Chapter 1 Introduction

Section 1.1: ‘A fit place for women’?

The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 27 August 1925 reported the first speech given by a female Member of Parliament (hereafter MP) in New South Wales. In the Legislative Assembly on the previous day, Millicent Preston-Stanley, Nationalist Party Member for the Eastern Suburbs, created history. According to the *Herald*:

‘Miss Stanley proceeded to illumine the House with a few little shafts of humour. “For many years”, she said, “I have in this House looked down upon honourable members from above. And I have wondered how so many old women have managed to get here - not only to get here, but to stay here”.

The *Herald* continued:

‘The House figuratively rocked with laughter. Miss Stanley hastened to explain herself. “I am referring”, she said amidst further laughter, “not to the physical age of the old gentlemen in question, but to their mental age, and to that obvious vacuity of mind which characterises the old gentlemen to whom I have referred”. Members obviously could not afford to manifest any deep sense of injury because of a woman’s banter. They laughed instead’.

Preston-Stanley’s speech marks an important point in gender politics. It introduced female participation in the Twenty-seventh Parliament. It stands chronologically midway between the introduction of responsible government in the 1850s and the Fifty-first Parliament elected in March 1995. Until 1925 (for 70 years or half of its life) all the parliament’s members were males. Preston-Stanley (*Hansard Assembly* 26 August 1925: 369) remarked

‘We have been told that Parliament is not a fit place for women. I am not prepared to say that it is so. But if it is so, then it is the most serious indictment that can be made against men, for has not Parliament up till today been an institution of their own making?’

Whether the gender environment of the New South Wales Parliament has been affected by the presence of women remains unexplored. There have been far fewer female MPs than male MPs. By the final months of the Fifty-first Parliament in 1998, only twenty-six women had

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1 Hereafter ‘Parliament’ means ‘the New South Wales Parliament’. Where other Parliaments are referred to, this is specified, as for example ‘the Federal Parliament’.

2 Eighty-four males were elected to the Assembly at the single election in 1995 (Smith, T. 2000b: 44).
served as Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) \(^3\), and of those, sixteen (about three-fifths) were members still. Their number then exceeded that of women Members in all previous fifty Parliaments. To the extent that personnel create institutions, female Members of this Parliament potentially had an historic opportunity to influence the parliamentary culture.

This raises the question of whether the parliament was regarded as a ‘fit place’ for women in the middle of the 1990s. Unfortunately, it is unclear what this claim means. Initially, it is relatively straightforward to examine the ways that current Members perceive the parliament and their roles in it. It is more difficult to interpret these perceptions taking into consideration the specific political context and utilizing contemporary scholarship on gender politics.

**Section 1.2: Problems of sex, gender and parliament**

Exclusive concentration on women produces scholarly problems and imposes unfair expectations on them. This study broadens the focus to include men and views gender as a form of behaviour rather than as a characteristic of MPs. It tests the hypothesis that the Parliament privileges certain types of behaviour as ways to operate successfully in its specific environment. The study does this by examining critically ‘gender in the Fifty-first Parliament’. No systematic study of gender has been attempted in the New South Wales Parliament and so this thesis produces new data on this topic. The study has several objectives, each of which will contribute to existing scholarship in broader areas. First, it will test the extent to which parallel studies of gender politics are applicable to this specific case. As it is partly a study of the influence of gender in parliamentarians’ role perceptions and behaviour, it will contribute another set of data to those related fields. Secondly, by focussing on the New South Wales Parliament, it will contribute data on this relatively neglected area of study. By concentrating on parliament rather than on related fields of politics such as party competition, leadership or issues, it makes important findings about the institution. These findings are relevant to studies of representative institutions generally. Thirdly, by adopting a broad methodology, this study will make findings about the assumptions behind recent trends in studying parliamentary behaviour, and particularly gendered behaviour. This aim and these objectives are important. Given a careful approach, they are also achievable.

In the final quarter of the twentieth century in Britain, the United States of America (USA) and Europe, especially in Scandinavian countries, women entered parliaments in sufficient

\(^3\) The official Parliamentary title for Members of the Legislative Assembly is ‘MP’. Here ‘MP’ describes all Members of the bicameral Parliament and ‘MLA’ and ‘MLC’ are used to distinguish Lower House Members from Members of the Legislative Council.
numbers to attract scholarly attention. Since the appearance of works by Currell and by Kirkpatrick in 1974, many studies have reflected an understanding that the behaviour of MPs is influenced by their personal role perceptions. Marian Sawer’s (1986) inquiry into role perceptions among Australian female MPs is used here to approach the general literature (see Section 2.3). Document study and direct observation are used for triangulation to check the interview data and to evaluate the significance of gender in the mid-term role perceptions of Members of the Fifty-first New South Wales Parliament. This specific case study will supplement existing studies of MPs elsewhere and test whether findings about the role perceptions of MPs generally apply to New South Wales MPs.

While females cannot have direct input to parliamentary procedures unless they are present, it remains to be seen whether their ‘presence’ (see Phillips 1995, 1996) is sufficient to influence parliament’s ‘procedures’ or ‘products’ (Thomas 1994: 10). Preston-Stanley’s arrival removed the assumption that Parliament was an exclusive male domain denied to people of her sex. The importance of the sex of the MP as a determinant of behaviour however, should not be assumed. The arrival of Preston-Stanley and her female successors is interesting but their presence is important politically not so much because of their biological characteristics as because of their behaviour. For a generation of observers exposed to the literature of second wave feminism, the record presence of women in the Fifty-first Parliament (for most of the term 29 women among 141 Members) raises subtle issues of gender politics and demands a critical approach to studying the impact of gender on the institution. While sex is primarily a biological category, gender is a concept that necessarily includes aspects of behaviour. It is argued below that an understanding of gender requires that it be distinguished from sex rather than conflated with it (see Section 2.2). Sex remains a useful starting point for studying gender and the presence of women MPs produces prima facie demands for critical attention for two sorts of reasons. These relate first to trends in scholarship and secondly to popular assumptions about the way MPs behave.

First, the study of parliaments is a dynamic field. The increased numbers of women MPs after 1995 is a development that challenges paradigms. Friction results when women meet resistance from male dominance. Some female MPs have complained that male dominance exists and so male dominance has subjective reality, but it has not been identified in any serious studies that look beyond men’s overwhelming numerical superiority. It is possible that
a paradigm of gender neutrality hides male dominance of the parliamentary culture beneath sexed assumptions and questions (Smith, T. 1997).  

Secondly, difference has been an important component of arguments for increasing the numbers of female Members in Australia’s parliaments (McGarity 1994, Reynolds 1995, Kernot 1996). While these arguments have a normative rather than empirical basis, female MPs might be influenced by such assumptions. Such arguments require close examination to decide whether embedded assumptions of sex-related behavioural differences accord with the experiences of New South Wales MPs. It is important to ask ‘Does their difference make a difference?’ (Saint-Germain 1989) and whether MP sex balance has ‘policy consequences’ and implications for ‘the legitimacy of the political system’ (Jones 1998: 3-4).

In the absence of specific studies of the New South Wales Parliament, it is necessary to examine works on gender from other contexts. The dearth of specific literature is not surprising given that New South Wales has not led nationally in women’s political achievements. One example concerns Presiding Officers. Joan Child was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1986 (Swain 1997) but it was not until mid 1998 that the first female presiding officer was elected in New South Wales. Virginia Chadwick (Liberal) achieved election as Council President when her predecessor resigned and apologised for being affected by alcohol (Daily Telegraph 30 June 1998).

Scholars concentrate on ‘firsts’. There are works on South Australian suffragists (Haines 1992a), the first Senate candidate Vida Goldstein (Bomford 1996), the first MP Edith Cowan (Bulbeck 1996b), and the first Premier Carmen Lawrence (Eveline and Booth 1997), but none of these was from New South Wales. Table 1.1 below, drawn partly from Swain (1997), places some female achievements in New South Wales into comparative perspective and suggests that New South Wales has trailed in benchmarks in women’s participation.

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4 For an example of the advantage of asking new questions about parliamentary politics see Smith, R. (1995). The Liberal and National Party Coalition in the Fiftieth Parliament 1991-95 formed minority Governments under Premiers Greiner and Fahey with the support of Independents. This reality challenged paradigms of executive dominance and made new approaches in scholarship appropriate.
Table 1.1: Achievements by Australian Women MPs: New South Wales Compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s Achievement</th>
<th>Australian First</th>
<th>N.S.W. First</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franchise</td>
<td>1894 SA</td>
<td>1902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to sit</td>
<td>1894 SA</td>
<td>1918 LA 1926 LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female MP</td>
<td>1921 Cowan WA</td>
<td>1925 Preston-Stanley MLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal House of Reps</td>
<td>1943 Lyons Tas</td>
<td>1983 McHugh (ALP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>1943 Tangney WA</td>
<td>1987 West (ALP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister</td>
<td>1947 Cardell-Oliver WA</td>
<td>1984 Crosio (ALP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALP Member Federal House of Reps</td>
<td>1974 Child Vic</td>
<td>1983 McHugh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Deputy</td>
<td>1983 Foot NSW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party Leader</td>
<td>1986 Haines Federal #</td>
<td>1998 Chikarovski (Lib)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presiding Officer</td>
<td>1986 Child Federal</td>
<td>1998 Chadwick LC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premier</td>
<td>1990 Lawrence WA**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>1991 Roma Mitchell SA</td>
<td>2001 Marie Bashir</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Janine Haines was the first woman to lead the minor party, the Democrats in the Senate (1986). No woman has led a major federal party. When Joan Sheldon became Leader of the Liberal Party in Queensland (1991) the Party was the junior Coalition partner.

* Elisabeth Kirkby was ‘Leader’ of the Democrats in 1988 but the Party had only two Members.

** Rosemary Follett (ALP) became ACT First Minister in 1989 but led minority governments. Lawrence became Premier mid-term following the resignation of her predecessor. It was not until 2001 that a woman led a party from opposition to gain a majority at an election when Clare Martin took Labor to government for the first time in the Northern Territory’s history.

When the female alumnæ of the Assembly by 1998 totalled just ten, and when biographers concentrate on Premiers (Nairn 1986, Steketee and Cockburn 1986, Easson 1988), it is not surprising that there are few secondary references to female New South Wales MPs. There is an unpublished undergraduate honours thesis about Preston-Stanley (Smith, E.F. 1977) but by contrast there is a book length study of Prime Ministers’ Wives (Langmore 1992). While there is always a ‘first New South Wales’ woman in each achievement category, neither scholars nor media commentators have written extensively about these. 5

Section 1.3 Gender and the Parliament, 1995-1999

At the essential level of male and female presence, it is possible to compare the chambers of the Fifty-first Parliament with other chambers in Australian parliaments. Table 1.2 below,

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5 Jocelynne Scutt (1996: 6) notes research into equal opportunity by Poiner and Wills who found high media interest in the intrepid ‘lone pioneer’ entering traditional male occupations but asked ‘who is interested in the “second woman to” or “the fifteenth woman to”?’
adapted from Swain (1997), shows how the chambers compared nationally for women’s presence.

### Table 1.2: Women and Parliament: New South Wales Compared May 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chamber</th>
<th>Women MPs</th>
<th>Total MPs</th>
<th>% Women MPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.C.T. L.A.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.S.W. L.C.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania House of A.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.A. L.C.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.A. L.A.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria L.C.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.A. House of A.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria L.A.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.S.W. L.A.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.T. L.A.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of Reps</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland L.A.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.A. L.C.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania L.C.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>165</strong></td>
<td><strong>842</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In early 1995 there were 14 women in the Upper House. This is one-third of the 42 Members of the Legislative Council (MLCs) and as the Honourable Jennifer Gardiner ⁶ (1996) noted, enough for a quorum. This proportion, according to Janice Burnswoods (Hansard Council 18 October 1995: 1933), was the highest in any Chamber in Australia. Research by Marie Swain (1997: 9) supports this claim about Federal and State Parliaments, but notes that the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory had a slightly higher proportion.

After the March 1995 election (discussed below in Section 3.6), seven by-elections were held for Lower House (Legislative Assembly) seats and seven casual Council vacancies were filled at joint sittings of the two Houses. ⁷ In most cases, men replaced men, but there were changes

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⁶ MLCs and Ministers are called ‘Honourable’. There have been suggestions that the title be no longer used for MLCs. Here, for convenience, ‘Honourable’ is not used. Interestingly, the Speaker addresses Assembly Members as for example ‘the Member for Coogee’ but Hansard by convention transcribes this to ‘the Honourable Member for Coogee’.

⁷ Labor took a National Party Assembly seat, and so from mid 1996 had 51 seats, while the Coalition had 45, and Independents held three seats. The by-elections reduced dramatically the collective experience on the Opposition benches (see Smith, T. 2000a).
to the numbers of males and females. In the Assembly for most of 1996-97 sat 15 of the 25 women who had ever been MLAs. There were 16 for a few months between the return of Peta Seaton in a by-election to replace Former Premier John Fahey in Southern Highlands (Hansard Assembly 4 June 1996: 2413) and the resignation of National Wendy Machin (Sydney Morning Herald 17 August 1996), and her replacement by Rob Oakeshott (Port Macquarie). In 1997, Lorna Stone brought the number to 16 again by winning Sutherland after Christopher Downy resigned. In the Council, three men replaced men. Then female numbers fell to thirteen when Tony Kelly replaced Patricia Staunton (Australian Labor Party, hereafter Labor or ALP), and to twelve when Arthur Chesterfield-Evans replaced Democrat Elisabeth Kirkby. Ann Symonds (Labor) was replaced by Carmel Tebbutt.

The ‘cohort’ of Members who entered during the Fifty-first Parliament contains 20 men and nine women. Replacements meant that by late 1998 there were 28 women among 141 MPs. Of fourteen changes in personnel during the Parliament, eight involved male for male, three male for female, two female for male, and one female for female. At the 1995 election only one seat (Badgerys Creek) changed hands as the result of a successful challenge by a woman against a female incumbent. These figures show that female MPs are relatively rare. The list of Members who entered during the Parliament (Table 1.3) indicates the sex balance among ‘freshers’. Among 15 new Members elected in March 1995, there were nine males, and among 14 who entered later, there were 11 males.

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8 Two MLAs (one Labor and one Coalition) resigned to contest the October 1998 Federal Election and their seats were not filled before the March 1999 State Election.
9 For the dates of these arrivals see Table 4.6 below. In addition, three MLCs (Franca Arena, Helen Sham-Ho and Richard Jones) left their Parties (Labor, Liberal and Democrats) to sit as Independents.
10 At the 1999 General Election, Liberals Marie Ficarra and Lorna Stone lost their seats. Jill Hall (Labor) resigned earlier to move to Federal Parliament. Four new women MLAs were elected, three Labor and one National. Four female MLCs (Liberals Goldsmith and Chadwick, Labor’s Isaksen and Arena) left and Greens Lee Rhiannon arrived.
Table 1.3: Members who entered during the Fifty-first Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Class of 1995’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Tingle C*</td>
<td>Jill Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Corbett C</td>
<td>Marie Ficarra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Cohen C</td>
<td>Patricia Staunton C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Lynch</td>
<td>Janelle Saffin C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Watkins</td>
<td>Diane Beamer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Stewart</td>
<td>Marie Andrews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Ellis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Anderson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Tripodi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By-elections and casual vacancies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Kersten C</td>
<td>Peta Seaton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie Lynn C</td>
<td>Lorna Stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Gallacher C</td>
<td>Carmel Tebbutt C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Primrose C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry Woods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell Turner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce McCarthy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Brogden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Oakeshott</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Kelly C</td>
<td>Arthur Chesterfield-Evans C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*C = MLC

The gender significance of such figures requires explanation. It is difficult to set a threshold at which a minority can have influence over the whole body of which it is a constituent. First, for a minority to have importance, the members must have a collective identity, but it is possible that differences between women overwhelm their common interests. Secondly, as women’s numbers increase their distinctiveness might actually diminish. Empirical investigation is needed to test whether these concerns apply to the specific context. It cannot be assumed either that men’s or women’s interests and behaviour are uniform, or that they always differ from one another. Thirdly, the parallel situation of smaller parties such as the Nationals and the Greens suggests that influence varies according to political context. A further two National Party MLAs for example, would affect the Party’s potential for influence but any effective increase would depend on many other factors.

In the Assembly females formed just over 15% of the ninety-nine Member Chamber. Some research (Dahlerup 1988, Saint-Germain 1989, Skjeie 1991) suggests that this is an important point on the way from ‘token minority’ to ‘critical mass’ and that until women attain this level, they can be stereotyped, isolated and marginalised. They can be ignored and their opportunities to influence the general parliamentary culture are limited. Other writers set
critical mass higher. The strong emphasis on voting and having the numbers to make decisions means that the majoritarian figure of 51% is practical. As women’s numbers grow however, general acceptance threatens their commitment to common objectives.

Interest in women MPs increased during the early 1990’s in Australia, and three general sorts of arguments were made for increased female presence. One assumed that women should have equal employment opportunity and that sex should not prevent anyone from achieving their political ambitions. Another assumed that women needed female MPs to represent them, either because female presence was important per se or because female MPs regarded their roles uniquely. Another argument assumed that everyone would benefit because more evenly proportioned assemblies behave better, make wiser decisions and have greater legitimacy. Sawer (2002: 5) has noted however, that arguments about representation have ‘great discursive power’ but have ‘multiple levels of meaning’. Popular expectations are vague and they do not always produce the anticipated effects. Besides, women should not be held responsible for making parliament a fit place in which to operate. This thesis will test in two ways the relevance of these three arguments for increasing the number of female parliamentarians. First it will examine the extent to which MPs themselves supported these particular arguments. Secondly it will look for other evidence that the behaviour of MPs is relevant to them.

Section 1.4: Expectations on female MPs

Women MPs elected in 1995 knew of popular expectations and adopted various attitudes to demands that they identify as specifically female MPs. It is reasonable to ask then, whether and in what ways the Fifty-first Parliament was ‘a fit place for women’ MPs to operate as women MPs, and indeed for males to operate as males. It is possible that all MPs are deterred from seriously discussing gender, but the consequences of this are not necessarily the same for all. This raises the question of whether MPs see their roles specifically as males and as females and whether different perceptions are important influences on behaviour. This inquiry begins by using interviews to elicit information about perceptions, and uses observation and document study to compare perceptions with behaviour.

11 Patricia Forsythe MLC names ‘about a third’ (Henderson 1999: 126). Another female MLC noted that the air-conditioning level was set too low for people in skirts but comfortably for those in trousers. She said that when women had a majority, the men would ‘fry’. In a comparable case, a Trade Union official cited 20% as the level of union saturation of the workforce at which influence and viability would be questionable (ABC Television 7.30 Report 20 December 1995).
While there are no legal restrictions on the sex of MPs informal pressures related to gender constrains their behaviour. An Editorial (Australian 12 October 1999) marking the fifteenth anniversary of the passing of the Federal Sex Discrimination Act argued that discrimination has taken ‘a more subtle - and therefore more difficult to combat - form, as suggested by the expression “the glass ceiling”.’ While MPs perform complex roles that cannot be explained solely by reference to their sex, the interaction of gender roles and cultural norms raises important questions about the institution.

To treat women as exceptional presents them with a unique dilemma. If they behave like males, then they might be accepted readily as MPs but they are unlikely to make the expected difference, and this undermines some arguments for having more females. If they behave differently, then they are vulnerable to stereotyping as ‘female MPs’ and so their effectiveness can be reduced by marginalisation. This dilemma has not been imposed on male MPs. To avoid imposing this dilemma unequally, questions about the sex of the MP are better expressed more openly. A more scholarly version of Preston-Stanley’s question then, is whether the Parliament is a fit place for individuals of any gender, or whether its culture advantages some genders. The understanding of ‘gender’ required in this context is explored further below (see Section 2.2).

Since 1925, male MPs have known that they might be required to work with female colleagues. On the other hand the certainty of female presence is recent. Janice Crosio has noted that when she entered the Assembly in 1981, she was the first female colleague that Labor Caucus Members had known, although ‘old [Rex] Jackson had been there thirty years’ (Henderson 1999: 136). The reaction of males to the presence of females provides some indication of discriminatory treatment. In the period under study, Premier Bob Carr was involved in controversies on gender issues. When he commented that Liberal MLA Kerry Chikarovski must be on hormones because her voice was deepening, reactions ranged from outrage and shock, through disbelief and criticism, to defence of Carr on the grounds that the Chamber is robust. Chikarovski told journalists that Carr ‘finds us being in the Chamber offensive and he’s doing all that he can to try to make it clear that women … are not really welcome’ (Sydney Morning Herald 13, 14 October 1995). The Herald Editorial, headed ‘Sticks, stones’, argued that ‘given the facts of political life in this state, women MPs can’t expect to be able to cry foul when they’ve been given a rough time in parliament and at the

same time demand equality’. Not all female MPs aspire to equality if it means copying men. Later, as Opposition Leader, Chikarovski attempted to create a new style of parliamentary leadership. The *Herald* criticised Chikarovski’s performance using precisely those masculine criteria that Chikarovski sought to challenge and change.  

Equality should not be confused with sameness. It is hardly advocating equality to expect females to conform to behavioural norms established by males but not to demand males to behave as females would prefer. The ‘hormones’ incident shows the importance of questioning where the power to construct role expectations is located. Evidence of this power being exercised is found in different treatment of males and females. The tag ‘female MP’ has achieved the status of myth and like so many terms in political discourse, is exploited for specific purposes. The comment about Chikarovski’s voice implied that female MPs should have a particular voice pitch and Carr sought to gain advantage by making Chikarovski seem abnormal. Chikarovski’s condemnation of the Premier’s behaviour also aimed to gain political advantage.  

So role perceptions elicited in interviews are not the only determinant of behaviour. Nor can they be isolated completely from other influences.

While MPs are not just passive reactors to environmental influences, there are discernible differences between the ways that they want to behave and the ways that they are able to behave. It would be wrong to assume that the observed actions of MPs reflect their motivations purely and simply. Therefore, the inquiry into roles through MP perceptions needs to be supplemented by direct examination of behaviour using other techniques of data gathering. As no similar inquiry has been conducted in the Parliament, it is necessary to adapt methods used elsewhere and for other purposes. Preston-Stanley noted a general perception about the parliament’s gender environment, and challenged male colleagues to consider the image they created and to reflect upon their approaches to their responsibilities. An image of politics as a masculine career can be a ‘push factor’ that deters female participation and the current low proportions of female MPs are sometimes justified on the grounds that many women simply do not want to enter politics.  

By searching for alternative explanations of behaviour, this thesis will place interviewee perceptions into a broader political context and ensure that systemic influences are considered.

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14 It should not be assumed that female MPs are passive victims. They use the media aggressively to their advantage when possible. See comments by some female MPs interviewed by Julia Baird (2001).
15 Note Pam Allan’s comment on ‘women’s cultural alienation’ (*Hansard Assembly* 18 October 1995: 2003 and p.81 below).
Section 1.5: Outline of the thesis

The research is reported in the following order. In this chapter (Chapter 1) the problem is introduced and the general aims are explained. In Chapter 2 relevant literature is reviewed and reasons given for defining ‘gender’ in behavioural terms. The overall methodology takes a broader view than that used in most works. While the study emphasises interviews, it includes document study and observation. The three approaches complement one another because each produces data that the other two cannot, and each provides a critical check on the data generated by the others.

Chapter 2 also explains why qualitative methodology is particularly suited to this inquiry and how interviewees were selected from among backbenchers with controls on the variables of party, chamber and date of entry. The interview instrument was based mainly on questions that have been asked in other studies. They included forced response survey questions to generate some data that is quantifiable and comparable, and open-ended questions. Tapes were made of these latter parts of the interviews and transcribed later.

The study takes place in a very specific context. When a backbencher moved from Macquarie Street to the Federal Parliament, he found Canberra ‘nowhere near as robust’ (Australian 12 December 1998). It is vital to have an appreciation of the unique local setting because specific environmental conditions influence interviewee perceptions and affect interpretation of them. In Chapter 3, influential aspects of the time and place are explored so that the background of the research is clear. The media display some very critical attitudes towards Parliament and parliamentarians are sensitive to their press. Media approaches produce particular problems for female MPs. Chapter 3 also examines the influence on gender politics of the Labor Party as it formed Government in 1995, and notes that while the Party adopted affirmative action through quotas for female MPs, some aspects of the party ethos seemed specifically masculine. Within Parliament Labor’s style was represented by the Premier and Cabinet. Time and space are also given direct attention here. The time of the study is in an era whose unique gender traits began with the 1995 election campaign. Interviewees made various comments about the period and about they ways that the passing of time affects their activities. The spatial dimension is important because the behaviour of Members is difficult to understand unless they are visualised in the chambers, the main parliamentary site of their most public political activity. Some features of the setting are found to be potentially masculine, and make male MPs more comfortable than female MPs.
Because the most obvious sex-based difference is that there are fewer females, it is necessary to ask how many males and females there should be. This leads to consideration of the reasons that the interviewees entered parliament and the ways that they understand their representational roles. Two broad types of representation are considered: descriptive representation (Chapter 4) and substantive representation (Chapter 5).

Chapter 4 examines interviewee perceptions of the ‘whom’ of representation. One argument for changing the sex ratios is that while male MPs aim to represent all of their constituents they have difficulty in standing for people that they do not resemble on a range of characteristics from socio-economic status to ethnic background and including sex. So if more women MPs are needed because they will provide women with representation, the perceptions of female interviewees should reflect that responsibility. Chapter 5 is more directly behavioural in that it examines the ‘what’ of representation. It is naïve to imagine that all women MPs give special priority to ‘women’s issues’. These issues can be defined from the viewpoint of the policy producer or the policy consumer. Interviewees described how they perceive issues and alternative evidence was gathered from inaugurals and some key debates.

A third argument for a more sex-balanced parliament is that it should improve legislative behaviour. The data examines the possibility of new Members altering the culture. Interviewees described how they experienced parliament. Chapter 6 explores how males and females came to parliament, and examines differences between the values placed on their prior experiences. It examines political socialisation, reasons for entering parliament and experience of obstacles and assistance. In particular, perceptions of the impact of family suggest that women are judged first as women and then as MPs. This translates into a sex-linked obstacle. This inquiry elicited from interviewees familiar slogans such as ‘two for the price of one’ and ‘everyone should have a wife’.

Chapter 7 identifies perceptions about factors influencing Members’ effectiveness and comfort in executing their responsibilities. A specific focus on parliamentary speech reaffirms the relevance of observation and critical approaches to document study. Interviewees produced some surprising observations regarding important qualities for an MP and about their satisfaction with aspects of their occupation. The uniformity of responses in some areas suggests that there is ‘closet’ behaviour among MPs who fear that display of critical viewpoints leads to stereotyping. Chapter 7 notes that speech is central to parliamentary activity, but that non-verbal behaviour, presence and listening are conventionally ignored in parliamentary research. In a television age, it is important to reassess styles of research that stress the written record of speech. An examination of interruptions shows that advantage
accrues to Members with certain sorts of voice, particular debating styles and specific attitudes to the notion of unparliamentary behaviour.

Finally, Chapter 8 draws some conclusions about how Members of the Fifty-first Parliament perceived their roles. It examines differences between male and female interviewees found in the data. It raises the possibility that the Parliament was an environment in which attitudes to gender brought advantage to some Members and disadvantage to others. It reaffirms the importance of using diverse approaches to the gathering and interpretation of data.

The election of Millicent Preston-Stanley was significant and so was the record number of female MPs in the Fifty-first Parliament. Differences between the political and scholarly contexts of 1925 and 1995 however, mean that care must be taken when discussing such developments. Recent research suggests that the behaviour of Members relates to the ways that they perceive their roles, and that males and females see some aspects of their roles differently. This study describes the perceptions elicited in interviews, and uses observation and document study to ensure that other influences on behaviour are made visible and considered in the analysis.

In 1925 Preston-Stanley was unsure whether parliament was a ‘fit place’ for women. This study assesses the extent to which gender was a concern 70 years later, but more importantly, it analyses the meanings of this concern.
Chapter 2 The Method

Section 2.1: Introduction
When research enters a relatively new area, caution is needed. It is important to design an open scholarly approach that admits a range of evidence and avoids predetermining outcomes. The method adopted here draws on works in related areas and combines these in a way that is suitable to the task of analysing gender in the Parliament. The first requirement is to establish a working definition of ‘gender’ and to discuss the ways that this definition interacts with scholarship (Section 2.2). ‘Gender’ is a contested concept, and while general definitional arguments cannot be settled here, it is important to state and to justify the definition adopted.

Feminist scholarship has influenced the literature that is most relevant to this inquiry. The literature on parliamentarians’ role perceptions is also relevant, but questions must be designed so that they are not biased towards the reproduction of male role types (Section 2.3). Fortunately, a number of studies that examine the roles of female MPs use a feminist approach. The interview instrument and method derive from this literature but are adapted to the specific case. Section 2.5 describes the sample of interviewees, the semi-structured nature of the interviews, and the approach to interpretation of data.

Observation (Section 2.6) and document study (Section 2.7) balance the interviews. It is important to understand the aims of the observation process because there is an enormous range of possibilities between looking in an undirected way and focussing on predetermined questions. Similarly, deriving maximum benefit from the key documents of parliament depends upon having a clear understanding of the way that Hansard operates. Observation and document study offer alternative evidence and give context to the interview data.
Section 2.2: Defining and studying gender

Definitions are crucial because language ‘is not a neutral medium … but a dimension of politics’ (Connolly 1993: 1). Indeed ‘what should be private or public, political or non-political is what we contest about’ (Wildavsky 1993: 164-5). ‘Sex’ and ‘gender’ are concepts that must be defined clearly so that they can be distinguished. 16 By defining gender in behavioural terms, it is possible to move beyond a naïve approach that correlates gender with males and to move beyond crude male-female distinctions. A more sophisticated approach results from heeding feminist critiques of methodology.

In discussions of gender, there is debate over whether observed differences between women and men are essential, or whether the individual is a ‘blank slate on which gender ideology is inscribed’ experientially (Cockburn 1991: 9). According to one view ‘there is no identity behind the expressions of gender, ... identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results’ (Butler 1990: 25). Even the seemingly fixed categories ‘male’ and ‘female’ are politically relevant. The concept of ‘woman MP’ or ‘female MP’ is controversial and the odd sound of the term ‘male MP’ shows that the terms are not used consistently. It is often assumed that women have gender and that everything reminds the woman of her sex (Alcoff 1996: 15), whereas men are the universal and the normal, whose roles are not complicated by gender. Men do not represent their sex, because it is assumed that they represent everybody. As men are regarded as ungendered then they are not challenged to interrogate the impact of their sex on their roles and as maleness is constantly associated with the role of the MP, it attains the status of a defining characteristic. It is important not to assign sex or gender exclusively to women.

Analysis of feminisation of parliament requires that sex and gender are distinguished. Increasing the number of women MPs is prima facie ‘feminisation’, but changes on the physical level might involve just a perception. Historian Marilyn Lake differentiates between ‘women having careers in politics and having feminist ideas on the agenda’ (Sydney Morning Herald 11 October 1999). Feminisation has been loosely defined as increased numerical presence of women MPs. Federally, Liberal women candidates won a record number of seats in 1996 (The Bulletin 19 March 1996, Hansard Senate 2 May 1996: 193, Sawer 1997, Swain 1997) but Labor women dismissed these as ‘one-terms’ swept in on a national swing. New South Wales Minister for the Status of Women Faye LoPo’ described the influx as ‘the accidental result of a landslide’ (Sydney Morning Herald 9 March 1996). The proportion of

16 The distinction is not always obvious because gender difference can be ‘rooted in biology but also maintained by socialisation’ (Ross 2002: 191).
female MPs in New South Wales has increased, but before ‘feminisation’ is established it is necessary to ask how their presence affects the gender environment. The need to consider cultural impact as well as raw numbers is acknowledged in studies of ‘feminisation’ in the Senate (Millar 1996), Australian politics generally (Eveline and Booth 1997), education (Williamson 1983), medicine (*Australian* 11 February 1999) and the workforce and unions (Hallock 1997).

Lack of earlier data makes longitudinal comparison impossible but influx of women from a ‘minority’ (cf. Griffith, G. 1995) or ‘outsider’ (Duke 1993) position challenges social mores and scholarly paradigms. Philosopher Margaret Wertheim (1995: 242) argues that as outsiders, women scientists are more ‘self-reflexive’, ask new questions and generate new cultures. So, more women members can change parliamentary cultures. If existing gender arrangements are open, non-discriminatory and balanced, feminisation need not produce conflict. If they are not, then friction results from the resistance of the institution as a whole or of some males within it. The likelihood of change depends on the women involved and on the ways that they see their roles. Unless they have a distinct interest in acting specifically as female MPs, then it is unlikely that they will be what Sawyer (1986) calls ‘threats to ingrained gender roles’ or ‘T.I.Ge.Rs’. Rather parliament might contain ‘chaps of both sexes’, as decision-makers in journalism have been described (Christmas 1997).

To move beyond a superficial concentration on female MPs, gender must be considered analytically. ‘Gender’ describes not only behavioural differences between male and female MPs but also differences among males and among females. Sawyer (1986) examined differences in role perceptions among MPs of one sex, and so her three distinct types of Mother, Individualist and Sister, are gender orientations. Her Mothers accepted traditional sex role orientations and conveyed the perspectives of housewives and mothers. The Individualists emphasised that they were first and foremost MPs and that their sex was irrelevant. The Sisters saw an obligation to represent women and to advance their issues but defined these broadly. Given Sawyer’s findings for women MPs, it would be wrong to assume that there is only one masculine way for males to perceive their roles.

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17 Increased female presence challenges political science as well as the political system. Marian Simms (1994) and Anne Phillips (1995) note the connection. Simms (1994: 236) says that men dominate the study as they have dominated the practice of politics in an ‘iron law of andrarchy’ (241). Phillips (1995: 58) claims that arguments for increased female presence are accepted more readily by practitioners than by theoreticians. Internationally, the political science profession is not feminising quicker than other academic disciplines (Anonymous and Anonymous 1999, Sarkees and McGlen 1999), although political scientists should understand well issues of representation.
Focus on women is a useful beginning but it is important to look beyond what Linda Lovelace Duke (1993: 1) describes as a ‘male-shaped understanding of the political world’. Evelyn Fox Keller (1985), Bob Connell (1995) and Michael Leach (1997) make similar arguments. Fox Keller (1985: 3) noted the common assumption that her examination of gender and science was about female scientists. A decade later Fox Keller (1996) still encountered the misconception that her aim was to ‘add women and stir’. ‘Gender’ is not just about women, nor exclusively about the construction of femininity. It concerns also masculinities that are ‘constructed in interaction’ (Connell 1995: 35) and are ‘relational’ in nature (Leach 1997: 63). New MPs are complex beings with multiple roles, but one obvious characteristic that influences the way they are perceived is that they are men and women. While their sexes are fixed their genders are not finally formed and unchangeable.

Connell (1995: 43-4) argues: ‘to believe that we can understand the social world through a biological demarcation is to misunderstand the relationship between bodies and social processes’. Conflation of sex and gender conceals diversity among males and among females and makes invisible the influences on their identities. If it seems that male MPs are privileged that does not establish that the advantage is directly attributable to maleness. Rather, a direct relationship between behaviours and a paradigmatic masculinity would be meaningful. According to Connell (71), locating masculinist behaviour is not the same as identifying masculinists. It is better to focus on gender as ‘processes and relations’, as an activity, rather than as a property of people.

Feminist methods influence scholars of masculinity including Connell (1995). Feminists also dominate gender studies. Feminist critiques facilitate the understanding of gender required here. Rather than replacing ‘biological determinism with cultural determinism’ (Chanter 2000: 1237), this study must move the focus from women in parliament, through the comparative study of men and women, to examine behaviour. ‘Gender’ as defined here then, has several important characteristics. First, while it concerns partly differences between the sexes, it is not confined to this area. Secondly, gender is not something that attaches only to female MPs. Thirdly, gender is a means of describing behaviour. Fourthly, feminist scholarship produces critical approaches to methodology. These characteristics provide a means for selecting literature that is relevant for this study.

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18 See for example the special issue of the *Gender and Education* Journal 9(1) March 1997 on ‘Masculinities in Education’. 

Section 2.3: Literature on gender and parliamentarians’ role perceptions

Most scholarly works about the Parliament (e.g. Hawker 1971, Clune 1993) fit historical rather than behavioural paradigms, two approaches that have a tense relationship (Eulau 1993). Surveys including ‘time and motion studies’ have been conducted into MPs’ work but these have had pragmatic occupational purposes and Parliament’s potential as a sociological site is unrealised (Cope 1997). The categories ‘gender’ and ‘politics’ are broad and this study draws on the more specific literature on gender and parliamentarians’ role perceptions. This mainly includes studies on women in parliaments.

While discussions of gender in New South Wales have been at the rudimentary stage of documenting the absence of women from Parliament, more sophisticated approaches from other fields can be adapted for present purposes. Feminist scholars have identified a ‘burgeoning’ of publications from early ‘descriptive or mapping exercises’, through ‘explanations’, to searches for new theories (Githens, Norris and Lovenduski 1994: ixff). Broad approaches include critiques of conventions and canons, writing women in where they were absent, and imagining how a ‘woman-focus’ might change political thinking (Ackelsburg and Diamond 1987: 505). In educational administration, Charol Shakeshaft (1989) notes that early approaches document and measure women’s absence. The focus then moves to reasons for absence, and descriptions of women who are present. Barriers to participation are thus identified. If it is found that existing theories and paradigms are partly responsible for women’s exclusion, new, gender inclusive theories are proposed. The following scheme (Table 2.1) is adapted from Shakeshaft (1989: 327) and includes some examples of Australian works. Like all generalisations, it is limited and most works have an emphasis rather than a tight fit. Stage 6 is regarded as aspirational.

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19 The parliament receives few mentions in surveys of theses (O’Loghlin and Matthews 1994, A.P.S.A. online), specialisations of Political Scientists in the Australasian Political Studies Association Directory (Lovell and Debono 1994), and subject searches of databases such as the Australian Public Affairs Information Service. Most studies of New South Wales politics focus on Government per se, and examine policy debates and outcomes (Laffin and Painter 1995) or party competition (Chaples et al. 1985) rather than Parliament.

20 Advisers, speech writers and journalists have been described only recently in the intensively studied and relatively resource rich Federal Parliament (Disney and Nethercote 1996, Maley 2000a and b).

21 While much theoretical literature examines politics or the state (Watson 1990, Pringle and Watson 1996), attention has been turning to legislatures specifically. The scarcity of female legislators is documented in official publications. The United Nations, Interparliamentary Union (I.P.U.) and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (The Parliamentarian 1994) have adopted affirmative action resolutions and monitor progress. Australian inquiries include Halfway to Equal 1992, Towards a Plan of Action 1993 and Women, Elections and Parliament 1994.

22 The issue of women in parliaments does not exhaust the possibilities for women in politics, especially in Australia where ‘femocrats’ have been influential (Sawer 1991).
Table 2.1: Stages of research on women in Australian Parliaments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Examples of works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Search for women MPs</td>
<td>What are women MPs like? What is their story?</td>
<td>History of exceptional women Biography</td>
<td>Demographic Attitudinal</td>
<td>Haines 1992a Millar 1993 Irving 1996a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Transform theory</td>
<td>What theories can explain gender in this context?</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Reconceptualise inclusive theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The works in the first category (Guilfoyle 1992, McCulloch 1994, Swain 1997) are primarily descriptive. This is not a reflection on their usefulness or thoroughness, but an assessment of their dominant aims. The works in the second category (Haines 1992a, Millar 1993, Irving 1996a) approach the subject from the historical viewpoint. They draw attention to the contemporary context within which pioneering women MPs had to operate. In the third category (JSCEM 1994, Reynolds 1995) the approaches are more analytical and seek to explain why the current conditions prevail.

There is some overlap chronologically between the third and fourth categories. The ability to study women on their own terms implies that the researchers have adopted a feminist methodology and that is usually associated with academic research rather than official reports or books intended for general readership. The works in the fourth category (Sawer 1986, Whip 1991, Sawer and Simms 1993, Broughton and Zetlin 1996) have engaged with the
question of whether studying women on their own terms is a coherent project and what methods are appropriate for the task. The works in the fifth category (Zetlin 1996, Eveline and Booth 1997, Lake 1997a, Sawer 2002) focus directly on the theoretical assumptions embedded in studies of parliamentarians. These works are critical of current orthodoxies in both the political world and the realm of scholarship of parliaments. The sixth category is aspirational in that most scholars want to draw on the tradition of the sub-discipline in which they operate and to advance the study. While this thesis notes the strengths of many works on which it draws, there is no definitive work on the issues that it addresses.

Many studies of parliamentary behaviour concentrate on MPs’ role perceptions. Studies of western parliamentary democracies (Blondel 1973) and works on Westminster systems (Searing 1995) are most relevant to this inquiry. Some comparative works are useful (Halligan et al 1988) and works on Australia specifically (Lovell 1994) are indispensable. However, some role types are sex-specific. Earlier models such as Blondel’s (1973) evolved during study of male dominated parliaments, and women do not necessarily conform easily to his types, such as ‘brokers’, ‘ritualists’ and ‘tribunes’. Jocelynne Scutt (1996a: 5) argues that the employment criteria for selection on merit in most occupations are culture bound and that the dominant culture has been white, male and urbanised. Studying women on their own terms requires special questions. Distinct attitudes to family and relationships provide prima facie evidence of this. Pressures on women to place family concerns first encourage an image

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23 Sue Thomas (1994) has noted the development in methodologies. While early research concentrated on women’s electoral fortunes, attention has been turning to ‘how women behave when they win office’ (Thomas 1994: 4). Thomas has identified three ‘stages of exploration’ in the USA. The first, using sociological profiles, shows that women come from community based activism rather than the professional and business backgrounds typical for males, and that women enter later than men, often after fulfilling family responsibilities. The second examines attitudes and discovers that women regard themselves as conscientious and effective but as needing to work harder to prove themselves. These studies suggest that women are more liberal than men in outlook and voting record, and are more likely to support socially progressive policies. A newly emerging third stage gauges women’s impact and contribution. With hindsight, Thomas sets her own work in the third stage, but attempts to ‘stretch the boundaries’ by examining the impact of women on the political process. Since 1994, more works have examined how female and male parliamentarians behave, in both the USA and Australia.

24 Blondel (1973) argues that legislators’ behaviour is determined by background variables such as age, gender, occupation, class, education and ethnicity, along with the socialisation influences encountered during the political career. Blondel identifies brokers, ritualists, tribunes, opportunists, inventors, trustees, delegates, politicos and professionals. Other typologies are offered by Searing (1995) and Davies (1973). Searing (1995) sorts tendencies among MPs into policy advocate, ministerial aspirant, constituency member and parliament man (sic). Davies (1973) describes agitators, administrators and theorists. While some MPs conform to type strictly, these orientations are not meant to be exclusive. MPs can have mixed orientations and adopt different attitudes over time. Other role descriptions examine specific functions, some according to the time spent on different activities. Lovell (1994) examines legislative activities, while Gould (1978) and Halligan et al (1988) are interested in constituency service. Jaensch (1986), Emy (1978) and Marsh (1985) consider representative styles and show how these influence parliamentarians as they scrutinise the actions of the executive government. Emy (1978) identifies the busybody, the pawn, political consultant, conduit, ombudsman and cipher. It should be noted that not all such descriptions constitute coherent typologies and not all scholars in this area aim to construct typologies.
of the female MP as being single or having a grown family. The female MP is expected to conform to general ‘female’ role types that arise prior to her role as MP. Studying women on their own terms is important not because it is incumbent on scholars to find solutions to political problems, but because if female MPs serve under specific conditions not imposed on men, then proper understanding of women’s roles as MPs is impossible with acknowledgment of those special circumstances.

As well as noting the different positions of female MPs research methods must acknowledge the influence of other local factors. Sawer’s study of role perceptions (1986) drew upon the work of Kirkpatrick (1974), Diamond (1977) and Vallance (1979), who examined female MPs elsewhere. 25 Sawer (1986: 532) notes however, that American and British typologies lack the ‘marked ideological and generational differences’ found among Australian women MPs, and stresses the need to develop new categories. Other studies (e.g. Considine and Deutchman 1994a: 865) argue that Australian parliamentarians interact with parties uniquely to have women’s issues ‘mainstreamed’. It is important to allow for local distinctiveness in designing the methodology.

