to apply to women in positions of public sector leadership and on government boards and committees.

In any event, as noted by Geoff Gallop, 'Politics, whether practised by men or women, is still about position, power and influence. It requires ambition on the one hand and judgment on the other'.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> M Grey, *Challenging women: towards equality in the Parliament of Victoria*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2009, p 258.

<sup>33</sup> J A Karp and S A Banducci, 'When politics is not just a man's game: Women's representation and political engagement', *Electoral Studies*, 27, (2008), p 114.

<sup>34</sup> G Gallop, 'We still sit uneasy with women in power', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21/6/11.

<sup>35</sup> G Gallop, 'We still sit uneasy with women in power', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21/6/11.