

Australia Votes

Federal Election 9 October 2004

Speeches related to Gender Issues in Elections

- [The Gender Gap in Australian Elections](#)

Dr Jennifer Curtin

- [Voting Patterns and the Gender Gap: Rural and Regional Dimensions](#)

Dr Jennifer Curtin

- [The Role of Women as Australian Citizens](#)

Professor Marian Sawer

- [The Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act: Aspirations and Apprehensions](#)

Professor Marian Sawer

- [Making a difference ~ Strategic Voting No Respect - No Vote](#)

Erica Lewis

Public Advocacy and Campaign Activities

- Women's Electoral Lobby
- Brotherhood of St Laurence Advance Australia Fairly campaign for government
- People Power -a new political movement in Australia
- The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)
- National Tertiary Education Union
- The Australian Education Union (AEU)

See: [Public Advocacy and Campaign Activities](#)

Marginal Seats and Election Issues

- [Social Disadvantage in Key Marginal Seats](#)
- [What are the issues?](#)

General Election Questions answered

- **What electorate am I in?**
- **Who's up for election?**
- **What system of voting is used for the election?**
- **Who's up for election?**
- **What system of voting is used for the election?**

See: [General Election Information](#)

Election Websites

- **Australian Political Parties**
- **List of Marginal Seats at the 1998 and 2001 Federal Election (by State)**
- **Australian Electoral Commission:**
- **ABC Australia: news, analysis, profiles, research**

See: [Election Websites](#)

The Gender Gap in Australian Elections

Dr Jennifer Curtin
Politics and Public Administration Group
20 October 1997

Over the last decade there has been a marked increase in interest in what has been labelled the gender gap. While generally there has always been a gender gap in terms of the representation of women and men in the decision-making arenas of politics, the existence and pertinence of a gender gap with respect to voting behaviour and political attitudes is still under discussion.

Dr Curtin's Paper

- provides an overview of the history of the gender gap in Australia
- offers a more detailed analysis of recent gender differences in voting behaviour in Australia
- examines where Australia fits with cross-national trends
- concludes by arguing that while the gender gap may not be a systematic phenomenon, it does nevertheless have important implications for political parties seeking to attract the women's vote.

Major Issues Summary

Over the last decade there has been a marked increase in interest in what has been labelled the gender gap. While generally there has always been a gender gap in terms of the representation of women and men in the decision-making arenas of politics, the existence and pertinence of a gender gap with respect to voting behaviour and political attitudes is still under discussion. Party strategists and

researchers, both in Australia and overseas, continue to investigate how the gender gap might manifest itself and what its relevance is to policy proposals and outcomes.

The gender gap is best understood as gender differences in vote. Between 1910 and 1966 it appears that men on average lent slightly more support to the ALP than to the Liberal-Country Party coalition, while a marginally greater percentage of women on average supported the Coalition compared to the Australian Labor Party (ALP). There was one exception to this trend, at the 1917 election, where three in four men supported the Nationalist Party and a similar number of women supported the ALP.

Between 1987 and 1996 the percentage of women choosing the Coalition has been higher than the percentage of men supporting the Coalition. The single exception was in 1990 where there was no difference between the percentage of women and men who intended to vote Coalition. In 1993, a seven percentage point gender gap appeared through gains made in the female vote. This gender gap decreased to one percentage point in 1996, this time largely as a result of 10 percentage point increase in support from men.

Although the ALP received 49 per cent support from women in 1987, this was still four percentage points lower than men's support for the ALP. The gender gap closed to two points in 1990 but began to widen again at the 1993 election, representing a reversal of the longer term trend whereby gender differences in support for the ALP had been declining over the last 25 years. While the ALP's gender gap was reduced to five points in 1996, this was not a result of increasing numbers of women voting ALP, but because of a drop in the ALP's male vote.

In addition to there being a gender gap between women and men who support the ALP, more women have voted for the Coalition than for the ALP since 1987, with a gap of 18 points evident in 1996. Male support for the ALP is somewhat erratic while the male vote for the Coalition has been more consistent over time, with 1996 being the first election where the Coalition gained significantly more of the male vote than the ALP.

The women's vote is not monolithic. Differences between women are often as diverse as those between women and men. With respect to income, the Coalition received slightly more support from women than men in the majority of income groups in the 1996 election, while the ALP received more support from men than women in every income group. The ALP also gained considerably less support than the Coalition from both men and women earning under \$25 000. In terms of age, in the 1993 election, both younger men and younger women were less likely to show support for the Coalition compared with older men and women. In the 1996 election, younger women and men were less likely to support the Coalition than older women and men, but in contrast to 1993, women and men under 30 were more likely to vote for the Coalition than the ALP. Support for the ALP declined with age while support for the Coalition continued to increase with age amongst both sexes.

Australia is by no means unique in having a history of women voting more conservatively than men. Research indicates that female conservatism was for many years a feature of voting behaviour in Europe and the United States. In the United States this has begun to change with more women supporting the Democrats than men. The percentage of women supporting the Democrats increasing from 45 in 1992 to 54 in 1996. Trends in women's voting behaviour in Britain are more like those in Australia, in that the Conservatives have consistently done better among women, while Labour has gained more support from men.

Gender is but one of a number of social cleavages that influence political attitudes, social values, electoral behaviour and partisan loyalties. However, it cannot be ignored as a fracture, either in its own right, or in the way it intersects with other variables such as income and age. Perhaps it will never be possible to predict how women will vote as compared to men, or compared to other women. Such choices are contingent on many other factors. This dilemma offers a challenge to political parties to think creatively about working families in all their varieties, in order to identify interests and to develop issues and policies that will attract both women and men and, as such, become the ultimate 'catch-all' party.

