

**Gender in the Fifty-first New South Wales Parliament**

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## Declaration

This thesis is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts, University of Sydney. The material has been compiled originally for this purpose. Any material previously published has been acknowledged.

This thesis is entirely the result of my own research.

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## Acknowledgments

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## **Abstract: Gender in the Fifty-first New South Wales Parliament**

Responsible Government began in New South Wales in 1856. Direct participation by women began 70 years later in 1925 with the election of Millicent Preston-Stanley. Her first speech questioned whether Parliament was a fit place for women. Another significant milestone was reached after another 70 years when female MLAs in the Fifty-first Parliament constituted 15% of the Legislative Assembly and female MLCs made up 33% of the Legislative Council. In the 1990s there was no formal barrier to the participation of persons on the basis of their sex but no scholarly study had addressed the question of whether the Parliament's culture was open to all gender orientations.

This study examines the hypothesis that the Parliament informally favoured some types of gender behaviour over others. It identifies 'gender' as behaviour rather than a characteristic of persons and avoids the conflation of gender with sex, and particularly with women exclusively.

The research used interviews, observation and document study for triangulation. The thesis describes the specific context of New South Wales parliamentary politics 1995-1999 with an emphasis on factors that affect an understanding of gender. It explores notions of representation held by MPs, analyses their personal backgrounds and reports on gender-rich behaviours in the chambers.

The study concludes that gender was a significant factor in the behaviour of Members of the Parliament. There were important differences between the ways that male and female MPs approached their roles. Analysis of the concept of gender in the Parliament shows that some behaviours are more likely to bring political success than are others. The methodology developed here by adapting literature from other systems has important strengths. The data suggest that there is a need for many more detailed studies of aspects of gender in parliaments.

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