

# Centenary of Queensland Women's Suffrage 2005



Photo: voters outside a polling place, Brisbane, Queensland, 1907

Collection: John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, no. 73409

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# Introduction

During the 1890s, women in Queensland finally decided they were not stopping until they got suffrage. Many took to heart Louisa Lawson's advice to those who met to form the Dawn Club in Sydney in 1889 that women's "only method to procure release, redress, or change, is to ceaselessly agitate", and did just that for ten years from the militant public meetings in 1894 to the achievement of suffrage for (white) women in Queensland State elections proclaimed in the Election Acts Amendment Act on 26 January 1905.

Since Queensland's 1859 separation from New South Wales, parliamentarians were elected on the "plural" vote. How many votes a man had depended upon how much property he owned; a wealthy squatter could have up to a dozen votes. Among those entirely excluded from voting - along with women - were those of "unsound mind" and, at that stage, men in the police force and the army. A controversial and divisive issue for the women's suffrage movement was whether women wanted the vote on the same conditions as men, or whether they were seeking, as did the Labor Party, abolition of the property vote.

The suffragists were drawn from different strata of society and not all were privileged - although they have often been stereotyped as middle class. There were Labor Party and/or union activist women, such as Emma Miller, evangelical humanists from the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and woman identified reformists with strong reservations about the help that could be expected from male-dominated organisations.



**Pictured: a chatelaine (a set of short chains attached to a woman's belt, for carrying keys, perfume, smelling salts, pin cushion, ...)  
photo: Shev Armstrong**

# Acknowledgements

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The Queensland Women's Historical Association

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house, and even a commode in the maid's room.

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# The Plural Vote

Since Queensland's separation from New South Wales in 1859, Queensland parliamentarians were elected on the "plural" or "property" vote. The amount of property a man owned determined how many votes he had; a wealthy squatter could have up to a dozen votes. A controversial and divisive issue for the women's suffrage movement was whether women wanted the vote on the same conditions as men (i.e. propertied women having more than one vote), or whether they were seeking, as did the Labor Party, abolition of the property vote.



Some of the men in Parliament were propertied, and no doubt had friends and voters in their electorates who were also propertied. So the thought that women's franchise could mean an end to their plural voting privileges caused some of these men to campaign against or sabotage Bills which were tabled to secure women's suffrage. Many also thought women unworthy of the vote.

**eggcooker**  
**photo : Shev Armstrong**

# Who's who in Brisbane 1900?

## Emma Miller



Emma Miller was a working class campaigner for better wages and conditions. She helped set up the Female Workers' Union in Brisbane in 1890. She helped form the Woman's Equal Franchise Association (WEFA), an organisation which insisted that the plural vote be abolished before women's suffrage could be won. This group formed the Women Workers' Political Organisation (WWPO) which campaigned through the unions and Labor organisations.

**Emma Miller's statue in King George Square, Brisbane. A small hand-scratched plaque under it asks who has stolen Emma's umbrella (missing from her left hand).**

**photo: Shev Armstrong**

**Alongside Miller's statue is a statue of Charles Lilley who was the first to raise the issue of women's suffrage in Queensland Parliament in 1870.**

Miller is also known for using a hatpin to great effect (unhorsing the Police Commissioner) during a skirmish with police in 1912, at the tender age of 73.

**Pictured are various hatpins, with a Parker pen as a size reference.**

**photo: Shev Armstrong**



For more information about Emma Miller, see Pam Young's book on Miller, "*Proud To Be a Rebel*."

For Miller and the union women's role in the 1912 General Strike, see Pam Young's article in *Hecate* 14.2 (1988).

## Elizabeth Brentnall

Elizabeth Brentnall first called for women's suffrage in her presidential address to the Woman Christian Temperance Union annual convention in 1888. Forceful, eminently capable and with fine organisational ability, Brentnall had been mistress of a large girls' school in Lancashire before her marriage.<sup>1</sup> She was state president of the WCTU from 1886 to 1899 and afterwards a honorary life president. The WCTU formed a separate suffrage department in 1891.



**Photo: Members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Brisbane, 1901**

Front Row: Mrs Carvosso (President), Mrs Brentnall (Treasurer), Mrs Murray (Honourable Secretary).  
Back Row: Mrs T. Bryce (Hon. Treasurer), Mrs E. B. Harris (Vice-President-at-Large)

**Collection: John Oxley Library, State Library**

**of Queensland, no. 108858**

What Elizabeth and her husband discussed at the dinner table would have been interesting. Frederick Brentnall, a moral extremist, opposed votes for women except with the property qualification. An appointed life member of the Legislative Council after resigning from the Methodist ministry with throat troubles, he was also part of the **Telegraph** empire. When the **Boomerang** lampooned him for his speech on raising the age of consent he sued them for libel and lost. 'I would like to see a woman who would ever tempt me to do wrong', he had said.<sup>2</sup> Brentnall was also responsible for the insertion into **Hansard** of part of Lawson's poem "Freedom on the Wallaby": 'So we must fly a rebel flag / as others did before us ... / they needn't say the fault is ours / If blood should stain the wattle,' as part of a speech thanking military and civil officers for 'the apprehension of the late organised attempt to subvert the reign of law and order' (the 1891 Shearers' Strike which was brutally suppressed by the state).

Agnes Williams (colleague of Brentnall) was acclaimed as the most capable feminist orator in the state. The Brentnalls' daughter, Flora, was a confirmed suffragist and 'Y' organiser for the WCTU. She married into the well established Harris family.



**teapot**

**photo: Shev Armstrong**

1 Audrey Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia, A Gift or a Struggle?*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 117.

2 Spencer Browne, *A Journalist's Memories*, (Brisbane: Read Press, 1927) p.275.

## Léontine Cooper

Léontine Cooper was the most important intellectual writing about white women's rights in the struggle for the enfranchisement of women in Queensland. Active in the first short-lived suffrage group, she formed the Women's Franchise League (WFL), (a breakaway group from Woman's Equal Franchise Association) and edited Queensland's only suffrage paper, the *Star*. Although a socialist she believed in the need for an autonomous women's 'non-party' group. Her appointment to a Royal Commission into working conditions was a first for women. She actively fought for female education, was instrumental in the formation of the Pioneer Club for women, and wrote remarkable short stories.

Born in 1837, the daughter of a French father, a merchant and an English mother, Léontine Mary Jane Buisson married Edward Cooper in 1869, in London. They emigrated in 1871. In 1874 Léontine, although married when most women had to resign to marry, taught in the newly opened one teacher school at Chinaman's Creek (now Albany Creek). In 1876/7 she was on the staff of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School as a French teacher. Her husband was a surveyor and wrote poetry. Cooper is said to have had a 'slow graceful manner' and 'a gentle, low, and refined voice'.

Cooper wrote a scholarly article on Emile Zola and then a series of wonderful feminist, realist short stories for the *Boomerang* in the late 1880s. Her four critical articles on women's work, wrongs, unions and rights place her in the forefront of emerging feminist theory. Active in the Women's Suffrage League, she defended it against the attack by the *Boomerang*. In 1894 when the women's suffrage movement re-grouped, then split on the issue of the plural or property vote, Cooper resigned as vice-president from the Woman's Equal Franchise League and was first (and apparently only) president of the Women's Franchise League. For a while she wrote 'Queensland Notes' for the *Dawn*, then, with a friend, edited the *Star*, a suffrage paper, for a year; later she edited *Flashes*, a weekly paper. Her eloquent and insightful letters to the editor frequently graced the *Courier* and she corresponded with Rose Scott who also believed in the importance of non-party politics.

Cooper was a socialist, even though women were largely excluded from the unions at the time (see Helen Hamley 'The Women's Union, 1890-1910', *Radical Brisbane*, 88-93). In 1891 Cooper was a government appointee on the Royal Commission into Factories, Shops and Workshops. This was the first time women had ever been appointed to a commission. Cooper became actively interested in the development of women's unions. By the mid 1890s Cooper emerged as an important spokesperson for both adult and child female education in Brisbane. She was active in literary circles, on the School of Arts committees and in the call for a university. In 1899 she was the first president of the Pioneer Club, for women only. Cooper died prematurely in 1903, soon after the death of her husband, and without children. A dedicated campaigner and extremely articulate spokesperson, Cooper was recognised by suffragists across Australia.



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## Sources:

### Online:

[link to the following longer article by Deb Jordan about Léontine Cooper:](#)

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## Margaret Ogg



Poet and writer, Margaret Ann Ogg worked as a journalist and edited the women's section of the **United Grazier**, a NSW publication, using the pseudonym "Ann Dante" (Andante).

She built up a network of white country women who would request her to shop for them. She was active in Brisbane literary circles and sub-edited the Presbyterian ***Austral Star***. Through the WCTU she was instrumental in setting up the Mission to Seamen.

In 1903 she became secretary of QWEL (Qld Women's Electoral League), a position she held for 30 years. In her reminiscences ‡ she recalls travelling around the outback, with a Mrs Anderson, on speaking tours promoting suffrage for women. When she was refused the use of the public halls (which happened more and more often as her reputation preceded her), she would speak from atop her sulky, using it as an open air platform. Here we have one of the few insights into the personal difficulties and abuse these women faced in their attempt to speak to other women about their new political rights. Ogg accused some of her hecklers as

being paid. Who were these men, we could ask. Who was paying them? Ogg was suspicious of radicalism, finds Betty Crouchley who has written the Australian Dictionary of Biography † entry on Ogg, and strove to maintain the anti-socialist stance of QWEL. Ogg's advice and organising ability helped Irene Longman and many men into parliament, and her expert lobbying contributed to the raising of the age of consent in 1913, and the Testators Family Maintenance Act, through which widows were entitled to a proportion of the husband's estate. For a long time her home at 27 Bridge Street, Albion was a landmark.



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‡ "Old Streets of Brisbane", Unpublished paper held by the Queensland Women's Historical Association

† Vol. 11, 1891-1893, pp. 67-68.

**photos of Margaret Ogg courtesy of Qld Women's Historical Assoc.**

# Lesbians in 1900s Brisbane

Dr Lilian Cooper and Ms Josephine Bedford (pictured below at the rear of The Mansions c. 1900) met at university in London. They travelled to Brisbane together and lived together for the rest of their lives. There is no doubt they loved each other. In the hindsight afforded by 100 years of coming out, it can be assumed that they were a lesbian couple.



photo courtesy  
QWHA

Dr Lilian Cooper was Queensland's first female doctor, described as a champion of women and children and "a mannish and abrupt woman who was idolised by her patients." (Courier-Mail 5.6.1991)

"One (male colleague) jokingly said to her (Dr

Cooper), 'What you want is a wedding ring.' **(where have we heard that, albeit modernised and more vulgarly expressed, since?)** 'I'd wear it on my big toe,' she flashed back contemptuously. Nothing could have insulted her more deeply than the suggestion that she should prefer marriage to medicine. Actually, she would have preferred death on the rack to marriage. The antagonism she had always felt for men had hardened in recent years into utter contempt." **From a biographical essay on Lilian Cooper by Lorraine Cazalar, 1970.**

Cooper opened her own practice in George Street in 1891 when she was 30 years old. Shunned by the city's all-male medical fraternity, she was at first denied the services of an anaesthetist for her operations. She was finally admitted to the Queensland Medical Society in 1893, and was the first woman surgeon appointed to the Mater Public Hospital.



**Dr Cooper's plaque from her George Street practice  
photo: Shev Armstrong**

Lilian and Josephine were both members of the Pioneer Club, a women only club loosely linked to the WFL.

