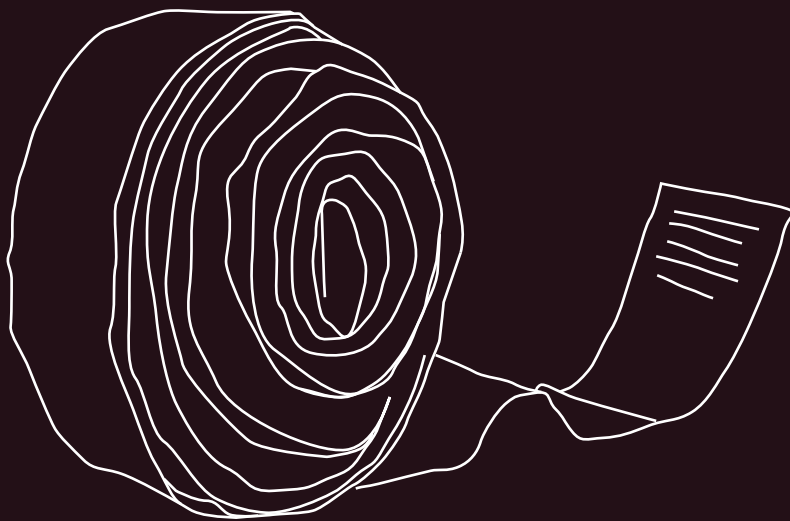




NELSON  
MODERN HISTORY

# WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS



MARYELLEN GALBALLY

SERIES EDITOR: TONY TAYLOR

“Women ought to have representatives,  
instead of being arbitrarily governed  
without any direct share allowed them  
in the deliberations of government.”

Eric Hobsbawm

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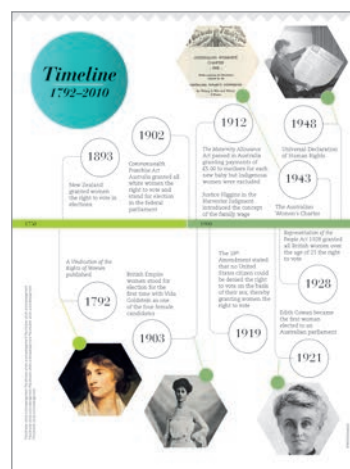
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## ABOUT THE SERIES

## Using Women's Movements

*Women's Movements* has been developed especially for senior secondary students of History and is part of the Nelson Modern History series. Each book in the series is based on the understanding that History is an interpretive study of the past by which you also come to better appreciate the making of the modern world.


Developing understandings of the past and present in senior History extends on the skills you learnt in earlier years. As senior students you will use historical skills, including research, evaluation, synthesis, analysis and communication, and the historical concepts, such as evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, empathy, perspectives and contestability, to understand and interpret societies from the past. The activities and tasks in *Women's Movements* have been written to ensure that you develop the skills and attributes you need in senior History subjects.



## ILLUSTRATED TIMELINE

is a bird's-eye view of the topic and summarises the major developments of the period.

**What motivated the Nurses to serve overseas?**



I have never regretted that I took the nation into my hand to take on nursing, for I has opened up opportunities that would have been hard.

Her name Teresa

**Questions and activities**

Considering a range of nurses, including the website of the Australian War Memorial, write a short biography of Jesse Tomlin that includes the following information:

- her age when enlistment
- when she enlisted
- where she served
- any experiences she wrote about
- what happened to her
- her significance and contribution to the war effort

What opportunities do you think she was referring to in above quote?

**SOURCE 1** is this text and what name is it called after. What was the Australian Army Nursing Service and her brother's service and the impact from her brother's service on the Regiment. The photograph was taken in a studio in 1917 in Cairo.

## SOURCE STUDIES

of visual and text primary sources and secondary literature appear frequently through the text and are combined with questions and activities to aid your evaluation and interpretation of evidence from the past.

KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS	KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS	KEY DOCUMENTS
<p><b>WOMAN SUFFRAGE CRASH</b> 1902-1903</p>  <p>Wollstonecraft argued as having written the founding text of feminism – <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Women</i> – that women should be treated as human beings who were men had the same capacity as men to reason and form moral judgements and should therefore have the same rights as men to political participation.</p>	<p><b>Disenfranchisement</b> The stated intention of people on the basis of their age, sex, religion or race.</p> <p><b>Universal suffrage</b> The right of women to vote and stand for parliament.</p> <p><b>Feminism</b> The advocacy of equal rights and opportunities for women, especially concerning the extension of their activities to social and political life. In practice there can be a variety of feminisms shaped by differing political and cultural values.</p> <p><b>Political values</b></p>	<p><b>Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902</b> The act of the national parliament that granted <i>Australians</i> white women the right to vote and to stand for election.</p> <p><b>Australians</b> Because the second statute in the world to grant women the right to vote and the first country to grant women the right to stand for election.</p> <p><b>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)</b> Adopted by the United Nations in 1979, this convention aims to protect the rights of women. <i>Australia</i> ratified this Convention in 1983.</p>

## KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS, KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS, KEY DOCUMENTS

feature brief biographies, profiles, definitions and summaries of key documents as a ready reference for learning and revision.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

CHAPTER ONE

*The woman question*

“...the full and complete designation of a society, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men as of old.”

W. M. F. Weston as the President of the International Women's Congress, 1915

Women's rights movements emerged in the 19th century in Western European countries including Great Britain, the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand in the context of dramatic changes which were brought about by new ideas and revolutionary movements. Movements also emerged campaigning for women's rights in other European countries, notably France and Germany. It is important to note, however, that in similar women's movements emerged in the colonial empires of the European powers. During the 19th century, Middle Eastern countries such as those comprising the women's rights and women's rights were built on the ideas of the Enlightenment and led by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

IN

**INQUIRY QUESTION**

“What and why did movements for women's rights emerge and what early successes did they have?”

CHAPTER 1  
The women question

## CHAPTER INTRODUCTIONS

provide a context to the issues that are addressed.

 Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928)

Suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst was named in 1989 by *Time* magazine (an American weekly news magazine) as one of the most influential people of the 20th century. She dominated the first 30 years of political life of 20th-century Britain, as the powerful leader of the militant suffragette organisation, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Overlaid on the image on the date of her birth and death are a quote from her that reads 'We have to free half of the human race, the women, so that they can help to run the other half.' One of her earliest involvement in the suffrage movement was with her husband Richard Pankhurst. Together they set up a suffrage society in Manchester in 1885 with the aim of obtaining the vote for women. In 1894 Campaigning for the vote for women became her life's work until its success in 1928. She died shortly after all women were granted the right to vote.

## SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUALS

are biographical profiles and assessments of key historical figures and frequently include questions and activities.

### The formation of gender identity

In consciousness-raising groups, women told stories that highlighted experiences of how they were brought up as girls in their families – how, as Simone de Beauvoir had said, ‘One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman’.

They argued their upbringing, the custom of women changing their family name to their husband’s, and of putting girls in pink and boys in blue. They discussed the fact that some school subjects were identified as being for girls and others (such as science and mathematics) were seen as being boys’ subjects.

They also discussed the fact that occupations such as secretary, teacher and nurse were considered as being for women, while those of doctor, lawyer and tradesperson were for men. Girls were often encouraged to be teachers because they would be at home with the children after school and on school holidays.

In the selection of children’s toys they noted that there was a clear divide between the sexes.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WAR FOR WOMEN

The significance of World War I for women and the achievement of further rights is debatable. Below are the views of two Australian feminist historians about the significance of World War I for women.

#### Historian 1

In *Creating a Nation*, Victoria, 1994, p. 218, Marilyn Lake writes:

‘World War I had extraordinary outcomes for gender relations. Women had won a measure of independence and had broken gender. These women had managed, going for “meeting challenges to relations between the sexes.” Yet of equal if not the more striking value that had only been achieved by the war!’

#### Historian 2

Anne Summers is concerned in her summation of the effects of the war on the role of women in *Gendered Places and Gendered Places* (Penguin Books Australia, 2012, p. 422), she writes:

‘The First World War did not provide an opportunity for Australian women to step beyond traditional roles... beyond the Great War... it is more correctly to be called... but the effects of winning and consolidating the status that women’s more social function was to have children and to influence those around them who could not do so themselves!’

### Questions and activities

1 Compare the above two opinions. What are the differences between them?

2 Based on the information in this chapter and your research, do you agree more with the first quote or the second quote? Provide evidence to support your answer.



One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.

Man is defined as a human being and a woman as a female – whenever she behaves as a human being she is said to imitate the male.

This has always been a man’s world, and none of the reasons that have been offered in explanation have seemed adequate.

... being a woman is not a natural fact. It is the result of a certain history. There is no biological or psychological destiny that defines a woman as such... Baby girls are manufactured to become women.

## INFORMATION BOXES

contain extended discussions of key events, concepts and historical developments. Many also include questions and activities.

## HISTORIAN BOXES

introduce key historians and schools of interpretation as a way of making historiography clearer.

## DIAGRAMS AND TALKING SOURCES

are used to visually summarise complex ideas and events.

### Chapter summary

- The Conciliation Act of 1912 explicitly denied women the right to vote and thereby denied them political citizenship.
- Women started to question their lack of political and legal rights. This included the lack of access to higher education and the professions.
- Women started to organise through suffrage societies to gain the right to vote.
- The right to vote was also seen as a means to address other social issues.
- Initially, the peaceful methods of campaigning were not successful.
- An anti-peace suffrage society was formed.
- The main suffrage organisation the NSWWS divided and a new more militant society formed – the WSPU.
- The new militant methods – mainly non-violent – gained attention of the press and public. The WSPU knew how important publicity was in raising awareness of their aims and demands and they understood how to get publicity.

**Visuals:**  
Visuals relevant to this chapter can be found at [Key Visuals](#) section on page 100.

### Chapter review activities

- What political and legal rights did women have in Great Britain in 1900?
- Design a poster illustrating the history of the women’s movement in the 19th century.
- Both the NSWWS and the WSPU believed in non-violent methods. Who did they want to get the right to vote? Why was it not for all women?
- Do you think many working class women would join either of the main organisations campaigning for women’s rights? Give reasons for your opinion.
- Visual analysis – the cartoon below was based on the nursery rhyme ‘This little house that Jack built’. This was put at the end of the 19th century by the Women’s Franchise League. What is the message of the cartoon? What is the message of the cartoon? What is the message of the cartoon?

**THIS IS THE HOUSE THAT MAN BUILT**  
And this is the house of the poor and the hungry, and there’s room for a great many more of ‘em.  
When they racket and riot  
And will not keep quiet,  
We place them on planks, beds and very low diet,  
To sleep all their din  
We put ‘em there in,  
Into THIS HOUSE  
That man built.



## CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CHAPTER REVIEW ACTIVITIES

conclude each chapter. They include a brief precis of the topic, suggestions for further reading, and a range of learning activities that consolidate knowledge and understanding of the chapter’s content. These tasks incorporate a range of historical understandings and skills.

## CONCLUSION

### Women’s Movements

At the end of the 19th century, who had changed for Australian women in terms of their political and legal rights? The answer to this question is a long and complicated history. The political and legal landscape for women at the end of the 19th century, and also in the first decade of the 20th century, would have been unimaginable to women at the beginning of the 19th century. We have looked at the political – a prime minister, state premiers and a Governor-General. We have looked at the political – a prime minister, state premiers and a Governor-General. We have looked at the political – a prime minister, state premiers and a Governor-General.

From the 1920s onwards, our movements became more formal. The Australian Labor Party provided Australian women with a political voice. The Australian Labor Party provided Australian women with a political voice. The Australian Labor Party provided Australian women with a political voice.

At the end of the 19th century, who had changed for Australian women in terms of their political and legal rights? The answer to this question is a long and complicated history. The political and legal landscape for women at the end of the 19th century, and also in the first decade of the 20th century, would have been unimaginable to women at the beginning of the 19th century. We have looked at the political – a prime minister, state premiers and a Governor-General. We have looked at the political – a prime minister, state premiers and a Governor-General. We have looked at the political – a prime minister, state premiers and a Governor-General.

### ACTIVITIES

- Drawing on your knowledge, research and the materials in this book, create a list of 20 facts for women and the women’s movement. You have been provided below. A list of facts for women.
- Individuals, or small groups, develop a ranking of criteria to determine the importance of each of these events or developments.
- Now rank each of the events or developments from ‘most important’ to ‘less important’.
- Write your ranking of 20 events from with your classmates. In what ways do your lists, rankings and criteria differ? Discuss these differences.

## THE CONCLUSION

summarises the topic and includes a series of activities to consolidate your knowledge of it. More importantly, these final tasks will help you build an understanding and interpretation of this period in history.

## Beyond this book

The Nelson Modern History series includes numerous titles on a range of topics covered in senior History courses around Australia. For further information about the series visit: [www.nelsonsecondary.com.au](http://www.nelsonsecondary.com.au).





Getty Images/De Agostini Picture Library



## KEY FIGURES AND ORGANISATIONS

**ZELDA D'APRANO**  
(1928–)



D'Aprano was an Australian unionist and women's liberationist. As a staunch advocate for equal pay she chained herself to the Commonwealth Building in Melbourne as a protest. She founded the Women's Action Committee, whose members protested by paying 75 per cent of a tram fare because they were only paid 75 per cent of a male wage.

**EDITH COWAN**  
(1861–1932)



A social activist and reformer elected in 1921 to the Western Australian parliament. Cowan was the first woman to be elected to an Australian parliament. She was responsible for introducing *The Women's Legal Status Act* that allowed women to become lawyers.

**VIDA GOLDSTEIN**  
(1869–1949)



Goldstein was a key figure in campaigns for women's suffrage in Victoria from 1890 when she gathered signatures for a petition to the Victorian parliament. She stood for election five times. At her first attempt, in 1903, she won 51 497 votes. She was the first woman to stand for parliament in the British Empire.

**SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR**  
(1908–1986)



Simone de Beauvoir was a French feminist whose book *The Second Sex* analysed the history of women's oppression and argued that girls' lives were shaped by their culture. She rejected any ideas about women being born with particular attributes. The book caused much debate when published in English in 1953.

**DAME MILLICENT GARRETT FAWCETT**  
(1847–1929)



A feminist and suffragist, Fawcett led the largest suffragist society in Great Britain – the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) – from 1897 to 1919. Under her leadership membership rose to 50 000 before the First World War. She believed in long-term change by moderate methods and was committed to non-violent activities.

**GERMAINE GREER**  
(1939–)



Australian Germaine Greer is of *The Female Eunuch*, an international best seller that created an enormous controversy when published in 1970. Greer argued that women's liberation was based on sexual liberation, and that by being repressed sexually through marriage and a consumerist society, women automatically become eunuchs.

MURIEL AGNES HEAGNEY  
(1885–1974)



Australian trade unionist and feminist, Heagney was a strong advocate for equal pay and was instrumental in the formation of the Council of Action for Equal Pay (CAEP). She believed in ‘a rate for the job’ and claimed that wage inequality always led to an inequality in the status and opportunities for women.

EMMELINE PANKHURST  
(1858–1928)



Leader of the militant British suffragettes, she established the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU), which led attacks on property to draw attention to women’s demand for the right to vote. Arrested numerous times between 1908 and 1912, Pankhurst went on hunger strikes and was violently force-fed while imprisoned.

KATE SHEPPARD  
(1847–1934)



Sheppard was the leader of the women’s suffrage movement in New Zealand. As a founding member of the NZ Women’s Christian Temperance Union, Sheppard advocated voting rights for women and organised petitions to parliament in 1891 and 1893. When female suffrage was granted, she worked to register women as voters.

KATE MILLETT (1934–)



The American author of *Sexual Politics* (1970), Millett argued that relations between the genders are political, with power playing a significant role even in the sexual act. In support of this argument she analysed the novels of major American male authors.

ELIZABETH REID  
(1942–)



Reid was a member of the women’s movement before being appointed as advisor on women’s affairs to Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in 1973. She created public policy on health, education and equal opportunities. She helped fund women’s refuges, rape crisis centres, women’s health centres, childcare and working women’s centres.

JESSIE STREET  
(1889–1970)



A lifelong worker for women’s rights, Street advocated – among other causes – the right to economic independence and equal pay for women. She was instrumental in developing the Australian Women’s Charter in 1943 and she took this with her to the founding meetings of the United Nations in 1948.

This page, clockwise from top left: Image reprint courtesy of the Australian History Museum; Getty Images/UIG via Getty Images; Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22651169>; National Library of Australia/nla.ms-ms2683-11-5x-s1-v, Official United Nations Photo (Department of Public Information); National Library of Australia/Elizabeth Reid, 1974 [picture], vn4591242; Corbis/Sygma/Sophie Bassouls



#### ANNE SUMMERS AO (1945–)



Anne Summers is one of Australia's leading feminists and one of the founders of Elsie Women's Refuge. Her book *Damned Whores and God's Police* had an enormous impact in Australia. She was head of the Office of the Status of Women from 1983 to 1986, and advisor to Prime Minister Paul Keating in 1992.

#### MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT (1759–1797)



Widely regarded as having written the founding text of feminism – *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) Wollstonecraft argued that women had the same capacity as men to reason and form moral judgements, and should therefore have the same rights as men to political participation.

#### AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF WOMEN VOTERS

Founded in 1921 by Bessie Rischbieth as a national body that could liaise with international feminist organisations and the League of Nations. The Federation persuaded Prime Minister Billy Hughes to include a woman on the Australian delegations to the League of Nations.

#### COUNCIL OF ACTION FOR EQUAL PAY (CAEP)

Formed in Sydney in 1937 as a lobby group to provide information to its affiliates and support organisations in their equal pay campaigns. Muriel Heagney acted as honorary secretary and treasurer until it disbanded in 1948.

#### THE NATIONAL UNION OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETIES (NUWSS)

The largest organisation in Great Britain dedicated to gaining the right to vote for women. Millicent Garrett Fawcett was president from 1897 to 1919. Its tactics were always peaceful and legal, and membership rose to 50 000 before the First World War.

#### UNION OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN

Established in 1950 to work for the improvement of the status of women, focusing on issues of equity and social justice. Its members were working women and mothers. In the 1960s it affiliated with the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement.

#### UNITED ASSOCIATIONS OF WOMEN

Formed in Sydney in 1929 by a number of women, including Jessie Street, Linda Littlejohn and Ruby Rich, who wanted a strong, radical, political organisation. It was instrumental in the organisation of the Australian Women's Charter Conference in 1943.

#### WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION OF AUSTRALASIA

Formed in Melbourne in 1891, it was the first national women's organisation in Australia. Influential in all of the colonies, its main concern was the effect of alcohol on men, and the physical abuse and poverty that resulted for their families. It claimed that nothing would change until women had the vote and it actively supported the suffrage movement.

### WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL UNION (WSPU)

British organisation made up of members who left the NUWSS in 1903, dissatisfied with the lack of progress in achieving the right to vote for women. Its leader was Emmeline Pankhurst, who – with her daughters Christabel and Sylvia – used increasingly militant and even violent actions. These included arson and bombings. Members were called suffragettes.

### WOMANHOOD SUFFRAGE LEAGUE OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Formed in 1891 by Louisa Lawson, Rose Scott, Maybanke Anderson, Dora Montefiore, Mary Windeyer and Eliza Ashton. Its motto was 'Equality is equity'. Tactics included petitions, deputations to politicians, public meetings and debates. Its program included women's suffrage, and women's right to property and guardianship of children.

### WOMEN'S ELECTORAL LOBBY

An independent national, feminist lobby group established in 1972 by Beatrice Faust in Melbourne in 1972. The group is dedicated to changing policies and legislation that affect women, including equal pay, childcare, abortion as well as law reform in relation to rape and domestic violence.

### WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

A feminist movement that grew out of student left-wing politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the USA. Its objectives included personal liberation and a focus on female sexuality. Its methods included consciousness-raising and direct action.

Opposite page, top to bottom: Newspix/Vince Calati; Getty Images/De Agostini







## CHAPTER SIX

### *A new militancy*

After the war most women returned to the domestic sphere, got married and gave birth to the children who would become the 'baby boomer' generation. Domesticity and the new 'housewife' image dominated women's magazines, accompanied by advertisements for new domestic technologies. Following the privations of the war, a new consumerism was encouraged. However, domesticity was not enough for many of the women who had actively participated in the war effort.

Many of the ideas and values of the 1950s were challenged during the 1960s and women began to return to the public sphere. In a decade of political and social turmoil both internationally and in Australia, students and others protested against racism, conscription and the Vietnam War. The emerging counter-culture movements also rejected the socially conservative values of the 1950s.

In this changing social and cultural environment a new version of the women's movement emerged. A new, radical organisation called the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) was formed in 1969. Members were militant and fought for civil rights as well as personal and social liberation.

This chapter focuses first on the international context during the 1960s, which paved the way for the new feminism that arose in Australia. It then turns to the Australian experience to explore the consequences of this development.

◀ During the 1970s, members of the Women's Liberation Movement took the struggle for political, social and cultural rights to the streets, in demonstrations, such as this one in Sydney, which mirrored earlier suffrage campaigns of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

#### INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- + What distinguished the Women's Liberation Movement from earlier organisations in terms of aims and methods?
- + What other factors may have been involved in changing women's rights?
- + What did this new feminism achieve?