With little specific data available on the role perceptions of New South Wales MPs, it was necessary to conduct interviews to provide data. References to ‘interviewee(s)’ here are to material produced in semi-structured interviews with 34 MPs (seventeen male and seventeen female) and a pilot study of seven past MPs. 26 The interviews were designed by drawing on studies of role perceptions among women MPs in Australian Federal and State Parliaments (Sawer 1982, Sawer 1986, Sawer and Simms 1993, Broughton and Zetlin 1996), Britain (Norris 1996), Canada (Tremblay 1996), New Zealand (Baysting 1993, Waring 1997), the USA (Currell 1974, Kirkpatrick 1974, Diamond 1977, Thompson 1980, Blair and Stanley 1991, Thomas 1994, Reingold 1996), and Scandinavia (Dahlerup 1988, Sainsbury 1993, Skjeie 1991, 1993). Some used data from more than one system (Whip 1991, Considine and Deutchman 1994a, b). Most emphasis was given to recent Australian works.

Section 2.4: Applying the research

This project draws on existing literature that derived data from interviews with mainly female parliamentarians, but extends it in several respects. First, it incorporates document study and

25 Kirkpatrick typed American women legislators as Leaders, Personalisers, Moralisers and Problem-Solvers. Diamond discovered the Housewife-benchwarmer, Traditional Civic Worker, Women’s rights advocate and Passive women’s rights advocate. Vallance’s study of British MPs identified the pragmatist, moral reformer, committee woman and imperator.

26 The interview instrument is attached as an Appendix (see p.251).
observation to a greater extent. Secondly, the sample of interviewees, seventeen males and seventeen females, is selected specifically to emphasise differences in perceptions between males and females. 27 Thirdly, this study examines differences among female MPs as other studies have done but also examines differences among males. Fourthly, there is less emphasis on categorizing MPs into archetypes and more on identifying specific behaviours.

The interviews are centrally important but analysis of the interview data is assisted by document study and observation. Reflecting on the scholarly tendency to elicit data on parliamentarians’ attitudes to ethics, Rodney Smith (1999: 47-8) argues that Members’ ‘individual responses form invisible cultures’, and notes the need to observe also the ‘everyday discourse of legislatures’ that forms ‘visible and active cultures’. Several data collection approaches are evident in parliamentary scholarship. Eulau (1993: 585) surveyed ‘types of data used’ in 46 studies of the USA Congress and found that all 46 used ‘documentary data’, 26 used ‘roll-calls’, 15 employed ‘bio-demographic/career data’, 13 used interviews, 11 used election data, four used budget data, four used campaign finance data, and two used observation. The rarity of observation reflects constraints on time and access. While some of these categories of data are intrinsically suitable for studies with particular aims, reference to key documents is important in a study of parliamentary activity.

Putnam (1973: 27) says that research uses ‘caution and counting to discipline our imagination. But we must begin with imagination - and with careful listening’. The current study is strengthened by the use of multiple methods of data-gathering. It uses interviews as many previous studies have done and employs questions that have produced important data about mostly female Members of other parliaments. It employs document study especially analysis of Hansard to provide evidence about the views of other Members, including the influential Leaders and Ministers. In addition it utilizes observation as an alternative means of data-gathering to balance the perceptions described in interviews and the evidence contained in documents. This multiple approach provides a stronger structure than would be produced by any one of these three methods in isolation.

Section 2.5: The interviews

The interview approach has not always been popular among political scientists but is used increasingly in studies of the political roles of women. The interview transcripts publicise

27 The term ‘sample’ refers to the group of interviewees and does not imply any statistical status such as ‘representativeness’ or ‘randomness’. 23
thoughts that were hitherto private and this resembles politicisation, or the personal entry to the public sphere or political culture. Political culture can be seen as a ‘discourse’ (Dryzek 1994) or a ‘mental universe’ (Buck 1996: 203), with different dimensions, and much can be learned about a political culture by ‘observing what languages… have become credited… to take part in its public speech’. The vocabulary of interview transcripts reveals modes of expression that are sanctioned in the interviewees’ subculture. Gender-inclusive language might be routine, an area of contestation, or taboo. 28 This does not mean that interview data offers only insights into language, but it does show the richness of this source.

The interview process requires ethical interaction with subjects, faithful reporting of results and accurate interpretation. Initially, it is tempting to believe that a ‘representative’ sample provides evidence about what New South Wales MPs generally think but the complexity of MPs’ positions and their strong individual identities makes a representative sample impossible to construct. One study of USA legislators includes as potential determining variables: age, level of education, religion, frequency of church attendance, political ideology, family income, region of residence, father’s education and whether mother worked (Bennett and Bennett 1993). Other differences include entry at by-election, arrival in Opposition, prior activity and experience, age on entry and prior income. With just 141 New South Wales MPs it was impractical to control every possible variable, but to foreground sex an attempt was made to allow for three other variables with strong potential to determine attitudes and behaviours: Chamber, Party and Date of Entry into Parliament. For each female MLC there is a male MLC and for each Labor female there is a Labor male and so on. This enables some checks to be made on whether different perceptions between male and female MPs are attributable to sex or another factor.

It should not be assumed that the two Chambers are similar. MLCs have eight year terms while MLAs are elected for four. MLCs are elected using proportional representation and their electorate is the whole State. The Council had a higher proportion of female Members (1 in 3) than the Assembly (1 in 6) and more crossbenchers (1 in 6) than the Assembly (1 in 33). The Council had fewer Members overall (42 to 99) and Question Time there was less rowdy. The main party conflict between Government and Opposition occurs in the Assembly where the Premier and Opposition Leader are Members. The 34 interviewees included 18 MLCs.

28 A range of attitudes has been displayed, for example to the term ‘maiden speech’ and other metaphors (see Smith, T. 1999d, Smith, Adam 2001).
Sawer (1986) found that distinctive role perceptions are held by female MPs according to ideology and generation. Here, ideology is considered by including Members from different parties. Party permeates notions of representation and appropriate behaviour. Only three of 99 MLAs did not win election as Members of major parties. Despite the early 1990s being an age of minority Governments, party remains influential (Chaples 1992). The interviewees included 12 Government and 17 Opposition Members and five crossbenchers.

Generation is taken into consideration by interviewing Members who entered at various dates. Sawer’s (1986) ‘Mothers’ for example, were earlier entrants with traditional private sphere role perceptions. Date of entry approximates age and generation, which seem to influence gender attitudes. Fillion (1996: 176) says that while behaviour among men has changed ‘marginally’, for women there has been a ‘large generational gap’.

Many older feminists fear that younger women take gains for granted and either reject feminism or say ‘I’m a feminist, but’ (Australian 2 February 1994, 28 January 1995, Sydney Morning Herald 12 April 1995). Defending the appointment of journalist Pru Goward to head the Federal Office for the Status of Women, Anne Henderson of the ‘Sydney Institute’ (Australian 25 March 1997) asserted that younger women appreciated Goward’s ‘pragmatic’ approach. When Goward was nominated for the ‘Ernie’ awards for chauvinism in 1997, she described the organisers as anti-family women in ‘Mao suits’. The awards, instigated by Dr Burgmann, are one sign in the Parliament of the feminism that characterises ‘Sisters’.


Research by Morgan and Banks found that 51% women and 31% men believed that a ‘glass ceiling’ affects women, and that older women believed this more strongly. Perhaps opportunities are improving for younger women while older women are meeting career bottlenecks (Australian 9 November 1996). British journalist Beatrix Campbell (Australian 24 April 1996) argued that the debate surrounding Helen Garner’s (1995) The First Stone shows that women have changed markedly but men very little. She described ‘a collective nervous breakdown’ among older feminists who misread younger women’s actions to bring male misbehaviour to account. Beatrice Faust found ignorance about ‘unfinished business’ in Kathy Bail’s (1996) D.I.Y. Feminism, and wondered how there could be a ‘third wave’ of feminism with the second still rolling (Australian 12 October 1996). Faust argued that ‘reformist feminism is about working the system or changing it - instrumental politics. Identity feminism is expressive - doing it yourself, by yourself and for yourself’. She complained that Bail’s generation was subject to the ‘depoliticising effects of mass culture’. Research into the influence of media ‘frames’ on opinion (Terkildsen and Schnell 1997) identified in USA newspaper articles diverse attitudes to feminist issues in recent decades. These include feminism, anti-feminism, traditional gender roles, economic rights/ workplace, and political roles. Feminism peaked during the 1970s (42% articles). The political roles frame in the same period grew from 9% to 28% of articles. In later articles greater overlap between frames suggests that recent discussions are more general and ideologically balanced. The research found that men were more likely than women to ‘frame’ issues.
Summers noted that ‘most men have not changed as quickly or as profoundly as most women’ (526), but urged young women to remember the ‘fundamentals’ (527). To allow for the influence of generations, interviewees in this study included eight Members who entered before 1988, 17 who entered 1998-1991, and nine who entered from 1992 and later. These cohorts are described as ‘Pre 1988’, ‘1988-91’ and ‘Post 1992’. 31

The thirty-four interviewees partly self-selected. Seventeen females were included and males were chosen to balance so that other variables were controlled. Close to a quarter of a population (34 of 141) is reasonably ‘representative’ in random sampling terms and 17 is a large proportion of 30 female MPs. The small number makes statistical interpretation unreliable except where male-female contrasts are strong and clear. The inclusion of female and male MPs in equal numbers should make it possible to discover what is distinctive about the views of both groups.

Before the interviews, a female MP suggested that ‘the women will respond’ (Conversation 3 April 1996). To ensure that the interviews were open to a range of attitudes, it was important that interviewees did not self select according to an interest in gender, especially as this could correlate with ‘women MPs’ and exclude many men. Tremblay (1996) recognised this potential problem in her study of Quebec mayors. Therefore, the initial approach expressed interest in ‘the ways MPs perceive their roles’. The first five interviewees were female, as were seven of the first ten. The sample evened out by the twentieth. Then, it was important to ensure that the sexes remained balanced numerically. 32

Females were targeted first because there are so few. Twenty-four women were invited and 19 responded positively. Securing 17 males required the sending of over twice as many invitations. Other methods, such as random or blanket invitations, would have secured different response rates. While some other males would have cooperated readily they were not approached. First, there was a need to find males to balance the females by Chamber.

31 There was a generational change when the Coalition won power in 1988 for the first time since 1976. At the 1991 election the Coalition became a minority government and in 1992 the political mood changed when Premier Greiner was forced to resign (see Smith, T. 2001a).
32 With seventeen interviews with MPs of each sex complete, two positive responses from women remained. These were not pursued. It was desirable to keep the interviews close together in time and it was becoming difficult to secure appropriate balancing interviews with males.
party and Date of Entry. Secondly, a sample of sympathetic interviewees would produce responses of a narrower range. 33

This study is ‘mid-term’ because this is the period in which Members are most settled. Earlier, new Members have had insufficient time to reflect upon their roles, and older Members may not have adjusted to changes in Government, to the challenges of accepting new positions or the disappointment of missing promotion. Later, Members are distracted as an election approaches. Although an exact day would be precisely ‘mid-term’, to carry out observations and interviews takes some months. Parliament does not sit every day, and when it does Members are busy with parliamentary duties. The interviews took place in the summer months October 1996 to March 1997, mostly a time of parliamentary recess, so that the comparability and uniformity of the responses were not compromised by intervening events. While a strict time limit can be imposed for interviews, it is not feasible for the inquiry generally because gender is constructed over a long period. Males occupied all the seats in Parliament for half of its history, and gender-consciousness is in many respects a recent phenomenon. Influences over time should not be artificially compressed and explanations should not neglect traditions.

In order to foreground the parliamentary experience per se the sample included only non-executive members: Government backbenchers, crossbenchers, and Opposition Members. The interviews excluded Ministers, Opposition Leaders and Chief Whips but included some Parliamentary Secretaries and Shadow Ministers. 34 The executive’s potential to influence the behaviour of Members was acknowledged in the other two methods. These generated data, for example from ‘Question Time’, which is central to parliamentary politics and foregrounds Cabinet. The study’s focus however is on parliamentarians. 35

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33 As answers to the letter of introduction arrived, interviews were arranged. Other patterns emerged. The first ten responses included six MLAs and six Opposition Members. Recent arrivals dominated, reflecting the relative recency of the arrival of female MPs and their male ‘shadows’.

34 Hansard and information pamphlets list some Members twice - as ordinary Members and as ‘Office Bearers’. These were the ones excluded from the ‘sample’. There were 20 Ministers in 1995 and 1999 and 21 for a time (1997-98). All were in Cabinet. Three were MLCs. Three, all MLAs, were females. The Ministry of the Fifty-first Parliament was stable, with only one resignation.

35 The term ‘politician’ is too vague and ideologically loaded for scholarly discourse. First, it implies a narrow view that equates politics with government institutions and denies the possibility of politics occurring elsewhere. Secondly, it carries negative connotations. This negativity is seen in surveys of occupational respect and was exploited in a 1991 referendum to reduce the numbers in the upper house (Smith, T. 1999a). The general negativity attaching to parliamentary activity is a special problem for women if their opportunity to wield parliamentary power is rising just as the institution is losing influence. If parliament is feminising then any denigration of parliament might be seen as an expression of gender bias. A concern to use the term ‘parliamentarian’ carefully is relevant in an inquiry into gender if the poor public image of ‘politicians’ that affects the performance of all MPs is earned mainly by men. When misdemeanours by male Federal Ministers caused a reshuffle, journalist Sheryle Bagwell (Australian Financial Review 8 October 1997) argued that the most obvious
The interview instrument

The interview method derives largely from studies parallel to the current task. Some questions are copied directly to facilitate comparisons and others adopt similar themes. Other questions are unique and derive from sources such as statements by Members. Question A(i) involving the statement that ‘politics in Australia is the best guarantee of freedoms’, derives from a statement by Premier Carr.

The interviews were ‘semi-structured’, using a survey questionnaire, Parts A, B, C, followed by open-ended discussion (see Appendix). Other studies have used similar mixed approaches (e.g. Blair and Stanley 1991, Thomas 1994). Some sent questionnaires ahead but this was avoided here for methodological rigour because anecdotal evidence suggests that busy MPs have their secretaries complete questionnaires. All of the interviewees were surveyed as well. This approach is common in smaller studies (Kirkpatrick 1974, Thompson 1980, Blair and Stanley 1991). In other studies (Considine and Deutchman 1994a, Tremblay 1996), follow-up interviews included as few as 10% of those surveyed.

A common complaint among ex-MPs in the ‘pilot’ concerned the time and effort spent on parliamentary formalities, when only the numbers matter, specifically their votes. Quantitative methods are appropriate in an institution dominated by numbers. The majoritarian emphasis in the Legislative Assembly means that a one-seat advantage determines sides in the Chamber and Government has an overwhelming advantage in resources. Premier Carr exploited numbers by teasing Opposition Leader Peter Collins as ‘Mister Fifteen Per cent’ because of his standing in opinion polls and a remark that ‘it’s not the size that counts’ links measurement figuratively to issues of gender.

demotions were of two females (see also Sydney Morning Herald 6 October 1997). Bagwell used an analogy from criminology: ‘men do the crime, women do the time’.

36 Some works (Diamond 1974, Kirkpatrick 1974, Crain 1994, Lovell 1994, Thomas 1994) have instruments appended. Where studies had direct parallels with the current inquiry, the instrument was acquired from the authors (Sawer 1986, Blair and Stanley 1991, Whip 1991, Considine and Deutchman 1994a). Their generosity is acknowledged.

37 Forced response scales are important when dealing with skilled interviewees. Longer responses in transcripts are diverse and ‘comparability between informants’ is difficult (Burns 1994: 279). Survey questions counter this problem. While some Interviewees expressed reservations about the wording of some questions, there were few strong complaints. Interviewees added comments where necessary. Except where specified otherwise, survey responses were on a five point ‘Likert’ type scale from ‘strongly agree’, through ‘agree’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’, ‘disagree’ to ‘strongly disagree’.

38 The numbers are everything’, ‘You are wanted just for your vote’. ‘You are just a number’. ‘If you don’t have the numbers you can’t achieve anything’. ‘Getting the numbers is what it’s all about, really’. ‘It’s bums on seats’.

39 See below p. 57.
As well as eliciting quantifiable data, the interview process allowed interviewees to express themselves in their own words. Feminists argue strongly the need for subjects to retain their individuality and that a subject can feel ownership of a quotation from an interview transcript, but not of a dot on a graph (Scott 1985). Interviewees should not be reduced to passive subjects because the ‘known are also knowers’ (Stanley 1990: 16). There are parallels between women’s moves from the private domestic sphere to the public world and the ‘making public of private interpretations of reality’ (Burns 1994: 279). The public-private dichotomy is a central problem for attempts to understand gender and politics and feminist scholarship challenges canons ‘of what we take politics to be, and of how we go about studying it’ (Ackelsburg and Diamond 1987: 504). Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches ‘weaves two narratives together’ (Bacchi 1996: 79).

The interview dynamics

Many works on qualitative methodology emphasise the centrality of the researcher. Susan Krieger (1991: 1) argues that social science treats the ‘self of the social scientific observer as a contaminant’ and makes the ‘authorial’ first person invisible by merging the ‘idiosyncratic’ into the ‘consensual’. She says that ‘at one time I could write a study and then write separately about how and why I came to do it. I no longer feel that I can proceed in that way’. Krieger’s dilemma is ‘how to depict particular social realities: how to get at what is true or important, and to see in specific situations, dynamics that are more broadly meaningful’. Writing on masculinity, Tacey (1997: x) describes the impersonal stance as a patriarchal construction and argues that ‘scholarship that includes the personal standpoint as part of its content is a more authentic and honest kind’. Notes were made about the research experience for later reference.

In the pilot study one ex-MP warned of the danger of interviewees inventing responses. There is no certain way to establish the honesty of responses and so it is important to report faithfully that ‘interviewees said…’ rather than ‘MPs believe…’. Responses were given by a specific set of MPs, prompted by particular questions at a fixed moment. Generalising from the data requires caution. The data does not necessarily hold for all New South Wales MPs let alone for all MPs everywhere at all times, and remarks must be kept within their contexts. There are however indications that interviewees gave honest responses. First, they were not conscripted. Seventy requests were needed to secure 34 interviews. Secondly, juxtaposing some questions together should illuminate any extreme contradictions. Thirdly, most
responses were given quickly. 40 Fourthly, interviewees were invited to participate in a project about role perceptions and were told about the specific purpose at the end of the interview. Many had guessed. Finally, by conducting all interviews personally, I could tell MPs that I had examined other evidence and show familiarity with proceedings in their Chamber, and was able to compare interviewees’ body language and intonations.

Many methodological considerations arose in planning the interviews. First, a broad range of literature was consulted. Secondly, feminist critiques were heeded, especially regarding the interviewer’s role. Thirdly, the subjectiveness of interviewees was acknowledged. Fourthly, the ‘sample’ of non-executive Members was described. Fifthly, variables were considered, including chamber, party, and date of entry. Sixthly, in designing the instrument some questions were included to allow comparability with other studies while some new ones have been created. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches have been incorporated.

Section 2.6: Observation

If observers had not been present to see Preston-Stanley deliver her first speech, it would be impossible to know that the house ‘figuratively rocked with laughter’ (above p.1). While observation is used rarely in political science (Dargie 1998: 66) it offers important advantages (see Friedman 1996, Hitchon et al 1997, Swers 1998). Perhaps the rarity of observation in parliamentary studies is explained by reliance on the official verbal record. Observation provides a means of critically reviewing interviewee perceptions of behaviour. It is possible that interviewees give answers that they anticipate interviewers expect to hear. Observation tests whether the perceptions describe past behaviour, prescribe future actions, or whether they are connected with behaviour at all. They might even contradict behaviour.

As observation is not mentioned in any published study of the Parliament, literature from other professions and one study of legislative behaviour from the USA (Kathlene 1994) have been consulted. 41 In addition, some media reports suggest behaviours for consideration. Kathlene (1994) studied committee meetings of the Colorado State House. Some of her methods are less relevant to whole chambers here, but her findings encourage the use of observation to check other data. Her analysis of ‘conversational dynamics’ showed that ‘sex differences among committee members are highly significant’ and ‘that male and female

40 The average time per interview was 55.3 minutes.
41 These include the courtroom (Blanck and Rosenthal 1992), the physician’s surgery (Buller and Street 1992), the classroom (Philippot, Feldman and McGee 1992), and management (De Paulyo 1992).
chairs do not conduct hearings in the same way’. Table 2.2 shows that observation occurred on some fifty days. This involved attending the Gallery in the Assembly for Question Time. 42

Table 2.2 Observation diary *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dates of visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>29, 30 May, 7 June, 24 August, 21 September, 10 October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>16, 30 April, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 28, 30 May, 4, 5, 6, 11 June, 23 July, 25,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26 September, 16, 30 October, 12, 13, 19, 26 November, 5 December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>8, 15, 23 April, 14, 15, 22 May, 18 June, 18, 23 September, 11 November, 2,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>31 March, 2, 29 April, 5, 6, 19, 26, 28 May, 2, 17, 18 June, 13, 19 August</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* I also attended occasionally during 1999 and 2000.

The aim was not to test behaviour exhaustively or to quantify instances of gendered behaviour in numbers, time occupied, or frequency. It was not intended to describe Members or days as more or less gendered, but rather to get a feeling for interactions in the chamber. 43 The observation achieved three broad aims. First, it provided a general appreciation of the context and intimate knowledge of parliamentary procedures. Secondly, it sought behaviours by males and females that were different or that affected males and females differently. Thirdly, a check was made for behaviours that related directly to data derived from other methods.

Members of Parliament are social activists who are so absorbed with issues that they rarely stop to consider ‘what it is they do’ (Eyerman 1982: 286). The social scientist who supplies evidence through observation and places actions into broader contexts, provides a ‘moment and a means for self-reflective analysis’. The researcher’s participation differs from that of Members. Members face a dilemma that does not apply to the researcher who can walk away later. As Members’ actions have consequences both for promotion and effectiveness on issues, they see incidents in highly personal ways.

42 Most visits included post-lunch business before Question Time, and the urgency debate that followed. Visits occupied 2 to 5 p.m. - a total of about 150 hours. Twice when the Gallery was full, observation took place through the closed circuit television screen in the foyer. Usually, the Council was visited after the Assembly. Often, legislative debates and committees were in progress there before the 4 p.m. Question Time. One inaugural was observed in each Chamber. In the Assembly this took place at seven in the evening. Occasionally, other debates were viewed incidentally because the author was in the Parliament on other business, especially interviews. Question Time is one of few times when all Members are present. It is important politically, and commands Press Gallery attention. Because it occurs daily and is regular, general business, Question Time should be typical of the parliamentary Session in terms of gender effects. 50 visits approximate a Member’s annual sittings.

43 As neither reading nor writing is allowed in galleries, notes were made later.
Section 2.7: Document study

While documents such as election pamphlets, media reports and speeches delivered outside parliament provide background information for this thesis, the chief documents are the official parliamentary publications, especially *Hansard*. As with any ‘artefact’, accurate interpretation of documents requires acknowledgement of their unique characteristics (cf. Hodder 1994, Smith, R. 2001: 16ff). It is important therefore to critically interrogate the nature of *Hansard*.

*Hansard* is important historically, legally, culturally and politically. As it provides the official record of parliamentary events, it is understandable that Members occasionally ask that the Daily Proofs be corrected. *Hansard* affords privilege to all that is recorded. It documents matters of public importance. Politically, it is the record against which governments and individual parliamentarians can be judged.

Much of parliament’s important business involves talking. Indeed, the reader of *Hansard* could believe that there is nothing but speech. As Ken Inglis (1996) has indicated, *Hansard* makes no attempt to describe actions. The pamphlet ‘Parliamentary Reporter’ (Parliament of New South Wales 1995) notes its limitations: ‘*Hansard* is by no means just a verbatim transcription… and has obvious mistakes corrected and redundancies removed’. A critical view is needed when examining the way that the parliamentary amanuensis presents speech and the best way to appreciate *Hansard*’s methods is to observe the parliament in action and to consult *Hansard*’s record of events.

As *Hansard* cannot describe actions it generally does not indicate who was present except those who spoke. The only exceptions are when a Member is addressed by the Speaker, and during Divisions. A Member might sit quietly and listen but receive no acknowledgment,

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44 *Hansard*’s inability to describe actions meant that when an intruder invaded the Assembly, it used the convention of noting an interruption from the Gallery and Speaker John Murray referred to a ‘disturbance in the House’ (*Hansard Assembly* 21 May 1997: 9014). Experienced Members know these conventions. During ‘Australia Remembers’ celebrations, the Hon. B.H. Vaughan recalled wartime air-raid drills (*Hansard Council* 25 May 1995: 208): ‘We had to lie down in a trench, with our arms across our foreheads like this’. The Hon. Ann Symonds asked: ‘How will *Hansard* record that?’ Vaughan responded: ‘*Hansard* could note: at this stage the Member crossed his wrists and put his head on his wrists’. It was now possible for *Hansard* to do so, but only after it was spoken.

45 Chapter 7 concentrates on parliamentary speech and draws heavily on observation.

46 During the ‘SuperRort’ affair media alleged that major party leaders accepted the ‘manipulation of parliamentary procedures to isolate the few MPs who were liable to raise objections… Speeches were incorporated into *Hansard* rather than read out. There was no division in the upper house and therefore no ringing of the (alarm) bells when the fateful amendment was voted into legislation’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 14 January 1998).
and this can lead to the impression that he or she made no contribution. Occasionally Members take extraordinary measures to avoid being ignored and even risk the Chair’s displeasure to argue a Point of Order or interject. It is the Speaker’s duty to listen to debates and occasionally he asks Members to ‘cease talking so that Hansard and the chair can hear the answers’ (Hansard Assembly 6 June 1996: 2683).

_Hansard_ has strict rules about recording interjections. As interjections are unparliamentary, _Hansard_ records only those responded to by the Member with the Presiding Officer’s call. This rule maintains the flow and meaning but it can be exploited. Criticising a _Four Corners_ program about sexual abuse by Christian Brothers, Treasurer Michael Egan responded to supportive interjections by Council Opposition Leader John Hannaford, a fellow Christian Brothers alumnus, and so these are recorded (Hansard Council 28 May 1996: 1537-8). Egan ignored Franca Arena’s objections that the program was ‘fair’ and ‘good’, and so these are not (Observed). Without another avenue of information such as observation, the researcher might conclude that there was no hostile interjection. This is a skewed view of the reception afforded Egan’s statement, and an incomplete understanding of female attempts to participate.

_Hansard_ addresses males and females differently. _Hansard_ records initials of male MLCs but first names of females. 47 Speaking on the Transgender Bill, ‘the Hon. Elisabeth Kirkby’ followed ‘the Hon. J.P. Hannaford’ (Hansard Council 4 June 1996: 2365-8), and ‘The Hon. Dr B.P.V. Pezzutti’ interjected while ‘The Hon. Dr Meredith Burgmann’ was speaking (2372). The Assembly uses titles and surnames. During ‘Private Member’s Statement’ ‘Mr Cruickshank’ followed ‘Ms Andrews’ (Hansard Assembly 4 June 1996: 2438 and 2439). _Hansard_ distinguishes ‘Mr J.H. Turner’ (2416) from ‘Mr R.W. Turner’ but it is uncertain which practice would apply were there two Ms Beamers. 48

Editing takes place when daily proofs are circulated for Members’ inspection. Bound weekly copies may differ from the ‘Daily Proofs’ but corrections must fall within agreed guidelines. MPs are not permitted to insert new material and cannot remove words if this would alter the meaning of what they said. 49 Occasionally, Parliament votes to expunge material altogether.

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47 In neither Chamber does Hansard describe exactly how Members are addressed orally. In the Council the President addresses Members, except Ministers and party leaders, by their full names including ‘the honourable’ but Hansard changes male first names to initials. In the Assembly, the Speaker calls Members by Electorate such as ‘the Member for Coogee’, but Hansard includes these in brackets after their names and inserts ‘the honourable’ into third person references.

48 British MP Maureen Colquhoun (1980: 95-6) asked the Speaker to call her ‘Maureen Colquhoun’ or ‘Ms Colquhoun’. He replied that it was undignified to omit titles, so would use a prefix but ‘slur it in such a way as to reduce, if not entirely eliminate, the audible distinction between Mrs and Miss’.

49 The purpose is clarification and to ‘preserve the idiom, not the idiots’ (Inglis 1996).
In mid 1997 an Opposition frontbencher was suspended from the Assembly after accusing a Minister of calling Opposition Members names. Eventually the Minister apologised, the Member was reinstated and the offensive material was expunged. The simple word ‘expunged’ appears in the record. The incident was reported in a newspaper (*Sydney Morning Herald* 27 May 1997) that placed the report near an item pointing out that Lithgow Police were being called to account for their response times. The juxtaposition may have been coincidental, but it showed that police records were being used to critical effect while the police officers’ political masters altered records by which their actions might be criticised.

The idiosyncrasies noted here do not reduce *Hansard*’s importance but they must be considered when examining its content. *Hansard* is used extensively here. Inaugurals have been examined for their content. The Sessional Summary has been used as a guide to speaking records. Key debates and activity in Question Time are noted where they relate to central themes and issues. As well as producing evidence of discussions in which the substance was relevant to considerations of gender, *Hansard* gives a good impression of the style of debate and conveys some of the atmosphere in the chambers.

**Section 2.8: Conclusions**

This chapter has established the approach to defining ‘gender’ that informs this study. To appreciate gender as a behavioural construct, the analysis must avoid assumptions that gender is inextricably linked to sex and that gender concerns only women. By examining literature on role perceptions it is possible to develop questions that are open and non-discriminatory. The approach combines interviews, observation and document study.

The semi-structured interviews use both quantitative and qualitative approaches and incorporate questions that have been asked elsewhere to test general findings. Thirty-four backbenchers - 17 male and 17 female - were selected and control was maintained over party, chamber and date of entry. The interviews were confined to the ‘mid-term’ summer of 1996-1997. Observation has been used to check on interview data, to improve interpretation and to provide acquaintance with the atmosphere in the chambers. Document study is unavoidable in parliamentary scholarship. *Hansard* provides inaugural speeches, sessional summaries and examples of debates around key issues. Attention has been drawn to *Hansard*’s technical and political limitations.
Chapter 3 examines the political context of 1995-1999. To understand the perceptions of the MPs and their behaviours some appreciation of the specific period is needed. Local traits must be considered when applying ideas from other studies.
Chapter 3 The Specific Context

Section 3.1: Introduction

Interviews, observation and study of documents were used to elicit data in this thesis. The data was collected in the specific context of New South Wales in the mid 1990s. This context affected the study, so an awareness of it is necessary to appreciate fully the responses of interviewees and to ensure accurate interpretation of data. Factors affecting the behaviour of parliamentarians included the media, partisan politics and dimensions of time and place. 50

Section 3.2: The media and public perceptions of parliamentarians: ‘it’s a dangerous road to always knock politicians’.

Section 3.3: Parliamentarians dealing with media: ‘conflict and blood on the floor’.

Section 3.4: Labor in Government and Parliament: ‘it was always robust. Now it’s ridiculous’.

Section 3.5: The Premier and Cabinet: ‘theatrical and presentation skills’.

Section 3.6: The 1995 election: political time and ‘the need to be seen and to politically project’.

Section 3.7: Position (the federal system) and place: ‘they wouldn’t let me near it’.

Section 3.8: Conclusions

Section 3.1 Introduction

Section 3.2 examines media approaches to parliament and the consequences for public perceptions of MPs. As Catharine Lumby has argued:

‘Trying to separate politicians from their images is futile. Political campaigns are structured entirely around media events and most people are informed by television, ensuring that appearance, tone of voice, demeanour and the ability to speak in short, witty grabs are at least as important as the substance of what is being said’ (Sydney Morning Herald 17 July 1998). 51

Media affect this inquiry on two levels. First they supply information through reports of political activity and care is needed interpreting these. Secondly media actively influence MPs’ behaviour. As image is so important in politics, image-makers partly determine the effectiveness of male and female MPs by providing positive or negative coverage. Media

50 For general political developments and chronology during the period, see the ‘Political Chronicles’ in the Australian Journal of Politics and History 1995-1999.

51 Premier Carr asserted that ‘we’re just playthings of the media’ (Sydney Morning Herald 10 October 1995).
define the issues that can be addressed and create paradigms of parliamentary roles, especially leadership. Specific attention is needed to aspects of media about which interviewees express concern or those where media report males and females differently. Section 3.3 examines how MPs report their experiences dealing with the media.

Labor Party influence in the Fifty-first Parliament was important because Labor supplied most female Members (9 of 15 or 16 female MLAs), and because the Government sets standards. Labor has adopted affirmative action to increase the number of female MPs but its internal politics are complicated by factional differences, and the ‘Right’ is dominant. Section 3.4 examines some aspects of Labor’s internal politics and its approach to parliament. The single most influential person in Government is the Premier. History remembers a period as belonging to the Premier who sets the tone of the Parliament. Labor MPs routinely express pride in the ‘Carr Government’. Section 3.5 describes the leadership style of Premier Carr, with special reference to incidents involving gender.

The media depicted the 1995 election as a ‘gladiatorial contest’ or ‘horse race’ between the leaders (Ward 1995: 127). The period under study began with the 1995 election and ended in the 1999 campaign. Section 3.6 examines how gender featured in the 1995 campaign. This section also notes the perceptions of interviewees about the period 1995-1999 and about the way time impinges on their activities. Section 3.7 examines two elements of the site of the Parliament. First, the status of New South Wales in a federal system has important implications for the attitudes of MPs. Secondly, Parliament’s working environment has some potentially gendered aspects.

The MP-subjects of this study operated in a political context with distinctive characteristics. The environment influenced the behaviour of parliamentarians and so an appreciation of the context is essential for complete observation and accurate interpretation of events. Approaches adopted by media made females less visible and less confident in projecting an image as competent MPs. Labor being in Government had some implications for the ways that most female MLAs approached their tasks. The occasionally abrasive style of the Premier had serious effects for Opposition women and for the atmosphere in the Assembly. The Parliament began with the 1995 election where gender issues featured in mainly negative ways. As a work site, the Parliament presented some difficulties for female MPs. While it is

52 James Anderson mentioned it twice in his inaugural (Hansard Assembly 15 November 1995: 3275) and Joe Tripodi thrice in his (30 April 1996: 550).
53 It is debatable when a campaign begins and a Parliament ends. The Fifty-first Parliament sat until late 1998. The final Hansards were for the Assembly of 25 November and the Council of 3 December (both Chambers sat in extensions on 4 December). Election Writs were issued on 8 March 1999.
difficult to prove that these conditions were more or less influential than other conditions might have been, they formed the context for this study.

**Section 3.2: The media and public perceptions of parliamentarians: ‘it’s a dangerous road to always knock politicians’**.

Relevant media took distinct attitudes to aspects of State politics in this period. There were gender implications in their approaches to the general political process and participants, the parliament and the executive, the two chambers, women MPs and sexuality. Several interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with the media. Interviewee 6 said that:

‘Most journalists have minimal understanding of the entirety of what being a Member is... what a local Member does. They see politics through the eyes of the ten or so names most mentioned. They see party number crunching and big party issues, but have no understanding of the complexities of representation in a democracy such as ours. It’s easy for them to be cynical but it minimises our effectiveness’.

Media attention seldom extends to backbenchers except to trivialise (Interviews 21, 31) or sensationalise (9). Interviewee 6 said that ‘Sunday papers’ criticise developments such as mobile telephone access and said that scholarly projects correct misperceptions. Asked whether ‘the public understand MPs’ work’ no interviewee agreed while 29 disagreed, 19 ‘strongly’ (C:iix). Only nine agreed that ‘the public appreciate MPs’ efforts’. Constantly negative media coverage can lead members of a subculture to feel that outsiders do not understand their situations and make them inward looking. Rodney Smith and Michael Jackson (1995) found that parliamentarians’ perceptions of corruption varied from their anticipation of public perceptions. Responding to possibly corrupt situations, Members assumed that the public were more inclined to regard an activity as corrupt. An ‘us-and-them’ tendency has corrupted subcultures such as the Queensland Police Force. Commissioner Fitzgerald (Fitzgerald, G. 1989: 211-2) recommended reducing the force’s male dominance.

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54 Different media organisations take different approaches. A cliché among ‘spin doctors’ at the time was the Sydney public relations ‘trifecta’. This meant that the *Daily Telegraph* ran a story, Alan Jones discussed it on 2UE Breakfast and it featured on Channel 9’s evening news bulletin. On the other hand, the Premier noted that the *Sydney Morning Herald* never advocates a vote for Labor, and said that he never watched *Stateline*. The *Telegraph* and 2UE are seen as the most politically influential media.

55 This study examines a specific aspect of a part of the activity of a government. It does not provide a balanced assessment in entirety of Government performance or of any individual’s contribution. It is not possible here to assess the relative weight that should be given to gender matters. At the 1999 election, there was little evidence that electors rated either gender issues or parliamentary behaviour as important considerations (Smith, T. 2000a). This study foregrounds gender for concentrated analysis. This can result in distortion unless the reader remembers this.

56 Shortly afterwards, an article portrayed MPs as overpaid eccentrics (*Sun-Herald* 18 May 1997). The Legislative Council’s ‘Corporate Goal 5’ is to ‘promote public awareness of the purposes, functions and work of the Parliament’, through visits by the public, publications, protocols, exchanges, inquiries and exhibitions (Parliament of New South Wales 1997).
Pioneering femocrats were confronted by ‘hierarchy and secrecy’ (Sawer 1991: 252). Such factors affect pioneering female MPs too.

Parliamentarians have attempted to improve their public standing. MPs are sensitive to their ‘press’ and many believe that media coverage is either lacking or biased. Low respect makes Members reluctant to demand improvements in services such as provision of child care. Two senior interviewees regretted that the career was losing attraction.

- ‘One of my sorrows is the contempt increasing towards politicians. It’s fuelled by media and it’s very damaging. Where politicians are held in low esteem it damages the fabric of society. Esteem is important for people who deserve it - not as a class - but there are a lot of good people in politics. It should be seen as a noble profession serving the community and we should try to get rid of people who abuse the power and abuse the system. It is a dangerous road to always knock politicians because you end up attracting only the vilest people and instead it should attract good people’ (27).

- ‘More and more politicians are held to account and that’s a good thing… I don’t envy new MPs because demands, and public esteem, have changed. At one time MPs overall had respect. Now they have it individually in their electorates. Most do a good job. But the overall standing has gone down and regrettably I think this is going to deter many capable people entering if there’s another career choice’ (30).

Interviewee 15 on the other hand, said that constituents of different ages regarded him differently:

‘There are three broad age groups. Older people treat you like Jesus Christ with a now out of date reverence. Those in middle life have a predisposed hatred for politicians. Younger people are relaxed, not fussed, not excited or disrespectful’.
The media have displayed dubious priorities in reporting parliament. Frequently, the *Sydney Morning Herald*’s satirical ‘Stay In Touch’ column contained more coverage than the rest of the newspaper about Parliament, and especially the Council. 62 The *Daily Telegraph* (6 August 1997) devoted a front page to a story headlined ‘NAKED IN THE HOUSE’ after discovering that Alan Corbett, Better Future for our Children MLC, his partner and son took a ‘skinny dip’ in the parliamentary pool. Page three carried a photograph of the pool. 63 The story was deemed newsworthy although the incident occurred nine months earlier. The *Telegraph* argued that ‘nudity among nuclear family members in the privacy of their own home’ was acceptable, but it was ‘another matter’ when the swim was ‘in public’ and with a “partner”. Later the *Herald* (8 May 1998) said that the ‘skinnydipping MP’ read a poem about the birth of his child but Corbett’s attempts to raise issues concerning families, children and men’s emotional lives received little comment. 64 Ann Symonds (Hansard Council 18 October 1995: 1913) blamed gender insensitivity when the *Daily Telegraph* (21 September) advised ‘reality therapy’ for her and colleagues in the ‘privileged and protected realms of the upper house’. Symonds said that ‘the editorial looks remarkably like the work of a man’. 65

Media specialisations affect coverage. 66 Lack of specialists to cover the upper house meant that the public was poorly informed about the chamber with the higher ratio of female Members. The Press Gallery in the Council was rarely crowded and often empty. 67 Television reporters watched Assembly Question Time then filed stories for the evening news.

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62 It suggested that MLCs ‘sometimes do things that are quite useful’, because Patricia Forsythe was at the Atlanta Paralympics ‘holding down balloons’ (29 March 1996). It noted ‘What they did in Macquarie Street’ and ‘the real world’ (25 June 1996), reported Marlene Goldsmith questioning the Attorney-General about his tie and mentioned Goldsmith’s thesis on ‘Star Trek’ (30 June 1997).
63 ‘Page three’ is the usual position for titillating photographs (see Holland 1998, Allan, S. 1999). After Seaton’s preselection the *Herald* photographer arrived. Although she suggested a head and shoulders shot the photographer wanted a fuller shot of the pregnant candidate and it appeared on page three. They did not return to photograph the baby (Henderson 1999: 216).
64 Media were largely unsympathetic when Mr Corbett spent long periods caring for his seriously ill wife during the Fifty-second Parliament (Illawarra Mercury 8 September 2001).
65 Similarly comments were made in a *Herald* editorial. The *Sydney Morning Herald* Index shows that the comments (10 October 1995) were written by a male. When Symonds left the Council she lamented the ‘decline of the parliamentary role’ as government had become like a ‘business’ (Hansard Council 29 April 1998: 4076). She said if Members ‘pay less attention to the dictates of the media and more to our own convictions about our role in society and as people with a social conscience, we would be serving our constituents well’. Female television newsreaders have complained of a relative lack of power as at ‘editorial crunchtime, a man makes the decision’ (Australian 13 September 1997).
66 Bernard Lane (1999), then the *Australian*’s specialist High Court reporter noted that if a judgment seems to have political implications editors send their political journalists from the nearby Press Gallery. Lane identified different styles in reports written by legal and political specialists.
67 On a day when the Assembly was not sitting, journalists ‘dusted off ancient maps’ to find the Council, but left when one MLC told them to get back to their ‘dens’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 19 November 1994). This does not mean that the Gallery in the Assembly is well attended. In his Valedictory when leaving the Assembly Gerry Peacocke wondered how media could report on events when they are often ‘not in the gallery’ (Hansard Assembly 25 November 1998: 10672).
bulletins without waiting for Council Question Time. If the Council is ignored, the 
Assembly’s more confrontational style is presented as normal politics.

There are gender implications in media reports that are sometimes inaccurate 68 and often take 
populist lines. 69 The Sydney-based press is kinder to executive government than to 
parliament. 70 As executives are more male-dominated than are legislatures, media affinity 
with Cabinets disadvantages women. The Government has supported the principle of the 
public right of reply against privileged statements by MPs, but has resisted the idea that the 
public through parliament should have access to information held in executive privilege.

While editorials call for free access to Government information, their constant criticism of the 
Council undermines the credibility of MLCs who demand access to documents.

An automatically hostile media line can prevent female MPs expressing genuine concerns. 
For example, when Members of the Assembly in a late night sitting (31 March 1998) delayed 
their departure until the stroke of midnight to secure taxi allowances, the front page of the 
Sunday Telegraph carried damaging ‘before’ and ‘after’ midnight images from a videotape 
that disappeared from the Parliamentary Library. Interviewee 9 noted that walking home 
around Sydney streets late at night was a particular concern of female MPs and that Federal 
Members expected a driver. 71 A female Member suggested that the taxi was not unreasonable 
for any worker at midnight and called the rules pedantic (Conversation with author). 72

68 When the Treasurer claimed that the Government had in 1996 answered more questions than any 
government in history, the Herald discovered that the statistics had been invented. It gloated: ‘Was 
there ever a time when politicians checked their facts before putting their mouths in gear?’ (Sydney 
Morning Herald 5 December 1996). Unfortunately, a Herald (22 February 1999) reporter testing how 
hard-working MLCs were by detailing how many questions without notice they had asked included the 
indexed statistics for the Attorney although these were answers. MPs sometimes express frustrations 
with media. Angered by speculation about her coveting Ian Armstrong’s leadership of the Nationals 
following the Party’s performance in the Clarence and Orange by-elections Wendy Machin referred to 
‘real cub reporter stuff’ (Australian 29 May 1996). Some journalists acknowledge that media can be 
careless. The Herald’s David Humphries (17 February 1998) noted that the Opposition falsely accused 
the Government of giving public money to Labor mates. Later correction was pointless because 
‘thousands of radio listeners got the message for which they have been programmed. Some sneaky 
politician abused authority to purloin a benefit for a similarly devious ally’.