Dr Cooper became popular with her patients and did her rounds on her sulky during the day, and by bicycle at night. With this popularity came wealth, and she and Josephine were known as among Brisbane's foremost philanthropists. Josephine worked toward family welfare and improvement of the lot of impoverished children.

In 1911, Lilian and Josephine went to America where Lilian spent time at the Mayo Clinic, then they travelled to England where Lilian obtained her MD. They returned to Brisbane, and when World War One broke out they joined the Scottish Women's Hospitals and spent a year in the war-torn Balkans. According to the Courier-Mail: **“Dr Cooper became a familiar, heroic figure working in appalling conditions in knee breeches and rubber boots. The couple were honoured by the King of Serbia.”** <http://thecouriermail.com.au/extras/oq/book10cooper.html>

After Cooper's death in 1947, her partner Josephine first offered their Kangaroo Point clifftop home to the Anglican church. The men of the church in their wisdom refused the house, for unknown reasons. So Bedford approached the Catholic Sisters of Charity who readily agreed to convert the house into a hospice for the aged and dying. That hospice later evolved into the Mount Olivet Hospital.



photo: Shev Armstrong

Josephine also commemorated her lifelong love of Lilian with a double stained-glass window which she donated to the Warriors' Chapel of St Mary's (Anglican and next door to the hospital) which can still be viewed on the southern side of the little church. It features a Roman centurion asking Jesus for the salvation of the centurion's slave. The centurion oppressor is risking his life to save his slave. Why did Cooper and Bedford choose this particular theme (they probably discussed donating the window before Cooper died, and as educated women they would have had access to theology and Roman history).

Interestingly, gay and lesbian activists from the United Kingdom in the 1990s produced a play about the centurion and his slave lover. And gay groups refer to the scene depicted as a gay message, where Christ heals the slave and gays are thus vindicated.

see <http://www.ukgaynews.org.uk/Archive/2005feb/1201.htm> for more info

It seems likely that Cooper and Bedford knew 100 years ago that this passage in the Bible had some relevance for their own relationship and lifestyle. Donating a window to a church provides a fine example of how women encode messages when under male domination. These women succeeded in passing on a one hundred year legacy to future lesbians in particular, and women in general. Josephine knew we'd find them, eventually. They have provided us with an enduring message of both their love and proof that, as the saying goes, "lesbians are everywhere", even in 1900s Brisbane. It's a sad fact that still, today, one hundred years later, most mainstream historians and journalists, and many clerics, are unwilling to consider or divulge information about this Brisbane couple's life together. We could be celebrating it.

Josephine's tombstone lies on top of Lilian's in the Toowong cemetery (or is it the other way around? Take a look for yourself.)

Further reading: Moore, C., *Sunshine and Rainbows: the development of gay and lesbian culture in Queensland*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2001.

# What was happening in the rest of Australia, and in other countries?

Australian States & (white) women's suffrage		<a href="#">plural vote</a> abolished
South Australia	1894	never had
Western Australia	1899	1907
New South Wales	1902	1894
Tasmania	1903	1900
Queensland	1905	1905
Victoria	1908	1899
Federal (white) women's suffrage	1902	

New Zealand women achieved their national vote in 1893, Australian [white women](#) in 1902. Women in the USA were enfranchised in 1920, and all British women got their vote in 1927.

In Britain in the late 1800s, there were many more women than men. Consequently, some women did not marry and there was fierce competition for jobs. The lower classes worked in the mines and factories which had sprung up as a result of the Industrial Revolution. A woman was virtually owned by her father, then her husband: **“By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage...”** (quote from William

**Blackstone in 1765)**

Because of the surplus of women, they were encouraged to migrate to Australia to find husbands. Those women who ended up in Victoria would have to wait till 1908 to get their state vote, and put up with attitudes such as these expressed by Victorian Members of Parliament: **“I have never found any desire for the franchise on the part of women - I mean real women. I have met he-women - who ought to have been born men, but nature made a mistake - who were in favour...”** and **“There is no safety in this State as long as these shrieking women are running about ... old frumps ... gawks ... tabby cats ... trash ...”**

Louisa Lawson of New South Wales commented on the types of arguments put forth by men opposed to women's franchise thus: **“Since the time when equal suffrage was first agitated, the subject has been grossly misrepresented and grossly caricatured ... (there is always) the covert sneer, the attempt at witticism, the unkind comparison ...”**

Volleys of cartoons from newspapers of the time expressing views from both suffragists and their opponents can be found online at the [State Library of Queensland's Picture Queensland](#).

Women campaigning for suffrage in Britain in 1906 were disrupting election meetings, chaining themselves to railings so police could not move them along while they were making speeches, and throwing bricks through shop windows. A grille was placed in front of the Ladies' Gallery in Parliament to contain these women. There, militant tactics engendered the term "suffragettes." Australian (white) women gained the vote without having to employ these tactics, and so are known as "suffragists."

Miles Franklin dedicated her novel *Everyday Folk and Dawn* to those English men supporting the women's suffrage movement. Australian women 'herein characterised were never forced to be "suffragettes," their countrymen having granted them their rights as suffragists.' (Virago, London, 1986, first published 1909)

There was also some cross-fertilisation between countries. For example, the Women's Christian Temperance Union was formed in America in the 1870s to address the effect alcohol abuse was having on men and, in turn, their families. Jessie Ackermann, a journalist, came as a WCTU missionary from America, and stayed in Australia for five years setting up branches of WCTU in many cities and towns.

#### **Quotations above from Oldfield's *Australian Women and the Vote***

##### **Nellie Martel**

Martel was one of the first four women to stand for election to the Australian federal parliament in 1903. She was one of the first members of the Womanhood Suffrage League in Sydney in 1891. In London from 1905 she worked with the Women's Social and Political Union, becoming a paid organiser around May 1906, and one of the British votes for women campaign's most prominent speakers.

See Ann Nugent: "Nellie Martel and the WSPU 1904-9." Hecate 31.1.2005 (forthcoming)

# Other issues being campaigned around

The struggle for the vote was only one aspect of the political activism around the first wave of feminism. The advancement of women was being organised for on many different fronts. Some feminists fought for legislative reform such as the raising of the age of consent (it was twelve in 1891), and for the abolition of the Contagious Diseases Acts (that quarantined women infected with venereal diseases in locked hospitals). There were campaigns for property rights for women, for legal protection against domestic violence, for shared ownership of children, for the education of girls and the entrance of women to the universities and into professions; there were advances in women's writing and publishing (Léontine Cooper edited a suffrage paper called *The Star*). They called for women police wardens and for women to be allowed entry into the public service and a full range of professions.

Marilyn Lake suggests that their "aims were limited but they were no less threatening for that. They sought to curtail masculine privilege and those practices most injurious to women and children - notably drinking, smoking, gambling and male sexual indulgence. They did not seek a total independence for women but to make their dependence a happier and more secure state." In Sydney, Louisa Lawson, editor of *The Dawn*, along with Rose Scott, focussed upon "the burden of wives and the degradation of mothers" and believed that "in the ballot lay the power to change relations between men and women and ultimately to create a better world."

Léontine Cooper's stories are pervaded by women's attempts to resist violence and the appropriation of their money by their husbands.

In the labour movement, the struggle for better working conditions for women was consistently prosecuted, especially through the establishment of a Women's Union by May Jordan O'Connell (and later, unions for different trades), and there were demands for equal pay. Some activists connected up these issues. Cooper, teacher of French at Brisbane Girls' Grammar School, wrote for example in her "Queensland Notes" column in Lawson's *Dawn*: "The Trades Union is a grand step taken toward the Suffrage."

The vote was part of a many-faceted struggle for equality for the Woman Movement from around 1880 to World War One. Susan Magarey's recent *Passions of the First Wave Feminists* asserts:

**First wave feminists felt they had been defeated even though they had won the vote....What went wrong?**

She suggests: "White Australia, masculinisation of the labour market and party politics" were central. Certainly, race suicide ideologies associated with the White Australia Policy impacted upon reproduction, especially in relation to women's access to contraception. Certainly, as Magarey says, "the first decades of the twentieth century set up new barriers between women's and men's work and



between men and women in the labour movement.” Advances towards women's economic independence were consistently held back as in, for example, the 1907 Harvester judgement that Henry Bournes Higgins (Nettie Palmer's uncle) wanted to make on the family wage - that men were the family breadwinners. Certainly no Party had any kind of adequate engagement with changing the situation of women - although the Communist Party in its early years before Stalinisation had tried to. But perhaps the key issue in the persisting inequality of women was unwillingness or inability to transform the family. As Marilyn Lake summarises it, William and Annie Lane for example did not substantially propose to try: NACSA promised to “secure the most complete homelife to its members”, but very much in “straight, temperate and monogamistic” terms.

A hundred years ago, a “Birth Strike” was believed to be occurring. In February 1901, the *Australian Women's Sphere* observed that “emancipated women are in revolt against maternity, as it has been known in the past, against enforced maternity”. A 1903 Royal Commission on the Decline of the Birthrate in NSW reported in 1904 (notably on a fall from 7 to 4 children on average between 1870 and 1900). Socialists concerned about the Nation wanted to keep women in the home and family. For Mary Gilmore in *The Worker* in 1908, a University education was inadequate unless supplemented by “a thorough course in roastology, boilology, stitchology, darnology, patchology and domesticology”. By contrast, Kate Stone, writing as 'Sydney Partridge' had commented in *The Worker* in 1910 that 'no woman of powerful intellect should ever marry unless she would be content to sink herself in her children, in doing which she gains nothing unless her desire for domesticity is stronger than her genius', while Marie Pitt applauded in the *Socialist* in 1912 “the greatest strike in world history - the revolt of the slave bearers.”

**'Slave mart bosses may bluster as they please, medical missionaries in the pay of fat fleshmongers may talk learnedly and threaten dire evils to prudent mothers of three or less, and suave magnates of Christianity may prate of the sin of ease or pleasure until they go black in the face...it will only stop when human life has become of more importance than successful commercial exploitation of human life, which is what the present Capitalistic system stands for.'**

# What was everyday life like in 1900?

You do not know old Brisbane till your eyes can see  
The old lagoon before the City Hall;  
And trace the rambling street that used to be  
Marked out with stepping-stones where there would fall  
The little creek south from the old treadmill

Margaret A. Ogg (2 creeks were crossed by Ann Street, by means of stepping stones)

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## Doing the washing - a big job



A wooden washing machine tub with paddles moved by pumping the tall lever, to agitate the washing.

photo: Shev Armstrong

Washing clothes and bed linen was done by hand, or by a lever-operated washing machine. Richer households had live-in maids to do this hard work. Most of the clothing was starched, which made it stiff to wear.

photo courtesy of Qld Women's Historical Association





Clothes and linen were squeezed through a wringer with an adjustment screw to vary the space between the rollers and thus the squeeze power. This removed much of the water.

**photo: Shev Armstrong**



Washing was hung on lines with big wooden pegs.

**photo courtesy of Qld Women's Historical Association**



Ironing was a complicated job. This picture shows how to "keep a few irons in the fire". A wood stove was lit and several irons placed on it to heat up. Each iron could be used for about 30 seconds before it got too cold, then it would be replaced by another iron, and so on.

**photo: Shev Armstrong**

Travel

**Below are pictures of the lifestyle of people in Brisbane around 1900.**

Getting from A to B was done on foot, bicycle, horse or goat drawn sulky, tram, train and automobile.