To view the Paper by Dr Jennifer Curtin, see:

[The Gender Gap in Australian Elections](#), a 1997 Parliamentary Library Research Paper by Dr Jennifer Curtin

[Return to Australia Votes Index](#)

Voting Patterns and the Gender Gap: Rural and Regional Dimensions

**Dr Jennifer Curtin
Economics, Commerce and Industrial Relations Group
6 February 2001**

"Recently, there has been considerable media speculation as to what voters in rural and regional electorates will do. In this context, it is of interest to review how women in rural and regional Australia have voted in the past and, in particular, how the National Party fares amongst women."

Dr Curtin's Paper includes tables illustrating the Male/Female Vote in Federal Elections 1987-1998 and Regional Dimension to Male/Female Vote in Federal Elections 1993-1998.

To view it see: [Voting Patterns and the Gender Gap: Rural and Regional Dimensions](#), a 2001 Parliamentary Library Research Note by Dr Jennifer Curtin [Return to Australia Votes Index](#)

The Role of Women as Australian Citizens

by Marian Sawer

Professor Sawer is a former President of the Australasian Political Studies Association and was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 1994 for 'services to women and to political science'. Professor Sawer is currently on secondment to the Political Science Program, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra.

Introduction

Australia was the first country in the world where women won the right both to vote and to stand for the national parliament - in 1902. Fears that women would neglect their homes or children if they were given political equality proved unfounded, as Prime Ministers and Premiers attested (Sawer and Simms 1993, p 10ff). Having won political rights for themselves, many Australian women joined in the struggle for women's suffrage elsewhere...The winning of political rights, however, did not mean that Australian women had achieved equal citizenship, even in the most formal sense. It was not until 1943 that the first two women were elected to the national parliament - the longest gap between rights and reality of any country. It was not until 1949 that women were allowed to retain their citizenship when marrying a foreign national, despite decades of lobbying on this issue by women's organisations. Marriage did not affect the citizenship status of male citizens. In 1959 women were still having to defend their right to be treated as a 'person' under the South Australian Constitution Act and hence their right to stand for the Legislative Council. A disappointed candidate for preselection had brought a suit against the electoral officer for allowing two women to nominate. Only in 1995 did Queensland amend its Jury Act to remove the blanket exemption from jury service available to women on the grounds of their sex."

Dr Sawer's Papers also features a dissertation on Women and Active Citizens; Economics and Social Citizenship and Redefining Citizenship.

To view Dr Sawer's Paper, see:

[The Role of Women as Australian Citizens](#)

[Return to Australia Votes Index](#)

The Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act: Aspirations and Apprehensions

**Professor Marian Sawer,
Political Science Program, Research School of Social Science, Australian
National University**

Thank you to Commissioner Pru Goward for inviting me here to be part of the 20th anniversary celebration of the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act. The Act has been in good hands, despite difficult times. In my paper I am going to discuss some of the pre-history of the Sex Discrimination Act, and then some of the myths that have become attached to it.

Australian women were very early in global terms to obtain formal rights of political equality. This did not, however, bring an end to sex-based discrimination in politics, let alone in other areas such as employment and education. There were long campaigns to achieve specific objectives such as equal opportunity to practice professions. Political candidates were often quizzed by women's organisations as to their attitudes towards equal opportunity issues. For example in 1913 the Women's Political Association in Victoria presented federal candidates with a questionnaire to rate their views on matters such as equal pay for women and equal opportunities for women in the public service.

The demand for more general equality guarantees was somewhat slower to emerge. It surfaces during the Second World War when women were mobilising to have a voice in postwar reconstruction. In 1942, prominent feminist Jessie Street wrote to the prime minister informing him that women in the Allied democracies were requesting Constitutional change "to extend to women all rights, status and opportunities enjoyed by men with provision that any sex discrimination prescribed in laws or regulations be invalid".^[1] She asked the government to prepare an amendment to the Constitution granting women equal economic, political and social rights. The following year a gathering of some 90 women's organisations in Sydney endorsed Street's call for a Constitutional equality guarantee. When the government finally put its proposals for Constitutional change to referendum in 1944, however, no such guarantee was included.

Demands for a general prohibition of sex discrimination receded in salience during the Cold War being widely regarded as having something to do with communism-an attitude we will find was still alive in the 1980s. Meanwhile the 1960s brought the increased labour market participation of women, the establishment of the Women's Bureau in the federal government and the much delayed removal of the Commonwealth marriage bar. Women public servants and women working in statutory bodies such as the ABC had still been losing

their permanency and their superannuation on marriage, some 20 years after this ceased to be the case in the UK and New Zealand. This was thanks to the stonewalling of Menzies with the able assistance of the Australian Clerical Officers' Association (ACOA). The 1970s saw the arrival of a new wave of the women's movement and the creation of Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL), which made sex discrimination a major campaign issue in 1972.

The many examples of gross discrimination in employment in Australia were a gift to the articulate and increasingly confident WEL women. Whatever compelled the federal secretariat of the Liberal Party of Australia to state that a male graduate would be preferred when advertising for a position of research officer in late 1972?^[2] Of course at this time, and right up to the passage of the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act in 1984 it was standard for classified job advertisements that appeared in the newspapers to be divided between those for men and boys and those for women and girls.

From the vantage point of today it is hard to remember why you had to be male to do jobs such 'loans officer', 'insurance investigator' or even to be manager of a Uniting Church Conference Centre.

In November 1972 Senator Lionel Murphy, soon to be Attorney-General announced that: 'The need to remove discrimination against women is obvious and will have early priority from a Labor government.'^[3] Apart from re-opening the equal pay case on their second day in office, the Whitlam government did move quickly to ratify ILO Convention 111 on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation. The all-male government was slower to move on sex discrimination legislation, however, and WEL lobbied in vain in 1973 to have sex discrimination included in the ambit of the Racial Discrimination Bill and in the abortive Human Rights Bill. In August 1975 the government did circulate a memorandum, on a 'Proposed Bill to Prohibit Discrimination against Persons by Reason of their Sex or Marital Status'.^[4] By then, of course, it was too late and the dismissal of the government in November meant that the proposed Sex Discrimination Act did not eventuate.

