

# HERstory – the EMILY’s List Australia success story

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## Introduction

After a hung parliament, marked by vitriolic and disturbing sexist attacks on Australia’s first woman Prime Minister, progressive labor women were prepared for electoral backlash. But at the ballot box in 2013, Alan Jones’ accusation that Australian women leaders were “destroying the joint”<sup>30</sup> failed to make any impact on voters.

Instead, the 2013 federal election delivered a remarkable statistic for EMILY’s List Australia – the return of all 13 sitting feminist MPs backed by the organisation. Even in seats where EMILY’s List supported women were retiring, the baton passed to the next generation of progressive Labor women.<sup>31</sup>

EMILY’s List has been a quiet achiever. In eighteen pioneering years, a remarkable 164 women have been supported into Parliament, receiving financial, political and personal support to get there. Further, a number of politically and culturally historic firsts have been made possible for women because of EMILY’s List, including the election of the first female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard; the first popularly-elected Premier, Anna Bligh,<sup>32</sup> and the first indigenous woman MP, Carol Martin – all coming through the EMILY’s List network.

The journey of influence for EMILY’s List parallels the life cycle. From the fumbling, furious passion of start-up and excitement of birth; through infancy where landmark firsts and early learning take place under the watchful eyes of mentors and guides, the milestones towards organisational maturity bear striking resemblance to those of an individual. By viewing the historic rise of the organisation – and its women leaders – through a human metaphor, it is entirely predictable that Julia Gillard’s complex rise to power should take place during the teen angst years of the organisation she helped to found.

As EMILY’s List Australia comes of age in 2014, (the organisation’s 18th anniversary falls on 11 November) it is timely to reflect on the growth of the organisation and the lessons to be learned from the Gillard years.

## What is EMILY’s List Australia?

EMILY’s List Australia (EMILY’s List) is a financial, political and personal network for supporting progressive Labor women candidates into parliament. It is the only organisation of its kind in Australian politics, with membership open to women and men who support the election of progressive, pro-choice women MPs to parliament.

EMILY is not, as many people assume, a woman, but an acronym. It stands for Early Money Is Like Yeast. The organisation was founded on the belief that early financial investment for women candidates helps them rise.

EMILY's List Australia was established in 1996 by a committed group of Labor women, determined to address the lack of women representatives in parliament and to shape public policy making for the benefit of women.

To appeal to a women's membership base which existed both in and outside the ALP, the founders of EMILY's List established the organisation as an independent, incorporated association, aligned to (but not controlled by) the ALP. Today, EMILY's List retains the feminist principle of women's autonomous organising, helping Labor appeal to progressive women voters and engage feminist activists in collaborative social change with the labour movement. Its independence allows it to be both a critic and a friend of the ALP.

### **EMILY's List Australia Quick Stats**

Aim: Financial, political and personal support to women candidates

Established: 1996

Funds Raised: >\$5 Million

Women supported: 234

Number of MPs: 164

### **EMILY's List Member Milestones**

- Julia Gillard, first woman Prime Minister
- Anna Bligh, first female Premier of Queensland
- Claire Martin, first female Chief Minister of NT
- Lara Giddings, first female Premier of Tasmania
- Katy Gallagher, third female Chief Minister of ACT (after Labor's Rosemary Follett and the Liberal's Kate Carnell)
- Carol Martin, first Indigenous woman MP, former member for the Kimberley
- First indigenous woman Senator, Nova Peris, current Senator for NT

EMILY's List supports progressive labor women into leadership in five ways. After a candidate is interviewed by members of its National Committee and endorsed for support, they receive:

### **Fundraising – early money and directed donations**

Early Money, a lump sum donation to woman candidates in targeted marginal seats, is designed to give women a head-start on the campaign trail and to draw out further donors. Early Money is raised by EMILY's List through income-generating activities such as membership, national events, merchandise sales and fee for service training.

EMILY's List also provides directed donations to women candidates. Raised from members of the public via the EMILYs' List website, 100% of funds go to candidates. EMILY's List

Australia is the only Australian political organisation enabling voters to donate directly online to candidates of their choosing.

## **Training**

EMILY's List provides emerging women leaders with training on skills needed to win election campaigns. The Gender Advantage: EMILY's List Campaign School includes courses in gender-based campaigning and research, fundraising, public speaking and working with traditional and social media.

## **Mentoring**

All EMILY's List endorsed candidates are matched with mentors – an experienced current or former woman MP, unionist or community campaigner – to provide advice and support during election campaigns. Practical and personal support on the campaign trail is highly valued by EMILY's List candidates and fosters connections between geographically and generationally dispersed women leaders.

## **Gender-based campaign support**

EMILY's List links women volunteers to candidates who need assistance with traditional election campaign activities, such as letterboxing, door-knocking and polling day leafleting. In addition, it produces its own campaign material with a gender lens to assist women candidates' capacity to win the women's vote for Labor.

