

A woman's right to vote - 1

In the early days of the Australian colony, women had little or no say in how their lives or their colony were run. Ruled by their fathers until they were married, they simply changed masters and were ruled by their husbands. Although they were expected to work hard, take responsibilities and pay taxes, they received no recognition for their efforts. In the mid-1880s, some spirited women decided to take action and the suffrage movement was born.



Let me tell you why I am a suffragette.

I understand politics as well as any man and I am able to form my own opinions. I do not need a man to tell me what to think and say. I am intelligent enough to listen to the speeches of politicians and to judge their actions. I believe I have the right to choose who represents me in parliament. If I'm expected to pay taxes and obey laws, then I want to be given suffrage.

I also believe that I have the right to stand for election to Parliament. Surely, in a democratic society, when bills are being passed that affect women, some women should be involved in their making!

We are suffragists. We support the suffragette movement and understand how these women feel. We agree that something should be done to give women equal status in society. We believe the social and moral status of the colony would improve if there was a little female influence in parliament.

We will happily read their leaflets and maybe even attend their meetings, but we wouldn't want to get involved with their more physical activities.



I think it's a disgrace! How can any of these women call themselves ladies? A woman's role in life is to make her husband look good and raise his children. All this political nonsense is an embarrassment to our fair sex.

Women in Parliament? How absolutely absurd! What do they know of political affairs, of trade and the economy? They wouldn't be able to make any rational decisions or judgements. They'd be far too emotional. Besides, who's going to run their homes and look after their children? More importantly, whose going to look after the man of the house when he gets home from a hard day's work?



In 1894, the first national suffrage group was established and the women worked hard to gain support for enfranchisement, being given the right to vote and stand for election.

In 1902, the *Commonwealth Franchise Act* gave non-Indigenous women over the age of 21 the right to vote in federal elections. However, at this stage most women still did not have the right to vote at state level.

Experiences of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal people and/or Torres Strait Islanders, migrants, women and children. (ACHHK114)