

22. Gender and the 2013 Election: The Abbott 'mandate'

Kirsty McLaren and Marian Sawer

In the 2013 federal election, Tony Abbott was again wooing women voters with his relatively generous paid parental leave scheme and the constant sight of his wife and daughters on the campaign trail. Like Julia Gillard in 2010, Kevin Rudd was assuring voters that he was not someone to make an issue of gender and he failed to produce a women's policy. Despite these attempts to neutralise gender it continued to be an undercurrent in the election, in part because of the preceding replacement of Australia's first woman prime minister and in part because of campaigning around the gender implications of an Abbott victory.

To evaluate the role of gender in the 2013 election, we draw together evidence on the campaign, campaign policies, the participation of women, the discursive positioning of male leaders and unofficial gender-based campaigning. We also apply a new international model of the dimensions of male dominance in the old democracies and the stages through which such dominance is overcome. We argue that, though feminist campaigning was a feature of the campaign, traditional views on gender remain powerful. Raising issues of gender equality, as Julia Gillard did in the latter part of her prime ministership, is perceived as electorally damaging, particularly among blue-collar voters.

The prelude to the election

Gender received most attention in the run-up to the election in 2012–13 rather than during the campaign itself. Prime Minister Julia Gillard's famous misogyny speech of 2012 was prompted in immediate terms by the Leader of the Opposition drawing attention to sexism in what she perceived as a hypocritical way. He also enraged her by saying the Government should have 'died of shame', a phrase used about the recent death of her father. In broader terms, the speech appeared to be a delayed but passionate response to both sexism and the campaign of sexual vilification she had experienced. When she became Australia's first female prime minister, Gillard had studiously avoided reference to gender, claiming instead that it was a 'great day for redheads'. Her caution about drawing attention to gender issues was illustrated by the long delay in deploying Abbott's pronouncements on women. They had already been tested on focus groups under the Rudd Government and found to produce an 'intense

reaction'. Rudd's advisor, Bruce Hawker, had been disappointed that when he sought to have them used in parliamentary debates: 'the response of many female ministers was to stand back' (Hawker 2013: 3). When Gillard eventually delivered her misogyny speech it was largely dismissed in Australian print media as 'playing the gender card' or engaging in a 'gender war', perhaps justifying her previous caution. The YouTube video of the speech went viral, however, and was watched by two million viewers within ten days (Sawer 2013: 114).

Since 2011 at least, when the 'Julia Gillard—worst PM in Australian History' Facebook page was created, Gillard had been the subject of obscene depictions in the social media as well as having cartoons of herself naked and wearing a dildo emailed to federal parliamentarians. This was in addition to the narratives being circulated by talkback radio hosts and by the Opposition depicting Gillard as a 'liar' ('Juliar') and as 'treacherous' for replacing an elected prime minister. The Opposition Leader famously spoke to carbon tax protesters in 2011 in front of banners reading 'Juliar ... Bob Brown's Bitch' and 'Ditch the Witch'—an image often used to illustrate the Opposition's sexism and disrespect for the Prime Minister.

There were gendered overtones and double standards involved in both the 'Juliar' and 'treachery' narratives: the 'treachery' of her ousting of Kevin Rudd was judged more harshly because ambition is often regarded as at odds with feminine characteristics (see Hall and Donaghue 2013). The gendered nature of other violent and sexualised language being used to describe Gillard, including references to her genitals and menstruation, was even more explicit (Summers 2013). It was Gillard's misogyny speech, however, which sparked commentary in the media about a 'gender war'.

There was a marked disjuncture between the mainstream media response to the speech and the response of online communities and alternative outlets. Within the dominant narrative, which was also taken up by the Opposition, Gillard was responsible for beginning a gender war that then rebounded on her leadership. Women cabinet ministers who defended her were described by Opposition members as the 'handbag hit squad', suggesting it was illegitimate for senior ministers to openly discuss sexism in politics and confirming received wisdom that women in public life will be penalised for doing so (Johnson 2012). The media-constructed idea that any reference to gender inequality was divisive in the electorate was reflected in adverse opinion polls and, in particular, a loss of male support (*Vote Compass* 2013).