EMILY's List's campaign support includes regular email, phone and personal contact with candidates during the campaign. It continues to provide support to candidates – including those who are unsuccessful – long after elections end, providing women with messages and gifts of appreciation for their hard work.

## **Gender gap research**

EMILY's List also undertakes privately funded polling of swinging women voters in marginal seats to identify the gender gap between female and male voting patterns and policy preferences. This qualitative research is designed to draw out issues important to women by conducting polling in single gender rather than mixed groups.

EMILY's List research applies rigorous analysis of data findings, cross-referencing ideas obtained from constituents with Labor philosophy and cutting edge linguistic and marketing techniques, to develop policy and campaigning recommendations for the ALP. Long-time federal MP and EMILY's List foundation member Jenny Macklin said that “the quality of Gender Gap Research commissioned by EMILY's List was invaluable in helping shape Labor's campaigns to meet the needs of women”.[33](#)

EMILY's List's expertise in gender based candidate support and campaigning had its beginning long before the organisation was established.

## **EMILY's List Australia – A long conception: 1975–1996**

Sara Dowse, appointed by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam as inaugural head of Women's Affairs, observed that “the 1970s could be characterized as a decade when feminists...crept

into just about every institution you could think of, with the express intention of turning it inside out. The Labor Party wasn't exempt from this".[34](#)

For Labor women who had been instrumental in Whitlam's election win three years earlier, 1975 was a watershed year. The loss of a labor leader supportive of women's issues, in the International Year of the Woman, had a galvanizing effect on feminists within the party.

When the ALP analysed the 1977 federal election defeat, Labor Senator Susan Ryan, a former member of the Women's Electoral Lobby, carried out research into the gender gap in political party voting preferences. Ryan reported on the women's vote trending towards conservatives until 1972, convincing her male colleagues that winning the women's vote was critical to Labor's future electoral success. A committee was established by the party, led by Fran Bladel and Ann Forward, to review how affirmative action strategies could be adopted within the party to increase women's participation.[35](#)

Although Labor women had been organising at local and state levels for many years, often their activities were focused on supporting Labor men, rather than focusing a gender lens on the political debate.

The inaugural National Labor Women's Conference in 1981 changed that; giving Labor women the opportunity for the first time to reflect on national political issues and to build relationships across the country to advance gender reform. It was no accident that within months of that conference, an affirmative action model for internal party committees – a 25% gender quota – was adopted by the ALP.

While this strategy increased female involvement in party committees, it did not solve the problem of getting more women into parliament.[36](#) Cheryl Davenport, one of a handful of women parliamentarians elected in the 1980s reflected on the grim nature of politics for women; of struggling to overcome derisory comments about their participation and marginalisation of the gender based policy issues they championed.[37](#)

By the 1990s, an important shift in gender relations was occurring within the ALP. Dr Carmen Lawrence took over as WA Premier and Joan Kirner became Victorian Premier. Lawrence and Kirner's rise to leadership was groundbreaking, even if it did come at the complicated end of labor governments struggling to handle a changing economic landscape. Marian Sawer has argued that both women were sent to clean up the mess made by their male counterparts, a form of "housekeeping the state".[38](#) Others have said that they had a "brief to heal the scars and divisions created by the perception of financial mismanagement".[39](#)

Despite Kirner and Lawrence's best efforts, the political pendulum, that had seen Labor dominate the 1980s, swung against them, thrusting them both out of office at the peak of their political power. Delivering the 1993 William McKell lecture, shortly after her ousting, Joan Kirner reflected on the role of women in politics at the time:

"our national parliament is overwhelmingly male, the voice of government is still a male voice, women remain governed rather than participate in government, women are legislated rather than legislators".[40](#)

In 1994, Australian Parliamentary Library research confirmed the parlous state of women's participation in political life. It showed in raw numbers that, after almost a century of suffrage, women's participation in many houses was barely over single digits.

## 1. Composition of Australian Parliaments by Party and Gender [41](#)

Neither Kirner, nor Lawrence, having reached the pinnacles of leadership in Australia, were prepared to let women's participation languish in this way.

Together, with a team of current and former Labor women, including Meredith Burgmann, Jan Burnswoods, Kay Setches, Cheryl Davenport, Judy Spence, Carolyn Pickles, Sue Mackay and Fran Bladel, they joined emerging labor women leaders Julia Gillard, (then a young labor lawyer), trade unionist Helen Creed, assistant ALP national secretary Candy Broad and community advocate Leonie Morgan, to set about making structural change within the ALP to support women politicians.

In 1993, Labor women hosted the Women, Power & the 21st Century conference in Melbourne, bringing together women from across the political spectrum. Here they examined quota systems in Germany, Scandinavia and Canada, as well as the benefits of reserving seats for women-only ballots (a strategy later adopted by the British Labor Party).

