

Labor but were upset at the class divisions it encouraged between workers and bosses. That set people apart instead of bringing them together as citizens. They saw Labor as a selfish party, caring for the interests of workers instead of those of the whole community.

But the rise of Labor could not be stopped, and in 1909 the progressive liberals were forced into an alliance with conservative liberals. Against their will, almost, they had to help in the creation of the two-party system, based broadly on class differences. That was far from their ideal of citizens being actively involved in public life.

The great democratic advance around 1900 was the granting of the vote to women. The campaigners for women's rights took citizenship very seriously. Unlike men, they had to struggle to get the vote. One of their arguments was that they were already citizens because of the work they did in the home and in helping people in the community. They had the moral quality of citizens, so they should not be denied the political rights of citizens.

Long before women gained the vote, they had taken on more responsibility in the home. They ran the household and brought up the children. It was mothers rather than fathers who taught children how to be neat and tidy, to be polite, and to know right from wrong. The women's campaigners talked of women as more moral and

#### LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS: OBJECTIVES

*In 1945 three women's organisations in Victoria—the Women Citizens' Movement, the League of Women Electors and Women for Canberra—combined to form the League of Women Voters.*

1. To support all reasonable reforms and to encourage women to become better fitted for citizenship by the study of social, political and economic subjects.
2. To safeguard the interests of women and children in legislation.
3. To promote the candidature of approved women for Federal and State Parliaments and Municipal Councils.
4. To further the appointment of approved women as Justices of the Peace and to press their claims as members of Boards, Commissions, Juries, the diplomatic Service and wherever they may share in the making and administration of the Law.
5. To work for World Peace and better International Relationships.

League of  
Women Voters,  
*Women's  
Sphere*,  
Melbourne,  
1989

more responsible than men. They were the true citizens, and men were just—men. Men were a threat to good family life. Too often they wasted their money on drink, were violent to their wives, and insisted on having sex with them and so wore them down with constant pregnancies. The women's movement was not in favour of contraception. It wanted men to control their sexual desires.

Women claimed a key role in society as citizen-mothers. Women needed to be protected as bearers of the next generation of white Australians, and their values could transform society as a whole. They would make sure the laws looked after the health and welfare of children; they would protect women from the sexual demands and violence of men; they would limit or prohibit the sale of alcohol.

After they had acquired the vote, women formed organisations to use their new political power. They were designed to bring together Protestant and Catholic women and to be neither Labor nor Liberal. One of their first jobs was to educate women about the political system, something which had not happened when all men got the vote. The women were opposed to the party system.



*Enid Lyons and Dorothy Tangney, first women members of federal parliament, 1943*

They thought that women would lose their influence if they allowed themselves to be swallowed up by the existing parties. These were run by men, and the women had issues to push that were against the interests and habits of men. They also thought that parties were divisive and that good citizens, men and women, could combine to build a better world.

Women's non-party organisations regularly ran non-party women candidates for parliament. Only one of them was successful. She was Ivy Weber, elected for Nunawading in the Victorian parliament in 1937. She was supported by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the League of Women Voters. Her campaign slogan was 'Mother, Child, Family, Home and Health'. The rest of the handful of women elected in the 60 years after women got the vote were representatives of parties. The first was Edith Cowan, in Western Australia in 1921. She was a Nationalist but upset the party by not toeing the party line. The first women elected to the federal parliament took their seats in 1943, Dorothy Tangney (Labor) and Enid Lyons (United Australia Party).



The following Societies are represented:—

(Under the auspices of the National Council of Women of S.A.)

