

**Women in Federal Parliament: Past,
Present and Future***

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Rosemary Crowley — In the last 200 years or so, women have campaigned to be able to vote in their relevant elections and, by the late nineteenth century, women in the western world had finally won the right to vote! Curiously, Australia, the British colony, was way ahead of the mother country. But the right to vote did not improve the lot of the majority of women—they were still second-class citizens. As our parliaments are the places for making the rules that govern our society, and where things could be changed, we needed women in parliament!

I acknowledge the arrival in this place 70 years ago of Dame Enid Lyons and Dame Dorothy Tangney and the women who followed them. But something more was needed and so emerged the women's movement of the late 1960s and 70s. It was not the first campaign by women but it was timely. The 1970s was a decade of great change—and/or the desire for change—in society, particularly seen in the women's movement, the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) and the development of women's shelters.

The dramatic effect of the WEL publication of the attitudes to women by men in parliament before the 1972 election, and newspapers articles about the same, produced a heady mix of public discussion and debate about the place of women in our society. In Australia it corresponded with the election of the Whitlam Government. Gough Whitlam addressed gatherings with the great words 'men and women of Australia'. I felt very clearly that I was being addressed! Whitlam won the election. Amongst other things he appointed the first women's adviser—in the world, I think, and certainly the first in Australia. Women were having a different presence in the public service and in the community. Free tertiary education made it possible for a great increase in the number of women going to university. Then Whitlam was sacked but the women's movement did not die.

In the 1970s there was a small increase in the number of women entering the parliament—and a further significant increase with the 1983 election of the Hawke Government. There were now six women in the House of Representatives—Joan

* These papers were presented in the Senate Occasional Lecture Series at Parliament House, Canberra, on 18 October 2013. The lectures marked the 70th anniversary of the election of the first women to the federal parliament and the 100th anniversary of women winning the right to vote and stand for election in Australia.

Child, Ros Kelly and Elaine Darling were elected in 1980 and they were joined in 1983 by Wendy Fatin, Jeannette McHugh and Helen Mayer—and all six were Labor. They joined senators from all parties with the majority also Labor—Margaret Guilfoyle, Margaret Reid, Shirley Walters, Florence Bjelke-Petersen and Kathy Sullivan, Liberal and National; with Janine Haines, a Democrat; and Susan Ryan, Jean Hearn, Pat Giles, Ruth Coleman, with new chums Olive Zakharov, Margaret Reynolds and Rosemary Crowley—13 senators and seven of them Labor.

I was one of those 1983 senators and when I was elected I was the first woman the South Australian Labor Party had ever sent to Canberra, a mere 89 years after women had won the right to both vote and stand for parliament in South Australia. I believe I am the first federal woman minister from South Australia but I do not match the achievements of Amanda Vanstone, who served 10 years in cabinet, and is the longest serving woman cabinet minister.

The Labor government was elected with a platform that included the document *Towards Equality*.¹ That document spelled out 42 proposals to advance the position of women in Australian society and to give them ‘a choice, a say and a fair go!’ It included sex discrimination legislation, affirmative action proposals, child care, women’s health programs, equal employment programs, anti-domestic violence campaigns, education programs for girls, women and sports and superannuation and Medicare and more. The document also had clear descriptions of mechanisms to see all these things happen, including government mechanisms, like the Office of the Status of Women and women’s desks in departments and a women’s budget paper.

It was Labor senator Susan Ryan who had carriage of the sex discrimination and affirmative action legislation. The Sex Discrimination Bill led to some of the most outrageous claims and contributions I ever heard in the Senate. The bill actually made it unlawful to treat people differently in a number of areas, like housing, education, financial matters, employment and clubs on the basis of their sex, marital status, pregnancy or sexual preference. According to those senators who opposed the bill, this was going to lead to disaster—women would no longer want to stay at home, men would no longer open doors for women, women would no longer want to have children and much more outrageous nonsense. The major misunderstanding was that the bill was all about women and that of course set the misogynist hares running. In fact the bill was about removing different treatment of men and women in the designated areas.

Susan Ryan copped an awful attack, both in the parliament and in the newspapers, and both personal as well as political. After a lengthy debate, the bill passed with a

¹ *The Australian Labor Party and the Status of Women: Towards Equality*, ALP, Canberra, 1982.

number of opposition senators crossing the floor to vote with the Labor government on this bill. The world did not stop spinning. Australia was not overrun by communists. Women did go on having babies, caring for them, cooking, getting married, and much more. And the media changed their stories and articles—the mad attacks stopped.

The bill was designed so that anyone experiencing discrimination could easily bring their complaint to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, and it was free and complaints were mainly settled without recourse to courts and legal expense by getting the parties involved to sit down together and sort things out. The bill had another great design. At the end of each year there had to be a report of the complaints brought and to the shock of many, the first year had complaints from mainly working class girls about wrongful dismissal and from men in the army on the grounds that if they were single they had to live in barracks, use the mess hall and the ablutions block but if they were married they got a four-bedroom house—discrimination on the grounds of marriage status. No one had predicted this outcome but it did two things—it helped men and boys to know the law was there for them too, and it led to the defence forces changing the accommodation they have for all their members.

The affirmative action legislation which followed required that companies with more than 100 employees establish affirmative action proposals for women. An affirmative action agency was established to oversee the changes and to assist in its implementation. The establishment of a committee to work with business meant that there was little objection and the bill passed easily.

In 1984 Bob Hawke recommended that all government departments prepare an assessment of the impact on women of all ongoing and new programs and to identify priorities for women—to go with the new women's budget paper.

I thought that when we got into government with increased numbers of women, it would be all systems go for changes for women, amongst other things. I have to say I was quite taken aback when I discovered many women, not Labor, were opposed to our reforms, like sex discrimination legislation and affirmative action. They were also opposed to Medicare, one of the greatest benefits for women ever. Women were the ones who had to take sick family members to the doctor and when they could no longer afford that, they either shopped the doctors or had the family, particularly the children, get sick and sicker. Medicare was, amongst other things, a great women's reform.

However, the Labor government was in office and all these things happened—and much more. The women's budget paper showed how much each department spent on

women and on men. It was a huge eye opener. For example the sports department showed that men's hockey had half the number of members as did the women but it got twice the amount of money. That got changed. What the Labor women and government did was to change things and change them for the better. We put new items into the parliament and onto the agenda. I remember Labor senator Pat Giles telling me that she had put uterus onto the Senate agenda.

I am not sure if it was Pat or me, but one of us asked Mr President if he was aware that Hansard, that claimed to be a record of all that was said in the Senate, was editing what we said into the third person masculine. Men and women became men, he and she became he. I had learnt from Gough Whitlam to read my Hansard every day and so I picked up these changes. There was sucking in of breath along the corridors of power but we got that changed. Now Hansard does record what is said.