The work of the Labor sisterhood during 1992–1993 was aided by the support of a number of influential men in the ALP. Opening the Women in Politics conference, Prime Minister Paul Keating said:

“It is less that women have a right to be there than we have a need for them to be there. It is less an argument for women than an argument for the country”.[42](#)

ALP National Secretary, Bob Hogg, went further to articulate his view that party reform would be needed to ensure women were included in decision-making:

“You can intellectualise prejudices away; it is much more difficult to put them aside in practice, as attitudes are deeply ingrained. We must ensure in a structural sense that the conditions are created which make political activity accessible to women.”[43](#)

With high profile support emerging for a gender quota – a mandatory target for the pre-selection of women in winnable seats – labor feminists commenced a strategic campaign to change the national ALP Platform and Constitution to embed structural mechanisms to overcome gender disadvantage. The Half by 2000 campaign was commenced, focusing on 50/50 gender equity in labor parliamentary causes by the new millennium.

Although Labor women were not able to lock in this aim for gender parity, the 1994 ALP national conference ushered in the party's first affirmative action rule for parliamentary seats, setting a 35% mandatory gender quota in all state/territory and federal election pre-selections for winnable seats.

Labor women had won the debate within the party rank and file, but still faced push-back from powerful men within the labor movement. Barry Cohen, writer and former Labor MP, expressed the sentiments of many:

”Do those promoting women expect that male members and senators would fall on their swords to make way for anyone male or female? Did they believe that aspiring

MPs would suddenly surrender their ambitions for the feminist cause, or that left or right wing ideologues would vote for an opposing faction's candidate? If so, they are living in fantasy land."[44](#)

With factional faceless men still campaigning to undermine women's representation in the party, the 1995 pre-selection round for federal seats saw women's numbers slide instead of grow, despite the gender quota. Adding insult to injury for Labor women, the Howard election landslide in 1996, saw 16 new conservative women surge into Federal Parliament.

The 1996 election result caused Labor women's campaigning to increase in urgency. It was obvious that the introduction of a gender quota needed to be supported by cultural change: something more had to be done for and by Labor women.

### **EMILY's List USA**

Several Labor women, particularly long-term Labor community and women's campaigner, Leonie Morgan, had witnessed the excellent work of EMILY's List USA, a mass-membership based network of women, functioning to assist the election of pro-choice Democrat women to Congress, the Senate and state governorships. EMILY's List USA's focus was to elect women to advance a pro-choice reproductive rights agenda and to protect recent gains made in the landmark Supreme Court case *Roe v Wade*. EMILY's List's advocacy has resulted in a record number of women serving in the United States Congress.

Kirner, Lawrence and the team of Labor women began adapting the EMILY's List USA model to the Australian context, differentiating itself from its US counterpart by requiring women candidates seeking endorsement to pledge advocacy, not just to reproductive choice, but to equity, diversity, equal pay and childcare.

### **The birth of EMILY's List in Australia: 1996**

Initially, labor women presented the idea of EMILY's List Australia to the Labor national executive, which insisted on nominating the board and controlling distribution of funds to candidates. This was unacceptable to the founders of EMILY's List, who believed women should control their own finances and organisations.

Going their own way, EMILY's List's founders engaged Julia Gillard, with the assistance of Tony Lang, a fellow Slater and Gordon lawyer, to draw up its constitution. EMILY's List was to be founded on feminist collectivism, but structurally it would operate with formal decision making powers, overseen by a national committee of feminist volunteers. Instead of chairpeople, the role of co-convenors was created. And, in recognition of the enormity of the task of running the organisation, this role was to be job-shared role, a convention which continues to this day.

At the same time, a fundraising drive to secure a small group of foundation members – each giving \$1000 to establish the organisation – gave EMILY's List its initial capital reserve.

EMILY's List Australia was launched at Parliament House in Canberra on 11 November 1996, 21 years after the dismissal of the Whitlam Labor Government.

## **Infancy and early childhood: 1997–2001**

Former Victorian Premier Joan Kirner and WA unionist Helen Creed were the inaugural national co-convenors of EMILY's List, with Joan acting as CEO on a pro bono basis. WA MP Cheryl Davenport took over from Helen in 2000.

The first four years of EMILY's List existence in Australia were focused on developing the core support structures that women would need to get elected while, at the same time, attempting to provide the foundations for individual women parliamentarians to succeed.

During this time, EMILY's List supported the election of 38 new progressive women to state, territory and federal parliaments and distributed some \$250,000 to candidate campaigns. In December 1998, the organisation set up its first national office and, in March 2001, welcomed its 2000th member. Volunteer EMILY's List Action Groups were established to coordinate activities in each state and territory.