## International stirrings

By the late 1960s, political movements in Australia made it possible for women to use their organisational skills and knowledge to work towards social change in their lives. The new women's movements were influenced and shaped by international developments. The women had learned their tactics from the American Civil Rights movement and from the student protests against the United States engagement in the Vietnam War. Other influences included the African and South-East Asian struggles for independence from European colonial powers. Australians had also been involved in demands for Aboriginal civil rights, and in the late 1960s many women activists began to turn their attention to the issue of women's rights.

Women established new feminist organisations and demanded rights that previous generations of feminists had worked for, such as equal pay. To these they added newer rights, many of which focused on the body: the right to contraception; the right to abortion on demand; the right to a satisfying sexual life; the right to same-sex relationships and the right to be safe from violence.

New ideas and new birth control technology sparked off the first major change in women's lives, bringing equality with men in sexual choices and changing women's social conditions.

### REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND TECHNOLOGY – THE PILL

“ By any estimation, the Pill, in all of its forms, has led to a radical transformation of America's moral landscape. It has facilitated extramarital and premarital sex on a scale unprecedented in human history. ”

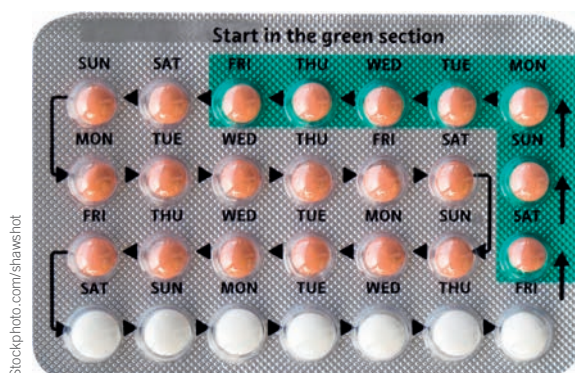
Extract from Sheryl Henderson Blunt, 'The Links Between Plan B and the Pill', *Christianity Today*, 23 October 2006

“ The introduction of the birth control pill blew apart forever the Old World order, helping prompt the explosion of the women's movement in the late 60s to early 70s. ”

Extract from Ann Taylor Fleming, *The Push for Equality*, PBS News Hour, 28 December 1999, © 1996–2014 MacNeil/Lehrer Productions. All Rights Reserved

“ But there is, perhaps, one invention that historians a thousand years in the future will look back on and say, 'That defined the 20th century.' It is also one that a time-traveller from 1000 would find breathtaking – particularly if she were a woman. That invention is the contraceptive pill. ”

Extract from 'Millennium issue: Oral contraceptives – The liberator', *The Economist*, 23 December 1999, © The Economist Newspaper Limited 2014



**SOURCE 6.1** The contraceptive pill was one of a number of triggers to the changes in women's movements in the 1960s.



## 1960–1986

- 1961** The Pill took Australia by storm but was only available to married women
- 1963** Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was published
- 1965** Merle Thornton and Rosalie Bogner chained themselves to the bar rail in the Hotel Regatta, Brisbane
- 1966** The term 'women's liberation' used in print in US magazine *Ramparts*  
Married women permitted to work in the Commonwealth Public Service
- 1969** Equal Pay for Equal Work case won in the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission  
*Sexual Politics* by Kate Millett published – a very controversial book criticised by some feminists; regarded as important for 'second wave feminism'  
First Women's Liberation group formed in Sydney
- 1970** *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer published – controversial for its use of explicit language and its content arguing that the traditional nuclear family represses women sexually by turning them into eunuchs  
Women's Action Committee (WAC) formed
- 1971** Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) formed in Melbourne
- 1972** Helen Reddy released her song 'I Am Woman'  
International Women's Day March became a focus in Sydney; 4000 women marched from the Town Hall to Hyde Park; an egg was thrown at Germaine Greer  
Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) formed; survey conducted to identify attitudes of existing Members of Parliament (MPs) to women's issues  
Conciliation and Arbitration Commission recognised equal pay for work of equal value
- 1973** Commonwealth public service granted women maternity leave  
Elizabeth Reid appointed as first women's adviser to the prime minister  
First women's shelter in Australia (Glebe, Sydney) opened for women experiencing domestic violence; known as Elsie's Women's Refuge  
Australian Government officially recognised International Women's Day
- 1975** International Women's Year  
*Damned Whores and God's Police: the Colonization of Women in Australia* by Anne Summers published
- 1976** 'Reclaim the night' campaign against violence towards women began
- 1977** Anti-Discrimination Act, New South Wales
- 1979** Full- and part-time women workers awarded the right to one year's unpaid leave after giving birth
- 1981** Rape within marriage became a criminal offence
- 1983** Government created the Office of the Status of Women  
Government ratified International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- 1984** Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act
- 1986** Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission established Affirmative Action Act



The right to safe and reliable birth control had been a goal of the women's movement since the 19th century, both in Australia and overseas. The 50th anniversary of the introduction of the Pill was in 2010. Today more than 100 million women worldwide use the Pill and in Australia this includes half of the sexually active, fertile women.<sup>1</sup> Today the Pill is seen as a symbol of the 1960s, a decade of social and political change. It gave women the right to control their own fertility in a reliable and easy way. No other contraception had been able to do this and it changed women's social conditions.

The Pill was developed as a result of new scientific and technological developments, not directly through women's political struggles for birth control. Interestingly, though, funds for its development were donated by Katherine McCormick, American birth-control pioneer and activist, and Margaret Sanger, long-time women's rights advocate.



## A new form of contraception

The contraceptive pill ushered in long-lasting changes that were embraced by young, single women as part of the sexual revolution, and it heralded a new period of sexual freedom after the conservatism of the 1950s. Traditional family values were challenged by the new permissive society that emerged, although not everyone embraced the changes.

While some regard the Pill as having caused a range of social problems in the 1970s and 1980s, and even say it was the cause for everything that was wrong with Australian society during those decades, the Pill had an enormous impact on the place of women in society and laid the foundation for new discussions about their role and status in the community.

The Pill was launched in the United States in 1960 as the first ever oral contraceptive. Australia was the second country to release the Pill – in 1961 – but it was expensive (taxed as a luxury item) and initially it was only prescribed for married women.

Despite the expense, the Pill was immediately popular because, for the first time, women had an effective, reliable form of contraception that was easy to use – just one pill each

night. Sexual experience without the fear of pregnancy gave women choices that men had had for so long. By 1963, one in ten married women of childbearing age in Melbourne was taking the Pill.

In 1973, a year after Prime Minister Gough Whitlam had reduced the cost of the Pill, in response to feminists' demands, more than 750 000 women were using the contraceptive.

During the 1970s, it became possible for single women in Australia to get a prescription for the Pill. Prior to that many of them wore rings to pretend that they were married in order to obtain prescriptions from a doctor. Single women's response to the Pill was different from that of married women. In the late 1960s, Nancy, a 20-year-old bookkeeper, noted:

“ I've done a lot of thinking, and I'm really too young to get tied down ... You never know what's around the corner, and it's more fun hunting than settling. These days, you get on the pill, and you stop worrying. The pill's changed everything. Now, if a girl's over twenty and still a virgin, there's something wrong with her. ”

Quoted in Frank Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians, a History*, Black Inc., 2012, p. 232

## Women's right to control their own fertility

Judy Blume, the highly successful author of books for pre-teens and teenagers, talks about how hard it is today to understand the fear of getting pregnant. This extract is from an interview available on the internet (search for 'Judy Blume makers'). Watch the full interview and answer the questions below.

They don't know what it was like to worry all the time about getting pregnant, to be terrified ... Even within our marriages that was such an enormous fear. There was nothing you could do about it if you got pregnant except a back alley kind of abortion and that could kill you.

Transcript from 'Judy Blume: The Era of Illegal Abortions', *The Makers*, 18 February 2012, [www.makers.com](http://www.makers.com)

In 1975, in the United States, Loretta Lynn recorded 'The Pill', a comic song about birth control written by Lorene Allen, Don McHan and TD Bayless. Several country radio stations refused to play it, but outside the country market, this controversial song gained huge attention and ultimately became Lynn's highest charting pop single. Search the internet for the lyrics to this song and answer the questions below.

### Questions

- 1 What is the fear expressed by Judy Blume in her interview?
- 2 What was the choice that she and other women would face if they got pregnant?
- 3 What do Judy Blume and Loretta Lynn have in common?
- 4 Who is Loretta Lynn addressing in her song?
- 5 What were her expectations of married life before she married?
- 6 Describe her married life before the Pill.
- 7 What change does she predict as a result of the Pill?

## The backlash

### encyclical

A letter sent by the Pope to all his bishops

The Pill attracted strong opposition from the Catholic Church hierarchy but not from the laity and some members of the clergy. In 1968, Pope Paul VI issued *Humanae Vitae*, an **encyclical** that condemned all forms of birth control. There were protests from within the Catholic community. A few left the priesthood while others ignored the Church's ban. An American survey in 1970 found that only 29 per cent of Catholics supported the Pope's ban on the Pill. Also, two-thirds of Catholic women were using birth control and one quarter of them were taking the Pill.

The introduction of the Pill initiated moral debates during the 1960s about pre-marital sex and promiscuity. Some doctors opposed the Pill on religious and moral grounds, arguing that it lowered the purpose of sexual intercourse to personal gratification rather than the higher one of procreation.

In the United States, all forms of contraception were banned in many states, but in 1965, the Supreme Court intervened and ruled that laws banning contraception violated the right of privacy. In 1973, unmarried minors were given the right to buy contraceptives.

### Impact of the Pill

- + It broke the connection between sex and reproduction.
- + It allowed for sex without the fear of pregnancy.
- + There was no longer a direct connection between sex and conception.
- + Women took charge of their bodies and reproduction.
- + Some women found it harder to resist men's sexual demands.
- + Families became smaller because it was easier to limit the number of children.
- + Couples could better plan to buy a home because they could rely upon two incomes for a period of time.
- + Employers now saw women as an employee option.
- + Higher educational institutions realised that women would not get pregnant and would be more likely to finish their degrees.
- + There was an increase in the number of couples living together without marrying and disapproval of this practice declined.
- + Younger women had pre-marital sex at an earlier age according to a survey taken in Australia in 1973 by an American sexologist. The survey also showed that nearly three quarters of the cohort had had pre-marital sex and that women were on average having sex at 18 and a half. A higher percentage of young women under 25 were having premarital sex (92 per cent) and they initiated sex more often.
- + The average marriage age in the US rose for women in the 1970s. In 1970, the average college graduate getting married was 23 years old; by 1975 that age was 25.5 years.

