

Status of Women
Report 2015

EMILY's List Australia



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“If there are social and cultural attitudes which discriminate against you, all the so called equality and opportunity in the world means nothing, because you don't start at the same place. So, I do support having quotas...It's important that you don't just rely on quotas, you have mentoring, leadership support, positive policy”

- Bill Shorten, 2013

“In any Labor Party pre-selection, there are two things I look for. The involvement of rank-and-file members of the Labor Party and our affirmative action targets and I think that helps us choose the best candidates”

- Tanya Plibersek, 2013



Foreword



“Affirmative Action reform by Labor women, including the establishment of EMILY’s List, has been a victory for strategic, long term gender based advocacy within Australia but there is still much to do.”

- HERstory - the EMILY’s List Australia success story,
Australasian Parliamentary Review, Spring 2014

This status report on the representation of women in Australian parliaments comes two decades after the introduction of the ALP’s first affirmative action rule in 1994.

The report has been compiled by EMILY’s List, which was set up in 1996 by a group of progressive Labor women intimately involved in the campaign to introduce AA. Realising quickly that structural change to the ALP Platform was not going to ensure equality within the party, they set about creating cultural change.

EMILY’s List, which remains Australia’s only political, financial and personal support network for progressive Labor women candidates, was the result of these efforts.

This Status of Women Report shows that the ALP’s quota system has been a success. It has increased ALP women’s representation from single digits in the early 1990s to 43% today. But the report also shows that there is a lot more to be done.

Overall representation of women in our parliaments stands at just over 30%, with Liberal women still struggling for representation in the absence of a quota in their own party.

There are still barriers to women participating in the ALP, too. The fact that the ALP has no female State/Territory or National Secretaries remains a problem for the party. Women continue to face challenges in the timing of meetings for women with children, insufficient training and mentoring as well as having to deal with attitudes amongst some men that deliberately discriminate and want to hold women back.

The ALP’s current national target of 40/40/20 has played a significant role in increasing the number of Australian women MPs in recent years, but 40% is not equal.

In the lead up to National Conference, EMILY’s List is launching a campaign for gender equality - 50% representation of women by 2020. We will be working to strengthen the sanction for failing to comply with targets and ensuring that they are applied in all areas of the party, not just in preselections.

Supporting women and getting them elected to parliament matters. In the past 18 months, EMILY’s List has analysed the impact of its endorsed women MPs in parliament. Assessments of Federal Labor in power from 2007-2013 and the Tasmanian Labor Government 1996 - 2014 have shown that a critical mass of women in our parliaments has a significant impact on legislation of benefit to women, children and their families.

More women need to be at Caucus and Cabinet decision-making tables as their presence brings about a broader, more representative legislative program.

It also makes electoral sense for the ALP to ensure it maintains a steady flow of quality women candidates. Recent election results in Victoria, Queensland and NSW have also shown that women candidates resonate strongly with voters, particularly those unhappy with male-dominated conservative governments. Such results have echoed recent Massachusetts Institute of Technology research showing “a simple way to improve a political party’s chances at the ballot box is to have more women as candidates”.

This report and our campaign to lift the target and strengthen AA across the party has been the work of hundreds of women, across many generations and diverse groups within the party.

We commend it to you.



Tanja Kovac and Senator Anne McEwen
National Co-Convenors



Affirmative action: an ALP success story



“Affirmative Action targets made the Labor Party look around and canvass for women candidates” - Julia Gillard, 2011

“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”

- Paul Keating, 1993

In the early 1990s, Joan Kirner, Carmen Lawrence, and a group of formidable women including former premiers and emerging labor women leaders, like a young Julia Gillard, identified that the ALP was not supporting enough women. They decided to address this through affirmative action and campaigned for a quota for women candidates.

In 1994, an initial target of women being preselected in 35% of all winnable state and federal seats was set, this target was later lifted to 40%.

These targets assisted in increasing the proportion of Labor women federally from 14.5% in 1994 to 38.2% in 2015. In 2014, the Victorian election resulted in women making up 47% of the ALP Caucus and 41% of Cabinet – with all nine Ministers members of EMILY's List.

Labor's affirmative action rules transformed the Australian Parliament, increasing women's representation by 110% and delivering a raft of public policy reforms that have benefited Australian women.

The ALP was acknowledged in a 2012 UN report for its efforts promoting gender equality. The UN said that AA and EMILY's List had demonstrated how a "combination of concerted strategies can bring about increased women's political leadership and gender sensitive policies".