The 1998 federal election, narrowly lost by Labor, saw a new generation of women enter parliament. Amongst them were EMILY's List endorsed women who would go on to have considerable influence in parliaments to come, including Julia Gillard, Michelle O'Byrne and Tanya Plibersek.

As the number of women seeking endorsement from EMILY's List grew, pressure began to build on the organisation to raise funds. Denied tax deductibility status because of its political nature, the organisation relied on membership fees, a national events calendar and a bequests program for funds. EMILY's List was one of the earliest examples of a crowd-funded organisation, predating non-political party organisations such as GetUp!.

## **The Tween Years: 2002–2006**

With the first steps taken towards a stable fundraising source, EMILY's List began focusing on deepening its political influence. It began playing an important role within the labor movement, acting as watchdog over the party's compliance with the affirmative action rule.

### **Lifting the Target**

As 2002 neared and the phased in timeline for meeting the 35% target approached, the EMILY's List leadership decided to mount a Lift the Target campaign, promoting a rule change to 50/50 representation of women and men. Months of organizing went into the campaign to influence the 2002 National Labor Conference, with feminist cartoonist Judy Horacek retained to design t-shirts, stickers and badges. Part of the direct action campaign included a brass band marching through the conference hall.

Again, EMILY's List Australia fell short of gender parity, but once more the target was lifted and a new affirmative action rule adopted – 40/40/20 by 2012. The new rule made mandatory pre-selection of both women and men candidates in 40% of winnable seats; leaving a further 20% of seats available to either gender.

By 2004, EMILY's List Australia had fundraised over \$500,000 and helped elect 123 Labor women to parliaments across the country. Kirner, having worked for the organisation without pay for eight years, stepped down as CEO and the organisation employed its first paid chief executive, Viv Waller. In 2004/5, Joan and Cheryl Davenport handed the co-convenor baton to Michelle O'Byrne and Senator Claire Moore. Both O'Byrne and Moore would go on to contribute significant policy reforms to protect the reproductive freedom of Australian women, no doubt inspired by their time at the helm of EMILY's List.[45](#)

### **A partnership for equity with indigenous women**

At this time, EMILY's List took on another challenge – to address the systemic disadvantage of aboriginal women. Carol Martin, Australia's first indigenous woman MP, who had been supported by EMILY's List in her successful bid for the WA seat of Kimberley, challenged the organisation to partner in a project to address poverty in, and lack of representation of, indigenous communities. In response to her call for support from the non-indigenous sisterhood, a working group was set up to explore strategies for getting indigenous women elected to parliament.

On 1 September 1 2003, the Partnership for Equity Network (PEN) was launched in the Northern Territory, with Senator Trish Crossin leading much of the advocacy. Shortly thereafter, Linda Burney, a Wiradjuri woman, was elected to the NSW Legislative Assembly. Now NSW Deputy Opposition Leader, Burney said in her inaugural speech:

I want to mention EMILY's List. EMILY has linked up Labor women in this place before we even came in. They taught me the value of “we” and “us”, not “I” and “me”. There are not enough women in our Parliament in any of the parties. Affirmative action is everyone's business. All I can say is the girls are in town, and there are plenty more where we come from.[46](#)

PEN evolved into a partnership between EMILY's List, Koori Women Mean Business, the Victorian Local Government Association and YWCA Victoria. Sisters Doing it for Themselves, empowered indigenous women to lead through the production of a “how to” guide for indigenous women's political participation,[47](#) a training program and a speed-date mentoring event to bring emerging indigenous women leaders together with current women leaders in the political, community and business sectors.

In 2005, Claire Martin, an EMILY's List endorsed MP and the first female Northern Territory Chief Minister, led Labor to a convincing second term in government, with the highest number of women (seven) in the history of the NT Labor caucus. That three of them were indigenous – Malarndirri (Barbara) McCarthy, Alison Anderson and Marion Scrymgour – was astounding. Joan Kirner said at the time:

It creates another record, this election. It's the most women in the Northern Territory Parliament, I believe. It will be a third of the Labor caucus, and hopefully that means another woman minister. And it means we now have six Indigenous women, all supported by EMILY's List, in parliaments across Australia, and five years ago, there were none. Three of those are in the Territory.[48](#)



## Labor pains

Despite gains in women's representation throughout 2002–2006, including the rise of EMILY's List endorsed MP Jenny Macklin to Deputy Opposition Leader, Labor continued to lose elections.

Margo Kingston, reflecting on the bruising defeats of the early millennium for Labor, offered a potential tonic:

When Labor believes it can't win, then it sometimes elects a woman to cushion the loss. Joan Kirner in Victoria and Carmen Lawrence in Western Australia spring to mind. They go for a softer, more inclusive, more team focused, less ego-driven style of leadership. You could see it as nurturing a grieving family. And you never know, maybe the public is ready for that, after the brutal, bruising, cynical, divisive, destructive, insensitive politics of John Howard over the last few years.