In 1974 WEL had succeeded in getting the minimum wage extended to some 300, 000 women receiving less than the male minimum. Women had not been eligible for the minimum wage, which was supposed to have a 'family' component. Edna Ryan's dramatic production of as yet-unreleased statistics showing women were the sole breadwinners for 131 700 families was the clincher in the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission. It is important to remember these things in the context of the propaganda campaign of the last two decades that has tried to depict equal opportunity as an elite agenda or the preserve of middle-class women.

Progress on anti-discrimination legislation was made at the State level with a Sex Discrimination Act enacted in South Australia in 1975 and Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination acts in Victoria NSW respectively in 1977. While the

Victorian Act was there in time for Deborah Wardley, whom Ansett refused to employ as a pilot on the ground of her sex, there was no legislation in States such as Queensland, where the Mayor of Rockhampton had been adamant in pursuing his policy of sacking married women from Council employment. ^[5]

At the Commonwealth level the dismissal of the Whitlam government by no means brought an end to the project for sex discrimination legislation. WEL and the UNAA Status of Women Committee were lobbying the new Fraser government on the issue and the Minister with responsibility for Women's Affairs, R.J. Ellicott, was persuaded of the case. He told the first meeting of the newly appointed National Women's Advisory Council in late 1978 that the government was considering legislation to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex and marital status. Convenor of the Council, Beryl Beaurepaire, took up the proposal with alacrity and brought all her formidable political skills to bear on the campaign. She organized a major conference on anti-discrimination legislation in Melbourne in May 1979, intended to prod the government into action. Liberal women such as Queensland Senator Kathy Martin played important roles in the Melbourne conference but battle lines were already beginning to emerge, with Tasmanian Senator Shirley Walters opposing sex discrimination legislation along with Babette Francis and Jackie Butler of the newly formed Women Who Want to be Women.

The Melbourne conference was strongly supported by WEL women, who made up about a third of the participants and presented papers and led workshops. Their recommendations won the support of the conference, and included provisions for affirmative action and sanctions, and scope to cover sexual preference as well as marital status, pregnancy and parenthood. At its national conference in Adelaide earlier in the year WEL had adopted an even more ambitious proposal, for a new Section 116A in the Constitution, to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex.

Ellicott, however, was consistently frustrated by the Attorney-General and by National Party cabinet colleagues in his attempts to advance proposals for Commonwealth legislation. In late 1979 he tried to force the pace by issuing, as Minister for the Capital Territory, a press release on the introduction of a sex discrimination ordinance for the ACT (21 December 1979). This attempt to commit the government also foundered, despite supportive action by the ACT House of Assembly.

The tripartite National and State Employment Discrimination Committees (EDCs), established to honour Australia's ratification of ILO 111, were themselves actively lobbying against anti-discrimination legislation by this time. Employer bodies approved of the EDCs, which were non-statutory bodies on which business as well as unions were represented and which had a purely hortatory role.

Beryl Beaurepaire continued her campaign, with an unprecedented series of

town hall meetings with women around Australia over Australia's Plan of Action for the UN Decade of Women. A centre-piece of the Plan, of which 50 000 copies were distributed, was legislation to provide guarantees against 'discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexual preference and marital status'. The process culminated with a national meeting in the Academy of Science in Canberra in March 1980, with delegates whose election had been overseen by the Australian Electoral Office. Thanks to the masterly chairing of Beaurepaire, broad consensus was reached. Once again, however, the Plan of Action was blocked by the National Party, and never received government endorsement.

At the Mid-Decade Conference in Copenhagen Ellicott did manage to sign the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This was despite Women Who Want to be Women trying physically to prevent the minister from signing. Ellicott and Andrew Peacock, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, issued a joint statement saying that signature of the Convention was an important indication of 'Australia's policy of equality for women and the elimination of discrimination.'^[6] Unfortunately little further progress was made towards ratification before the change of government.

Meanwhile, on the Opposition benches Senator Susan Ryan, as Shadow Minister was also increasing the pressure and introduced her Sex Discrimination Bill as a Private Senator's Bill in 1981. This was a broad-ranging bill, drafted by long-time WEL member and barrister, Chris Ronalds. It was to give rise to two major pieces of legislation which Ronalds continued to advise on, the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act of 1984 and the Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Act of 1986.

It also became a major plank in the Labor Party's election policy, endorsed by representatives of some 26 national women's organisations with whom the party consulted in 1981, most of whom had participated in Beaurepaire's UN Decade of Women consultation process. The momentum built up seemed unstoppable. In October 1982 the Coalition government finally announced its intention to legislate, although only in relation to the ACT and Commonwealth employment, and without undue haste.

With the election of the new Labor government in 1983, however, the way seemed clear for action at last. A Sex Discrimination Bill modeled on Chris Ronalds' original Bill, but without the latter's affirmative action provisions^[7] was introduced into parliament in June 1983. CEDAW, which was to provide some of the Constitutional basis for the Bill, was ratified in July. It obliged State's parties to promote women's equal enjoyment of human rights and freedoms in all areas of life, including education and employment. The High Court had confirmed in the recent Koowarta case that the federal government was able to use its external affairs power to legislate to meet obligations under international human rights conventions.

At about this time all hell broke loose. The Queensland co-ordinator of Women

Who Want to be Women, Jackie Butler, who was also Chair of the Council for a Free Australia, a far-right organisation, mounted an extraordinary nation-wide campaign against ratification. This lasted long after ratification had taken place and flowed seamlessly into a campaign against what was called 'the Sex Bill'. A propaganda sheet, circulated through church networks under the names of Butler, Dr A.Rendle-Short and Mrs Robyn Sully claimed that changes were already being made to the Bible to eliminate differences between masculine and feminine roles. Ratification of CEDAW would also lead to a nation-wide network of crèches and childcare centres, so that the state would have care and control of the child from infancy. Australia would be placed under the control of foreign powers and would no longer be free.

