

Australian Democracy: A Feminist Perspective

Merrindah Andrew

30 March 2009

Why a feminist perspective?

1. Women have (some) different interests and issues from men, which are not adequately addressed in the current form of democracy
2. Political institutions and cultures of democracy have marginalised women
3. Women have struggled against these 'democratic deficits', leading to an expansion of substantive democracy

Definitions

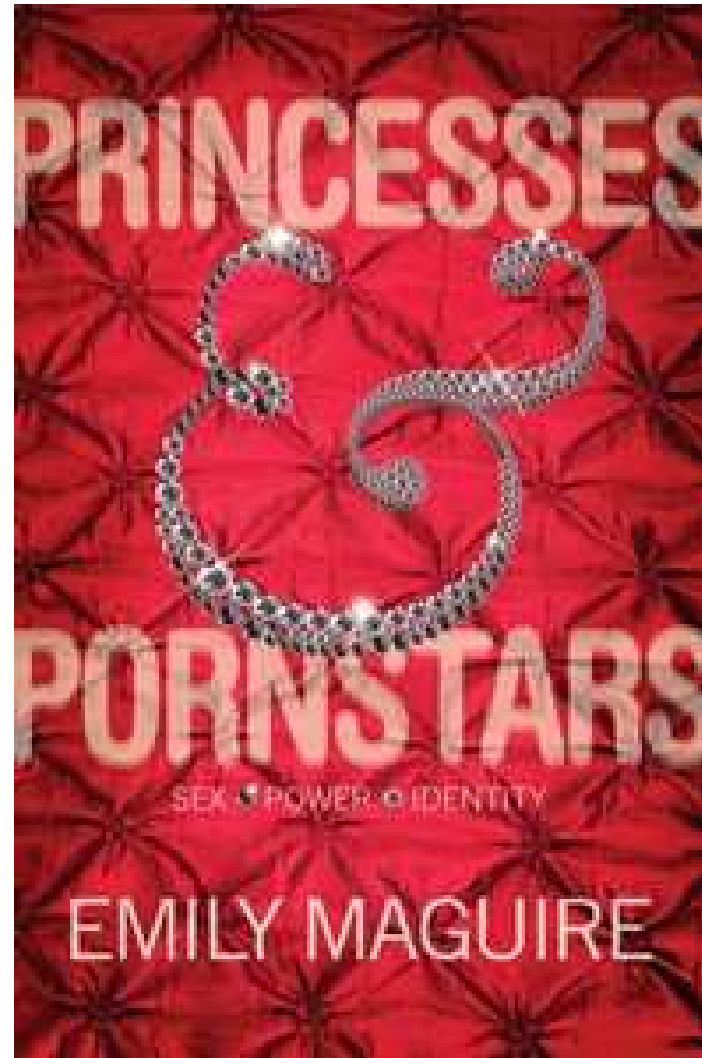
- Feminism: a political movement and an ideology that aims to achieve equality and liberation for women, against inequality and oppression
- Democracy: equal capacity for effective participation in collective self-government