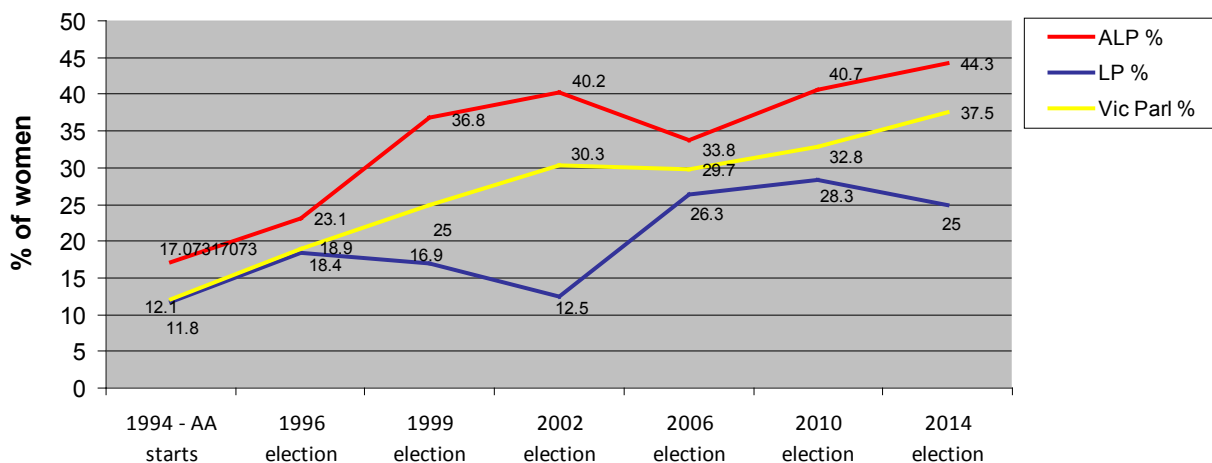
This report found that, after increasing the number of ALP women MPs, Labor's focus on women's health and education programs, anti-domestic violence laws, parental leave and pay equity legislation had changed the perception of these from women's issues to "social policies with relevance for all of Australian society".

More women mean more representative parliaments and better policies.

That's why in 2015, EMILY's List and the National Labor Women's Network are spearheading efforts to convince ALP delegates to again change the party's rules to enshrine all pre-selections being shared equally among men and women candidates.

After all, 40% is not equal.

Party comparison on Women's Representation in Vic State Parliament by Election since ALP Affirmative Action introduced in 1994



Liberal Party lags behind



“So I figure I have failed. But so, I think, has our party at both the state and the federal level. It is obvious that if we want more women in cabinet we need more women in parliament. The current 22 per cent figure is just not good enough. Improving this pathetic figure must be the job of every party member and every party employee.”

- Former Senator Sue Boyce, 2014

While the proportion of ALP women has increased from 14.5% to 43% in 20 years (a 190% increase), the percentage of Liberal women has barely shifted from 13.9 to 23.2% (a 58% increase).

Despite this, the Liberal Party remains opposed to quotas.

Now, however, a new report says “as Liberal female representation in Parliament continues to decline, the party has no option but to develop an action plan to rectify the declining numbers if it is to remain relevant in today’s society”.

Several high profile Liberal women have vented their frustration over the Party’s performance. Former federal member Sharman Stone marked International Women’s Day 2014 by calling for the introduction of a Liberal Party gender quota, while Senator Sue Boyce lamented when giving her valedictory speech in mid 2014, that when she left the Senate there would be no LNP women to take her place.

The recent review of the Victorian Liberal Party found that potential Liberal women candidates are still being asked about their family and personal lives, while their male counterparts are not.

These observations echo a similar review five years previously which identified the problem of women candidates being asked about their marital or parental status as “unacceptable”.

Liberal woman Margaret Fitzherbert has said that even if Liberal members don’t agree with quotas, it is time for them to at least “acknowledge the problem, and stop relying on a blind faith in ‘merit’ to somehow provide a sudden increase in numbers of female MPs”.

The 2015 review report includes 14 recommendations which, it believes, will help bring “attract, promote and empower women to become active”. These recommendations still do not include a gender quota.

Women on the world stage

Australia is currently ranked 42nd on the International Parliamentary Union’s list of women in national parliaments, based on figures showing that women members make up 27% of the House of Representatives and 38% of the Senate.

According to the IPU, 30% representation by women is the minimum benchmark for equal participation. Rwanda remains at the top of the list, with women making up 58% of its parliament since 2013 (64% of the lower house). Rwanda’s 2003 Constitution requires that both sexes shall occupy not less than 30 per cent of decision-making positions.