**photo: Brisbane Customs House, 1898**

**Collection: John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, no. 65241**

Trams used to run from Hamilton to West End, and to Holland Park, Rainworth, Toowong, Enoggera, Stafford and Chermshire. There were also trams on St Helena Island.

The webmistress would like to express here her personal lamenting of the loss of the trams in Brisbane. They are a safe and efficient form of transport, and are more environmentally friendly than cars or buses. What if Brisbane City councillors were held retrospectively accountable for bad policy decisions? Who would we call to task now, and how would they try to justify their decisions? And who would be blamed in, say, 50 years from now for contemporary decisions being made about public transport, tunnels, bridges and roads?



**photo: Two Clark children on their way to Sunday School in a goatdrawn buggy, Redland Bay, Queensland, 1900-1910  
Collection: John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, no. 36414**

Dr Lilian Cooper used a sulky for her rounds, and for night calls she used a bicycle. She used train and horseback to make country calls (Brisbane was on the edge of the bush in those days) and eventually purchased an automobile.

**"Brisbane, with a population of 130,000, had appalling roads, muddy, rough and chokingly dusty, while bullock and horse teams ploughed up the tracks called 'roads' elsewhere in the state.**

**On the evening of Wednesday, May 31, 1905, a meeting of "almost all the motorists in Brisbane" was held at the School of Arts, in Ann Street. These**

eleven men and one woman (Dr. Lilian Cooper), voted to form the Queensland Automobile Club.

Eighteen local motorists eventually agreed to be foundation members. Half were doctors - a good indication of their comparative affluence - and their belief that 'autos' could be a reliable means for visiting patients."

from *Road Ahead Magazine* > *Archived Editions* > *February/March 2005* > *Features* > *Get a Horse*

Story by Robert Longhurst,

[http://www.racq.com.au/cps/rde/xchg/SID-342D8FD3-B2E2F8C0/racq/cms\\_production/hs.xsl/322\\_mem\\_roadahead\\_200502getahorse\\_ENA\\_HTML.htm](http://www.racq.com.au/cps/rde/xchg/SID-342D8FD3-B2E2F8C0/racq/cms_production/hs.xsl/322_mem_roadahead_200502getahorse_ENA_HTML.htm)

and "As early as 1906, there were complaints heard at the new Automobile Club of Queensland (ACQ) that certain 'medico' members were being targeted by a particular constable, as they puttered along inner city streets. By 1909, these complaints had multiplied, especially as members had to pay substantial fines. For example, both Dr Lillian (sic) Cooper and Dr David Hardie had broken the 8 mph speed limit in Queen Street, and were each fined £3/3/6."

from *Road Ahead, RACQ Centenary Edition 1905-2005*, April/May 2005.



**Photo: Brisbane ambulance officers posing on a buggy with a wheeled litter attached to it, ca. 1898**

Ambulance officers pictured are: Honorable Bearer Tyson, Honorable Driver Gray, Permanent Bearer Daniells, and the horse 'Outlaw'.

**Collection: John Oxley Library, State Library of**

### **Queensland, no. 343**

Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade was established in 1892. In 1897 the first of the white ponies and sulkies were purchased, but the sulky only provided the means of getting to the place of the accident; the patient was still transported by pushing the litter. The first motor vehicle was placed in commission in May 1909.



To travel out of town, a lady would need her travelling vanity case (pictured right) although in actuality these cases were hardly ideal for travel as they were heavy and cumbersome.

**photos: Shev Armstrong**

During the 1880s working women in Brisbane had to cope with typhoid, bad sanitation, inadequate pure water, and poor housing. Girls were denied access to higher education, women workers were restricted to manual tasks and, of course, female wages were lower. They weren't even able to own their own property until the Married Women's Property Act of 1890.



**cooking stove**

**photo: Shev Armstrong**

# What the menfolk made of it all



Men's opinions on the prospect of suffrage for women varied enormously from downright opposition and sabotage to political support. Below are some descriptions of what the menfolk of 1900 Brisbane made of it all, with some interesting comments.

**pictured: masculine toiletries circa 1900**  
**photo: Shev Armstrong**

There was considerable anxiety in the ruling class about the prospect that 'in the ballot lay the power to change relations between men and women and ultimately to create a better world.' (*The Dawn*)

Arguments against women's enfranchisement ran the whole gamut from the speculative, through the ludicrous, to the bizarre. The objections fell into six categories: 1) women did not want it; 2)

they were unfit to use it; 3) they were too easily led; 4) it wasn't in the male interest; 5) fear of the unknown; 6) women should be revered and uncontaminated.

Objections that women did not want the vote were not only pure speculation but also flawed, as there was no compulsion to register to vote. They surfaced in all debates from 1890 to 1905, however. Premier Boyd Morehead was a great opponent of the suffrage, considering it:

**much better that the other sex should keep out of the troubled sea of politics. They have higher functions to perform than political ones, and to those functions their attention should be confined.... The bulk of the women in this colony do not want it.**

In 1894 the Ministerialists showed that nothing had changed so far as they were concerned. David Dalrymple was convinced that 'the most intellectual, and the greatest number of domestic, motherly women are against it.'

**The majority of women are distinctly opposed to it; and the only result of carrying a measure of this sort will be, that a majority of women, at the instance of a minority of women, and with our assistance, will be compelled to take the responsibility of entering into a sphere of life - political life - which has very few charms, and which is utterly distasteful to most women who love their homes...The great majority of women look forward to be compelled to register and record their votes with the most intense disgust and horror.**

John Kingsbury maintained that: 'The ladies have never endeavoured to get their

vote. They have never put in a claim for it,' and Justin Foxton sang to the same tune, that:

**three-fourths of the women of the colony are either absolutely indifferent or strongly opposed to it...all they appear to have been able to do is get a petition signed by 7000 women. The enormous disparity between the number of signatures to the petition and the number of women who have had an opportunity to sign it and did not do so confirms me in the opinion that a majority of the women of the colony do not desire the franchise.**

Foxton had become Home Secretary by the time the first government Bill was introduced in 1901, but had not changed his opinion. George Story overlooked the fact that it was around 7.30pm when he commented during the 1901 debate: 'If the woman vote had been wanted the gallery would have been filled with women.' Even in 1915 Donald Gunn was not convinced that women really wanted the vote, and asserted in any case they were just a duplicate vote of their husband. He advocated a referendum on the matter.

The second objection that women were unfit to vote drew upon notions of women's intellectual capacity not being the same as men's, and the fact that women were not able to fight to defend their country. They were alleged to have defects in their character, be narrower in their views, or more conservative. Byrnes remarked in 1894 that women were: 'brought into work for which her past training and her physical frame of mind do not eminently fit her.' In the same debate Dalrymple maintained of women: 'seeing that they are on the whole more emotional than men, their presence in political life will increase the bitterness of political life.'

The third objection was based on the premise that women would easily be misled by designing males. Dalrymple was of the opinion that 'in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, women will vote as their husbands, or brothers, or male friends tell them', and George Thorn went one step beyond that, asserting that 'if there was a good-looking young man he will get their vote irrespective of his politics.'

The fourth objection, that women's suffrage was not in the male interest, was usually, although not always, handled euphemistically in debates. It included such things as the concern that women would vote as a bloc; they would neglect their families; they might corrupt the system; parliamentary institutions would suffer; the divorce rate would go up and the birthrate down; they might even get into parliament.

A recurrent theme was that some members were worried their womenfolk might not vote for them. In 1894 James Chataway was very concerned about those ramifications:

**We will be impaled upon the horns of this very awkward dilemma . That women will either vote in accordance with the views of their husbands, fathers, brothers, or, as I hear an hon. Member say, their sweethearts, or they will vote against them. If they vote with them, we are only doubling the number of men already on the rolls. If they vote against them, we are preparing for ourselves a very great deal of trouble. We are preparing for ourselves domestic friction and war in the home, the results of which we cannot anticipate.**

In 1901, George Story similarly predicted: 'There must be dissension at home unless the woman votes exactly as the man wants her. She might vote directly against her



husband's interests.' Dalrymple in 1894 thought further and anticipated the collapse of the couple:

**'If, in addition to the many causes of trouble in domestic life, we introduce the element of politics, then I am afraid that the number of marriages which take place will rapidly diminish, and that the divorce court will be more thronged with suitors.'**

Damage to children was another common theme. William Little was certainly worried about it in 1890:

**They would consequently have to attend the public meetings at which the candidates express their views, and the result would be that the children at home, whom it is their burning duty to protect and educate, would be neglected. I say it will be a cruel day for Queensland...**

These same sentiments were still being echoed in 1903 by Donald MacKintosh:

**If they get the franchise, they will be saying to their husbands, "Look here, I am going to a meeting. You can stop home and mind the children"...That is how the women's franchise will work. By and by there will be no children at all.**

Thorn was worried about the effect on north Queensland:

**The North now returns seventeen members; but if this Bill becomes law, owing to the large proportion of women in the south as compared to the North, the number of Northern members would be reduced to twelve.**

In 1894 Byrnes predicted vastly more far-reaching consequences: **parliamentary institutions would suffer, and the power of woman as the regenerator of man will also suffer. I look upon it as a dangerous experiment...I believe that its result would be injury not only to the body politic but to the women themselves.**

There were also worries that the vote would give women a taste for political influence and Dalrymple gave examples of how a woman might cast several votes:

**The young woman went out in the morning ...and voted as Mary Johnson...in the middle of the day she appeared...as "fair, fat, and forty," ...as Mary Still; and in the evening...she voted as an old woman...Mary Yet.**

Back in 1890 [Hyne](#) reported the concerns of some members, but wasn't particularly worried himself about women voting as a group: **Another argument is that women will vote in a body and a number of my friends have a great horror of that.**

The fifth objection, fear of the unknown, tended to be based around the lack of precedent and experience. Australia had survived until then without it; it might lower the tone of parliament; public opinion was not sufficiently advanced. Dalrymple perorated:

**we cannot foretell the consequences. What we can foresee is not at all encouraging, and the mere fact that it is a step in the dark is sufficient to prevent any reasonable man voting for it. Why should we take steps in the dark?**

The sixth objection revolves around the constructs of womanhood as being kept in a

gilded cage or placed on a pedestal to avoid contamination by the hurly-burly of politics. Members spoke on this with considerable inventiveness: for example, there was no way a woman would register to vote if she had to give her age.

Peter [Airey](#) thought the government was deliberately exploiting femininity for its own ends:

**we all know that there is a decided objection on the part of many ladies to state their age. This, no doubt, arises from the tender reticence which we look upon as a graceful attribute of the feminine mind. It appears to me that the design of the Government is to get credit for conferring the franchise on women, while they are deliberately cutting that away by compelling women to state their ages.**

The notion that women were too virtuous to be exposed to jostling or bad language at polling booths also persists throughout the debates:

**Women will become unsexed by coming in contact with people at election times.**

**I do not think any man would like to see his wife, or sister, or any other female relative present at the scenes I have witnessed.**

**Drunken men scrambling for ballot-papers, and you often see that at general elections.**

**It has been said...women...dislike the publicity of voting at a polling-booth, and the possible crush and annoyance.**

At various times, the case for the innate virtuousness of women was put. Byrnes in 1894 implored:

**I hope that the women of this country will cast on one side the pernicious gift that is being offered to them, because it is one that they would find extremely prejudicial to their higher interests.**

James Blair in 1902 made several points in a speech:

**It may be a question whether women should embark in the maelstrom of politics. Extending the franchise to women deadens and roughens the innate sweetness of their lives which go to make us respect them. Giving them a privilege which undoubtedly should be theirs...will have the tendency towards elevating, ennobling, and purifying political life.**

Finally, reasons that fitted no category but the bizarre for not giving women the vote were advanced:

**I find there are five kinds of women in the colony, judging not by the walks of life they may occupy, but by their appearance, their facial expression and countenance. There is the ugly woman, the plain woman, the fair woman, the lovely woman, and the beautiful woman. I find the first two kinds - the ugly and the plain woman-constitute about 10% of the women of the colony; fair women 75%; and the lovely and beautiful women, 15%. How do they express themselves on this question of the franchise? I have endeavoured to find out, and to the best of my ability I have found out. I find that the only women in favour of the extension of the franchise to women are those of the first two kinds, the ugly women and the plain women. The fair, the lovely and the beautiful are either indifferent to the proposed extension of the franchise, or opposed to it. (George Thorn. QPD 71, 28 September 1894:718) Highlighted by the webmistress as the quaintest comment of the lot!**

'Now, if you give women the franchise you will add to the Power of the clergy, and by that means will strike a terrible blow at the new unionism, and the democratic socialism, and all the other "isms"...'