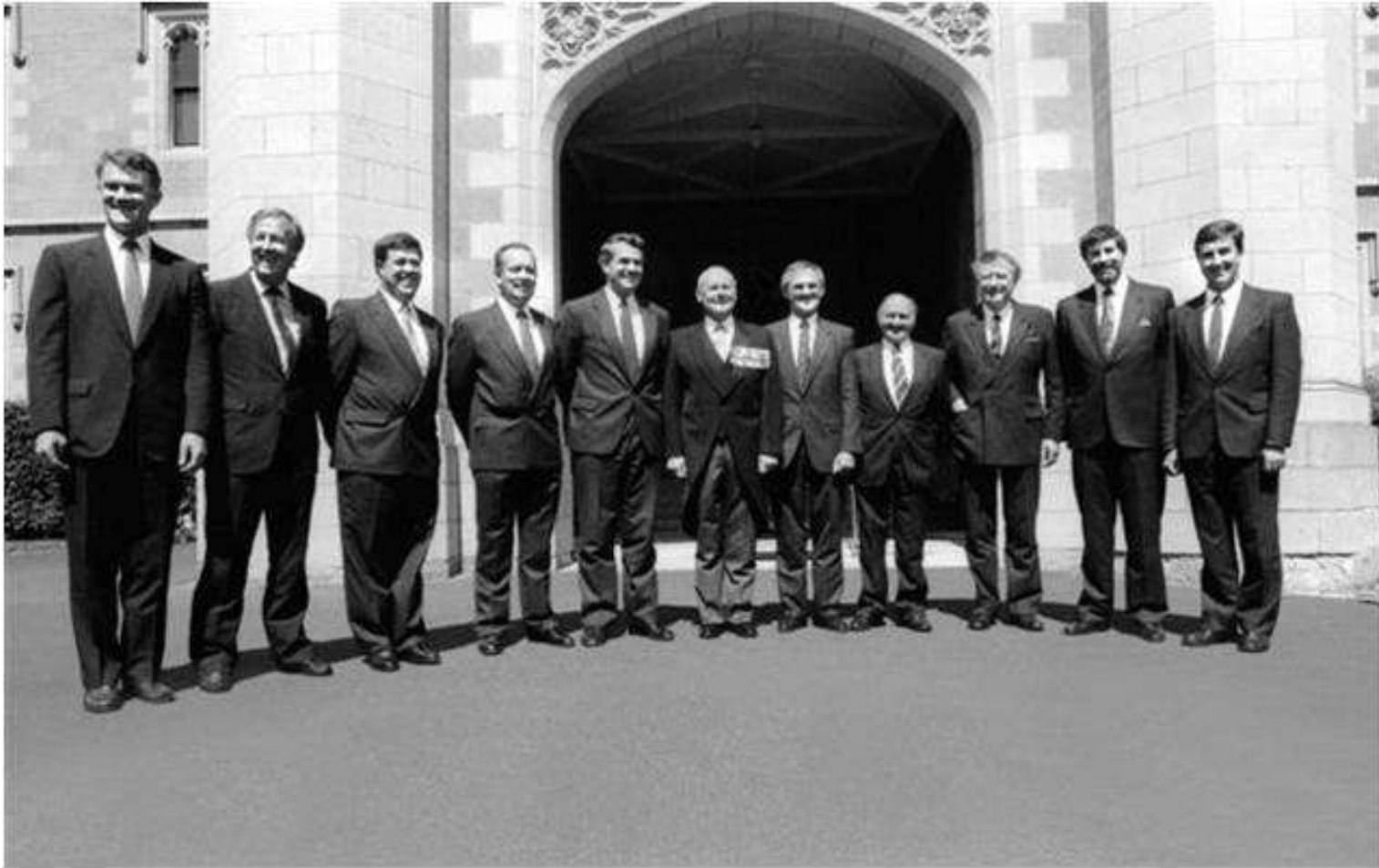


BARBARA POCOCK



The labour market Ate my babies
Work, children and a sustainable future

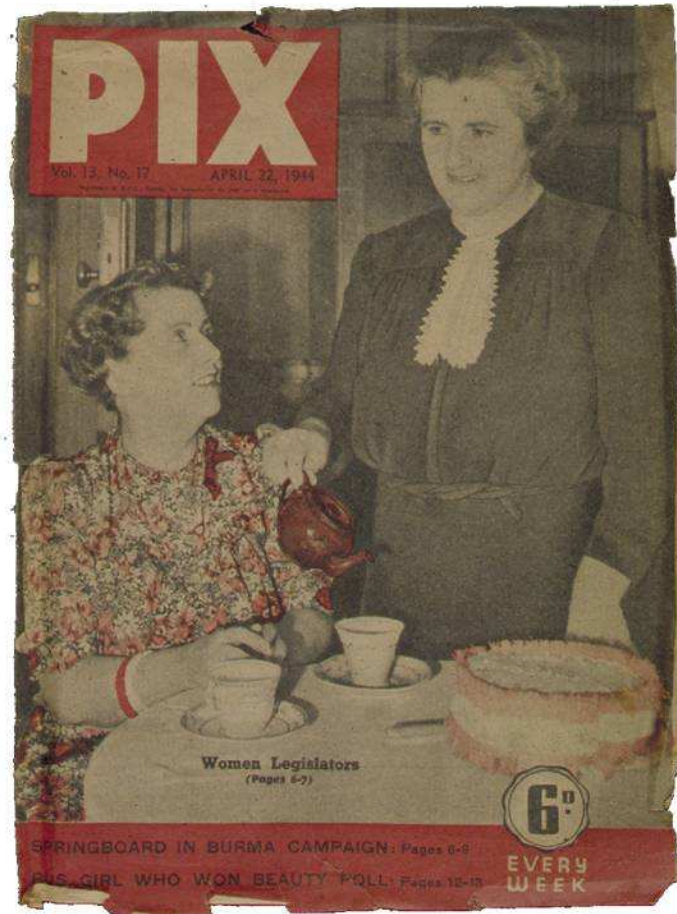




The Tasmanian Cabinet in 1992