The propaganda sheet and the kind of letters it inspired, was helpfully read into Hansard by Liberal South Australian Senator Baden Teague in November 1983. The letters, typical of the flood of letters received by federal members of parliament, expressed fears that ratification would lead to the elimination of the 'Judaeo-Christian' family and to the Bible becoming a banned book.^[8] Earlier in the same month Senator Shirley Walters had claimed in parliament that ratification had already led to the headmistress of a Tasmanian school removing the Bible from the school library and burning it.^[9] National Party Senator Ron Boswell stated confidently that 'The women of Australia do not want legislation that is drafted by the public servants of Mongolia.'^[10] Like a number of other Queensland politicians he believed the clamour for equality emanated from the Soviet bloc countries. The idea that the equality of women was a Trojan horse for communist subversion led to ASIO devoting resources to spying on Women's Liberation groups in the 1970s.

Elaine Nile, of the Festival Light, took out newspaper ads saying 'Stop the Ryan Juggernaut' and made arrangements for busloads of supporters to come to Canberra to demonstrate against the Sex Bill outside Parliament.

Supporters of the Bill were not sitting on their hands either. Pamela Denoon, the National Co-ordinator of WEL, stitched together a coalition of women's organisations from across the political spectrum to support the Bill, ranging from the National Council of Women through to the Union of Australian Women. In Parliament Susan Ryan was constantly on her feet to defend the Bill and introduce the 53 amendments intended to placate opponents. Apart from the spectres of communism and Bible-burning, there was opposition to intrusion on the rights of States and the rights of churches to discriminate.

A second Bill was introduced in late 1983 to incorporate the changes. WEL made a last-minute save to ensure the new draft actually included employer liability for sexual harassment. WEL also distributed a practical Guide to the new Bill, prepared by Sydney WEL members including June Williams, later to be Western Australian Equal Opportunity Commissioner.

Apart from action at the community level there was also staunch support from

Liberal parliamentarians such as Senator Kathy Martin, and from Ian Macphee, who publicly denounced the 'hysterical and mischievous' campaign against the Bill. ^[11] Australian Democrat Senator Janine Haines was another eloquent supporter, as was National Party member Tom McVeigh, who had ministerial responsibility for the Office of the Status of Women immediately before the change of government. He was to be one of only two National Party members to support the Bill. The parliamentary supporters were duly acknowledged at the large WEL celebration party held outside Parliament House on the day the Bill finally passed on International Women's Day 1984. The parliamentary champions of the Bill joined with members of women's groups in drinking champagne and eating the purple, green and white cake in the shape of the women's symbol.

Perhaps this is the point at which to tackle some of the myths about the Sex Discrimination Act, which have taken on a life of their own and are reproduced in one source after another. The first is the myth that the parliamentary debate over the Sex Discrimination Bills was 'the longest in the Senate's history up to that time' ^[12] Of course this is nonsense in terms of the history of the Senate. But even if we take the period from World War II until 1984 the debate on the Sex Discrimination Bills was only the eleventh longest debate. The Senate Table Office maintains a statistical record of hours spent in consideration of Bills. While there were 17 hours of debate on the Sex Discrimination Bills there were almost 70 hours on the two Communist Party Dissolution Bills, almost 56 hours on the Commonwealth Bank Bills, 28 and a half hours on the Family Law Bill and 27 hours on the Customs Amendment Bill (No 2) 1979.

Another myth which has received a wide airing is that having been the foremost proponent of the Bill, the Women's Electoral Lobby then attacked it on the day it passed through parliament. It is said that two spokeswomen for WEL, an organisation whose 'long-standing top priority had just been enacted', appeared on the *7.30 Report* with Susan Ryan and described the Sex Discrimination Act as 'useless, an insulting token'. ^[13] As you can see from the image of the WEL party thanking Susan Ryan and other parliamentary supporters of the Sex Discrimination Act this again has no basis in reality.

It derives from a memory of a *7.30 Report* segment after the passage of the *Affirmative Action Act* two years later, in which two young WEL spokeswomen said that while WEL welcomed the Act, the lack of sanctions was a major weakness. This is the role of a Lobby, to praise what has been done but explain how it does not go far enough. The sanctions were finally introduced in 1992—no industry assistance or government contracts for companies named for non-compliance with the Act.

Another myth frequently encountered is that 1980s feminists had a women's rights-based agenda that did not take into account men's needs for work and family rights. Here is the 'Joe Average' poster produced by the Office of the Status of Women in 1983 to promote ILO Convention 156 on Equal

Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers with Family Responsibilities.

Convention 156 was controversial simply because it did require policies enabling men as well as women to combine family responsibilities with paid work. It entailed family friendly work practices and conditions that would enable men to take a more equal role in raising their children. Although it was part of the Hawke government's election policy in 1983 there were many delays in ratifying it, on the ground of State objections. It again became part of the Hawke government's election policy in 1990 after a lot of pushing by 'old-style' feminists. This time ratification did occur and the Office of the Status of Women kicked off implementation with the 'Sharing the Load' community education campaign. This included the videos 'Another Tuesday Night' and 'Any Wednesday', which are brilliant discussion starters, highly commended by the UN and worthy of rediscovery. A Work and Family Unit was also established in the industrial relations portfolio to continue policy development on conditions and practices that enabled both parents to combine family responsibilities with paid work-a unit abolished in 2003.