'There is less disposition to hang women than men, and yet men have the administration of the law. It is possible that if women administered the law there may be greater disposition to hang women.'

Thomas Byrnes in 1894 claimed women's suffrage would have an astonishing impact:

**a sudden and violent revolution not only in our political system, but in the innermost portions of society...They are seeking by this Bill...to interfere with the social arrangements which have existed from the beginning of civilization.**

Queensland would be the second last state in Australia to enfranchise women. This took place in 1905 without the extreme consequences predicted.

Much of the above text reproduced from an article by John McCulloch in *Hecate: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Women's Liberation*, Vol. 30, no. 2, 2004

Read/print John McCulloch's article with complete references and notes:  
[The Struggle for Women's Suffrage in Queensland](#)

The Bulletin since the end of the nineteenth century had been articulating its sense of a crisis of masculinity in its ridicule of the Domestic Man. In November 1888, it published these typical sentiments: 'All our moral and mental life is the moral and mental life of men who are half women in their habits, men breathing always a domestic atmosphere', and in August 1895 appeared Henry Lawson's poem 'The Vagabond', that included these lines:

**Sacrifice all for the family's sake  
Bow to their selfish rule.  
Slave till your big soft heart they break  
The heart of the 'family fool.'**

Reading women's writing was also liable to turn a man into a SNAG. In *The Bulletin* in April 1923, Vance Palmer wrote: '**A man wants vivid character, robust humour, a tough philosophy, and tragedy without a superfluity of tears. The atmosphere of women's novels is not good for him: it is warm and enervating, like a small room heated with an asbestos stove.'**

Léontine Cooper depicted in *The Boomerang* a typical family man far different from Lawson's. Cooper's stories are pervaded by women's attempts to resist violence and the appropriation of their money by their husbands.

Frederick Brentnall, MLC and chairman of the board of directors of the Brisbane *Telegraph* was among the bourgeois patriarchs who did not want votes for women, unless they were propertied. But his wife Elizabeth was Colonial President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union that, from 1891, had thrown its weight behind women's suffrage.

One of the most strident masculinist voices in opposition to female suffrage was that

of David Dalrymple who, in 1894, lamented in Parliament that women would be 'compelled to take the responsibility of entering into a sphere of life - political life - which has very few charms, and which is utterly distasteful to most women who love their homes', and asserted that most viewed the prospect of having to vote 'with the most intense disgust and horror.' He also expected that, since women were 'on the whole more emotional than men, their presence in political life will increase the bitterness of political life.'

Premiers from 1893 had been singularly unhelpful with regard to women's suffrage. Hugh Nelson reported flippantly at an election meeting in 1896: 'I have consulted my matrimonial authority who thinks that women would be better without it', while his short-lived successor Thomas Byrnes, who had in 1894 referred to votes for women as a 'pernicious gift', and as likely to produce 'a sudden and violent revolution not only in our political system, but in the innermost portions of our social system', in 1898 proposed a referendum on the issue - with voting in it to be done only by men! WEFA collected 10,000 signatures in a petition against it but when Byrnes died suddenly the proposal, fortunately, died with him. In July 1897, the WCTU had presented a petition with 4000 signatures from all over Queensland but, as an increasingly cynical Eleanor Trundle reported, it 'met the usual fate of petitions'.

Robert Philp's contribution for increased democracy was a proposal that all Queensland adults would have the right to vote but men with two or more 'legitimate' children would have two votes. Fortunately he wasn't in power for long, and was soon replaced by Arthur Morgan. Having been elected on a mandate of (supposedly) universal suffrage, Morgan called a special Cabinet meeting and then a special sitting of Parliament, to prorogue the Upper and Lower Houses. Many of the women were there - maybe including Elizabeth Brentnall - to see the suffrage bill go through despite her husband's vote.

### **Men's attitudes to women being able to sit in Parliament**

The suffragist Elizabeth Brentnall's husband, Frederick, in 1915 had snidely referred to the fact that although women could stand for election to Federal parliament none had yet got there: 'Does not the fact that the electors have not yet elected one show that they are wiser than the men who passed the Act?'

The patriarchal pomposity in relation to Queensland women getting the vote was equally evident in debates about women running for election to parliament. Justin Foxton in 1894 had insisted:

**the entry of women into this House as necessary result of granting the franchise may be decidedly deprecated, as we have to deal with subjects here which would be very inconvenient to discuss with an audience of ladies.**

And in 1915, James Forsyth expressed the same opinion:

**I do not think myself that this is a place for a woman at all, and I hope that when we get into Committee we shall be able to have that innovation knocked out.**

The gatekeepers did have some opposition: at the turn of the century Peter Airey welcomed the prospect of female Members:

**I think that if ladies were allowed the privilege of sitting in this House, they would be the means of purifying this Chamber and making certain volcanic**

**members conduct themselves in a manner more in accord with our ideas of propriety. If women are fit to elect, I say they are fit to be elected.**

And in 1915, John Huxham suggested that a particular class of woman, at least, might be an asset:

**the advent of women into our Parliament would be an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Why should we deny that right to intellectual women who have taken a high university degree.**

Source: John McCulloch - forthcoming book



**basic commode in  
maid's room**

**photo: Shev  
Armstrong**

# The background political climate



Several failed attempts were made to extend the franchise to women in Queensland between 1890 and 1904 before success was finally achieved by the passing of the Elections Acts Amendment Act in early 1905. They must be seen in the context of the prevailing conditions in the new colony, and in the context of the major stakeholders of the day.

When Queen Victoria signed the Order-in-Council of 6 June 1859 to excise the northern two-thirds of New South Wales to form the new colony of Queensland, the men over twenty-one who lived up there and earlier that year had voted for the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, would probably have assumed they would remain enfranchised. Unfortunately, Queen Victoria had signed the Order of Separation prior to NSW granting manhood suffrage, and when the first Queensland election was held in April and May of 1860 a NSW roll from which about a third of the names had been removed was used. Accordingly, a large section of the males in the new colony were disenfranchised.

The new colony repealed many of the provisions of the 1858 New South Wales electoral legislation pertaining to the collection of electoral lists, and enacted fairly stringent conditions that had to be met before your name could be entered on the voter's roll. You had to be a man of twenty-one years, a natural born or naturalized subject of Her Majesty or legally made a denizen of Queensland, and there were various property qualifications.

Thus, instead of manhood suffrage for all males over twenty-one, as was the case in South Australia (1856), Victoria (1857) and New South Wales (1858), the new colony adopted a system designed to favour the conservative pastoral interests. In fact, the new colony at that time could be fairly described as Australia's equivalent of the American Wild West, controlled by wealthy pastoralists. Like the Wild West there

were vast lands to be opened up, native inhabitants to oppress, and gold to be found. The Wild West differed in one important aspect, apart from everybody carrying guns, in that it had already enfranchised its women.

It wasn't until 1872 that there was anything remotely resembling manhood suffrage in Queensland. The six months residency qualification was retained, but property qualifications were relaxed in as much as you could now register if your leasehold property only had eighteen months to run, or if you had been in possession of leasehold property for eighteen months instead of the previous three years requirement. Also the maximum vote that could be cast by an individual in the same electorate was now one. However, this new legislation also introduced a restriction that did not exist before: "Provided also that no aboriginal native of China or of the South Sea Islands or of New Holland shall be entitled to vote except under a property qualification." Presumably this measure was introduced to ensure that the Chinese on the goldfields in the 1870s, and the Kanakas imported to work in the cane fields were not enfranchised.

The retention of the six months provision continued to disadvantage the mostly single male itinerant workers who never stayed in a place long enough to fulfil the residency requirement. A significant sector of the over twenty-one male population was disenfranchised because they were unable to fulfill the six months residency qualification, or own or lease property. Rich men could make multiple registrations to vote if they owned multiple property. The voting system, known as plural voting, allowed a man to vote in any electorate in which he held property. A wealthy pastoralist could cast multiple votes at a single election and, in theory, also buy votes by sub-dividing his land and registering the various lots in the names of friends and supporters who would then presumably vote for him.

Needless to say there were many even in the 1890s who were still opposed to electoral reform. In 1895 John Cameron was adamant that: 'I have never believed in the principle of one man one vote, and nothing will convince me that all men should have equal voting rights.' In 1897 William Armstrong expressed a similar view: **'The country should recognize thrift by allowing a property vote...one man one vote will lead to a preponderating influence of the towns over the country.'** Other members in that debate expressed the same sentiments: **'If the country is to be wisely and judiciously governed, it must be governed by the best intellects that we have, and not by the unthinking mob.'** **'I do not believe, for instance, that a man who is idle, dissolute, and disaffected, and who carries all his belongings under his hat, is the equal of a man who by his industry, thrift, and temperate habits has made a home for himself.'**

Two years later, in 1899, the Home Secretary bemoaned the fact that: **'Now, the leading principle of this Bill is, of course, one man one vote. I little thought that it would ever fall to my lot to be the one to introduce a Bill of this sort into the Assembly.'**

### **Parliamentary Politics**

Although there were two houses of parliament those qualified to vote could only do so for the Legislative Assembly which was elected for five years and initially comprised twenty-six members drawn from sixteen electorates. Three year parliaments were introduced in 1890, by which time there were sixty electorates

returning seventy-two members. The members of the Legislative Council were appointed for life, and it remained an appointed house until its abolition in 1922.

In theory all those qualified to vote could also stand for parliament but, as MPs did not receive expenses until 1886 and were not paid until 1889, the system ensured that only wealthy men could afford to become politicians. Members of the Legislative Council, however, received neither salary nor expenses, although they did get free railway passes. Voting in Queensland was first past the post from 1860-1892 when 'contingent' (optional preferential) voting was introduced, and by 'secret ballot'. In 1914 Queensland became the first state to introduce compulsory registration and voting.

The new colony's discriminatory voting system was one of the causes of the enormous political turmoil and instability that lasted for some fifty years. Queensland produced Australia's most radical and militant labour movement which resulted in the formation of the Trades and Labour Council in 1885, and eventually the Labor Party in 1891.

Owing to the lack of an entrenched party system, allegiances changed, and governments came and went; even during the fifteen years (1890-1905) of the women's suffrage campaign Queensland had seven changes of governor, with six different individuals occupying that position. Even then they consisted of only three full governors, plus two lieutenant-governors, one lieutenant-governor administering, and one administrator. In the same period there were nine premiers, three changes of speakers in the lower house and two different presidents of the Legislative Council. In addition, there were five state general elections, two federal general elections, one state referendum, a Royal Commission, three Constitutional Conventions, the great shearers' strike of 1891, and the depression of 1892.