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| National Council of Women.                      | Methodist Women's Auxiliary, Foreign Missions.                 |
| Adelaide Hospital Auxiliary.                    | Minda Home Association.  |
| Adelaide Rescue Society.                        | Mothers' and Babies' Health Association.                       |
| Army Nurses Fund.                               | Mothers' Union of South Australia.                             |
| Australian Nursing Federation.                  | P.G.C. Old Collegians' Association.                            |
| Australian Board of Missions—Women's Auxiliary. | Presbyterian Women's Missionary Society.                       |
| Baptist Women's League.                         | Prisoners' Aid Society.  |
| Catholic Women's League.                        | Queen's Home Incorporated.                                     |
| Congregational Church Women's Society.          | Royal British Nurses' Association.                             |
| Council of Jewish Women.                        | Salvation Army.  |
| Country Party Association—Women's Section.      | Sailors, Soldiers, Nurses Relatives' Association.              |
| Country Women's Association of S.A.             | Seacliffe Women's Service Association.                         |
| District Trained Nursing Society.               | Sisters' Sub-branch Returned Soldiers' & Sailors' Imp. League. |
| Girls' Friendly Society.                        | South Australian Mothers' Union.                               |
| Girl Guides' Association.                       | Thebarton Women's Service Association.                         |
| Glenslg Women's Service Association.            | Theosophical Society.  |
| Housewives' Association.                        | Travellers' Aid Society.                                       |
| Infant Schools' Mothers' Clubs Association.     | Unitarian Women's League.                                      |
| International Peace Society, Adelaide Branch.   | University Women Graduates' Club.                              |
| Jewish Women's Guild.                           | University Women's Union.                                      |
| Kindergarten Union.                             | Wattle Day League.   |
| Kingswood Women's Guild of Service.             | Women's Christian Temperance Union.                            |
| Lady Victoria Buxton Girls' Club.               | Women Teachers' Association.                                   |
| League of Loyal Women.                          | Women Teachers' Progressive League.                            |
| Liberal Federation—Women's Branch.              | Young Women's Christian Association.                           |
| Liberal Women's Educational Association.        |  |

*Amy Johnson, the woman flyer, welcomed by Adelaide's female citizens, July 1930*

**WHY THE WOMEN'S POLITICAL ASSOCIATION IS NON-PARTY**

At the outset we desire to remove a false impression as to our non-party policy. It is not to be supposed that we are a body of gelatinous creatures, who have no definite political views. We have all got very decided views as to the merits of the various political parties—some of us are protectionists, some are free-traders, some are single taxers, some are labourites, some are socialists, some are anti-socialists, but we differ from those organised on party lines in one important particular. We believe that questions affecting individual honour, private and public integrity and principle, the stability of the home, the welfare of children, the present salvation of the criminal and the depraved, the moral, social and economic injustice imposed on women—we believe that all these questions are greater than party, and that in 9 cases out of 10 they are sacrificed to party interests.

*Women Voter,*  
Melbourne,  
August 1909

So women failed to break the mould of politics. However, they were still influential, chiefly by lobbying politicians on their causes.

The crisis of the 1930s Depression briefly broke the party mould. Middle-class people were frightened by what Labor was planning or talking about, but they did not look to the Nationalist Party to save them. Overnight they formed new organisations of concerned and decent citizens. They felt the party system, both sides of it, did not reflect their values. The revolt of the citizens was short-lived. The new organisations were gathered together in the United Australia movement, which became another party.

Aboriginal people, like women, had to struggle to gain their rights. From the 1930s their demand was that they should be citizens, equal in rights and responsibilities with everyone else. Their rights were gradually restored and they took their victory in the 1967 referendum as a sign that they had become citizens. But soon afterwards Aborigines dropped the talk of being citizens. They referred to their human rights and insisted more on their special separate identity as the indigenous people of the nation. They demanded that their traditional lands be restored and their special culture be recognised.

In the 1960s the women's cause came alive again when it called itself women's liberation. Now women did not make their claims as citizen-mothers. On the contrary, they wanted to be able to avoid being mothers by having cheap and good contraception and the right to have abortions. If they were mothers they wanted to be able to leave their children in the care of others so they could work. Nor did they say they were purer and more moral than men. They wanted to enjoy sex as much as men and to be as free as men in their sexual lives.

They gained many of their new demands by lobbying. One of their most successful organisations was the Women's Electoral Lobby, formed in Melbourne in 1972. It sent off questionnaires to parliamentarians asking their views on women's issues. Few bothered to fill them in. So the women decided to track down and interview all the candidates running for the federal election late in 1972. The newspapers were so interested in the women's movement that they published, for no charge, charts showing the candidates' answers. Women could now decide how to vote on the basis of women's issues.

However, there was less interest, in this new women's movement, in breaking the party system. Instead, women demanded that the parties should run as many women candidates as men and in seats that women could win. By these means the number of women in parliament did rise. Women were still hopeful that when women were present in large numbers, the nature of parliament would change. They believed women would be less interested in abusing opponents and more interested in cooperation. The party battle, they said, was a boys' game.

Australia's political history has not produced a strong Australian ideal of citizenship. When Australians were Britons, they had an identity with a strong civic element. They were citizens of the Empire. They knew that Britain gave parliamentary government to the world and that to be British guaranteed you certain rights and freedoms. This was the central theme of British history, which until the 1960s Australians knew better than their own.

Civic themes are not usually an important part of the Australian history Australians know—convicts, gold-diggers and bushrangers. The political victories of the excluded are remembered—1894 when women first got the vote; 1967 when Aborigines became citizens. But how European men in Australia became citizens, few people know.