(<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>)

Measuring the impact of Labor women in parliament



“One of the things that I think the [Labor] Party has to guard against is that people don't get the view that, 'Oh, well, the girls have had their turn, and now it's the boys' turn.' No, the best parliaments are those where the population in its diversity and gender is represented, and so you get democracy and you also get the breadth of views that a parliament needs to represent its community”

- Joan Kirner, 2008

Since 1996, EMILY's List has been dedicated to assisting progressive women to campaign for public office. And the results have been impressive, with more than 400 supported and over 200 elected to parliaments across Australia.

And while increasing the number of women in parliament remains the organisation's primary goal, we have also recently turned our attention to measuring the significant impact of a critical mass of women in parliament.

Our analysis of both the Rudd-Gillard Governments (2007-2013) and the Tasmanian Labor Government (1998-2014) showed very clear links between these governments having increased numbers of progressive women MPs and Cabinet members and the passage of reforms such as Australia's first paid parental leave scheme; pay equity for community sector workers, increased provision of quality, affordable child care and tax and superannuation changes which benefited working women.

With four of the five women in the federal Cabinet between 2011 and 2013 long-time EMILY's List members – Julia Gillard, Penny Wong, Jenny Macklin and Tanya Plibersek – legislation was also passed to introduce Disability Care; remove gender references from Medicare and place RU486 on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Across the 16 years the Tasmanian ALP was in power, EMILY's List supported the election of 10 progressive women to that state's parliament, including Tasmania's first woman Premier Lara Giddings. Six were also assisted to enter the federal parliament.

This government achieved reform in such key areas as family violence; financial assistance and support; discrimination; gender equality; child care; education and reproductive choice.

And while they ultimately strove unsuccessfully to lead Australia in areas such as marriage equality and voluntary assisted dying, the Tasmanian Labor Government created opportunities for these important issues to be debated.

In the foreword to our Tasmanian analysis, Lara Giddings said she was “very proud to be a part of that group of progressive, committed and highly effective women who, as this report shows, have made a significant contribution to bringing about legislative reform of benefit to Tasmanian women, children and families”.

“The Party is happy enough to put women candidates in marginal seats for obvious electoral reasons - they do well. Our challenge is going to be when safe seats come up. So there's a recognition that you have to have outcomes to achieve women being successful in safe seats. Again...you can write down rules but you've got to have collective commitment”

- Bill Shorten, 2013



Measuring the impact of Labor women in parliament



“The work of EMILY’s List is another vital part of the push to ensure that women and men share the power and the decision-making. Australia will be a more rounded, mature society when that happens”

- Sharran Burrow, 1999

Legislation of benefit to women and children: a snapshot of a critical mass of EMILY’s List women in parliament.

Federal Government 2007 - 2013

Same Sex Relationships (Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws) Act 2008

Paid Parental Leave Act 2010

Carer Recognition Act 2010

Family Assistance Legislative Amendment (Child Care Rebate) Act 2011

Australian Human Rights Commission Amendment (National Children’s Commissioner) Act 2012

Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012

National Disability Insurance Scheme 2013

Tasmanian Government 1998 - 2014

Anti-Discrimination Act 1998

Education Amendment (Smaller Class Sizes) Act 2003

Relationships Act 2003

Family Violence Act 2004

Adoption Amendment Act 2013 (to allow same sex adoptions)

Criminal Code Amendment (Sexual Offences against Young People) Act 2013

Reproductive Health (Access to Terminations) Act 2013

Australian
Labor is committed to men and women
in the Party working in equal partnership
it is our objective to have
equal numbers of men and women at all
at all levels in the Party organisation, and in
public office positions the Party holds.
To achieve this the Party adopts a comprehensive
Affirmative Action model of 40:40:20



Established 1996



Financial, political and personal support to women candidates



Julia Gillard, first woman Prime Minister



First indigenous woman Senator, Nova Peris



Anna Bligh, first female Premier of Queensland and first popularly elected Australian women Premier



Lara Giddings, first female Premier of Tasmania



Carol Martin, first of eight Indigenous women MPs



Claire Martin, first female Chief Minister of NT



“We knew we had to change the rules, and we did change the rules, and it took a hell of an effort to do it...

And we were doing it for this band of very bright young women that we could see were being kept out of parliament by the blokes.

And then of course, we thought, well that's terrific, we've changed the rules, but we hadn't changed the culture.

So that's when we set up EMILY's List.”

- Joan Kirner, 2008

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