The effect of the Pill was to change women's social conditions and offer them more in life than marriage and children. When it became legally available to single women in the 1970s, new opportunities opened up as the fear of getting pregnant disappeared. Women could plan their families, they could finish their tertiary education, and as a result they entered the professions on a more equal basis with men.



## New ideas

During the 1960s, a number of women began to research and write about the experiences of women in modern society. Often they were drawing on earlier ideas such as those of Simone de Beauvoir (see Chapter 5, pages 134–135). This new research highlighted the fact that for many women in developed countries their opportunities to access education and careers had been limited only by their sex.

### THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE

One of the most influential of these works was *The Feminine Mystique* by American author Betty Friedan, first published in 1963. The book received an immediate response from women in the United States, Australia and Great Britain. In the United States, it is regarded as having initiated a new wave of feminism and has been designated one of the most influential books of the 20th century. It investigates ‘the problem that has no name’, the title of the first chapter.

“ The problem laid buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction a yearning that women suffered ... Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night – she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question – ‘Is this all?’ ”

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, WW Norton & Company Inc., New York, 1963

*The Feminine Mystique* began in the 1950s as a survey for the 15th anniversary reunion of Friedan’s college classmates, all of whom were housewives. It focused on the way in which they were using their education. The survey results indicated that 89 per cent of the women were not using their education and skills and were unhappy in their role as housewife. She concluded that they were financially secure, had children, but asked themselves, ‘Is this all?’ The traditional role of wife and mother was not enough; it was not satisfying. Friedan continued surveying other suburban housewives before writing *The Feminine Mystique*. The book sparked discussion about the role of women in society at a time when, in the United States, 60 per cent of female college students were dropping out and getting married, rather than completing their studies.

### Impact of *The Feminine Mystique*

Betty Friedan received hundreds of letters from unhappy housewives in America supporting her ideas. She also received criticism from those who claimed she focused only on white, middle-class women and did not include those from other races or classes. Bell Hooks, a prominent black feminist scholar, was highly critical of Friedan’s work, arguing that her approach excluded many women, including those without husbands or partners, children or homes, the poor and non-white women. More recently, however, other black feminists have claimed Friedan did them a favour by provoking them into action.

## The Feminine Mystique Betty Friedan 50 years

Introduction by Gail Collins  
Afterword by Anna Quindlen

**SOURCE 6.2** A special edition of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* was published in 2013 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its publication

Used with permission of WW Norton & Company, Inc.

“Today, I would argue that Friedan’s unintentional exclusion of African American women in ‘The Feminine Mystique’ was in fact a gift because it might be what led to the development of a black feminist movement and scholarship in the area of black feminist thought.”

Michelle Bernard, ‘Betty Friedan and black women: Is it time for a second look?’  
Washington Post blog, 21 February 2013

More than two million copies of *The Feminine Mystique* have been sold since publication and it has been translated into many languages.

*The Feminine Mystique* is regarded in America as a catalyst for what is called ‘second wave feminism’. Some American feminists refer to the publication of the book as ‘where it all started’. In Australia, it appeared in 1963 just prior to the announcement of conscription of 18-year-old men for the Vietnam War, an event that ushered in a period of questioning of social norms and of mass protests – an era that radicalised young women as well as men.



### Betty Friedan (1921–2006)

It seemed to me that men weren’t really the enemy –  
they were fellow victims ...

Betty Friedan, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 1 April 1974

Betty Friedan was an American writer, women’s rights activist and feminist. As a journalist she wrote for a number of union publications. In 1952, she was dismissed from the United Electrical Workers’ *EU News* when she asked for maternity leave for her second child. She then became a freelance writer. Friedan came to international attention with the publication of her book *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963.



Alamy/ZUMA Press, Inc

In 1966, she co-founded the National Organization for Women (NOW). The aim of NOW was to advocate for women’s rights. It published a Bill of Rights in 1968 that advocated the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) that could have amended the US Constitution to guarantee equal rights for women. This ERA dated back to 1923 when it was written by suffragist Alice Paul.

Friedan also established a number of feminist organisations, including the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL) in 1969, dedicated to achieving abortion rights. She also formed the National Women’s Political Caucus in 1971. She published a number of other books including *The Second Stage* in 1982 and *The Fountain of Age* in 1993.

She died in 2006, aged 85.

### Question

- 1 Prepare an evaluation of Betty Friedan’s work for women’s rights in the period after she had published *The Feminine Mystique*. What did she achieve? How significant do you think she was in furthering women’s rights? Use evidence from this chapter and search the internet for more interviews and resources.

## NEW ACTIONS IN AUSTRALIA

In Australia, *The Feminine Mystique* prompted a new approach to thinking about the place of women in society. The book gave Australian women the impetus to question their own role in society and their lack of participation in public life. A range of campaigns began in the 1960s as well as debate about equal pay. Women felt that the time had come for action.

### The Bar Room Suffragettes

On 31 March 1965, two women entered the public bar of the Regatta Hotel in Brisbane and asked for a drink. The barman refused to serve them so they chained themselves to the railing at the bar. The police were called, and when they arrived they took the women's names and told them that they were not allowed in the public bar. The police then left, not wishing to create a scene.

The action of chaining themselves to the rail represented a new approach by Australian women wishing to extend their rights. Their action was reminiscent of the British suffragettes, Muriel Matters and Helen Fox, who had chained themselves to the grille of the Ladies Gallery in the House of Commons in 1908.

### Bar Room Suffragettes

Merle Thornton, right, and Rosalie Bogner chained themselves to the bar in the Regatta Hotel in Brisbane in 1965. The action was a protest against women being barred from public bars. Hotels usually had a room called the Ladies Lounge where women could drink, but at higher prices than men in the public bar. Thornton and Bogner were nicknamed the 'Bar Room Suffragettes' by the Brisbane newspaper, *The Courier-Mail*.



NewsPix/© News Ltd

### Questions

- 1 What were Thornton and Bogner trying to achieve in chaining themselves to the rail in the public bar of the hotel?
- 2 What effect did they have? Did they achieve their aim?
- 3 Imagine you were one of the policemen called to the pub that afternoon. Write a report for your superior officer, describing the problem you found, the actions you took and the behaviour of the men and the publican.
- 4 How did the women advance women's rights by this action?

Merle Thornton and Rosalie Bogner were protesting against the exclusion of women from the public bars of hotels – an iconic male space. They were also breaking with the women's movement's former good allies (the temperance movement) by wanting to drink in a pub.

Their husbands distributed leaflets explaining what they were doing and calling for women to be allowed to drink in bars. A few weeks earlier, the women had asked the Minister to alter the Licensing Act governing hotels in order to allow women access to public bars. He refused so they resorted to action as the British suffragettes had decades earlier.

Women were banned from many public spaces in the 1960s, including public bars, football stadiums and other sporting facilities such as racetracks. Up to that time married women were also not allowed to work in the public service.

This action of civil disobedience drew attention to the issue of women being denied access to public spaces. It also attracted considerable press and television publicity. One writer to *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper commented on the connection to the British suffragettes and the rights elaborated in the United Nations' Charter.

“ The Charter of the United Nations stands for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction in race, sex, language or religion. Good luck to the two young Ladies who have drawn our attention to the drinking law which is contrary to this charter by discrimination against women. ”

*The Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 5 April 1965

The women's action also drew attention to the fact that women paid higher prices on lower wages for a drink in the Ladies Lounge. According to historian Diane Kirby, the 40 men in the bar who were asked what they thought of the action said they admired the women. The publican, however, opposed their presence.

A week later, Thornton and Bogner, along with eight other women, entered three different pubs and were welcomed by the men. The police refused to come, as reports came in that men were buying the women drinks in the public bar. The women claimed the action as a victory for women's rights. This event has come to be regarded as the beginning of the new women's movement in Australia, a movement with more militant methods of operation. In 1970, women were finally given the legal right to drink in public bars.

## THE RIGHT TO EQUAL PAY

Equal pay for equal work had been an issue for the women's movement since the beginning of the 20th century. In Australia, the Harvester Judgement in 1907 set the minimum wage and was very important in terms of women's work and wages, as it based its ruling on the concept of a family wage. A family wage was the minimum amount needed for a man to support himself, a wife and children. The idea of a male breadwinner with dependent wife and children was counterbalanced against the female worker as a single woman without dependents. However, single men received the family wage even if they remained single all their lives.





## EQUAL PAY, 1950–1985

- 1951** Equal Remuneration Convention of the International Labour Organization recommended that men and women workers be given equal pay for work of equal value with a view to setting a rate for jobs without regard to gender
- 1958** The Equal Pay Act was passed in New South Wales. This gave women on state awards equal pay with men.
- 1966** Married women allowed to work in the Commonwealth public service
- 1969** Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission decreed that men and women should receive equal pay if engaged in work 'of the same or a like nature'; the result was that the 82 per cent of women engaged in women's work got nothing; mostly teachers and nurses benefited. It was to be phased in over four years.
- 1972** National Wage case introduced the phrase 'equal pay for work of equal value' (taken from the International Labour Organization) but no definition was given for the word 'value', regardless of the sex of the worker, nor did it outline a way to compare jobs
- 1973** Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission set a minimum wage for all adults
- 1974** Men and women could receive the same minimum basic wage; gender was no longer the main factor in wage setting and the concept of family support was no longer a part of the wage system
- 1977** The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) adopted the Working Women's Charter calling for an end to 'discrimination on the basis of sex, race, country of origin, age, religious or political belief, marital status or sexual preference'
- 1985** Anne Sgro Children's Centre opened in Coburg

Through the decades of the 20th century, each time the case was put for an equal wage the response was that a woman did not need as much as a man because she was included in her husband's wage. The connection between the family wage and a woman's wage was critical in denying her equality of pay. Men feared that equal wages would undermine the family wage for male workers and also the family itself.

In 1950, the basic wage for a woman was set at 75 per cent of the basic wage of a man. During the 1950s, women went on strike to protect their wages. Two examples of this are women at the Rheem factory in Brisbane and at the Swift Meatworks in Aitkenvale. Organisations were formed to fight the issue of equal pay – for example, the Queensland Equal Pay Committee, which was formed in 1956 and included union activists Kath Thomas and Stella Nord, both of whom worked for equal pay over decades.

The 1960s brought more campaigns and test cases. The ACTU decided in 1962 to declare a National Equal Pay week to raise the profile of the campaign and put pressure on employers.

In 1969, Zelda D'Aprano, a trade unionist, took action as the Bar Room Suffragettes had done a few years previously. Knowing that



**SOURCE 6.3** Nancy Anderson, in a 1969 protest for equal pay, highlights the way in which activists for women's rights frequently made imaginative use of protest methods to make their point.