69 When the Premier condemned an overseas study trip by members of a committee he got editorial 
support (Australian 11 June, Sydney Morning Herald 12 June 1997) and the Herald ran an Editorial (13 
June 1997) headed ‘Junketing MPs’. Members were boozed on return to Mascot Airport (Prime 
Television News 10 June 1997). The Premier and the media also condemned the expense of 
Parliament’s opening ceremony (Sydney Morning Herald 13, 17 September 1997, Australian 17 
September 1997) and the Herald (15 September 1997) described the Black Rod as ‘an obscure Marvel 
Comics hero’ and the parliamentarians as ‘gladiators’ of the ‘bearpit’.

70 The Economics Editor of the Australian (12 September 1995) for example, contrasted Carr’s ‘fiscal 
responsibility’ and robust intellectual framework with the vested interests of critics within Labor. 
71 Her comments are reported in full below pp.66-67.

72 The Government blamed the Opposition for the late finish and foreshadowed a change to Standing 
Orders so that debates could be curtailed (Sydney Morning Herald 6 April 1998). Ironically perhaps, 
the Opposition was moving against the Minister for Fair Trading over his use of travel allowances. 
Liberal frontbencher Chris Hartcher complained that the Sun-Herald report of his role in the incident
The media have criticised the Legislative Council constantly. When President Willis resigned (Hansard Council 29 June 1998: 6713ff) the Daily Telegraph (30 June 1998) called for the Chamber’s abolition and the Herald (1 July 1998) suggested returning it to ‘part-time’ status. Interviewee 27 commented that the performance of the Council improved when it became full-time and research from other occupational areas shows that part-time work has generally been considered a ‘female’ area and of lesser status. Even full-time colleagues in ‘fraternal’ trades unions stereotype part-time workers negatively. It is possible that media denigration of upper houses relates to their generally higher ratios of female Members. Many female dominated occupations attract lower status and salary, and this affects those who raise issues popularly regarded as ‘female’.

A tradition of disdain for the Council dates from its days as a part-time Chamber. Interviewee 27 argued that professionalism improved when the Council became full-time:

‘Our House used to be a part-time Chamber and people treated it with contempt. I was one of the first full-time politicians and we showed what a big role an upper house member could have’.

Despite the disadvantages and although there is often little choice anyway, many women prefer part-time work. In one survey 85% female doctors said that family responsibilities were the biggest influence on their careers (Australian 25 September 2000). So lack of a part-time option in a parliamentary career affects women rather than men.
The disillusionment of senior Members could reflect changes in media. Television foregrounds physical appearance, and while there are some female newsreaders and reporters covering politics, there is an emphasis on their looks (Australian 13 September 1997). Minister for Women Faye LoPo’ noted that there are few female presenters over 40 but plenty of men who ‘can be revalued at any age’ (Henderson 1999: 216). Often, empathy is lacking between female MPs and female journalists although they face similar problems. When politicians depend upon media so greatly, criticism of journalistic practices carries risks. Chikarovski and Federal Labor MP Cheryl Kernot identified discrimination when addressing a luncheon on women and politics. Subsequently, both experienced negative coverage (Jenkins 2000, Smith, T. 2000a). Complaints about media attitudes come mainly from relatively powerless Members including the Opposition and women MPs. In response journalists claim that MPs are desperate for coverage.

As well as emphasizing appearance, the media sexualise MPs. Reports of the inquiry by the Independent Commission Against Corruption into allegations that Labor MP Paul Gibson received gifts from a ‘crime boss’ carried photographs and gratuitous mentions of his former ‘lover’ Sandra Nori (Labor, Port Jackson) long after her evidence to the inquiry had been given (e.g. Australian 2 and 23 May 1998, Sydney Morning Herald 8 July 1998). Nori felt that the affair damaged her promotion prospects, providing enemies with an easy target and taking you ‘off the boil’. Labor MLA Pam Allan said that the gossips were less interested in the crime angle than ‘the titillation of the sexual stuff’. Labor MLA Gabrielle Harrison noted that it was Gibson being investigated, but ‘the photos were Sandra. The public are so thirsty for it’ (Henderson 1999: 188ff.). Female MPs are not helpless victims, but a discriminatory

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76 Jennifer Byrne (Sydney Morning Herald 13 July 1992) complained of ‘subtler’ approaches that ensure female newsreaders ‘retreat to the familiar uniform of boofed-up helmet and power jacket’. In Australian politics and government, women comprise 44% journalists but only 20% interview subjects, so are far from parity of coverage (Australian 18 November 1995).

77 The Global Media Monitoring Project on Women’s Participation in the Media found the Australian media uncommitted to sexual equality in staff or coverage and that neither women nor the issues they consider important ‘are seen as newsworthy, while space is always available for blow-by-blow descriptions of irrelevant political spats and the latest trivial ailment of footballers. Women are most likely to be linked to socially based issues’ (Australian 13 September 1997).


79 Kernot allegedly warned a young colleague against becoming a ‘publicity slut’ (Sydney Morning Herald 13 December 1997).

80 When Kernot moved from the federal leadership of the Australian Democrats to the Labor Party, she complained that the media constructed the image that she was ‘seduced’, ‘a blushing innocent wooed by her pushy Labor suitors’ (Sydney Morning Herald 14 November 1997).

81 Chatting on radio male journalists discussed Nori and the embarrassment to former husband, Labor Senator John Faulkner. There were quips about pillow talk and ‘caucus interruptus’. Media put women on pedestals from which they easily fall, and most female journalists are no more sensitive than males.
expectation that that they need to be sexed beings to attract attention must influence their image and their behaviour. 82

Occasionally the words of a story are less important than the visual portrayal of women MPs in newspaper cartoons and photographs. Cartoons concentrate on leaders and so few women feature, but when they do the images are often sexual. 83 Portrayal of women MPs in press photographs has changed over time. An earlier entrant (23) regretted being photographed in an apron by her kitchen sink, and Wendy Machin was criticised for modelling swimming costumes in a local newspaper. 84 By comparison, Carmel Tebbutt MLC entered late in the term, and her photograph in the local inner city newspaper conveys a different image (The Glebe 6 May 1998). Tebbutt, also Deputy Mayor of Marrickville, is pictured on the steps of Parliament House, wearing a dark-coloured slacks suit, with her arms folded and a calm, determined facial expression. Her feet are on different steps. The camera angle is friendly. When subjects look down at the camera they appear large and in control.

In relation to sex scandals, Interviewee 20 commented:

‘The Australian media are pretty good about private lives. There’s a lot they know they don’t let on. We don’t have such exciting lives. I would think that if a bloke here wanted to wear high heels it wouldn’t be an issue. When Paul O’Grady came out gay it was basically ho-hum’. 85

Most Press Gallery journalists consider themselves highly ethical in matters of scandal and place private lives off limits. 86 As men hold the power in most ‘sex scandals’, a tendency towards self-censorship in the media advantages men rather than women. It is mainly male

82 Nori gained a Ministry in 1999 after serving as Parliamentary Secretary 1995-1999.
83 In mid 1999, federal Labor frontbencher Jenny Macklin complained about the treatment of Democrat Leader Meg Lees, who was shown as a sexual conquest of the Prime Minister after an important bill was negotiated through the Senate (Australian 9 June 1999). One cartoonist responded by drawing Macklin as a bunny girl/cocktail waitress who lost her political position because she was drawn inappropriately by a cartoonist. At least Herald cartoonist Alan Moir drew Chikarovski with a face. Her predecessor Collins was continually depicted as a faceless man.
84 Julia Baird (2001) identified four frames in the treatment of female MPs in Australian print media: iron lady, housewife, body and feminist. The housewife and body frames reflect traditional sex roles and are easy to depict in photographs.
85 O’Grady declared his homosexuality in 1990 (Sydney Morning Herald 3 January 1996). The ‘high heels’ had been worn by a federal male MP and suggested several British scandals (Parris 1995).
86 There have been exceptions. Kernot’s past was publicised (see Sydney Morning Herald 6, 8 February 1997, 13 December 1997, 14 March 1998, 18 June 1999 and Simons 1999). Journalist Mike Steketee (Australian 3 May 1997) acknowledged the impossibility of overcoming ‘gossip’. His article demonstrated the paradox because he cited rumours of an affair between a prominent business personality and a former Prime Minister. So the idea that ‘political scandal in Australia rarely has anything to do with matters extra-marital’ (Sydney Morning Herald 6 August 1999) seems outdated. While there was no sex scandal in the 1999 State election, the Daily Telegraph (1 June 1999) later revealed that Michael Photios had run a ‘morals’ campaign while living with a lover. The photographic coverage punished his wife and children as well as the deceptive former MP.
MPs around Australia that have been accused of exploiting female staff sexually or being subject to apprehended violence orders. Staffers can have their careers ruined and do not have the benefit of privilege to tell their side of the story (Australian 3 June 1995, 18 June 1999). Rumours of romantic relationships in the workplace are readily turned against women. When Chikarovski became Deputy Premier in late 1994, there was some resentment on her own side of politics and there were rumours of an affair with the Premier (Sydney Morning Herald 12 July 1997). Scutt (1996a: 10-11) argues that one barrier to women receiving mentoring from men who dominate top positions, is the myth that women exploit their sexuality and ‘sleep their way to the top’. 87 This stereotype does not affect males. Few women hold positions of such influence that they might dispense favours for sexual reasons, and the idea that men might promote other men for sexual reasons is excluded from the heterosexual paradigm.

Section 3.3: Parliamentarians dealing with media: ‘conflict and blood on the floor’.

When interviewees were asked about media interest in their private lives, some (1, 8, 12, 15) replied that there was none. One thought this unfortunate because there were false impressions that needed correcting (7). Most spoke of the need to limit media access (2, 9, 10, 14, 16, 19, 23, 28, 34), especially to families (25). One said that media generally respect your wishes but ‘if you try to use the family as an asset then it’s free for all’ (24). 88 One mentioned being ‘flattered’ by the attention (26) but another spoke of ‘intrusions’ (27). Interviewee 30 commented that ‘most journalists individually are decent people but they are under instruction from editors and some say that if they write a straight story it won’t be accepted’.

Members regularly express dissatisfaction with media. Interviewees were asked (C:vii) to describe the effectiveness of media reporting of aspects of their roles, and few (10) chose the ‘very effective’ option. Table 3.1 shows that for each task, more interviewees (37) clustered at the opposite end of the scale - ‘not very effective’.

87 When a Queensland judge said that ‘it is not unknown for a woman to sleep her way to the top’, the President of the New South Wales Bar Association commented that women used ‘feminine wiles’ for career advancement, but later apologised (Sydney Morning Herald 22 April 1995).
88 The 1999 campaign launches by Carr and Chikarovski were sensible in this regard. Carr’s wife and Chikarovski’s children were present but were not exploited gratuitously.
Ambivalence about reporting of constituency and community work reflects comments by some interviewees (22, 32) that they received fairer coverage from local media than from the Sydney mass media. 89 The poor impression of reporting of specifically parliamentary activities is explained partly by journalists’ failure to check facts. Virginia Chadwick told a female journalist (Sydney Morning Herald 30 June 1998) that her election as Council President sent a positive message to the public at a time when women’s numbers were declining. The article mentioned Kirkby (replaced by Arthur Chesterfield-Evans) and Symonds, but Symonds was replaced by a woman (Carmel Tebbutt). Patricia Staunton had been replaced by a man (Tony Kelly). It is unlikely that the error was Chadwick’s. 90

Asked to rate their effectiveness ‘dealing with media’ (C:v) 11 interviewees (seven males but only four females) rated themselves ‘high’. Asked about time spent ‘dealing with the media’ (C:iv) 11 (including seven females) said ‘too little’. Two (both males) answered ‘too much’. While interviewees generally believed that they should work on improving their media performance, females believed this slightly more strongly.

Asked whether media trivialisation of female MPs was an accurate explanation for the sex ratios in Parliament (C:xxviii) responses were distributed from ‘very’ to ‘not very’ on a five point scale. Table 3.2 shows that responses by females were found closer to the ‘very accurate’ end of the scale than those of males.

89 The important issue of interviewees’ perceptions of their effectiveness in debates in the chamber is discussed further below (see Chapter 7).
90 The article mentioned that Chadwick had been seen as a likely successor to Premier Greiner but not that Chadwick expressed disgust with the Herald’s ‘appalling journalistic standards’ (see Sydney Morning Herald 4 May, 23 June 1992) for suggesting she had told him to resign.
Table 3.2: Accuracy of media trivialisation of female MPs as an explanation for the sex ratios in Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 (Very)</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3 (Moderately)</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 (Not very)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four males and one female chose ‘5 (Not very)’. At the other end of the scale, eight females and four males chose ‘1 (Very)’ or ‘2’. Females are more inclined than males to attribute their image problems to media coverage.

Interviewee 9 described the media’s role as frustrating:

‘The suspicions are real because there are stupid games being played and what gets me is that the stupid games are rewarded. People put on performances in the Chamber - tantrums. All the media are interested in is conflict and blood on the floor. They’re not interested in real issues and are not interested in advancing ideas for the good of the State. They’re interested in selling papers and getting viewers for television and you want the Colosseum for that. You don’t want Plato or Aristotle or advancing human wellbeing. That won’t get your ratings up’.

Continual emphasis on conflict means that strong leadership can come to be associated with aggression and the ability to dominate the chamber.

Stories are flavoured using metaphors. Sometimes these are just interesting devices that increase an article’s readability. Sometimes they convey images that are conducive to certain forms of masculinism, such as those from warfare and sports. Sally Loane (Sydney Morning Herald 11 November 1995) for example, once described the Premier as ‘twirling his matador’s cape’. The metaphor is of machismo. Bulls and most matadors are male. Members regularly congratulate local football teams and embrace the game literally and analogically. Jennifer Gardiner led MLCs in singing ‘the Swans Song’ to support the Sydney Australian Rules Football team (Hansard Council 19 September 1996: 4376), and on the day following an important rugby league match, billed as ‘mate against mate, state against state’, the Speaker showed his loyalty by producing a large blue plastic hammer. Calling a Member to order, he hammered his desk (Observed) and threatened to do to him ‘what New South Wales did to Queensland last night’ (Hansard Assembly 4 June 1996: 2421). Sport can be interpreted as an agent for ‘media constructions of hegemonic masculinity’ (McKay and

Meredith Burgmann said that she would risk the wrath of officials to ‘invade’ the field when Plugger Lockett kicked a historic goal for the Swans (Sydney Morning Herald 15 May 1999).

MPs believe that media have powerful influence over them. Asked about frustrations Interviewee 1 said that often people on both sides of Parliament knew ‘what has to be done but don’t have the political strength’. They were powerless because media constantly question MPs’ ‘motives’ to make cheap points, which is ‘different to the issue itself being questioned: when an issue comes up the first thing some people say is “What could John Laws do to this?” or “What could Alan Jones do to this?”’ 94 Premier Carr asserted that ‘we live in an electronic democracy’ (ABC Radio National Background Briefing 29 June 1997) and that idea links government directly to the people through the mass media rather than through their elected representatives. 95

The Government’s reluctance to provoke media has caused some MPs to feel that their own influence has diminished. Interviewee 21 called the pending Code of Ethics ‘the Daily Telegraph code’ and attributed the Premier’s enthusiasm to editorial pressure. Interviewee 20 expressed disappointment in the leadership’s ‘absolute lack of understanding of civil liberties. I didn’t think that when I came in here, one of the key issues I would be involved with would be civil liberties’. This interviewee blamed media and said that ‘the parliamentary leadership

92 At an International Women’s Congress Professor Nathaly Gagnon of Montreal argued that men are introduced to violent behaviour through sports cultures (Australian 24 April 1996).
93 When Barry O’Farrell asked about ‘jockeying’ for preselection in the former Prime Minister’s seat, he was greeted with interjections such as ‘you’ll never be a jockey, Barry’ and the Speaker said that he would have to ‘call the stewards in’ (Sydney Morning Herald 1 May 1996).
94 When Labor adopted its affirmative action plan, Laws referred to ‘feminazis’ and ‘thought police’ (Australian 11 March 1995). Federal Labor’s hesitant women’s policy during the 1996 election campaign was attributed to a perceived ‘John Laws factor’. In 1993 Labor’s benchmark in this area had been special adviser Anne Summers but in 1996 it was Laws (Gardiner, Jane 1996: 9). There was considerable comment when the Premier had a dinner meeting with talkback radio host John Laws (Daily Telegraph 2 October 1997), especially following Laws’ on-air comment that ‘my relations with the New South Wales State Government aren’t what you might call cosy’ (Adams and Burton 1997: 128ff). The dinner improved relations and Laws began predicting Government announcements with great accuracy (Sydney Morning Herald 28 February 1998). Laws was less pleased with the annual ‘Ernies’ dinner, at which he was a nominee in the 1998 media category for sexism (Sydney Morning Herald 3 September 1998, Burgmann 2000). Jones and Laws of 2UE featured in the Australian Broadcasting Authority’s ‘Cash for Comment’ inquiry (see http://www.aba.gov.au/radio/investigations/completed/commerc_radio/index.htm 21 June 2001).
95 Jones has been a regular Master of Ceremonies at Liberal party functions (Sydney Morning Herald 29 May 1993, 27 February 1996). During a preselection contest for a Liberal Senate seat, Jones spoke strongly against Marise Payne and offered MLC Marlene Goldsmith’s campaign a ‘stab or a lift’. Goldsmith denied that it was her ‘way of doing things. I value my political integrity and this sort of incident has the potential to cause immense harm’ (Sydney Morning Herald 22 March 1997). Later Senator Payne complained about a negative campaign. Jones’ hostility to Payne might have been attributable to her youth, her advocacy of a republic or her outspokenness on women’s issues. Goldsmith wrote a book (1996 Political Incorrectness Sydney Hodder and Stoughton) that placed her opposite Payne on many issues.
is fighting for Daily Telegraph approval’. ⁹⁶ At Party Conferences Young Labor delegates moved to have the Parental Responsibility Act repealed and wore baseball caps backwards to protest the stereotyping of young people as ‘gang’ members. Meredith Burgmann described the law allowing young people ‘loitering’ to be apprehended as a ‘piece of Liberal Party legislation that we never liked’ (Sydney Morning Herald 8 October 1997). The frustrations are greater among Left MPs.

Media approaches to coverage of parliament have gender implications. First, media tend to present a negative image of the political process. At a time when more women are entering parliament this has gender implications. Media tend to side with the executive and trivialise the work of backbench Members and especially MLCs. As proportionately more women are backbenchers and MLCs, they face particular problems. Secondly, media generally attack moves to improve working conditions as perks. As some recent improvements have made the place more attractive to female candidates, women are especially disadvantaged. Thirdly, media sexualises MPs, but has special difficulties with treatment of females in leadership roles. Fourthly, metaphors used by journalists tend to carry a sub-text of masculinist discourse. Fifthly, the highly influential media personalities, including talkback radio hosts, are mostly males. Conservative elements in the media have opposed the stances taken by Members fitting Sawer’s (1986) crucial ‘Sister’ category on issues including civil rights and women’s status. While the media have demanded access to information, they have neglected other aspects of civil liberties. Female interviewees were more keenly aware of these problems than were male colleagues.

Section 3.4 Labor in Government and Parliament: ‘it was always robust. Now it’s ridiculous’.

While Labor’s affirmative action policy has indicated a determination to eliminate female disadvantage, election of a Labor Government raises other questions about gender. Moves for female advancement might have been slowed by the dominance of Labor Governments by socially conservative right wings. The State branch has been slow to adopt effective affirmative action policies to achieve a sex balance in parliament, although it is not disgraced by comparison with other States, other parties or other eras. As the Left tends to promote women more than other factions do, anything that weakens the Left might handicap moves for

⁹⁶ Carr has a reputation for being tough on law and order and less concerned for civil liberties (Sydney Morning Herald 7 November 1995, ABC Radio National The Law Report 11 May 1999). Journalist Paola Totaro (Sydney Morning Herald 23 November 1994) describes Carr striding through the Press Gallery announcing that The Daily Telegraph-Mirror’s ‘City of Fear’ special had made his day.
sex balance. Labor women perceive a problem with the Party’s tradition of mateship, and there have been some charges of patrilineal nepotism.

In 1995, Labor was the most sex-balanced party with nine females among 50 MLAs. As the Government, Labor set standards for other parties to follow. Labor Governments are Right Wing dominated and the Premier clashed with the Left over many policies including poker machines, powers to dismiss police officers and juvenile justice (Sydney Morning Herald 19 April 1995, 12, 22 November 1996, 20 March 1997). The Left faction has tended to promote women while the Right is more conservative on gender issues. This could relate to the role of Catholics in the Party. Catholic influence has slowed policy change on sexuality, abortion, divorce, domestic violence and women’s equal right to ordination (Australian 29 October 1997). Reacting to the Pope’s statement Splendour of Truth, Independent Clover Moore (Bligh) described it as out of touch, but for Labor veteran ‘Johno’ Johnson MLC it was a ‘document of considerable joy’ (Sydney Morning Herald 6 October 1993). Of course, other parties also have religious influence.

Women’s participation in the Labor Party reflects the State’s political culture. While the first Labor woman went to the House of Representatives in 1974, New South Wales Labor did not return a woman to that House until 1983. Jupp and Sawer (1994: 11) have argued that the Branch was historically ‘less sympathetic to the women’s movement than in some other states but was ready to recognise that changes were unavoidable’. Simms (2000) has noted that the branch considers itself ‘distinctive’ and that its conference delegates displayed ‘relative social conservatism’ on a range of issues including drugs, sentencing, censorship, land rights and immigration.


Historically Catholics congregated in Labor seats. Many Caucus members and Labor Premiers have been Catholic (Hogan 1979). On the other hand, no Catholic has led Labor to an election victory since 1959 while Nick Greiner, a Catholic, won leading the Liberals in 1988 and 1991. When Liberal MPs have names such as O’Farrell, O’Doherty, Greiner and Chikarovski, sectarian alignments are weakening (Australian 14 November 1998). Interviewee 21 alluded to these changes in party demographics, noting that once Irish-Catholic names would have placed members in Labor’s camp.

During the ‘euthanasia’ debate the influence of Catholic Members including Johnson was made public (Australian 29 March 1997) and one Member of the Committee on I.C.A.C. thought religious influence relevant when he questioned Commissioner O’Keefe about organisations to which he belonged (Sydney Morning Herald 14 January 1997).

Fred Nile’s ‘Cull to Australia’ Party changed its name to ‘Christian Democratic Party’ to make its intentions clear (Nile 2001, Smith, T. 2001b). Young Liberals complained that fundamentalist Christians wanted to hijack the federal Party’s agenda and noted the influence of the ‘Lyons Forum’ in overturning the Northern Territory euthanasia law (Sydney Morning Herald 7 April, 2 August 1997, Australian 14 November 1998).
Throughout the 1980s the Labor Party was criticised nationally for having so few women returned to parliaments. In Labor’s 1993 Federal election victory, women voters supported Labor in greater proportions than usual so Labor women expected acknowledgment. 101 When the Party adopted a ‘50-50’ affirmative action target Janice Burnswoods said that traditional arm-wrestling and factional haggling were needed and that ‘blokes are on notice’. Labor’s quota plan to preselect women candidates in 35% winnable seats was opposed by the New South Wales and Queensland Right factions (Sydney Morning Herald 6 December 1993, 13 August, 3 September 1994).

State branches determine policy for implementing the 35% quota and New South Wales alone left the decision at the local level, enabling each electorate to plead special circumstances. 102 Australian Council of Trades Unions President Jennie George complained that waiting for seats to become vacant would not achieve the target and argued that some ‘trogolodytes had come out of the woodwork’ to insist women be selected ‘on merit’. In her opinion ‘the merit principle hasn’t been applied a lot to them’. Environment Minister Allan doubted that the quota target would be met by waiting for vacancies and advocated one-third weighting in preselections for all seats, not just vacant ones. She spoke of the 1994 ‘euphoria’ dissipating (Sydney Morning Herald 2 October 1995, 8 May 1996). 103

When the Federal seat of Sydney became available, the Left was able to fill it. Sandra Nori was suggested as a possible candidate but Meredith Burgmann ruled herself out because of the constraints of motherhood and reportedly advised those ‘with dangly bits’ not to apply.

101 Prime Minister Keating engaged Anne Summers as adviser on women’s issues. Analysts suggested that she had convinced women enough to deliver Government. Sara Dowse (Broadside Weekly 10 June 1992) said that Summers salvaged a situation where Labor’s approval among women was low. Keating complained of wastage of a ‘vast pool of talent and wisdom’ but when a vacancy provided a test case in a New South Wales House of Representatives seat, a male won preselection (Australian 17 March, 4 December 1993). When a man was preselected to succeed Keating in Blaxland, a Labor woman complained that ‘deals are done all the time, they are just not deals for women’. The candidate’s mother said that ‘Michael thinks the world of Paul. He has been walking in his footsteps. They went to the same school and church’. Australian Council of Trades Unions President Jennie George was disappointed, because ‘the longer it goes on and the less evidence there is that Labor is serious, the greater the disaffection among women voters’. Summers, noting George’s continual exclusion from a seat said that ‘the reasons offered would be laughable’ but for ‘that straight-faced seriousness only Labor men can manage’ (Sydney Morning Herald 16, 20 May 1996, 26 August 1999).

102 The 20% vote weighting for female preselection candidates did not apply in seats with sitting Labor members.

103 As the 1996 federal election approached, Labor had not preselected any new woman in a safe seat and only five women had been selected in over 40 New South Wales seats (Sydney Morning Herald 12 August 1995). George suggested a national ‘watchdog’ to oversee quotas, but National Secretary Gary Gray objected that the National Executive was a watchdog (Sydney Morning Herald 28 August 1995). Former Federal Minister Jeanette McHugh’s proposal to revive the women’s conference was rejected as ‘sexist’ (Australian 12 October 1996).
When the Left faction was determining the order of candidates for the 1999 Council election, Burnswoods argued the need to retain women in electable positions. With Ian Macdonald and Burgmann likely to be included, the third position could have gone to Burnswoods or Attorney-General Jeff Shaw (Sydney Morning Herald 1 July 1998). Since the State Branch abandoned its Women’s Committee in the eighties on the grounds that it was delivering disproportionate influence to the Left (Sydney Morning Herald 9 June 1986), it has been assumed that members of the relatively powerless Left faction are most interested in promoting women and advancing women’s issues.

Labor preselections are hotly contested, and when women have been successful, opponents have argued that they were not necessarily the most deserving women. When Patricia Staunton missed Senate preselection, she lacked support from the party hierarchy in Sussex Street headquarters (Sydney Morning Herald 6 June 1994). The winner was female, so Staunton’s failure does not show that the party is hostile to women’s opportunity, but the fact that the wife of a Party official won preselection caused media to allege nepotism. Close relatives can be considered safe inheritors of established traditions and supporters of the status quo. Before the 1995 election, both major parties promised to increase the number of women on boards and commissions, but Duncan Gay (National MLC) criticised Labor’s ‘jobs for the girls approach’ in appointing the wives of two Federal Labor MPs to the Industrial Relations Commission (Australian 6, 10 June 1998). Even if such criticisms are unjustified they have negative effect on the women appointed because they further the view that women are mere political appointees, there because of quotas.

It is important to keep such criticisms in perspective. If New South Wales Labor has been slow on affirmative action, so have other State branches and other parties. Carmen Lawrence warned that people did not appreciate the policy (Sydney Morning Herald 13 August 1994) and preselection conflict resulted in several States. The federal party’s adoption of Cheryl
Kernot confirms the observation of Simms (1994) that parties actively recruit women with high profiles. Labor women adopted an approach usually associated with their opponents by establishing an Australian ‘E.M.I.L.Y.’s List’ (Early Money Is Like Yeast) to fund a women’s network to support preselected women (Sydney Morning Herald 11 November 1996). Founder former Victorian Premier Joan Kirner believed the Party supported the project (Australian Financial Review 13 November 1996). When Carmen Lawrence appealed against a Royal Commission finding that she had misled it, Labor women donated towards her legal expenses. Kirner extolled the ‘true feminist mateship of the Australian Labor Party’ and Jennie George criticised a ‘witch-hunt’ (Sydney Morning Herald 23 April 1997). Labor women obviously thought Lawrence’s sex relevant but the need for a special fund suggests that the Party was ambivalent about taking responsibility for her defence.

Labor does not compare badly with other major parties in promoting women. Following the Liberals’ 1993 federal election loss, former Senator Chris Puplick criticised the prevailing view that politics was a game for successful ‘gentlemen’ rather than a profession. Puplick accused senior Liberals of resisting the rise of young people such as Ministers’ staffers and recommended that the party adopt a career structure like Labor’s (Australian 10 April 1993). Liberal moderates were disappointed when their party failed to preselect women to counter the image of Labor’s young women Reba Meagher and Gabrielle Harrison. Jennifer Scott missed Federal preselection and Carlene Wilson missed Strathfield, but when the Liberal Women’s Forum helped return many women to Federal Parliament in 1996, organiser Chris McDiven was accused of setting up a ‘women’s faction’ (Sydney Morning Herald 15 July 1995, 6 March 1996).

Nationals federal Leader Tim Fischer admitted that his party was biased against women and when the party preselected no New South Wales women for the 1996 election, Machin said that women were leaving the Party, convinced that it would promote only males. Jenny Gardiner told State Conference ‘Let’s hang our heads in shame and then get on and do something’. Machin lamented that the same arguments were used against women then as ten years previously. These related to age, marriageability and toughness, questions not asked of men. She said ‘I don’t want to die in office as the only woman who made it into the Legislative Assembly’. The Party nominated a woman to a three cornered contest (Liberal-

109 Mary Delahunty Victorian Education Minister and Clare Martin were television presenters.
110 Lawrence appealed against the findings of the Marks Royal Commission that she had lied.
111 Labor women have made negative comments about mates and mateship. See p.125.
112 Katrina Hodgkinson won Burrinjuck in 1999.

Newer parties are quicker to promote women, as they do not have to change the culture of a large organization formed in male-dominated times. Although women held both the offices of President and Secretary of Young Labor for the first time in 1996, they did not think that the macho culture would change overnight. 113 President Liz McNamara said that many men had told her that she was ‘too nice’ to be in politics and admitted that you had to be more aggressive than the men to prove yourself: ‘if you are soft and nice you don’t get anywhere in the ALP’. Secretary Joanne Woods, daughter of Minister Harry Woods predicted ‘generational change. The party is growing up’ (Sydney Morning Herald 26 August 1996).

While such concerns relate directly to party business they have the potential to affect gender and parliamentary affairs. During the period, attention has been drawn to the rowdiness of the parliament, especially the lower house. It is difficult to know whether the tough image of parliament is a matter of overwhelming tradition or whether it is an image maintained by some who benefit from it. Some interviewees complained about parliamentary procedures. Interviewee 10 for example cited a ‘deterioration in parliamentary standards. It’s become a circus. It was always robust. Now it’s ridiculous’ (10). Others referred to ‘arrogance’ (22) and the ‘traditional dominance of the executive’ (24). 115

The Herald described the Parliament as the ‘rowdiest bearpit of any State’ and after two days of the new Government, State Political Correspondent David Humphries called it ‘the same bearpit’. 116 He attributed problems not to the Speaker but to Ministers’ contempt for

113 The party’s ‘blokey’ culture might have encouraged physical disputation. Labor members have complained of ‘thuggery’ and ‘right wing spivs and factional heavies’ (Sydney Morning Herald 15 May 1995) and ‘displays of brawn and muscle’. During the 1994 Vaucluse by-election Premier Fahey exploited the 1980 bashing of Left Member Peter Baldwin in inner Sydney. The Liberals ran advertisements featuring a photograph of Baldwin’s battered face (Sydney Morning Herald 9 April 1994). Some of the ‘blood on the floor’ alluded to by Interviewee 9 is real.

114 Interviewees volunteered criticisms in answering questions about ‘disappointments’, ‘frustrations’ and ‘change’: ‘People in the galleries are sometimes confused as to which side is Labor and which Liberal. We have a right wing Government and a left wing Liberal Opposition that is on occasions more socially responsible than the Government’ (5). ‘. because of television Question Time is worse. Other Members here in the Wran era tell you it was bad then, but the camera dominates proceedings’ (6). ‘Going from Government to Opposition changes the efficacy of you as a local member, your ability to talk to people in power, to do things and also in the atmosphere of the place’ (16).

115 While no MLC complained about the chairmanship of the President, the situations differ. The Government did not have sufficient numbers to secure the Presidency. Non-Government MLCs were likely to be satisfied with the Liberal President and Government Members were more concerned about the need to negotiate with the crossbenchers.

116 Two Coalition Members were expelled in that time, equalling previous Speaker Rozzoli’s total for the entire Fiftieth Parliament, and the Opposition walked out in protest. By late 1998, Murray had
Questions. Humphries, amused when a journalist asked Opposition Leader Peter Collins whether the ‘gloves were now off’, said ‘as if they’d ever played by the Marquess of Queensberry rules’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 14 June 1994, 22, 25, 26 May 1995).

Government and Opposition blame one another for the conflict. Regardless of who is responsible, a rowdy chamber with a masculinist reputation inhibits women’s participation. 117

Collins accused the Carr Government of being ‘power drunk’ and of taking decisions ‘in the dead of night, when no-one is there to watch’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 3 June 1995). 119 He expressed concern about changes to procedures including Ministers interrupting debate and the return of the ‘gag’. 120 Government Leader Paul Whelan accused Collins of selective amnesia, because the Coalition Government had used the gag 49 times. Asked whether they approved use of the gag (C:xxvii) interviewee attitudes by sex showed little difference although seven males and four females said that the gag is needed in some circumstances. 121

Speakers are always at the centre of parliamentary conflict. Interviewee 6 said that things ‘the current Speaker does makes things worse. MPs want a sense of justice’. The Opposition has moved dissent from John Murray’s rulings and accused him of bias (*Hansard Assembly* 15 May 1997: 8744ff, 20 May: 8848ff). 122 When Murray dispensed with the wig and gown worn by Speakers past, National Party Leader Ian Armstrong declared that Labor was ‘bent

ejected MPs 71 times but only one Labor MP. Carr foreshadowed a plan to dock the pay of ejected Members. The *Herald* (16 October 1998) described Michael Photios who suffered 18 ejections and Jillian Skinner as ‘serial interjectors’.

Interviewee 17 expressed frustration about the 1988 Coalition victory: ‘On child care and protection in the eighties, we had one of the best models in the world and I had to sit here and watch it being dismantled under the coalition government. In the same way I worked on the development of the women’s housing program and it was demolished by an incoming government’. 118

This possibility is considered in Chapter 7 below.

When the Government made the 1996-97 summer break 132 days, the Opposition said that this was to dodge criticism. A *Herald* Editorial (8 April 1997) said that an effective Opposition should damage a Government with the ‘quality, intensity and factual merits’ of its attacks outside. Collins argued that Parliament has Question Time, set debates, the budget process and requires that Ministers do not lie. The *Herald* concluded ‘from today, Mr Collins gets his chance to match his rhetoric with performance’. After a long break the next summer, Carr said that ‘grieving gorillas at the zoo received more publicity in 24 hours than members opposite received in four months’ (*Hansard* 1 April 1998).

See also below Table 3.5 Sittings.

The ‘gag’ ends debate by using procedures such as a motion that ‘the Member no longer be heard’ or that ‘the question now be put’.

Understandably, 58.3% of Government interviewees compared with 17.6% from the Opposition said that it was ‘necessary in some circumstances’. 16.7% Government compared with 29.4% Opposition said that it should never be used. It is not surprising that 40% crossbenchers disapproved of the gag because it is applied in a vote and so they are vulnerable to it should they attempt to move against the wishes of both of the major parties.

on destroying traditions and values’ including the flag and oath of office (Sydney Morning Herald 2 May 1995). Council President, Liberal Max Willis wore the regalia arguing

‘I’m a traditionalist. I believe in the importance of the office and that it must be set aside from the man. The regalia helps the frail human to carry out the office with dignity’ (Sydney Morning Herald 4 May 1995).

When Liberal Virginia Chadwick replaced Willis however, she said that ‘the office is dignified in itself and you don’t need trappings to set it off’ (Sydney Morning Herald 22 October 1998). Willis’ departure lacked ‘dignity’ and Chadwick set the regalia aside from the woman into a glass case where it resembles a museum exhibit (Sun-Herald 5 July 1998). 123

The Legislative Assembly’s reputation as a rowdy bear pit is not new. All governments exploit the sitting schedule. Most Speakers are accused of bias. All Premiers seek to make opponents uncomfortable. All Oppositions regard Parliament as their forum. Independents always have legitimate complaints about being excluded from processes. The point of examining these features of Parliament is not to suggest that the period 1995-1999 was an especially difficult one, but to show that these were the characteristics of parliamentary politics at the time under study. Some of these characteristics have direct relevance to gender. Because women as a group are relative newcomers, the power of the culture that greets them can determine whether they settle in successfully. If they meet the behavioral expectations of the parliament, this alienates them from electors who expected them to be different. By seeming to endorse existing norms, they can deter other women from wanting to become parliamentarians. In an aggressive masculine culture women occupy a specific position, and an appreciation of this situation is needed before their participation can be understood.

Section 3.5 The Premier and Cabinet: ‘theatrical and presentation skills’.

Bob Carr, thirty-ninth Premier, won admiration from Interviewee 5 for his ‘enormous public speaking quality’ and ‘theatrical and presentation skills’. The Premier’s performance on gender issues prompts some observations. The Premier has been a strong personal leader. His disparagement of opponents has spared neither males nor females, but has included attacks on gender identities. While some of Carr’s antics have seemed immature, his control over the

123 Waring (1997) described uniformed ‘flunkeys’ as a sop to the egos of male MPs in New Zealand. Interviewee 13 regarded the Attendants positively, because their respect reminded him of the honour he had. This committed him to sincerity, seriousness and hard work. While the observer might not notice direct connections between the traditions and gender, it is possible that a general conservatism in procedures alienates MPs who associate themselves with new forms of power and who wish to make changes. Often these are women. In her first speech Reba Meagher referring to the Parliament warned that she was ‘... respectful of its history but I will not be bound by tradition or protocol if it stands in the way of a better deal for the people of Cabramatta’ (Hansard Assembly 1 December 1994: 6142). There is no evidence that Meagher subsequently broke with ‘tradition or protocol’.
Government has been sure and the Ministry has been stable. While Carr has been criticised from within Labor because of policies that seemed to offend against socialist principles or civil liberties, he has won media support and avoided electoral backlash. Labor’s 1999 election success was a personal triumph. The problem for female MPs is that this success makes conflict seem an indispensable feature of politics and entrenches the role of a dominant, robust leader. These traits make parliament unattractive for women to enter and a difficult environment in which to operate successfully and advance their careers.

The Premier has been involved in controversies on gender issues. As well as commenting on Chikarovski’s voice, he called her ‘Lucrezia of Lane Cove’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 25 May 1995) and described an Opposition Member as ‘Bronwyn Bishop without the delicacy’ (*Hansard Assembly* 28 April 1998: 3964). When in Opposition he allegedly called the Deputy Speaker a ‘silly bitch’ and suggested a Minister change her lipstick. Interviewee 16 said that the most noticeable sexist behaviour was when males comment on females’ appearance. 124 Carr alleged that his predecessor had ordered an expensive brochure reprinted on the grounds that his own photograph was smaller than that of the Minister assisting him on ethnic affairs. Carr told Parliament that had the Opposition asked female colleagues, they would have learned that ‘it’s not the size that counts’. Liberal MLC Patricia Forsythe complained to the Department for Women about the sexist remark (*Sydney Morning Herald* 16 June 1995) and Carr apologised.

When touring the USA Carr visited writer Norman Mailer (*Sydney Morning Herald* 20 June 1995). Kate Millett (1969: 314) described Mailer as ‘a prisoner of the virility cult’ and someone ‘whose powerful comprehension of what is most dangerous in the masculine sensibility is exceeded only by his attachment to the malaise’. Carr could not resist the opportunity to deliver one-liners. 125 Bob Ellis, a speech writer for Carr, likened the Premier to an ‘overgrown student politician’ (*ABC Radio National Background Briefing* 29 June 1997). If the parliament resembles the schoolyard, then this has gender implications. Responding to a Question about advice to new MPs, one female interviewee (17) argued the need for not being intimidated and said that there were plenty of bullies around. 126

124 Federal parliamentarians gave a rare display of bipartisan support for Education Minister Senator Amanda Vanstone when it was reported that she failed to meet students at a conference because she was afraid they would attack her build and dress sense. Federal Labor MPs’ attacks on Vanstone featured in the annual ‘Ernies’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 8 April 1997).
125 During the 1995 election campaign, journalist Kate Legge called a profile piece ‘The Carr Enigma’ (*Australian* 11 March 1995).
126 An opponent described Michael Egan as the Government’s ‘bovver boy’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 20 December 1996).
Other analogies for the parliament include an arena of conflict and a theatrical performance. Twenty-three interviewees agreed that Parliament was an ‘arena of conflict’ (B:i). Twenty-five interviewees agreed (7 females and 5 males strongly) that it was a ‘piece of theatre’ (B:i). When Collins tore up a briefing paper, Carr referred to ‘vulgar theatre’ but has used various props such as a tray, a wallet and a trophy (*Sydney Morning Herald* 26 September 1997). During a censure motion against her, the Environment Minister produced a copy of *Woman’s Day* and tore paper (Observed 11 November 1997).

The adversarial nature of the period was established early in the Parliament. Following the Premier’s lead, Ministers in the Assembly (three females and fourteen males) attacked predecessors in their portfolios. Allan lampooned the refurbishment of the Environment Minister’s suite but other attacks were more serious. Gaming Minister Face received complaints about fraudulent fundraising raffles and Fair Trading Minister LoPo’ pursued Machin over allegations about land subdivisions. Government MPs laughed raucously when LoPo’ said that Machin had modelled swimsuits for advertisements in a local newspaper (*Australian* 31 May 1995, 24 April 1996, *Sydney Morning Herald* 1 May 1996). Intimidation is not practised exclusively by males against females, but it is part of the environment. Opposition frontbenchers have been attacked for their physical build, mode of dress, speech and place of abode. As with women’s voices, the physical size of some Members places them in an impossible position, because larger Members are lampooned as readily as smaller ones. Personal denigration features regularly in debates.

Carr has been a strong leader and has run a stable Ministry but has embarrassed some Ministers by over-ruling them. When Left Leader Andrew Refshauge was over-ruled on a

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127 However, the head of I.C.A.C. described as unfair, the initial investigation of Machin by the former Ombudsman (*Sydney Morning Herald* 23 July 1996).


129 The Premier has referred to a Monarchist as ‘the vertical Corgi’ and to the Opposition Leader as ‘Pop-up Peter’, and said that one MP would never be a jockey but could be a sumo wrestler (*Sydney Morning Herald* 9 May, 26 September 1995). Carr has occasionally embarrassed himself: He told one Opposition Member that ‘anyone who wears a tie like that should see a doctor’, but the tie had been designed by a young boy as a fund-raiser for the Save the Children Fund (*Sydney Morning Herald* 30 May 1997). Generally however, Ministers enjoy the Premier’s jokes and laugh on cue. When an Opposition frontbencher of short stature rises to speak Ministers greet him by suggesting he ‘stand up’ and asking whether it is ‘past his bedtime’ (Observed: Assembly 18 September 1997).