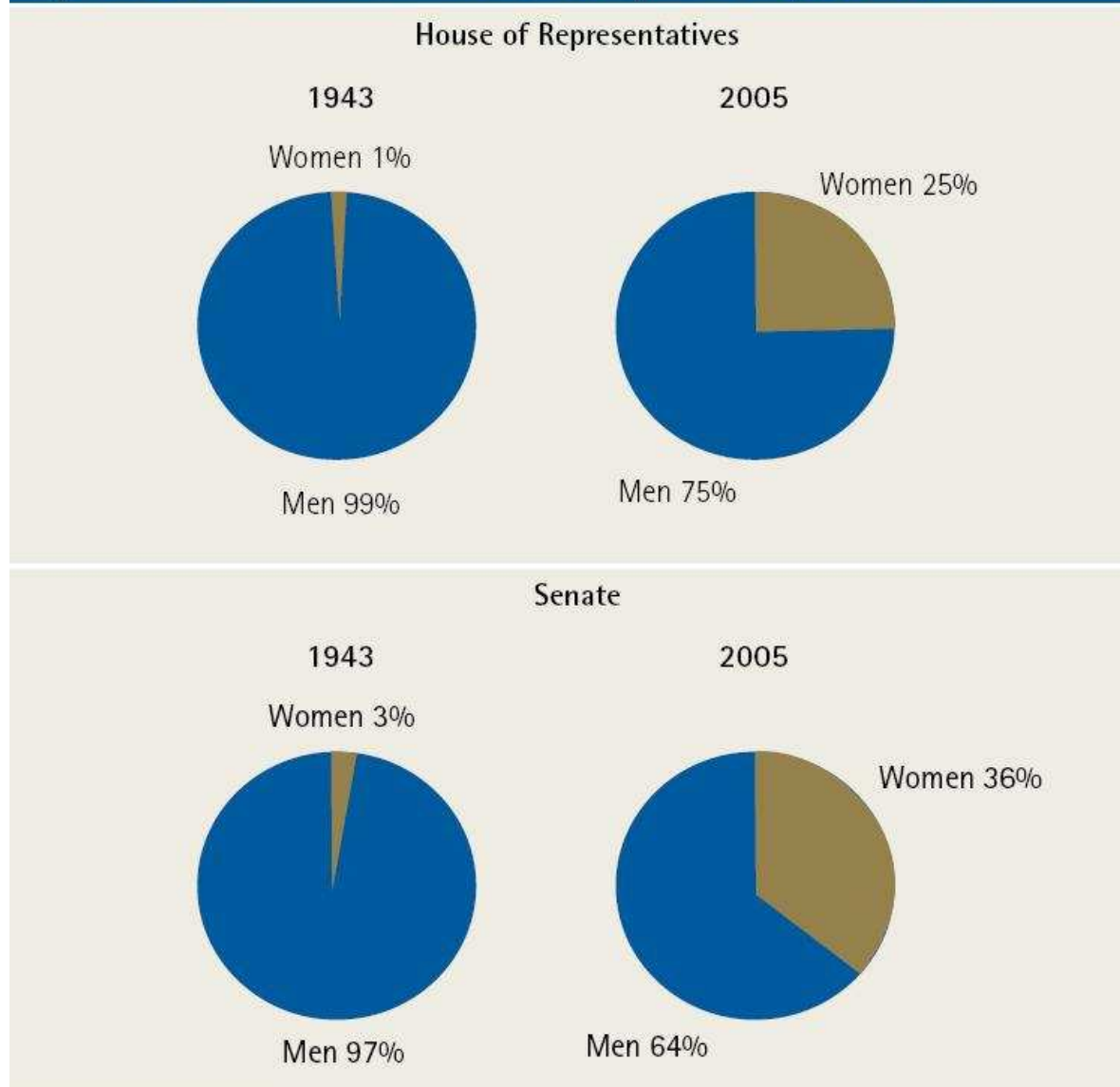


Rudd Ministry December 2007



Dorothy Tangney & Enid Lyons, 1944

Figure 4.2. Women in the Senate and House of Representatives, 1943 and 2005



Source: Maddison and Partridge (2007)