The gender war narrative stood in contrast to the narratives found on feminist blogs such as *Hoyden About Town* (www.hoydenabouttown.com) and in publications targeted at women, such as the *Sydney Morning Herald's* 'Daily Life' site. There, Gillard's speech was covered as a continuation of debates about

sexism in politics. Commentary was overwhelmingly positive and coverage was more extensive. A second peak in ‘gender war’ stories occurred after a 2013 speech at the launch of ‘Women for Gillard’, where the then Prime Minister again made reference to gender equality issues, including abortion and women’s representation in government.¹ The same contrast in how the speech was framed—as an instrumental, political tactic in newspapers, and as a part of ongoing discussion of sexism and politics in online communities—was evident once more (Table 1).

Table 1: Media framing of and commentary on Gillard’s sexism speeches of 9 October 2012, 11 June 2013

	Online communities*		Crossover publications*#		Newspapers#	
	Sexism/ gender frame	Political strategy frame	Sexism/ gender frame	Political strategy frame	Sexism/ gender frame	Political strategy frame
Positive	31	2	8	0	24	29
Neutral	2	0	1	0	5	24
Critical	4	2	2	5	25	120
Total	37	4	11	5	54	173

*collective, feminaust, ‘Destroy the Joint’ (Facebook), The Hoopla, Hoyden about Town, Mamamia.

*#‘Daily Life’ (Sydney Morning Herald), The Drum (ABC).

#Australian, Courier-Mail, Daily Telegraph, Sydney Morning Herald.

Sources: As indicated above.

As Gillard stated in her resignation speech after being defeated in the caucus ballot, gender did not explain everything about her prime ministership, but it explained some things. She ended this speech on an optimistic note: that it would be easier for the next woman and the woman after that. However there was nothing in her experience to suggest it would be any easier for a woman prime minister who raised issues of gender equality—on the contrary it might have ‘become harder for the next feminist and the feminist after that’ (comment by Fabrizio Napoleoni responding to Elam and Esmay 2013). To counter such an effect, *GetUp!* ran a campaign asking Australians to submit their own ‘gender card’ calling out sexism, and naming issues that affected women unfairly. Thousands responded. EMILY’s List also circulated their own gender card to be handed out for sexist offenses—modelled on yellow and red penalty cards in football.

1 A former Labor Party staffer had been given a brief to set up ‘Women for Gillard’, funded by the New South Wales State Office of the ALP. There was no attempt to seek input from bodies such as EMILY’s List, which was promoting the power of gender-based online campaigning, nor from the creators of the successful ‘Destroy the Joint’ Facebook and Twitter campaigns. It lacked credibility and gained no traction.

Beyond the issue of sexism that mired her prime ministership, Gillard's policy legacy remained highly contested. On the one hand, many commented on her failure to communicate the range of policy achievements her government successfully made in difficult circumstances; on the other hand, there was much criticism of specific policies such as moving sole parents onto the inadequate NewStart allowance. The Victorian Women's Trust, while disagreeing with her sole parent and asylum seeker policies, took out full-page newspaper advertisements in July 2013 under the heading 'Credit Where Credit Is Due' to draw attention to the record legislative achievements of the Gillard Government.² Her supposedly dysfunctional government had seen 561 pieces of legislation through to royal assent, considerably more than the Rudd Government (Singleton 2014: 45).

A week after his overthrow of Australia's first woman prime minister, Kevin Rudd announced a new cabinet, with an unprecedented number of women (six out of 20). When asked if this was to stem a possible backlash from women voters he pointed to his previous record of appointing women but also said, in what was clearly intended as a critique of Gillard: 'I'm not one to make an issue of gender. I don't see things through the prism of gender, I never have, never will' (Rudd 2013). This commitment to avoid gender issues was carried into the 2013 Labor election campaign, which did not include a women's policy or any gender equality commitments apart from a token gesture in the campaign launch speech: 'We want an inclusive Australia where there is no discrimination on the basis of your race, your gender or your sexuality.'

The retreat from commitments to women in key election policy speeches has been evident at both state and national levels since the 1990s. This trend is also apparent in other democracies, although it is sometimes balanced by a desire to depict gender equality as a core national value to be contrasted with the values of Muslim immigrants (Dahlerup and Leyenaar 2013).