130 Carr described his leadership philosophy: ‘the leader is always right. If he’s ever wrong, refer to proposition one’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 15 November 1996). Reversing a decision to move hospital resources to the western suburbs caused Health Minister Andrew Refshauge to face a No Confidence motion, which he survived on party lines (*Sydney Morning Herald* 6, 18, 21 September 1996).
Health issue, there was speculation that Pam Allan might challenge for the factional leadership. Allan attributed the rumours to some other Left members who were speculating in a ‘naked grab for ministerial spots for themselves’ and said that they ‘thrive on acrimony and poisonous relationships’ (Australian 21 September 1996). 131 In mid 1996, alarmed by ‘backflips’ or broken promises on hospitals and tollways, union officials and MPs suggested that Carr adopt a consultative style rather than the isolation and arrogance associated with former Prime Minister Keating. One Labor MP said she had met Carr only twice, both times by accident. Another said that ‘the issue of consultation goes to the heart of the nature and style of the New South Wales Labor Right. It’s the lack of party consultation that frightens people’ (Sydney Morning Herald 6 July 1996).

A Premier must try to balance the claims of many groups. Carr boasts an interest in history and one historian compared him to Henry Parkes in this respect (Sydney Morning Herald 11 December 1995). 132 According to the Sydney Morning Herald (31 May 1996) however, the Premier told a Conference of Spokeswomen that the history of women in Parliament began in 1931, although Preston-Stanley entered in 1925. 133 While Carr promoted and mentored individual women MPs, his Government did not give high priority to women MPs as a group.

Section 3.6 The 1995 election, political time and ‘the need to be seen and to politically project’.

Interviewees were aware that the period was unique and reflected on how time affects parliamentary activities. They noted routines, lack of time to prepare and generational differences. The 1995 election campaign established tacit ground rules for the ensuing term. Gender featured in the campaign in three ways. Each side launched a women’s policy. Media described a perceived ‘gender gap’ in support for the Leaders. There were some incidents that linked to sexual harassment allegations in the previous Parliament.

However, Carr ran a stable Ministry. The only resignation resulted from I.C.A.C. investigations of pre-1995 matters rather than Opposition pressure (Sydney Morning Herald 5 May 1995, 1 May 1998). 131 Allan’s credibility suffered during her handling of the Wallis Lake oyster contamination crisis and during the 1999 election campaign, she was disciplined for misusing travel entitlements by taking her family (Sydney Morning Herald 20 March 1997, 4 March 1999). 133 Carr’s strong interest in the history of the USA prompted journalists to see a resemblance to Abraham Lincoln (see Moir’s cartoon Sydney Morning Herald 20 September 1996). Carr admires presidential style, including the possibility of appointing Ministers from outside parliament (Australian 23 March 1996, 3 September 1997) and described New South Wales as ‘the New York of Australian politics’ (Sydney Morning Herald 6 April 1996).
Launching the Coalition women’s policy Premier Fahey depicted Labor negatively. Contrasting his four frontbench women with Labor’s two, Fahey said Labor was ‘a living example of the all-male clubs of yesteryear, where mateship and tribal loyalties triumph over talent and ability, where men get safe seats and senior ministries and women get the marginal leftovers’ (Sydney Morning Herald 9 March 1995).

As Minister for Women, Chikarovski had been popular with women’s groups and described by bureaucrats as articulate and committed (Chappell 1995: 165-6). Premier Fahey attempted to exploit her appeal to female voters by ensuring that women’s policy had a separate launch. When he appointed her Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party late in the term, he obviously considered her image to be an electoral asset.

There is ongoing debate about what constitutes ‘women’s policy’ and whether it should be approached separately or in mainstream portfolios. Many State responsibilities such as health, education and personal safety affect women disproportionately because of their socially designated positions. So general attention to those policy areas could attract women voters. However, both sides pitched ‘law and order’ campaigns to appeal to people feeling vulnerable, and defying statistical evidence, promoted images of women, the elderly and children as the main victims of assaults. Law and order was a dominant issue.

As asked whether tougher penalties would deter crime (A:ii) interviewees were inclined to disagree, and females disagreed more clearly. Table 3.3 shows that only three females agreed while eleven females disagreed. Six males agreed while eight disagreed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.3: ‘Tougher Penalties are needed to deter crime’</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither</td>
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A statement of Carr’s was the basis for one question. Interviewees were asked (A:i) whether they saw politics as ‘the best guarantee of freedoms’. Nine interviewees strongly agreed and six of these were female. Only six disagreed and four of these were female. So while there was general agreement with the idea (11 females and 12 males agreed) females were slightly more polarised. Responses to these two questions together suggest that female MPs have greater reservations about exploiting law and order in an election campaign.

134 Labor (Sydney Morning Herald 7 March 1995) promised an inquiry into pay disparity, education programs for judges handling sexual assault cases (repeated in 1999), and safer railway stations (echoed in its ‘film noir’ television advertisements in 1999).
Media reports continually contrasted the styles of the Leaders and suggested that Fahey had greater appeal to female voters. A Herald-McNair poll showed Carr’s popularity at 47% among men and 40% among women, while Fahey had 44% and 55% respectively. Commentators noted Fahey’s ‘fatherly style’, footballing background and liking for a beer and Carr’s ‘hard edge’ and bookishness (Sydney Morning Herald 16 February 1995). While there has been an Australia-wide gender gap in support for Labor Goot (1996) cast doubt on the way the polls were used. They were quoted selectively and used only when the gap seemed large and interesting, but were ignored when they produced less newsworthy results. Nor was the gap perceived as Fahey having had a problem with male voters or Carr having greater appeal to them.

Allegations of sexual harassment hung over the 1995 election. In Cabramatta, Liberal candidate Rocky Gattellari used a colourful Australian expression and threatened to ‘punch’ out Labor’s Reba Meagher. Fahey called the incident a ‘beat-up’ but given Gattellari’s record as a boxer, the admission in his autobiography that he had hit a woman, and reports of bizarre events at campaign fund-raisers, Meagher’s reaction was understandable. Former Minister Terry Griffiths was succeeded by a female candidate Marie Ficarra who retained Georges River for the Liberal Party. Griffiths resisted suggestions by supporters that he run as an Independent after he lost endorsement because of his behaviour towards female staff. In Blue Mountains however, former Liberal Member Barry Morris ran as an Independent. Election analyst Malcolm Mackerras declared that Morris would have won ‘handsomely’ as a Liberal, so denying Labor its majority. Morris, who was charged with a campaign of harassment against a Blue Mountains City Councillor, including a scheme to use a prostitute to compromise him, was convicted and jailed (Sydney Morning Herald 27 October 1994, 14 January, 6, 7 February 1995, 23, 29 May 1996).

During counting of the 1995 election results, a hung parliament with Clover Moore holding a balance of power seemed possible. Some Labor Members said that another election would

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135 Federal Liberal Leader Hewson said: ‘You’ve got to be suspicious of a guy that doesn’t drive and doesn’t like kids ... up against a full-blooded Australian like John Fahey he has not got a hope’ (Sydney Morning Herald 19 October 1992). Hewson apologised later.
136 Meagher won the seat in a by-election following the assassination of John Newman in 1994.
137 Sexuality was a sensitive issue late in the Fiftieth Parliament. Bligh electorate contains Oxford Street Darlinghurst and has a large concentration of gay people. The Member, Independent Clover Moore, was popular in the gay community and her picture was on the front page of the one hundredth edition of the newspaper Capital Q. Moore introduced a law prohibiting vilification of people for their sexuality and was a ‘Gay Mardi Gras’ icon when twenty marchers dressed as ‘Clover Moores’ (Sydney Morning Herald 22 August, 31 October 1994). Interviewees 16 and 22 mentioned difficulties accepting their parties’ lines on the bill.
be preferable to accepting some controversial policies that she advocated on behalf of gay constituents (Sydney Morning Herald 29 March 1995). 138 Despite this apparent hostility to homosexuality among some Members, Labor preselected a Mardi Gras organiser to contest Bligh (Australian 15 February 1995). 139 How these objecting MPs would have reacted had their own candidate won Bligh in 1995 is uncertain. Parliament might informally construct a sexual orthodoxy that advantages masculinity generally over femininity, and specific masculinities over others. Some Labor backbenchers later objected to Government funding of a Sydney bid for the 2002 Gay Games (Sydney Morning Herald 16 April 1997) although some colleagues described the objections as ‘homophobic’. The dropping of a school pilot program to prevent vilification of gay people shows that the Government regarded sexuality as a difficult issue (Sydney Morning Herald 16 May 1997).

After the election Collins became Opposition Leader and Chikarovski declined a frontbench position, saying that she wanted more time with her family and in her electorate (Australian 8 April 1995). Media speculation about her leadership ambitions increased when the 1996 by-elections led to a frontbench reshuffle (Sydney Morning Herald 16, 18 March 1996). It soon became apparent that several features of the election campaign had shaped aspects of the Parliament. While the Labor Government promoted the Office for Women into a Department, law and order issues remained high on its agenda and toughness remained its preferred style. Although the positions of Opposition Leader and Premier require different skills, there was little evidence that Mr Carr would alter his image overnight. Rather the Government continued to treat the Opposition disdainfully as the accident-prone team that the previous Government had been.

The Fifty-first Parliament was elected for a fixed four year term and occupies a unique period. Time has political implications including the electoral cycle, the sitting schedule, and career stages. Loomis (1994) argues that political time deserves closer study as historical moments can determine some attitudes. Interviewee 16 reported modifying her first speech because events surrounding other Members made her reluctant to sound too controversial.

138 A Labor MP died four days after resigning. Later Moore asked whether the Government fearing political embarrassment, concealed that he had Human Immuno-deficiency Virus. The Government denied the possibility. Paul O’Grady MLC described Moore’s intervention as a “vicious” attack on personal privacy and “political bastardry”. Moore claimed that if the MP had the disease, publicising the fact would help remove the stigma attached to it (Sydney Morning Herald 24 December 1994, 22 May 1995, Australian 20 May 1995).

The electoral cycle runs from a ‘honeymoon’ period to a pre-election phase where charges of ‘pork-barrel’ politics abound. Independent MPs forced the minority Coalition Government to adopt a Charter of Reform including a fixed four year term and so the electoral cycle of the Fifty-first Parliament was unique. Interviewee 33 said that the fixed term grants respite from the election cycle and:

‘... the impingement on your work by the need to be seen and to politically project and therefore - that is your work as much as your constituency work - but we’re lucky now that we have fixed four year terms. Prior to that insecurity would drive people to be more political but that does impinge on our ability to perform our work. I’m a person who “lays it out” ... and sometimes that’s not an asset in the political sense’.

Parliament’s sitting schedule is controversial. Comparisons between the sitting days of parliamentarians in Britain, the USA and Australia make the latter seem less hard working (Sydney Morning Herald 6 October 1993, Australian 9 February 1994) but the volume of legislation considered here is relatively high. MPs work long hours with sitting days compressed to accommodate country Members. Peter Collins (Hansard Assembly 13 December 1995: 4927) called the ‘so-called family-friendly hours’ a ‘bit of sizzle and no sausage’. The following extracts from the schedule (Table 3.4) demonstrate the pattern.

Table 3.4 1996 Spring Sittings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Sitting dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
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140 A referendum held with the 1995 election set the fixed term. The ‘yes’ vote of 75.5% was higher than the vote of 65.9% to ensure judicial independence (Sydney Morning Herald 4 May 1995).

141 The Annual Report of the Legislative Council (1996-97) shows the error in generalising about workload from sitting days. Between 1995-96 and 1996-97 sitting days fell from 64 to 58 but the average length of sitting days rose from 8.07 to 8.22 hours. The Government introduced 33 bills compared with 22 the previous year, but received 128 from the Assembly compared with 133 in 1995-96. There were 1851 questions without notice (1298 the previous year). Divisions also increased.

142 Intensity of a Member’s speaking activity is better understood by examining page numbers in Hansard rather than calendar days (see Table 4.6 below).
There was a different routine in each Chamber. The Assembly resumed after lunch each day at 2.15 and Question Time followed disposal of business. In the Council, at 4 p.m. business was suspended for Question Time ‘pursuant to Standing Orders’. A draft agenda was produced for each Chamber daily but times varied with Government and Opposition blaming one another for delays. Late in session, there is a contrived, arbitrary and artificial aspect about some dates recorded in Hansard. This irregularity is influential because issues receive greater media attention when they coincide with sittings.

Some interviewees thought that time was a problem:

- ‘We are about thirty-five hours per week short of what we need to do our jobs’ (1).
- ‘The job is bigger than the time available to do it. There is not enough time in the day. I constantly feel unsatisfied that it is not done as well as I would like’ (2).

Asked about ‘frustrations’ Interviewee 4 nominated ‘the fact that it’s 1996 and I still haven’t been able to achieve changes. Not being able to do many things you’d like but frankly I don’t have the time’ (4). Time is significant personally as well as politically. Interviewee 6 found frustrating ‘... the draw on time, family time, for activities you sometimes think are of limited value to your primary purpose which is to serve constituents. Sometimes you think that if someone blew a whistle and said “what are we doing here?” we’d all go home’.

Others made various observations about time.

- ‘People don’t appreciate that if the house is sitting it’s difficult to leave the precincts. It’s like house detention. We have little control of our working hours and are answerable to the formalities of the house. A number of people particularly women, try to change the working hours but never seem to get anywhere’ (8).

143 Mid-week sittings on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are convenient for country Members. Separate schedules are produced for the two Chambers. The Council generally rises later and frequently sits on Monday and Fridays. There is a weekly routine. Extra time is allocated in the Assembly for Private Members’ Business but Standing Orders can be suspended to abandon this period. On the 16 June 1998 for example the Manager of Government Business and Leader of the House moved suspension to enable discussion of the Budget. Dr Peter Macdonald, one of three crossbenchers, the Members most affected by restriction of Private Members’ Business, was denied leave to speak on the motion (Hansard Assembly 16 June 1998: 13, 17 June: 40-1).

144 The Opposition accuses the Government of poor organisation or deliberate delay to enable the use of the guillotine late in a Session. The Government blames the Opposition for filibusters and continual calling of procedural Divisions.

145 The Assembly record for 19 June 1997 includes events of 26 and 27 June. On page 10801 Mr Speaker left the Chair at 9.21 p.m. On page 10802 is found ‘Thursday 26 June 1997 [Continuation of sitting of Thursday 19 June]’. These pages are numbered earlier than the pages describing prior events in the Council. The same problem arises regarding extra-parliamentary events. Apparently on 25 June 1998 (Hansard Assembly: 6688), Mr Stewart (Lakemba) applauded ‘Canterbury Council’s inaugural crime prevention summit held on 29 June’. This is not an error. Hansard (6701) refers also to Consideration of Legislative Council amendments of 3 July. The Assembly sitting for 25 June extended until the Council considered legislation. This is customary procedure at the end of a Session.
• ‘I’ve matured because of politics. I’ve risen at four o’clock in the morning and will get home at seven and there are functions I’ve got to go to tonight. We average two nights a week at home. That’s the price you pay for being committed’ (29).

• ‘The pattern of the workload makes it difficult to provide time for family responsibilities or family pleasures. In prioritisation of time and determination to allocate time I was not a total success. I don’t think any MP is’ (33).

Another important element of political time concerns career stages. Interviewee 10 reflected that ‘I came in at the right time, the start of the time when there was a push for more women so I had no problems’. There is some evidence that MPs change their attitudes with length of service. Responses by cohort (date of entry) to questions about the ‘importance of the MP’ (C:viii) suggest that attitudes vary with length of service (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5 Proportion of cohorts regarding the role of MP as ‘very important’

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<tr>
<td>As representative</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As watchdog on government</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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It may be that maturity produces a more realistic understanding of what is achievable and a more critical appreciation of the relationship between parliament and executive. In the interview situation it is possible, but difficult to prove, that senior Members and freshers give most honest answers, while those in mid career might be more guarded. Senior Members understand that their days of ‘climbing the greasy pole’ (Black et al 1992, Halford 1993) are over and have no need to avoid statements that endanger their climb up the promotion ‘ladder’ or send them sliding down ‘snakes’ (Cowley 1995-6). While freshers are ambitious, they might not be practised interviewees. Lacking bitter experiences, they might not understand when they are being asked questions that they should answer cautiously.

Interviewee 27 described ‘the continuous strength of the executive defying parliament… in

146 Other comments described ‘a steep learning curve’ (13), ‘lack of time to research’ (15), and ‘the speed with which legislation comes through’ (18). ‘MPs have to try and balance their time between parliament and committees and reading every single Bill at the expense of the important task of representing constituents’ (19). ‘My rate of achievement in six years is greater than most people achieve in a lifetime. I say that without any ego. I had a reputation when I first came into the place. I kicked down every Minister’s door I could find. Then after six months I realised doors had handles and if you tried the handles they were open’ (22). ‘I don’t see myself as a career politician. I’ll work seven days a week for ten years - then depart’ (24). ‘To get things to change seems to take so long, it’s an interminable battle that becomes frustrating and I think some members just walk away and say it’s all too difficult to hang on year after year’ (30). ‘You grow older quicker, age much quicker, at twice the rate. It’s the feeling of responsibility. All MPs age much more quickly in Parliament’ (31).

147 Veteran Bathurst MP Mick Clough opposed plans for electricity privatisation and explained that when he first joined the ALP in 1948, he was ‘considered to the right of Genghis Khan’. By 1997 he was considered ‘left of Lenin’ but felt that he had not changed (Sydney Morning Herald 31 June 1997). Reflecting on his inaugural speech, Interviewee 7 described it as ‘wildly naïve’.
party rooms. It’s got the power to deliver good positions and is able to bend so many MPs, even against their own wills’. Interviewees were asked ‘How closely do the following describe your ambitions: be Premier or Prime Minister?’ (C:xvii). Over 70% interviewees in each of the Cohorts entering ‘Pre1988’ and ‘1988 to 1991’ chose ‘not very’ while only 33.3% of those entering ‘Post 1992’ chose ‘not very’. Newer members are more ambitious. Asked about advice to new MPs, several interviewees suggested that they ‘shut up’ and listen and learn and generally take their time (5, 8, 13, 15, 16, 22, 23, 24). On the other hand, when asked whether they would do anything differently in hindsight, one MP (25) advised greater involvement because the time passes so quickly. Asked about their biggest disappointment, some mentioned being passed over for promotion.

The generation gap is relevant to gender in role perceptions. Commenting on the belief that women have changed much more than men in recent decades, Belinda Probert argues that the change has not been uniform and so there is now more diversity among women. While men still share the experience of work in their identity formation, women no longer have domesticity as a universal experience. Employment levels have fallen among women from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Thus Probert reasons that ‘what is good for one group of women is not necessarily good for another’ (Sydney Morning Herald 16 July 1997). Sawer (1986) found that later entrants were more likely to be ‘Sisters’ than ‘Mothers’ and to advocate feminist approaches to women’s issues. If ‘Sisters’ were present in the Fifty-first Parliament, they may well have been older sisters who had been there some time.

Changes occurred during the period under study. A review of MP security was conducted after the assassination of Cabramatta MLA John Newman in 1994 and changes were made after the Port Arthur shootings in April 1996. Interviewee 9 cited personal security as a career concern for a female MP:

‘Federal parliamentarians get Commonwealth cars with drivers to take them to functions. State politicians, unless you’re a Minister or leader of a party do not which

148 Interviewee 21 suggested that he would have a future only in China’s gerontocracy. Another (32) described current Parliamentarians as ‘featherweight’: ‘The most significant change in parliament has been the reduction in standards of the people who have gone in there, lack of experience, lack of ability… I equate this parliament on both sides as featherweight. When I went in … we had … Ministers of immense stature. This mob are inexperienced juniors’. Senior Members might regard the old days with nostalgia but younger ones seem less sentimental.

149 Police Special Branch suggested Members check under their cars with mirrors. The Labor Government ordered another review when a shot was fired at the home of the Minister for Fisheries and Mineral Resources (Sydney Morning Herald 14 January, 21 September 1995). Fred Nile asked about the fire bombing of a car in Canterbury and threats to the Member for Lakemba and Franca Arena asked about investigations into the assassination of the then Member for Cabramatta (Hansard Council 17 April 1996). On 21 May 1996 guards began to carry wands (Observed). On the 22 May an archway was installed and the Assembly entrance dedicated to ‘in’, and Council to ‘out’ traffic. On 28 May an x-ray machine for bags was installed (Observed).
means if I go to a function somewhere out in a high crime area, big community functions, usually you can only park blocks away. They don’t end till late and at midnight I’m walking back to my car through blocks of dark streets. I would never do this as a private citizen... it’s part of the job but I do think state politicians should have cars with drivers to pick them up at the door, when you have to go to functions at night. We’re in the parliament where a politician has been murdered, where threats have been made. There have been bomb threats. And still we’re expected to wander around the backblocks of all parts of Sydney at all times of night unescorted and walk a long way back to our cars. It’s a glaring flaw in the system’.

Despite increased security one intruder invaded the Assembly. Although the Daily Telegraph (22 May 1997, p.3 early edition only) carried two grainy photographs taken from the official videotape footage, there is little mention of the incident in the official record. Hansard (21 May 1997: 9014) notes that when a Division was called, there had been an ‘Interruption from the Gallery’. Then Mr Speaker announced: ‘Order! As a result of the disturbance in the House, the division on this matter will be deferred’. While it is possible to identify male and female Members in the first photograph, by the time of the second, the incident had become an exclusively male event and two former police officers were prominent. Former skills and experience will always be handy in a parliamentary career, but security arrangements should ensure that skills possessed predominantly by males do not become an essential de facto qualification for the role.

This section has shown that political time is important. First, the Fifty-first Parliament occupies a unique place in history. Secondly, the organisation of the term, the sessions and the sitting days have political implications. Thirdly, some MPs have more experience than others. Fourthly, MP careers go through stages. Fifthly, there were changes. MPs were replaced, security was tightened, and proceedings were videotaped. All of these aspects of time influence perceptions and have implications for gender.

Section 3.7 Position and place: ‘they wouldn’t let me near it’.

New South Wales is a sub-national unit in the Australian federal system. Most scholarship emphasises Australian political culture in an aggregated way, but the recognition of regional differences is important for understanding gender politics. Geography is also influential through aspects of the positioning and architecture of the parliament. The researcher will misunderstand elements of the context unless attention is paid to these physical environs.

Australia’s state and federal political systems have many similarities. Origins in the Westminster model and common political parties suggest uniformity rather than diversity. State and federal parties merge in the popular mind and Members move between levels of
Government. 150 Asked about role models and mentors, thirteen interviewees named Federal members and two noted service on staffs of Federal MPs. As the 1996 Federal election neared, Labor strategists feared that western Sydney voters would punish Labor federally for the Carr Government’s broken promises over motorway tolls and the Left complained about a ‘remote’ and ‘macho’ leadership culture (Australian 20 September 1995, 6 March 1996). 151 Labor’s federal defeat left New South Wales with the only Labor Government in Australia. 152

Theoretically, federalism protects regional differences. It is surprising then, given the supposed weakness of Australian political culture that little scholarly attention is paid State subcultures. 153 Interviewees 3, 11, and 17 said that interstate colleagues expressed amazement at the stances of New South Wales MPs. 154 There is at least a subjective impression of State distinctiveness. Rodney Smith (2001: 281) notes from 1998 Australian Election Survey data that ‘only in New South Wales did a clear majority of voters indicate that national bonds took precedence over their state consciousness’. Voters in New South Wales and Victoria (289) ‘had greater trust in federal government and attributed less graft, waste and control by big business to the federal government’. Concentration on national culture is justified to the extent that citizens across Australia experience similar nation building and socialisation processes. There has been an effort to eliminate regional divides, but uniformity should not be assumed. Inglis (1996) has argued that in Federal Parliament, many of the most robust and colourful speeches have been made by New South Wales MPs. History is an important determinant of political culture and feminist critics question whether nationalising and citizenship building processes apply evenly to the sexes (Bulbeck 1996a and 1996b, Cass and Rubenstein 1996, Roberts 1996, Lake 1997, Pringle 1997). While white Australian political history is brief, post-Federation nationalising influences are even briefer and New South Wales remains distinct. 155

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150 Three of five Coalition MLAs (John Fahey, Paul Zammit and Ian Causley) and an MLC (Stephen Mutch) who resigned after the 1995 election went to Canberra and a MLA who did not contest the 1995 election (Bruce Baird) won a Federal seat in 1998. One MLA was replaced by a Labor Member (Harry Woods) who had lost his Federal seat. Goldsmith contested Liberal preselection for a casual Senate vacancy. Jill Hall (Labor, Swansea) and Alby Schultz (Liberal, Burrinjuck) resigned when nominations were called for federal seats in 1998 and won those. 151 Labor lost fourteen seats in New South Wales, and only in Queensland did the party suffer a bigger swing (Sydney Morning Herald Editorial 21 March 1996). 152 New South Wales voters were governed by the same party at both levels for about one-third of the time 1946-96. 153 There are works on distinctive ‘smaller’ States such as Queensland (Lunn 1984, Whitton 1989, Coaldrake 1990) and Western Australia (O’Brien 1994). 154 The 7.30 Report (ABC Television 23 March 1998) noted Cabinet Minister Brian Langton’s appearance before the Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry into his use of travel warrants as a Shadow Minister before 1995. Auditor-General Tony Harris said that when criticised for sloppy accounting, people say ‘this is New South Wales, after all’. 155 The first Address-in-Reply in the House of Representatives was made by the eldest MP, W.H. Groom, who was a ‘transported’ convict in the 1840s (Souter 1988).
It is desirable for several reasons to distinguish New South Wales conceptually among Australian systems. The culture of New South Wales is distinct, and possible points of distinction include relations between men and women and public and private spheres. There are many connections between the States and Canberra. Feminist historians cast doubt on the neutrality of post-Federation nation building processes. While there is no evidence that New South Wales is more masculinist than other Australian systems, relations between the sexes in this State has some distinct features.

Physical place influences behaviour including gender relations. In turn dominant patterns of gender relations influence perceptions of public spaces, architectural style, the external environs and the working spaces, including views from the galleries. To appreciate behaviour, it is necessary to have some idea of the physical setting. Parliament’s size, shape, lighting and staff are all relevant.

Duncan (1996a: 1) notes that geographic concepts are ‘useful in contextualising and situating social relations’. She argues that parallels between the ‘dualisms’ of mind and body, interior and exterior and private and public reinforce the idea that the public realm has no physical body and no sex. So essentially sexed women seem not to belong in public. Pam Allan was unusual in that she carried out her duties as Environment Minister when obviously pregnant and later with child on hip (Prime Television News [Orange] 26 August 1998). At the end of a crucial censure motion against her by Kerry Chikarovski, Allan’s baby was in the chamber (Observed 11 November 1997). Highly specialised spaces encourage the splitting of personas. The parliamentarian is a very different person when in the Chamber and when at home being a father to a young baby. Massey (1996: 121) argues that splitting is a trait of ‘masculinity, not of men’.

Some feminists argue that all public spaces are masculine but to different degree and in different ways (McDowell 1996). Duncan (1996a: 3-4) says that gender relations are ‘embedded in the spatial organisation of places’. Parliament House was designed before women became members, and so the space was not intended to accommodate them. When Peta Seaton was a by-election candidate, the Herald (7 December 1995) finding that she was a keen interior designer, asked whether she would turn her hand to Parliament House. ‘It’s a heritage building!’ she cried. ‘They wouldn’t let me near it’. The report that ‘she cried’ is

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156 This motion and debate are discussed at various points below. See Section 7.4.
interesting as is the marking of Seaton as a housekeeper. 157 As privatisation grew in the 1990s public spaces shrunk. 158

Parliamentary architecture is linked with culture (Goodsell 1988). 159 While Federal Parliament was constructed in a purpose built city and is surrounded by constitutional symbolism, the New South Wales Parliament sits in historic Macquarie Street bounded by the Domain and the Cahill Expressway and shaded by commercial buildings and the Catholic Cathedral. 160 The building was originally a hospital and has undergone various renovations (see Hawker 1971, Parliament of New South Wales 1987, 1995b). Interviewee 5 said that a female Minister’s aggressively defensive attitude extended to casual meetings in the lifts, as though the building prevented amicability. 161

The visitor entering from Macquarie Street is greeted by a diverse scene. The carpeted foyer has a column where the original paintwork has been exposed and portraits of historically important figures line the walls (Parliament of New South Wales 1987: 19ff). A modern fountain and atrium mark the entrance to newer areas that are closed to the public. The floor is hard and the shoes of women MLCs clatter and draw attention as they cross to the Chamber. The foyer portraits are in a dark English style and convey gravity. Although most of these are of males, they include pictures of the Queen and of Preston-Stanley. This is in fact the Assembly foyer. Connecting the two Chamber foyers is the Premiers’ Corridor, and the 38 pictures there are all of males.

157 This echoed the ‘new broom’ analogy used by the first Federal female MP (Inglis 1996)
158 The Government claimed that it was returning Government House to public use by having the Governor reside elsewhere, but also decided to lease to a private developer a building acquired by the State’s first Labor Government and leased the Showground to Fox Studios (Sydney Morning Herald 17 October 1995, 31 January 1996).
159 There have been studies of the Federal Parliament (McIntosh 1989, Fewtrell 1991, Warden 1995, Cope 2001) although none examines gender. Some former politicians and journalists have complained about the new building’s isolation and lack of character (Australian 9 May 1998, ABC Radio National Late Night Live 9 September 1998). The British Parliament has been described as a ‘men’s house’ (Rodgers 1981) and in the New Zealand ‘Bee Hive’, Waring (1997) argues that males are more impressed by the trappings of class advantage including the club-like chairs.
160 The symbolic influence of Parliament’s neighbours is difficult to assess. Cahill Expressway symbolises a complex array of Sydney’s problems from planning and architecture, to transport and pollution, to difficulties over funding of projects and private sector investment in Government enterprises. The Expressway is outdated and cannot cope with the volume of traffic flowing off the Harbour Bridge. It connects with a controversial Eastern Distributor designed to ease congestion of traffic from the southern suburbs and facilitate airport access. Some Interviewees (1, 24) stressed the importance of transport as an issue. Another (30) used the idea of expressways analogically to criticise policies that merely moved problems around and caused new ‘bottlenecks’. Occasionally, trains rumbling through the City Circle underground railways are heard in the Assembly.
161 When the old facilities became inadequate, extensions were built, giving each Member a separate office. Most Members were delighted but Labor MLA Michael Cleary lamented the effects of isolation on Members, who spent their time in their ‘cocoons’ dreaming up ways to be ‘nasty’ (Hansard Assembly 27 September 1984: 1526, 15 September 1987: 13551).
The mixture of architecture in the foyers reflects the gradual evolution of democracy, but the Chambers remain heavily steeped in tradition. The Council’s red décor is dominated by the busts of early statesmen, imaginatively clothed in classical garb to render an air of patrician authority. The green Assembly has similarly heavy drapes and on one wall a war memorial plaque is flanked by a sabre and rifle. Artificial lighting is needed in both chambers and the windowless Assembly has a gloomy green glow.

While many Members, especially MLCs, complain about office space, most seem content with the conditions. In the Assembly Chamber itself however, cramped conditions affect behaviour. The Assembly always seems warm, and this could be a result of the number of bodies as well as the setting of the air conditioning. The crowding (see photograph, Parliament of New South Wales 1987: 20) suggests that trousered legs are more comfortable. They sprawl across the bench space and the central floor space. Walking to the Despatch Box or lectern can be a problem, especially for female Ministers and getting into the backbench can be difficult when bulky individuals are already in place near the entry to the benches. On one occasion, a male Member made a game of refusing entry to a female (Observed: 2 June 1998).

One MLC (Hansard 5 June 1996: 2602) suggested that a newspaper photograph of the Premier leaning on the Governor’s Chair symbolised the Government’s attitude to the Vice-Regal office. Similar domination might be attributed to Members with broad shoulders imposing on others’ spaces, especially males beside females. Elbowing is unavoidable. When former Federal Member Harry Woods arrived in the Assembly after winning a by-election he relished the closer Chamber because ‘you can see the whites of the Opposition’s eyes and rip into them’ (Sydney Morning Herald 29 May 1996).

Members view proceedings from different perspectives. Members sitting mid-Chamber must turn to see the crossbenches and the Speaker. In the long narrow Assembly there is a 166

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162 British MP Glenda Jackson (1994) argued the gendered significance of the House of Commons having a rifle range but no creche.
163 When a new Opposition Member entered after a by-election, he was forced to sit in the aisle and the Premier suggested that he was joining the Government. The Member replied that his displacement showed how the ranks of the Opposition were growing.
164 However, the coolness of the Council has been noted by one female critic of the ways males manage the place. Keeping the physical setting cool might contribute to cooling passions.
165 Hanifa Deen (1998) describes how men ‘stretching out their legs and saying “no room” kept unaccompanied women in Bangladesh from boarding buses.
166 On the other hand, views from different galleries prompt different observations. By sitting in several galleries in succession the observer appreciates the effect of these differences, just as moving from one Chamber to another provides a contrast. The Council is a more intimate Chamber and Question Time is less theatrical. The observer in the Gallery could reach out and touch MLCs and the atmosphere
different view from each side.  One effect of the seating arrangements of Government on the Speaker’s right and Opposition on the left is that a right handed Speaker tends to hold a pen posed to record participation and calls. This tempts the Speaker to rest the left elbow and hunch the left shoulder. So it is more natural for the Speaker to watch those on his left and he is more likely to catch Opposition Members misbehaving.

If the Parliament met in different surroundings, its deliberations would be different. First, buildings and spaces are not neutral sites but have political meaning. Secondly, feminist theorists have argued that some spaces are gendered masculine. Thirdly, in Macquarie Street, there are traditional, masculine overtones in fittings and the uses to which spaces are put. The extent of the influence of space is however, difficult to estimate.

Section 3.8 Conclusions

All scholarly projects are set in specific contexts and some aspects of the political background to this study have direct gender relevance. Interviewee 7 expressed the spirit of the time when he described Jackie Kelly (who held the federal seat of Lindsay in Sydney’s outer west) as ‘an exciting candidate’. Labor preselected a female to challenge her at the 1998 election. There was certainly an increased awareness in media.

The northern or Ladies Gallery has a poor view. From the back a few Opposition backbenchers can be seen and from the front, straining, the tops of Ministers’ heads. Opposite (south) is Hansard’s Gallery and the view is little better. Reporters occasionally stand and peer down to ascertain which Member has spoken. When the chamber is rowdy, problems arise, especially concerning Opposition backbenchers who sit with their backs to Hansard. The upper public gallery with its wooden benches has a more complete view but crossbenchers are obscured. The leather benches of the Speaker’s Gallery provide the best view and are close to the Members although crossbenchers face away from the Gallery. This Gallery contains the cameras and so the Member with the call is likely to glance in this direction occasionally. Opposite (east) is the Press Gallery. Journalists see Members as the Speaker does, but the Speaker is obscured in his high-backed chair. The facial expressions, gestures and body language of the Speaker are hidden and so reporters cannot appreciate fully his interplay with Members. This has been corrected to an extent by the availability of television footage from the cameras in the Speaker’s Gallery, but this would entail journalists either viewing proceedings ‘live’ from their rooms or seeing the action later.

The position also tempts the Speaker to raise his left hand to his chin and to chop at his throat while Opposition Members are speaking.

The Sydney Morning Herald Index for example shows that more articles were devoted to ‘Women in politics’ in mid-decade.

| Sydney Morning Herald Index: numbers of entries for ‘Women in politics’ |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 8 | 5 | 11 | 26 | 41 | 13 | 10 |

difficult one for MPs to whom gender was a concern. Examination of the media coverage of parliament reveals approaches that have gender implications: a negative image of the political process, trivialization of the work of backbenchers and MLCs, attacks on ‘perks’, sexualisation of MPs, distrust of female leaders, metaphors from masculinist discourse, the influence of male ‘shock-jocks’ and campaigns against issues likely to be espoused by feminists. Female interviewees seemed to be more keenly aware of these problems.

Female advancement has not been helped by the dominance of Labor’s conservative right wing. The branch has been slow to adopt effective affirmative action policies and Labor women have found some problems with the Party’s tradition of mateship. The Left faction has been relatively powerless and reluctant to move where its factional interests are at risk. A perceived ‘gender gap’ in support has led Labor strategists to believe that male voters are Labor’s more natural constituency. The incidence of gendered behaviour seems to be encouraged by some aspects of Labor’s approach to the robust Legislative Assembly and by aspects of the Premier’s leadership style.

The 1995 election campaign set the tone for the period. Women’s policy was given some prominence but law and order was emphasised and allegations of sexual harassment were never far from the surface. Interviewees said that shortage of time influenced their activities and the passing of time affected their perceptions. Some aspects of the spaces in and around Parliament have gender implications. Questions of security, access and architecture tie in closely with cultural aspects of the environs and working conditions such as crowding, facilities, staff, procedures and traditions. For the researcher, an appreciation of the different viewpoints available to observers is an important consideration.

The relevance of place emphasises the importance of the scholar being present for observation. 170 Asked whether ‘reception of casual visitors’ was efficient seven interviewees disagreed and fifteen agreed, leaving twelve neither agreeing nor disagreeing. 171 Two interviewees commented that a researcher should know more about that than they. There were no problems of access for interviews because all were by appointment, but there were some postponements. Of 34 interviews, 26 were conducted in Parliament House, as were two of

170 Usually I sat wherever Attendants found space. Twice my local MLA booked me into the Speakers Gallery. Twice there was no space but I watched proceedings on the video screen in the foyer.
171 The Annual Report of the Legislative Council (1996-97) shows that casual visitor numbers fell from 31,535 in the previous year to 21,181. The number for the following year seems to be slightly lower again. While the number of sitting days fell from 64 to 58, it seems unlikely that this accounts for the drop because bookings fell only slightly, from 28,016 to 27,632.
seven pilot interviews with ex-MPs. The remainder took place in the electorate offices of MLAs and various places for ex-Members.

New South Wales shared many aspects of the period with other systems. While other governments for example, were wary of offending talkback radio hosts, the combination of factors prevailing there was unique. With these vital aspects of context established, the data can be presented accurately. In Chapters 4 and 5, distinct understandings of ‘representation’ are addressed. Chapter 4 examines the observable physical presence of male and female members. This returns the study to the rudimentary question of the meaning of the sex ratios.
Chapter 4: Sex Ratios and Representational Ideals

Section 4.1 Introduction

According to the *Daily Telegraph* (27 August 1925) Preston-Stanley said that her presence in Parliament should not be taken as merely representative of one sex because women are vitally concerned with all national questions. While Preston-Stanley claimed to represent people generally, others regarded her presence as an important milestone for women. Representation is a difficult concept with layers of meaning. It is complicated further when some MPs claim special representative abilities and others try to stereotype opponents.

When asked about the importance of different aspects of their roles (C:viii) interviewees gave high priority to their work ‘as representative’. Twenty-two interviewees rated the role of MP very important ‘in general’ and ‘as representative’. Fourteen males and eight females thought this role very important, but more males gave ‘very important’ answers in all aspects of the role. While most interviewees regarded the role of representative as important this does not explain how interviewees understood that function.

While this study aims to move beyond concentration on the sex of the MP, the rudimentary question of presence is an important starting point for discussions of gender. During the 1990s popular arguments that there should be more female MPs drew on theories raised in official inquiries. Shortage of women was attributed to preselection processes (Reynolds 1995), the electoral system (McGarity 1994), media presentation of female MPs (Eveline and Booth 1997), the parliamentary culture (Bielski 1995), and the reluctance of women to come forward (Tremblay 1996).

172 ‘Very important’ responses for other aspects of role were ‘watchdog on government’ 18, ‘symbol of democracy’ 15, ‘legislator’ 14, ‘role model’ 12 and ‘team player’ 8. These findings are discussed below (Chapter 7).
Arguments about representation have often been confused. Section 4.2 distinguishes the strands of this concept, emphasizing the difference between descriptive and substantive modes. One reason for confusion is that representation mostly occurs through intermediary parties. Section 4.3 examines proposals for implementing representative ideals, either through major parties or bypassing them. There has been a suggestion that seats in parliament should be ‘dedicated’ for people with certain characteristics and a ‘Women’s Party’ has run candidates in some elections. Section 4.4 shows that interviewees supported the idea of a 50:50 ratio when parliament is considered collectively. Section 4.5 examines the explanations interviewees gave for the current ratios and why 50:50 was ideal. Section 4.6 looks at interviewees’ perceptions of their individual representative roles. Particular attention is given to the ‘whom’ of representation and whether males and females expressed any special responsibility to represent men and women per se. In Section 4.7 additional evidence is provided by examination of representative ideals in inaugural speeches. As many of the aims expressed by new MPs concern policies and issues, this discussion leads into Chapter 5 which concentrates on substantive representation.

Section 4.2 Theories and political realities of representation

In popular discussions, the term ‘representation’ has been used loosely and in scholarly discourse it is regarded as ‘notoriously diffuse and recalcitrant’ (Brennan and Hamlin 1999: 109). Elaine Thompson (1999: 42) describes representation as a ‘complex idea’ and notes that ‘few agree on its content’. Women’s presence in parliaments has been described as ‘relative absence’, ‘imbalance’, ‘disproportion’ and inadequate or ‘under representation’. Terms such as ‘gender disparity’ and ‘sexual imbalance’ imply relativity such as the 15:84 female: male ratio of MLAs in 1995. Raw numbers however, do not explain how many men or women there should be, nor why fifteen women won seats. Explanations appear only when numbers are placed in some perspective. For example, the sex ratio in the general population explains the popular ideal of 50:50.

Public opinion surveys conducted in 1994 found popular views that there were ‘too few’ female MPs and that most people wanted more (Sydney Morning Herald 7 November 1994). General notions of representation are however, not consistent with the diverse functions that

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parliaments and MPs perform. While there is an obvious appeal to equity similar to that applying to any form of employment, the equal opportunity argument takes on special meaning in the political context.

Sawer (2002: 5-7) notes that under-representation of women has become a ‘slogan’ and describes several levels of meaning that have attached to it. These levels include arguments about justice, utility and symbolism, and the representation of values, perspectives and experiences and interests. 174 Parliament evolved to meet practical need and theories are often post-hoc justification for politically expedient developments (Birch 1971: 106) and practitioners are quicker than theorists to seek alternatives to current arrangements (Phillips 1994: 58). Rather than acting as a plain mirror that ‘re-presents’ the sexes equally, parliament behaves like a refracting prism with an output that can differ markedly from the inputs (Jones and Jonasdottir 1988: 5). While resemblance is sometimes held to be necessary for representation to occur, it is not sufficient (Watson 1995: 142). 175

The symbolic role attaches easily to parliaments collectively, while the action of performing as a legislative agent on a constituent’s behalf entails an individual role. In the Parliament as a whole, people from minorities have 42 MLCs among whom they might find a representative who shares some of their experience. When constituents approach an individual MLA it is usually because they recognise the parliamentarian’s official responsibility to act as their agent before government. As this study aims to focus on behaviour, this latter concept seems to have immediate relevance, but it remains important to look at the personal characteristics of MPs. 176 Current modes of representation are challenged by the appearance in parliament of previously omitted minorities. While the collectivist theory that parliament should be a social microcosm emphasises the need for ‘mirrors’, the more individualist approach is that voters need ‘mouthpieces’ (Sawer 1997b). The mirror metaphor accords with the descriptive category and answers the question of whom MPs represent. The mouthpiece analogy

174 A study of a large corporation’s personnel for example, found that ‘women were virtually unrepresented in the company’s top echelons’ (Sydney Morning Herald 19 May 1997). This is a curious usage because company directors are appointed to represent the interests of shareholders collectively. Parliamentarians are unique because they represent constituents formally. Hannah Pitkin (1969: 16) says that the etymology of representation suggests a symbolic property of ‘making present of something which is absent.. not literally.. indirectly.. through an intermediary’.

175 ‘Political representation’ is a name for a particular phenomenon rather than a description of a specifically located case of representation as it is generally understood. While resemblance seems to imply visual similarity, in political contexts it might mean ‘of like mind’.