Susan Ryan and I established early morning exercises in parliament which were great as preparation for those very long days. Susan knew of my interest in women's sport and so she appointed me to chair a government inquiry into women, sport and the media. It recommended the establishment of a Women's Sports Promotion Unit in the Australian Sports Commission and increased funding for women's sport. I have to say that 30 years on, not much has changed for financial assistance for our women sports champions—though the recent netball game against the Kiwis was live on TV and that is a great advance. The questions we asked back then are still pertinent today—women's sport does not get fair recognition or support. But it is not riven with scandalous and outrageous salaries or betting scandals.

Susan Ryan also established women's study courses in philosophy departments of a number of universities. Women went into those courses in considerable numbers. If they passed their first year, they had automatic entry into university—and many women made the grade and got university degrees. They then entered the workforce and contributed to the economics of the country. They were all older and had no need of child care. They were an economic benefit and I wonder if anyone has done the numbers and measured their contribution.

Yes, we women changed the agenda but the changes for women and for society were much more than items on the agenda. What changed after the sex discrimination legislation and the other reforms was a great broadening or transforming of society itself. We the people of Australia now had a different way of understanding the country we lived in, and of how we talked about it. There was a new conversation, a new language, a new culture in Australia. It may have taken time to change but change it did.

If you find it hard to accept that claim, then look at our society now and consider the changes for our sons and daughters, if not for our grandchildren. We now have many more women and men working in non-traditional jobs. The changes have expanded our economy as well as our conversation and culture. No, the changes did not happen overnight but happen they did.

The society we now live in is so much better for expanding the opportunities for everyone. That is why those people still missing from the main story must have our consideration, whether they are Aboriginal, Asians, migrants or newcomers from wherever, refugees and asylum seekers and always the women as well as the men.

From all of this, it follows that more women into parliament would be a good thing. But how to achieve that? There is an argument against increasing the number of women in parliament, as we do in the Labor Party, by preserving a number of places for women, because it leads to claims that such selection necessarily means tokenism and picking second-rate women.

I am amazed that some of the Liberal women still persist with this, when it is patently clear that excellent women have been elected into the Labor ranks. It irks me that one argument says that if you have to pick a woman, then you will only get token choices or second-rate candidates. It is not only offensive, it is wrong. Labor people are able to do two things at once—choose a woman and a woman of quality. These arguments sit strangely in a party which has a requirement that 50 per cent of all their Liberal committee members must be women. This was established by the women in Toorak in the 1940s when Bob Menzies was trying to establish the Liberal Party and he needed money. He approached the good matrons of Toorak who said yes, he could have the money, as long as 50 per cent of Liberal committee members were women. And so it has been ever since. And why is it never said of men? If we have to pick men, why is that not tokenism?

Another important outcome of our Labor rules changes—to guarantee 35 per cent women at that stage—was that a Liberal woman parliamentarian said to me in the corridors of power, that our success made it that much easier for the Liberal women. And I was able to tell her, after Liberal women's success in a subsequent election, that her party's success had the same sort of benefit for Labor women.

If you look at the figures today, you will find the evidence that the number of Labor women in all our parliaments is now 41.7 per cent, significantly more than the conservative women. There was a continuing increase of women of all parties in the 1980s and 90s. Three Liberal women joined the Senate, including Amanda Vanstone, Jocelyn Newman and Sue Knowles. There was also a Democrat and independent

woman from Western Australia, one new Labor senator and also three Labor women in the House. Carmen Lawrence joined in 1994, Cheryl Kernot in 1990 and Natasha Stott Despoja in 1995. I am not going to list all the women who have entered. That percentage is now 40 per cent for the ALP and the figures bear out the effectiveness of this process.

Because I was the first ALP woman from South Australia, I established a number of ways to keep in touch and inform women, from small groups to meetings with other women's organisations and holding functions with good and interesting speakers. I appreciated that the women were very supportive and proud of me and of women in parliament—mostly.

There are two stories from my time in parliament. I visited Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, and met with a newly formed women and the law group. I was hoping to ask them questions but I never got one out. They devoured me with their questions—'what is your parliament like?', 'Can you describe how it takes place?' I told them how there is a very big room with a table in the centre: that the speaker sits at the top of the table to keep order and that one party sits on one side of the room and the other party on the other side. They looked at me with huge wide eyes. 'In the same room?', they asked. I regard that as one very sad statement of the effect of years of civil war. Yes, in our country we sit across from each other in the same room, testament to our country and its systems, with all their imperfections. It is also a very good reminder of just what we have in this country and why we should value it more and rubbish it less.

I went on a delegated legislation conference in London with the wonderful Annie Lynch, Deputy Clerk of the Senate. She was very proud that she had an all-women delegation, senators Pat Giles, Kay Patterson, Bronwyn Bishop and me. I spoke about the Scrutiny of Bills Committee, established by Alan Missen, a Liberal from Victoria, before I came into parliament. Annie later sent me the speech from the House of Lords where they quoted me on their way to establishing a scrutiny committee in their own parliament—a thoughtful act on Annie's part and much appreciated. Annie Lynch was a woman pioneer herself.

I mention this to remind me of how wonderful the staff of the Senate were and I suspect still are. They went out of their ways to assist us in the course of our work. I served on a number of Senate committees and later chaired some and the secretariat staff, along with the library staff, were just wonderful. I thank them all again. I also thank my personal staff again—much of what is attributed to us is the work of so many others.

Yes, I want to see more women in our parliaments. It is beyond debate, to my mind, that if we promote democracy, particularly its representative dimension, then we must accept 50 per cent women in our parliaments and nothing less. This must be the goal for the next century into the next millennium. Until women stand equal alongside men, we will not have achieved.

What our recent parliamentary history shows is that more women in parliament means just that—more women—but it is no guarantee of improvement of conditions for women.

I support the increased number of Liberal women and women of non-Labor parties in parliament and I congratulate them and at the same time, I oppose their policies, especially the things the Liberal governments did in 1996, and since, to dismantle the government machinery to assist policies and programs for women. One of the women elected in 1996 was Pauline Hanson who led a virulent and misinformed campaign against Australian Aboriginals and Asian migrants. I strongly opposed what she said. But if men of very different attitudes have been elected to our parliaments, then the same must also hold for women.

Against these negatives is the excellent counter of the RU486 legislation. Women from four parties in the Senate united to submit a bill to allow the importation of this medication for abortion. What an example, and what a success!

I have raised the importance of the cultural change that the women and the Labor government effected. It goes to the important point I made earlier—that when women were able to have a voice and to be listened to, they opened huge possibilities for the whole of society. They dramatically extended the agenda, they broadened the topics for discussion, they increased the economic wealth, the range of jobs, the education provision, the range of research and the intelligence of the community. Perhaps most importantly, they opened new areas for discussion, new items on the political agenda, and the language that went with that. And I love that the conversations—the cultural changes for women—are now happening in so many other countries. These changes enrich our country; so it is for our world.