So I suggest Jenny Macklin, Julia Gillard or Carmen Lawrence for Labor leader. What do you think?[49](#)

But Labor could not elect all three talented women as leaders.

## Women vs women

For the first time, the EMILY's List sisterhood faced the prospect of women within in its own network being in direct competition with each other.

These tensions came to a head when Julia Gillard took on the role of Opposition Immigration spokesperson, supporting mandatory detention of asylum seekers in the wake of Labor's loss during the 2001 Tampa election. This caused Carmen Lawrence, previously an EMILY's List ally, to speak out against the policy publicly and, later, to resign from the Opposition frontbench and then the parliament.

And, in December 2006, a unity ticket of Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard challenged Kim Beazley and Jenny Macklin for the leadership and won.

Although Gillard, Lawrence and Macklin remained respectful of each other's contribution and ambition, EMILY's List's success story in getting women into parliament had, ironically, created a competitive environment between women.

The Rudd-Gillard alliance would go on to finally defeat the Howard Government, with Gillard, as Deputy Opposition Leader responsible for employment, industrial relations and social inclusion portfolios, playing an instrumental role in the change of government.

## Teen Angst – the rise of Julia Gillard: 2007–2013

The teen years of an organisation, like those of an individual, are often fraught with angst and confusion. The rise of Gillard on the federal sphere paralleled EMILY's List's challenge as it attempted to transition from infancy to adulthood.

## **A critical mass makes an impact**

Along with Gillard, several Labor women took on powerful roles within Government. Jenny Macklin assumed responsibility for Families, Community Services, Housing and Indigenous Affairs; Penny Wong became Minister responsible for Climate Change and Nicola Roxon became responsible for Health and Ageing.

This critical mass of labor women began delivering a raft of gender reforms, including equal pay for community sector workers; disability funding; significant increases to pensions and tax benefits for part-time working women; inclusion of abortion medication RU486 on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme; a national plan to protect women and children from violence, and systematic investment in indigenous housing, education, health and employment.[50](#)

But no reform was more important to women than the establishment of a paid parental leave scheme. Throughout years of labor opposition, women in the trade union movement, particularly long term EMILY's List member and ACTU President Sharan Burrow, had campaigned for a paid parental leave scheme to support working parents.

The Coalition's response to paid parental leave in office, even when confronted with statistics by women in their own ranks, was to dismiss it. As Workplace Relations Minister, Tony Abbott famously said the policy would be brought in "over his government's dead body".[51](#)

The role progressive labor women ultimately had on the enactment of this legislation was not lost on Abbott. Criticising Labor's paid parental leave plan as an example of the ALP's capture by feminists, he accused EMILY's List of being "arguably the ALP's biggest faction".[52](#)

## **Supporting Julia Gillard PM – gender based campaigning**

Midway through the first term of the Labor Government, EMILY's List hired a new National Coordinator, Tanja Kovac, to work alongside Co-convenors Hutch Hussein and Senator Claire Moore. It was Kovac's view that Gillard was next in line to lead the Labor Party and that the organisation needed to prepare itself for the likelihood of her future election. The prospect of a Labor woman leader was discussed for the first time formally at the organisation's 2010 strategic planning weekend. Ironically, five days later, on 24 June 2010, Julia Gillard replaced Kevin Rudd as Labor leader.

Like much of the nation, EMILY's List was not sufficiently prepared for her rise to power.

Despite this, EMILY's List's leadership immediately wrote to ALP National Secretary, Karl Bitar, requesting a Julia10 campaign be initiated, recognising the historic significance of electing the first Labor female prime minister. The letter records:

EMILY's List Australia has fielded hundreds of media enquiries, emails, online commentary on Facebook and other social networking sites from women who are excited about Australia's First Woman Prime Minister.

We believe there is an urgent need for promotional material celebrating her and tapping into the goodwill many women feel towards her rise to the leadership. Like all marketing opportunities, it is important to react quickly.<sup>53</sup>

EMILY’s List believed that the campaign was important for framing Gillard’s sudden rise to the leadership and to establish a gender lens in the campaign to capitalise on long term polling trends showing that women preferred Labor over the Coalition, especially with Tony Abbott at the helm.

At this time, EMILY’s List began applying the work of cognitive linguist, Professor George Lakoff, whose book Don’t Think of an Elephant had revolutionised progressive politics in the United States and deeply impacted Barack Obama’s campaign for presidency. Lakoff’s theory that the progressive vision is gendered feminine, while the conservative vision is gendered masculine resonated for obvious reasons with the EMILY’s List leadership. The organisation’s proposed campaign in support of Gillard during 2010 was underpinned by the belief that bringing feminised qualities and politics to the centre, rather than the margins, of politics would win votes for Labor.