176 A problem with explaining sex ratios by examining elections is that the term ‘gender gap’ is commonly used to refer to the behaviour of male and female electors. While some research attempts to describe and explain differing support for parties and for particular candidates, especially leaders, according to the ‘gender’ of the voter, most analysis focusses on the biological category of sex (Renfrow 1994, Robb 1996, Leithner 1997).
approximates substantive representation and addresses the question of which issues MPs represent. 177

The descriptive and substantive concepts partially parallel upper and lower house electoral methods. It is easy to relate microcosmic ideas to chambers elected as a whole on proportional representation, but where a single Member has exclusive responsibility for an electorate it is easier to think of him or her as a mouthpiece concerned with substantive issues. In lower houses the individual MP relies to a greater extent on being a disembodied and sexless agent, and so questions of gender are more challenging there. MLCs, who are elected by the whole State and who theoretically represent all electors, face a different challenge. While MLAs have to ensure that they represent all electors, MLCs resolve some of the ‘dilemmas’ of representation (Sawer 1999) by specialising. For example, some female Labor MLCs have aimed to provide representation to women in prison. Obviously this does not require that they have themselves experienced incarceration.

Descriptive categories are liable to be attacked for essentialism. When specialised parties arise they are accused of fundamentalism and exclusivity. Naïve descriptivism is vulnerable to reductio ad absurdum attacks: if parliament should reflect society, then it should reflect society in all its visible facets, including the ignorant, the hostile and the criminal. If the microcosmic principle applies to sex, then it applies to age, race and religion. Interviewee 22 suggested that multiple requirements are debilitating. He argued that if society insisted that there should be one Lebanese Member, then someone else would say that you must have two, one male and one female. While a microcosm need contain only those aspects of identity that are politically meaningful, the aspects to be included are contested. 178 It is important then, to approach cautiously the notions of better representation and greater representativeness.

177The ‘who’ or descriptive arguments emphasise the importance of ‘presence’ (see Phillips 1991).
178 Parliament’s Standing Committee on Social Issues held an inquiry into the representation of Aborigines (Australian 6 July 1997), but the report declined to recommend ‘dedicated seats’. The Herald (30 November 1998) said that while Aboriginal people needed a ‘voice’, it should be a ‘meaningful role’ and recommended that parties pursue equal opportunity. Franca Arena advocated a quota plan to get indigenous people into parliament through ‘special representation’ but the Premier opposed dedicated seats because this was ‘not how democracy works’ (Sydney Morning Herald 21 September 1995, 3 March 1998). His idea of representation is linked firmly to existing electoral arrangements. Mr Carr has also argued (ABC Radio National In the National Interest 18 October 1998) that MPs are not mere delegates but have a degree of the Burkean trustee about them and might be expected to show leadership and to consider the common good. Competing concepts of representation are at work here. His endorsement (albeit qualified) of Liberal Prime Minister Howard’s lower house mandate on tax reform rather than the Democrats’ Senate mandate is consistent with a belief that single member electorates are closer to the representative ideal (ABC Television Stateline 9 October 1998). Interestingly, his observation (above p.48) about an ‘electronic democracy’ is more consistent with the mass approach than with geographically discrete electorates.
Section 4.3 Implementation of gender representation through elections

Popular demands that outsiders be included in Parliament relate only loosely to theories of representation. Arguments about means have included calls to change electoral systems, practical attempts to reform parties and the rise of a party for women. One proposal for electoral reform is the ‘Carlton Plan’. Noting that men win more seats than women do in electoral competition, Federal Liberal MP Jim Carlton proposed eradicating the ‘win-lose’ situation. He proposed that a male and female be elected for each seat from separate male and female lists so that parliaments contained 50% men and 50% women (Carlton 1994). This proposal addresses the broader gender issues only tangentially. If males competed against males and females against females in separate elections, a form of political apartheid would arise and the sex of the candidate would not provide a means for voters to distinguish between candidates.

As most candidates are endorsed by parties, these organisations have an intermediary role in representation. Advocates for greater presence of women have targeted party preselection processes and major parties have responded in various ways. Independents argue that their commitment to their electorates is not compromised by membership of a party and most MPs occasionally feel the conflict between loyalty to party and electorate. When Tony Kelly replaced Patricia Staunton in the Council (Prime Television News [Orange] 4 September 1997), there was little public comment about the change in sex balance. The Right chose Kelly to strengthen rural representation at the request of Carr and State Secretary John Della Bosca (Sydney Morning Herald 8 September 1997).

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179 Women Into Politics Inc. recommended that the Commonwealth Parliament’s Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters investigate having two Members per electorate and the Australian Women’s Party aimed to amend the Australian Constitution to entrench this as a principle (Sydney Morning Herald 12 August 1995).

180 A variation on the Carlton proposal could make all parties nominate a male and female in every seat. Voters could then decide between them and sex would be foregrounded as a variable.

181 When the Government was deciding where to place the new headquarters for the State’s electricity authorities, Mick Clough raised the possibility of resigning unless Bathurst got it (Sydney Morning Herald 13, 16 September 1995). Clarence MP Harry Woods called on the Premier to remember Labor’s ‘true constituency’ of unionists and country people when deciding policy on logging national parks (Sydney Morning Herald 16 September 1996). Criticising Pauline Hanson for her hostility to critics, Labor Senator Margaret Reynolds stressed the importance of parliamentarians representing all constituents and said that it was ‘reprehensible for any parliamentarian to refuse to represent a particular group’ (Hansard Senate 1 May 1996: 605). It is unusual that Hanson, then an Independent, was accused of neglecting constituents. Most Independents argue that their roles are not complicated and compromised by party membership. Hanson later formed a party (Grant 1997, Kingston 1999).
Thomas (1994) found that female American legislators have longer involvement than males in party organisations. In Australia the Labor Party provides the most thorough training ground. In Cabramatta in 1995 Labor’s Meagher and Liberal Rocky Gattellari were the main candidates. The younger Meagher had experience in Labor machine politics, particularly Young Labor (Sydney Morning Herald 7 September 1992), while Gattellari nominated very late. Meagher exploited Gattellari’s less disciplined approach and won the seat easily (Smith, T. 2000b: 27). Some Opposition interviewees admitted socialisation in Labor politics but none had moved in the opposite direction. In the Parramatta by-election, the Liberal Party sought a ‘star’ candidate and approached some ex-footballers. A local Councillor who sought preselection, likened party headquarters to a ‘dowager duchess’ seeking ‘busty blondes or football players’ (Australian 19 May 1994). 182 Asked whether ‘MPs are well qualified’ (C:ix), seven interviewees agreed while 12 disagreed, five strongly. This shows some confusion about what qualifies a person to be a parliamentarian. The expectations of parties that act as gatekeepers might differ markedly from popular understandings of the criteria. 183

Although major parties have made adjustments, progress has been too slow for some excluded minorities. In recent years an Indigenous Peoples Party, a Seniors Party, Grey Power, and a Women’s Party have contested elections. 184 While the major parties evolved around sectional interests of labour and capital, it is not easy to distinguish visually the Labor MPs from their opponents. Women MPs are easily distinguished but their difference does not make sex a political cleavage in the way that it be would if women were elected for a Women’s Party. Many women in major parties have opposed the formation of an exclusive Women’s Party. Meredith Burgmann called the Women’s Party a ‘silly idea’ that assumes ‘women all have the same political views, which they don’t’. Conservative critics see such parties as ‘fronts’ to siphon preferences towards Labor. Liberal Lord Mayoral candidate Kathryn Greiner said that ‘women’s issues should be treated with a much wider focus than any single-issue party’ (Sydney Morning Herald 12 August 1995). Meanwhile, other small parties, such as those dedicated to abolition of the family court and greater freedom for ‘four wheel drive’ vehicles and shooters, provide de facto representation for some males and their interests. So if arguments about pursuing the common good are to be used against the notion of a Women’s Party, they should be aimed elsewhere also.

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182 When Marise Payne sought preselection, ten years experience in the offices of four prominent Members aroused suspicion in the Party and she gained endorsement only after private sector experience (Sydney Morning Herald 5 April 1997).
183 Marian Simms (2001: 227) notes that female MPs are more likely than male MPs to have had experience on the staffs of MPs, and usually Ministers.
184 See for example the list of parties at the 1999 election (Green 1999: 46).
Responding to claims by activist Joan Bielski that the major parties caused ‘women’s cultural alienation’ from politics, Pam Allan said that arguments about offensive language ‘are probably reasonably substantial’, but noted that many women ‘excel in debate’ and show ‘no uneasiness using parliamentary procedures’ (*Hansard Assembly* 18 October 1995: 2003). 185 The Women’s Party argued that parliamentarians should work to make chambers places where women would want to serve. Allan argued that support for a Women’s Party was not the best way to promote more women in Parliament and a male colleague also recommended the Labor way to parity (*Hansard Assembly* 18 October 1995: 2003). Allan conceded that the party would raise awareness but concluded that a separate women’s party ‘has not been the solution this century’. Liberal Patricia Forsythe advocated her party’s approach to planning for the 1996 Federal Election (*Hansard Council* 19 October 1995: 2055).

Advocates of increased women’s presence want it achieved under certain conditions. A Women’s Party with a women’s platform and endorsing women candidates seems to be an ideal way to foreground sex. Voters would then support women because they are female, just as they vote for candidates because they are endorsed by a specific party. Unfortunately, a genuine ‘women’s party’ is vulnerable to attacks as ‘single-issue’ with a strong mandate on very few issues. As women within major parties want the correct female candidate, major parties maintain a veto. Federal MP Jeannette McHugh said that she would always prefer a ‘Left’ man to a ‘Right’ woman (Henderson 1999: 73). As long as it is assumed that the major parties provide the best representation for the population as a whole, then it is possible that they provide the best representation for women anyway. Sex should not be allowed to generate a representational ghetto. 186

Eventually, arguments about major parties providing the best representation for women turn on the question of whether the major parties provide the best ‘representation’ generally. Falling support for major parties shows that large numbers of voters are not confident that they do so. 187 If there is a crisis in representation, then the challenges about women’s representation should assist major parties to understand the problems. This does not mean that women should have to solve the broader problems faced by parties in order to be accepted as candidates. Often, the issue of women candidates is conflated with the issue of addressing the

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185 Later, Allan demonstrated her robustness by telling an opponent ‘It’s not a wet dream. It’s a question’. She said that she had to speak out that way because of Opposition attitudes and actions (*Daily Telegraph* 11 April 1997).


187 Between the 1995 and 1999 elections for the Legislative Assembly for example, the combined vote for Labor and Coalition fell from 85.2% to 75.9% although Labor’s improved almost 1%. In the Council, the Coalition vote fell over 11% while Labor’s rose 2%. See Green 1995b, 1999.
voting ‘gender gap’. The confusion suggests that for more women to be elected, women voters must rally to support them, but it is not clear that women voters support women candidates just because they are women. Indeed, many women voters might resent the suggestion.

Candidates present voters with complex choices. All of the voters in a blue-ribbon Liberal seat for example, can expect that their MP will give them all equal service as their constituency agent, but realise that he or she is also in most cases a partisan committed to voting along party lines on specific issues. Some feminists early in the twentieth century pursued a ‘non-party’ ideal. For some the corrupting influence of parties led to the espousal of extra-parliamentary political measures and advocacy of using the vote to achieve specific ends. For others, the desire to avoid party influence translated into a need to run as Independents (Lake 1999: 139ff.).

Proposals for changes to secure a better balance between the sexes in parliaments have not been greeted with universal approval. Suggestions about changing the electoral system seem to be essentialist, moves to alter party preselection processes or to form new parties have been resisted and the non-party option has little prospect of success. The main advantage gained from the debates around these proposals is that they help to clarify thinking about ‘relationship between the representative and the represented’ (Jewell 1985: 99) and about the electoral systems that formalise the relationship (Pitkin 1969, Birch 1971).

Section 4.4 Parliament as representative collection – the presence of the sexes

Interviewees held strong opinions about the sex ratios in Parliament. Asked ‘how many women should there be?’ (C:xxx) 21 interviewees said ‘many more’, and five others volunteered ‘50%’ or ‘50-50’, which is many more than current ratios. Four interviewees chose ‘some more’. One answered ‘the same’. No interviewee chose ‘fewer’ or argued that it does not matter, although two said that you ‘cannot tell’ and one volunteered ‘as decided by the electorate’. Interviewee sex was important in explaining these perceptions (see Table 4.1). Males gave all of the ‘same’ and ‘cannot tell’ responses and two of the four ‘some more’ responses. So three times as many males (six) as females (two) did not endorse the idea that there should be ‘many more’ female MPs. While twice as many males (11) said there should be many more female MPs than demurred (6), seven times as many females (15) said there should be many more as did not (2).

188 Media comment about the aim of Labor’s ‘Emily’s List’ organisation is often confusing (e.g. Australian Financial Review 13 November 1996, Canberra Times 22 March 1998).
### Table 4.1 ‘How many women should there be?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Sex</th>
<th>Many more</th>
<th>Another answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviewees had clear opinions about the reasons for the ratios. Canadian political scientist Manon Tremblay (1996) observes that attempts to explain the scarcity of women take one of two approaches, ‘blame the victim’ or ‘blame the system’. The former suggests that women are unsuitable to be MPs while the latter says that political institutions are at fault. If women are regarded as the problem, then they are offered advice about how to change themselves. If institutions are seen as the problem, then suggestions are made about changing the institutions or bypassing the barriers. One way of distinguishing these approaches is to ask interviews about their attitudes to affirmative action.

Asked whether ‘affirmative action programs have gone too far’ in society generally, four males and two females agreed while eight females and five males disagreed strongly (A:ii). Among those who approved affirmative action generally, some said that female candidates needed more ‘training’ or ‘empowerment’. This reflects the approach of the Liberal Women’s Forum that claimed success in the 1996 Federal Election. As Simms (1993: 27) says, Liberal women regarded Labor’s affirmative action policy as ‘apparently anathema to their idea of individualism’. An Opposition interviewee said that ‘men just naturally think about politics and prepare themselves. Women won’t do that’ but a Government interviewee argued that while training programs were useful, they should be held for men too. When interviewees were asked whether they approved of affirmative action programs to increase the numbers of female MPs, some said that the job should go to the ‘best person’ (16, 22) regardless of sex. Others referred to ‘merit’ (5), ‘the same terms’ (29), and the need to ‘earn your position’ (32). These answers imply confidence that merit applies currently and that no remedial action is needed to ensure that the ‘best person’ for the job is able to attain it ‘on the same terms’.  

Some interviewees compared opportunity for women in parliament and other occupations:

- ‘A backbencher is both a local member which is a huge job in itself and the equivalent of a general manager or senior manager’ (2).

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189 Party is important here because the four interviewees who agreed strongly with the proposition were from the Opposition, but only one of the 13 disagreeing strongly was. See below Table 6.5.

190 Liberal women believe that this is possible. Kathy Sullivan, the sole female among six candidates for the federal Speakership, said that ‘women in the Liberal Party are expected to achieve on merit and I expect to get this on merit’. She did not become Speaker (Sydney Morning Herald 11 March 1996).
• ‘Affirmative action programs have been successful in other areas and I think they would work for Parliament’ (6).
• ‘As in the general community, I don’t see why we shouldn’t devise some program that achieves similar things in the Parliament’ (17).

Scutt (1996a: 5) notes arguments that employment criteria used to select on merit are culture bound and that the dominant culture has been white, male and urbanised. Interviewees who strongly supported affirmative action (e.g. 1, 3, 4, 6) were not denying that the job should go to the ‘best person’ but advocated action because current arrangements prevented this match occurring. So interviewees disagreed about whether there is a problem and also about how to address it. 191 Bacchi (1996) locates tension between equal opportunity and affirmative action along the political continuum with conservatives likely to stress opportunity while radicals stress outcomes. Most interviewees supported the principle of equal opportunity and argued that women must be able and willing to compete on equal terms. All agreed in principle that females should face only those obstacles that men also face (see also below Chapter 6). They varied in their assessment of whether such obstacles exist but only some Coalition males expressed confidence that current electoral arrangements deliver ideal outcomes.

The idea that women do not think naturally about politics might not seem to be a criticism of them, but it tends to hold them responsible for their absence. One interviewee strongly agreed that affirmative action had gone too far but still thought that there should be many more women. This suggests that the interviewee thought that affirmative action bends the rules unacceptably. Asked about possible explanations for the sex ratio (C:xxviii) only two interviewees found ‘women are apolitical’ very accurate but 18 (including 11 women) rated ‘parties preselect more men’ very accurate. Generally then, interviewees, especially females were more inclined to ‘blame the system’ than the victim.

There are arguments that women’s numbers in most occupations rise according to their status in society generally, and so numbers of parliamentarians reflect social trends. On the other hand, because parliament makes the laws that ensure opportunity and facilitate social equality it seems odd to think of parliament as following general trends as ‘the last bastion’ (Reynolds 1995). 192 Proportions of women in other occupations do not inspire optimism anyway. 193

191 In Federal Parliament following the change of Government in 1996, Labor’s Senator Margaret Reynolds (Hansard Senate 26 March 1997) asked whether the Government was ‘opposed’ to ‘gender policy reform, a comprehensive women’s budget process and a 50-50 gender balance for the proposed people’s convention’. Senator Jocelyn Newman replied that the Government was ‘hell-bent on seeing that women get a fair go’ and believed that ‘merit works’.
192 During the so-called ‘Tripodi affair’, Greens MLC Lee Rhiannon argued that the Government’s promise to make the state a place where women might feel safe was meaningless when it could not guarantee their safety in parliament (Sydney Morning Herald 13 November 2000).

Disadvantage is cyclical. Lack of political power translates into lesser shares of wealth, high welfare dependency, discrimination at law, difficulties in education, and lack of protection against changes to industrial relations. These conditions then prevent the disadvantaged from gaining entry to parliament. Cockburn (1991: 215) attacks organisational resistance by men, who ‘generate institutional impediments to stall women’s advance.... At a cultural level, they foster solidarity between men and sexualise, threaten, marginalise, control and divide women’. While men have successfully broken sex stereotype barriers, women have a tenuous hold on many careers considered ‘non-traditional’ for them (cf. Williams 1989), so there seems little reason to regard parliament as especially slow to change.

Section 4.5 Interviewee perceptions of representation

Affirmative action is necessary when quick natural change is not expected. Of the interviewees who did not say that there should be many more females, four entered Post 1992, three 1988-91 and only one Pre 1988. So the ‘many more’ response gains support with service or possibly with age. The generational difference was explained by Interviewee 3 who said that without affirmative action, women would ‘wait forever’. Older Members have heard many claims that natural increase will produce balance eventually, but experience proves otherwise. Newer Members have less experience of the systemic barriers excluding women.

Projections have been made of likely progress into the future based on natural increase, but even with ‘quotas’, many Labor women doubt that targets will be reached. Depending on which dates are used, at the 1995 election the numbers of female MLAs increased by some

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193 Professor Leonie Still found that between 1984 and 1992, female managers in leading Australian companies increased only 1% to about 4%. The USA rate was 10%. Clare Burton says that merit has been defined as ‘fitting with the existing culture and won’t rock the boat’. Barbara Cail of Chief Executive Women’s Network says that Australia’s obsession with sport affects business. Often when women leave to start businesses, this is seen as legitimising different career paths (Australian 19 April 1997). While women increased their workforce participation from some 15% in the 1950s to 60% in 1990, the rate has slowed. Young women tend to work full time then leave to have children and resume part time. The rate is complicated by financial disincentives and by the growth in sole parents who are mainly women (Sydney Morning Herald 21 April 1998).
half from 1994 or two-thirds if compared with the previous election of 1991. If that trend had continued 22 (or 25) women would have been returned in 1999. The idea that every successful woman makes it easier for those coming after her was hardly borne out at the 1999 election. In the Council female MLC numbers fell to nine with only one new female returned. MLA numbers increased slightly to 17, but the reduction of total seats to 93 meant that they formed 18.27% rather than the 15.2% of 1995.

The history of women’s political achievements casts doubt on natural increase. Women were enfranchised earlier in Australia (1902) than in many systems that have more women MPs and New South Wales has not led Australian parliaments for achievements by women. The Constitutional Centenary Foundation Newsletter (March 1994) noted that among twenty-two countries, only New Zealand had enfranchised women earlier (1893), but that by ‘Women MPs as % of all MPs’ in 1991, nine countries including Sweden (38%, franchise in 1919) led Australia which had only 7%. According to figures on lower house percentages collected by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, by 2003, Australia ranked twenty-third of some 150 countries (IPU 2003). Table 4.2 selects statistics for countries mentioned in this inquiry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Women as % lower house members</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison with women MPs elsewhere is problematic when political cultures are diverse. Scandinavian countries have high ratios of female parliamentarians but they also have a

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194 In her Valedictory, Marlene Goldsmith (Hansard Council 3 December 1998: 11140) described the Council as a ‘trailblazer for the representation of women’ and hoped that the number would be ‘maintained and exceeded’.
195 See Green 1999 and Smith, R. 2000 for details of the election.
196 There can be sudden changes. Australia’s 19.5% in mid 1996, was almost a threefold increase in five years (See Table 1.2 above). At the 1997 Election, the British proportion rose to almost 20%. Sudden increases could indicate a lifting of barriers. See also ‘Women in Parliament in the Council of Europe Member States’ [http://www.dhdirhr.coe.fr/equality/Eng/Table2.htm](http://www.dhdirhr.coe.fr/equality/Eng/Table2.htm) pp.1-2 Accessed 7 November 2000.
higher proportion of parliamentarians in the population. 197 The Australian trend is in the opposite direction. Premier Carr oversaw the reduction of the Assembly from 99 to 93 Members in 1998, and criticised over-representation. 198 Many other criteria could be used.

The Scandinavian ratios have been achieved in social democracies that pursue outcomes more seriously than the capitalist or liberal model that emphasises individualism. However, as one study of MP sex ratios in Argentina shows, it is not possible in the short term to adopt a ‘Scandinavian political culture’ (Jones, M. 1998: 5).

Epochal comparisons suggest that women are achieving a more secure tenure in Australian parliaments. Despite disproportionate preselection in and election to marginals, women hold these well. A ‘sophomore surge’ (Holbrook and Tidmarch 1991) and the advantages of incumbency ensure that many of them are re-elected. Indeed Krebs and Walsh (1996) argue that women are better at defending seats than winning them initially. The problem for women then is how to break in. As well as the arguments about affirmative action described above, there have been suggestions that a proportional representation electoral system would be advantageous to women.

There are comparatively high proportions of female MPs in chambers using proportional representation, and these chambers are often regarded as being more reflective of the community. Interviewee 17 noted the Council’s representation of ‘minorities’ and another (20) argued that it contains more ‘moderates’. Interviewee 19 suggested a better balance could be achieved in the Assembly with proportional representation as used in the Council but this approach has problems. Critics cite instability and minority governments, but a more serious problem is that proportional representation need not necessarily produce sex representativeness. The system used in the Council delivers broader party representation only. There is no reason to believe that the system must deliver better representation for sex than other categories. The Assembly for example had a much better representation of young people than the Council did. 199

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197 Arend Lijphart (1998) has argued that proportional representation could be adopted in the USA House of Representatives together with increasing the congressional term and boosting the number of members by 50%. Examining Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, West Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the U.K., the New Zealand Royal Commission ‘Report on the Electoral System’ (see Norton 1990: 319) found that only Ireland (15,487) had a smaller ‘overall population per seat’ than the Scandinavian countries (all between 20,000 and 30,000). West Germany had 110,615 people per seat and Australia had the next highest ratio with 69,196.

198 He said that almost everyone in Tasmania is an MP and doubted that the Northern Territory would become a state because it could not fill the Senate membership (Sydney Morning Herald 22 May 1995). Carr’s seat (Maroubra) grew from 37,945 enrolled voters to 44,129 (Green 1995b: 18, 1999: 22).

199 The youngest MPs, Meagher, Harrison, Seaton, Brogden, Tripodi and Oakeshott were MLAs.
While the Council had fewer women than the Assembly (14:15 in 1995, 12:16 in late 1998), their proportion of Members (1995) was twice as high (a third: a sixth). It is difficult to prove however, that the Council sex ratio results from the electoral system rather than other variables. Interviewee 11 commented that the Council is regarded as a career backwater. It is not considered an ideal location for ambitious parliamentarians so competition for places is not as great and it has a gentler reputation than the Assembly.  

Proportional representation allocates seats to parties according to their vote. This favours smaller parties more than single-member electorates do, and so the Shooters Party, Call to Australia (or Christian Democrats), Greens, Better Future for our Children and Australian Democrats secured seats in the Council, while the Assembly had only Members from the Labor, Liberal and National Parties and Independents. Parties decided the numbers of Government and Opposition females by controlling positions on lists and women headed only six of the 27 tickets in 1995.  

The minor party Members are crossbenchers and these are no more likely to be female. Female membership of the crossbenches in 1995 was one in three in the Assembly and two in seven in the Council (five in nine in late 1998). These proportions are similar.  

Parties determine the sex ratios. Asked how many women there should be, one interviewee answered ‘as the electorate decides’. The response was a normative judgment only insofar as it endorses the status quo. Besides, in very few cases can it be shown that the elector decides between candidates on the basis of their sex. This interviewee, for example, was not opposed by a candidate in all respects similar except being of the opposite sex. For this to occur, his party would have had to endorse two candidates. In practice then, the electorate did not ‘decide’ on the basis of his sex and does not decide the sex ratios in parliaments collectively. While the election ensures that there is ‘representativeness’ in parliament, this is only by party. The electorate decides the party ratio but preselectors have decided the sex ratio among candidates. A more accurate answer might be ‘as parties decide’. Recognising the priority given to parties, Susan Ryan (1999: 193) has observed that for most Labor women, ‘factions come ahead of feminism’. Most parties have adopted some form of affirmative action because

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200 An obvious exception is when parties look to the Council for their Leaders. In these cases lower house seats are found for them.
201 Diverse patterns in lower and upper house elections suggest that voters discriminate in some cases (see Green 1995a: 76-80). However, most voters simply endorse a party ticket in the upper house. Of Labor’s 1,325,819 votes in 1999, 1,306,409 were ‘ticket votes’ (Green 1999: 50).
202 Besides, the Currell-Ross formula shows that in 1995, the ‘women’s handicap factor’ was very similar in both chambers. In the Assembly it was 1.64 and in the Council 1.60. See Currell 1974, Smith, T. 2000b: 43-5.

It was once thought that electors might be reluctant to accept women candidates, but this has been proven wrong (Mackerras 1980, Hewitt and Mattinson 1989, Anderson 1997). Rather, preselections are crucial in a system dominated by two major parties that hold many seats with safe margins. Parties have preselected women as ‘flag wavers’ in unwinnable seats (Sawer and Simms 1993: 62-3). Tables 4.3 and 4.4 show the marginality of Assembly seats for which the major parties ran candidates in 1995.

**Table 4.3: Marginality of seats with major party female candidates 1995 election**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor female candidates</th>
<th>Seat Marginality</th>
<th>Liberal female candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 (20.8%)</td>
<td>Safe (&gt;10%)</td>
<td>2 (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (8.3%)</td>
<td>Incumbent 5-10%</td>
<td>1 (7.15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (4.15%)</td>
<td>Incumbent marginal &lt;5%</td>
<td>3 (21.45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (8.3%)</td>
<td>Not held marginal &lt;5%</td>
<td>2 (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (16.6%)</td>
<td>Not held 5-10%</td>
<td>1 (7.15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 (41.7%)</td>
<td>Unwinnable &gt;10%</td>
<td>5 (35.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 24</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.4: Marginality of seats with major party male candidates 1995 election**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor male candidates</th>
<th>Seat Marginality</th>
<th>Liberal male candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 (17.3%)</td>
<td>Safe (&gt;10%)</td>
<td>15 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 (22.6%)</td>
<td>Incumbent 5-10%</td>
<td>7 (10.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (10.6%)</td>
<td>Incumbent marginal &lt;5%</td>
<td>4 (6.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (10.6%)</td>
<td>Not held marginal &lt;5%</td>
<td>8 (12.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 (14.6%)</td>
<td>Not held 5-10%</td>
<td>18 (27.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 (24%)</td>
<td>Unwinnable &gt;10%</td>
<td>13 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 75</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total 65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Female candidates were preselected disproportionately in unwinnable seats. In Labor’s case over 40% female candidates contested notionally unwinnable seats, while only 24% male candidates had such seats. For the Liberals, over 35% female candidates were in unwinnable seats while 20% male candidates were. At the other extreme, Labor women were marginally better off than Labor men because over 20% Labor’s females were contesting safe seats while only 17% of males were. Liberal females were not as well off as Liberal men because while
14% of them had safe seats, 23% of male candidates did. The success of candidates is indicative. Labor ran 99 candidates of whom 50.2% were successful. It ran 24 females of whom 37.5% won seats. The Liberal success rate was 36.7% over all and 28.6% for female candidates (Smith 2000b: 45).

Some interviewees added comments when asked how many female MPs there should be. Interviewee 21 commented ‘we’re surrounded by them here!’ While this is not how most interviewees saw the sex ratios, it is a valid observation. The perception of being ‘surrounded’ suggests realities other than the sex ratio among colleagues. Most New South Wales MPs have female secretaries. An impression of being ‘surrounded’ also suggests that female MPs are particularly active, energetic and involved.

A common criticism of affirmative action programs and quotas (Broad and Kirner 1996, McDiven 1996) is that women achieve their positions because of their ‘chromosomes’ rather than their ‘neurones’ (Haines 1992a: 4). This criticism has been used against women in frontbench positions and speculatively, against women candidates who might be elected according to quota arrangements. If women MPs are set apart only by being female then they should not be expected to behave differently. This is a self-fulfilling prophecy because it forces women to meet criteria set by men. If they succeed, evidence of behavioural differences are obliterated and if women behave like men always have, this undermines arguments that the norms were gendered in the first place. The claim also implies that male MPs have achieved their positions through qualities apart from their sex, but the identification of male advantage is an important feature of debates about the sex-balance in parliaments.

The number of ‘many more’ and ‘fifty per cent’ responses suggests that interviewees believe that Parliament should reflect the composition of the population closely. Some interviewees made this explicit. This microcosmic notion implies that representation should be achieved on a collective rather than an individual basis. Individual MPs cannot give descriptive representation to their constituents because electorates of 40,000 voters are socially diverse. Furthermore, individual voters are likely to have affinities beyond the geographical boundaries of a local electorate and will not place their representative expectations exclusively on one MP. Mass communication means that one is able to associate one’s interests with categories of like-minded people at a distance. ‘Virtual communities’ might be

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203 Women have always formed the majority of personnel in the British House of Commons despite the low proportion of women Members (McDougall 1998).
204 Perhaps different answers could be expected if the question about ratios were worded ‘How many men should there be?’
a better basis for representation in modern society. Electors might not care about the sex of their MPs during interaction in the electorate, but when MPs gather in Parliament, the sex ratio is visible and so seems relevant.

Section 4.6 Representational ideals – interviewee self-perceptions

The popularity among interviewees of the microcosmic notion suggests that MP sex is a strong determinant of representative behaviour, but this could be misleading. When asked whether they saw themselves as trustees with a degree of discretion, as delegates elected by voters to do their expressed bidding or as politicos who were party members first (C:xxi), 20 interviewees (10 females) chose ‘trustee’, six (2 females) chose ‘delegate’, and three (2 females) nominated ‘politico’. Five gave another answer usually including ‘trustee’ combined or qualified. 205 There was some evidence that earlier entrants were more partisan. Given that male MPs as a general group have longer service, the choice of politico by only one male is interesting.

To investigate these answers further, interviewees were asked about their representative priorities and whom they represent (C:xxii). Regarding a ‘specific electorate’, 11 males and six females rated this very important (see Table 4.5 below), while six females and one male rated this not very important. 206

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205 In a national survey of election candidates 41% considered themselves as local representatives, 17% as partisans and 16% as legislators. 25% were undecided (McAllister and Studlar 1994).

206 The popularity among MLAs of both ‘specific electorate’ (13) in C:xxii and ‘trustee’ (11) in C:xxi is interesting. It suggests that MLAs claim discretion in carrying out their roles. At first sight, it would seem to be easier for the MLA to know the will of his or her electorate than it is for the MLC whose electorate is the whole State. On the other hand, in local electorates there are always many voters who did not support the elected member, and so it is necessary for MLAs to be adaptable. MLCs are elected on a quota and so can specialise and concentrate on representing a small constituency. Interpreting ‘the electorate’s will’ is always controversial because elections depend upon administrative arrangements – boundaries, regulations, counting methods – which intervene between people and parliament. There are some arbitrary elements to the process that turns people into voters and then aggregates voters into parliamentarians, governments and mandates (see Goot 1999). The different ratios of votes secured to seats gained in the two chambers confirms this. In 1995 the parties polled 86.2% of Assembly votes and secured 96.9% seats. In the Council, they polled 73.7% votes for 76.2% seats. Besides, an Opposition can win a greater share of the aggregate vote, but not attain enough seats to form a majority Government in the Assembly. In 1995 Labor secured 41.26% of first preference votes but the Coalition got 43.94% (Green 1995b: 3). In two-party preferred terms, the Coalition secured 51%.
Table 4.5: Number of ‘very important’ responses on some representational ideals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideal</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conscience</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community interest</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific electorate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment of society</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-five interviewees rated ‘yourself/ your conscience’ as ‘very important’. All rated ‘the community interest’ as important and twelve males (nine females) rated this ‘very important’. One difference was that two females only rated the ‘party machine and branches’ as ‘very important’. One female and two males rated this ‘not very’. Indeed 15 females chose in the top three here while only 10 males did. While there are complications because of party and date of entry, the pattern is consistent with arguments that females must mainstream issues into their parties (Sawer 1986, Considine and Deutchman 1994a), and contradicts the possibility that females are more independent (but see Chapter 5). The fact that no males nominated party as very important is odd. It is possible that males perceive parties as conduits for representation of others rather than as entities needing to be represented.

If it is assumed that the representational tasks required by their electorates are similar for males and females, the rating of a specific electorate as very important by almost twice as many males as females is interesting. This finding suggests that males focus more on their electorate responsibilities while females have a stronger perception that the demands of their electorates are not their primary responsibilities. This is surprising given the assumptions that female MPs are efficient at serving their electorates and so likely to achieve re-election. On the other hand, this finding is consistent with those claims that females are more dependent on parties, either for election or for mainstreaming of their issues.

There is little evidence in these particular responses to show that female interviewees felt a special responsibility to represent women. The survey asked how important a ‘segment of society’ was in interviewees’ representational ideals. Only four interviewees (two female) thought this ‘very important’ while six females compared with four males, chose in the two bottom options on the scale. There was no evidence that females regarded themselves as more closely representing a social segment such as females.
The perceptions revealed in the data suggest that interviewees held complex views of representation. They did not fit neatly into the conceptual categories used in some surveys to describe the roles of MPs. Over half of the interviewees thought of themselves as ‘trustees’ rather than delegates or politicos, and the perceptions of males and females were very similar. When interviewees were asked to comment about some specific representational responsibilities, conscience, the community interest and a specific electorate were regarded as most important. The strongest difference between males and females was that fewer females thought a specific electorate very important. More females thought party important but the numbers were small. These results suggest that more explanation is required. Inaugural speeches are a potentially rich source of information about both representational ideals and issues that MPs espouse.

Section 4.7 Whom MPs represent – evidence from inaugural speeches

Alternative evidence of representational ideals is found in inaugural speeches. Inaugurals occur at the beginning of the parliamentary career, and the constant context makes some comparisons possible. In their inaugurals, Members entering during the Parliament mentioned party and electorate frequently. There were some direct mentions of social segments such as women and youth, but more mentions of issues that concern particular categories of people. Table 4.6 lists the inaugurals given in the Fifty-first Parliament, their date, their location in Hansard and their length.
### Table 4.6: Inaugurals, ‘Class of 1995’ i.e. Fifty-first Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MP</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>First Speech</th>
<th>Hansard Page</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan Corbett C</td>
<td>31 May 1995</td>
<td>443</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Cohen C</td>
<td>1 June 1995</td>
<td>513</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Lynch *</td>
<td>1 June 1995</td>
<td>561</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill Hall</td>
<td>6 June 1995</td>
<td>689</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Ficarra</td>
<td>6 June 1995</td>
<td>717</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Watkins</td>
<td>17 Oct 1995</td>
<td>1835</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat Staunton C</td>
<td>18 Oct 1995</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Saffin C</td>
<td>18 Oct 1995</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Stewart</td>
<td>18 Oct 1995</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Di Beamer</td>
<td>24 Oct 1995</td>
<td>2214</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Anderson</td>
<td>15 Nov 1995</td>
<td>3275</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Year 1995 Hansard to p.5523

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MP</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>First Speech</th>
<th>Hansard Page</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joe Tripodi</td>
<td>30 Apr 1996</td>
<td>550</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Andrews</td>
<td>1 May 1996</td>
<td>679</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### By-elections and casual vacancies Fifty-first Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MP</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>First Speech</th>
<th>Hansard Page</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Gallacher C</td>
<td>17 Apr 1996</td>
<td>28 May 1996</td>
<td>1560</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Primrose C</td>
<td>28 May 1996</td>
<td>1565</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell Turner</td>
<td>18 June 1996</td>
<td>3058</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce McCarthy</td>
<td>25 Sep 1996</td>
<td>4590</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peta Seaton</td>
<td>15 Oct 1996</td>
<td>4802</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Brogden</td>
<td>22 Oct 1996</td>
<td>5164</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Oakeshott</td>
<td>30 Nov 1996</td>
<td>7857</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Kelly C</td>
<td>17 Sep 1997</td>
<td>No inaugural</td>
<td>Second term</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorna Stone</td>
<td>20 Dec 97</td>
<td>19 May 1998</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel Tebbutt C</td>
<td>30 April 1998</td>
<td>18 June 1998</td>
<td>6105</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C = MLC * The above times include extensions. Lynch was refused an extension.

These speeches range widely and many Members state explicitly whom they represent. Table 4.7 examines the representative ideals mentioned in these speeches.
## Table 4.7: The Class of ‘95: analysis of inaugural speech content: mentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Members</th>
<th>Representation ideals</th>
<th>Legislative aims and priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Party</td>
<td>Electorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tingle C</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohen C</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watkins</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewart</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brogden</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripodi</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakeshott</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCarthy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbett C</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woods</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn C</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallacher C</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primrose C</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesterfield-Evans C</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Members</th>
<th>Representation ideals</th>
<th>Legislative aims and priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Party</td>
<td>Electorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ficarra</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saffin C</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beamer</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seaton</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrews</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staunton C</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tebbutt C</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 9 207

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207 Tony Kelly did not give an inaugural. Mark Kersten’s is too long for comparison. Paul Lynch spoke exclusively on a matter of privilege.
MPs in their inaugurals revealed complex notions of representation. Members’ pledges of loyalties and aims stressed party and electorate. John Brogden for example said:

‘It is an unequalled pleasure for me to stand in this Chamber as the parliamentary representative of the people of Pittwater and as a Liberal’ (Hansard Assembly 25 October 1996: 5164).

In a brief speech, Tony Stewart (Lakemba) mentioned his electorate 57 times and the Labor Party 36 times. There is some diversity within the general pattern. MLCs, who represent the whole State, emphasise specific legislative intentions and their parties and more often mention a social segment. Independents do not have a party. Interestingly, Eric Ellis (Liberal, South Coast), who followed Independent John Hatton’s long incumbency, stressed similar links with the local community rather than his party.

Social segments mentioned include women, ethnic communities and most markedly youth (MLAs Meagher, Tripodi, Seaton, Brogden and Oakeshott). In a previous Parliament, Franca Arena (Hansard Council 25 May 1988: 492) welcomed ‘the first Asian woman to be elected to an Australian parliament, the Honourable Helen Sham-Ho’, but there was no mention of such a characteristic in the period under study. The sex ratio in the Council might explain why Alan Corbett was prepared to say that (Hansard Council 4 June 1996: 2404) ‘I welcome with all sincerity as colleagues and fathers the Hon. P.T. Primrose and the Hon. M.J. Gallacher, who recently made their first speeches in this House’. 208

Marie Andrews’ May Day speech (Hansard Assembly 1 May 1996: 679) noted that the ‘Labor movement is still male dominated but I applaud the leaders of our day in their sincere attempts to encourage more women to take a more active role’. Peta Seaton (Hansard Assembly 15 October 1996: 4802) a Liberal woman referred to the likely impact on Parliament of ‘more women and people from diverse community groups’. Lorna Stone (Hansard Assembly 19 May 1998: 47) stressed the influence of her mother in convincing her that women could do anything they chose.

Generally MPs expect to use their individual backgrounds and experiences but also look forward to contributing broadly. Occasionally higher ideals creep in. 209 Some recent Members stressed the importance of restoring the faith of young people in the institution.

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208 Corbett would not have said ’Hon’ rather than ‘Honourable’, or ‘P.T.’ and ‘M.J.’ rather than ‘Peter’ and ‘Michael’. Arena would certainly have said ‘Helen’. Hansard uses formal initials for men only.

209 Two MLAs who entered after by-elections O’Doherty in the previous Parliament (Hansard Assembly 22 September 1992: 6208) and McCarthy (25 September 1996: 4590) quoted the Bible and expressed religious motivation.
Robert Oakeshott for example (*Hansard Assembly* 22 April 1997: 7857) referred to a need to correct ‘understandable cynicism and apathy’. There are some other patterns, including mentions of regions. MLCs Janelle Saffin for example, mentioned the North Coast and Carmel Tebbutt the inner city. Russell Turner (National, Orange) referred to area beyond the ‘sandstone curtain’ of the Blue Mountains.

The ideals and aims stressed in these first speeches include both issues and categories of people. 210 Stewart, Primrose, Andrews and Tebbutt, all Labor (including two MLAs and two males) mentioned unions. Lynn used the term ‘battlers’, Gallacher mentioned police twelve times and Staunton referred to nurses over thirty times. Brogden mentioned youth and Corbett, as might be expected, emphasised children. Saffin and Democrat Arthur Chesterfield-Evans mentioned Aboriginal people. Stewart and Tripodi discussed the multicultural nature of their electorates of Lakemba and Fairfield.

Among the nine women giving inaugurals, Labor MLCs Staunton, Saffin and Tebbutt gave most prominence to women’s issues. Interestingly, Russell Turner (National Party, Orange) mentioned the needs of women three times. Bill McCarthy (Liberal, Strathfield) noted the presence of his family and asked ‘Aren’t daughters wonderful?’ By contrast, only Greens MLC Ian Cohen acknowledged men’s issues. This absence of specific reference supports those arguments that men are equated with ‘everyone’ and any general discussion of health or justice or education includes them. The general tenor of discussion of gender by interviewees indicated that they associated only women with gender issues and women with gender issues predominantly. 211 This approach excuses the silence of male MPs on such issues. 212

While Table 4.7 concentrates on ‘the Class of ‘95’ the inaugurals of some more experienced Members provide interesting comparisons. Table 4.8 analyses the content of first speeches by some female Members who entered earlier.

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210 It is difficult to know when common interests are strong enough to become aspects of identity. So perhaps attention to the issue of firearms gives representation to shooters, but this does not necessarily operate in the same way as representation for categories that have broader social significance.

211 While Federal Liberal women argued that the Government had listened to community concerns that they had ‘articulated’, so saving the Office of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner from abolition, the Offices of commissioners on race, disability, social justice and privacy remained under threat because their Government had slashed the funding for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission by 40% (*Sydney Morning Herald* 20 September 1997). Media criticism of the Federal Liberal women concentrated on their special responsibility on the obvious ‘women’s issue’.

212 As she took leave to be married, Federal Democrats’ Leader Meg Lees exhorted Coalition women MPs to break ranks and ensure that In-Vitro Fertilisation remained available to all women (*Sydney Morning Herald* 20 December 2000).
Table 4.8 Earlier Inaugurals made by some female Members of the Fifty-first Parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Some earlier females</th>
<th>Representation ideals Party</th>
<th>Electorate</th>
<th>Legislative aims and Priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allan 1988</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Schools 103, females 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moore 1988</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Gay rights 6, prostitution, police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison 1994</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>More women MPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meagher 1994</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Labor, traditions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recent arrivals to mention gender issues included Gabrielle Harrison (Hansard Assembly 12 October 1994: 3851). Harrison said that ‘Parliament should be more representative’ and noted that women are ‘grossly under-represented in management and professions’. She said: ‘I hope that my election represents a gain for all women who aspire to hold public office in this State’ and suggested that changing parliamentary sitting hours would be a good step towards ‘encouraging many more women’. Harrison said that it was ‘disturbing that my status as a single mother became an issue’ during the by-election. 213

Caution is needed when examining any parliamentary speech. Allan’s inaugural makes little mention of specific women’s interests (Hansard Assembly 17 May 1988: 203). Her second speech however, concentrates on the issues of women in the teaching profession and the needs of female students (31 May 1988: 911). She mentioned these over thirty times (Smith 1999c: 759). Inaugurals are made by idealistic and ambitious freshers who have not experienced for long the acculturating influences of parliamentary life. A future project might well analyse the valedictories of these Members should they give them, to assess how they reflected on the aims stated in their inaugurals.