Clearly then every government of the day considered it had more important things to worry about than votes for women, and herein lay part of the problem because most of the legislation introduced into the parliament to effect this reform was private members' Bills. These are notoriously difficult to steer through two houses of parliament unless they have the support of the government and, in any case, most of the Bills were encumbered by other issues.

The Labor Party's position was quite clear, it supported votes for women, but its first priority was the abolition of the plural vote. It is difficult to say whether the non-Labor parties were as implacably opposed to giving women the vote as they were to the abolition of the plural vote because most of the Bills contained both issues, but they did have their share of powerful misogynists. These included the Colonial Secretary/Home Secretary Horace Tozer (MP 1871, 1888-98) who had recommended shooting down the striking shearers in 1891; and Premiers Nelson (MP 1883-1906) who later as governor must have found it particularly galling to give assent to the successful 1905 franchise bill; Byrnes who maintained it was against the wish of women to have the vote thrust upon them; Dickson who made political mileage by tying the plural vote into the federation referendum, then promised a referendum about women's suffrage, but died in office before his word could be tested; and Philp who appears to have been totally duplicitous with respect to women's suffrage, and only offered the so-called 'baby vote'.



## The Struggle for Votes for Women

Besides the gradual spread of the women's franchise in other parts of Australia, Queensland women had a few other things going in their favour, not least of which was the steady increase in the number of Labor MPs in the Queensland Parliament as the suffrage campaign progressed, plus the fact that Queensland women would vote in the 1903 federal election. The upsurge in Labor numbers began with the election of the first endorsed Labor candidate, strike leader and shearer, Tommy Ryan, who became the MLA for Barcoo at a by-election in 1892.

The idea of women's suffrage was first put before the Queensland Parliament in 1870 by Premier Charles Lilley during a debate on electoral reform. He lost office the same year but remained a staunch supporter of the enfranchisement of women. In 1892 William Taylor made the suggestion, but did not move a motion, that propertied women should be added to the electoral roll. The first serious attempt at reform was made by Richard Hyne with a private member's Bill on 29 July 1890. This Bill was quite clear and unencumbered, and gave women the vote under the same conditions as men. It was a matter of justice: they paid taxes without representation, and they had to obey laws they had no say in formulating, Hyne pointed out. Although the bill was shelved and no vote was taken, the issue had been given an airing.

The next attempts occurred in 1894 when Charles Powers and Thomas Glassey (leader of the Legislative Assembly's sixteen Labor MPs) introduced separate private member's Bills to enfranchise women. The Powers Bill was encumbered by including the abolition of plural voting, and the Glassey Bill by including all itinerant workers. The Glassey Bill stated it applied to all natural-born or naturalised British over the age of twenty-one, but excluded Aboriginal natives of Australia, or those from Japan, China, India or parts of Asia, Africa, South Seas or Oceania.

Plural voting was very dear to the non-Labor side of politics as it was one of the bases of its power, and the proposals in the Glassey Bill for enfranchising itinerants were clearly unworkable. Inevitably both Bills failed to gain enough support in the Legislative Assembly. The following year they both tried again. This time Powers dropped women and concentrated on the plural vote, but again both Bills came to naught.

A referendum to decide whether Queensland would become part of a federated Australia was held on 2 September 1899, and was passed by a small majority of about 7000. The Premier, James Dickson, an opponent of women's suffrage, promised to abolish plural voting if the referendum was passed, but was silent with respect to the women's vote. A one-man-one-vote bill was drafted, but his government fell before it went before parliament. The wording of the bill had upset the women's suffrage organizations, and the WCTU sent a deputation to Dickson asking that it be changed to one-adult-one-vote.

The Dickson ministry was succeeded by the world's first Labor government in 1899. It was led by Anderson Dawson, but only survived for one week when it was replaced by the regrouped non-Labor forces under Premier Robert Philp. During his premiership **a government Bill came before the house that will probably go down in history as one of the silliest pieces of legislation ever placed before an Australian parliament. Introduced by the Home Secretary, Justin Foxton, it included one-adult-one-vote and enfranchised the police force, but the Bill**

also prescribed that men would in fact get two votes if they had two or more children who were born in 'lawful wedlock' and in Queensland. The local press, and even the overseas press, had a field day with the so-called 'baby vote'. The Rockhampton Bulletin reported: 'Notwithstanding all the silly things the present government have done we do not like to think they seriously anticipate placing such a farcical law on the statute book...As we have said, the principle of the measure is rotten, the details are a burlesque, and it is an elaborate legislative joke...'

Hansard paints a vivid picture of the parliamentary debate and, even though it was a government Bill, it was shelved after it passed the second reading. One MLA evoked a scene whereby men would turn up at the polling booth with their two children, to show they were entitled to two votes; another asserted that it was phallic worship. Someone interjected that it was the law of procreation, one member branded it the physical capability vote, and another **the stud vote**.

The Philp government was returned in the March 1902 general election, and shortly thereafter William Kidston tabled a private member's Bill to enfranchise women. Once again it failed, and the government only allowed a short time for debate. That same month, a deputation from WEFA, WSL and the WCTU saw Philp and demanded a sensible government Bill to enfranchise women. But despite his promises they were to be disappointed.

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#### Appendix:

- In possession of a freehold estate to the value of 100 pounds sterling for at least six calendar months, or
  - Being a householder occupying any house, warehouse, counting-house, office, shop or other building of the clear annual value of ten pounds sterling, and having occupied the same for six calendar months, or
  - Having a leasehold estate to the value of ten pounds sterling per annum held upon a lease which at the time of registration [on the voters roll] has not less than three years to run, or
  - Been in possession of a leasehold estate for three years or more, of the aforesaid value, or
  - Holding a government license to depasture [ie. graze cattle] lands, or
  - Having a salary of 100 pounds a year and having enjoyed the same for six calendar months, or
  - Being the occupant of any room or lodging and paying for his board and lodging forty pounds a year or for his lodging only at the rate of ten pounds a year and having occupied the same room or lodging for six calendar months.
- Those specifically exclude from voting included:
- Those of unsound mind.
  - Anyone in receipt of aid from a charitable institution.
  - Those who had been attainted or convicted of treason, felony or other infamous offence unless pardoned or having completed their sentence.
  - Persons in the military service or the police force.
  - Clerks of Petty Sessions.
  - Paid police magistrates.

For the text with complete references, read John McCulloch's [\*"The Struggle for Women's Suffrage in Queensland"\*](#) here

# Chronology

## CHRONOLOGY OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN QUEENSLAND

**1837** Léontine Cooper born

**1839** June 26 Emma Miller born

**1859** Queensland separates from New South Wales

**1864** Margaret Ogg born

**1868** Contagious Diseases Acts of Queensland

**1870** Sir Charles Lilley introduces votes for women into parliamentary debate on electoral reform

**1871** Léontine Cooper arrives in Brisbane from London  
Queensland government restores limited manhood suffrage (compared with New South Wales)

**1879** March Emma Miller arrives in Brisbane from England

**1885** Women's Christian Temperance Union established in Brisbane  
Trades and Labor Council formed in Queensland  
Queensland Elections Act disqualifies Aboriginal people from voting  
Henry Jordan introduces WCTU petition to raise the age of consent from 12 to 16  
June 29 Annie and William Lane arrive in Brisbane and the first of the Lucinda Sharpe columns appears in the *Figaro*, as well as support for the women's vote.

**1886** Emma Miller marries Andrew Miller, her third husband

**1887** William Lane begins the *Boomerang*

**1888** Léontine Cooper writes about women's rights in the *Boomerang*

**1889** The Queensland's Women's Suffrage League was founded (first known as the North Brisbane Women's Suffrage League)  
Woman's Christian Temperance Union divided on the issue of franchise at the Convention, although Elizabeth Brentnall long term president, since 1888, urged it.

**1890** July Richard Hyne introduces a Women's Suffrage Bill  
August 5 Well-attended meeting of the Women's Suffrage League in the Town Hall  
William Lane in the Boomerang attacks the Women's Suffrage League  
Married Women's Property Bill passed  
Women's Union established by May Jordan, Emma Miller et al.  
William and Annie Lane transfer to the Worker

At the Woman's Christian Temperance Union annual convention it is agreed that a Colonial Suffrage Department should be formed

**1891** February 24 First sitting of the Factories Royal Commission held in Brisbane including six women on the board, the first women ever

April 4 Sir Charles Lilley lays the foundation stone of the Trades and Labour Hall in Brisbane

June 1 The Queensland Government declines the invitation to send a representative to an Australasian conference on coloured labour

The Queensland Women's Suffrage Association folds

Emma Miller marches with the shearers' strike prisoners when released

September 20 The annual Convention of the Women's Christian Temperance Union opens in Brisbane

Guardianship and Custody of Infants Act

**1892** May Business in Queensland at a standstill owing to the financial crisis. Runs on a number of banks.

May 30 Public meeting held to inaugurate University Extension Movement

**1893** February Disastrous floods of the Brisbane and Mary rivers

Eleanor Trundle elected as suffrage superintendent for the Woman's Christian Temperance Union

July Annie and William Lane and 400 settlers leave to form a utopian colony in South America

Charles Powers, prominent member of Liberal remnant moves first of 3 motions favouring female suffrage

August 11 Electoral Bill conferring the franchise to women passed by the New Zealand Parliament and passed in the Legislative Council by a majority of two on 8 September.

August 17 Mrs Harrison Lee delivered a lecture in Brisbane on 'The Darkest Side of City Life'

December 17 Mass public meeting on women's franchise chaired by May Jordan. Provisional committee established to draw up resolutions.

**1894** February 28 Mass public meeting chaired by Dr William Taylor. The Women's Equal Franchise Association is formed when Sarah Bailey moves a motion from the floor of one woman one vote.

March Mass public meeting chaired by Léontine Cooper, men asked to leave and committee for WEFA elected with Eleanor Trundle as president.

March Léontine Cooper resigns as vice-president. The breakaway Women's Suffrage League begins with 29 women.

April Eleanor Trundle replaced by Emma Miller as president of WEFA.

WEFA circulates questionnaire to all candidates in the forthcoming elections and supports suitable candidates in their electioneering.

August Thomas Glassey (Labor leader) introduces electoral Bill to enfranchise "all natural born or naturalised British subjects over the age of 21".

September Charles Powers (Independent) introduces Bill to abolish plural voting and introduce votes for women. Both Bills are shelved.

WEFA Petition 11,356 signatures (one person one vote).

**1895** February 300 people on a river cruise fundraising for the WEFA, with the Metropolitan Brass Band.

April WEFA annual general meeting.

October Sherwood branch of WEFA formed

**1896** National Trades and Labor council support women's votes conditional on abolition of the plural vote.

March WEFA circulates questionnaires to candidates for the election.

April 4 WEFA annual general meeting, report suffrage groups at Bundaberg and Woollongabba.

April 7 Mrs Harrison Lee, the well-known temperance advocate, delivers the first of a series of mission lectures in the Norma Hall, Ann Street.

October 9 A new court (the Lady Lamington) in the Ancient Order of Foresters is opened for females, and eighteen members initiated.

August 21 Mrs Barney, of the WCTU, lectures in the Wharf Street, Congregational Church on "Prison Work and Police Matrons".

December WEFA deputation to the Home Secretary requesting women inspectors. Marriage and Divorce Act.

