



Index and Introduction



AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTION CENTRE

Unit 13: Women's voting rights under the Australian Constitution – Year 9 - C & C Strand: Citizenship, Identity & Diversity

Topic 9.3: Women's voting rights under the Australian Constitution

Year 9

Key people, events and ideas in the development of Australian self-government and democracy, including, the role of founders, key features of constitutional development, the importance of Britain and Western influences in the formation of Australia's system of government and women's voting rights. (ACDSEH090)

Investigating the factors that led to the *Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902*, which enabled women to vote and stand for election for the federal Parliament (ACDSEH091)

Key Takeaways

1. Women had to campaign for the right to vote in Australia and used sophisticated political tactics to win.
2. In comparison, British women used more militant, but arguably less effective tactics, taking longer to achieve the vote.
3. The right to vote was just the beginning. Women needed to get elected to Parliament and win the right to be lawyers and serve as judges, to start achieving real change.

Achievement standard

Understand key people, events and ideas in the development of Australian self-government and democracy, including, the role of founders, key features of constitutional development, the importance of British and Western influences in the formation of Australia's system of government and women's voting rights.

Revision:

Unit 4. Topic 5.2: Representative Democracy. The story of voting rights in Australia including for Indigenous Australians and women.



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Topic Summary

In this topic, students learn about how women obtained the right to vote and overcame the legal impediments that were in their way (eg. not being recognised as 'persons' by Parliaments or the courts). They compare the different tactics used by suffragists and suffragettes in Australia and the United Kingdom, and the ongoing campaign for the representation of women in Parliament and the courts.

Students should understand that:

- women were excluded from voting in all Australian colonies until the 1890's or 1900's, which meant that laws often did not take into account their specific needs or interests;
- from the 1880s women formed groups to campaign for the vote;
- many prominent women campaigned for the franchise, including Louisa Lawson, Vida Goldstein, Mary Lee, Maybanke Wolstenholme and Catherine Helen Spence, and that their campaigns affected sections 41 and 128 of the Constitution; and
- women had to continue campaigning even after they achieved the federal franchise in 1902, because they still needed to win the right to vote in all States, and get women into Parliament and into the courts, so their interests were more likely to be reflected and protected in laws.

Teacher Reference Documents (TRDs) and Lessons/Activities

TRD 118: Votes for Women

Lesson/Activities One: The story of women's voting rights under the Australian Constitution – Votes for Women

TRD 119: Catherine Helen Spence (South Australia)

TRD 120: Maybanke Wolstenholme Anderson (New South Wales)

TRD 121: Edith Cowan (Western Australia)

Lesson/Activities Two: The story of women's voting rights under the Australian Constitution – Australian Suffragists

TRD 122: Suffragists in the United Kingdom and different tactics

TRD 123: The right of women to stand for Parliament, be lawyers and serve on juries

Lesson/Activities Three: The story of women's voting rights under the Australian Constitution – Securing rights for women