Fairfax Syndication/The Age Archives

**SOURCE 6.4** Zelda D'Aprano chained herself to the railing outside the Commonwealth Public Service building in 1969, as a protest against the lack of equal pay for women.



The Herald

**SOURCE 6.5** Zelda D'Aprano with friends, paying only 75 per cent of the price of a ticket, arguing that 'We earn 75 per cent, we pay 75 per cent on the trams'.

their protests was to only pay 75 per cent of a tram fare, arguing that they only received 75 per cent of a man's wage.

## Equal pay

In 1972, the idea of equal pay was broadened to 'equal pay for work of equal value', meaning that jobs could now be compared to see if there were similar tasks involved. Pay was based on the job, not on the gender of the person undertaking it. As a result, employers sought to reclassify jobs to a lower classification in order to avoid implementing the ruling.

petitions and deputations brought few results, she chained herself to the Commonwealth Public Service building in Melbourne to attract attention to the campaign for women's equal pay.

D'Aprano later recalled:

“ After having a chat about all of these aspects, we both agreed that something more than just talking was needed to draw attention to the pay injustice meted out to women and more positive action was required. We began to fantasise women chaining themselves up like the suffragettes did and jokingly asked ourselves where women could chain themselves to make their protest effective. ”

Zelda D'Aprano, *Zelda*, Spinifex Press, Melbourne, 1995, p. 171

The action was successful in its aim – it drew widespread media and press television coverage.

## A limited victory

In 1969, shortly after Zelda D'Aprano had staged her protest, the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission granted women 'equal pay for equal work' but only in the situation where women were working in the same job as men. This benefited only about 18 per cent of women workers. Female teachers were among those who benefited.

This new legislation, with pay increases to be phased in over four years, did not provide equal pay in workplaces that were predominantly female. The family wage continued to exist.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Muriel Heagney had argued for 'one rate for the job' regardless of the worker's gender, but in the 1960s the concept of male and female work still existed. However, the legislation did establish the 'principle' of equal pay but it was a very limited achievement. More action was needed, so Zelda D'Aprano and three teachers – Thelma Solomon, Alva Geikie and Jessie 'Bon' Hull – established the Women's Action Committee (WAC). They envisaged that this would be a militant organisation and rather different from previous women's organisations. One of

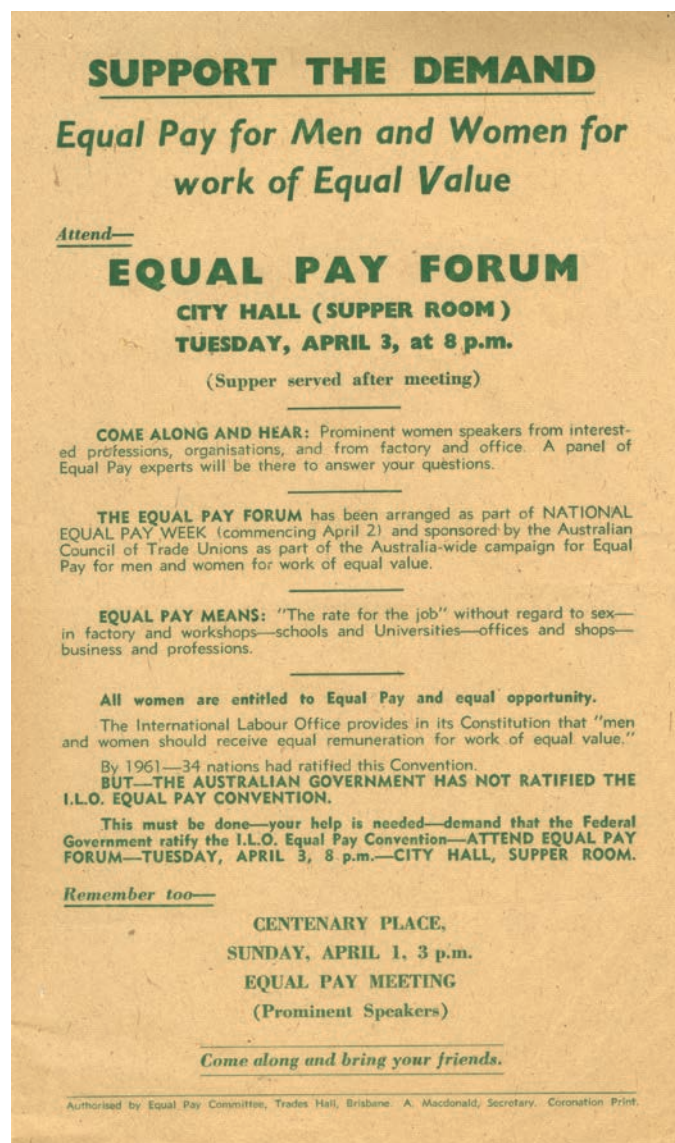
## Migrant women in the workforce

Government-sponsored immigration on a large scale occurred after the Second World War. As a result, many migrant women – initially Italian and Greek – joined the workforce. They were often in poorly paid jobs in the textile, clothing and shoe industries. Many of them also undertook piecework at home. In the factories, they faced the difficulties of a different language, communication and culture. They were also discriminated against, given the worst jobs and lacked support from the unions. Naturally, they felt socially isolated.

With the election of the Whitlam Government and Al Grassby as Minister for Immigration, the working situation for ethnic groups improved. In 1973, the first Migrant Workers Conference was held, followed by greater recognition from the unions for the different needs of migrant workers.

In 1975, the women's group of the Italian Federation of Migrant Workers and their families spoke out on issues of importance to them. In particular, they wanted information in their own language about health and child-care. Other migrant women from different ethnic backgrounds also felt excluded. German-born Gisela Kaplan commented that she knew 'of no single immigrant woman of a non-English speaking background who is a stranger to the experience of ostracism and exclusion by other women and by feminists'.<sup>2</sup> In response, some women's groups in Australia attempted to include and represent the needs of migrant women. For example, when the Working Women's Centre was established in Melbourne in 1975, two part-time liaison officers who were fluent in Greek, Italian and Spanish were appointed. Shortly after, a paper called 'Women at Work' discussed the needs of migrant women, with articles written in as many as seven different languages.

In 1974 and 1975, ethnic rights were promoted along with feminist ones in the Migrant Women Workers Project, which produced a report that pointed out the lack of adequate services available for women of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The report, titled 'But I wouldn't want my wife to work here ...' was a study of migrant women in Melbourne and it highlighted the dire situation of migrant women factory workers. In 1982, the Immigrant Women's Speakout Association of New South Wales Inc. was formed; its aims included assisting 'immigrant and refugee women to achieve equal participation in society ...'



**SOURCE 6.6** This leaflet was authorised by the Equal Pay Committee, Trades Hall, Brisbane. It announced the Equal Pay Forum to be held on Tuesday 3 April at 8 p.m. as well as other equal pay events. This forum was to be part of the Equal Pay Week Campaign.



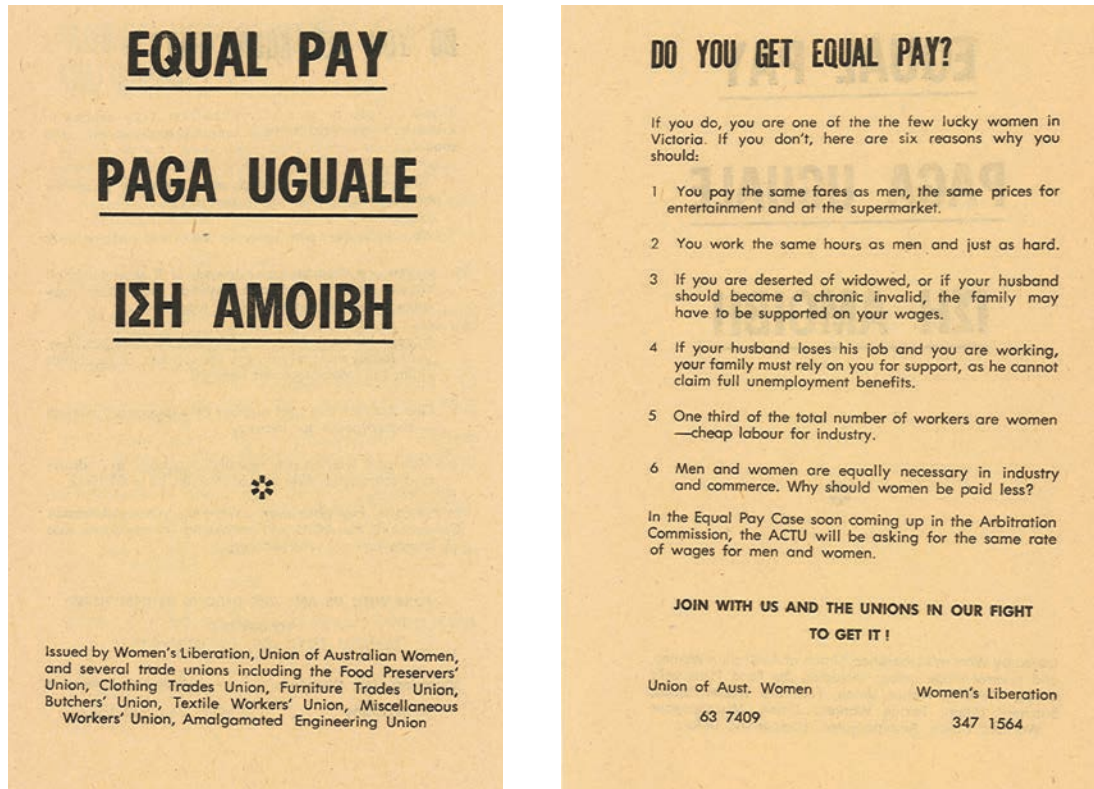


Image supplied by University of Melbourne Archives. Bon Hull collection. 2000.01.08. file 1/1/10. box 1. Reproduced with permission from Union of Australian Women, Textile Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia (formerly Clothing Trades Union and Textile Workers' Union). Copyright is also jointly held by Food and Confectionery Division of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (formerly Food Preservers' Union), Forestry and Furnishing Products Division of CFMEU (formerly Furniture Trades Union), Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union (formerly Butchers' Union), United Voice (formerly Miscellaneous Workers' Union) and Automotive Food Metals & Engineering Union (formerly Amalgamated Engineering Union)

**SOURCE 6.7** This equal pay brochure, now held at the Women's Liberation Archives, Melbourne University, was published in English, Italian and Greek. Why was it important the such brochures were published in multiple languages? What does this suggest about the changing nature of the women's movement in Australia in the 1970s?

## Women's liberation

The Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) burst onto the political stage in 1969 and grew into a mass feminist movement challenging all aspects of social life. It set the agenda for reform for two decades, in women's health, education, employment and childcare. The WLM represented a break from the values and methods of previous women's movements and introduced a significant philosophical shift.