Regrettably, requests for a gender based campaign went unheeded and neither EMILY’s List nor the National Labor Women’s Network played a part in election strategising for the ALP. Consequently, no campaign material was produced by the ALP promoting the historical significance of Gillard’s gender or aimed at galvanizing the women’s vote in her favour.

In the end, it was left to EMILY’s List Australia to undertake the bulk of gender-based campaigning for Julia Gillard’s prime ministership, with EMILY’s List members and donors paying for and producing campaign material and merchandise to celebrate Gillard, including:

- Let’s Make History campaign merchandise featuring twenty-six black and white photographs of male Prime Ministers, juxtaposed to a colour photo of Julia Gillard. The popular design was repeated on stickers, t-shirts and tea towels (Fig.1)
  - The RedHead Power Julia 4 PM campaign, aligning Gillard’s flaming red hair, to another Australian ginger icon, the redhead on Bryant and May matches (Fig.2)
  - A marginal seat leaflet comparing Tony Abbott’s chauvinism and faith-based conservatism to Julia Gillard’s progressive values. (Fig.3) To support this campaign, a sticker was also produced calling on women to ‘Torpedo the Speedo’, a mock reference to the Member for Warringah’s penchant for photographs in his bathers. (Fig. 4)
4. Children brought into the parliamentary chambers

Date:	Name:	Child’s age	Parliamentary business	Comments:
1995	Senator Jacinta Collins	New born	Unknown	The Senator and President reached an understanding that the child could share her seat in an emergency. <sup>[45]</sup>
Pre-2001	Anna Burke	Under three	Divisions	Brought child into the chamber on two occasions but received a note from the Speaker indicating that other

Date:	Name:	Child's age	Parliamentary business	Comments:
				members had not approved. <a href="#">[46]</a>
7 Feb 2001	Mark Latham	Three months	Divisions	The baby attended two divisions when Latham was without a child minder. <a href="#">[47]</a> The Speaker made no ruling on this.
27 June 2002	Senator Winston Crane	Unknown	Valedictory	The Senator delivered his valedictory speech with his young daughter beside him. <a href="#">[48]</a>
Unknown	Senator Natasha Stott Despoja	Unknown	Unknown	Reported to have brought baby into the chamber a number of times without incident. <a href="#">[49]</a>
2004	Michelle O Byrne	About 1 and 3 years	Divisions	It was reported that the Speaker was supportive. <a href="#">[50]</a>
18 June 2009	Senator Sarah Hanson-Young	2 years	Division	President ruled that the child be removed.
2009	Catherine King	One year	Late night sittings	Brought son into the chamber on at least six occasions in 2009. <a href="#">[51]</a>

5. One of the first acts of the new Labor Government in 2008 (Albanese 2008, p.152) was to put a motion allowing a proxy vote for women MPs who were breast-feeding. The Senate has not followed this decision, but the Procedure Committee report of August 2009 acknowledges that, following changes in 2003, Standing Order No 175 does not apply to breast-feeding mothers (Commonwealth of Australia Senate Procedure Committee 2009). There had been a House of Representatives committee recommendation to allow proxy voting after Victorian MLA Kirstie Marshall was told not to breastfeed in the Assembly, in 2003. The slow implementation of this was matched only by the arcane tone of much of the discussion. According to Dr Rodrigues' research paper (2009), no data is kept on the use of these provisions and, to my knowledge, they have never been used.
6. There are, of courses, long-standing rules prohibiting "strangers" from the floor of any Australian parliament, except by invitation. These are based on UK traditions and were originally designed to prevent disruption of proceedings or intimidation of MPs; but a solitary infant or toddler? (Parliament of Great Britain).
7. Even though the term "strangers" has been replaced with "visitors" in the standing orders of both Houses, "strangers" is still the preferred term used in conversation and debate by most members. This not only acknowledges the history of the Westminster system and celebrates the "otherness" of parliament; it also represents the world-view of many MPs: infants and toddlers do not have a place in Parliament and MPs with young children

should organise a strong separation between the two. As Dr Rodrigues' 2009 research points out, fathers have been doing this since Federation, many MPs would contend privately that women should do the same.