Not long after I entered parliament, I was accosted by a Liberal man in parliament who challenged with ‘it’s not fair, why don’t we have a men’s health program?’ Back then I was inclined to say ‘you have been running the country for a century so what’s stopping you!’ Now I realise that back then there was no conversation about men’s health, no language about it, except about how they got heart attacks from the pressure of their busy lives. It was not talked about. Women started the conversation for women’s health and that has led to men’s health expansion to many areas—

significantly to depression and Beyond Blue started by Jeff Kennett and prostates are now on television. See what we started!

The parliamentary way is not the only way to advance the cause of women, but it comes with the weight and the protection of the law and once in place, it is not so easy to dismantle.

I want to finish with a few words about our recent prime minister, Julia Gillard. There have been many women, on all sides of politics, who have been ministers, speakers, president of the Senate; women as heads of banks and on boards; women as premiers; women governors in three states, and one woman Governor-General. All of these women have acquitted themselves very well. Never have I read or heard any attack on those women except the premiers. There has been some attack but nothing like the vicious, virulent, persistent, sexist campaign waged against Julia Gillard after she became prime minister.

Some political cartoons were rough but it was the sexist ones that reached new levels—unheard of levels—of gross and disgusting sexism. It was fiercely overboard and it is worthy of some significant analysis—by others than me.

I liked that Julia said that her being the first woman prime minister has made it that much easier for other women to become prime minister in the future. I am sure that is true and I hope that the standards set for Julia Gillard are never repeated again. I have not checked the cartoons from 1943 but I am sure that there were never any to match 2013!

In the days after Julia Gillard was replaced I could not believe the air space in our news, papers, television and other sources. A letter to *The Age* on 16 September 2013 by Anne Cooper of New South Wales says in part:

Since Gillard was removed as prime minister by her party there have been no references to the sex of either of the male leaders, no reference to the authenticity of their relationships, no mention of their male privilege and no implication that their behaviour or performance is in any way related to gender. Every woman and man in this country who possesses an ounce of self-awareness has been deeply and painfully affected by the treatment of the former PM.

The wonderful example and lead that earlier women in parliament have provided, like Amanda Vanstone and I, has been set back by the treatment of our first woman prime minister. I trust that her generosity and dignity will lead to a better and balanced

picture so that in the not too distant future Australia has more women prime ministers who will be accepted in their own country.

I had the great good fortune to be in parliament in a government committed to improving things for women, with a number of women in its ranks. Women in parliament made a difference and the first steps were taken all those 70 years ago by two gracious women.

Amanda Vanstone — In looking at the records of the number of women in parliament I was shocked to realise that up until the recent election I had met and known reasonably well most of the ministers and many of the members.

Anyone can look up the records and see the numbers for themselves. What I will try and do is to give some of the flavour and feeling of being in the parliament in the eighties, nineties and early two thousands. In 15 short minutes it is impossible to do more than metaphorically run with a supermarket trolley down the aisles in my brain and pick out a few products. This is not a considered treatise.

How lucky was I to have my first years in parliament when both Susan Ryan and Dame Margaret Guilfoyle were in the Senate. Dame Margaret, a Liberal, was the first female in cabinet with a portfolio. There is often a lot of focus on the first this or that which is understandable. That might mean that the second and subsequent office holders get less credit than they should. Susan Ryan followed her. Sure she was not the first federally but she was the first for the Labor Party.

Margaret was an iron fist in a velvet glove. Labor senator John Button's remarks on her valedictory, that he would look across the chamber and amongst swine and see a rose, are testimony to her capacity. She kept perspective.

I recall walking over with her from the old Parliament House to the Lobby restaurant for a lunch at which some New South Wales party members and donors had wanted to meet some of 'the women'. Our party meeting had run over time and we were a little late. Sensing my concern about being late she gently but firmly made the correct situation crystal clear. We were senators doing our job, we are employed by the people of Australia and grateful as we are as Liberals to donors and simpatico as we may be with party members, we do not work for them, they are not our bosses.

On another occasion there was a party room debate as to whether we would move a censure motion over the government's treatment of a particular public servant believed by many to be Liberally-minded. Sensing an imminent biff many were into

the fray and baying for blood. Margaret sat quietly and as the debate drew to a close made her contribution. She politely admitted she was simply unaware of how many of the speakers had direct knowledge of this matter (which I read as a sweet and charming code for: I am unaware because no direct knowledge has been evident in the debate and I suspect none of you have any). She recalled her knowledge of this person and his record under the previous Liberal government in dealing with a minister and her attitude was to say the least not positive. She made it clear that if there was to be a motion she would not be supporting it. I cannot recall now whether she said she would be absent from the vote or whether she said she would make her views plain if necessary. Maybe nothing was said on that. Her contribution made many who had spoken in the heat of the moment, more out of a desire to attack Labor than out of knowledge or principle, recant. It was calm, strong, informed and pointed. It was impressive. As I recall no motion was put.

In the old Parliament House, the architecture or more specifically the layout and facilities ensured ministers intermingled more with backbenchers of both sides. There was no ministerial wing. Rooms had a hand basin, a bench, a few cups and saucers and an electric kettle. The bathrooms were intermingled throughout the hallways. That meant the corridors had people going to and fro from the cafeteria, the dining room and the bathroom. That flow of people in turn meant that everyone would see each other much more frequently than in the new Parliament House.

That is how as a relatively new young backbencher for the opposition I ended up talking to the famous Susan Ryan whilst washing our hands in the bathroom. I still remember her saying that when my lot finally got into government I would be grateful for having had the experience of opposition. At the time I thought ‘this is easy to say from government’, but I know it was true.

One night I went with a staffer to her office to congratulate her on the passage of a bill for which I had not voted. The fact I did not like the bill did not mean it was not an achievement. Senator Crowley may remember this night. The then Finance Minister Peter Walsh was there and there was a justifiably celebratory mood. Her response to my arrival was not laced with the sourness that comes from narrow world views and petty politicians. Quite the opposite. She happily announced that perhaps tonight was a good night to break out that one bottle of ‘ideologically unsound’ champagne. How could I say no?

Both Guilfoyle and Ryan are the real trailblazers for women and for their respective parties. Neither played the victim card. They simply did their jobs and did them well.

Neither would have had a particularly easy time of it. The difficulty may not have been any overt discrimination. Rather it is just a fact of life that if you are the new one in and you are from a different world you will not feel as included as all the others do. They know each other, perhaps have overlapping networks they share that you do not. You will necessarily feel a bit on the outer if only in a social sense.