Meanwhile, to return to August 1984 and the first Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pam O'Neil, who had been a founding member of WEL Darwin. Although critics claimed the Act would mainly be of benefit to middle-class women, O'Neil's experience in the mid-1980s was that it was ordinary women in traditional, relatively low-level women's occupations, in offices and shops, who used the legislation to seek redress. Indeed the Act has probably had its most wide-reaching impact on women's experience of the workplace. All of us with experience of low-level jobs before 1984 know the kind of sexual harassment and sexist putdowns of women employees that were a normal part of that experience. A mock-up of a used tampon on the work-bench of a new apprentice in the print-room at the ANU was one of the many examples I encountered when developing the EEO program for the Australian National University. One of the most important functions of the Sex Discrimination Act has been to raise women's expectations that they will receive equal treatment in the workforce.

The argument that equal opportunity for women is a middle class or elite agenda is part of a broader campaign of denigration against all supporters of human rights and equal opportunity. Concern for equal opportunity is presented as part of the contempt displayed by elites for the values of ordinary Australians.^[14] This discursive strategy emanates from America. It creates a populist 'Us and Them' divide between a so-called elite that wants to spend public money on items such as ramps for the disabled and ordinary taxpayers who just want to pay off their mortgage. Not only does this distract attention from the very real social and economic inequalities that continue to exist in our society but constructs a strangely feminised elite. The most active supporters of equal opportunity and human rights have often been groups such as teachers, librarians and social workers-quite different from the elites we have been

accustomed to, who did not even want to let women into their clubs!

And let me finish with an image of just one of the new employment opportunities opening up to women following the passage of the Sex Discrimination Act.

Women have travelled a long way in a parliament which would not even employ a woman for the job of Hansard reporter until 1969, despite the shortage of men with short-hand skills. We cannot, however, rest on our laurels. Twenty years after the passage of the Sex Discrimination Act it would be timely to again review the effectiveness of our Commonwealth sex discrimination and equal opportunity legislation, just as was done to mark the fifth anniversary of the Act. The review initiated then, which resulted in the Lavarch Report, *Half Way to Equal*, is well known as a milestone in the evolution of the Act. Then as now there is much to be learned from the innovations progressively introduced into equal opportunity legislation in other jurisdictions around Australia-one of the glories of federalism. A reference to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee would be a very appropriate birthday present for the Sex Discrimination Act.

Thank you all.

Endnotes

1. Heather Radi (ed.), *Jessie Street, Documents and Essays*, Sydney, Women's Redress Press, 1990, pp. 129-130.
2. Anne Hooper, 'The Emergence of Contemporary Feminist Groups in Australia: With special reference to the Women's Liberation movement and the Women's Electoral Lobby in the ACT,' BA Hons, Political Science, The Faculties, Australian National University, 1973, p. 14.
3. Jocelyne Scutt, 'Legislating for the Right to be Equal', in Cora V. Baldock and Bettina Cass (eds) *Women, Social Welfare and the State*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1983; 1988, pp. 230-231.
4. In retrospect, the fact that the only Bill to be enacted was the *Racial Discrimination Act* was perhaps a blessing in disguise; it made an ideal test case before the High Court for the use of the external affairs power as a Constitutional base for federal human rights legislation (in *Koowarta* 1982). This meant that the Constitutionality of the use of the external affairs power to enact human rights legislation was established before the more controversial Sex Discrimination Act came along.
5. Eventually resolved in 1978 by the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission using ILO 111 as a basis to vary the Municipal Officers' Association to include a non-discrimination clause.
6. *Australian Foreign Affairs Record*, July 1980, p. 240.
7. To give time for 'community education' on the meaning of affirmative action,

popularly believed to mean quotas for women in employment and promotion, rather than the requirement that employers take action to identify and remove barriers to equal opportunity.

8. Senator Baden Teague, Senate Hansard, 29 November 1983.

9. Senator Shirley Walters, Senate Hansard, 8 November 1983.

10. Senator Ron Boswell, Senate Hansard, 29 November 1983.

11. Ian Macphee, 'The Sex Discrimination Bill: A Liberal View', Address to the NSW Division of the Liberal party, 17 September 1983. Macphee had become well-known for his actions in pursuit of equal opportunity for women as Minister of Employment and Industrial Relations in the final phase of the Fraser government. In January 1983 he sent away State treasurers and ministers for labour in town to collect their share of the \$200 million wage-pause fund, because their proposals mainly consisted in creating jobs for men. Macphee told them to come back in a month with proposals that would create an equal number of male and female jobs.

12. Susan Ryan, *Catching the Waves: Life in and out of politics*, Harper Collins, 1999, p.242. See also Anne Summers, Introduction 2nd revised edition of *Damned Whores and God's Police*, Penguin, p. 17: 'The 1984 debate remains the longest in the history of the Australian parliament'. (In the first ten year years of the federal parliament the average time spent debating each Bill was 25 hours, considerably longer than was devoted to the Sex Discrimination Bills.)

13. Ryan, *Catching the Waves*, p. 243.

14. For a full account of this discursive strategy and how it has been promoted in Australia see Marian Sawer and Barry Hindess (eds), *Us and Them: Anti-Elitism in Australia*, Perth, API Network, 2004.

© Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Last updated 16 September 2004.

Your comments and feedback are welcome. Email us at:
webfeedback@humanrights.gov.au

Return to Australia Votes Index

No respect - no vote!

Women's Electoral Lobby

2004 Federal Election Campaign

By ERICA LEWIS

Making a difference ~ Strategic Voting

You have to vote on October 9th in the Federal Election and it's true: regardless of how you vote, a politician is still going to get elected. So... you might as well have as

much of a say and as much fun as you can.

Voting Basics ~ for first timers

Use numbers only.

The easy rule for a valid vote is to number all the boxes with consecutive numbers starting at 1.

Remember that both the House of Reps and Senate elections are preferential. Which means that unless you are voting 1 for the eventual winning candidate or their closest rival, your vote will probably be counted several times. In most seats which will be won by either the Labor or Liberal/National parties, your vote will end up with whoever of these two groups has the lower number on your ballot paper.