8. Given that recent research by the Human Rights Commission shows that 49 per cent of working Australian women experience discrimination when they are pregnant or have young children, MPs' views simply mirror those of many Australian workplaces (Australian Human Rights Commission 2014, p. 14). The stereotype of an 'ideal' worker as "someone who is male, has no caring responsibilities and is available to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week" (Australian Human Rights Commission 2014, p. 17) is also the stereotype of the 'ideal' MP.
9. In 2006, then Liberal MHR, Jackie Kelly, the first Minister to give birth whilst an MP, let her frustration at the lack of child care facilities in Parliament House show (Commonwealth of Australia 2006, p.98):
10. If you are wondering where all the talented, experienced females are, they have gone to raise their kids....In the current environment, a mum returning to politics is not going to have enough time in her career to become Prime Minister of this country. I and other mothers in this parliament have struggled to maintain our careers while we raise our children. I have been told to use the child-care centres in surrounding suburbs when my children are here. For six years, I have relied on family and friends to amuse my children while I perform my duties in parliament.
11. Given that both Houses usually sit until well after 6.00pm, Kelly appears to have been remarkably restrained in her response to suggestions about using the local child-care facilities. Yet, in my experience, Kelly kept up the façade of the "ideal" MP very well in her 11-year career, travelling extensively as a parliamentary secretary and as a Minister.
12. Whilst a number of MP mothers including Jackie Kelly have tried to present the façade of being an "ideal" MP, I contend that Hanson-Young, from a younger generation, was punished because she assumed a flexibility that did not exist.
13. I made my first speech on June 12, 2007, not long after Senator Bill Heffernan's infamous comments dismissing then Deputy Opposition leader Julia Gillard as "deliberately barren" (The Bulletin 2007).
14. In my speech in June 2007 (Commonwealth of Australia 2014, p. 3307) I noted that not only was I only the third Queensland Liberal woman to be a Senator but I was also the first ever mother to be elected by my State party.
15. I added:
16. I don't raise this to cause a fertility debate. I don't think that procreation, or lack of it, has any effect on an individual's decision-making or policy-making ability.
17. But I do raise it in the context of ensuring our national decision-making is as good as it can possibly be by asking 'How do we make politics more family friendly?'
18. I firmly believe that any group will make superior decisions if its members bring a wide variety of experience to the task. The best decisions, the best policy debates will come when men and women from a wide range of ages and backgrounds are engaged in the process.
19. It is an area where I made remarkably little progress in seven years. The biggest challenge to getting more women to consider being Federal politicians is structural change to Parliament itself.
20. The other big challenge is countering the incidental, or subtle, sexism which pervades Federal politics. I despair of my Party ever reaching the 30 per cent

- critical mass considered necessary to embed change, but female Labor colleagues who long ago passed this figure because of their 40 per cent quota system often complained about sexism just as vociferously in private.
21. They told of competent women being sidelined in factional deals for pre-selection so Party venerables, usually former trade union leaders, could get the reward of a parliamentary career. They complained, in the same way Liberal women did, about decision-making processes that privileged opposition for opposition's sake over sensible outcomes.
  22. Sadly, the Coalition parties have not built on John Howard's record number of 26 women MPs in 1996. Both Judy Moylan, in an article in the Australian Financial Review in 2013, and Kathy Martin-Sullivan AM, a former Queensland Senator and MHR, (2006, pers. comm. May) credit former Liberal leader John Hewson with the 1996 record. Hewson had expressly told State divisions that he wanted more women candidates and the Party actively head-hunted and advertised for women candidates. The decline in numbers began as soon as the 1998 election, and efforts to kick-start resurgence have been strenuously ignored.
  23. In the 2013 interview, Moylan said she had tried to reinvigorate the focus on more women candidates in 2010, but "[n]othing happened. Some of the women showed some interest but there was nothing which is a shame because we are now reaping the result of not having an active program."
  24. I do not remember being approached by Moylan but I spoke twice in the Party room on the need to actively develop a plan to find more female MPs, once in the lead-up to the 2009 election and again in the lead-up to the 2013 election. Former Senator Judith Troeth AM also pushed for more women, including writing an opinion piece for The Age in 2010 in favour of setting quotas as the ALP did. The piece was based on a policy paper, Modernising the parliamentary Liberal Party by adopting the organisational wing's quota system for preselection (McCann and Wilson 2014).
  25. On both occasions that I spoke, I was, like Moylan, listened to politely. No member stood to speak against me, but perhaps more telling, none stood to support me.
  26. Martin-Sullivan contends that without the very active support of the Liberal parliamentary leader, more women will not be pre-selected or elected (2005). Our history since the 1996 record suggests she is right.
  27. It is not coincidental that the fall in female numbers has mirrored the fortunes of moderates within the Liberal Party. Virtually all the women, and the few men, who have publicly pushed the Party to improve the representation of women have been moderates.
  28. The current Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services, Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, a Liberal right-winger, in a speech to the National Public Sector Women's conference earlier this year, recalled that Minister and Senator Helen Coonan, a member of Howard's Cabinet, held a celebration in 2005 to mark a political first for Australia; 10 women in Cabinet. Unfortunately the number of Liberal women MPs has been flatlining ever since (McCann and Wilson 2014, p. 32) and Cabinet numbers have taken a nose-dive in the eight years from 2005 to the first Abbott Cabinet in 2013, from that high of 10 to just six in the outer Cabinet and only one woman Minister.
  29. Whilst both John Howard and current leader Tony Abbott have made the right noises, Abbott said he was "disappointed" that there was only one woman in his first Ministry and only six women in the outer Cabinet of 42, neither actively pushed the State divisions to provide more women candidates. Their

contributions can best be characterised as “more women would be nice but...”. Both leaders have also dog-whistled to the conservatives in the Party by linking any moves to encourage more women with the Labor Party’s “tokenistic” quota system.