The campaign

Official campaigning was characterised by a contradiction: there was a studied evasion of the topic of gender by the major parties, yet campaigning was strongly gendered. Examining media coverage shows how consistently both leaders were striving to project themselves as masculine leaders. Beyond this

2 After the election was over, sold-out tribute events were organised by Anne Summers and the Victorian Women's Trust in venues such as the Sydney Opera House and the Melbourne Town Hall. Again thousands expressed their determination that the achievements of Julia Gillard's prime ministership not be written out of history nor her resilience in the face of three 'leaders of the opposition': Tony Abbott, the Murdoch press and—on her own side of politics—Kevin Rudd.

tacit competition, less powerful political actors attempted to raise gender issues, and especially women's interests, but had limited success. As such, the election saw the 'blokieness' of Australian political discourses reassert itself.

As we have already discussed, the major political actors made little mention of gender during the campaign. Instead, both Tony Abbott and Kevin Rudd presented themselves as men of action and as family men. For Tony Abbott, the emphasis on his wife and daughters—and even Peta Credlin, his chief of staff—was not new. Abbott and Coalition politicians have for years referred to the women in his life as evidence that Abbott has no 'problem with women'. This 'problem' with women was partly a reference to a gender gap in Abbott's approval ratings (see, for instance, Sawer 2012). It was also a reference to Abbott's many comments indicating a belief in traditional gender roles.

Tony Abbott's views on women were kept alive as an issue by feminist and progressive campaigning online. Yet this was also a consequence of Abbott's own comments: most notably he referred to the 'sex appeal' of candidate Fiona Scott as a reason to vote for her. Then, in a video message to the Big Brother house, he referred to the sex appeal of his own daughters: 'If you want to know who to vote for, I'm the guy with the not bad-looking daughters' (Badham 2013). There were a series of other sexist comments, which the Abbott campaign framed as 'daggy dad' moments. Thus, Abbott's family allowed him to emphasise his paternal role, and diminish perceptions of a more aggressive masculinity. This image of a 'fatherly and husbandly protective masculinity' was well rehearsed and strategic: it had allowed Abbott to draw flattering contrasts between himself and both Gillard and Rudd (Johnson 2013: 22).

Rudd, too, used his family members in his campaign, with his daughter Jessica taking an active role. Like Abbott, Rudd sought to project an image of strong and active leadership. Though Abbott used his sporting pursuits to do this, Rudd relied on seeming busy, decisive and efficient. Both leaders thus used masculinity in their attempts to appear relatable and personable.

Campaign policies

As already noted, the Labor Government did not take a women's policy into the election. For its part, the Coalition did release a women's policy, albeit only two days before the election and with its only spending commitment being \$1 million additional funding for the White Ribbon Campaign, a men's campaign against gender-based violence. However the first item of the policy did indicate that the Coalition Spokeswoman on Women, Senator Michaelia Cash, had been listening to the concerns of the Women's Alliances. The Alliances are the peak bodies funded since 2010 to represent to government the views of different

sectors of women, including rural, immigrant and Indigenous women, as well as to represent the views of advocacy coalitions around issues of equal rights, economic security and violence against women. They received a renewal of their triennial operational funding in 2013. The Alliances, like preceding women's advocacy coalitions, had been pressing for the return of the Office for Women to Prime Minister and Cabinet from its exile in the line department of Family and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 20 kilometres away from the heart of government.

As the Coalition policy stated, location in the Family and Community Services portfolio had implied that the women's portfolio was a welfare concern rather than underpinning a whole-of-government approach to improving government outcomes for women. Within a month the Office had moved back to Prime Minister and Cabinet from where it had been exiled since the Howard Government moved it out in 2004, a move that had not been countermanded by the Rudd or Gillard governments. Its previous exile had come under the Fraser Government and had lasted from 1977 to 1983 when its return had been a high point of the Hawke Government's women's policy. The 2013 Coalition women's policy was the first time since 1983 that a commitment relating to the actual structure of government had been a lead feature of women's policy. The return of the portfolio to Prime Minister and Cabinet was of satisfaction both to advocates and bureaucrats, providing much more timely access to Cabinet proposals for the purpose of advice on gender impacts. It also provided a stronger base for the Interdepartmental Committee on Women, responsible for a whole-of-government approach to improving gender outcomes. The Women's Safety Branch remained in the renamed Department of Social Services along with the National Plan for Reducing Violence against Women and Children and related functions. The potential gain from the return of women's policy to the heart of government was offset by the abolition in December 2013 of the last vestige of women's policy machinery within the framework for intergovernmental decision-making—the COAG Select Council on Women's Issues.