To the extent that agenda issues are discussed 'off line', that can mean that you are not in those discussions, because you do not go to the bar for a drink before dinner, or play tennis with the guys in the morning or whatever. You may say, 'So what? In the end, agenda items have to be dealt with at the meeting. Everyone gets to have their say at the meeting.'

But if informally, with no intention to lobby or to exclude, over the course of a few days before a meeting, discussion has taken place that leads many at the meeting to one particular point of view then there is much less chance that the outsider, however informed, will get much of a chance to sway opinion.

If Bob has already told Simon, Martin and Richard informally over the last few days that he thinks ABC, he is unlikely to have a female come in and occasion him to go back on what he told Simon, Martin and Richard. There are two exceptions to this. When ABC is not very important and everyone is happy to let other opinion hold sway is one. But if ABC is not important it probably will not get into the informal chatter before meetings anyway. That is more for the interesting and important stuff. The other example is where the outsider presents compelling evidence that ABC is a bad idea.

That might need a little explanation. Compelling does not mean strong and persuasive argument to the contrary. In politics and policy in particular there are usually a number of possible courses of action and the debate is about preferred direction from a range of roughly equally safe options rather than a good vs evil option. The outsider has little chance of changing the course of the meeting on preferred safe options. Generally to get a look in one might need to show the preferred option is high risk or to show that an alternative option offers much greater reward in terms of better outcomes or electorate approval.

From my own experience over time in parliament, being the only woman or one of two women at a meeting is a particular experience. Very few men go to meetings where they are the only male and certainly even less male politicians find themselves in this position. Men or women may have changed since those days but my recollection is that men were used to holding the floor, or to rephrase that, unaccustomed to women doing so.

At the same time men wanted to be seen to 'do the right thing' and therefore your opinion was often sought when your perspective was not likely to add anything new because it was an issue where different gender simply did not bring a different perspective. Being the odd one or two out is not particularly difficult, it is just that the constancy of it is a bit wearing.

We all understand that a lot of small talk goes on before a meeting, whilst awaiting everyone's arrival or during a coffee or lunch break. Where this is focused on the issue of the day or politics generally there is no issue. But a reasonably sized group of men, predominantly from the eastern states might want to talk about rugby union or rugby league or cricket or racing. That can leave many women out in the cold. (At least Victorians understand AFL.) It is important to note that no one is trying to be exclusionary.

I am certainly not suggesting that women, when together will focus on recipes and handy housekeeping tips. I am simply pointing out that left to our own devices any large group of one gender will not necessarily be a comfortable place for one or two of the opposite gender.

Every now and then I would have women MPs and senators and sometimes just the women senators for end-of-session drinks. We would laugh and tell stories about the guys who took themselves too seriously on both sides, the ones who were a bit slow off the mark and one who would often be so openly fake with his compliments that we were all revolted. All parties were there and nobody was, shall I say, indiscreet. I can assure you no man would have felt very comfortable and the reverse applies when the boys get together.

Guys are just going about their business and being themselves. They have grown up in a culture that led them to be in all-male meetings that led them to talk blokey talk when they are together. Having women around was as new for them as it was for the women.

Even in the late eighties and early nineties when there were significantly more women, albeit still, as now, a minority, women were seen as being 'new'.

Some of the men would seek to make light-hearted jokes if two or more women were dining together. 'Ah ha, the sisterhood are dining tonight!' It was ridiculous. Was it out of the need to appear savvy or did they feel a little unsettled? Who knows? But what I do know is no one would seek to make either a comment or joke about a group of guys eating together. Some would stop by the table and make useless idle chatter. Perhaps to be nice, condescending as that attitude is (poor women they need a bit of

TLC) or more likely to confirm in their own minds and that of colleagues that they were SNAGS.

This reminds me of the story of the woman who says when she wants to go out, have a few drinks, relax, take in a movie and have some chat about interesting issues she goes out with the girls. When she is looking for a man she looks for a DIMBO (deliciously inviting male (brains optional)).

It is important to focus on the history of women moving into parliament as we are doing today. Nonetheless one way to help women parliamentarians is to stop asking them in the electorate to talk about being a woman in parliament. Stop tying them to that goldfish bowl. If we want to help them we will ask them to talk about the economy or taxation or industry. Stop making them the issue and give them a platform for the hard issues of the day. Women will succeed by doing their job well, not by being seen first as female and second as competent.

Reg ‘the toecutter’ Withers once responded to a question from me about what he thought by saying, ‘You’re paid the same as me, elected by the same. You figure it out’. He may have been attempting to be rude, surely not, but I did not take it that way. To me it was an affirmation of equality.

One of the difficulties for women in politics then was a particular weakness of many men. Ego is very important to them. Unlike women they have not been toughened up with centuries of being the downtrodden underdog. Their egos are thus particularly fragile.

A young man who worked for me was kind enough to point out to me what is now glaringly obvious. He said I thought if I went into a meeting with all the facts and figures and a well thought-out argument that I stupidly expected to win the day. He pointed out that if in his time in the public service another bloke had ‘showed him up’ at a meeting it would not be forgotten. The male ego, he pointed out, just hates others looking smarter. In front of other men, a woman being the perpetrator would be regarded as much more humiliating.

A road test confirmed that if I used almost the same strong language a male colleague had used when ‘going around the table’ I would be seen as being a very aggressive female whereas he would be simply making a strong point.

Here is a tip for dealing with those old world guys, young as they may be, who just have not moved into the century where women are equal. When they say something you think is ridiculous, do not verbalise it. He will go straight into defence mode,

which sets up barriers. Just say, 'that's a really interesting idea' (as you tell yourself how crazy is interesting), then say you know lots of people who would agree with that (there are lots of crazies out there). He will feel relaxed, not under attack. Then say something like 'Just before you make your mind up on this ...' (He thinks this affirms him as the decision maker) 'there are just a few risks to watch out for, so as to ensure you don't end up getting burned' (He is thinking you want to help him). He will be ready to listen.

Much is said about women being able to achieve their full potential. We see in the paper today women who have made tremendous contributions across so many fields. It is tempting to think that it is a little easier for women in fields outside politics because of the nature of politics. It is a bit clubby, very competitive and combative and very public. In reality every industry has its peculiarities and the women recognised today have surely each faced their own set of problems.

Much is also said about selection on merit, both for preselection and for becoming office holders. A former senator and then MP, Kathy Sullivan, used to often respond to that remark with the question 'Really, how did you get here?'

On that topic the real benchmark is not whether effective women get their due. The truest test of equality is whether, if you think of the least effective man in a job, an equally ineffective woman could get that job?

A parliament, a ministry and a cabinet must reflect the community. The Liberal organisation gave John Howard a victory that swept many women into parliament. The time is obviously here to regain that focus and as MPs and senators retire make special efforts to entice competent women into taking on the role.