Examination of inaugurals prompts some observations. First, although mentioning gender rarely, women are still more likely than men to mention gender. To the extent that men mention social segments, they are more likely to talk about youth or ethnic groups.

Secondly, the safer the seat, the more often male MPs mention their Party. The pattern is less clear for females. Thirdly, Labor women are more likely than other women to mention the need for more women’s representation. Fourthly, women are interested in as broad a range of issues as are men. Fifthly, the few men to specifically raise gender-specific issues mentioned the needs of women.

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213 Harrison was a ‘political widow’ who succeeded her late husband in the seat of Parramatta. Her opponent - also female - was criticised widely by female MPs of both major parties when she suggested that Harrison’s place was at home with her young son (see below p.170).
Section 4.8 Conclusions

The sex ratios in parliament have been described variously as ‘imbalance’, ‘disproportion’ and ‘relative absence’ of women. On one level, the ratios can be addressed as a matter of employment opportunity comparable to other occupations. Interviewees were in favour of equal opportunity for individual women but were divided ideologically about affirmative action programs. Labor men and women were more enthusiastic about affirmative action than were Coalition women and especially Coalition men. In keeping with their general philosophies, the Labor Party has adopted quotas while the Liberal Party has attempted to empower individual women.

Some interviewees agreed that there was a problem with the sex ratios and many endorsed ‘50:50’ as ideal. In popular discourse, representation has come to mean ‘representativeness’ and applies superficially to physical characteristics. The visual element leads to analogies with reflection and mirror representation. Interviewees seem to share this popular ‘descriptive’ view and an assumption that better-balanced assemblies make better decisions.

When consideration is given to what MPs do, confusion and controversy arises. There is confusion over what it means to represent men or to represent women, and arguments that women MPs are needed to represent women’s interests are controversial. Interviewees described themselves as representing on a variety of levels simultaneously. There is no evidence that any saw themselves as exclusively or even predominantly representing citizens of their sex. While some females mentioned women, masculine interests are invisible. This does not mean that masculine interests are ignored but rather that they are assumed in most activity. Interviewees’ clearest aims were to represent a specific electorate, and they gave this priority over the intermediary party.

Some arguments for increased women’s presence depend on female MPs having a distinct representational style. Elaine Thompson (1999: 45-6) argues that:

‘Twenty-five years of research into discrimination has shown, unambiguously, that men in positions of power do not share the world-views and values of minorities. In the arena of elected politics, there has been a rejection of such a paternalistic version of representation and a commitment that the elected representatives in both house of parliament should reasonably reflect the population in terms of ethnicity, race and gender: that the parliament should be a microcosm in gender, race and ethnicity of the larger Australian population. The preselection practices of the major parties have

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214 No interviewee reported being approached by female constituents particularly. Some British Labor women MPs have described being approached by constituents of male colleagues (Childs 2002: 148).
been changing, especially with respect to the representation of women’ (Thompson 1999: 45-6).

Among these interviewees references to a distinct style were rare and qualified. In the important regard of electoral success women MPs resemble male MPs. As the Member for Bligh noted after her re-election she is no ‘shrinking violet in the political system’ (Sydney Star Observer 6 April 1995). While she is present, she will be noticed. It has been noted above, that women MPs might be exceptional women because of the very fact of their election. It has been observed (Thompson, J.H. 1980, Blair and Stanley 1989, Whip 1991) that women MPs, subject to acculturation and ‘convergence’, share attitudes with male MPs as much as with non-political women. This partly explains why women in major parties attack the Women’s Party as fundamentalist. There have been suggestions for changes to the electoral system such as dedicated seats and proportional representation. The idea of dedicated seats has been rejected and there are problems with the assumption that proportional representation delivers more seats to women. Consequently the possibilities for change remain with the major parties.

Naïve descriptive theories of representation are convenient slogans for MPs. On the other hand, MPs do not see their roles in such simplistic terms as a need to represent a biological sex. Where the ‘world-views and values of minorities’ become important is when different experiences influence approaches to the ways MPs behave. The other major type of representation concerns the ‘what’ rather than the ‘who’ of representation and this substantive representation involves advocacy of issues. The task of Chapter 5 is to explore the notion of men’s and women’s issues and to analyse interviewee perceptions of their priorities in relation to these.
Chapter 5 Issue Representation

Section 5.1 Introduction

Representation can entail presence, emphasising who MPs are, but it can also be envisaged as behaviour, emphasising what they do. The areas are interconnected because part of the case for presence implies that women apply distinct approaches based on their experiences. Individual MPs do not routinely distinguish these styles because they respond to needs expressed by the constituents they represent. When parliament is considered collectively however it makes sense to ask which MPs address which issues and whether there is a pattern.

There is no agreed methodology for studying political issues. Just as discourse analysis in post-structuralism tends to ‘see through, rather than to see culture’ (Kenway and Willis 1997: 208), political science tends to ignore the essence of issues and use them to illuminate the actors who espouse, oppose or suppress issues, the historical moments that shape them or the consequences of their contestation. There is a risk of circularity when issues are so ubiquitous that it seems obvious what is ‘at issue’. 215 Most discussions of issues by sex concern women’s issues rather than men’s. Two main approaches have been taken (Bochel and Briggs 2000: 65). One assumes that female MPs’ experiences are distinct from males’ and examines their legislative behaviour. This approach defines women’s issues as those espoused by women MPs and assumes that women hold common views. The other approach identifies issues that have greater impact on female constituents. The first implies that female MPs

215 Nor are issues necessarily confined to one parliamentary term. Following the 1999 election the Legislative Council passed liberal laws for same sex couples, property and inheritance. The bill was opposed only by Nile, Tingle and One Nation’s David Oldfield (Sydney Morning Herald 27 May 1999). The bill must have been prepared in the Fifty-first Parliament so it is somewhat artificial to look at the legislative record for the term in isolation.
promote certain issues, while the second implies that women MPs have certain issues brought to them, predominantly by female constituents.

Study of issues is complicated when MPs compete to establish superiority on gender. In the Federal Parliament following the change of Government in 1996, Labor’s Senator Margaret Reynolds (Hansard Senate 26 March 1997) asked whether the Coalition Government would retain a comprehensive women’s budget process 216, but the Carr Labor Government did not produce a gender audit in New South Wales. Opposition Spokesperson on the Status of Women Patricia Forsythe noted on International Women’s Day 1996 that ‘we are still waiting for the Women’s Budget Statement promised before the election’ (Sydney Morning Herald 9 March 1996). Peter Primrose in his first speech as an MLC referred to a ‘Social Justice Budget’, which the Government used to measure the impact of its budget on women (Hansard Council 28 May 1996: 1565). 217 When Government and Opposition compete for advantage on such issues, they seldom agree about what constitutes a gender-sensitive approach.

While the interests of women might differ from those of men, it cannot be assumed that the interests of women MPs resemble those of women generally. If this were seen as an essential characteristic of female MPs, then it would collapse back into the argument that women’s interests can be addressed only by increasing women’s presence. If the presence of women MPs were both necessary and sufficient for the addressing of women’s issues, then there would be no point to empirical work in this area. Whatever women MPs did would constitute activity on a women’s issue.

At another extreme, it is possible that male and female MPs have so much in common that the sex of the MP does not matter. If this is true, then male MPs can represent female interests. Interviewee 20 argued that there are some issues men cannot represent, some that some men can, and sex-neutral issues. On some issues men need ‘reminding’ more than women do. Interviewee 20 specified sitting hours, abortion, pool fences and guns. This interviewee said that she never had to explain the need for gun control to a woman. Yet when the issue gained prominence in 1996 after the Port Arthur incident, Gardiner opposed restrictive legislation. As the Parliament’s only National Party woman, however, Gardiner was under unusual

216 International women’s organisations regarded the Hawke Government’s approach to disaggregated budget analysis as ‘exemplary’ (Sawer 1991: 262).
pressure. Several male Labor MPs from rural areas also questioned the laws in caucus. Competing representational principles make generalisations problematic. Members of major parties use the term ‘single issue’ to disparage minor party members who claim a mandate on a narrow range of issues and avoid others. There is no matching male claim that women are unsuited to deal with some issues, but female MPs complain that women are tacitly excluded from some areas such as ‘hard-hat’ portfolios.

Michelle Saint-Germain (1989) examined activity by women in the Arizona legislature and found that while women increased the scope of their activity, they still remained likely to propose legislation in areas of traditional women’s interests. She defined these as abortion, children, education, family, public health, sex and welfare. While these areas seem likely, it is important to ask whether female MPs in Australia have as much control in choosing their issues. One study of Federal Australian MPs found differences in the ways that men and women approached a bill, but the granting of a ‘conscience vote’ made the case atypical (Broughton and Palmieri 1999).

Attempts to define a women’s issue through women’s advocacy strike problems of measurement. It might be reliable if a debate were found in which all the women spoke, but no men, but such issues are rare when most Ministers are men and most debates require an input from the responsible Minister. When such unbalanced interest does occur, the issue and its advocates are threatened with ghettoisation. Indeed, some feminist critics argue that male domination of parliaments renders some issues invisible. A de facto characteristic of women’s issues is therefore neglect, as the term ‘women’s issue’ can be used in a non-literal and pejorative manner. Such discriminatory approaches are avoided by a continual questioning of the reasons that males and females have specialisations. It cannot be assumed that interests are determined simply by the biological sex of the MP.

Members adopt various approaches to their roles. When asked about introducing a Private Members’ Bill, several interviewees noted the need to work co-operatively with colleagues.

‘I don’t think in terms of Private Members’ Bills but party bills. The things I’m interested in, it’s a matter of having the party do. In a number of areas related to women, legislation is normally a fair way down the list although this Government hasn’t been too bad. There are areas related to domestic violence, apprehended

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218 See below Section 5.4.
219 John Tingle’s inaugural demonstrated this problem (Hansard Council 31 May 1995: 397).
220 Anne Summers predicted that as with her generation women today would be unable to choose their issues but ‘they will choose you’ (1994: 524).
221 Beatrice Faust argues that some responses to her columns show that the term ‘female’ can be used as a ‘pejorative’ and Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett attacked male opponents as ‘two girls from Melbourne Grammar’ (Australian 4 February 1995, 21 March 1997).
violence orders, things like that, it could be going faster on. But for my areas of interest, Private Members Bills are not ways of solving them’ (11).

Asked about achievements, another argued the importance of teamwork.

‘I can’t actually look at one specific thing but a lot of things have given me great joy and satisfaction. Committee works, adoption legislation, H.I.V. acquired medically compensation, women protection with appropriate legislation, in ethnic affairs appropriate amendments to bills. This is why I came into parliament - to assist to make society better. There’s a little grain that each one can contribute in many areas. The issues I cared about were always supported by the party: anti-discrimination, child protection, E.E.O. legislation. Generally, that’s how we work. An individual doesn’t put a name to legislation even though they’ve made a great input and I think it works quite well. Often when I go overseas people say “what legislation did you put your name to?” I could never call it my legislation. It was a cooperative effort with policy committees and so on. Other people put in effort too (27).

To determine whether male and female MPs have distinct interests and pursue different issues Section 5.2 examines the ways that interviewees perceived ‘gender-relevant’ issues and how they set their policy priorities. Section 5.3 examines the distribution of portfolios and Section 5.4 looks at membership of backbench committees. Section 5.5 peruses the speaking records of three male and three female Members to see whether it is possible to distinguish between issues that male and female MPs pursue. Section 5.6 looks at the cases of paedophilia and gun control, contentious issues that show the dominance of party. Section 5.7 examines the idea of the conscience vote when party discipline is relaxed. Section 5.8 returns to consider the ways in which parties affect the approaches adopted by male and female Members.

This inquiry into substantive representation reaches three conclusions. First, it is difficult to define issues as male or masculine and female or feminine. Neither approaching issues through their advocates nor through their impact is completely convincing. Secondly, females address a broad range of issues as males do but the term ‘women’s issues’ is not balanced by awareness of ‘men’s issues’. Thirdly, party is the strongest determinant of MP activity. MPs have some freedom to pursue individual interests, but these usually take second priority. Most sexed issues (really ‘women’s issues’) raised in Parliament are sanctioned by parties.
Section 5.2 Issues and advocates

Interviewees were asked how they perceived issue advocacy by MPs generally and how they individually approached issue representation. The survey revealed differences by sex in perceptions about representing issues. Asked to identify among eight portfolios, ‘gender-relevant policy areas’ that affect males and females differently (A:v), ten females and four males nominated all eight areas. Eleven males (two-thirds of male interviewees) decided on individual issues, whereas only five females did. Table 5.1 below shows that twice as many females as males said all areas had gender relevance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee sex</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Issue by issue</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results seem to reflect a clear difference in perception, but they could indicate different understandings of what constitutes gender-relevance. Among those who chose ‘all’ some interviewees might have taken a stance in principle, while others considered each portfolio area. In a similar study, Sawer (1986) categorized her respondents as Mothers, Sisters and Individualists. Sisters see all business as relevant to women while Individualists might name none but could also choose some. Mothers, who accept ‘in-grained gender roles’, could be expected to select some policy areas. Interestingly, among these interviewees, it was male interviewees predominantly who named some areas. Despite Preston-Stanley’s quip about ‘old women’ (above p.1), male interviewees cannot be characterised as Mothers but some do accept an archaic parallel between the public/private dichotomy and male and female interests. Like women generally female MPs might have changed their attitudes more than males (cf. Summers 1994: 526, Thomas 1994). As over half of the females but under a quarter of males considered ‘all’ policy areas to be gender relevant, female interviewees were further removed from traditional notions of sex-based interests than were males.  

Asked if ‘women concentrate on different issues’ (C:xxix) almost twice as many females as males agreed (13:7). Only one female and three males disagreed. This finding does not indicate why MPs concentrate on issues or whether they are free to choose. It could be that

222 Fewest interviewees endorsed agriculture and the arts. The other six policy areas shared a social orientation. There are two possible interpretations of the interviewees’ thinking here. It could be that fewer Members receive representations from constituents on these more specialised issues, but it is also possible that interviewees omitted areas in which they claim less personal expertise. Policy can be considered from the viewpoint of the policy-consumer or the policy-maker.
some MPs are able to choose while others get the leftovers. It would not be unusual to find seniors choosing the prime areas and juniors picking up the rest, and it is possible that males have some precedence over females. When female MPs complain about stereotyping they acknowledge that advocacy of some issues harms their careers. 223 Issues associated mostly with female MPs have lower status. Whether females choose to concentrate on such issues is unclear. Indeed, whether they even have such concentrations is debatable, but the perception among 20 interviewees was that they do. 224 This suggests that the explanation lies in the experience of the MP rather than the nature of the policy.

To investigate this problem further, interviewees were asked to nominate a Private Members Bill (xxxviii) if they could be assured of successfully sponsoring one. Among females this wish list contained bills relating to termination of pregnancy, euthanasia (2), surrogacy, education, planning procedures, child abuse and victims’ justice, health, Aboriginal affairs, gambling, a local transport issue, domestic violence, drug law reform, pesticide reduction, prison reform, and access to interpreters. Two said they would come back to that. One did not. The other noted the need to mainstream and nominated domestic violence. Another replied that she had ‘no burning ambitions’ and another emphasised that ‘it’s teamwork’.

The wish list among males included electoral reform, a local planning issue, smoke free environment, abolition of States, planning laws, traffic congestion, disability and mental health services, support for new parents, uniformity of services across the State, judicial and medical accountability, environment protection, endangered species protection, farm debt mediation, harsher penalties for drug pushers, drug law reform and drug decriminalisation. One said that he could not say off the top of his head and another emphasised that he thought in terms of programs and budgets rather than laws. Both lists are diverse and range widely across portfolios. This diversity shows that all interviewees think broadly about their representative responsibilities and that the government’s legislative program does not eliminate personal enthusiasms. Priorities change. Some interviewees asked ‘right now?’ (10) and ‘this week?’ (24). MPs might well pursue an issue at a particular moment because it has a high profile and there is a good prospect of success. It is unclear whether the sex of the MP influences longer term, strategic objectives or short-term tactical goals, or both equally.

223 Sarah Childs (2002: 151) noted in Britain a ‘common perception that women who seek to act for women act only for women’ and that ‘if an MP desires promotion, she cannot afford to be regarded as acting for women too often or too forcefully’.

224 The explanation for the numbers could be different for males and females. Males might want to avoid giving females grounds to complain about being stereotyped or they might refuse to acknowledge that females have special skills. Females might be proudly announcing their different skills but simultaneously lamenting their stereotyping.
The lists overlap but there are differences. Females nominated only two issues outside ‘social’ portfolios, whereas males nominated six. The females’ list includes more controversial issues likely to excite conservative commentators such as talkback radio hosts to decry ‘political correctness’. The females’ list suggests that females are more liberal in outlook, and less inclined to favour harsher penalties and stricter laws to solve social problems. 225 There is greater emphasis on broad social issues among females, while males focus directly on legislative remedies. On the other hand, this could reflect the operations of two different discourses, one that is interested directly in programs and the other in black letter law. Both male and female interviewees noted the importance of non-legislative approaches. One spoke of using ‘programs and budgets’ rather than a ‘great reform bill’ (7). Another said: ‘I am more concerned with the way in which budgets operate and programs and services are delivered so it’s not necessarily always a focus on legislation’ (17).

In order to test further whether interviewees distinguished between ideals and the reality of their activity, they were asked (C:xxiii) to name three policy specialisations. Answers were diverse, for both males and females. Table 5.2 compares first areas of specialisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy area</th>
<th>Females nominating</th>
<th>Males nominating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/ training</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and regional develop</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasury/ finance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law/ order/ police</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal welfare</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: One male described himself as a ‘generalist’.

225 It is possible that women vote more conservatively but that changes advocated by female MPs are stereotyped as radical demands in the current climate of economic rationalism (Sawer 1997c). Women generally do not identify themselves as more conservative than men (De Vaus and McAllister 1989).
Some differences were predictable. Women are traditionally held to be more interested in the ‘domestic’ areas of health, women and children. More surprising is the greater emphasis placed on the environment by men (five men nominated environment as first priority) and the interest in State and regional development by two women only. 226 If women generally are ‘greener’ than men then the interviewees are atypical of the general community. On the other hand, this might mean that male MPs are willing and able to represent the interests of female constituents. State development, an ‘economic’ portfolio, is usually associated with males. An alternative explanation is that rather than behaving as males or females might be expected to, MPs specialise in areas in which they are trained or in areas that allow them to make the greatest contribution to their parties.

Table 5.2 shows that stereotypes remain strong and confirms the evidence from ideal Private Members Bills. Again few females (5) nominated areas outside the ‘social portfolios’ (the first six in the Table) as their first specialisation, while only three males nominated those areas. 227 When all three choices are considered, comparatively high concentrations for males were the environment (8:3) and law and order and police (7:0). For females the biggest margins over males were on women’s issues (6:0), and urban planning and local government (5:1). While women’s issues seems an obvious specialisation, the explanation for interest in local issues could be that these areas are seen as being especially important to women and children. Perhaps women naturally approach politics on a local basis first. In the year 2000 across Australia, 25.3% Local Government Councillors and 17.8% Mayors were women. 228

As ‘women’ form a recognised policy and portfolio area, some interviewees might have assumed that women’s issues are treated in the Department for Women. If males considered that this relieves them of a burden, it has not resulted in them espousing balancing men’s

226 It is a popular perception that women in general are ‘greener’ than men. The majority of activists in environment groups are female (Canberra Times 28 December 1989). A Federal Minister for the Status of Women expressed concern that women, the main providers of domestic labour, are responsible disproportionately for recycling and green shopping (Sydney Morning Herald 8 October 1991; see also De Vaus and McAllister 1989: 3).

227 When all three choices are considered, there are some differences by sex. Equal emphasis was given Community Services (3 males and 3 females) and Agriculture (3 each), but more males nominated Mining (1:0), Industrial Relations (2:1), Animal welfare (1:0), Health (5:3.5), Treasury/ finance (3:1), and Legislation/ democratic processes (2:0) and more females nominated Housing (1:0), Transport (2:0), Business (2:1), Corrective services (3:2), Ethnic (2:0), Children’s (2:0), State and regional development (3:1) and Education and training (7.5:4). While more male mentions of Health contradicts popular stereotypes, more female interest in Transport, Business, Corrective Services and State and Regional Development counters notions of narrowness and stereotypes of female expertise.

issues. No interviewee nominated ‘men’s issues’ and the concept arises in the data infrequently. Where an interviewee might have considered a Bill on men’s health, he could think of this as a health issue generally rather than a men’s health issue specifically. While it is assumed that men’s interests are catered for in all policies, it could be that attitudes follow administrative categories. So the existence of a specialised women’s policy area might accentuate differences. 229

A feature of the choices is that 21 policy areas were raised. 230 As the issues covered the range of State responsibilities, the ‘sample’ of interviewees is broad on this question. In the third and final choice, some females did not want to advance one issue and omit another and so nominated two, such as ‘health/education’. By contrast, males tended to nominate areas that are not quite portfolio areas, such as ‘the democratic process’. Two males left the third choice blank, but no female did. This contradicts the notion that women concentrate on a narrower range of issues.

Breadth of interest is shown by the dispersal of responses. Of 21 areas named, the most specific was animal welfare, nominated by a male. There is no specific portfolio for this. Setting that area aside, females nominated five areas that no male named, including women, children, ethnicity, Aboriginal affairs and housing. Females did not nominate three areas named by males: mining, democratic processes, and law and order. It should be noted however, that one female nominated juvenile justice. This has been placed with children’s policy here, but could be an indication of interest in law and order. Regardless of categorization anomalies, there is no evidence that women address fewer issues. On the contrary, two policy areas account for the interests of half of the males, but to cover half the females it is necessary to include four interests - twice as many. For these interviewees then, females as a group were the greater generalists. 231

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229 The Domestic Violence Advocacy Centre and Women’s Electoral Lobby attacked Peter Nagle (Labor, Auburn) who said that some males were subjected to ‘domestic violence hysteria, witch-hunts and McCarthyism’. His comments were condemned by Minister for the Status of Women Chikarovski and by Labor’s spokesperson Allan (Sydney Morning Herald 16 November 1993). Citing men’s health disadvantages in heart disease, suicide, accidents, lung and stomach cancer and strokes, Dr Alex Wodak argued that governments over-emphasise women’s health (Sydney Morning Herald 11 August 1995). He suggested that with the arrival of a female Federal Health Minister, men’s health should be discussed rationally but feared that he might be labelled a ‘trogloidyte misogynist’.

230 Co-incidentally the Carr Government had 20 Ministers and for a time 21, although several had multiple responsibilities. Interviewees mentioned more areas with slight variations, but for convenience these are aggregated in Table 5.2.

231 Several males nominated very specific areas for Private Members Bills, including penalties for drug offenders, smoking bans and animal welfare.
Interviewees explained their priorities. Above (Chapter 4), 20 interviewees described themselves as ‘trustees’ (C:xxi) with a degree of discretion, and 25 thought their ‘conscience’ was what they represented best (C:xxii). Only four thought a ‘segment of society’ very important in their representative styles. In deciding legislative priorities (C:xxiv) 10 interviewees said that personal interest was very important and eight rated representations from constituents ‘very important’. On these questions, differences between male and female interviewees were small.

Constituencies is an important factor in policy choice. Because MPs take careful note of electors’ demands, the areas nominated could be determined for them. It is unlikely that this explains all choices however, especially as ten interviewees said that personal interest was a very important consideration in allocating legislative priorities. While there is diversity in each electorate, the socio-economic profiles of electorates vary, and so perhaps some MPs have more time to pursue personal interests. Several interviewees noted the exhausting and time-demanding nature of the servicing aspect of their roles and a seat’s marginality can determine the amount of time the Member can spend on policy development. Simms (2001: 227) has argued that this is a particular problem for females, many of whom have held marginal seats.

In relation to policy impact, more females than males said that all policy issues were gender-relevant. More females also said that females concentrate on different issues, a perception confirmed first by choices of Private Members Bills and secondly and more strongly, by lists of policy specialisations actually adopted. These findings together suggest that choices are limited in reality and that specialisations arise from the MP’s experience rather than the nature of the issues. While there is a tendency to stereotype female MPs as concentrating on a narrow range of issues, among these interviewees, the females displayed broader interests than the males. Further investigation is needed to determine the reasons behind these choices.

When asked about representative priorities, interviewees generally approved the idea of operating as trustees, but in reality, they are heavily constrained. As MPs must respond to constituents’ demands, the diversity of electorates served by MLCs and MLAs influences issue advocacy.

Section 5.3 Promotion to Portfolios

Women held portfolios in proportion to their presence and in ratios comparable to other parliaments. These tended to be in traditional areas of female responsibility. Although few men expect to be Minister for Women, few of the limits on male MPs’ opportunities could be
attributed to their sex. Some research shows that in traditional female occupations such as nursing, males are promoted quickly. Apparently, traditionally female workplaces are less strictly gendered and males encounter fewer barriers than women do in traditionally male occupations. It is unclear why the visibility of females as a minority group in many workplaces translates into disadvantage while the high visibility of a few male nurses brings advantage. If women experience the parliamentary work site specifically as women, then they share with other professional women experiences such as family pressures, sexual harassment and a ‘glass ceiling’. Some interviewees (e.g. 23, 34) argued that portfolios are allocated according to the Minister’s sex, or that women are disqualified from some areas (see below Section 5.4). Interviewee 34 complained: ‘they typecast me. They think anything to do with roads or ports... they think I can’t understand economic issues. They would never give it to me. The stereotypes... because I’m a woman I have double jeopardy’.

Promotion to the Ministry often reinforces stereotypes. Issues such as abortion law reform, industrial relations, juvenile justice, and family and community services belong to portfolios commonly assigned to female Ministers (Deverall et al 2000). While these lists might have been compiled specifically to suit popular notions of women’s expertise, it would be unfair to expect a female Minister to reject a portfolio just to avoid the stereotype. Caution is needed also when examining the issues listed in Hansard’s ‘Sessional Summary’. In 1995, female Ministers were allocated Sport, Environment, Fair Trading and Women. At times there were female Shadow Ministers (Health, Corrective Services, Environment, Aged, Disability and Community Services). No interviewee nominated the arts or sport in their specialisations, and fair trading rated only a half mention in a third preference. Female lack of interest in the

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232 At a meeting of nine State and Territory Ministers in the portfolio area however, there was one male. At 7 August 2001, the male Chief Minister still had responsibility for Women’s Policy in the Northern Territory. See http://www.owp.nt.gov.au/body.html

233 Clair Brown of Southern Cross University found that while men constitute only 8% registered nurses, they occupy 20% of senior positions. Likely reasons include rapport between male nurses and male doctors, the image of males as breadwinners, mentoring by female nurses, being predominantly full-time and a strength advantage in lifting. Male nurses, stereotyped as effeminate, might struggle to prove their masculinity by achieving quickly (Sydney Morning Herald 17 January 1995).

234 Males might be more comfortable in all non-domestic places. Beatrice Faust argues that ‘women enter police forces with expectations raised by feminism, but men have the expectations of their grandfathers’. This confrontation between new woman and old man might affect parliaments. While entry of more women could improve the culture, they are deterred by the macho atmosphere, hierarchical styles, discrimination, harassment, lack of child care and male jealousy towards entitlements such as parental leave. Eva Cox notes the paradox for individual women who attain powerful positions: to be accepted they have to support the status quo but feminists who expected them to be agents of change complain about a sell-out. They are made to prove their loyalty constantly. If they take risks, they are stereotyped and marginalised (Australian 17 August 1996).

235 In 1999 Carmel Tebbutt had assistant responsibilities for youth affairs and the environment and was Minister for Juvenile Justice.

236 To locate material in Hansard see the Sessional Summary, Annual Reports, Bills Digests and the cumulative Index produced occasionally. The 1996-97 Index is found in Volume 259 (June 1997) and includes material from Volume 250 (April 1996) forward.
environment could be a result of having a female Minister if women MPs think that areas
given to female colleagues are less in need of their attention. This would assume two things
however: that they believe that female colleagues present female perspectives and that female
perspectives are strong enough to overcome some partisan differences. This should not be
assumed.

As well as the type of portfolio allocated women, the mere fact of their promotion is
important. Three female MLAs (LoPo’, Allan and Harrison) were Ministers. This is one in
three female Labor MLAs. Fourteen of forty-two male Labor MLAs held portfolios. This is
also one in three. Taken as a whole however, the proportion in caucus (MLAs and MLCs)
suggests that more Ministries should have been awarded to women. Fifteen women among
sixty-eight Members is a ratio of one in four and half. In a Ministry of twenty, it might be
expected that there would be four female Ministers. The differences are slight, but given the
stringency with which factional numbers are enforced, the favours granted women after the
election were not great.

It is wrong to assume however, that all MPs are equally qualified to be Ministers. When
media compare Shadow Ministers with Ministers, the pool of experience is crucial. Shadow
Ministers rely on senior backbenchers because they do not receive extra staff and cannot
compete for resources with Ministers. 237 Members in modern times seldom remain in
Parliament after reaching the pinnacle of a career. About one in six Opposition MLAs
resigned mid-term and there were replacements in the Council too. 238 Figure 5.1 shows that
female MLAs had relatively limited experience. 239

237 Interviewees 6, 10 and 14 noted that the Opposition was starved of resources to an extent
disproportionate to their relative strength in seats.
238 Bolton (1998) says that great past leaders would be appalled by the lack of dedication.
239 Experience favoured the Government heavily. Since the Coalition last won a general election
(1991), 27 new Members joined the Legislative Assembly. Sixteen were from the Coalition. In 1997, of
33 MLAs who were in the Parliament during the previous Labor years (to 1988), 22 were from Labor.
This is close to half of the Government. The 11 experienced Coalition MLAs formed under a quarter of
the Opposition. The remainder were made up of 18 from each side and three Independents elected
1988-91. So over a third of the Opposition’s 45 MLAs were relatively inexperienced. The 11 newer
Labor MLAs formed under a quarter of the Government’s 51.
Franca Arena was bitter about missing a portfolio, and this might have influenced her later radical campaign on paedophilia and resignation from the Party. Nori became a Parliamentary Secretary in 1995 and later, when she missed out on the Ministry, was the subject of Opposition mischief. Peter Debnam (Liberal, Vaucluse) gave notice that he would move:

‘That this House acknowledges the parliamentary career of the Mother of the House, the Member for Port Jackson, and deplores the fact that the Government has refused to reward her skills and efforts with a frontbench position, with the Premier instead choosing to strengthen the boys club with appointment of the Member for Clarence’ (House Papers Assembly 19 November 1997: 607).

Nori entered in 1988 as did Allan. In fact, Grusovin had more experience, having been MLC and a Minister, but that did not suit the Opposition case. Nori’s suitability for the position was exploited also by the factions and Right wing ‘fractions’. Nori expected support from her Left colleagues but the Right ‘trogs’ also supported her to frustrate the Right ‘Terrigals’ (Daily Telegraph 5 November 1996). Such partisan and factional manoeuvres complicate attempts to

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**Figure 5.1: Parliamentary experience L.A. 1998**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Opposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972-75</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-80</td>
<td>B X</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-83</td>
<td>B B X</td>
<td>MMMMMM MMM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-87</td>
<td>B B B B B B</td>
<td>SS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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240 After Hughes (1976).
understand the effects of gender as an isolated variable. 241 The shorter experience of females collectively however, works against the development of a specifically female tradition.

Moon and Fountain (1997) suggest that women MPs are promoted faster than males. They find that women are given ‘social’ portfolios because this reflects their traditional social roles, but question whether these are inferior portfolios. Perhaps they are not intrinsically so, but they are subject to reductions in times of financial austerity and the winding back of the welfare state, so they might be very tough portfolios indeed. 242 Moon and Fountain (1997: 461) find that only Tasmania had a lower proportion of ministers who were women 1970-96 than New South Wales. Interestingly, these are States where Labor has been in power most. Yet, 13.3% ministers in Labor Governments had been women, compared with 7% in non-Labor Governments. In the Carr Government, three of the twenty-one MPs who were Ministers were women. Fourteen per cent (14.3%) compares well with the national mean.

Two female Ministers held their portfolios constantly: Harrison in Sport and Allan in Environment. LoPo’ held more than one portfolio but was Minister for Women throughout. In a reshuffle LoPo’ was promoted from Consumer Affairs to Community Services. The latter had been a difficult area and LoPo’ appointed the Department’s third Head since 1995 shortly after she acquired the portfolio. Interviewee (23) commented that she thought that women would have really made it in State political life when they were seen in the ‘hard hat’ portfolios. Yet Community Services has been an extremely difficult portfolio and one that suggests that the Premier had great respect for LoPo’. A less optimistic view is that women are always called upon in such difficult times. 243 However, the Carr Government was extremely stable, so if women are granted opportunities when men make a mess, then the stability of the Carr ministry eliminated one avenue of female access to leadership.

241 Simms (1993: 34) notes the influence of factions, especially in the Labor Party. Factions are broad party organisations with connections inside and outside Parliament. Interviewee 11 stressed their importance to an understanding of her role.
242 After the 1996 federal election, women who had held a broad range of shadow ministries were given stereotypical responsibilities. Journalist Christine Wallace (Australian Financial Review 25 March 1996) described the portfolios of Health, Family Services and Consumer Affairs as ‘nursing, mothering and shopping’. Further, portfolios likely to suffer funding cuts, Social Security and Education, were given women. Later when Prime Minister Howard reshuffled the ministry, Alan Ramsey referred to a ‘back-to-the-kitchen’ ministry and argued that Susan Ryan’s allocation of a similar ‘non-job’ caused her resignation. While rewarding seven males with promotion, the Prime Minister patronised women by claiming that ‘for the first time in my government, a woman is full-time on the job of the status of women’. Formerly it had been in his office (Sydney Morning Herald 8 October 1997).
243 Anne Summers has warned against stereotyping women in politics as more moral because it is both ‘dangerous and untrue’. Summers noted an assumption by some observers that Australia’s first female Premiers (Lawrence and Kirner) were ‘brought in like political housewives to clean up the mess left by their predecessors’ (Australian 9 September 1992).
Harrison did not conform to popular images of Cabinet Ministers (Henderson 1999: 117). At meetings and sporting events attendants greeted her with impolite disbelief. When she explained who she was on one occasion, she was told ‘Yeah. You and twenty others. Turn your car around’. Such incidents make the task of performing ministerial duties more difficult. As Harrison has sought to provide a role model for young women interested in political life, such public treatment undermines her efforts. Harrison’s reception in Parliament was sometimes demeaning. According to Allan (Henderson 1999: 119) Harrison once had to walk across the Chamber to table a document and ‘there were four National Party members with their little tongues hanging out… They’re just traditional blokes. They’re full of lust’. Allan said that she thought that Members were working on such problems, but often the responsibility for reform is placed onto women to dress in such a way that they are taken seriously. Ficarra said that colleagues tended to be more judgmental about women’s appearance, and Chikarovski - perhaps tongue in cheek - said that she would abandon the pants suits for skirts when the party won government (128).

Following the Government’s return at the 1999 election, Harrison and Allan lost their portfolios. Nori was promoted and MLC Carmel Tebbutt became a Minister. It should be remembered that the caucus and factional manoeuvres decide the places in a Labor Government. An Editorial (Sydney Morning Herald 8 April 1999) asserted that ‘the factions giveth and the factions taketh away’ and argued that Harrison had exploited her Ministry to entrench her position in Parramatta, although this was no reason to demote her. The Herald said that Allan’s problem was that she was ‘too much of a factional warrior... too outspoken in cabinet and too confrontational when dealing with talkback radio hosts’. The Editorial noted that Carr claimed Allan’s environment portfolio as a great achievement of his first term. It said that the new ministry contained mediocre factional hacks but turned away ‘talented’ MPs and concluded that the factions serve the party rather than the government. The Left promoted two women and demoted one. The right excluded Harrison and promoted two males. The Editorial implied that males are more likely to be ‘hacks’.

Opposition females holding ‘shadow’ responsibilities included Wendy Machin, Jillian Skinner (Health), and Patricia Forsythe MLC (Community Services, Disability Services). Chikarovski (Corrective Services, Environment) had some time on the backbench. Chikarovski became Opposition Leader but this was after Parliament rose for Christmas (1998). She elevated Ficarra to spokesperson on the Environment. Party leadership requires

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244 People are slowly becoming accustomed to seeing women in powerful roles. In her Valedictory, Dorothy Isaksen reported that when she was elected in 1978, she would be asked often ‘Whose secretary are you?’ (Hansard Council 3 December 1998: 11137).
understanding of many policy areas. Chikarovski’s achievement of the leadership of the Liberal Party illustrated many of the complex concerns that influence a parliamentary career. There were explanations founded on the idea that women are called in to clean up a mess when leadership is a poisoned chalice, unwanted by males. Lawrence compared Chikarovski’s position with her own and Joan Kirner’s: ‘they’ve reached for what is symbolic rather than a substantial change’. Lawrence said that ‘the political woman’s curse is great expectations’ (Henderson 1999: 223). The Liberal Party persisted with Chikarovski after the election defeat so she became one of the few women to get a second chance as a Leader.

Section 5.4 Committee membership

Women MPs held committee positions proportionate with their presence. Committees scrutinise the activities of Ministers. Table 5.3 below shows the sex composition of lower house and joint committees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>% F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Road Safety</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Accounts</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superannuation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Bodies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Councils</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.C.A.C.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Works</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Committee</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ombudsman</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulations Review</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care CC</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>127</strong></td>
<td><strong>102</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Committee service is usually restricted to backbenchers. This means that the male: female ratio of 112:29 in the whole Parliament changes to approximately 80:24. Table 5.3 shows that both males and females averaged more than one position, but it is difficult to know how much

245 Source: Parliament of New South Wales Session 1995 Sessional Summary No. 32. Parliamentary Committees can be Joint, Statutory, Standing or Sessional.
effort any Member expended. Government and Opposition are both keen to be represented on all committees, to control the chair and have the numbers.

There were no women on some committees but they were highly represented on committees overseeing the Health Care Complaints Commission, Regulations Review and Ethics, and they had over the 20% average on some others. This suggests that some committees, such as those dealing with health, civil liberties and ethics are perceived as appropriate for female membership but it does not explain why. Females chaired four Council Committees in 1995 and males five, of which the President chaired three. Government females chaired Standing Committees on Privilege and Ethics, State Development, and Social Issues. The only Committee on which women formed a majority was Social Issues (4:3). A female crossbench MLC chaired the Select Committee on Hospital Waiting Lists (Parliament of New South Wales Legislative Assembly Session 1995 Sessional Summary #32 First Session of Fifty-first Parliament). No female MLA chaired a committee.

Table 5.4 shows Membership of the Council’s General Purpose Standing Committees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Chair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The co-incidence between sex ratios and the sex of the Chairperson suggests some correspondence, but the record does not indicate that this was a deliberate policy adopted during the formation of the committees, nor whether the women members thought it important to use their numbers to secure the chair for one of them.
Section 5.5 Parliamentary debates and sexed issues

As well as holding portfolios and serving on committees, MPs participate in debates in the chamber. At first glance it seems that females ignore some debates. There was little female input into fisheries legislation for example (Hansard Council 3 December 1997), but if women are considered as a group, their relative numbers limit their ability to participate. So while male domination of debate does not establish a men’s issue, high participation by women might establish a women’s issue. If women must specialise rather than spread themselves too thinly, it is simpler for them to specialise in what are perceived as women’s issues because that will be expected of them as a minority anyway. Meanwhile, males are reluctant to identify overtly male interests, so the positions of the sexes are not comparable.

When an MP speaks on generic legislation, it is difficult to tell whether he or she is addressing a supposedly ‘sexed’ issue. When it was revealed that Aboriginal women make up 20% of the State’s female prisoners although they constitute just 1% of the State’s population (Sydney Morning Herald 26 February 1996) this might have been taken up as a ‘women’s issue’, as an indigenous issue, or as a legal issue. Despite these methodological problems it is important to examine contributions to legislative debates, Question Time and other business. Six MPs were chosen, three male and three female. For sake of comparison the six included two Labor MLAs (Joe Tripodi and Jill Hall), two Liberal MLAs (Eric Ellis and Marie Ficarra) and two National MLCs (Mark Kersten and Jennifer Gardiner). The Index to Speeches was examined for June 1996 - June 1997 (Hansard 1997 Volume 259). The Bills spoken on by these six Members are listed in Table 5.5. Common interests in the pairs are listed in bold. The fact that two Members spoke on these Bills shows that their parties regarded them as important. When only one of the pair spoke on a Bill, it is possible that part of the explanation is the sex of the MP.

246 Time constraints prevent Independents from speaking on every issue and minor parties demand extra staff to allow them to improve research capabilities.
247 Dr Peter West argued that when the racial perspective is applied to Aboriginal deaths in custody ‘masculinity becomes invisible’ although most victims are male (Australian 11 November 1998).
248 All were ‘freshers’ except Gardiner. No new female National entered in 1995.
Table 5.5 Three male and three female Members: speaking on Bills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Spoke on Bills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellis</td>
<td>Crimes, Firearms, Home-owners Defence, National Parks (Aboriginal ownership), Payroll tax, Pollution control. (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ficarra</td>
<td>City of Sydney, Commonwealth powers (Firearms), Environmental legislation enforcement, Hazardous chemicals, Ethnic Affairs, Firearms, Health amendment, Heritage, Liquor and registered clubs, Local government, Nude bathing, Mental health, National Parks declarations, National Parks (Aboriginal ownership), Nurses, Pollution control, Public health (tobacco), Smoking, Street drag racing, Youth and Community Services Bill. (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripodi</td>
<td>Appropriation, Industrial relations, Public health (tobacco). (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall</td>
<td>Animal research, Appropriation, Commonwealth powers (Firearms), Home detention, Mental health, Non-indigenous animals, Prevention of cruelty to animals, State sports centre, Warnervale airport. (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kersten</td>
<td>Appropriation, Parental responsibility, Firearms, Firearms amendment, Home invasion, Prevention of cruelty to animals, Rural Fires. (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardiner</td>
<td>Parental responsibility, Coal, Firearms, Firearms amendment, Impounding, Local Government, Learner drivers, Street drag racing, Vehicle identification, Menacing driving, the Budget. (11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some Members spoke more than once on some legislation. The three males spoke on 16 bills while the three females spoke on 40 bills. This could indicate energy, interest or other factors. As a senior Member of a small party, Gardiner had to be competent in a number of policy areas. Ficarra became Shadow Minister for the Environment later and many of her contributions were in that area. The contributions of the females show that all three spoke on only one area, firearms. There was no common interest listed for the three males, except for Appropriation.

Table 5.6 below lists Questions Without Notice asked by these six members.

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Table 5.6: Three male and three female Members: Questions Without Notice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Asked Questions Without Notice on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellis</td>
<td>(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ficarra</td>
<td>Canterbury Council, Elective surgery, Intensive Care beds, Landcom financial management, Poker machine tax, Royal North Shore Hospital Critical Incident Reports, Tourism week. (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripodi</td>
<td>Clothing industry outworkers, Violence in sport. (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall</td>
<td>Birth defects, Child care services, Child care for athletes, Nurses, Women in sports administration. (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kersten</td>
<td>Aboriginal youth detention, Bourke (law and order 7), Bourke police, Broken Hill (17 including School of the air, lead levels, rail, goats), Cubba Station prison (2), DOCS (2), Staffing Department of Land and Water Conservation, Discovery (3), Dubbo law and order, Electricity (2), Feral goats (2), Freight rail (2), Trespass (2), Menindee management (2), Nyngan-Brewarrina stock losses (4), Parental responsibility, Police patrol commanders, Primary producers tax (2), Rabbits, Rail charges (4), Rural impact statements (3), Trackfast closure (2), Walgett agriculture office (2), Wilcannia to White Cliffs road, Youth suicide. (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardiner</td>
<td>Cooinda respite care centre, Education Department restructure, Social Security client services, District courts, Elective surgery, Energy privatisation (5), Eraring power station, Government services privatisation, Gun laws, Inquiry into Agriculture Department, Standing Committee reports (2), Main Streets conference, Air bags, North Coast community services, Executors and legal costs (2), Police service North Coast HQ, Port Macquarie disabled accommodation, Yamba Port, Prevention of cruelty to animals, Proposed Bathurst Union, Regional development (Green paper 4, policy 5), Regional summits, Snowy River water, Sydney tourism, Veterinary research facilities. (25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The aggregates given in Table 5.6 refer to the number of different issues raised. They do not include multiple questions. It is evident that MLCs ask more questions than MLAs although the lack of questions by Ellis is difficult to explain. The two Labor Members would not necessarily have written their own questions, although Ministers begin answers by thanking the Members for their questions and commending their interest in the area.