Don't just vote ~ make a donation!

Did you know that there is a monetary value attached to your first preference vote?

House of Reps candidates pay \$350 as a deposit to enter the election and Senate candidates \$700, and if they get more than 4% of number 1 votes (primary votes) they get their deposit back.

Once you've got over 4% you also get \$1.79 for each primary vote.

Sometimes this money goes back to the parties, sometimes back to the candidates to cover their election expenses.

So whether the candidate of your choice wins a seat or not, your vote may help them be reimbursed. So you can think of your vote as a small donation as well as a first preference vote.

Don't just vote ~ make a statement!

As mentioned in the Voting Basics, we operate a preferential system of voting in Australian elections, so as long as you number all the boxes, not only do you get a say in who gets elected, but also in how the ballot records the preferences of the elector.

There are two truths of elections that are relevant here. First, that people vote for people who they think will win and second, that the electorate tends towards the middle of the political spectrum.

Personally I always like to buck the trend and generally like to start my vote, especially my Senate vote, somewhere a little or even a lot more extreme than who I know will get elected. Just to stretch the middle a little and to register that I'd like to see the major party who'll end up with my vote move a little more away from the

other major party.

Senate voting & splitting your vote

Many people in Australia vote differently in the Senate than they do in the House of Reps.

There are different theories on why people do this:

- Some are voting for parties in the Senate who will get elected there but not in the House of Reps;
- Some are deliberately trying to ensure that the party they would like to form government doesn't also control the Senate so that the Parliament becomes a rubber stamp for the executive;
- Some perhaps are just confused by the fact that they have to vote twice

To get elected to the Senate you don't even need to make 50% + 1 of the vote; if you're from one of the states you only need 14.3%. This is why we find more independents and minor parties in the Senate and why strategic voting in the Senate is more likely to make a difference.

Voting below the line

'Voting below the line' means that you don't just place a single number for a party at the top of the Senate ballot. You actually record a number for each candidate where his or her name appears on the ballot paper. Meaning that you can vote for good people - and especially good women - across parties.

Party 'how to vote cards' often encourage you to simply place a single number at the top of the ballot paper for their party. This means that your preferences will be distributed as the party as asked them to be.

Playing the System

So my advice is to - say - vote for someone whose politics you like, even if you don't think they'll get elected, and then make sure you number the rest of the candidates from least worst to horrifying so that you know your ballot paper counted at both the beginning and the end.

You'll have given your vote's money to someone you support, if that's not a major party; happily given your money to some more dissident voices; and registered your desire for a more diverse political scene.

Erica Lewis

6 September 2004

Adapted from an article for the 2001 WEL election campaign

Public Advocacy and Campaign Activities

Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL)

WEL's Thinking Voter's Guide to the 2004 Election. See how the parties compare on issues of importance to women.

Also available at their website is WEL's Policy Guides on:

- Childcare
- Education
- Health
- Taxation and Payments
- Violence against Women
- Women as Decision Makers
- Work and Family & Industrial Relations

WEL's website <http://www.wel.org.au/election2004/> will be a resource for thoughtful voters.

Brotherhood of St Laurence Advance Australia Fairly campaign for government

8 September 2004

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is entering the 2004 election arena with an **Advance Australia Fairly** campaign for government policies that include all Australians.

This election the Brotherhood is opposing the exclusion of millions of Australians from work, affordable housing, education, health and dental care.

"After 20 years of economic restructuring, we must now invest in people and services so that all Australians have an equal chance to realise their potential and enjoy a decent quality of life.

As a leading social welfare agency we stand for

- Policies and services that put people first
- Investment in people
- Advancing Australia fairly

Our campaign urges you to think about 'someone else' when voting in this election.

That 'someone else' might be one of the

- 850,000 Australian children growing up in jobless households
- 1.2 million Australians who can't afford to rent or buy a home
- 880,000 Australians who can't get full time work
- 24,000 older Victorians on waiting lists for beds in aged care facilities
- 206,000 teenagers missing out on education or full time employment
- 265,000 Indigenous Australians expected to die 20 years earlier than white Australians
- 9,000 refugees on who need the chance for a safe future and to make a positive contribution to our culture and economy."

Find out more about the campaign at:

AdvanceAustraliaFairly.com.au

People Power -a new political movement in Australia

People Power is a new political movement in Australia. Below is an excerpt of their Mission:

People Power aims to empower people who have become invisible in our political system:

- families (the foundation of society but unrepresented by any broad, mainstream movement)
- consumers (our two main parties represent employers and employees, but not consumers)
- people with disabilities, chronic and mental illnesses and their families/carers (the most invisible and vulnerable Australians)
- the aged (regarded as not glamorous, important or productive in our culture)
- volunteers in communities (who are the glue in society but are unrepresented in any of our halls of power)
- rural communities (long neglected by the centres of influence)
- small businesses and independent owners (the backbone of our economy and employment but overlooked by governments)
- individuals and communities who practice self-help (whose voices are rarely heard)

These people are the forgotten people in Australian politics, ignored by the Two Establishments in our country - the Establishment of the Right (the big end of town, corporate power) and the Establishment of the Left (public sector bureaucrats, trade

unions, and the cultural elite).

Australians have disengaged from politics on a massive scale. The proportion of our citizens who are members of political parties is amongst the lowest in the western world. All our political parties (with the exception of the Greens) are in major decline - not surprising when they have lost touch with the little people and become part of the Two Establishments.

Our politicians are drawn almost entirely from the ranks of lawyers, trade union officials, and staffers for other politicians. Where are the mechanics, the nurses, the entrepreneurs, the landscape gardeners, the home makers?

Pressure groups, media giants, business interests and career politicians have filled the vacuum in public citizenship.

We want to empower ordinary Australians in their roles as citizens, consumers, carers, community members, shareholders, owners of assets and members of families

We want to curtail the power of elites, media moguls, bureaucrats, the big end of town, and vested interest lobby groups.