Moreover, the return of women's policy to Prime Minister and Cabinet received a very mixed reception thanks to Tony Abbott's misogynist reputation (Harris Rimmer 2013). The 'Destroy the Joint' movement helped spread the word through Facebook and Twitter that the Prime Minister was now 'Minister for Women' and an electronic petition stating that this was unacceptable promptly gathered 10,000 signatures. EMILY's List used its new social media capability to create a meme: 'The new Minister for the Status of Women in his own words...'. It had 200,000 views and was doubtless shared with many more.

This reputation meant that the Coalition's paid parental leave policy—first unveiled before the 2010 election—was received somewhat cynically in the media as an attempt to repair Abbott's sexist image (e.g. McGuirk 2013). However

it was well received by a number of women's advocacy groups including the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL), which surveyed the parties on key policy areas (WEL 2013). The Coalition policy was more generous than the scheme introduced by the Labor Government in 2011, providing for 26 weeks of leave (rather than 18 weeks); income replacement rather than the minimum wage, up to a cap of \$75,000 over the six months; and a superannuation component. It was subject to criticism on a number of grounds, including expense and policy details, but most notably from the Nationals who saw it as discriminating against homemakers.

Both major parties received low ratings from WEL on support for sole parents, despite some minor improvements made by the Labor Government after an outcry over the shift of sole parents onto NewStart. The Coalition did particularly badly on the equal pay issue. Labor had both supported and funded the equal pay increases for community service workers and also committed \$6 million over four years in the 2013–14 Budget to the Pay Equity Unit in Fair Work Australia. The Coalition, on the other hand, had supported neither the equal pay increases nor the Pay Equity Unit.

Furthermore, in relation to pay equity, the Coalition made it clear in their childcare policy (released on the same day as their women's policy) that they would be making no new payments from the Labor Government's Early Years Quality Fund, established in June. This fund was to raise the pay of childcare workers for two years, until an equal remuneration decision could be handed down by Fair Work Australia. Early childhood educators were earning only \$19.00 an hour. After the election the Government wrote to childcare providers, saying that if they had not already implemented the wage increases the offer of funding was 'hereby revoked'. More broadly, the Coalition commitment to cuts in public sector expenditure inevitably carried with it a disproportionate impact on women, due to female employment patterns in public sector and community service employment.

One area to which the new Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator Michaelia Cash, appeared committed was the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, adopted in 2012 as part of the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women in conflict and conflict resolution. Although somewhat slow to develop its national action plan (the 36th country to do so), Australia's bid for Security Council membership supplied some momentum. Senator Cash enthusiastically launched the first annual civil society report card on the plan (prepared with funding from the Office for Women and the Australian Civil/Military Centre) and called on women's advocacy organisations to continue holding government to account. Julie Bishop, as the new Foreign

Affairs Minister, also highlighted issues of sexual violence in conflict and the crucial part women play in peacekeeping and peacebuilding, notably in her first speech to the UN General Assembly.

Even the Australian Greens, who had succeeded the Australian Democrats in the role of championing gender equality, were relatively muted in 2013. The section on women in their election policy did point out that Labor had put the political promise of a surplus above the wellbeing of single parents while the Coalition was intending to cut health, education and welfare spending affecting the most vulnerable. One commitment clearly directed against an incoming Coalition Government and any repeat of Howard-era policies was to 'maintain Australian foreign aid programs that support women's reproductive health'. The Greens platform (and that of the Australian Sex Party) also included strong support for women's right to choose abortion. The other micro-parties, especially those on the right of the political spectrum, generally paid little attention to gender. However, it is important to note that the Family First Party, which has socially conservative views on issues such as abortion and believed that Labor's parental leave scheme discriminated against stay-at-home mothers, won a Senate spot in South Australia.