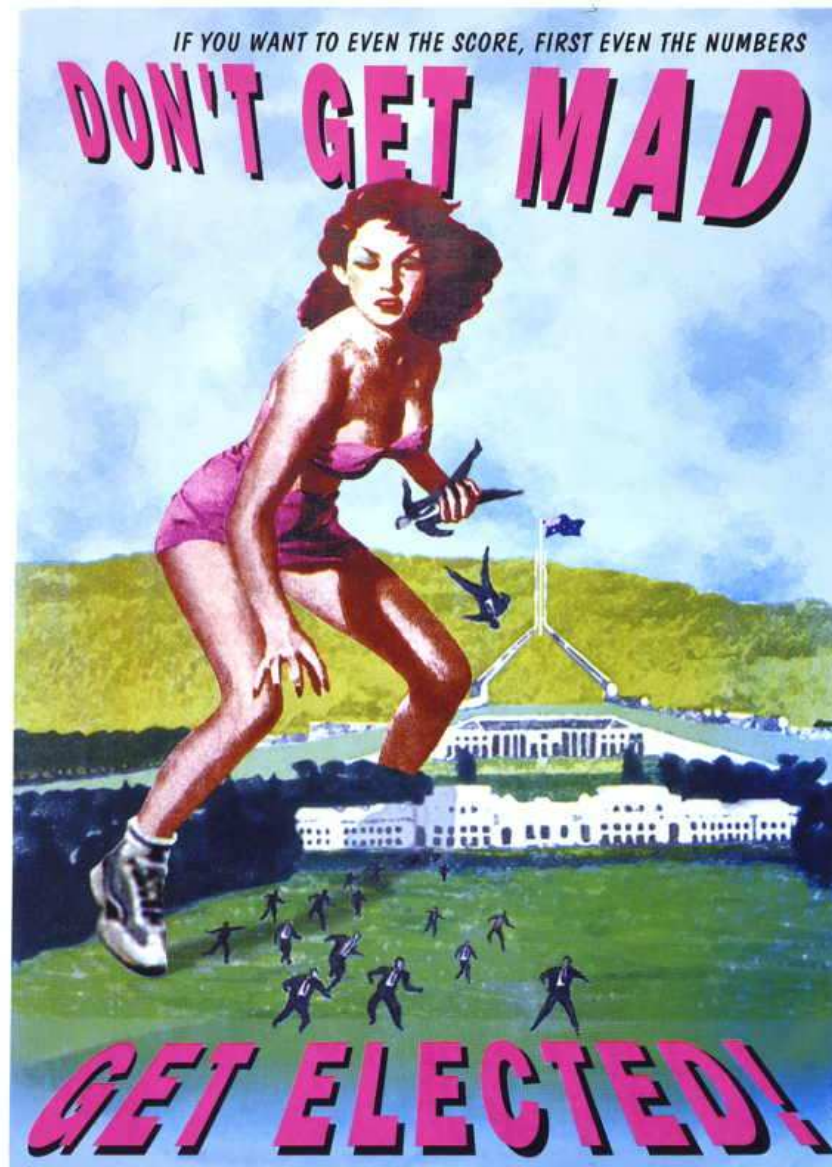
How well does
Australian democracy
serve Australian women?

Prepared by
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for the
**Democratic Audit
of Australia**

School of Social Sciences
The Australian National University

Report No.8



1997 poster



Julia Gillard



Anna Bligh



Maxine McKew

Why is the representation of women important?

Two arguments:

1. Because parliaments that do not resemble the populations that they represent are inherently undemocratic.
2. Because women have some different interests from men and these are best represented by women themselves.

(from Brennan 2002)

Why aren't there more women in politics?

- electoral system factors;
- historical constraints on women entering 'public' life;
- the lower levels of participation of women in the paid workforce;
- social expectations that women marry and have children; and
- women's own reluctance to enter such a 'male' domain.

(from Brennan 2002).



Julia Gillard photographed in her home in the Sun Herald, 2005

“No fruit. I think that was the principal flaw, no fruit. I now always have rotting bananas in the bowl just in case.” – Julia Gillard



Women who attended the first Australian Federation of Women voters conference held in Adelaide, 1924.



International Women's Day March, Melbourne, 1975

Hoyden About Town

HOYDEN (hoid'n): woman of saucy, boisterous or carefree behavior

About

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Hoyden About Town was begun by tigtog in September 2005. HAT offers an eclectic selection of opinion/commentary/linkage on things which catch our eye and strike us as worth sharing with our readers. We speak fangeek and have long been [aware of all internet traditions](#). We make no attempt to be a journal of record.

Some things we take more seriously than others: **politics, feminism, parenting, health and skepticism** for a start. ([»more on Special Interests](#))

- **Recommended Reading:** RSS feed modules for our other blogs and feed-readers are on [the Our Other Blogs page](#).
- You can find some of the images we've blogged on [Flickr](#)
- We have succumbed to [Facebook](#) as well (although I thought we'd be able to do more with the Facebook group. Feel free to post items of interest there for other hoydens).



To search, type and hit enter

The Hoydens blog on life, laughs, science, progressive politics and the foiling of diabolical masterminds. [\[read more or contact\]](#)

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'Senator Meg Lees and Prime Minister John Howard',
Mark Knight, *Herald Sun*, 29 May 1999



'Senator Meg Lees holding the "whip hand" with Prime Minister John Howard', Bill Leak, *Weekend Australian*, 22-23 May 1999



'Jenny Macklin lampooned', Bill Leak, *Weekend Australian*, 22-23 May



'Premier Kirner confronts political opponents',
Jeff Hook, *Herald Sun*, 4 March 1991



'Premier Kirner depicted with Prime Minister Hawke and Treasurer Keating negotiating Victoria's dept problems', Jeff Hook, *Herald Sun*, 4 March 1991



The Democrats Evolution: Chipp, Kernot, Lees, Natasha'. Cartoon by Peter Nicholson from *The Australian* newspaper: www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au

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