Our core values are:

- self-help
- empowerment
- community
- smaller government
- inclusion
- relationships and social capital
- ethical conduct

We invite Australians from all walks of life to exercise People Power to renew our democracy, to change our politics, and to re-invigorate the best of our social traditions of a fair go, egalitarianism, a hand up not a hand out, unpretentiousness, and inclusive, convivial community.

Find out more about at: <http://www.peoplepower.org.au/Mission.htm>

Deliver the election goods, says ACOSS

The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) called on all political parties to commit to delivering 5 key needs for all Australians today. By Andrew McCallum

"ACOSS calls on the political parties to meet these 5 key needs: housing, help with the costs of children, services, jobs and fairness for Indigenous Australians. This election should not be about gimmicks and giveaways, it should be about these real issues and actions to address them," said ACOSS President Andrew McCallum.

ACOSS has identified problems and solutions for 5 key needs which are:

- **Help with the costs of children**

"In 2000, one in seven children lived below the poverty line, including one in five in sole parent families. Family Tax Benefits are below the minimum costs of raising a child and multiple income tests create poverty traps when parents go back to work. Half of all sole parents and one fifth of all couples with children faced effective tax rates on their wages of more than 60%.

ACOSS calls on the parties to: make the \$600 lump sum family payment fortnightly, index it so its value does not fall and extend it to families with teenagers living at home and replace multiple income tests with a single streamlined family income test."

- **Jobs**

"The number of people relying on unemployment benefit for over a year - 358,000 is still about the same as it was seven years ago. One in six children is growing up in a jobless family. The lack of affordable child care limits opportunities for lower income earners to undertake work and training.

ACOSS calls on the parties to: remove penalties for people on social security payments who seek work or study, increase Child Care Benefit for low income families and boost help for long term unemployed people such as wage subsidies and training."

- **Services First**

"The money spent on tax cuts is depriving Australians of funds for services such as health, education, child care and aged care, to make these more accessible and affordable. ACOSS calls on the parties not to offer further tax cuts but instead invest in health, education and community services."

- **Housing**

"Too many Australians struggle to find secure, affordable housing. The ABS has estimated that 100,000 people are homeless each night and that 1.1 million low income people pay over 30% of income on housing.

ACOSS calls on the parties to: create a National Housing Plan, create a National Housing Minister, curb negative gearing and concessional capital gains tax and supply an additional \$500 million for public and community housing plus Rent Assistance."

- **Fairness for Indigenous people**

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians continue to face extreme levels of disadvantage than other Australians and are deprived of control of many services affecting them. ACOSS calls on the parties to: commit to reconciliation, boost resources to Indigenous health, reform the Community Development Employment Program and improve Indigenous housing."

For further information Download File:

[ACOSS Call to the Political Parties \(gif\)](#)

National Tertiary Education Union

The future of our higher education system is going to be a major issue in the upcoming Federal Election. Focus group research commissioned by the NTEU shows that higher education, particularly the changes introduced by Minister Nelson that will increase student fees, are one of the three or four most important issues that people will take into account when making up their minds on how to vote.

In response to this, the NTEU is preparing a number of public advocacy and campaign activities during the election campaign, including the website at:

<http://www.nteu.org.au/campaigns/election2004>

The Australian Education Union (AEU)

The Australian Education Union has a membership of 155,000 educators who work in public schools, colleges, early childhood and vocational settings in all states and territories of Australia. Members include teachers and allied educational staff, principals and administrators mainly in government school and TAFE systems.

The AEU is promoting a Public Education Campaign at:

<http://www.publiceducation.org.au>

Marginal Seats and Election Issues

Return to Australia Votes Index

Social Disadvantage in Key Marginal Seats

Jesuit Social Services has joined with several other key organisations to highlight the growing inequality in Australia. On their website, there is a list of key marginal

seats in Victoria and New South Wales which you can click on to see statistics on social disadvantage in that electorate and their ranking on 10-12 disadvantage scores.

Victoria

- Ballarat
- Bendigo
- Chisholm
- Corangamite
- Deakin
- Dunkley
- Gippsland
- La Trobe
- McEwen
- McMillan

New South Wales

- Banks
- Barton
- Cunningham
- Dobell
- Eden-Monaro
- Greenway
- Lindsay
- Macarthur
- New England
- Page
- Parramatta
- Paterson
- Richmond
- Robertson

Source: <http://www.jss.org.au/>

Election Issues

The Australian Council for International Development

<http://www.acfid.asn.au/elections2004/electionsroundup2004.htm>

Features - elections 2004: what are the parties saying?

In the Parties' own words, the site features what the political parties are saying about international development. One can do a Search by Party or a Search by Topic.

Election 'Trackers

<http://www.electiontracker.net/et/>

The electionTracker.net Election 'Trackers' are 4 talented young journalists aged between 18 and 25, who were selected from a nationwide call for applications to report to the site direct from the campaign trail.

Travelling alongside John Howard and Mark Latham, the Trackers write daily news articles and web logs, as well as reporting to community radio stations around the country.

electionTracker asked candidates eleven questions about policies and personalities to help people decide who to vote for. To see their interviews see: Election Eleven at:

http://electiontracker.net/et/component/option,com_staticxt/staticfile,s_qas_ar.php/Itemid,37/

SMH WebDiary

<http://webdiary.smh.com.au/index.html>

Leading independent journalist and author Margo Kingston has led a lively debate with her readers in Webdiary since 2000.

Margo Kingston achieved notoriety in 1998 when she led a sit-in of journalists at the Federal election campaign launch of the One Nation Party in the Queensland town of Gatton - the journalists were unhappy with the party's treatment of the media during the campaign. Margo's experiences during this interesting election campaign are recorded in her book, *Off The Rails: The Pauline Hanson Trip* (ISBN 1865081590).