The first women's liberation groups met in Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney in 1969. They emerged at a time of expansion in higher education, and during the political and social protests of the 1960s – the debates and campaigns against conscription, the opposition to the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement. Women's experiences within the protest groups led them to question their role as women in these organisations. They took many ideas and actions from the American women's liberation groups.

Australian women had already achieved political and legal rights, fought for by previous generations. Now they faced the barrier of conditioning – the formation of gender identity in childhood that conditions the attitudes and values of the adult.

Two influential and controversial books marked the beginning of the women's liberation movement. In 1969, *Sexual Politics*, by American author Kate Millett, was published, and *The Female Eunuch* by Australian author Germaine Greer was published a year later.



Copyright 1969, 1970, 1990, 2000 by Kate Millett. Used with permission of the University of Illinois Press.



*Patriarchy is fundamental to women's oppression.*

*Sex is political ... relations between men and women are based on the dominance and subordination of men over women.*

*A study of sexuality in literature where women's subordination is played out or expressed in art and literature.*

*In the novels of Norman Mailer, DH Lawrence and Henry Miller, it can be seen that men use their power over women to degrade them.*

*The social conditioning of girls and boys shapes them into stereotypical 'masculine' or 'feminine', reflecting particular sex roles. Status is assigned to each role, with women receiving a lower status than men.*

Alamy/foto-zone



*Greer encouraged women to be more active and less passive to overcome their oppression in society.*

*Sexual liberation is a central part of women's liberation; thus women who were denied their own sexuality became eunuchs.*

*Urged women to first analyse their own situation and then take action to secure their personal liberation.*

*After women achieve their own liberation, they should work for social liberation.*



## Germaine Greer (1939– )

Germaine Greer is a writer and radical feminist, a former academic and teacher. She came to attention both nationally and internationally with her first book *The Female Eunuch* in 1970. The book, a bestseller, was controversial, receiving both positive and negative reviews. It shocked some people by its graphic sexual references and images.

In the book Greer argued that men have contempt for women, and that the traditional family of husband, wife and children represses women sexually. Women are passive and powerless in this society. Women, she argued, should break away from their traditional roles and challenge male authority figures. They should explore their own sexuality. Sexual liberation, she says, is a central part of women's liberation.

Germaine Greer was born in Melbourne in 1939, attended a Catholic girls school and studied at the University of Melbourne and at the University of Sydney. She won a scholarship to Cambridge University where she began writing under pseudonyms for controversial magazines such as *OZ* and *Private Eye*.

*The Female Eunuch* became a symbol of women's liberation. It sold out quickly and went to a reprint. In the first year, it was translated into eight different languages. Like Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* seven years earlier, it opened up a public space for women and provided them with a language they could use to question their social role. It sparked fierce debates in communities and in the public realm.



Fairfax Syndication/SMH Picture by Berry

## AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

The Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in Australia was not one single group or organisation. It was decentralised – that is, it existed at local levels rather than as a single national organisation. The WLM consisted of grass-roots organisations and included feminists who labelled themselves as radical, socialist, communist, liberal, lesbian or Christian.

The WLM marked itself out as different from previous women's movements in both content and methods. It opened up broader discussions of the role of women in society, such as structural inequalities and women's absence from decision-making in public and private spaces.

## HERSTORY

The suffragists of the 19th century, both overseas and within the Australian colonies, used their writings to analyse their oppression and to fight for women's rights. In New South Wales, Louisa Lawson published a monthly magazine, *The Dawn*; in Queensland, Leontine Cooper published her monthly women's magazine, *The Star*; and in Victoria, Vida Goldstein published *The Sphere*.

Knowledge about the struggle for the right to vote and the work of women during the decades of the 20th century to extend women's rights was relatively unknown by the time of the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s. Women's history was not taught in schools or universities.

The constant questioning by the WLM as to how and why women were oppressed led to the birth of subjects such as Women's Studies in universities and other higher education institutes, and a new interest in women's history.

In this context, four women's histories of Australia were published in 1975:

- + *Damned Whores and God's Police* by Anne Summers
- + *My Wife, My Daughter and Poor Mary Ann* by Beverley Kingston
- + *The Real Matilda* by Miriam Dixson
- + *Gentle Invaders* by Ann Conlon and Edna Ryan.

Soon after these books were published, other publications, such as the journals *Refractory Girl* and *Hecate* were published. These publications gave women a 'voice' and a new confidence, built upon a knowledge of their history, which they used to demand their rights.

### Questions

- 1 Why didn't women know about the women's rights struggles in the past?
- 2 What focus did histories of Australia have before the 1970s?
- 3 Explain why women's histories were rarely published before the 1970s.
- 4 What has been the effect of the lack of women's histories before 1970?

## WOMEN'S LIBERATION METHODS

The WLM adopted the method of consciousness-raising – an idea that came from the civil rights movements' method of using personal testimony. Consciousness-raising took the form of group discussion based upon the shared personal stories of oppression experienced by each member of the group. Women had the opportunity to speak out about their personal experience of oppression. In telling their stories they found common experiences, which they analysed and discussed. Through this practice they became more aware, or 'conscious', of the everyday oppression of women.

## The formation of gender identity

In consciousness-raising groups, women told stories that highlighted experiences of how they were brought up as girls in their families – how, as Simone de Beauvoir had said, ‘One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman’.

They analysed their upbringing, the custom of women changing their family name to their husband’s, and of putting girls in pink and boys in blue. They discussed the fact that some school subjects were identified as being for girls and others (such as science and mathematics) were seen as being boys’ subjects.

They also discussed the fact that occupations such as secretary, teacher and nurse were considered as being for women, while those of doctor, lawyer and tradesperson were for men. Girls were often encouraged to be teachers because they would be at home with the children after school and on school holidays.

In the selection of children’s toys they noted that there was a clear divide between the sexes.

Other methods used by the WLM to draw the public’s attention included choosing one day in a year to march or to celebrate a cause. One example was the adoption of the International Women’s Day (IWD) march. In 1978, a march called ‘Reclaim the Night’ was established to raise awareness of and protest against violence against women. This march started in America as ‘Take Back the Night’ in 1975 and was adopted by Belgium in 1976. In Australia, a ‘Reclaim the Night’ march was held in Sydney and Perth in 1978, followed by Melbourne in 1979.

Social activism was always a central part of the WLM. Women acted to provide assistance where the government had not and where there was a need. Rape crisis centres, childcare centres, halfway houses and refuges for women were established in each state, organised by collectives of women.

## Some of the rights women lacked in the 1970s

- + Married women had no right to credit.
- + Women had no right to equal pay.
- + Women had no right to continue to work in the Commonwealth public service or as teachers when they married.
- + Abortion was illegal.
- + Spousal rape was not a crime.



## The Women's Liberation declarations

Women's Liberation groups formed in many parts of Australia and most issued statements about their aims and goals. The following documents from the early 1970s show the full range of their views and ideas.

### Manifesto, Women's Liberation Movement

Women's Liberation is **not** a feminist movement, i.e., it is not narrowly confined to the struggle of women for equality with men in the present society. The aims of Women's Liberation are TOTAL in the sense that the liberation of women must concur with the liberation of **all individuals** from a situation in which the only socially accepted mode of self-expression or development is in terms of pre-defined sexual roles.

A woman is never taken for **herself**: she is always 'Bill's bird', 'the little woman' or just 'mum'.

Extract from 'Manifesto', *Camp Ink*, Women's Liberation Movement, Adelaide, July 1971

### Women's Liberation newsletter

Women's Liberation believes that women in our society are oppressed.

We are economically oppressed: in jobs we do full work for half pay, in the home we do unpaid work full time.

We are commercially exploited by advertisements, television, and press: legally we often have only the status of children.

We are brought up to feel inadequate: educated to narrower horizons than men.

This is our specific oppression as women. It is as women that we are, therefore, organising. We demand:

- 1 That Women Have Control Over Their Bodies – We believe that this is denied us until we can decide whether to have children or not and when we have them.
- 2 The Repeal of Abortion Laws: Abortion on Request – Abortion is an essential part of birth control. Contraception without the right to abortion means that the State, in effect, controls our bodies if we become pregnant unwillingly. Women should have the right to decide whether or not to have an abortion.
- 3 Freely Available Contraception – More education on contraception is needed at an early age and, for this to be effective, contraceptives should be easily available and free on social security. Doctors should not have the right to refuse contraception on their own moral grounds.
- 4 Free 24-hour Community Controlled Child Care – The government should provide full child care facilities throughout Australia. These should be free and staffed by qualified people – men and women. The centres must be under the control of those who use them, to prevent bureaucratic 'baby dumps'. Women should not have to bear individual responsibility for the care of children.
- 5 Equal Job Opportunities and an End to Low Pay – Employers have no right to pay women less than men, or to keep women in menial jobs. The government must act to correct this injustice by making it illegal for employers to discriminate against women. Although, at first glance, the equal pay decision in 1972 seems favourable, the full effect of the decision will not become apparent until 1975. In other words, we have been 'bought off' until then.
- 6 Equal Education Opportunities – To enable women to have really equal opportunity, all schools must stop streaming women into 'service' jobs which reflect the wife/mother role – cleaners, teachers,

*continued*

continued

nurses, secretaries, social workers – essentially supporting roles. Sexual bias in curricula should be eliminated. The education system must play a large part in undoing the conditioning of women to accept an inferior role, by encouraging women to assert themselves in all fields.

We believe that by united action we can achieve our aims.

Extract from Women's Liberation Newsletter, Women's Liberation Movement, March 1973, pp. 5–6

### Questions

- 1 What is the context of these manifestos?
- 2 Who is the audience?
- 3 Why do you think Women's Liberation groups produced manifestos?
- 4 What are the main points?
- 5 Look at the language used – why are words such as 'manifesto', 'demand' and 'oppressed' used?
- 6 Do these manifestos suggest a change in ideas and tactics for the women's movement?
- 7 What do these manifestos tell you about each organisation that wrote them?
- 8 Are there parts of the manifestos that are relevant today?

## Abortion law reform

Demands of the Women's Liberation Movement included a woman's right to control her own body. This includes the right to abortion – an aspect of reproductive rights. Abortion has long been used as a method of birth control, despite being against the law. Women often resorted to 'backyard abortions' that were illegally carried out by some doctors or people with some medical knowledge. Women sometimes tried to perform abortions on themselves. All of these methods came with risks and often ended in death or the woman not being able to have another child.

In Australia, health is a state responsibility so each state has the right to make its own laws on abortion. In the 1970s, groups sprang up in each state, demanding and lobbying for the decriminalisation of abortions. In New South Wales, for example, the Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC) was established in 1972. It has campaigned continuously since then to achieve its stated goals:

- + abortion is a woman's right to choose
- + repeal of all abortion laws
- + free safe abortion on demand
- + free safe contraception on demand
- + no forced sterilisation.