**1897** March 29 Annual meeting of the Women's Equal Franchise Association held in Trades Hall.

July 14 WCTU Petition for the rights and privileges of citizenship - 3869 signatures

September 17 The 10th annual convention of the WCTU commenced its sittings in the City Tabernacle, Brisbane. Elizabeth Nicholls, the Australasian president, addresses a public franchise meeting.

**1898** February News reaches Brisbane of the death of Miss Frances Willard (American leader of the WCTU), and a memorial service is held.

Labor Party adopts universal adult suffrage as part of its official platform

Mrs Payne, a WCTU organiser, tours Queensland holding 11 public meetings in country towns.

September WCTU hold a public franchise meeting as part of their convention

**1899** February WCTU organise a large protest meeting attended by WEFA members.

The Pioneer Club for women only established, a social support network for women intellectuals.

Referendum on Commonwealth constitution. National WCTU lobby for women's vote, and the WCTU Queensland send a deputation to Dickson, the premier.

**1900** A deputation from the three suffrage groups lobby Premier Philp for the women's vote

A deputation asks the Home Secretary for women police to be appointed

**1901** August The 'baby vote' bill introduced by Justin Foxton proposes to give women the vote, but husbands with two children two votes.

**1902** March Eighth annual meeting of WEFA

June 28 Right to vote and stand for federal parliament - 101,492 Queensland women enfranchised.

August Deputation from the WEFA, WFL and WCTU to the Premier to ask for the

alteration the State franchise to one based on the Federal Franchise Act. Included Mesdames Cooper, Trundle, Miller, Alder and Culpin.  
William Kidston's private member's Bill giving women the vote

**1903** March Léontine Cooper dies

June Millicent A. Calow tops the State public service examination, the first year women are allowed to compete. May McLaughlin also joins the intake of nine.  
September Women Workers' Political Association formed at Trades Hall with Emma Miller elected as President. Miller travels around Queensland.

Agnes Williams from the Bundaberg WCTU tours North Queensland and forms Franchise Leagues at Rockhampton, Mount Morgan, Mackay, Charters Towers and Townsville.

Albion WCTU holds a mock parliament

October 12 Rose Scott from New South Wales speaks on "Why Women Should Have a Vote" at Centennial Hall

October 21 Queensland's Women's Electoral League formed at a meeting convened by Mrs L. G. Corrie and held in the School of Arts. 260 members enrol on the first night.

Women Workers' Political Organisation formed - with a mixture of women's issues and party aims.

Queensland's Women's Electoral League deputation to Premier on wish for state franchise

**1904** November 2 Public indignation meeting organised by the Political Labour Council at Centennial Hall. Unanimous resolutions passed by Mr J.S. Collings and Emma Miller. Deputation to Premier the following night.

**1905** January 24 Elections Act Amendment Bill confers the franchise on the women of Queensland. Mesdames Higgs, Alder, Culpin and Collings visit the Premier to congratulate him.

January 25 Royal Assent given to the Bill

WEFA disbands

National Council of Women of Queensland formed

**1907** Women first go to state ballot box

**1911** Queensland Health Act Amendment Act

**1913** Age of consent raised to 17

**1917** Emma Miller dies

**1918** Elections Act Amendment - Women allowed to stand for parliament

**1921** Legislative Council (nominated for life) abolished. No women ever involved.

**1929** Irene Longman, conservative, elected to the State parliament

**1930** December 24 Elections Act Amendment Act - Torres Strait Islanders and 'half caste' Aborigines specifically excluded from the right to vote (extending 1885 Act)

**1932** The Protector of Aborigines, Bleakley, collects names of Torres Strait Islanders and 'half caste' Aborigines to remove them from the rolls.

**1947** Annabelle Rankin first female Federal member of Parliament when elected to Senate

**1962** Commonwealth Electoral Act amended to grant universal suffrage to Indigenous Australians

**1965** 17 December Elections Act Amendment Act passed - Aboriginal people's right to vote

**1966** Vi Jordan (Labor) becomes the second woman to sit in Queensland Parliament

**1980** Elaine Darling first Queensland woman in federal House of Representatives for Lilley (1980-1993)



# Women's right to sit in Parliament

While Queensland was the second last State to enfranchise women, in 1905, it was the second State to allow the right for women to sit in parliament, when the Elections Act was assented to on 23 November 1915.

Edith Cowan in 1921 had made the Western Australian parliament the first to elect a woman. The first woman in the Senate was Labor's Dorothy Tangney in 1943, but there was no Labor woman in the House of Representatives until 1974. The difficulty of women getting into Parliament and their low numbers there until recent times is almost astonishing. Even though Queensland women first went to the polls in 1907, the first woman was not elected until 1929.



Irene Longman was the first to stand as a candidate: 'endorsed by the Country-National Party and the Queensland Women's Electoral League' (and, in fact, the first woman MP in every State was from the conservative side of politics, as was the first Federal member, Edith Lyons - who, looking at her fellow MLAs in the 1940s, would wonder: 'were there any who even washed their own socks?'). In Queensland, it took until 1966 for a second woman, Vi Jordan, to enter parliament - and she managed a feat that Longman had not in getting a women's toilet in the House. We can, however, thank Longman for women being admitted to the Queensland police force, something originally proposed by the suffragists in the nineteenth century. Longman and Jordan were followed by Vicki Kippen and Rosemary Kyburtz in 1974. Annabelle Rankin was Queensland's first

female Federal member when elected to the Senate in 1947, and the first Queensland woman in the House of Representatives was Elaine Darling in 1980. When Kathy Martin (Sullivan) was elected to the Senate in 1974 she was the only Queensland woman in Federal parliament. Flo Bjelke-Petersen and Margaret Reynolds were both elected to the Senate in the 1980s.

**Photo: Portrait of Irene Longman**

**Collection: John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, no. 63182**

Source: Carole Ferrier 'Editorial' *Hecate* 30.2.2004.

For full details of Queensland women in federal and Queensland parliament see John McCulloch's forthcoming book.



**Delegates to the  
Australian Women's  
Conference in Brisbane,  
1909**

**Collection: John Oxley  
Library, State Library of  
Queensland, no.122356**

**Photo: inside the  
gate of the city  
polling station.  
Women at  
Queensland's first  
state election, May  
1907**

**Collection: John  
Oxley Library, State  
Library of  
Queensland, no.  
36662**



# Historical suffrage walk in Brisbane

## WALKING TOUR BRISBANE SUFFRAGE LIVING HERITAGE SITES:

### [old] TOWN HALL QUEEN STREET [MALL]

\* Women's Suffrage League 1889 - 1891

### FROM KING GEORGE SQUARE With EMMA MILLER STATUE

\* Women's Unions,  
\* *Boomerang/Worker Office*,

In passing ANN STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

\* Margaret Ogg

### EMMA MILLER SQUARE ROMA STREET

\* Emma Miller

### [old] TRADES HALL TURBOT STREET

\* Woman's Equal Franchise Association  
\* Working Woman's Political Association

### SCHOOL OF ARTS ANN STREET

\* Woman's Franchise League (1894-?)  
\* Leontine Cooper  
\* Queensland's Women's Electoral Union/League

### CENTENNIAL HALL ADELAIDE STREET

\* Public Protest Meeting, 2 November 1904 and walk to the Premier's Office

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES/PARLIAMENT HOUSE GEORGE STREET

\* Aboriginal women, 1897 Act and domestic service

### LONGER WALK OPTION VIA FERRY TO KANGAROO POINT

(involves taking stairs up)

\* Joesphine Bedford's memorial window to her partner Lilian Cooper at St Mary's.  
\* Hospital wing Mt Olivett dedicated to Lilian Cooper

### Extended SITES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Brisbane Girls' Grammar School  
Leontine Cooper memorial park  
Bedford Playground in Spring Hill

# How the Bill was passed

It was of course up to the men to introduce the suffrage Bill.

Visit the menfolk page for their amusing / quaint views on women and women's suffrage.

In mid September 1903 Arthur Morgan replaced Philp as Premier, and promised a QWEL deputation that he would introduce an electoral reform Bill. However, an election intervened which saw the 34 Labor MPs form a coalition with Morgan as Premier, and a government Bill to give women the vote and abolish plural voting was introduced into the Legislative Assembly in September 1904.

Airey framed a little Bill,  
Designed the fatman's vote to kill.  
His party generally were mute -  
The Opposition used the flute.

When Airey's little Bill goes through,  
Heaven and earth will smile anew,  
Each woman then will be a queen;  
Three meals a day - no work between.

(Petrie, QPD, vol.93, :147.)

Known as the Electoral Franchise Bill, it was introduced into the Legislative Assembly by the Home Secretary, Peter Airey, on 27 September. It completed its second and third reading on 11 October without a vote being taken as there was clearly overwhelming support for it. It then went to the Legislative Council where it was read a first time the same day. The second reading was moved by the Secretary for Public Instruction, Andrew Barlow, and debate was completed on 25 October, but the Council balked at abolishing the plural vote and it was decided that the Bill would not be read a second time for another six months. The Council was promptly dubbed the 'House of Prejudice, Privilege and Property', and the 'slaughterhouse of reform'.

On 16 December 1904, in moving the adjournment of the House, Premier Morgan announced an extraordinary scenario to force the passage of his franchise legislation. Not only was the measure unprecedented, but also the inconvenience it posed to members of parliament. Country members would have had difficulty in getting home for Christmas and back again by 4 January, and sitting in parliament in January without any airconditioning would have been a very unpleasant experience. But Morgan's own words show his determination in the matter:

**It is intended to summon Parliament to meet on the 4th of January next year for the purpose of dealing with the Franchise Bill and the electoral machinery Bill. These Bills will form the sole business of the special session. The government was returned upon promises I claim have been substantially carried out as far as it was possible to carry them out in the session now**

**closing. But that portion of their policy dealing with the question of electoral reform, though assented to almost unanimously in this Chamber, since the Bill dealing with the question passed without challenge - without a division - was unfortunately rejected by the other branch of the Legislature.... Reasons were advanced to justify the rejection of the measure, the chief of these being that the Franchise Bill should have been accompanied by a machinery Bill for the application of the Franchise Bill... As I have already intimated, we propose to resubmit the Franchise Bill which was passed by this House less than three months ago. We shall submit, in addition, a Machinery Bill.**

When the parliament reconvened, both the Electoral Franchise Bill and the Machinery Bill, known as the Elections Acts Amendment Bill 1905, passed through the Legislative Assembly without a division and were conveyed to the Council. A problem with the postal vote now emerged in that women in the outback who couldn't travel to polling booths couldn't travel to a post office either to register their vote. A couple of messages were sent from the Council to the Assembly, and eventually a compromise was reached whereby a woman could post a ballot paper that had been witnessed by a Justice of the Peace, and would not have to go to a post office in person. Nevertheless, a motion in the Council that the Electoral Franchise Bill go into the committee stage was lost, and the basic thrust of both Bills was encompassed in the Elections Acts Amendment Bill when the other Bill failed to return to the Assembly from the Council.

Finally, on Wednesday 25 January 1905 the Legislative Council acquiesced, and the Elections Acts Amendment Act of 1905 was assented to on that same day by the Lieutenant-Governor Sir Hugh Muir Nelson. The next day, Thursday 26 January 1905, the Elections Acts Amendment Act of 1905 was proclaimed by a Queensland Government Gazette Extraordinary.