Contenders and representation

In terms of the parliamentary presence of women, the election brought little change. Overall the entry of women into Australian parliaments plateaued around 2005 (see Figure 1). This is similar to the stalling effect noted in other Westminster countries such as Canada (Trimble *et al.* 2013) and has contributed to Australia's slide down the international league table of the representation of women in national parliaments. Australia dropped from 15th place in 1999 to 49th place by 1 May 2014, with 52 countries ranked above it (IPU 2014). Coalition victories contributed to a halt in progress, while only repeated media interventions by EMILY's List prevented the Labor Party from falling further below its own quota. By July 2014 women constituted 21 per cent of Coalition parliamentarians around Australia compared with 43 per cent of Labor parliamentarians.

This standstill in progress deserves further discussion: to what extent have women overcome men's dominance of politics in Australia? A major comparative study published in 2013 provides an especially helpful way of conceptualising such dominance. Drawing together case studies of 'old' democracies, Drude Dahlerup and Monique Leyenaar developed a model that included six dimensions

of politics: the numbers of women in politics; politics as a workplace; vertical and also horizontal sex segregation of roles; discourses about women in politics; and public policy which takes account of gender issues (Table 2).

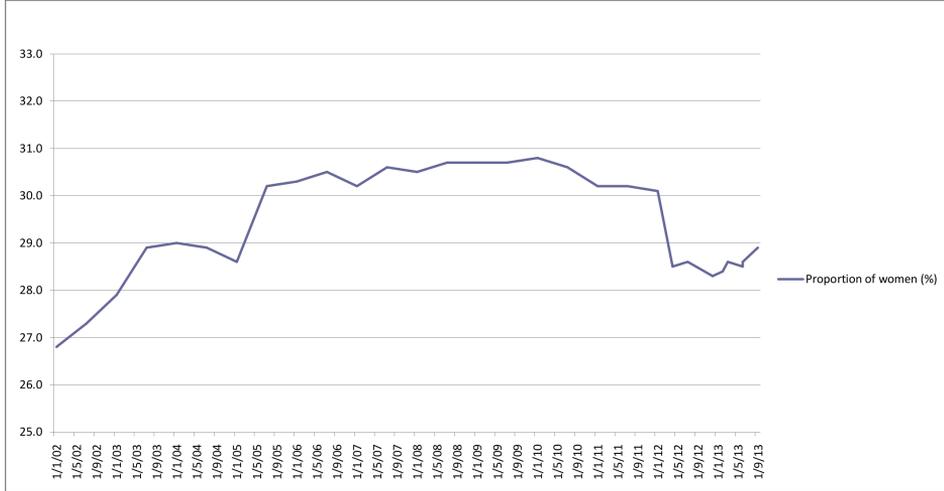


Figure 1: Women as a percentage of MPs across Australia since 2002

Source: Parliamentary Library.

Table 2: Multidimensional model of male dominance/gender balance in politics

Dimensions	Male dominance	Gender balance
1.Representation	Women’s numerical underrepresentation	A continuous 40–60 per cent representation for either sex
2.Politics as workplace	Male-coded norms and practices	Gender-neutral codes and family-friendly practices; crèches
3.Vertical sex segregation	Unequal gender distribution in political hierarchies	Leadership positions shared equally (40–60 per cent)
4.Horizontal sex segregation	Limited access of women to full range of portfolios and committees	Portfolios assigned without gender bias but according to expertise and interest
5.Discourse and framing	Gendered perceptions of politicians	Dominating discourse that gender balance is normal and required for democracy
6.Public policy	Policies biased in favour of men. No concern for gender equality	Gender mainstreaming, i.e. action taken to ensure policies reflect needs of both sexes and promote gender equality

Source: Adapted from Dahlerup and Leyenaar (2012: 8, 302).

Within the first dimension of the Dahlerup/Leyenaar model, the parliamentary representation of women, four stages of progress towards gender equality were identified. Australia sits within the third of these four stages—in other words progress has stalled before gender balance has been achieved and while women still make up less than a third of parliamentarians. In terms of parliament as a workplace, progress has also been slow, with the first (small) childcare centre in an Australian parliament only opened in 2009 and with babies and toddlers still being regarded in Standing Orders as 'strangers in the house' (Holland 2003; Rodrigues 2009).