**SOURCE 6.8** Pro-abortion march, Sydney, 2013. The Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC) is one of the oldest action groups to emerge from the Women's Liberation Movement and its work is still continuing.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, state laws changed and abortion stopped being a criminal offence if the procedure was undertaken for the mother's health. This change in the law came about due to the 'right to choose' campaigns organised through the WAAC in Sydney, the Women's Abortion Action Coalition in Melbourne and equivalent organisations in the other states. Doctors could very broadly define the definition of 'the mother's health'. Since these rulings, women have received safe abortions in hospitals and clinics. However, abortion still retained a quasi-legal status – officially illegal but accepted in practice as long as a doctor agreed that it was in the best interests of the mother.

Abortion is still debated today as Right to Life, or 'pro-life', groups continue to campaign against it. Abortion is a right that women had to fight for in all Western countries during the 1960s and 1970s.

### *Roe v. Wade*

As in Australia, women in the United States campaigned for abortion rights. In 1973, a landmark court ruling on a woman's right to abortion was delivered by the US Supreme Court. It decided in *Roe v. Wade* (by seven votes to two) that the Texas state law prohibiting abortion was unconstitutional and that women had a right to an abortion during the first three months of pregnancy. This decision was controversial and sparked a national debate. The United States was divided into pro-life and pro-choice groups.

#### Questions

- 1 Research the abortion laws for the state you live in. Write a brief paragraph outlining them. Do you agree with them or not? Give reasons.
- 2 Research the details of the US Supreme Court judgement *Roe v. Wade*. Who were Roe and Wade? What had happened to bring about this court action? Who opposed the decision and why? What was the response to the decision?

## Childcare

Childcare had been a critical issue during the Second World War, when women were drafted into the workforce, and it became so again during the 1960s and 1970s. This time the impetus for increased childcare provision came from the Commonwealth Government, which wanted women at work to boost economic growth and productivity. Feminists responded by asking for childcare centres to be open for 24 hours a day. The *Commonwealth Childcare Act 1972* supplemented the state services for day care centres.

As more women entered the workforce, feminists argued that childcare centres should be staffed by both male and female carers. They also argued that within the family home men could take their share in the job of caring for children.

In 1972, community activist and feminist Winsome McCaughey made one of the first statements on the issue of childcare on behalf of women's liberationists.

“ In our society, the nuclear family (read mother) has been held to be fully responsible for the development and socialisation of the child under school age. Women’s Liberation holds this to be an unreasonable and unsatisfactory method of childrearing. The recently formed Women’s Liberation ‘Community Controlled Child Care’ action group ... denies the assumption that the ideal environment is home with mother, all day every day ...

Children are in a very real sense, the children of the whole community and [Community Controlled Child Care] believe it to be the responsibility of the government to make educational facilities available to children under five years of age, in the form of good child care centres for the small child. ”

Winsome McCaughey, ‘Day care – liberating who for what?’, *Dissent*, 28, 1972, pp. 3–8

Provision of childcare had not increased with the increasing numbers of women entering the workforce in the late 1960s and early 1970s and this became an issue for women. They either arranged for private minders or attempted to obtain a place for their children at nurseries that employed kindergarten teachers.

In 1972, women’s organisations successfully lobbied the McMahon Government, and what followed was the first major commitment to preschools by a Commonwealth government – five million dollars were allocated to the building of childcare centres. The government also agreed to support local, not-for-profit initiatives with regard to childcare. Elizabeth Reid, who was the adviser to the prime minister on women’s issues, and members of the Women’s Liberation Movement, persuaded the government to extend day care and preschool facilities with an allocation of more than 45 million dollars during the 1974–75 fiscal year.

One of the groups that influenced the debate about childcare services was the recently formed Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL). Formed in 1972, WEL identified itself as part of the Women’s Liberation Movement.

WEL was made up of mainly middle-class and professional women, and it focused not on personal liberation but on influencing politicians to make the changes in parliament that would lift barriers to women’s rights, including the right to adequate childcare services.



**SOURCE 6.9** The Women’s Electoral Lobby has been campaigning for women’s issues for more than 40 years.

## WOMEN’S ELECTORAL LOBBY (WEL)

The Women’s Electoral Lobby was established in Melbourne and Sydney just before the 1972 federal election with the aim of interviewing all candidates (but particularly high-profile sitting members and ministers) about issues of importance to women.

The 1972 campaign was called ‘Think WEL before you vote’. This initial campaign was based on six demands:

- + equal pay
- + equal employment opportunity
- + equal access to education



- + free contraceptive services
- + abortion on demand
- + free 24-hour childcare.

Beatrice Faust was the initiator of the Melbourne group. She had already been involved with abortion law reform as well as the campaign for the liberalisation of censorship. The group's membership blossomed very quickly as more and more women joined.

The Women's Electoral Lobby was independent and not aligned to any political party. Tension grew between WEL and other groups connected with the Woman's Liberation Movement, which dismissed WEL's choice of working within traditional politics as **reformism**, preferring more radical activities and new methods such as consciousness-raising. Despite this tension the various women's liberation groups worked together successfully on campaigns; for example, applying pressure on the Tramways Union to allow women to be tram drivers.

#### reformism

Policy of bringing about reform without radically changing the current political system

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WEL received positive coverage by the press; perhaps because its method of using surveys was less threatening than the demonstrations and protests, and the dress and behaviours of women's liberationists.

The practice of surveying politicians about their views on issues was not new for Australian feminists. It dates back to the beginning of the century. Other techniques used by WEL included media campaigns, demonstrations, and writing letters and submissions to the government.

In 1972, WEL conducted a survey to rate federal election candidates. The results were published in *The Age* newspaper and other major state newspapers. Bill Hayden and Gough Whitlam from the Australian Labor Party (ALP) scored highest, while then- Prime Minister William McMahon scored only one vote out of a possible forty.

Not all responses to the formation of WEL were positive. Sir John Cramer, a former Australian Army Minister, refused to attend WEL's public meetings, stating that 'a woman must be taught that virginity is the most valuable thing she possesses'.

Adequate provision of childcare was a major issue leading up to the 1972 election. Two years after the ALP won government, WEL placed an advertisement in the *Australian Financial Review* to remind the government of its pre-election promises. WEL also held a demonstration about childcare in the form of a children's party outside Parliament House in August 1974, with a fire engine and a merry-go-round.

WEL was instrumental in the following areas:

- + introducing the concept of an adult minimum wage rather than a family wage
- + introducing the concept of fault-free divorce
- + raising awareness about rape in marriage
- + defining the phrase 'lack of consent'.

## *The rise of the femocrats*

With the leader of the ALP, Gough Whitlam, actively campaigning for women's votes, an alliance was established between the ALP and the women's movement. After Whitlam won government, he appointed women to senior positions in the public service. This was a form of state feminism. A new Australian word was coined to describe these women: 'femocrats'.

No other Western country introduced feminists into government this way. Many of the women received their appointments with elation and high hopes. Other feminists were critical, viewing any acceptance of a position within the government as co-option that would lead to compromises on positions. Even worse, they saw working in government as a 'sell out' to the state and believed that nothing or very little would be achieved.

The combination of a newly elected Labor Government eager for reform and the Women's Liberation Movement led, in 1973, to the appointment of a women's adviser to the prime minister – Elizabeth Reid. This was the first time in the history of Australian government that such a position had been created. Some historians believe that this was the beginning of state feminism.

Women such as Sara Dowse and Anne Summers, who both headed the Office of Women's Affairs, came from the women's movement and accepted positions in the bureaucracy in the belief that they could effect social change for women. Other well-known femocrats to take high positions included Susan Ryan (who later became a senator), Lyndall Ryan and Daniela Torsh. Their work during successive governments introduced many significant services and benefits, and raised the status of women. It led to more women entering parliament and to the first Australian female prime minister in the 21st century.

According to historian Marilyn Lake, one of the femocrats' major and long-lasting achievements was to

gain federal funding for the services that the Women's Liberation Movement had set up. These included women's refuges, health centres, rape crisis centres and childcare services. This funding was an acknowledgement from the government that there was a need for such programs; it was also an indication of the success of the movements that had set up the services without government support. Leading academic Marian Sawer has suggested that these femocrats brought about a 'quiet revolution'.

“ The United Nations (UN) drew on the Australian model as an example of good practice and international researchers drew attention to the distinctive ways in which the Australian women's movement had operated through the state to achieve gender-sensitive policy and the funding of feminist services. ”

Marian Sawer, 'Australia: The Fall of the Femocrats' in Joyce Outshoorn and Johanna Kantola (eds), *Changing State Feminism*, Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, p. 20



**SOURCE 6.10** Elizabeth Reid, the first adviser to the prime minister on women's affairs, photographed with Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and the Secretary of the Australian Government's Department of the Media, James Oswin in 1974



## 1980s – 1990s

- 1980** Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council established
- 1983** Susan Ryan became Labor's first woman cabinet minister. She was appointed as Minister Assisting the Prime Minister Bob Hawke on the Status of Women and was Minister for Education and Youth Affairs.
- 1984** Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act passed  
UN Conference on the Status of Women, Kenya
- 1986** Joan Child became the first woman to be Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act passed  
Janine Haines was elected as leader of the Australian Democrats political party, becoming the first female federal parliamentary leader of an Australian political party
- 1987** Justice Mary Gaudron became first woman appointed to the High Court
- 1989** Rosemary Follet became Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), the first female head of a government in Australia
- 1990** Joan Kirner (Victoria) and Carmen Lawrence (Western Australia) became first women to head their respective state governments
- 1994** Indigenous Women's Network formed
- 1996** Jenny George elected as first woman president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions
- 1998** Abortion legalised in limited circumstances in Western Australia

As a result of the femocrats' initiatives in the wider political context, federal and state governments in Australia introduced laws that addressed many of the enduring concerns of the women's movement. Two of the most important Acts passed were the Sex Discrimination Act and the Affirmative Action Act.

### SEX DISCRIMINATION ACT 1984

This Act was a milestone in Australian anti-discrimination legislation. It faced strong opposition in parliament and held the record for stimulating the longest debate in Australian parliamentary history. In the end, members of the opposition voted with the Labor government on this Bill.

The aim of the Sex Discrimination Act is to eliminate discrimination and sexual harassment in Australian society, and, by so doing, promote gender equality. The Act is written in gender-neutral language. Both men and women are able to make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission about discrimination on the basis of their gender.

In addition to the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act, each state introduced its own sex discrimination legislation. The first year after this Act was passed into law, Jane Hill was awarded \$35 000 under New South Wales legislation when she suffered sexual harassment at her job over a period of 18 months.