Year	Mover	Bill	First Reading	Second Reading	Third Reading
1890	Hyne	PMB	29 July	31 July	Shelved
1894	Powers	PMB	19 July	28 Sep	Def 2nd
1894	Glassey	PMB	8 Aug	6 Sept	Def 2nd
1895	Glassey	PMB	12 July	23 Oct	Def 2nd
1901	Foxton	Govt	1 Oct	13 Nov	Shelved
1902	Kidston	PMB	17Jul	7 Aug	Def 2nd
1904	Airey	Govt	27 Sep/ 11 Oct	11 Oct/18-25 Oct	11Oct/n/a
1905	Franchise	Govt	5/10 Jan	6/17 Jan	9/- Jan

1905	Machinery	Govt	5/12 Jan	11/25 Jan	12/25 Jan
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<b>VoteLA</b>	<b>VoteLC</b>	<b>Premier</b>
None	n/a	Morehead
17-31	n/a	Nelson
26-32	n/a	Nelson
29-35	n/a	Nelson
26-18	n/a	Philp
26-30	n/a	Philp
nil	12-19	Morgan
nil	8-16	Morgan
nil	nil	Morgan

In the above table for 1904 and 1905 under Readings, the dates for LA and LC are shown LA/LC.

Source: J. McCulloch - forthcoming book

# Excluded from the Vote

It was only white women who would win the vote in 1905. Racial anxieties ran through from the ruling classes to the labour movement which was notoriously backward in relation to the interests of non-white workers. In 1872 specific racial exclusions from voting of any man who was 'an aboriginal native of China or of the South Sea Islands or of New Holland', even if he had the property qualification, had been introduced. A very few Aboriginal men who had the required property did vote - in the next century the definition of 'Aboriginality' was broadened to exclude people.

In 1894 Thomas Glassey, leader of the Labor MLAs, introduced a private member's bill to enfranchise women - but this explicitly excluded Aboriginal natives of Australia and 'Asians'. Miller's daughter Katie Macfie's pointing to 'the competition of black labour' quelled attempts to raise votes for non-whites in the suffrage campaign.

Deep-rooted patriarchal ideologies meant that the notion of Australia as an egalitarian society would remain a myth through the twentieth century; it had never been a 'paradise' for the (white) working man and this was even less the case for any other workers within Australia's capitalist economy. Racism and economic discrimination based upon ethnicity meant that black women, and non-whites in general, were in an even worse situation; with neither constitutional nor economic equality in sight for Indigenous women, their trafficking into domestic service for a 'lousy little sixpence' or less, or being trapped in even more powerless situations, was widespread.

South Seas Islander Women and Chinese and other Asian people were legally excluded from voting for decades. Aboriginal women were deprived of the vote until the mid-1960s. For the campaign of FCAATSI see Marilyn Lake's *Faith*. Indigenous women were mainly employed as drover's boys or domestic servants (see Jackie Huggins and Ann McGrath in *Hecate*).

Ruby Langford Ginibi from the Bundjalung people whose land extends from Ipswich to northern New South Wales, in her life writing including *Don't Take Your Love to Town, My Bundjalung People* and *Nobby's Story*, consistently takes up the racist stereotyping of black women, and the systematic taking away of their children, 'mainly to hide the fact that they were fathered by white men'. In *Haunted By the Past*, she recounts her struggles as a serial single parent, exacerbated by poverty and racism, and fathers who 'were well and truly there at the making of those kids but not for the responsibility of rearing them.' Domestic service in the homes and families of others also frequently undermined black women's own. While much second wave feminism was about how women could escape their kitchens, many black women had never had one of their own to get out of. Ginibi recalls in *Don't Take Your Love To Town* 'fantasies about getting a roof over the kids' heads and having taps and floors.'

Aboriginal and Islander people did not get the vote until the 1960s.

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## CHINESE

In November 1848, 65 Chinese labourers disembarked at Brisbane having been contracted to work for 5 years at six pounds per year and two suits of clothing in the pastoral industry. Figures are unreliable but many more Chinese indentured labourers are known to have followed, and to have also been employed on the canefields. They were controlled by the **Masters and Servants Act**, which was heavily weighted towards the employers and gave them few rights, as well as the **Aliens Act** of 1861/1867 that restricted their naturalization and land holding. There was nonetheless periodic uproar about "The Chinese Question", especially following the opening of the north Queensland gold fields when many free Cantonese immigrants arrived in Cooktown. Although their coming would in its turn after a while be restricted by a huge Poll Tax, in 1883 Griffith was reportedly only re-elected after making a great effort to look more anti-Chinese than his rival McIlwraith.

With the **Sugar Bounty Act** of 1905, Chinese were excluded from plantation work, and mainly ran leasehold farms, increasingly becoming preferred employers by Aboriginal and Melanesian workers, with the Sub-Inspector of Police at Mackay reporting: "The Chinese offer better wages and what is more pay the aboriginals their wages when due, they also house and feed them well."

Under the **Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act** 1898, the Chinese had been barred from employing any coloured labour. "Finally in 1920, when the Returned Soldiers Association petitioned to have Asiatics excluded from the banana industry altogether and their farms turned over for soldier settlement schemes, the Chinese agricultural industry was totally destroyed" (Cronin, 253).

William Lane published in serialised form in 1888 a novel entitled **White Or Yellow? A Story of the Race War of AD 1908**. The appearance of the last episode coincided with race riots against the Chinese in Brisbane (see Raymond Evans in **Radical Brisbane**).

Annie Lane had written in the **Worker** of 2 April 1892:  
I would not do a black man harm or a yellow man or a green man  
for that matter but I'd sooner see a daughter of mine dead in  
her coffin than kissing one of them on the mouth or nursing  
a little coffee-coloured brat that she was mother to.

In 1892, WH Browne had written of "the black flag, the yellow flag and the brown flag waved in the faces of electors" (QPD LXXIII1895)

(Sources: Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin: *Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination*.  
Raymond Evans and Carole Ferrier, eds. *Radical Brisbane*.)

In earlier times, if a Chinese had the necessary freehold qualifications he could vote in municipal elections and, until 1882, in divisional ballots. In 1876, the **Aliens Act** prevented even naturalized Chinese from running for either House of parliament, and in 1885 the **Elections Act** proscribed from voting in Queensland elections any



“aboriginal native of Australia, India, China or the South Sea Islands.” Reinforced in subsequent ***Elections Acts Amendment Acts*** 1905 (Qld) and the ***Elections Act*** 1915 (Qld) was that no “aboriginal native...of Asia shall be entitled to have his name placed on an Electoral Roll/ shall be qualified to be enrolled upon any electoral roll.”

## **SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS**

South Sea Islanders were barred from voting with the ***Elections Act*** of 1885 that said: “no aboriginal native of Australia, India, China, or the South Sea Islands is entitled to vote in Queensland elections.”

With the institution of the White Australia Policy in 1901, many thousands of South Sea Islander workers who had been brought into the Australian colonies as indentured labour were repatriated from Queensland and northern New South Wales. William Lane's demands for the eradication from the colony of 'every dirty skin, black or yellow' had borne fruit. Almost all the South Sea Islanders were to be compulsorily sent back by 1906, with what the 'Kanakas' called the 'closing' of Queensland .

Since the early 1860s the great wealth of many of Queensland's ruling class, particularly those with interests in shipping and sugar, was built upon the indentured labour of tens of thousands of South Sea Islanders (sixty percent New Hebrideans, from what is now Vanuatu, and thirty percent from the Solomons). These workers were contemptuously called 'Kanakas'. Some were kidnapped, many others induced onto the ships by deception.

Indentured labour had been obtained at first by unsupervised private enterprise recruiting. State control was introduced with legislation in 1868 and 1872, the latter called rather euphemistically the ***Polynesian Protection Act***. With slavery formally ended in the United States following the Civil War, and Britain officially withdrawn from the slave trade at the beginning of the nineteenth century, indentured labour took its place worldwide. And, as Kay Saunders records, with the curtailment of cotton and sugar exports from the United States during the Civil War, 'Queensland was regarded potentially as a second Louisiana'.

Faith Bandler, a prominent Australian South Sea Islander activist, commented in 1977 in the preface to her biographical fiction, ***Wacvie***, 'most Australians do not believe that slave labour was used to develop the sugar cane industry.' It was viewed as that in 1867 when, as Myra Willard documents, many missionaries were denouncing the 'traffic in human beings' as 'injurious to the social, moral and spiritual interests of the natives, as demoralising and degrading to the white men engaged in it, as in short a revival of the slave trade'. Noel Fatnowna in writing his ancestors' history suggests: 'It was like a kind of slavery but legally it wasn't'. ***Wacvie*** also depicts the international pressure upon Queensland against the trade; the overseer, Russell Cameron, comments on the annoyance of having to combat 'those nigger lovers from the Mother Country'.

Some of the powerful local actors in this ugly piece of history were James Burns and Robert Philp, John Campbell and his son Edwin, Louis Hope, and Robert Towns - to

be immortalised in the name of our northern regional capital. Towns, a Sydney businessman and MLC, had the notorious Ross Lewin as his skipper to 'blackbird' the first workers for cotton growing on Townsvale estate near Beaudesert, forty miles from Brisbane in 1863. John 'Tinker' Campbell, of aristocratic Scots ancestry, arrived from Nova Scotia where, Thomas Welsby reports, he had been 'a most almighty villain, and cheated a proper raft of folk and then shipped himself off to Botany Bay for fear folk would transport him there'. In 1842 he was curing beef on land purchased at Kangaroo Point and the Valley. In partnership with Towns he then raised and dealt cattle and mined coal at Redbank. But they too fell out, in 1865, and Campbell went to Caniapa near Russell Island to manufacture salt. In 1870 he was growing sugar and cotton at the northwestern end of Macleay Island in Moreton Bay, with South Sea Islander workers. The ruins of a wharf built by 'Kanakas' can still be glimpsed beneath the undergrowth at Thompson's Point on the Island. The physical labour of the South Sea Islanders was crucial to the Queensland economy, but official policy was designed to prevent them from consolidating any workplace or industrial strength.

John Campbell's eldest son, Edwin, was foreman of 'Kanaka' labour for Towns; in 1863 he arranged for the first South Sea Islander workers to come to Brisbane on Lewin's ship the *Don Juan*. Seventy-three of them arrived in August, and Towns gave them twelve month contracts at 10s a month. Despite this highly-exploited labour, Towns' cotton plantation at Logan showed a deficit of 5744 pounds in 1868. 'He failed to form a colony of islanders on his plantations as he could never induce married men to bring their wives', the *ADB* reports rather naively. 'The *Queensland Polynesian Labourers Act* 1868 convinced Towns that bureaucratic control had made islanders more expensive to employ than Europeans.' In evidence at the 1869 Royal Commission into the kidnappings in the Loyalty Islands, Towns supported licensing and agents on the ships. His major holding of land in the north may have been connected to a development upon which he reported with delight. Official recognition had been given to his sterling contribution to the colony: 'the Government have paid me the compliment to call the town "Townsville".'

Towns had begun his career as an apprentice seaman on a British coal carrying boat. By the age of nineteen he had become a captain and, following several visits to Sydney from 1827, he settled there in 1843. His ships imported labour from Britain and Germany as well as China and India and in the late 1840s he claimed that he had 'saved Moreton Bay from ruin' with imported Chinese labour for the pastoral industry.

James Burns and Robert Philp were both Scots. Philp arrived in Brisbane in 1862 where his father, John, had a lease on the municipal baths, and was later involved in cattle and sugar production. In 1865, Burns and his brother ran the Burns and Scott store in Brisbane; in 1872 they opened another one in Townsville but, standing up badly to malaria, James relocated to Sydney leaving in charge his manager, Philp, who had begun to work for his shipping company in 1874 and became a partner in 1876.