Turning to vertical and horizontal segregation, the 21st century has seen some improvement, with an increased number of women serving as heads of government—for the first time at the federal level as well as in New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and for the third time in the Australian Capital Territory. Women have also been moving into non-traditional portfolio areas, such as Julie Bishop as both Foreign Affairs Minister in the Abbott Government and Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, Tanya Plibersek as Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister as well as Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and Senator Penny Wong as Shadow Minister for Trade and Investment as well as Opposition Leader in the Senate. However other women in the Abbott ministry were allocated more traditional 'nurturing' portfolios such as Assistant Minister for Health (Fiona Nash), Assistant Minister for Education (Sussan Ley) and Minister for Human Services (Marise Payne). Where progress has been limited, as illustrated during the Gillard prime ministership, is in discourse around women in politics and in substantive policies directed towards gender equality.

Looking more closely at gender and partisan effects, as in previous elections the Greens had the largest proportion of women candidates (46 per cent), followed by the Labor Party (33 per cent) and then the Coalition parties (21 per cent) (AEC 2013). While the number of Coalition women in the House of Representatives went up by four, their presence in the Coalition parliamentary parties continued to be much lower than the proportion of women within the parliamentary Labor Party (Tables 3 and 4; Figure 2). The continuing failure of the Coalition parties to field a significant number of women candidates has meant that incoming Coalition governments have an inadequate pool of women to draw on for frontbench positions. This has resulted in significant falls in the representation of women in government following recent Coalition victories, most dramatically in Western Australia and Queensland, but also in New South Wales. Because the pool of eligible candidates for appointment to ministerial positions consists of members of the government party or parties, the highly uneven representation of women across parliamentary parties creates a real problem for maintaining women's presence in the executive (Curtin and Sawer 2011: 50). In the United Kingdom, for example, this uneven representation

has contributed to Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron’s ‘woman problem’—a problem worsened by the effects the Cameron Government’s public sector cuts have had on women.

Table 3: Gender breakdown of the House of Representatives after the 2013 election

Party	Male	Female	Female (%)
ALP	35	20	36.4
Liberals/LNP/CLP*	58	17	22.6
Nationals/LNP*	14	1	6.6
Independents	1	1	50.0
Greens	1	0	0.0
Palmer United Party	1	0	0.0
Katter’s Australia Party	1	0	0.0
Total	111	39	26.0

*MPs allocated according to their party room.

Source: Parliamentary Library.

Table 4: Gender breakdown of the Senate, 1 July 2014

Party	Male	Female	Female (%)
Greens	3	7	66.7
ALP	11	14	56.0
Nationals/CLP*	4	2	33.3
Liberals	22	5	18.5
Other	7	1	12.5
Total	47	29	38.2

*Senators allocated according to their party room.

Source: Parliamentary Library.

There was a great deal of critical commentary on the absence of women from the new Abbott cabinet, where the only woman is Foreign Minister Julie Bishop (Table 5). Media stories adversely compared Australia to many countries including Afghanistan and were perhaps best summed up in the headline ‘Is this what Abbott means by having a “mandate”?’ (Kenny 2013). The extensive media criticism was reflected in the polls, although with a gender and partisan inflection. Essential Research found 51 per cent of women (but only 39 per cent of men) were concerned that there was only one woman in cabinet; 90 per cent of Greens voters were concerned, compared with 67 per cent of Labor voters

and only 17 per cent of Liberal voters (Bowe 2013). Abbott's remark that he was 'very disappointed there are not a lot more women in cabinet'—an oddly passive way to describe his own decision—helped earn him the Clinton Award for Repeat offenders at the 2013 Ernies Awards for sexist remarks.