## The Sex Discrimination Act 1984

The objects of this Act are:

- (a) to give effect to certain provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and to provisions of other relevant international instruments; and
- (b) to eliminate, so far as is possible, discrimination against persons on the ground of sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy or breastfeeding in the areas of work, accommodation, education, the provision of goods, facilities and services, the disposal of land, the activities of clubs and the administration of Commonwealth laws and programs; and
- (ba) to eliminate, so far as possible, discrimination on the ground of family responsibilities in the area of work; and
- (c) to eliminate, so far as is possible, discrimination involving sexual harassment in the workplace, in educational institutions and in other areas of public activity; and
- (d) to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle of the equality of men and women.

Extract from 'Sex Discrimination Act 1984. Act No. 4 of 1984 as amended'. This legislative material is reproduced by permission, but is not the official or authorised version. It is subject to Commonwealth of Australia copyright.

### Questions

- 1 Describe in your own words the aim of this Act, making sure you cover all the points from (a) to (d).
- 2 Why was this Act so important?

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ACT (EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN) 1986



**SOURCE 6.11** Some occupations opened up to women by anti-discrimination laws were in the military. Wing Commander Linda Corbould was the first woman to command a Royal Australian Air Force Flying Squadron. She joined the RAAF in 1981 and served until 2011, seeing active service in Somalia, East Timor and the Iraq War.

This Act replaced the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*. It required higher educational institutes and employers with 100 or more staff to introduce programs that would assist in removing barriers to inequality, and to women's equal participation in the workforce. This was opposed by some employers and reviewed in 1999. The anti-discrimination Acts opened up new occupational areas for women.

Affirmative action was intended to make employers change the gender profile of organisations. If a workplace had more than 100 employees an Affirmative Action Plan was to be developed by management in order to provide opportunities for women to gain knowledge and skills required to take on more senior positions.



In the education sector, schools and universities employed Equal Opportunity Officers to work towards broadening girls' views about courses that were appropriate for them. Female students were encouraged to think about applying for studies that were largely taken by males at the time. These included mathematics and science subjects in schools, and medicine, science or engineering degrees in universities. Girls were also encouraged to consider taking on an apprenticeship in a trade area.

## WAVES OF FEMINISM

There is a generally accepted idea, repeated in many books, textbooks and articles, that there have been two waves of feminism. The first wave began in the late 19th century and finished in America around 1920; in Great Britain in 1918; and in Australia in 1902. This was when women achieved the right to vote. The second wave began with the Women's Liberation Movement in 1969.

Some historians refer now to a third wave that began in the 1990s and extends into the 21st century. It refers to a new stage in which the idea of feminism has changed to acknowledge the differences among women. It encompasses those women whose lives and experiences have been largely invisible – such as Indigenous and migrant women.

These extracts from prominent historians of the women's movement in Australia highlight the complexity of the issues of the two-wave theory.

### Anne Curthoys

Despite the changes of the last two decades and the continuities with the past, the year 1970 does seem to mark a significant moment in Australian history – a starting point for a new kind of women's movement.

Ann Curthoys, 'Doing It For Themselves: The Women's Movement Since 1970' in K Saunders and R Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, p. 425

### Marilyn Lake

Five overlapping phases can be discerned in the history of Australian feminism ... the first phase, the 1880s and 1890s ... the second stage in the first three decades of the twentieth century ... The third phase from the 1940s to the 1960s ... the fourth phase which styled itself a women's liberation movement ... and the fifth phase of feminism which we presently occupy.

Marilyn Lake, 'History of Australian Feminism' in Barbara Caine (ed.) *Australian Feminism: A Companion*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p. 134.

### Questions

- 1 In what ways do Lake and Curthoys differ in their ideas about phases of feminism in Australia?
- 2 If we accept that there are only two stages of feminism, what does that suggest about the years in between in terms of a women's movement?
- 3 Review Chapters 4 and 5, and then 6. What evidence is there to suggest that women's liberation was a significant break from past women's movements?
- 4 What continuities do you see? Have all the demands made in the early movement been met?
- 5 Why would people think that there was no women's movement in Australia between 1902 and 1969? Consider how people learn about the past.

## Conclusion

Between 1960 and 2000, there was a radical shift in the role of women in Western society. The home was no longer seen as the natural space for women. The term 'househusband' was created to describe men who switched roles and stayed at home to care for preschool children while their wives went to work as the 'breadwinners'.

It would have been inconceivable in 1960 to imagine that by the 1980s the military would be made up of both men and women, or that a woman would be commanding an air force squadron, or that women in the military would see active service and be present at all levels of command and decision making.

For women to have equal opportunities in employment, a sharp disjuncture was required in society's view of their role. The catalyst for this disjuncture was the Women's Liberation Movement. It burst onto the social landscape in 1969, breaking with the women's movements of the past in its desire for personal as well as social liberation. Its criticism of the unequal structures of societies, as well as an emphasis on activism and new methods, signalled its difference. But even new, radically different movements have some continuity with previous ones. In their reaction to the previous movements, women's liberation groups also revealed their origins.

Debates about continuing with previous methods of operation – such as whether feminists should remain outside government or join the government – produced tensions within the women's movement. However, groups on both sides of this debate cooperated when necessary in a political event or protest.

The significant changes that took place in politics and economics during these years led to a more equal society. However, the process is by no means complete. The explicit sexism experienced by Australia's first female prime minister, Julia Gillard, shows that the struggle is not over and that a women's movement is still needed. As Kate Millett wrote in *Sexual Politics* in 1969, 'there is such a thing as sexual politics and the personal is political'.<sup>3</sup>

## Chapter summary

- + The Pill was revolutionary because it provided an oral contraceptive that was reliable; it removed the fear of pregnancy and was disconnected from the act of sex.
- + Despite initial disapproval and concerns about its side effects, the Pill changed women's lives and was an important influence on the development of the women's movement in the latter part of the 20th century.
- + The battle for equal pay continued throughout most of the 20th century, and although equal pay was achieved in principle, in reality for most women during the second half of the century the gender gap in wages still existed.
- + The impact of *The Feminine Mystique* was enormous both in America and internationally, despite its focus on white, middle-class women. It opened a public space for women from different backgrounds to express their grievances and lack of rights.
- + *The Female Eunuch* was controversial and immediately successful in challenging the existing role of women. The book presented a picture of women's oppression as a fundamental element of society. It raised sexual issues that had not been discussed so openly before.
- + The Women's Liberation Movement differed from the previous women's movements in its criticism of inequalities imposed by institutions and structures in society. Its adoption of consciousness-raising as a method of exposing the sameness of the oppression of women, while giving them confidence to speak out, was new.
- + The Women's Electoral Lobby was highly effective in keeping politicians to account and putting pressure on them to keep their electoral promises.
- + The entrance of feminists into government positions was divisive. There were those who thought feminists could effect change within the bureaucracy and those who believed that women would be co-opted to join the system, or be forced to compromise.
- + Feminists who joined the bureaucracy were called 'femocrats'. Their support for women's services through government has been labelled as a form of state feminism by some historians.
- + The Sex Discrimination and Affirmative Action Acts were two of the most important Acts passed by the Australian parliament. They addressed women's concerns about discrimination in society on the basis of sex, and about the structures in organisations that prevented women from participating equally in the workforce.

### Weblinks

Weblinks relevant to this chapter can be found at <http://nmh.nelsonnet.com.au/women>.

### Endnotes

- 1 Norman Swan, ABC Health Report: Beyond the Pill, 10 February 2014
- 2 Marilyn Lake, *Getting equal: the history of Australian feminism*, Allen & Unwin, 1999, p. 266
- 3 Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, Doubleday & Co., 1969



# Chapter review activities

- 1 In 1999, *The Economist* named the Pill the most important scientific advance of the 20th century. What was so significant about it?
- 2 Imagine that you are a female sitting next to a classmate who is male. You both work for the same number of hours at the local fast-food shop, both serving chicken and chips. You receive 75 per cent of your classmate's wage. Write a letter to the manager arguing why you should receive the same amount of money.
- 3 What did the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) achieve? The extent to which the WLM was successful can be measured by how many of its aims were achieved. Listed in the first two columns of the table below are the demands set out in the Women's Liberation Movement's Manifesto on page 159 and from WEL on page 162. The two sets of demands are remarkably similar. Using this chapter and wider research, briefly indicate in the third column your assessment of the women's movement's achievements in these areas during the 1960s. In the fourth column, note the evidence you used to make this assessment.

WLM Manifesto	WEL	Level of success	Evidence
Women's right to control their own bodies through contraception			
Legalised abortion	Abortion on demand		
Freely available contraception	Free contraceptive services		
Free 24-hour childcare	Free 24-hour childcare		
Equal opportunity/job opportunities	Equal job opportunities		
Equal educational opportunities	Equal access to education		

- 4 Using evidence from the table, evaluate the extent to which the WLM achieved its aims.
- 5 Before 1969, women were paid less than men in the same job just because they were women. Were there some jobs from which a woman had to resign when she got married? What reasons were used to justify this?
- 6 Kath Thomas and Stella Nord were two unionists who fought for equal pay over several decades. Investigate their work in the equal pay struggle, and write a short account of their methods, and their achievements.



- 7 Merle Thornton became one of the leaders in the struggle for women's rights in Queensland, establishing organisations and campaigning for changes to laws restricting women. Research her political work and write a short assessment of her achievements for women. Provide evidence of your assessment. How significant was her work for women?
- 8 In 1978, a new campaign to raise awareness about violence against women began. It was called 'Reclaim the Night'. Investigate this campaign to find its origins, its organisers, their aims and achievements. Create a poster for their campaign.
- 9 Childcare was one of the three most important demands of women as mothers. Explain why it was so important? Is childcare still an issue today? Explain.
- 10 Analyse the poster in Source 6.12.
  - a What is the context of this poster?
  - b Who produced it?
  - c What is its purpose?
  - d How might it have shocked the public when it was produced?
  - e How does it convey its message?
  - f How effective do you think it is?
- 11 Elsie's Refuge in Glebe, New South Wales, was the first Australian women's refuge set up by feminists in 1972. Research the refuge and write a brief history of it for your local newspaper. Outline its origins, who set it up, what their purpose was and what outcome it had.
- 12 Is feminism still a 'bad' word? Give reasons for your response.
- 13 The song 'I am Woman' became a number one hit in 1972, selling more than one million copies. Written and performed by the Australian singer Helen Reddy, it reflects on issues associated with the women's movement. Find the lyrics for the song online. What themes and message do they convey? Is it a 'feminist' song? What use might such a song be to historians of the women's movement in the early 21st century?



**SOURCE 6.12** A 1969 poster produced by the Health Education Council, UK, and issued by the Family Planning Association