There are so many issues where gender perspectives are the same and others where they are not. I can recall a bill to deal with the sex slave trade which was necessary because Australia's slavery laws were the old adopted English laws. We can forgive lawmakers for not imagining that we would need new ones in Australia.

As the then Justice Minister I was able to introduce such legislation and finally it was passed. No doubt it has been amended and amended since the late 90s. I am not sure how quickly a male would have done that. In any event if you want to understand how sexist and shallow our society can be, consider the media's first response to the release of some intelligence highlighting the problem. The phone calls came thick and fast: 'Have you got one, have you got one we can interview?' She would have been just a piece of meat for the media machine.

Just a few products from the supermarket aisle.

Laura Tingle — When Bill Shorten’s election as leader of the federal parliamentary Labor Party was announced, the *Sydney Morning Herald* columnist Mike Carlton, with tongue in cheek, tweeted:

Mr Shorten looked radiant in a tailored charcoal suit, crisp white shirt and crushed mulberry tie.

A younger female tweeter responded, also with just a touch of irony:

I thought his hips looked big.

It is true, isn’t it, that what male politicians are wearing, or whether it makes their bum look big, is not always the first port of call in the way they are portrayed in the media, though there are exceptions such as Bob Katter and his very large, very Queensland hat.

It is hard not to start a review of the way the media has portrayed female parliamentarians on the very sore point of the obsessions with what they look like, if for no other reason than we have just gone through a tumultuous period in federal politics where what the prime minister was wearing, what she looked like, became an essential part of the daily political discussion.

Images are so powerful and the media, both because it works in shorthand and because it reflects back on us the views in our community, is prone to stereotyping.

A UNESCO report in 2009 described the common images of women in the media: ‘the glamorous sex kitten, the sainted mother, the devious witch, the hard-faced corporate and political climber’.²

Perhaps one of the reasons the media has had such trouble over the years—not just here but around in the world—in finding a way to portray women in politics is because so many of those stereotypes do not quite work. And of course, that may be partly because none of those stereotypes go to basic questions of competence and properly won authority.

² UNESCO, *Getting the Balance Right: Gender Equality in Journalism*, International Federation of Journalists, Belgium, 2009, p. iv, http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/files/28397/12435929903/gender_booklet_en.pdf/gender_booklet_en.pdf.

I am going to talk a lot about stereotypes, and how the ones applied to women in federal parliament by the media have evolved over the years. But if I was to only venture down that path, I would be doing a considerable disservice to the history of women in the federal parliament. I sometimes think that the frustration with dealing with the stereotypes overlooks both what actually happens in the parliament, the considerable advances that have been made by women in becoming accepted in parliament, their enormous contribution to policy and politics and also the positive changes that have taken place in the way the media portrays women MPs, certainly during the almost 30 years I have worked in the Canberra Press Gallery.

The thing that struck me when I started preparing this paper was how utterly shocking the numbers were—and had been—when I arrived in Canberra. In 1987, it was not only unusual for there to be female ministers, it was still astonishingly unusual for there to be federal politicians. There had only been 25 female senators since federation. But more extraordinarily from the perspective of 2013, just 11 female members of the House of Representatives elected in 86 years.

When I arrived in Canberra, there had been one Liberal cabinet minister—Margaret Guilfoyle—and one Labor cabinet minister—Susan Ryan. I remember when Ryan was appointed education minister by Bob Hawke in 1983. The cartoonist Patrick Cook drew Hawke saying something to the effect of ‘I have already made my biggest decision ... finding a job important enough for Susan Ryan’.

It was light-hearted but the cartoon reflected the mood of the times. Women in parliament were a trend that male politicians knew they should ascribe to. We were still talking serious novelty value in the media. It was post women’s lib but a time when the media went out looking for stories about successful women in business and politics but found them quite thin on the ground. The issue of the role of women was, by 1983, part of the fabric of the new government. Anne Summers was poached to head the Office of the Status of Women in the Prime Minister’s Department.

Yet I remember very well from this time the conundrum faced by my good friend Jillian Broadbent, who went on to be a member of the Reserve Bank board and the Chair of the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. In the early 1980s she was a director of one of Australia’s most successful merchant banks. Invariably, when journalists wanted to write a piece about women in business they went to her, because they had found earlier profiles in the clippings. Broadbent got to the point where she declined, in her wonderfully gracious way, to be part of any more of these pieces. ‘If people just keep seeing me and a couple of other women in all these pieces’, she said, ‘they’ll come to the view that we are the only ones who have actually made it’.

So the more sophisticated end of the media was a bit stuck: on the one hand you wanted to profile prominent women where you found them. On the other, there was always the risk that by writing 'gee and she's a woman' pieces, you were continuing the idea that it was unusual for women to be in such roles. Which at the time it was! And whether it was male politicians coming to terms with female arrivals, or the media, it was a little unclear how to proceed.

When I arrived in Canberra, the numbers of female senators was starting to grow but the number of MPs in the House of Representatives was still relatively small. There were 15 senators but just five female MPs. One of the first MPs to get a lot of media attention was Ros Kelly, the Member for Canberra. Ros got a lot of media attention. Not a lot of it was positive. A 1995 profile of Kelly notes that:

From the press has come allegations of using her children, her dog, her football team (the Canberra Raiders), a cooking book she wrote for constituents, her hair and more to further her political career.³

Her travails in dealing with the attitudes of her fellow MPs were also recorded:

In 1981, she won an apology from Sir Billy Snedden for a sexist innuendo in parliamentary debate. Two years later, the Coalition MP Bruce Goodluck suggested neglect in her return to work within a week of the birth of her first child.⁴

Mick Young was said to have commented when he was stood down as Special Minister of State during the Paddington Bear affair in 1984 that 'Within half an hour, Ros was in my office taking measurements for curtains'.⁵

In 1987, *Woman's Day* ran a profile of Kelly when she was appointed a junior minister. The heading? Ros Kelly: 'I'd quit politics for my family'.

Why have I spent so much time on Ros Kelly? Partly because she was becoming a minister at the time I arrived in Canberra but importantly she was the first Labor woman from the House of Representatives to become a minister.

As I mentioned earlier, there had always been more women in the Senate than the House and there is a very different atmosphere in the red chamber which I think was reflected in the way women in the parliament were portrayed. The more civilised

³ *Sunday Age*, 10 September 1995, Agenda, p. 3.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

nature of the Senate, its less gladiatorial atmospherics, its focus on the details of policy, tended to filter down to the way women senators have been portrayed over the years. If you think of the names that come to mind in terms of prominent federal female politicians in the last 30 years, so many of them are senators: Margaret Guilfoyle, Susan Ryan, Janine Haines, Cheryl Kernot, Rosemary Crowley, Amanda Vanstone, Bronwyn Bishop, Sarah Hanson-Young, Penny Wong. It is not a question of 'softer' treatment in the media, just the likelihood that, earlier on, the substance of what they were saying was likely to be able to cut through, rather than the stereotypes about the fact they were women.