Answers in the upper chamber are generally shorter. The three Ministers in the upper house had carriage of Treasury and State Development, Attorney General and Industrial Relations, and Community Services, Aged and Disability Services. Ministers answered questions on other issues with a promise to contact the relevant Minister in the lower house, and this dampens excitement. The totals of 25 for both Nationals could be coincidental or the result of strict organisation.
Whips distribute ‘Dorothy Dixers’ to backbenchers. Interviewees 11 and 23, one from each side of parliament, explained that they were under no illusions about backbench power.

- ‘It’s worse in government because backbenchers are humble and do what they’re told and shut up. I knew there’d be less scope for individual backbenchers in government... that you have to toe the line more often. It didn’t come as a surprise but it’s still frustrating’ (11).
- ‘...when I talk to colleagues and other backbenchers their concerns are similar: don’t ask questions that are unsolicited and don’t embarrass the Ministers. You are basically there to make up the numbers and cheer Ministers on’ (23).

There are some suggestions of men’s and/or women’s issues. Hall’s questions all concerned women and children, and were likely to have been addressed either to Health Minister Refshauge or Sports Minister Harrison. Tripodi’s question on outworkers showed his interest in industrial relations but could also show an interest in ethnic women workers. 251 The Nationals’ questions reveal that they tend to divide the State by regions to manage coverage and rely partly upon constituents for the content of their questions. 252 Together with the priorities of party whips, these pressures restrict the Members’ freedom to pursue what might be described as special personal interests. The three males did not ask any questions of common interest, but the three females all asked questions about health.

Table 5.7 indicates other matters including motions and adjournment speeches. The lists for the females reaffirm the importance of local constituencies and interaction with electors. Ficarra’s contributions on euthanasia, racism and injecting rooms suggest interests beyond the Georges River electorate. While Hall’s list also contains some general issues such as health insurance and police, these might have been very specific matters affecting her Swansea electorate. Gardiner’s list emphasises rural issues. While breast cancer is predominantly a women’s issue, this does not mean that the interest was decided by the MP in isolation from approaches by constituents. As Ficarra’s reference to St George’s Day shows, Members follow important events such as hospital fundraising and awareness raising campaigns on numerous issues (Hansard Assembly 23 April 1997: 7973-4). 253

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251 Tripodi said that the delay in making his inaugural was attributable to his desire to wait and speak on industrial relations (Hansard Assembly 30 April 1996: 550, Smith, T. 1999e).
252 Kersten was the party’s Assembly candidate in Broken Hill in 1995.
253 Brian Langton (Kogarah, Labor) also spoke about the area on 23 April (Hansard Assembly 7972-3).
Table 5.7: Three male and three female Members: other activities indexed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Other matters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellis</td>
<td><strong>Library</strong>, Censure of Minister for Fair Trading and Minister for Women, Business (5), Community organisations (2), Courts, Gas industry (2), the disabled (2), Planning (2), Police, Transport infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ficarra</td>
<td>Aborigines (2), Health Care Complaints, Injecting rooms, <strong>Library</strong>, Motion of No confidence in Minister for Health (2), Children (3), Commonwealth-State relations, Racism, BHP employment policies, St George Day, Health (2), Euthanasia, Hospitals (4), Housing, Health Insurance, Local Government, Obituary, Pollution, Railways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripodi</td>
<td>Small <strong>business</strong>, Public accounts (5), Drugs (2), <strong>Education</strong>, Ethnic affairs, <strong>Health</strong>, obituary, Olympic Games (2), Fairfield brothels, <strong>Police</strong>, Political parties, <strong>Schools</strong>, Sport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall</td>
<td>Ambulances, House Committee (5), Beaches, <strong>Business</strong>, Caravans, Community organisations, Clubs, Egg labels, Crime, Dredging of Lake Macquarie, <strong>Education</strong> (2), Green Point conservation, Family affairs, Fish (2), <strong>Health</strong> (7), Hospitals (2), Newcastle steelworks (2), Health insurance, Caravan parks, Wheel clamping, Planning (2), <strong>Police</strong>, <strong>Schools</strong> (4), Welfare services (2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kersten</td>
<td><strong>Budget</strong> (3), Small business, Library, Courts, Law and order, Drought, Obituary, Poker machines, Railways, Roads, <strong>Sport</strong>, Trade unionism (2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardiner</td>
<td><strong>Budget</strong> (2), State development (4), Redistribution, Electricity, Fish, Breast cancer, Agriculture department (3), Regional development, <strong>Sport</strong>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7 shows that there were some common areas between the Coalition men, such as Business, Community Organisations and Planning. Among the women, health was again a common concern, especially between the lower house opponents Ficarra and Hall. In addition, Ficarra spoke about children three times, while Hall spoke about families once and welfare twice. In relation to their overall activity, these overlaps are small. They do occur however, in stereotypical areas.

The Tables considered together suggest that many factors decide the parliamentarian’s program. It is not surprising that the National Party MPs spoke on so many matters

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254 Some Members anticipate their activity in their inaugurals. Table 4.6 above listed the legislative aims stated by incoming Members. Tables 5.5 – 5.7 indicate how Members attempted to carry out these aims. Ellis referred mainly to over-regulation and his speeches on crime, tax, pollution, planning and transport drew attention to the problem. Tripodi referred mainly to multiculturalism and references to clothing industry outworkers and ethnic affairs were contributions in this area. Kersten referred especially to the Broken Hill area and his contributions were consistent with that interest. Hall’s emphasis on development and employment were reflected in contributions on airports, the Newcastle
because there are fewer Nationals. Nor is it surprising that there is so little overlap between the topics addressed by Kersten and Gardiner. The Whip must ensure co-ordination in a smaller party to maximise the effectiveness of participation.

Speaking on an issue does not establish a uniform ‘interest’. Members listed for a debate can be on either side. Also, Members with an interest in an issue might prefer that it were kept off the agenda.  Nor are voting records a complete guide. Members sometimes require amendments to legislation to make it acceptable. Elisabeth Kirkby, a staunch republican, voted against a plan to change the oath of allegiance because she believed that constitutional changes required approval at referendum (*Sydney Morning Herald* 27 September 1995). Furthermore, Members speak for various reasons. Diane Beamer (Labor, Badgerys Creek) has described parliament as a ‘strange animal’ (Henderson 1999: 137): ‘We’ll have a whole day passing bill after bill, then we debate the budget speech for three days’. Beamer noted that some Members aim to record their achievements and demonstrate their activity. On the other hand, the very fact of women’s presence makes two subtle differences to the quality of men’s contributions. First, if they decide to leave some issues to women, this would accentuate differences. Secondly, if they are more circumspect about what they say regarding issues they perceive as falling within women’s expertise, this could cause homogenisation.

Deciding which issues attract the attention of male and female MPs is difficult. Legislation tends to be ‘in globo’ and generic legislation such as an Appropriation Bill can contain references to numerous specialised interests. Whips control and coordinate much activity and when debates have speakers for and against, it is difficult to decide whether both sides have an interest in the same way. In order to appreciate these difficulties better, it is advisable to consider some relevant issues in greater depth.

steelworks, caravans and planning. Ficarra mentioned local issues, especially environmental concerns and her later contributions were mainly in those areas.

An interesting case occurred in the previous Parliament. When Fred and Elaine Nile, then Call to Australia, attempted to amend legislation on termination of pregnancy, female MPs protested by walking out. They preferred the status quo and wanted to keep the issue off the agenda and prevent anyone speaking about. In this case, silence might be interpreted as a better indication of interest in a women’s issue than the speaking by Elaine Nile was (*Hansard Council* 12 September 1991: 1091).

Beamer admitted filibustering when ‘tapped on the shoulder’ and told to go for twenty minutes although prepared for only three. ‘So I chatted away. I would draw to a conclusion and then say “just one more point”. The opposition was in fits of laughter’.

This effect has been reported by some British women MPs (Ross 2002: 199).
Section 5.6 Contentious issues: two case studies

The issues listed by Interviewee 20 as those on which women took special approaches included firearms and pool fences to protect children. During the Parliament, there were developments in both areas. Minor party candidates were elected to the upper house in 1995, Alan Corbett on a platform of ‘A Better Future for Our Children’ and John Tingle for the Shooters Party. While both were male, they were positioned on opposite poles on most issues.

The Government found the area of children’s policy a persistent problem. Shortly after election it abandoned the Office of Youth Affairs, believing that it had been a political platform for Jillian Skinner’s election and introduced legislation to ban child pornography as part of an anti-paedophile campaign (Sydney Morning Herald 6 April, 22 May 1995). On this issue, a female interviewee claimed as an achievement the restriction of pornographic material in places accessible to children. Later in the term, the Opposition embarrassed the Premier during Question Time over a leaked document showing that over 100 Department of Community Services staff were being investigated for abuse and negligence. Community Services Minister Ron Dyer was ‘demoted’ during a reshuffle and LoPo’ became Minister (Clune 1998a: 253). The portfolio was an area of continuous controversy and much of the trouble related to the Department’s management of children in crisis.

Sexual abuse of children was the subject of a campaign by Deirdre Grusovin and Franca Arena. Acknowledging that they were under pressure to abandon their campaigns, they declared that the issues of paedophilia and child protection were more important than their careers (ABC Television Stateline 18 April 1997). Arena became involved in enormous controversy, personal cost and the threat of expulsion from Parliament. When she was contacted by victims who claimed that the Wood Royal Commission into the Police Force had suppressed their evidence about prominent people, Arena named a judge who suicided.

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258 The paedophile issue overwhelmed others relating to children such as pool fencing. Dan Gaffney, sports medicine commentator noted that despite Labor’s promise to review fencing laws, the numbers of children drowning increased 340% between 1994 and 1998 (Australian 16 December 1998).
259 Labor announced during the 1991 election campaign that it would establish a Children’s Ombudsman and a special court to deal with neglected, homeless or abused children. It was still trying to establish an office of Child Protection Commissioner in late 1998. The Director of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre said that Parliament and lawyers failed to meet their responsibilities to children. He noted that few of the State’s 12,000 lawyers specialised in children’s issues and that there was no Ministry for Children. He referred to ‘institutional abuse and neglect’. Detective Chief Superintendent Lola Scott told the Wood Royal Commission that if she were Premier, child sexual abuse would be her first priority (Sydney Morning Herald 6 May 1991, 10 October 1995, Australian 17 April 1997). A Children’s Commissioner was appointed in 1999 (Sydney Morning Herald 15 May 1999).
260 Before the 1995 election, Grusovin was removed from Labor’s frontbench after naming alleged paedophiles in Parliament. One was a former MP who was charged but murdered before his trial (Sydney Morning Herald 29 June 1998).
shortly afterwards. While the Police Commissioner refused to engage in a ‘fishing expedition’, Arena threatened to name others (Sydney Morning Herald 20 March 1997).

After the 1995 election, Arena felt betrayed because Carr voted for Eddie Obeid in the ministerial ballot. She was further disappointed because she wanted the Presidency but Labor decided not to contest. Arena claimed that she ‘loved Bob like my little brother. I gave him my total loyalty’, but noted that younger people were ministers and that Carr ‘made it known he wanted Gabrielle Harrison. Is it a mateship thing? You need in our party to have a brother, husband or relative in either the party or trade union to help you’. Arena resented the fact that LoPo’ was ‘pontificating’ about more women in politics, then voted for Obeid, to ensure she got a job herself. Arena soon moved a motion of support for voluntary euthanasia without party approval (Sydney Morning Herald 4 July 1995). Arena denied being motivated by jealousy or resentment, but it is difficult to rule out such negative sentiments completely. Her willingness to act without party permission suggests that she recognised that her career had reached a cul-de-sac.

Arena crossed the floor to support a motion by the Reverend Fred Nile to revive and expand the Wood Royal Commission’s paedophile reference. She said: ‘I could not have lived with myself to vote against it. This has been my work for the past twelve months. I hope the party understands’ (Sydney Morning Herald 11 April 1997). Arena suggested that the Premier, the Opposition Leader and others had conspired to suppress the Royal Commission’s report, partly because it named colleagues. 261 The Premier called the allegation ‘nutty’ and established an inquiry to test her claims. When the inquiry reported, the Labor Party moved to expel her. Arena argued that the inquiry was a way to punish her over the naming of the judge and said that her expulsion would ‘expel my constituents’ (Hansard Council 11 November 1997: 1414). 262 Arena said that some colleagues had spoken against her expulsion in the party room but had not voted against the motion. 263

261 Arena argued that the transcripts of evidence showed that a Labor Party official admitted that there was an MP named. The official said that because it was not a Labor Party person, he took no action (Hansard Council 11 November 1997: 1410). Arena chastised media for failing to peruse the transcripts and regurgitating material from the Premier’s public relations team (1409). An Opposition frontbencher threatened to name Labor Party members but was restrained by the Opposition Leader (see also Arena 2002). One response to the findings of the Wood Royal Commission was an unsuccessful move to make consistent the ages of consent for males (18) and females (16). Jan Burnswoods, Labor Left MLC, has been associated with this legislation (see below p.130).

262 Newspapers predicted the expulsion of ‘Maverick’ Arena from parliament (Australian, Sydney Morning Herald 8 November 1997). Arena said that the community would judge her and promised ‘if I suffer the humiliation of being thrown out by these thugs, I will fight them’ (Sydney Morning Herald 23 October 1997).

263 Some Labor Members were absent during her speech, and one female, visibly upset, sat between male colleagues, who were offering either support or encouragement to toe the party line (Observed).
When considering a response to Arena, Carr said that expulsion from the Party was possible, although ‘we’re not in the business of creating martyrs’. The Opposition voted against her expulsion from Parliament because her presence embarrassed the Government (Sydney Morning Herald 19 September, 13 November 1997). Eventually, the Arena case was referred to the Privileges and Ethics Committee.²⁶⁴ The Committee, chaired by Burgmann, strongly condemned Arena and demanded that she apologise, and said that if she failed to do so, she be expelled. Arena made a statement of regret and proclaimed ‘They will have to come into parliament and shoot me before I go’ (Sydney Morning Herald 21 March 1998). The resolution’s defeat along party lines suggested that Opposition Members saw Arena’s presence as a problem for the Government and wished to exploit that for as long as possible. Because they gave priority to tactics, the vote does not reveal much about the issue of paedophilia. After her investigation by the Privileges Committee, the Herald Editorial (17 September 1998) said that she survived by ‘force of numbers, not arguments’.

When the Government moved to establish a central register of people accused of child abuse the Premier said accused people would be responsible for correcting any errors and seeing that a note was placed in the file. Carr said that you cannot be ‘too draconian protecting kids’ and in reacting to the recommendations of the Royal Commission (Daily Telegraph 27 November 1997). Placing the onus onto the accused seems to have been Arena’s error precisely, so it was interesting that this development was received without extensive criticism.²⁶⁵ Arena admitted that her campaign suffered from people peddling false information and complained that ‘people have tried to set me up’ (Australian 27 September, 26 November 1997). Arena rejected gay community accusations that her paedophile campaign targeted them, but the reaction shows that issues that cluster naturally for some Members are divisive for others.²⁶⁶

Arena no doubt hoped that nobody would shoot her, but when the parliament debated a response to the Port Arthur massacre, the issue of firearms topped the agenda. The National Party’s sole female MLC voted against the restrictive measures. She was voting in the way

²⁶⁴ The Arena case raised issues of parliamentary privilege. Arena argued that a commission appointed by the executive had no power to investigate MPs. She refused to appear, but sent evidence and had legal representation (Australian 20 September 1997).
²⁶⁵ Paedophilia caused the Government to reconsider plans to make defendants and media commentators pay for aborted trials. Two trials were aborted when the Police Minister expressed his opinion of paedophiles (Sydney Morning Herald 4 June 1999).
²⁶⁶ As the term ended, Arena formed the ‘Franca Arena Child Safety Alliance’ to contest re-election saying that ‘my job is not finished yet’ (Sydney Morning Herald 5 December 1998). After the election she conceded defeat and said that she had ‘no regrets’ (Manly Daily 14 April 1999). Arena’s case shows how complex issues are, especially when entwined with parliamentary and party politics.
rural MPs of all parties felt inclined to do. Although the Council got Australia’s first elected Shooters Party Member in 1995, the issue was neither new nor localised. Following Port Arthur, Democrat Elisabeth Kirkby advocated quick New South Wales legislation before ‘the next fruit loop empties a bagful of ammunition into a crowd of innocent people’. She feared that the political will would dissipate and said she ‘sniffed the breeze in the corridors of the Parliament and there is the rather disturbing aroma of jelly’ (Sydney Morning Herald 6 June 1996).

Tingle claimed (Hansard Council 31 May 1995: 397) that the Shooters Party aims for freedom and justice rather than protection of shooters’ rights, but firearm ownership is prominent among those freedoms. Although Tingle declined to vote on a number of issues on which his party did not have a policy and therefore did not claim a mandate, the issues discussed in his inaugural speech suggest that many issues cluster naturally. Realising the power of his crossbench position, Tingle agreed to support legislation on reform of the State Rail Authority in return for Government support of his amendments to firearms laws (Sydney Morning Herald 25 June 1996). Although it would be incorrect to assert that the firearms issue divides men and women absolutely, many reformers see the ‘gun lobby’ as masculinist

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267 Rural Labor MPs Clough and Bill Beckroge (Broken Hill) ‘walked out’ of Caucus over the firearms bill. They promised their electorates consultation and noted that many in the Party attributed the 1988 defeat of the Unsworth Government to the issue (see Hagan and Clothier 2001). The National Party’s Mark Kersten sent a statement to a rally, saying that other MPs shared his misgivings although Leader Ian Armstrong backed federal proposals (Sydney Morning Herald 4, 20 June 1996).

268 Dawn Fraser (Balmain, Independent) in 1990 advocated a ban on imports of ‘military style’ weapons and bayonets and claimed that the types of weapons used in the Tien An Men massacre in Beijing were obtainable in Sydney (Sydney Morning Herald 22 September 1990). The Kirner Labor Government in Victoria linked the issue to the portrayal of women and violence in the media. Wendy Fatin, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women agreed with Kirner’s assessment, and urged men to tell their mates to stop domestic violence. Sex-based differences in assessing the need for firearms control are compounded by party philosophical differences (Australian 28 September 1991). Some female MPs stress the sexual imbalance in shooting and link this with wider problems of power and force. A survey revealed that 30% of men felt that it was acceptable to force women into having sex (Sydney Morning Herald 23 April 1997). A ban on hunting and particularly duck shooting had been a concern of Richard Jones MLC and when Carr was Environment Minister in 1987. During the election campaign, Allan promised a ban (Sydney Morning Herald 13 October 1995).

269 The Party’s reputation suffered when a former election candidate was charged with murder. The candidate had been editor of three shooting magazines (Sydney Morning Herald 24 July 1997).

270 While there are ‘constellations’ of issues there is also fragmentation. During 1995 Corbett introduced a bill to end corporal punishment in schools, supported Aboriginal rights, sex education and recognition of same-sex couples, but opposed homosexual adoption rights and condom machines in schools (Sydney Morning Herald 2 October 1995). Arena, noticed mainly for her radical stance on paedophilia, has also been active in promoting multiculturalism (Sydney Morning Herald 19 May 1997) and was prominent in attempts to organise a ship of MPs to protest French nuclear testing at Moruroa Atoll (Australian 19 August 1995). Fred Nile has been an advocate for Aboriginal people and workers, but because these activities do not fit his media image, they receive little publicity (Nile 2001, Smith, T. 2001b). The paedophile issue exposed contradictions. When the Attorney-General proposed legislation to prevent children accessing paedophile material on the internet, 200 people protested outside parliament, concerned that this was a form of censorship and a civil liberties issue (Sydney Morning Herald 28 May 1996). The presentation can determine the MP’s position.
in orientation, while many shooters think that reforms are driven by feminists. Ted Drane, President of the Sporting Shooters Association, resigned in order to lobby more aggressively on a range of issues, including the apprehended violence orders being used to ‘punish men’ (Daily Telegraph 16 April 1997).

Tingle introduced a Bill to allow householders to use ‘deadly physical force’ when defending themselves against home invasion and the Government considered supporting it (Sydney Morning Herald 17 November 1995). Two and a half years later, with an election approaching and law and order again looming as a central issue, the Premier announced that the Government would introduce its own very similar legislation. Earlier the Government refused to support a Bill proposed by Corbett aiming to register all firearms. The Bill had the support of the Police Association, the Coalition for gun Control and the Women’s Refuge Movement (Sydney Morning Herald 27 February 1996). The fate of these two Bills suggests that the willingness of MPs to espouse greater gun control is limited by party processes. In this case, the Members who stood out as being prepared to defy their parties were the males who opposed the tighter regulations. Differences are debated inside the party room, but once a decision is taken, all support the party line. Governments might use single issue Members as stalking horses or lightning rods by allowing them to introduce bills on contentious issues. If voting takes place on strategic lines, with Members knowing that the Government will introduce its own Bill or amend legislation at will, it would be unrealistic to expect Members to speak from the heart.

While females stress the importance of removing firearms from the community, male MPs are more inclined to advocate greater penalties for misuse of weapons. This is consistent with males being likely to support campaigns to be tough on crime. Premier Carr blamed the Opposition for the referral of a Bill on mandatory life sentences for drug traders to an Upper House Committee where left wing Labor MLCs were critical (Sydney Morning Herald 13

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271 When accepting an award for his stance on gun control, Prime Minister Howard thanked the ‘women of Australia’ for support (Australian 31 May 1997).
272 Despite fears about encouraging ‘vigilantism’, the Government adopted Tingle’s home invasion bill. It codified common law rights to use reasonable force in self-defence. Carr spoke of ‘law made not by judges but by the community for the community’ (Sydney Morning Herald 9 September 1998).
273 MLC Marlene Goldsmith circulated a questionnaire about violence in the media to members of the Press Gallery. The covering letter noted that any journalist failing to respond would be named in Parliament. Earlier a newspaper made a similar threat to MPs over a questionnaire on gun control (Sydney Morning Herald 7 May 1996).
274 Several male MPs showed tough attitudes to law and order. Liberal Burrinjuck MLA Alby Schultz recommended in the Chamber that a brutal murderer be removed from special protection and placed with other prisoners who would ‘know what to do with him’ (Hansard Assembly 8 May 1997). Some months later, a former teacher convicted of child sexual abuse was killed in Junee prison in Schultz’s electorate. Schultz’s federal campaign advertisements emphasised his pride in attracting the privately owned prison to the electorate (Prime Television 20 September 1998).
October 1995). Left MPs have been outspoken on civil liberties. Following trials in Orange and Gosford Carr planned to extend the Parental Responsibility Act statewide so that police could take young people home if they were out at night. Five Left MLCs, Burgmann, Saffin, Symonds, Macdonald and Primrose, issued a statement suggesting that Carr note the findings of the Attorney-General’s Committee evaluating the Act (Sydney Morning Herald 13 February 1997). They complained that

‘the legislation infringes civil liberties, leads to no reduction in juvenile crime and has the potential to be used in a discriminatory fashion. As members of Caucus we believe that this legislation should not be used in country areas. We believe that the legislation is contrary to international treaties on the rights of children, and ALP policy’.

The issues of paedophilia and firearms show that extreme caution is required when attempting to evaluate the contributions of Members. It is important to note the positions taken by parties for tactical reasons. An additional complication is that not all Members feel restricted by party discipline to the same extent.

Section 5.7 Conscience votes

Issues cannot be understood in isolation from their political contexts. The most powerful influence on Members’ behaviour is their parties and there is some evidence that women depend upon their parties to enable their special issues to reach the parliamentary agenda. Conscience votes are allowed when party leaders determine that it is inappropriate to force MPs to vote for the party line. Interviewee 7 noted that MPs come under informal pressures when they speak in the chamber:

‘Occasionally I get told to sit down and stop speaking or shorten my speech. I regularly ignore that unless I’m aware of some tactical reason. If it’s just a case of “we want to get away earlier” or something. This is one of the few unencumbered rights in this place, to stand up and speak’.

Although the idea of a conscience vote suggests that MPs would on such occasions reveal their true beliefs, they do not abandon pragmatism completely. Despite popular assumptions it is difficult to establish that Labor women are entirely ‘pro-choice’. Perhaps fearing a backlash, New South Wales Labor women were divided over whether choice should be in the Emily’s List platform (Sydney Morning Herald 31 July 1995). 275

275 In Western Australia pro-choice MPs took a ‘straw poll’ to test parliamentary support and found that MPs there feared a backlash too (Sydney Morning Herald 4 April 1998). The conscience vote sometimes allows other common interests to emerge. On the question of abortion there was an incident in the previous Parliament when Beryl Evans (Liberal MLC) staged a walkout of females. Elaine Nile was speaking on a Bill on Termination of Pregnancy (Hansard Council 12 September 1991: 1091) when a quorum was called. Later, Goldsmith explained that she had stayed in the Chamber because the walkout denied Nile’s right to speak and breached privilege.
When Rob Oakeshott campaigned for Port Macquarie, he proved vulnerable on gender issues. Because he was succeeding Machin, he was asked whether he supported the right to abortion. He said that he supported the Party’s position to allow a conscience vote (Sydney Morning Herald 2 September 1996). Abortion was not a prominent issue in the Parliament, but pro-choice Members considered a Private Members’ Bill to amend the anachronistic measures in the Crimes Act (Sydney Morning Herald 4 April 1998). There was however, a ‘discussion’ of euthanasia. The Speaker described the occasion as historic because two non-MPs gave the opening speeches (Hansard Assembly 16 October 1996: 4850ff). Nori, a member of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, and Allan were isolated in their support of the comments by Professor Peter Baume. The Leader of Opposition Business however, was not impressed with the occasion and argued that parliament needed a bill or resolution to debate. In the upper house, Government Leader Egan in reply to a question by Arena said that he would not facilitate a discussion (Hansard Council 16 October 1996: 4745).

The idea of a ‘conscience vote’ has relevance to claims about mainstreaming. The reluctance of parties to officially sponsor controversial bills could be a convenient means of avoiding many ‘women’s’ issues. On 23 October 1997, Jan Burnswoods introduced a Private Members Bill that aimed to ensure that the age of consent was the same (16 years) for males and females. She noted that the Labor Party ‘permits a conscience vote on moral issues - a definition that is sometimes difficult to pin down’.

It is possible that women have more trouble forcing issues onto the agenda than men do and that more ‘women’s issues’ are ‘non-issues’. When Parliament considered removing Justice Vince Bruce from the bench following a critical report by the Judicial Commission, both major parties saw this as a matter of ‘conscience’ (Sydney Morning Herald 9 June 1998). This suggests that the term has an odd political usage and refers to any time when party discipline is relaxed rather than an issue that concerns the individual consciences of MPs. When asked about what it is they represent, 25 interviewees (13 females, 12 males) rated ‘yourself/ your conscience’ as very important (C:xxii). Whether this can be interpreted as a plea for more relaxed party discipline is unclear, but there was no indication that females were more likely to consider themselves to be concerned with issues of conscience. It is more likely a claim to be always acting conscientiously and in good faith.

276 The debate was instigated in New South Wales by federal legislation overturning Northern Territory legislation. Earlier Paul O’Grady, ill with H.I.V. persuaded Caucus to allow him to introduce a voluntary euthanasia bill while he was an MLC (Sydney Morning Herald 25 June 1996).

277 Mainstreaming has been identified as a feature of systems such as Australia where tight discipline means that party policy translates into legislative action (Considine and Deutchmann 1994a).

Marian Simms argues that parties sometimes marginalise women’s issues by resorting to ‘conscience votes’ that avoid party discipline. Simms notes that parties have an extraordinarily high degree of discipline on economic issues, but that the conscience vote is reserved for issues where ‘private’ matters such as divorce and abortion are involved and a high degree of emotion is expected (Sydney Morning Herald 24 July 1995). No male interviewee mentioned termination of pregnancy or surrogacy as key interests but females did (above p.106). There has been one study of women’s contributions to federal parliamentary debate based on the case of the euthanasia resolution (Broughton and Palmieri 1999) but if Simms’ assessment is correct, the ‘case’ is atypical. Indeed, if women’s issues are more likely to be afforded conscience votes, then women’s contributions to such debates must be expected to be greater. The problem for understanding women’s participation is that these can always be dismissed as abnormal examples.

Interviewee 23 mentioned some areas of interest that the party would not adopt and for which ‘the chances are zero’. Another (25) commented on the downside of belonging to a party, the frustration of: ‘having to accept passage of inappropriate or unacceptable laws because of party loyalty’ and another (18) noted the particular problems faced by crossbenchers.

‘I’ve been trying to get amendments to the X Act for three years and of course private members legislation always gets dropped to the bottom of the notice paper. Every Member has the right to introduce private bills, so I haven’t got very far with that’.

There are special problems for women in allocating priority. Asked about advice to new Members, Interviewee 1 suggested:

‘Set goals and stick to them. Stick to a plan to achieve them and don’t get sidetracked. Don’t dilute your interests. That’s what I did. I’ve taken on so many of them. You can burn yourself out very quickly taking on every cause’.

This problem could reflect a conscientious approach that commits the MP to treat all representations seriously. The statement further contradicts claims that women are inclined towards a narrow range of interests. It suggests that strong advocacy of controversial issues marginalises MPs and cause them to be taken less seriously.
Section 5.8 Party dominance of issues

While some interviewees emphasised mainstreaming, this applied more to the Labor Party than the Coalition. Interviewees who spoke of this approach are mainly Government Members. Interviewee 20 emphasised smaller groups within the party:

‘You can change legislation before it hits the deck, and that however can really only be done with those Ministers that you have a personal relationship with, those Ministers you can harass. But then there’s a sense of achievement because legislation does change’. 279

Labor’s factional system makes caucus decisions more binding on the party than in the Liberal Party room where the Leader has more authority over policy. Interviewee 5 said: ‘You can always bring your concerns to the party room and let them know. It’s easier in the Liberal Party than the Labor Party. Discipline is lacking in the party room at times’.

Interviewee 9 noted the difference in regard to winning promotion rather than in regard to legislation, but the same mode might apply.

‘Well if what you want to do is advance in politics, suck up to the leader. That is the advice. If that’s what you want. Most people coming into parliament want to be Ministers, want to advance. You get very ambitious people coming in here. That’s only the first stage and the next stage is becoming a Minister and that’s the bottom line at least in our party where the leader selects the Ministry or Shadow Ministry. If you’re in the Labor Party - suck up to all your colleagues so they’ll vote for you’.

Interviewee 32 offered similar advice:

‘I was going to tell him if he wanted to make a career out of it and his main aim was to succeed as a Member of Parliament, to throw your principles out the window. Join all the party bodies. Get in with the ruling clique. But if you want to come out of parliament with your principles in tact, stick to your guns. If you think you’re right argue the point and never take a backward step. That would be my advice to him’.

This interviewee assumed a new Member would be a ‘he’.

Interviewee 20 said that Caucus has not always prevailed in this Labor Government. Interviewees described frustrations.

• ‘…. in the left of the party you don’t have the numbers to do things yourself effectively. You have to be thinking of going through the process of changing the party, pushing the party in the direction you want to go’ (11).
• ‘…. we used to have very strong debates at conferences and other forums which had the effect of being binding on the party in government and therefore you did

279 Sarah Childs (2002: 148) found that some British Labor women MPs favoured the drip-feed of Ministers in private and informal settings. One MP noted however, that being listened to is not the same as having an impact.
had the ability to influence directions, but that no longer applies because most decisions are taken by the executive’ (17).

Generally Opposition Members have more latitude than Government Members but the Left continued to speak out on contentious issues. 280

Asked about factors that would affect their careers (C:xviii), interviewees did not endorse any options very strongly. Of seven suggested influences, two were endorsed as ‘very important’ by more females than males. One was ‘expertise in a policy area’ but the difference was small (5:4). Indeed, several interviewees, mainly females, thought that their specialist policy potential had been wasted and that they were not consulted about areas in which they were qualified. Five females and two males rated ‘performance as a party member’ as ‘very important’. While female interviewees could have a more realistic appreciation of the way they depend on the backing of a party, it is unclear whether this dependence applies to all MPs and the females appreciate it better, or whether it applies exclusively to female MPs. If women lack numbers in the party room, then this might suppress women’s issues. 281 When interviewees were asked to rate their effectiveness in various aspects of their roles (C:v) only eight rated themselves ‘high’ in influencing party room decisions. Interestingly five of these eight were females. By contrast 18 interviewees rated their effectiveness high on making representations. Although women occasionally find common bipartisan cause when they are treated stereotypically, ideology is generally a stronger determinant of behaviour than sex is. Skjeie (1993: 285) describes a survey that shows party to be a better indicator than gender on political issues, and this study is continually drawn to the observation that parties are more likely to shape the behaviour of women Members than vice-versa. 282 While this applies to men as well, it is not as likely to affect the raising of men’s issues.

280 For example an Editorial headed ‘Tough Carr’ (Sydney Morning Herald 22 November 1996) applauded the Premier’s ‘resounding victory’ in Caucus on police reforms. Police officers demonstrated outside Parliament because the new Police Commissioner was being given wide powers to dismiss. The Editorial opined that ‘dissident MPs were unduly influenced by the verbal thuggery of the demonstrators’ and that had they prevailed ‘it would be difficult to imagine how Mr Carr could have remained as Premier’. The Left, that causes many of Carr’s problems, urged adoption of Federal unfair dismissal laws. Following the 1999 election, Carr vowed to abolish factions and warned MPs against criticizing the budget (Sydney Morning Herald 19 April 1995, 24 June 1999).

281 There are always dissenters, but the secrecy of party room discussions masks internal dynamics. In 1996, the 22 Left caucus members discussed a resolution to censure Meredith Burgmann for speaking to media about caucus deliberations. Her ‘fraction’ of eight ‘hard’ or ‘union’ left members considered withdrawing from general Left meetings (Sydney Morning Herald 16 April 1996).

282 Federal Coalition women were criticised for timidity in advocating women’s issues. Journalist Adele Horin noted their silence while the Government moved to abolish women’s right to take equal pay claims to the Industrial Commission. Horin noted that the ‘boys on the backbench’ were vocal enough to win concessions on native title and gun laws (Sydney Morning Herald 25 May 1996).
Private Members Bills are introduced usually with party permission, when a Member cannot get the party to sponsor legislation. Governments rarely accept such Bills because they imply that it is failing to act in an area. During the Term, a number of Bills were put forward. Vaucluse Liberal MLA Peter Debnam’s ‘Traffic Amendment (Street Racing) Bill’ attempted to ban the drag racing in suburban streets (Hansard Assembly 14 November 1996: 6021). The Government did not support the Bill but later brought in very similar legislation, the ‘Traffic Amendment (Street and Illegal Drag Racing) Bill’ (Hansard Assembly 27 November 1996: 6739). Debnam commended the ‘courage’ of the Police Minister and noted that this was his Bill with ‘three words’ rewritten on the first page and other ‘minor amendments’ (6745).


Party discipline might affect males and females differently. Interviewees expressed disappointment over legislation including bills related to sex and sexuality. Two interviewees (one male, one female) were prepared to cross the floor over the bill outlawing homosexual vilification and another complained about Government hostility to her same-sex parenting bill. Such tensions arise more frequently on ‘women’s issues’. Of three MPs who left their parties but stayed in Parliament two were women and both resigned from major parties. This does not necessarily prove however that women are less loyal to their parties, because all the defectors had been in parliament since at least 1988 and all were all MLCs and both factors loosen discipline. It is possible though, that women are less afraid to break ranks. If they are pessimistic about their promotion prospects, they have less incentive to toe the party line. When Helen Sham-Ho joined the crossbench as an Independent after resigning from the Liberal Party, citing weakness on issues of multiculturalism, she reported ‘new-found freedom’… I don’t have to bow to party discipline. I can speak out and be critical of the Liberal Party, the Labor Party, anyone. I can speak according to my conscience and for my

283 By late 1998 two Private Members Bills by Government Members remained on the Bills List, one under the name of a female MLC and the other a male MLA (House Papers 3 December 1998).
284 There were other examples. When the Opposition produced a plan to ban smoking in restaurants, Health Minister Refshauge asked Cabinet to wait for his legislation, but because there had been a report with recommendations, Cabinet would not wait. The Premier said that ‘I’ve never seen one side of politics as the repository of all wisdom’ and promised to use good suggestions (Sydney Morning Herald 12 May 1999). On the other hand, parents’ groups complained that the Government refused to produce a policy on boys’ education because Shadow Minister O’Doherty was interested in the area and the Minister wanted to deny him credit (Sydney Morning Herald 31 July 1995).
constituents’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 18 July 1998). Interviewee 31 noted the freedom he gained to pursue issues when he left his party.  

Asked about the influence of party preselections in the sex ratio in Parliament (C:xxviii), two-thirds of Government interviewees and four-fifths of Crossbench interviewees regarded this as very important, but only a third of Opposition interviewees did. So discipline varies across parties. Liberals often emphasise this difference and condemn Labor’s rigidity. Party discipline is a problem for understanding debates inside parties also. Asked about disobeying a whip, Interviewee 20 counted four occasions:

‘I refused to vote on X policy but was able to prove it was Labor policy, put there by Lionel Murphy and Neville Wran, so I got out of that one. In fact I got the entire House, the Labor Party, not to vote’.  

Speaking about frustrations, Interviewee 21 said

‘I can speak for every MP about that... decisions foisted upon Members from on high - some of which even the Cabinet hasn’t known about. There are a couple of instances in recent times where the Premier hasn’t consulted or has consulted only a couple. To be a Minister in such a cabinet must be frustrating. You’re not approaching Ministers are you? They wouldn’t be frank with you anyhow’.

For crossbenchers, the question of whips was not applicable. Interviewee 31 said ‘We don’t have a whip but I’ve disobeyed the leader. We’re free to act on our conscience and I have’. Others had disobeyed. Eight of the cohort of seventeen who entered 1988-91 chose to elaborate. Three of the eight Pre 1988 cohort chose to do so and two of the nine Post 1992 entrants. This slightly higher percentage among the 1988-91 cohort is consistent with an individualist ideology, but is so slight as to be negligible in such a small sample.

Interviewees noted:

- ‘I disobeyed orders not to speak on gun control. I got away with it because it was a strong conscience thing. It didn’t bring down a Government or anything catastrophic or I would have been mindful I was put there by the electorate to represent the party. I spoke on behalf of my constituents’ (5).
- ‘... anti-vilification laws ... the suggestion was we abstain and I asked the whip was there any of our mob in there and he said “Yes. Four Nationals”. So I went in. It’s not that I’ve got anything against homosexuals but my right to say I don’t like their behaviour in public is my right to free speech’ (16).

285 ‘Now I’m concentrating on these issues because I can do that. I’m totally free now’ (Interview 31). The popular image of dissent from the party line is that of the ‘maverick’ whether male or female. Alan Ramsey (*Sydney Morning Herald* 22 March 1999) described the willingness of Susan Jeanes to risk censure in the Federal Liberal Party room by speaking out on an apology to Aboriginal people and the ‘work-for-the-dole’ scheme. Jeanes, who lost her seat in 1998, admitted that she had not done ‘what a good little politician would do in terms of her party. I’ll take the government on when I have to’.

286 Fifteen interviewees had not disobeyed a whip (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 21, 25, 30, 33).
• ‘I have abstained. I’ve always given an explanation. I’ve been reprimanded. X and I had a blue over homosexual vilification laws’ (22).
• ‘I disobeyed party rules once. I crossed the floor over the gun laws’ (26).
• ‘I didn’t agree with the direction that the government – my government – was taking on the declaration of wilderness areas’ (29).

While a range of issues stirred Members to consider dissent, firearms, the environment and anti-vilification legislation were prominent. These are issues where charges of ‘political correctness’ have been made and the dissent was against a perceived orthodoxy, but it is unclear whether this shows that interviewees were motivated by principle or electoral pragmatism. 287 Nor is it possible to determine from the data whether MPs who give interviews are naturally more disposed than most MPs to risk offending Whips.

MPs cannot speak on every issue and many debates involve strictly limited lists. Whips control the roster and so the speaking record reflects the perceptions of whips about appropriate contributions rather than individual choices. Whips must balance the entire roster and criteria such as experience and other commitments are more important than achieving a sex balance or gender equity. Of the Whips (six in each Chamber), only Dorothy Isaksen MLC (Labor) was female. The effect of this imbalance is not clear. Meredith Burgmann had a public disagreement over procedures with the (male) Deputy Whip of her faction. While the newspaper report referred to sexist behaviour, and a roster and family responsibilities were involved, it is unclear whether the incident was caused by the difference in sex (Sydney Morning Herald 18 December 1995). Rodney Smith (1999: 50) observes that focussing too strictly on the possibility that Whips force Members to act against their consciences can disguise the ‘important ways in which parties are explicit and implicit sources of ethical learning and guidance for legislators’. Smith notes that parties provide ‘compass readings’ and a ‘common ethical touchstone’ (51).

The MP’s party rather than his or her sex strongly determines most behaviour. When female Labor MPs are asked whether they would prefer a female colleague or a good Labor person, they commonly answer that they would prefer the latter. As Susan Ryan observes, ‘factions

287 Others stressed that it was a complex situation: ‘I haven’t disobeyed a whip but I’ve crossed the floor. Something cropped up in the Chamber and I had to make up my mind. I voted against all the Members of my party. I believed that what the Government was doing was pragmatic but wrong so I voted against it’ (8). ‘I have negotiated seriously. We have a good whip. It has not come to that’ (9). ‘Not turning up rather than crossing the floor’ (23). ‘The vote’s pretty well decided in the party room. If anybody is going to vote another way they would declare it. I’m in close consultation with our whip’ (24). ‘… we had to have permission to move motions and I just decided to do my own thing’ (27). ‘Not by voting contrary to the party line, or not attending parliament, but in the party room objecting to the economic rationalist approach. I register my objection or displeasure but I go along at the end’ (34). ‘I’ve felt inclined to disobey party ministers on numerous occasions’ (32).
come ahead of feminism’ (Ryan 1999: 193). Comparable questions are not asked of males. These attitudes seem to place severe limits on the possibility of women making common cause, but the possibility of male solidarity is seldom even considered. This suggests that there is never any tension between party membership and maleness. 288 Asked whether women MPs were ‘more loyal to party’ (C:xxix) seven interviewees agreed and 15 disagreed, but Table 5.8 shows that there was little difference by sex in either answer. However, while almost twice as many males disagreed as agreed, almost three times as many females disagreed as agreed. So females were less inclined to think of themselves as more loyal partisans.