30. Labor’s quota system is considered repugnant by social conservatives in the Liberal and National Parties. They claim it is demeaning to women and responsible for mediocre candidates.
31. Both Julia Gillard and Tanya Plibersek are frequently cited as examples of ‘quota girls’ and reasons not to instigate such a scheme. Personally, I do not see a problem with a system that could produce Liberal women with the intelligence and fluency of either of these two women.
32. Instead, Liberal conservatives choose to prefer what is referred to as the merit-based system. Interestingly the concept of merit is only applied when the question of improving women’s representation is raised. I have never heard a conservative say: “We must preselect men of merit.”
33. In reality, women are pre-selected for as many good and bad reasons as men. But fewer women stand for pre-selection for some of the reasons outlined above. Fewer women know how to play the pre-selection game thinking (mistakenly) that presenting well and speaking well are the most important requirements. They can be unaware that pre-selections for the most prized seats have often been decided before the public part of the process starts. Given the male domination of Party organisational positions, male candidates are unsurprisingly often preselected. As Schumpeter wrote in a recent Economist article on choosing CEOs: “[G]iven a plethora of candidates, all with perfect CVs, selection committees continue to look for the ‘x’ factor and find, strangely enough, that it resides in people who look remarkably like themselves.” (Schumpeter 2014, p. 67)
34. At a Federal Women’s Council meeting of the Liberal Party in Melbourne in 2005, I tried to encourage women members to adopt a more businesslike attitude to improving women’s representation. I argued that no business would simply say: ‘It would be nice to have more profit in the next few years and leave it at that. Business owners would set a target and develop a plan designed to meet that target and I suggested doing the same. To me, this seemed a sensible and fairly unremarkable idea. However, I was surprised by the vehemence of the opposition, which included now Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, and what I perceived as a deliberate misunderstanding by some that I was calling for quotas.
35. Fierravanti-Wells, appears to speak for most women Liberal MPs, and many aspiring ones, when she says: “I have never wanted to be a ‘quota girl’”. Yet her following comments typify the sometimes contradictory nature of the debate on women’s numbers within the Party, as she added: “Women still have to be prepared to work twice as hard to be regarded as half as good...Females make up half our population, yet this is not reflected in our Parliaments. Regrettably, I think it will take a long time before this imbalance is naturally redressed.”
36. It was these contradictions and the lack of action by Prime Minister Tony Abbott to proactively address the “disappointment” he felt at having only one woman in the inner Cabinet that I was thinking of when I recently described Abbott and some of his colleagues as “subtle sexists”. (Swan and Ziariaris 2014).
37. The majority of the many emails I received after these comments were supportive. One woman, whom I will not identify, wrote:

38. I'm a partner in an international law firm... When discussing a large client internally, the managing partner of my office said, to explain why my client gives me a lot of work "Oh yes, but (name of client) likes women". He then laughed as if that is not only incomprehensible in a professional context, but the only explanation for my receiving the instructions. He would have no idea how offensive that remark was, and I knew that if I called him on it, I would be labeled a feminist witch. ... That happens every day in one form or other" (2014, pers. comm. 27 June).
39. Another wrote:
40. I'm not a Liberal supporter... but... I also really like your opinion that it's easier to attack the big things. Clever those that wish to maintain power; they just absorb into the fabric of life and continue doing what they are doing without challenge. As adversaries we have to be smarter and more strategic... (2014, pers. comm. 24 June).
41. A Prime Minister who talks of "shirt fronting" (a term I take to mean grabbing the opponent by their collar and speaking aggressively to them from close range) and a Finance Minister who describes an opponent as an "economic girlie-man" continue to evoke exactly the environment that most women do not want in their workplace (ABC 2014).
42. Former Governor-General Quentin Bryce has said former Prime Minister Julia Gillard was often asked "How do you do it?" She wondered in her speech what the question really meant. "Were they really asking how do you turn a blind eye to the sexism, cruelty and overt abuse and get on with running the country?" (Markson 2014) Bryce does not state that Gillard faced the question of "How do you do it?" because she was a woman, but it is not a question that has been asked of male politicians. Even those with very large families have been celebrated for their ability to combine virility and civic duty, not their ability to manage work and family life.
43. Fierravanti-Wells is correct when she states that the current imbalance in the Liberal Party is unlikely to be righted "naturally". This is because it is caused by the inaction of conservative Liberal MPs and senior members of the Party executive. They must be pushed to correct the numbers problem "unnaturally", but, as many Labor women would attest if they were free to speak, the subtle incidental sexism will take longer.

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