It has been different in the House. I have always thought that there is no tougher test for a politician than standing at the despatch box in the House of Representatives. My personal view is that few women over the years have actually been able to muster the sense of authority and control over the chamber that you need to really pass that test. (Of course, not all blokes manage it either but it has been even harder for women and it has influenced the way they have been reported on in the media.)

Ros Kelly, for example, never quite conquered the House from the despatch box. The women who have managed it who immediately come to my mind are Carmen Lawrence, Bronwyn Bishop, Julie Bishop, Julia Gillard as deputy prime minister, and Tanya Plibersek.

I have also talked about Kelly because I think the 1980s really started to see the long road proper travelled upwards by women in federal politics in Australia. We had moved on from militant feminism to a time when women were seeking to get into politics simply because they wanted to do it and had the qualifications for the job.

There is a fascinating Canadian study from the 1990s that reviewed the changing media portrayals of women. There are lots of similar studies conducted in Europe and the US more recently with very similar findings. And it is a depressingly similar story to the Australian one, showing a certain lack of creativity in media stereotypes, and I think gives us some insights into the universal roots of the recent debate in Australia about the treatment of our first female prime minister.

The Canadian study argues that in the first two-thirds of the century, two strategies were used to 'normalise' women in politics, for which the authors of the study mean a woman's 'femaleness' was neutered. The stereotypes were built around a female MP's family relationships. Various examples given were women elected to parliament who were represented as the wife/widow, and thus as appendages of powerful husbands whose seats they had inherited. 'This implied that they held power not in their own right but in someone else's name', the study said,

Golda Meir and Indira Gandhi, two powerful prime ministers, in contrast, were degendered in a different way: as ‘grandmother Golda’ and ‘Nehru’s daughter’ respectively. Their political status was lowered because their actions were viewed through a family lens.⁶

The other set of stereotypes focused negatively on a female politician’s sexual capacities. For example ‘spinster’ was a stereotype with a pedigree going back to the suffragette movement of the turn of the twentieth century.

The study argues that one of the things that changed the stereotypes was neither changes in the way female politicians operated nor the way the media operated but the fact that, in many democracies, a gender gap started to be observed between the voting intentions of men and women which forced both the political establishment and the media to rethink the way politics worked.

The result was a whole new set of stereotypes emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, the most spectacular and most visible being that of the ‘superwoman’, applied to a ‘young, intelligent, active and ambitious woman who succeeds on “all levels” and “has it all”’. She combined a family with her career, and was seen as being ‘as groomed as she is competent’ in her ministerial responsibilities. The superwoman embodied both ‘traditional characteristics (family and children) with the modern traits of the businesswoman (superior IQ, enormous capacities for work, an iron constitution as well as charm and generosity)’.⁷

A second stereotype was that of ‘the champion’, which tended to be applied to women politicians ‘of a certain age’ who had led a more traditional life:

Often a woman narrated in this way has come to politics after she has proved herself in another domain, perhaps business, sports or various charitable organizations. Her children are usually older, and her family obligations more compatible with her public representation duties. She, too, pays attention to her grooming, is open to the media and aware of her previous accomplishments.⁸

There were others as well including being ‘one of the boys’ who benefit from a kind of acceptance but are, at the same time, ‘continually reminded that they are an

⁶ Kathy Megyery (ed.), *Women in Canadian Politics: Toward Equality in Representation*, vol. 6, Dundurn Press, Toronto, 1991, p. 136.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 143.

⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 143–4.

anomaly and may be placed in the unenviable position of being used as an alibi *against* women's interests'.⁹

The study noted that the important difference in the two eras of stereotypes was that, at least, the stereotypes had moved from women politicians being defined by what happened at home to being defined by their relationships in the public domain.

Built upon those stereotypes were narratives that applied only to women and which, amongst other things:

- tended to ignore the substance of a female MP's speeches in favour of her personal characteristics (like her looks, dress, hair)
- made women politicians responsible for women as a class and
- used 'feminism' to denote a negative personal characteristic.

The study argued that women MPs were evaluated differently to men:

- Women had to live up to a considerably higher standard of excellence than do men.
- The political performance of women was judged only by the extremes of the scale (good and bad), while men are evaluated across the whole scale, including the mediocre middle range.
- Women politicians had to live up to a moral code of sexual abstention not imposed on men.¹⁰

I have to say that all these things sound exceptionally familiar to me.

Ros Kelly observed at the end of her career, 'The media either absolutely loves you or absolutely hates you. There's no in between. Carmen [Lawrence] called it the Madonna-or-the-whore approach. I think it's absolutely right'.¹¹

Cheryl Kernot was often described as a 'superwoman' in the years when she was at her political peak as leader of the Australian Democrats because she had a young daughter. But the number of female politicians in Canberra in the 1980s and 1990s who were younger and had small children was still reasonably limited.

The prominent women who received a lot of focus as personalities—rather than as ministers—in the 1980s and 1990s tended to be a little older. Think Bronwyn Bishop and Carmen Lawrence. Bishop cut through in her early days by breaking the more polite habits of the stereotype and monsterring public servants in estimates

⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 144–5.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 151–2.

¹¹ *Sunday Age*, 10 September 1995, Agenda, p. 3.

committees. It was this aggression which helped cast her for some as a potential future prime minister. She brought this aggression to the House and has always applied it, along with her experience as an amateur thespian, at the despatch box.

Lawrence was a competent minister but she brought a politically lethal history of ugly controversy with her from her time as premier in Western Australia. When the relentless pursuit of her over those events by the Liberal Party led to a state Royal Commission, we saw one of the stranger episodes unfold involving the role of women in politics. Lawrence would attend the Royal Commission each day, surrounded by female supporters, bunches of flowers thrust at her like some feminist martyr. Female journalists in Canberra suddenly seemed under pressure to take Lawrence's side because they were women, rather than report the unfolding controversy for what it was: another nasty political contretemps in which Lawrence's hands were not entirely clean.

In 1996 and 1998, the surge of younger women coming into the parliament really started to take off. Female MPs with little kids became less of a novelty, just something that posed even more challenges for hard-working politicians. The women MPs tended not to plaster their kids all over their politics and media profiles. The number of female cabinet ministers increased and became less of a subject of controversy. They were written about for delivering, or not delivering, on their jobs.

But the real challenge came as women started to move into leadership positions. Julie Bishop ascended to be deputy leader of the Liberal Party. This put her at the centre of tactics meetings and shadow cabinet deliberations. But she sometimes found herself not written into accounts of the machinations of these bodies. And her ability to survive a cavalcade of opposition leaders passing through the top office between 2007 and 2009 tended to be written in negative rather than positive terms.