In 1881-4, 'Philp enthusiastically diverted some vessels to the labour trade' but the commercial advantage of this was curtailed by the 1885 Royal Commission. From 1883-5, Burns was engaged in bringing in South Sea Islanders but, 'always uneasy' about it, withdrew when some of the crew of the *Hopeful* were prosecuted for

kidnapping and murder. Burns had a store on Thursday Island and branches in most of the major northern Queensland ports, so that he could participate fully in the exploitation of New Guinea. In 1883 Burns, Philp and Co Ltd was set up, but Philp's speculations would send him broke by the early 90s. In the 1890s 'the firm became the principal instrument for Australian imperialism' in the New Hebrides', the **ADB** records, culminating in a Royal Commission at which 'rapacity and inefficiency' were alleged.

Philp was Premier between 1899-1903 and 1907-08. When he first won the seat of Musgrave in 1886, he was prominent in the Townsville Separation League and devoted his maiden speech to northern separation. Philp's continuing advocacy of the use of Melanesian workers in the period leading up to Federation led to his being dubbed by the **Worker** in 1899 'the godfather of black labour'.

But advocacy of the repatriation of the 'Kanakas' frequently stemmed not from concern for their rights and welfare - but from straightforward racism. Jean Devanny's 1949 novel, **Cindie**, is set in the last period of indenture, the compulsory deportations of the 'Kanakas', many of whom by then had been in Queensland for years, and wanted to stay. Brisbanites Randolph and Blanche Biddow have a plantation in the North. Their daughter Irene is involved in turn-of-the-century Labor Party politics in Brisbane, and inveighs against 'fraternisation with the blacks and Chinese'. 'In town no one associates with blacks and yellow men'. The **Worker** of 1898 warned 'the people of Australia...to take no risk with the filthy Asiatic and South Sea aliens who bring with them many disgusting vices and habits', while the **Bulletin** for 13 March 1901 conjured up an 'indescribable vileness that festers in the North' where 'the lowest whites, the aborigines, the islanders of both sexes freely intermingle'.

From *Radical Brisbane*

Faith Bandler campaigned for the rights of the South Sea Islanders and by the 1990s, believed that they lacked representation on even any body representing blacks in Australia. She began to construe them as a 'dispossessed people' and Elizabeth Evatt was one who responded with a call for affirmative action: "Their original presence in Australia can hardly be regarded as voluntary: they are not Aborigines, but suffer many of the same discriminations. For further details see Marilyn Lake, **Faith**.

## **STRUGGLE FOR THE ABORIGINES' AND TORRES STRAITS' RIGHT TO VOTE IN QUEENSLAND:**

Oodgeroo Noonuccal, poet, political activist, artist and educator was a central figure in the movement formed in the early 1960s to work for the advancement of rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Queensland.

### **National Struggle:**

In an introduction of the 'Indigenous Australian Story' Kirsty Lees in **Votes for Women : The Australian Story** recounts how clauses in the federal constitution specifically excluded Aboriginal people in 1901. It was a long struggle to change this - 'unable to vote until 1962, Aborigines inhabited a political no-man's land for sixty-one years'. Marcia Langton continues how, in the constitution, Australian nationhood

was founded in racism. Since federation, she summarises, debates have focused on how to incorporate Aboriginal people within the framework of the Australian nation - by assimilation, by integration, self-management, self-determination, reconciliation - 'but always on the proviso that they would never be equal.' (Marcia Langton, '**The Nations of Australia**', Alfred Deakin Lecture, 20 May 2001).

Faith Bandler was at the founding conference of the national body - the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) held in Adelaide in 1958, an umbrella group for Aboriginal advancement organisations. Assimilation as the dominant policy was being challenged and integration advocated. For further details about the federal council see <http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/IMP0086b.htm> and for a biography of Faith Bandler see Marilyn Lake's ***Faith: Faith Bandler, Gentle Activist*** (Crows Nest NSW, Allen + Unwin, 2002).

### **Queensland**

The Queensland branch of FCAATSI was founded in 1961. Oodgeroo Noonuccal was the Queensland State Secretary for ten years. Her importance as a poet and activist, a leading figure in the community has been recognised - see <http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/IMP0082b.htm>

And Adam Shoemaker, Oodgeroo: A Tribute, ***Australian Literary Studies***, Vol. 16, No. 4, 1994.

Lees recounts the story of when a delegation from FCAATSI met Menzies, then Prime Minister of Australia, and afterwards they were going to have a drink, Menzies offered alcohol to Oodgeroo, who reminded him that under Queensland law offering alcohol to an Aboriginal Australian was a criminal offence. The state of Queensland and former colony was notorious for its racism - systemic and structural racism cutting through all levels in the community. Savage border conflict continued well into the 20th century, more so than the southern states.

We look forward to the oral histories of the men and women involved in the struggle for the vote in Queensland.

Deb Jordan and Carole Ferrier

Click [here for a printer friendly version](#) of the above article by Jordan and Ferrier

Read more in Margaret Reid's article:  
[Caste-ing the Vote: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voting Rights in Queensland](#)

# Conclusion



**Colonial-made Hip Bath (with arm rests). Japanned, tinned steel or galvanized iron**  
**photo: Shev Armstrong**

All this past history is very much with us in relation to the present when, despite many more women in parliaments, many things have not changed much at all or may be going backwards. There is a current perception of a new 'birth strike'. On 1-2 September 2001, Mike Steketee in the Australian talked of 'couples increasingly abandoning the idea of children on the career altar.' In 2000, when the Lisa Meldrum case ruling allowed single women and lesbians to access reproductive technologies, John Howard denounced it as 'a denial of the rights of the child', echoing George Pell who had suggested that the way was now open for 'a massive social experiment on children.' The bishops appealed the case and the government tried to amend the Sex Discrimination Act of 1984 in order to discriminate in this area. This year, a British television programme that showed a child with 'two mothers' on ABC Kids created some anxiety, recalling Fred Nile's earlier peroration that 'God made Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve', and there was more rhetoric of panic about a 'gayby boom', with non-heterosexuals described as the mothers of 'bent babies'.

Tony Abbott stated in 2002 that a compulsory paid maternity leave system would only be implemented over the 'government's dead body' (Age 22 July). Australian women were in 2004 exhorted to have three children - 'one for the husband, one for the wife and one for the nation.' A cash payment of \$3000 is offered for each. (Back in 1912, the Labor government introduced a £5 Maternity Allowance. This was available to single women - although not to 'Asiatics, Aboriginal Natives of Australia, Papua or the Islands of the Pacific.') Lake suggests that Labor women earlier pursued motherhood and child endowment mainly because 'if men no longer needed to support women and children...then unequal pay could no longer be justified', and progress would have been made against institutionalised economic inequality.

But John Howard on talkback radio in 1998 asserted that it was:

**unfair that when a mother, or father for that matter, elects to stay at home and provide full-time care for their children and their young, they tend to get sneered at and looked down upon and treated as second class citizens. And I think that is wrong, and the stridency of some of the ultra feminist groups in the community who sort of really demand that every mother be back in the workforce as quickly as humanly possible, now that is ridiculous. (Alan Jones 2UE 16 March)**

And in April 1999, Jeff Kennett urged girls at the MacRobertson Girls High School to make a career out of motherhood. Mary Helen Woods from the Australian Family Association endorsed his sentiments with turn-of-the-previous-century rhetoric: **I think we live in a rich, large, almost empty land and that, ultimately, we won't be able to keep it. It would be better if we populate it ourselves... [Kennett] wants to see that [women] don't get so successful in other areas that they put aside childbearing.**

In early November there was also a most unusual intervention by the Governor General, exhorting women to avoid abortion (*Australian* 13 November 2004).

Alexa in Maybanke Wollstenholme Anderson's Sydney journal, the *Woman's Voice* of 18 May 1895 objected to Walter Balls-Headley's advocacy of 'rabbit-like fecundity'. His Victorian sexology (which might seem still with us) elaborated, Magarey suggests, an account of sexual difference that 'enshrined man's lust and woman's desire for maternity at the heart of the Australian paradise, making intrinsic to it a sexual double standard within, as well as outside marriage'. The nineteenth century dominant ideology of complementary and separate spheres for the genders was addressed in 1904 in Hobart by Ida McAulay (aunt of CEW Bean)

**We are told that giving the woman the franchise will take her out of her own sphere.... I believe that a woman's sphere is just that which she chooses to make it.**

At the present time, Dever and Curtin suggest, newly debated is 'who constitutes proper families, correct mothers and the right (white) babies.' They consider that these debates 'give expression to shared anxieties about race, (reproductive) biology and nation' and 'depend upon one another in their efforts to re-constitute familiar hierarchies of meaning and merit in the realms of motherhood and family.' These old ideologies are newly materialising in relation to policies, practices and attitudes in relation to the family, welfare, work and immigration, that are not necessarily in the interests of many, let alone all women.

This text reproduced from the editorial by Carole Ferrier in *Hecate* 30.2.2004.

Paper quoted: Maryanne Dever and Jennifer Curtin, "The Politics of Reproduction: The Howard Government, Paid Maternity Leave and Family Friendly Policy." Working Paper no. 3, School of Political and Social Inquiry, Monash University, Feb. 2004.

# Further reading and resources

## Suffrage Readings : QUEENSLAND

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Hamley, Helen, 'The Women's Union, 1890-1910', in Raymond Evans and Carole Ferrier (eds.) *Radical Brisbane* (Melbourne: Vulgar Press, 2004) : 88-93.

\*\*\**Hecate* Special edition, 'Focus on Queensland Women's Suffrage', 30. 2. 2004: 4-103.

\*\*\*Kellett John, 'One –Woman-One-Vote: Annie Lane, 'Lucinda Sharpe' and the Female Franchise in the Late Nineteenth Century Queensland', *Hecate*, 30.2.2004 :36-52.

\*\*\*Jordan, Deborah, 'Leontine Cooper and the Suffrage Movement, 1888-1903', *Hecate*, 30. 2. 2004, [http://arcq.com.au/suffrage/articles/09\\_Jordan.doc](http://arcq.com.au/suffrage/articles/09_Jordan.doc)

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Reekie, Gail (ed.), *On the Edge, Women's Experiences in Queensland* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1994).

\*\*\*Reid, Margaret, 'Caste-ing the Vote: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voting Rights in Queensland', *Hecate*, 30.2.2004 : 71-80.

Shute, Carmel, 'Heroines and Heroes: Sexual Mythology in Australia 1914-1918', *Hecate*, 1.1 (1975).

Spearritt, Katie, 'New Dawns: First Wave Feminism 1880 – 1914', in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, (St. Lucia: UQP, 1992).

\*\*\* Young, Pam, *Proud To Be a Rebel, The life and times of Emma Miller*, (Brisbane: UQP, 1991).

\*\*\*Young, Pam, 'Emma Miller and the campaign for women's suffrage in Queensland, 1894-1905,' *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* v.2, pt.2, 31 May 2002: (223)-230

[First Wave Feminism & Second Wave Feminism bibliographies](#) (other states and worldwide) (.doc document)

[web based reading](#)

articles available here as printer-friendly Word .doc documents (with complete references and notes):

- [Léontine Cooper and the Queensland Suffrage Movement](#), 1888-1903 by Deb Jordan
- [Caste-ing the Vote: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voting Rights in Queensland](#) by Margaret Reid
- [One-Woman-One-Vote: Annie Lane, 'Lucinda Sharpe' and the Female Franchise in Late-Nineteenth Century Queensland](#) by John Kellett
- [The Struggle for Women's Suffrage in Queensland](#) by John McCulloch