Though Margo Kingston is openly left-of-centre in her political leanings, she is generally respected by all sides of politics for her tough, no-holds-barred style of political journalism.

General Election Questions answered

[Return to Australia Votes Index](#)

General Election Information from:

<http://electiontracker.net/et/content/view/4/38/>

What electorate am I in?

Electorate boundaries are different for Local, State and Federal Government electorates. To find out which electorate you are in for the upcoming Federal election, plug your postcode into the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) webpage: <http://www.aec.gov.au/eseach/main.htm>

Senators are elected on a State-wide basis; so each Senator represents the entire State or Territory.

Who's up for election?

All seats in the House of Representatives are up for grabs. As the Howard Government is unlikely to call a double dissolution election, only half of the Senate positions will be contested this time around. Six Senators will be elected from each of the six States and two Senators from each of the Territories.

Although all the major and significant minor parties have pre-selected their candidates to contest the election, these, as well as the independents who are running, are not officially available from the AEC until the close of nominations. The list of candidates that appears on the eT website has been obtained by scanning parties' and various other electoral websites. The list will be updated once the official list is released by the AEC.

What system of voting is used for the election?

Both the House of Representatives and the Senate use the preferential system of voting.

For the House of Reps, voters casting a formal (as opposed to informal) vote must number all the boxes in order from most to least preferred candidate in consecutive order. You cannot vote 1-2-3-4-5-5, even if you don't know which party to put last; you must make a decision about which party you like the least! If you don't number all the boxes in consecutive order, your vote will not be counted; even if your first preference is clear it will not be counted. Although it is actively discouraged it is possible to vote 1-3-4-8-20. So long as your intention is clear, there is a discernible

order to your preference and no number has been repeated, your vote will be counted.

In the Senate, because of the large number of candidates who tend to be up for election, you have two options for casting a formal vote:

1. You can number all the boxes below the line. If you choose this method of voting, the same rules apply as for voting for the House of Reps. You must number every single box from one to however many candidates are running.
2. You can put a 1 in the box above the line for the party or independent/s of your choice. You must not number any other boxes. If you choose this method of voting, your preferences will be distributed according to the preferences lodged by the parties with the AEC prior to the election.

If you make a mistake, you can ask for a new ballot paper from the polling booth officials.

Although the same system of voting is used for both the House of Reps and the Senate, each has a different method for counting the votes and determining winners.

How are votes counted in the House of Reps election?

The majority system is used for the House of Reps elections, that is, a candidate is elected once they have achieved 50% of the vote + 1.

First, all the ballot papers are distributed according to voters' first preferences. If one candidate achieves 50%+1 they are automatically declared the winner. If no candidate gets the majority of votes after this first count, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and their votes distributed according to the next preference on those votes. This process is repeated until a candidate secures 50%+1 ballot papers. This lucky person is declared the winner.

How are votes counted in the Senate election?

This process is based on the proportional representation system and is a little more complicated than the majority system used for the House of Reps. To be elected as a Senator, you must secure a certain quota of votes determined by the number of candidates to be elected and total votes cast. So, in this election, because there are only six Senators to be elected from each State the quota for election as a Senator equals the total number of (formal) votes cast plus one, divided by the number of Senate spots plus one (and ignoring any remainder).

For example, if there are 1000 votes cast the quota will be:

$$(1000 + 1) / (6 + 1) = 143 \text{ votes}$$

Candidates who achieve this quota of votes are automatically elected (in order of the number of votes obtained). Any votes received in excess of the quota are considered surplus votes and are transferred to those candidates who were those particular voters' second preference. However, in these situations, because it is not possible to determine which votes actually elected the candidate and which votes are surplus, all the elected candidates' ballot papers are "transferred" at a reduced value. The "transfer value" of an elected candidate's votes is determined by dividing the number of surplus votes by the total number of the elected candidate's ballot papers (to 8 decimal places without rounding).

So, for instance, if the candidate in our hypothetical, Anita Porkbarrell, received 189 votes. The quota is 143 votes and thus Porkbarrell has a surplus of 46. The transfer value of Porkbarrell's ballot papers is:

$$46 / 189 = 0.24338624$$

Now, of the 189 people who voted 1 for Porkbarrell, 166 put Anthony Gerrymander as their second preference (Gerrymander had 121 first preference votes). Those 166 votes are transferred to Gerrymander at their transfer value. So, those 166 votes are worth:

$$166 \times 0.24338624 = 40$$

Now Gerrymander has a total of $121 + 40$ votes = 161 votes. This is clearly over the quota of 143 votes required, so Gerrymander is elected. His 18 excess votes are transferred in the same way.

Ahhh maths at work.

If, after all the surplus votes have been distributed there are still some Senate places available, the preferences of the lowest scoring candidates begin being distributed.

The lowest scoring candidate is excluded and this person's ballot papers are distributed to the candidates to whom the voters have given their next preference. When a candidate reaches the quota of votes required, he or she is elected. This goes on until all the Senate places are filled.

For more answers to Frequently asked election questions see:

<http://electiontracker.net/et/content/view/4/38/>

Election Websites

[Return to Australia Votes Index](#)

Election Websites:

Australian Liberal Party:

<http://www.liberal.org.au/>

The Nationals:

<http://www.nationals.org.au/default.asp>

Australian Labor Party:

<http://www.alp.org.au/policy/index.php>

Australian Democrats:

<http://campaign.democrats.org.au/index.asp>

The Greens:

<http://www.greens.org.au/>

List of Marginal Seats at the 1998 and 2001 Federal Election (by State):

<http://members.westnet.com.au/jackhsmit/marginals.htm>

Australian Electoral Commission:

<http://www.aec.gov.au/content/who/profiles/index.htm>

ABC Australia votes: news, analysis, profiles, research

<http://www.abc.net.au/elections/>