Julia Gillard was well liked as a deputy leader and deputy prime minister and reported on positively in the media for her competence and hard work. She was a strong performer in parliament. At the same time, it is hard to forget that an image that had a powerful effect on people's view of Gillard was the one of her sitting in the empty kitchen with the empty fruit bowl.

But the events of 2010 and her rise to the prime ministership saw all the stereotypes come screaming back, though Lady Macbeth seemed to be the dominant one.

It is worth noting that it was not just in Australia where the media had trouble making the leap from the general proposition of women in politics to the idea of a female

political leader. In the US, the 2008 election campaign saw both Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin drawn using different stereotypes.

One review of the campaign noted that it took a while for the media to really investigate the largely unknown Palin's record as governor of Alaska, or her view on important, controversial issues. Instead they focused on her unconventional family, beauty, and her intelligence or her lack of intelligence. She was asked inappropriate questions about her breasts and wardrobe. One spokesperson from CNBC stated, 'Men want a sexy woman ... Women want to be her; men want to mate with her'.¹²

Hillary Clinton, on the other hand, was already a well-known figure in politics. Newspapers often drew man-like features on Clinton as an army general, poking fun at her powerful presence. In one extreme case displayed on the YouTube internet website a KFC bucket read, 'Hillary meal deal: 2 fat thighs, 2 small breasts, and a bunch of left wings'. (Sound familiar?)

The weird thing about all this to me is that while all these things happen here and overseas, the electronic media in particular has an insatiable demand for women, particularly women who speak with authority on any subject, either on television or the radio.

Even after twenty years, I am still shocked when I have to turn down a radio or TV producer's request to appear on their program because of other commitments and they ask whether I know of another woman who could do it, even once another blonde woman.

This brings us to changes in the media that have in turn affected the way our federal politicians are portrayed. Once again we are not just talking about Australian phenomena. Media scholars refer to the 'tabloidisation' of the media. That is, a journalism that thrives on sensation and scandal, personalises, simplifies, ignores the public issues in favour of private ones, and favours striking visuals over serious analysis.

That process in Australia has been fuelled by the decline of the broadsheet papers and print media generally and in federal politics by the crossing of the Rubicon by Laurie Oakes in 2002 when he criticised Cheryl Kernot for failing to mention in her autobiography her extramarital affair while leader of the Democrats with Gareth Evans, then deputy Labor leader and a key figure in her move to Labor.

¹² Donny Deutsch interviewed on CNBC program *Squawk on the Street*, 4 September 2008.

Some claim that this passed the legitimate public interest test since it cast a new light on Kernot's decision to change parties. I have never been completely sure about that. What it certainly did was make our politicians' private lives fair game. This had not generally been the case before this. And going back to the Canadian study, I believe it has revealed a different media standard for the way the media expect women to conduct their personal lives to the way it treats men.

Extensive revelations of male MPs' travel rorts in the late 1990s rarely explicitly mentioned, for example, that the wrongfully claimed expenses sometimes, but not always, involved the fact that the MPs were not sleeping in the beds they were supposed to be sleeping in.

More recently there have been cases of coy stories appearing suggesting federal ministers are having affairs with their staff with no names given, but rather threats that they will be exposed if they do not desist.

All this brings us to Julia Gillard. Nobody quite put the role of Gillard's gender in the nature of her prime ministership better than she did on the day she lost the leadership of the Labor Party: 'It doesn't explain everything, it doesn't explain nothing, it explains some things'.

Julia Gillard worked unbelievably hard and achieved a lot. She gave it her all. But my own assessment of her was that she was always a deeply flawed prime minister, even before she had to confront a wall of media and public hostility and craziness.

Certainly the circumstances of her rise created a new hostility to Gillard and awoke what turns out to be an element of appalling misogyny in Australian society to which I can attest from the emails and letters I have received about the former prime minister over the past few years which have been truly shocking in their nastiness. And I am not easily shocked.

But beyond the really crazy level of abuse, I think the former prime minister's portrayal in the media suffered because it affronted almost all of those too easy stereotypes I spoke of early. She was not married. She did not have kids. She could neither be cast as some bloke's female relative or as superwoman. When the media did discuss her relationships with men it was either to use them to ascribe sexually transmitted criminality to her, or to implicitly question her own sexuality.

And of course most noticeably, there were no limits put on either the comments or the aspersions cast on Gillard, even if she held the most powerful job in the country. So it was okay to suggest she be drowned in a sack, stand in front of signs saying 'ditch the

witch’, or ask her whether her partner was gay. It did not even stop after she left public life.

I am ashamed to say the *Australian Financial Review* ran a gossip item just last month, on the back of a piece in *Woman’s Day*, for God’s sake, which asked whether Gillard and her partner Tim Mathieson had split up. The former prime minister was furious about the piece.

I found it objectionable for other reasons. On Friday, our Rear Window gossip column sanctimoniously thundered:

why the hell haven’t any other media organisations chased this huge story? Surely, the immediate breakdown after losing office of the former prime minister’s seven year de facto relationship is news of national significance? This is a bloke who lived in the Lodge, stayed at Kirribilli House and did the First Bloke thing with enthusiasm.¹³

Four days later, after Gillard had angrily denied the story and demanded, unsuccessfully, that it be removed from our website, Rear Window wrote this piece as it noted Gillard’s appearance at the Opera House with Anne Summers:

We wondered a few weeks ago whether Gillard might use the venue to unleash. We just hadn’t thought it would be on us. It was a piece in Bauer Media rag *Woman’s Day* that did that damage.¹⁴

How utterly gutless and pathetic. All that brave journalism demanding someone chase this ‘huge story’ of ‘national significance’ had simply become an innocent report of what a woman’s magazine had said. What is certainly true is that if you inserted ‘John and Janette Howard’ into that copy it would not have got into the paper.

I will conclude on that career enhancing note but simply observe that one of the changes that is taking place with social media and the internet is that our politicians—both male and female—have more ability to portray themselves as they wish to the public.

It is worth looking at the websites of our MPs and senators and see how they are choosing to do so and whether, even there, they are able to escape the stereotypes.

¹³ ‘Strange silence on Gillard status’, *Australian Financial Review*, 27 September 2013, p. 37.

¹⁴ ‘A night at the opera with Julia Gillard and Kim Williams’, *Australian Financial Review*, 1 October 2013, p. 45.