Despite his 'disappointment', implying that there was no way to appoint more women, Abbott claimed that there were many women 'knocking on the door' and this led to some public discussion about whether the door was really open on the conservative side of politics. Outgoing Liberal parliamentarians such as Judi Moylan, Senator Sue Boyce and former Senator Judith Troeth (who had advocated quotas for the Party in 2010) cited structural and cultural problems within the Party. Boyce went so far as to describe the cabinet composition as 'shocking' and 'embarrassing' (Crowe 2013). Interestingly, one potential ministerial candidate, Bronwyn Bishop, was instead nominated to be Speaker of the House of Representatives. This continued a pattern whereby new Coalition governments in New South Wales and Queensland also compensated for shortfalls in their cabinets by appointing women as Speakers.

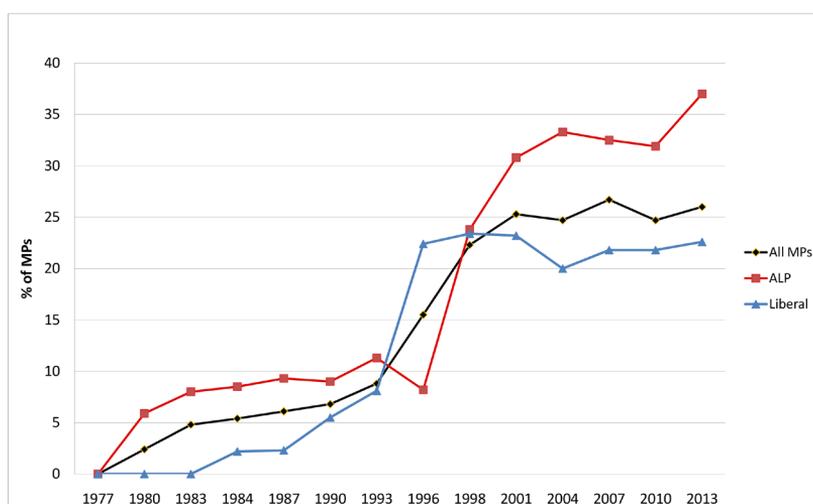


Figure 2: Women as a percentage of parliamentary parties and of all MPs, House of Representatives, 1977–2003

Source: Parliamentary Library.

While it seemed a great leap backward for there to be only one woman in cabinet, the picture was somewhat more gender balanced on the other side of the chamber (Table 5). There was a greater pool of women to draw from in the parliamentary Labor Party and the representation of women in the shadow ministry almost mirrored their representation in caucus. It was notable, however, that most of

the women in caucus and in the shadow ministry (eight out of 11) were from the Left faction. These included Tanya Plibersek who, as we have seen, became Deputy Leader and Senator Penny Wong who continued as Labor Leader in the Senate.

Table 5: Gender breakdown of the Abbott ministry and the opposition shadow ministry, September 2013

Ministry category	Male	Female	Female (%)
Cabinet	18	1	5.3
Whole ministry	25	5	16.6
Parliamentary secretaries	11	1	8.3
Shadow Cabinet	14	5	26.3
Shadow ministry	19	11	36.7
Shadow parliamentary secretaries	7	8	53.3

Source: *Parliamentary Handbook, 44th Parliament of Australia*.

Conclusion

Julia Gillard's prime ministership led to increased visibility of sexism in politics, and also brought to light considerable unease about the way in which that sexism was discussed. Although Gillard was removed from the leadership, this unease continued to influence the 2013 election. Notably, the campaign tactics of both major leaders placed significant value on masculinity. To what extent, then, does Australian federal politics remain strongly masculine, as measured against the Dahlerup/Leyenaar typology of masculine dominance?

Despite an increase in women reaching leadership positions such as head of government or presiding officer of parliament, the entry of women into Australian politics has stalled since 2005. Even raising this issue has been construed as divisive and, as we have seen, the major parties have difficulty in articulating an overarching commitment to gender equality, at least for domestic purposes. High profile women's policies are no longer taken to elections. There remains, moreover, an undercurrent of sexism in political discourse. The machismo of both Abbott's and Rudd's campaigning indicates a widespread assumption that leadership requires the attributes of traditional masculinity. The 2013 election saw many political actors protesting that gender—that is, gender inequality—is not a significant issue. Campaign tactics, however, continued to suggest otherwise.

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This text taken from *Abbott's Gambit: The 2013 Australian Federal Election*,
edited by Carol Johnson and John Wanna, published 2015 by
ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.