Question — I do not have a question, I would just like to make a public acknowledgement and a thank you to Rosemary Crowley. You don't remember me Rosemary. When you were the Minister for the Status of Women in 1994, you and I met and discussed the possibility of having a national day that focused on breast cancer awareness and research, and you were very enthusiastic about it. I had been lobbying for three years, unsuccessfully, all of the politicians, and they were supportive but no one would take any action. You told me to write the proposal, and the subject for the proposal and the budget. It was accepted and in September 1994 Mrs Keating launched Australia's Breast Cancer Day. She announced the establishment of the Kathleen Cuninghame Foundation, now known as the National Breast Cancer Centre, for breast cancer awareness, and the National Breast Cancer Foundation for research. So because of your action, you have been responsible for saving many women in Australia from developing breast cancer and making them more aware of the disease. So thank you very much.

Rosemary Crowley — Thank you so much. I didn't expect a plaudit. But one of the things I did want to talk about was changed language, and one of the best examples I know, is that men had no health problems, except heart attacks, up until very recently. There was no language for men to talk about men's health. I think it is absolutely critical that blokes now learn to talk about health and that they are encouraged politically to do what women very comfortably did. So thank you for that support. So prostates, and probably a few other things besides, will soon hit the agenda.

Question — I have questions for Amanda Vanstone and Rosemary Crowley. Amanda, I have just been re-reading Tony Abbott's *Battlelines*. I note his comments on the Howard cabinet, that they could always rely on Amanda Vanstone to put a woman's perspective when needed. Otherwise she 'brought a practical common sense to the consideration of political problems'. So I'd like to ask you for a couple more examples of the women's perspective that you brought to cabinet, apart from the very good example of sex slavery, which you did talk about.

And to Rosemary Crowley, you emphasised the importance of measurement of the impact of policy on women and of decent data for this purpose. So I wonder why you think that the Australian Parliament, unlike parliaments in other Western democracies, has never had a standing committee on gender equality to oversight gender analysis of policy in government and the collection of adequate data. It seems to me if we had such a standing committee it probably would have pre-empted what happened this

year, which was the dropping of the time use survey, the only ABS survey which measures women's unpaid work and its intersection with paid work and its contribution to the economy. We lost that this year. We didn't have a standing parliamentary committee with a mandate to keep an eye on things such as that. Thank you.

Amanda Vanstone —Look I don't know that I can help, because while some people do keep diaries, I never did. When I started in parliament, there weren't computers and I was terrified that if I kept a diary people would nick it, and if you told the truth in it—and why would you keep a diary if you didn't—your colleagues might find out what you thought of them! It might not be such a good idea for all relationships. As we all know, it is best sometimes to keep some things to yourself. But I think there would be plenty of occasions on a day-to-day basis where gender perspective might make a difference and be different, but I didn't try and keep a list of them. The welfare area would be an obvious one. There might be one in health. Perhaps there would be in sport. There would be a whole range of them but none particularly stand out.

I haven't read *Battlelines*. I do not read political commentary books because I think I am too busy saying what I want to say. To be frank, I am not terribly sure about them. In fact I was harassed by a publisher today who has been at me about writing a book. I am just not comfortable about it, because I know that if I sign on the dotted line—they send you letters with, you know: 'Money; sign here'—I will produce something and then they will try and goad me into telling stories I do not want to tell. If you have made a part of your political life being the good team player, I do not see why you would chuck that away for a lousy book where you pontificate on other people. I might do it, but that means I would have to avoid that, and that means they may not be interested in the book.

Rosemary Crowley — One thing I know about Amanda, it would make a good read whatever she wrote.

As to the data, about disaggregated data, I think it is terribly important and I was really very disappointed that one of the first things Mr Howard did was to do away with the women's budget paper. That was an amazing, interesting thing. I finished up at the United Nations shortly after that and I was approached by South Africa and Japan—because you have had a women's budget paper, we are planning to introduce those and would I care to support it? I was delighted to support it. I think South Africa has succeeded but Japan has not or the other way round. And it might be very interesting to do what you are proposing, which is to have something other than party political people who might set up the requirement for the data. The data from the

women's budget paper was extraordinary. It really quite shocked people. The example about women's sport is to the point and very easy to understand.

If you looked at social security, which spends a lot of money, I would suggest more than 50 per cent, certainly, would go to women. Whether you talk about aged pensions and so on, they would be much more fifty-fifty. But the data was really very interesting. People were shocked when they had a look at the disaggregated data, and I think it actually allows for more considered future policies in certain areas. So I would strongly support some way of getting back to collecting or having that kind of data and any other disaggregated data about men and women. It saves a lot of stupid arguments, and that is one of its very best reasons. So thank you for the question, I wish we had it still, one way or another.

Question — How can we encourage and empower more ethnic representation in parliament and particularly ethnic women?

Rosemary Crowley — In a way, what I would say was powerful about the women's movement was that it was started by women outside of parliament and so I would have thought that the best thing would be for ethnic women—and I don't know whether you would say all ethnic women, or whether it would be this group and this group and this group. But I think that the powerful thing about the women's movement in the sixties and seventies was that it was women who started it and women from across the board. In fact, I do not know how many of you were alive in the seventies. Very few; you are all too young. But I had lived in America in the sixties, where I learnt to riot with the best of them, and I think one of the things they had was the burgeoning women's movement. And it began to be in all places, everywhere. Would we go and protest at supermarkets at the price of goods? Would we protest at universities about something? Would we protest in schools about education and so on? But it was from the women themselves, and I would suggest that that would be one awfully good way to start. But you also might find a political group that was sympathetic and you might want to see if you could get some support and help in that direction too. What I do say is: we need more representation. Until we are actually in our parliaments talking about all the people in Australia, for and on behalf of all the people in Australia and, more importantly, listening to them all, then I think we are still short of what democracy really means.

Amanda Vanstone — I would like to add to that. I think it is a difficult road, and the reason I think it is difficult is this: unless you are a full-blood Indigenous Australian, you have got migrant blood in your veins. That is what we are: one of the big three migration nations—us, Canada and the United States. And so really, if you rephrase what you have said, it comes down to a representation of newer migrants here rather

than older ones. Then that leaves you being seen to represent a smaller proportion of people. And the reason I think it is hard is, we are having trouble enough getting 50 per cent women in, so if you want to get more in from a smaller cohort it is going to be harder unless you run, in the end, on the basis of capacity. I think that is the way, always, to get in.

Laura Tingle — I was just going to add at the end, I was at a diplomatic function last week where a group of businessmen from another country were talking not about the lack of ethnic women in the parliament but the lack of ethnic diversity in the parliament. I think there is that broader point. Rosemary and Amanda know much more about the machinations of parties and how they choose people, but it seems to me that we are still stuck in a bit of a period of tokenism about these things. Where people say: ‘Oh look. We’ve got a Vietnamese person. Oh, actually, no they’re not, they are Chinese. You know, same sort of thing’, or whatever. It was the other way round during the election campaign, I think.

I think that the reality is that it goes to the way the parties choose people and that in the same way they do not see women as tokens, as our representatives, they sort of say ‘We are a much more diverse society and we should represent all of those diversities in the parliament’.