Table 5.8: Women MPs are ‘more loyal to party’

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
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Criticisms of Government actions on gender issues are more likely to come from Coalition women but if Sawer’s (1986) T.I.Ge.R. analysis remains relevant, these are less likely to be Sisters and active on such issues. 289 When they do employ gender critiques, the Government can argue that the criticisms are motivated by partisan considerations. New South Wales Liberal women criticised the lack of female representation on Committees planning the 2000 Olympics, an Olympic Committee spokesman accused the Liberal Women’s Forum of interference (Sydney Morning Herald 28 April, Daily Telegraph 29 April 1998). Labor women did not join the criticism of the conduct of the Games by the Carr Government. There were charges that the Sydney 2000 Olympics was a ‘blokey games’ run by Graham Richardson (Sydney Morning Herald 29 March 1997, 16, 21, 28 April and 28 November 1998). The Australian (25 April 1998) referred to ‘Richo’s 2000 Olympics: the Games mates play best’. While some complaints were made about the involvement of people with Labor connections, the Liberal Women’s Forum noted the scarcity of women in senior roles. There was one woman on the board alongside 15 men, and women occupied 30% general management positions, but 60% of lower positions. A Sydney Organising Committee

288 The need for female MPs to show loyalty to women and to their parties creates dilemmas. When the Howard Government downgraded women’s units such as the Office of the Status of Women and the Affirmative Action Agency, it reportedly bowed to ‘intense pressure’ from female Liberal MPs and Liberal women’s groups in deciding to retain the Sex Discrimination Commissioner. Lobbying was led by New South Wales Senators Payne and Helen Coonan who said that Liberal women were ‘pleased the Government has been prepared to listen to community concerns as articulated by the Liberal women… There’s a desire to get better at using government processes rather than always being outside running around the edges’. The Howard Government moved also to ensure that conservative women’s organisations received funding (Sydney Morning Herald 3 May, 8 July, 20 September 1997).

289 This is comparable to the position of Republican women in the USA. When Democrat women caucus they are unlikely to find themselves at odds with Democrat men (Thomas 1994, Swers 1998).
Olympic Games (SOCOG) spokesperson responded that this was comparable to other corporations, politics and the law. The *Australian*’s Olympics writer Adrian Bradley described the masculine domination as ‘an unfortunate social barometer’ of the general culture. Richardson conceded the male domination but refused to accept partisan bias. A sacked marketing executive Karen Webb told the Industrial Relations Commission that SOCOG was a ‘boys club’ (*Australian* 21 March, 21 December 1998, 19 July 2000).  

The public silence of Labor women is understandable if it is assumed that they made personal representations to the Minister.

Common cause among female MPs is possible. Women in the Swedish Parliament have become so adept at analysing the gender-constructing behaviour of Members that they have formulated hand signals with which to identify specific types (Theorin 1995: 47). Such awareness seems very far removed from the position of New South Wales women. While they sometimes cooperate, they are strongly divided by party affiliation, and are as likely to use women’s issues to secure partisan advantage as they are to use their parties to pursue women’s interests. Allan was involved in an incident that is not recorded in *Hansard*, because it concerned an unanswered interjection. Allan advised a male Opposition member ‘keep your shirt on’. Skinner, who held a crucial position within the Speaker’s earshot, rose on a Point of Order. Allan lampooned Skinner saying ‘Oh go on Jillian. Say it’s sexist, go on’ (Observed). Allan’s remarks are not recorded in *Hansard*, perhaps because she made them when sitting and when no Member had the call, and because Skinner did not respond. Her point of order did not allege gender bias in Allan’s remark, but the incident suggests that female MPs tend to employ critical approaches most readily when they are consistent with personal and partisan advantage. When Minister for the Status of Women LoPo’ announced changes to housing laws to ensure women could hang laundry on their balconies, Chikarovski said LoPo’ was ‘time-warped’ and argued that a woman is ‘more than just a housewife’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 16 November 1996).

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290 *Herald* columnist Gerard Henderson (21 April 1998) identified strong links between partisanship and patriarchy. He argued that when Tracey Holmes resigned from SOCOG, Olympics Minister Knight ‘went into full patronising mode’ to describe Holmes as a ‘good, nice, middle ranking media person’. Henderson referred to Richardson’s memoir *Whatever It Takes* as ‘replete with blokey tales of drinking, vomiting, swearing, toilet-seat phone conversations and big hits’. Henderson said that in Richardson’s world ‘getting the numbers for a mate’ is ‘better than sex and almost as exciting as a good feed’. Richardson conceded that the personnel were predominantly male but rejected claims of bias towards Labor men.

291 The first finger means ‘they make you invisible’. The second means ‘they ridicule you’. The third says that ‘they keep you uninformed’. The fourth indicates double punishment. The fifth means ‘they treat you in a sexist manner and make you feel guilty about it’.
Asked whether they would describe relations with MPs ‘across the Chamber’ as amicable (B:iv), only three interviewees disagreed (none strongly). Only one disagreed that such contacts were useful, and three disagreed that there was common ground. Although they were not asked specifically about the sex of their colleagues, they were invited to add comments at any stage, and did on many questions. No interviewee commented about whether he or she found more common ground with men or with women, but the fact that only four interviewees disagreed with the proposition (C:xxix) that women are more approachable suggests that other factors inhibit cross-chamber approaches. 292

There is an additional conceptual problem here. Women who find common cause can be reacting against domination by men or the system generally. It is probably easier to attack the latter rather than one’s male colleagues. Senator Natasha Stott Despoja said that ‘it’s hard for women in politics to compete healthily and to show a degree of sisterly solidarity’ (Sydney Morning Herald 13 December 1997). If that is difficult within a party such as the Democrats, held to be relatively free of the baggage encumbering older parties (see Sawer 1997c), then it is likely to be even more difficult between women separated by membership of hostile parties.

When interviewees were asked how they decided their legislative priorities (C:xxiv), six females and four males rated personal interest as ‘very important’. More males than females (5:3) rated representations by constituents as ‘very important’. More females (3:1) rated the party agenda as ‘very important’ and ‘important’ (10:6). Three females (and one male) rated interest groups as ‘very important’. So female MPs might be squeezed more tightly between their parties and interest groups. Women’s groups are better organised and they actively lobby women MPs, who are expected to respond. 293 If they do not, then they are accused of selling out. Groups devoted to men’s issues are fewer, newer and more loosely organised, and when most MPs are males, individual targets for lobbying are not obvious, particularly when few MPs speak on men’s issues. While more males emphasised representations by constituents, some constituents might find their MPs more, or less approachable on specific issues, and so

292 The strength of party loyalty was demonstrated when the Liberals considered running a candidate in the Port Macquarie by-election following Machin’s resignation. There was speculation that the Coalition might split and Machin considered staying on. Eventually the agreement was maintained, despite the Premier’s promise to grant the Nationals special status should a split ensue (Australian 19, 26 August 1996, Sydney Morning Herald 20 August 1996).

293 Asked about lobbyists’ access to Parliament, nine interviewees (including six males) agreed that they have ‘too much’. Later, Parliament introduced a registration scheme for lobbyists. The Speaker said that the ‘white shoe brigade’ had been touting for business and sought to bring in some order and security (Australian 26 February 1997). Interviewee 27 said that there was too much access for professional consultants, including ex-MPs, but that community based interest groups needed more.
might tailor their demands. If interviewees’ perceptions above about approachability are
accurate, then constituents might well be more demanding of female MPs. 294

Section 5.9 Conclusion

Despite the methodological problems some conclusions are warranted. First, MPs take on a
huge range of issues. Only some of these create a ‘cluster’ and only some receive public
attention. Secondly, there is a perception among interviewees that it is possible to characterise
the issues adopted by women. However, there is more evidence of fragmentation than of
packages of issues that cluster conceptually. This perception is consistent with women being
more marginalised. Stereotyping hinders careers and ambitious MPs stress their
approachability on all issues. This complicates attempts to describe representational
specialties because the ambitious might downplay theirs. On the other hand, when asked
about their specialisations, female interviewees nominated a broader band of issues than
males did.

Thirdly, the experiences of crossbenchers who lack promotion prospects suggest that MPs
have some highly specialised interests. Fourthly, while male and female MPs aim to represent
some issues that impact differently on males and females, the differences are small in
practice. The nomination of environment by more males is surprising given that females in
the general population are held to be more environmentally conscious. This suggests that the
sex of the MP is not determinative. The explanation for the difference usually lies elsewhere,
but there is no guarantee that the explanation is similar in each case. Some differences could
be attributable to gender processes. The apparently greater interest in law and order issues by
males for example, could result from discouragement of women from taking an interest in an
area where toughness is the paradigm, while ambitious males shun portfolios where softer
images are required.

The influence of MP sex cannot be isolated easily from other factors. Other variables include:
chamber, party and date of entry, and individual characteristics not included as variables here,
such as background, experience and reasons for entering parliament. Other cultural factors are
completely beyond the MP’s control. When MPs’ interests are sex stereotyped then the
likelihood of change is minimised and the culture self-perpetuates.

294 Labor women are more inclined to admit the influence of groups, especially trades unions. When
asked about their general political views (A: i and A: ii), no female Government interviewee thought that
trade unions have too much power, while no Opposition female disagreed.
Fifthly, issues are not constants nor are they monolithic. Interest can legitimately place the MP on either side of a debate. If firearms are a ‘sexed’ issue, then any MP showing an interest in the issue would be seen as advocating a men’s or a women’s viewpoint. As the Shooters Party Member did not express his advocacy in this way, the definition of firearms as a ‘women’s issue’ attains an arbitrary and asymmetrical aspect. Sixthly, methodological problems remain and numerous caveats must be heeded when attempting to assess the parliamentarian’s contribution to an issue. Women’s issues can be seen as ones espoused by female MPs or as ones that impact disproportionately on women, and the processes of portfolio allocation, speaking rosters and media priorities are congruent with either perspective. While it is convenient to refer to ‘women’s issues’ and ‘men’s issues’ the difference in concept and performance is not separation but distinction, and issues range along a continuum rather than falling into polar dichotomies. If these are not problems enough, it will be seen in Chapter 6 below that the parliamentarian’s role is influenced by many other aspects of their perceptions, and that gender is central to these.
Chapter 6 Becoming an MP

Section 6.1 Introduction
Section 6.2 General consciousness of sex and gender: ‘I’m not a gender sort of person, really’
Section 6.3 Political orientation
Section 6.4 Political socialisation and reasons for entering parliament
Section 6.5 Career ambitions
Section 6.6 Obstacles: ‘What do you want, “War and Peace”? ’
Section 6.7 Assistance: ‘Males have mentors’
Section 6.8 The family effect
Section 6.9 ‘Two for the price of one’
Section 6.10 ‘Everyone should have a wife’
Section 6.11 ‘Nannies and cleaners’
Section 6.12 Conclusion

Section 6.1 Introduction

While Chapters 4 and 5 found some differences in the ways males and females approached their representative tasks, Chapters 6 and 7 offer explanations for those differences. Chapter 6 describes factors arising from pre-parliamentary experiences while Chapter 7 identifies influences in the Parliament. Both find evidence that male and female interviewees perceived that their options were limited by factors beyond their control.

Section 6.2 examines the extent of consciousness of sex and gender among interviewees. To the extent that males or females accept popular stereotypes, then their behaviour follows well-defined paths. If only women are conscious of popular sex-role expectations, then males and females still have different assumptions about how they should behave. Carmen Lawrence described a dilemma for women in politics:

‘If you’ve got to be so different that you give politics a whole new name and character, so virtuous that you can overcome the very negative perceptions people have about politicians, then any mistake you make is seen as catastrophic. It’s actually an impossible agenda’ (quoted in Eveline and Booth 1997: 116). 295

295 Lawrence was judged in a ‘court of public opinion’ as well as on legalities. (Australian 12 February 1997). The Commission and subsequent legal actions dragged on for five years.
Many women MPs have found that they are expected to be safe, reliable and sexless, but simultaneously attractive and alluring (Australian 12 September 1995, 10 April 1999).  

Overall consciousness of gender is difficult to assess in isolation, but some themes emerge from the interviews. First, females are forced to consider their roles as females much more than males are forced to consider their roles as males. Secondly, some females’ responses are suggestive of ‘closet feminism’. Feminist attitudes are displayed only when female interviewees criticise some obvious male advantage. Thirdly, male interviewees made few statements about masculinity. Fourthly, the most general consensus is that males and females interpret gender as meaning ‘related to women’.

Section 6.3 examines interviewees’ political orientations and Section 6.4 their political socialisation and reasons for entering parliament. New Zealand MP Marilyn Waring (1997: 7) argues that women ‘come from and belong to a different political culture’. While it would be difficult to defend that generalisation for all women and it is difficult to identify precisely a women’s political culture, Preston-Stanley noted that the parliamentary culture of 1925 was not constructed by female MPs, and there is only modest evidence of their influence in 1995. While all MPs experience the parliamentary culture, the perils are greater for women when they, as a group, are seen as outsiders.

Female interviewees shared some views popularly associated with females generally, including attitudes to levels of taxation. Males seldom think of themselves as holding typically male views but assume that they are broadly representative of the range of views in society. While males and females report similar political socialisation, popular myths persist about the political experiences of women. Female interviewees were less inclined to specify reasons for entering parliament and gave more diverse and less idealistic reasons than males. Section 6.5 shows that females were more realistic about their political career prospects, but they were no less ‘ambitious’ than male colleagues. What these similarities conceal however, is the possibility that the paradigmatic parliamentarian has been built around male or

296 Some research into appearance and ‘power dressing’ suggests that to be successful, women should even cut their hair because long hair is too ‘sexy’ (Australian 8 May 1997).

297 Reasons for female reluctance to adopt feminist critiques are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

298 Many female MPs note the stereotypical views outsiders have of them. Federal parliamentarian Kathy Sullivan (1994: 17) reports being asked ‘What’s it like being a woman in the Senate?” When she replied ‘It’s really just like being a man in the Senate’ people would ‘smile knowingly and patiently’ and ask ‘but what’s it really like?’ Sullivan found the electorate’s understanding different from her own and those of her colleagues. Susan Ryan (1999: 137) says that “these days young feminists ask me what it was like to be a young woman working with these men. They wait for me to say that I was miserable, overwhelmed by the “Boys’ Club” as current jargon describes the parliament’. The need to break free of such stereotypes might have prompted Meagher to promise to avoid ‘tradition or protocol’ when necessary (above p.56 fn 123).
masculine characteristics and that females who aspire to the role must adapt their own attitudes and behaviours, so diluting any differences.

Section 6.6 examines experiences of career obstacles and Section 6.7 describes assistance. In particular, experiences of encouragement and discouragement are investigated in order to ascertain whether men and women think that they are made equally welcome. While interviewees agreed that political life involves continual confrontation with obstacles, most did not attribute these to their sex, although a few females mentioned stereotyping. Interestingly, females more often recognised assistance. It is difficult to discern whether this means they have been trained to think in this way, whereas men have not, or whether it reflects the relative recency of their arrival and their dependence on former Members who are mostly male. If women really do need assistance, this is not necessarily because they are less resourceful. Some obstacles are best removed by insiders. While some males acknowledged mentors, Opposition females readily acknowledged male mentors. Labor women commonly mentioned peer mentoring. Interviewees raised issues related to many other variables, and also to highly personal and unique circumstances. Among these personal factors, relationships and family circumstances were prominent.

Sections 6.8 – 6.11 investigate the family effect. There is ample anecdotal evidence to suggest that family responsibilities are a burden for women but an advantage for men. Spouses were described variously as personal supporters and political partners, but interviewees noted that the role is changing. With more female members and changes in society, spouses are more likely to have their own careers. The slogan ‘two for the price of one’ (Section 6.9) is becoming dated, but the notion that ‘everyone should have a wife’ (Section 6.10) persists. Where the MP has dependent children the differences between the situations of males and females are accentuated (Section 6.11). These more private aspects of the parliamentary role begin an understanding of parliamentarians’ individual thinking. Later, Chapter 7 examines the influence of the parliament in the relationship between perceptions and behaviour.

Section 6.2 Consciousness of difference: ‘I’m not a gender sort of person, really’.

It should not be assumed that gender questions are at the forefront of the thinking of MPs. Males have little incentive to refer to gender as their sex is commonly seen as an ‘advantage’ (Eveline 1994). When commentators describe the experiences of women MPs, their analyses are sharp, but gender questions can often be overlooked. Women identify gender processes
more commonly than men, but not automatically. 299 So if such questions are not routine among women’s advocates, it cannot surprise that women MPs fail to discuss gender. Noting the reluctance of former female MPs to reflect on their experiences, former New Zealand parliamentarian Marilyn Waring (1997: 2) says that ‘the silence of a battered woman is a wall of resistance. It is often effective protection, but it also keeps other women removed from the truth’. Waring had no knowledge of female predecessors.

Gender influences the behaviour of MPs whether or not they are conscious of it. Interviewee 4 noted of parliamentary life that ‘you aren’t even aware the way it colours your approach to things’. While practitioners acknowledge that males and females are distinct in some ways women MPs do not necessarily conform to popular assumptions about how they should behave. 300 Some works (Sawer 1986, Whip 1991, Broughton and Zetlin 1996) stress that it is wrong to generalise because there are clearly types among female MPs. Other studies note that post-election experiences can influence behaviour markedly. Manon Tremblay (1996: 43) in a study of Quebec mayors, uses the ‘Queen Bee’ and ‘Closet Feminist’ syndromes to explain the pressures on women to conform to gender expectations. Scutt (1996b: 327ff) argues that the Queen Bee adopts a ‘hybrid sex’ to claim a male legitimacy. This leads to the claim that ‘I am not a woman. I am an MP’. 301 No female interviewee in this study made such a claim. All, with one possible exception, expressed interest in helping other women because of the difficulties they face, and most acknowledged assistance from others. So there do not seem to be any Queen Bees among interviewees. ‘Closet feminism’ is harder to identify because it means that women hide any commitment to their sex and its issues. This means that they tend to find other reasons to justify their decisions. If women hide their female priorities, then this flattens differences out and obscures their distinctiveness.

There was little evidence that male interviewees were conscious of being ‘male MPs’ rather than simply ‘MPs’. No male interviewee directly claimed any personal advantage in being male. Four males thought that affirmative action had gone too far (see above p.83), which implies that females have some relative advantage, but the other 13 accepted that there was some disadvantage that needed to be addressed. There was no overt expression of masculinism designed to maintain male dominance, few references to the influence of

299 Anne Summers for example, made no reference to gender in her (1997) address ‘The Media and Parliament’, although popular images of female MPs have been a constant area of complaint.
300 Sawer (1996: xii) points out for example that the newly elected Federal Government, boasting that a quarter of Liberal MPs were female, immediately abolished the ‘family friendly’ curfew on sitting hours, apparently with little resistance.
301 Following their election three new Federal female Coalition MPs told Life Matters (ABC Radio National 5 March 1996) that they were MPs first, and two of those said they were MPs only.
masculinity and no argument that males needed special assistance.\textsuperscript{302} It is unclear whether males do not need assistance, or this is just a difference between the perceptions of males and females. It could be that males perceive themselves as naturally competitive and so fear being labelled as weak should they expect or offer assistance, whereas females find cooperation more natural. One male and one female interviewee (6 and 27) noted the difficulty of operating in a highly competitive environment where trust was minimised and today’s friends are potentially tomorrow’s foes.

Males made no assertions that they were superior or that females were inadequate MPs. There was certainly a range of perceptions among males about female distinctiveness and this might reflect different consciousness. Table 6.1 shows that when interviewees were asked to respond to ten statements comparing male and female MPs (C:xxix) such as ‘women are more conscientious’, the opinions of males were spread widely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of difference</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The aggregates in Table 6.1 suggest that the comparative statements were ones that women were more likely to agree with than disagree with (100:36), while the distribution of males’ responses however, is flatter with 56 agreements, 62 disagreements and 52 neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Apparently, the males as a group hold less clear opinions about female MPs. One explanation is that males accept females as professional colleagues to the extent that they do not think of them as females. Another is that the particular females who have become MPs have not challenged males’ expectations.

A few males commented about female MPs. Interviewee 12 noted in relation to the operations of his office that women juggle issues well, while men use one-dimensional, conventional thinking. Interviewee 26 argued that women make ‘very effective’ MPs but another (29) said: ‘if women want to go into politics they must be prepared to... on the same terms as males. It’s a profession they choose ... and the idea that females have problems that males don’t have because of their gender is in my view totally wrong. I do’.

\textsuperscript{302} The issue of males needing counselling arose in federal parliament following suicide attempts by two members. One attempt succeeded. The members were Senator Nick Sherry (Sydney Morning Herald 8 October 1997) and Greg Wilton (Australian 17 June 2000). The suicide of Queensland One Nation MP Charles Rappolt (Australian 5 August 1999) excited less interest outside Queensland.
Interviewee 22’s remark that ‘I’m not a gender sort of person really’ (22) would not surprise feminists who argue that the denial of gender is necessary to male advantage. They might be surprised to hear it being expressed openly, but the interviewee said that he did not judge people by their ‘gender’. He said that in a recent preselection ballot, he voted for a woman, not because of her sex but because he thought her the best person for the job. He thought her sex irrelevant. Another said that he would ‘not necessarily’ support affirmative action:

‘you’ve got to have a high public profile and earn your position. ... the way for women to get into parliament is to become more active in branches and public life’ (32).

Simms (1996) shows that the opposite is the case, that women always have been very active at local and lower levels of parties. Sawer (2000) points out that Labor’s 35% ‘quota’ was derived from membership levels. However, if party activity has been sex-segregated, women might well have been rendered invisible. 303

Just as female MPs occasionally note representational responsibilities to women in their inaugural speeches, they sometimes acknowledge the existence of a common parliamentary tradition. In her first speech, Janice Burnswoods said

‘I am sure that if women had been represented here and in other parliaments in anything like appropriate numbers over the past decade the dreadful term maiden speech would not have such currency. I hope that honourable members will refer instead to first speeches’ (Hansard Council 15 October 1991).

Carmel Tebbutt remarked that she was part of a growing number of women MPs and thanked Meredith Burgmann for her assistance (Hansard Council 13 June 1998: 6105). She expressed pleasure to be in the Council ‘representing the Australian Labor Party’ and contributing to ‘further reform in the true Labor tradition’. Tebbutt said that it was ‘a honour to follow Ann Symonds’ and acknowledged her roles in ‘drug law reform, children’s policy and women’s policy’. Tebbutt noted that:

‘Women of my generation have benefited greatly from the actions of predecessors which have increased the opportunity for women to participate’.

It is possible that Symonds deepened a tradition that successors might continue. In her controversial inaugural (Hansard Council September 1982: 2728) Symonds quoted Rose Scott’s speech to the Sydney Economic Society in 1895, and said that she was ‘happy as a woman to join my five women colleagues here, and I look forward to continuing growth towards equal representation of the sexes in political life’. 304

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303 As Norris and Lovenduski (1995: 16) found in Britain, there is a pyramid of activism, and females dwindle towards the peak. Premier Carr told young women that if they wanted to become MPs, they had to join branches in greater numbers (Daily Telegraph 19,20,23 March 2001, Carr 2002).

304 Surprisingly, female MPs have not traced the tradition to Preston-Stanley.
Farewelling Symonds, Patricia Forsythe said:

‘Ann Symonds now joins Judith Walker and Beryl Evans as women members of this house when I joined in 1991 who have now retired. To see the example set by each of these women was to be inspired by their work’ (Hansard Council 29 April 1998: 4079).

As two of the three women she mentioned were not Liberal colleagues, Forsythe was acknowledging a common multipartisan women’s tradition. While valedictories and farewells are conventionally moderate, Members are not compelled to express farewells. 305

It is unusual for males during inaugurals to note their maleness, 306 but they do so implicitly when mentioning occupational and family backgrounds, experience and attitudes. To avoid being considered exceptional then, females might avoid acknowledging their sex precisely because men never acknowledge theirs. Admitting sex adds a burden and makes the MP vulnerable to stereotyping and marginalisation. On the other hand, occasional criticisms of masculine behaviour suggest that females are more conscious of the maleness of colleagues than vice versa.

When interviewees were asked many questions about their roles, few volunteered views about sex or gender unless the questions specifically elicited a response about male-female differences. The exceptions were two female Government interviewees who related negative experiences or perceptions when asked about ‘frustrations’. Interviewees mostly interpreted gender as meaning ‘sex-differentiated’, and in many cases, as meaning ‘female-related’.

**Section 6.3 Political orientations**

Points of difference or similarity in the perceptions of interviewees are explained partly by experiences. It is possible that all MPs identify as *homo politicus* and resemble each other more than they do males or females in the general population. It is necessary to ask then whether male and female interviewees have similar beliefs and whether they have been subject to similar socialisation processes. It is unrealistic to expect to find evidence of distinct male and female behaviour if they enter parliament with similar aims. If on the other hand, females have different beliefs and are motivated by distinct aims, then similar behaviour indicates that they are constrained by other factors.

305 During ‘Seasonal Felicitations’ (Hansard Assembly 13 December 1995: 4925), the Premier noted that former Premier Fahey was leaving Parliament. Mr Gibson interjected ‘You’re going to lose a drinking mate’. Mr Carr replied: ‘I know, and there is considerable sadness on my part at that prospect’. This comment was not serious. Mr Carr does not often drink alcohol.
306 But note Alan Corbett’s comment above p.96.
Interviewees were invited to respond to a series of statements about politics (A:i) and some political issues. Table 6.2 shows responses by males and females to statements about politics. Differences were not marked and there were some shared attitudes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About ideas in conflict</td>
<td>F 4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class based</td>
<td>F 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarised left versus right</td>
<td>F 3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About powerful interests</td>
<td>F 5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of little concern to most people</td>
<td>F 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About size of government</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The best guarantee of freedoms</td>
<td>F 6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominated by political parties</td>
<td>F 8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For these eight statements, there is a clear difference on only one. More female interviewees than males agreed that politics is about powerful interests (13:9) and only three males disagreed. On some questions interviewees were polarised. While more females agreed that politics is about ideas in conflict (10:8), more females than males disagreed also (4:2). On the statement that politics is dominated by political parties, more males agreed (16:14) but one male disagreed, while no female did. These answers show little evidence of common views among males or among females, but nor do they show that the views of males and females coincide completely.

Interviewees were also asked for their reactions to ten statements about political issues (A:ii). Table 6.3 shows some diversity in the patterns of responses by sex.
Table 6.3: Reactions to issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trade unions have too much power</td>
<td>F 4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harsher penalties are needed to deter crime</td>
<td>F 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is too much poverty</td>
<td>F 8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes are too high</td>
<td>F 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many people are on welfare *</td>
<td>F 5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana should be legalised</td>
<td>F 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The environment needs more protection</td>
<td>F 6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirmative action has gone too far</td>
<td>F 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land rights will solve Aboriginal problems</td>
<td>F 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is too much corruption in NSW</td>
<td>F 4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One male gave another answer.

There were some discernible differences especially in ‘social’ areas. More males (6:3 females) agreed that harsher penalties would deter crime and more females (11:8 males) disagreed. All 17 females agreed that there is too much poverty while three males did not. Nine males but only five females agreed that taxes are too high while 10 females but only five males disagreed. These differences together suggest slightly divergent views on the welfare state. While the distribution of responses to the statement that ‘too many people are on welfare’ is quite even, the question can be interpreted variously. It can imply that many
people on welfare should not be, or that the system is placing too many people on welfare. This inverted pattern is consistent with more general findings that females generally support higher taxes to provide adequate welfare.

Asked to choose a personal political orientation (A:iii), interviewees gave diverse answers. Table 6.4 shows that seven interviewees did not want to choose any of the options. Five of these were males. One said that his orientation was changing constantly because the political environment was so dynamic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideological</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left of centre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right of centre</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate/centre</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another answer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were only two points where the differences between males and females exceeded 1. Five males but only two females insisted that their orientation did not fit the options and only one male but three females described their orientation as ‘left of centre’. While these are just perceptions, they reflect and affect behaviour. It appears that males are less comfortable being pigeon-holed in this way. As might be expected, party was a predictor in these questions. Only Government interviewees described themselves as ‘left of centre’ while four Opposition MPs chose ‘liberal’. Generation was also important as all ‘left of centre’ interviewees entered before 1988. Post 1992 entrants chose a mixture of pragmatic, democratic liberal and moderate/centre. This suggests that ideology is on the decline, at least as a left-right orientation. Some Opposition Members commented about Question A:i that the idea of politics as being class-based was a fiction maintained by Labor because it was losing relevance and party members.

307 Party influence was clearer. 20% crossbenchers, 33.3% government members and 53% opposition members agreed.
The responses to question A:ii show clearly that party is a strong predictor of attitudes. Table 6.5 shows that on most issues interviewees were polarised by party.

Table 6.5: Reactions to issues by interviewee party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trade unions have too much power</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbench</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harsher penalties are needed to deter crime</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbench</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>There is too much poverty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbench</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taxes are too high</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbench</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Too many people on welfare</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbench</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* One crossbencher gave another answer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marijuana should be legalised</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbench</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The environment needs more protection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbench</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affirmative action programs have gone too far</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbench</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Land rights will solve Aboriginal problems</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbench</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>There is too much corruption in New South Wales</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbench</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was broad agreement that ‘there is too much poverty’ and ‘the environment needs more protection’ but there were many differences. While the different total numbers distort the
picture slightly, the percentages indicate the strength of party on these questions. For example, 0% Government Members agreed that trade unions have too much power, but 70.5% Opposition Members agreed. 100% Crossbenchers neither agreed nor disagreed. In relation to harsher penalties being needed to deter crime eight Opposition interviewees (47%) but only one Government interviewee (8.5%) agreed. This is surprising in view of the popular perception that law and order was the decisive issue for Labor in the 1995 election campaign. All crossbenchers disagreed.

Other clear differences between the major parties were on the level of taxation, numbers of people on welfare, legalisation of marijuana, affirmative action and land rights. Eleven Opposition interviewees (but only one from the Government) agreed that too many people are on welfare. Nine from Government (none from Opposition) agreed that marijuana should be legalised. Eight Government but just one Opposition interviewee strongly disagreed with the proposition that affirmative action had gone too far. Six from Government and only one from Opposition agreed that land rights would solve Aboriginal problems. The pattern was weaker on the extent of corruption.

Although this set of questions was the one most obviously directed at the issues that divide MPs ideologically, the responses show that party is an extremely important variable. In an inquiry into gender, there are important implications. First, even where males as a group or females as a group share some perceptions, caution is required when attributing behaviour to one shared characteristic. Secondly, in many cases, party is a stronger determinant. Candidates at elections commonly campaign on their partisan allegiance but seldom on their sex.

Section 6.4 Political socialisation and reasons for entering parliament

Interviewees were asked to identify the most important factor in their political socialisation (A:iv). Table 6.6 shows the responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socialisation influence</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crisis in world, nation or community</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis in personal life</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following family tradition</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another answer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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No interviewee chose ‘reacting against family tradition’ or ‘wanting to emulate a role model’. ‘Crisis in world’ was chosen predominantly by Government and crossbench Members whereas only Opposition MPs chose ‘personal crisis’. Date of entry was again important. Three quarters of interviewees who entered before 1988 said that a crisis in the world was an influence. Post 1992 entrants were inclined to choose ‘another answer’ and elaborate. There are two distinct possibilities here. First, the further interviewees are from date of entry, the more they think that their original motivation was public duty. Secondly, there has been a generational change and the socialising influences of more recent recruits are more complex and diverse. Studies of role perceptions must allow for this change.

While the patterns by sex were fairly similar, the strong influence of family tradition has gender implications. Family connections in parliaments are common. Interviewee 4 spoke of discussion around the kitchen table. Two interviewees mentioned their fathers. An Opposition female described her father as a role model, while a male crossbencher said that his was a mentor. Mothers were not mentioned often, although a Government male noted the influence of his grandmother. Lorna Stone recognised her mother’s influence in her inaugural (above p.96). Bill Day who had been a Labor candidate for the seat of Clarence, and whose father Don Day was a Labor Member in the area, was selected as Liberal candidate (Sydney Morning Herald 2 May 1998). His father pointed out that ‘it’s not such a big leap from the right wing of the Labor Party to the left wing of the Liberal Party’. Several Coalition interviewees mentioned early socialisation in Labor politics, but none had moved in the opposite direction.

Father to son succession is not unusual in Australian politics, but mother to daughter succession is less common. If women inherit seats, then they are more likely to follow deceased or retired husbands, and opponents may allege that nepotism is at work. The widow in this Parliament was Gabrielle Harrison but she had persuaded her husband to join the ALP at university (Catholic Weekly 21 March 1999). So this was not a case of the husband doing the difficult groundwork and bequeathing the seat. Females are at least as likely as males to have served an apprenticeship in party positions. Sandra Nori (Henderson 1999: 41) joined the Labor Party at 20 and Diane Beamer as a child attended branch meetings with her father (80). It is difficult to make firm comparisons however, because some recent arrivals such as Reba Meagher remained active in party youth branches until close to their election.

In the USA the stereotypical path to political recruitment is the predominantly male business and professional occupations (Thomas 1994: 4). While these are traditionally deemed suitable qualifications for a political career, domestic duties are not. Females need to have community
involvement or overtly political experiences in parties. This difference might have prompted the interviewee’s remark (p.85 above) that women do not think naturally about politics and prepare themselves. Australian research however, shows that male and female candidates display remarkably similar political histories (Simms 1993: 25). Nevertheless, there remains a belief among some party officials that business and trade union links are important, and these areas remain male-dominated (Simms 1994: 243).

When interviewees were asked about their reasons for entering Parliament (C:xv), some differences emerged. Table 6.7 shows that reasons for entering were fairly uniform by sex although for the ‘very important’ response fewer females (1: 4 males) regarded entry as a right and fewer wanted to keep ‘enemies’ out of power (1: 4). The strongest response for males was ‘achieve an ideal’ (13 ‘very important’) while for females ‘achieve an ideal’ and ‘a sense of public duty’ both attracted 11 ‘very important’ responses. Public duty, which attracted ten ‘very important’ responses from males, was the only one among ten suggested reasons where more females chose the ‘very important’ response. Interestingly, three males only rated ‘financially lucrative’ in the top two levels. No female rated this motivation above ‘4’. Although the difference is small, it is interesting in light of attitudes to salary (below p.203). While no females rated this highly as a motivation, more females seem dissatisfied with the salary. Females as a group then, seem more inclined to enter parliament in spite of the salary than because of it. It is less likely that this applies to males.
Table 6.7 Reasons for entering parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>1 Very important</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieve an ideal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right an injustice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promptings of a mentor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of public duty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw it as your right</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruited by the party *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep enemies out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturally ambitious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financially lucrative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One female gave another answer.

The importance of the motivation ‘to keep your enemies out’ diminished with experience.\(^{309}\)

This apparent softening of attitude over time is borne out by data on ‘relations with MPs across the Chamber’. Asked whether they ‘enjoy their company socially’ (B:iv), the more recent entrants were ambivalent.\(^{310}\) It is possible that MPs are taught their places rather than having the option of deciding the terms of their presence. Alternatively, this might apply to some MPs only, while others have greater choice and control. Interviewees described their

\(^{309}\) 75% of the Pre 1988 cohort said this was ‘not very important’, compared with 53% of the 1988-91 cohort and 33% of the Post 1992 cohort.

\(^{310}\) Five of the eight interviewees in the Pre1988 cohort agreed and eight of the seventeen ‘1988-91’ cohort agreed. Only one of nine in the Post 1992 cohort agreed, while six marked ‘neither agree nor disagree’ and two disagreed strongly. It would be understandable if new arrivals take time to learn whom they can trust. Alternatively this might signal development of a new style of politics that is less compromising and more personal. A lessening of mutual respect among parliamentarians would be consistent with decline in respect for the institution and in popular approval of the political class.
intentions regarding length of career and eight different levels of ambition, of which two are particularly relevant to promotion and leadership. Asked ‘How long do you intend to stay in Parliament?’ (C:xvi) the answers were widely dispersed and there was no strong pattern by interview sex.

### Table 6.8 How long interviewees intended to remain in parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No firm plans</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Until aims achieved</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set number of years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinitely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answers by sex were very similar on all of these options. In addition however, two females volunteered that they would have no say in the matter and two males noted a specific number of years. So perhaps males are more likely to think that they have control over their careers, but whether they have in reality is another question. One possible explanation is that the established role of MP fits most men comfortably, while for women, tensions arise automatically.

### Section 6.5 Career ambitions

Asked to describe how closely some aims fitted their ambitions (C:xvii), Table 6.9 shows some interesting differences between the ambitions of females and males.
Table 6.9 Ambitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>2 Fairly important</th>
<th>4 Important</th>
<th>5 Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be an effective backbencher *</td>
<td>F 7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative procedure expert</td>
<td>F 5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy specialist</td>
<td>F 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective committee member *</td>
<td>F 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontbencher *</td>
<td>F 7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal parliamentarian</td>
<td>F 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premier or prime Minister</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquire skills to use in private sector</td>
<td>F 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* On these points, 3, 1 and 2 interviewees respectively did not answer.

Four females but no male chose the lowest point on the scale for becoming expert in legislative procedures. Perhaps surprisingly, five males but only one female gave the lowest rating to becoming a frontbencher. At the top end of the scale, 13 females and nine males chose one of the top two ratings. However, two males rated becoming Premier or Prime Minister highly but no female did. These patterns suggest that female interviewees regard Ministerial service as a natural progression and even as a matter of duty, but might not consider leadership a realistic possibility. One female interviewee (10) remarked ‘This is confidential, isn’t it?’ Although expressed light-heartedly, this comment reflects the concern that women MPs especially must be circumspect about showing ambition. This might explain why three female interviewees gave a ‘2’ rating to becoming Premier. Other interesting differences at the top end were that two more males rated highly becoming an effective

311 Ambition is a prominent political quality. It is seen as a natural characteristic of men, but problems arise for ambitious females. Susan Ryan, a Minister in the Hawke Federal Labor Government, expressed the difficulty: ‘You don’t go into politics unless you are ambitious. All politicians are ambitious. In men, it is seen as a healthy and promising sign’ (Australian 15 June 1992).

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backbencher (9:7 females) and committee member (3:1 female). Indeed, when asked whether natural ambition was a factor in the decision to enter Parliament (Table 6.7 above) eight females to only six males chose two the top options on five point scale. Females then seem to be as ambitious as males but this might be a difference in consciousness or readiness to admit ambition. Joining the frontbench is a more realistic expectation than becoming Premier.

Aspiring frontbenchers must conform to party whips and some interviewees noted the power of the executive and the ‘disappointment’ of missing promotion.

- ‘I suppose at one stage being passed over for promotion to shadow minister’ (9).
- ‘That’s the great ambition you have in this profession, for the vast majority anyway. I missed out in a draw out of the hat when X got up. I missed out by one vote last time around so I feel like Greg Norman who has just missed one putt’ (30).

Asked about factors that might determine whether they achieve their ambitions (C:xviii), Table 6.10 shows that interviewees endorsed no factor very strongly.

**Table 6.10 Factors likely to determine whether interviewees achieve their ambitions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Very likely</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 Not very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skill as legislator</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How colleagues perform*</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General political trends</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events in personal life</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance as party member*</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise in a policy area</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media profile</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Two interviewees (one male and one female) said that this did not apply.

One interesting finding was that 16 males rated media profile 1 or 2, while only 12 females did. This is not entirely consistent with earlier evidence that females are slightly more likely to attribute under-representation of women to media coverage, but is consistent with females’
tendency to believe that they did not spend enough time on media relations. At the negative end of the scale the most interesting difference was that eight females but only one male rated their skill as a legislator ‘4’ or ‘5’. The female interviewees did not necessarily think that this attribute was unimportant, but they were more skeptical than were males about the importance of legislative skill in the achievement of their ambitions. While females emphasised promotion to the frontbench, they did not think skill as a legislator was highly valued by those who had power over their advancement.

Of seven factors offered, more females than males endorsed two factors as helpful. The margin for ‘expertise in a policy area’ was minimal (5:4). More endorsement of ‘performance as a party member’ (5:2) suggests that female interviewees have a realistic appreciation of their dependence on the backing of a party. Interviewee 9 made clear her views about the importance of party in promotion and the need to ‘suck up’ and Interviewee 32 from the other side offered similar advice. 312

In relation to party support, two female interviewees complained that stereotyping by colleagues destroyed their opportunities for promotion. Meanwhile the ‘factional warriors’ (34) who spent time ‘drinking with the mates’ (27) worked the numbers for advancement. One male (32) acknowledged a tension between getting in with the ‘ruling clique’ and sticking to one’s principles. For women the need to be accepted as one of the boys is doubly difficult. Arena wrote unsuccessfully to a newspaper editor after her campaign for a portfolio failed. While Hansard was not read as widely as the Herald, she said, she would distribute as many copies as possible. Arena explained her omission from Cabinet:

‘In my next life I will ensure that I am married to a mate, have a brother who is a mate, and am related to a mate one way or another. It appears to be the most important attribute to being successful in life in Australia’ (Hansard Council 6 June 1995: 663-4).

She did not aspire to be a mate herself, perhaps thinking that by definition, a woman cannot be a ‘mate’. Later, as a crossbencher, Arena repeated the theme when farewelling a colleague:

‘Ann Symonds and I were on the Labor Party ticket for the Legislative Council in 1981. She was further down - the top places being taken by some “mates”, some Labor Party trade union hacks who never made any contribution to this place - so Ann Symonds was not elected in 1981’ (Hansard Council 29 April 1998: 4077).

It is unclear whether party is important to all MPs and females appreciate it better, or whether party is more important to females. If females are in small numbers and have very specific agendas that must be mainstreamed, then they depend heavily on parties. If it is assumed,

312 While the rhetoric in the Coalition parties is that the leader selects ministers according to merit, many other considerations apply. The frontbench must be balanced around sex, experience, cliques and regions. In Labor factions choose Ministers and the leader allocates portfolios.
even erroneously as was seen above (Chapter 5) that males pursue a broader range of issues, then it is probably also assumed that they will win some and lose some, and so they are more prepared to compromise and bargain politically. Their careers are not tied to one issue. 313

Asked (C:xxv) how enjoyable they found compromise, males seemed to tolerate it better. While none chose ‘1 - very’, five males but only one female rated it ‘2’ on the five point scale. Four females and two males rated compromise ‘5 - not very’ enjoyable. On the other hand, a male said that he found the necessity to do deals frustrating. 314

Some conclusions are warranted. Female interviewees expressed some views about politics and issues that suggest they share views that have been attributed to females generally, such as attitudes to levels of taxation. This kind of observation is however, rarely made about males because it is assumed that their views are broadly representative of the range of views in society. While males and females report similar processes of political socialisation, popular myths persist about the political experiences of women. Female interviewees were less inclined to specify reasons for entering parliament and had more diverse reasons than males. Females were slightly less idealistically motivated and slightly more realistic about their prospects, but were no less ‘ambitious’ than male colleagues. What these similarities conceal however, is the possibility that the paradigm parliamentarian has been built historically around male or masculine characteristics and that females who aspire to the role must adapt their own attitudes and behaviours, so diluting any differences.

Section 6.5 Obstacles - ‘What do you want, “War and Peace”? ’

While the perceptions of interviewees about their beliefs and political objectives are clearly important background for understanding their behaviour, it cannot be assumed that those beliefs are static, or that the objectives are fully achieved. To enter parliament, the individual must gain election. To succeed as a Member in a highly competitive environment, the individual must work hard and make decisions that further those objectives. The data has elicited numerous suggestions that the process might have more in common with a hurdles event than a flat race, and that some competitors face higher hurdles than others. MPs tend to take obstacles for granted as a part of political life and males do not dwell on these. While females make many comments that identify difficulties encountered only by women, they are

313 There is some anecdotal evidence that females are less likely to receive a second chance in politics.
314 This frustration can erupt in various ways. When confrontations occur they suggest that the parties are not prepared to negotiate. In one incident a press photograph (Sydney Morning Herald 20 September 1995) showed a male Member from each chamber standing toe to toe outside parliament during a demonstration over environmental policy.
reluctant to identify these as obstacles. It is interesting however, that females are more aware of assistance received by themselves as individuals and by men as a group.

The final survey questions asked about the qualities and number of female MPs, then the first open-ended question asked whether interviewees had encountered obstacles entering and settling in to parliament. The responses suggest that many interviewees interpreted the question as a follow-up and so tacitly added a qualifying clause ‘because of your sex’. A simple ‘no’ was a common answer (14, 16, 28, 30) and one said ‘None that springs to mind’ (26). Some responded that meeting and overcoming obstacles is the essence of political life and that they had met ‘only the usual ones’. Another (13) regarded them as ‘challenges rather than obstacles’. 315

While some saw the obstacles as small, Interviewee 9 commented

‘Oh! What do you want, “War and Peace”? A whole heap. All the people who want your job for a start. Once you’re preselected the other side of politics try to destroy you before you get there or after. I don’t think the word for parliament is “settle in”. One doesn’t settle in. It’s always adversarial and highly combative. War without weapons. War with verbal weapons. Therefore you don’t settle in. You settle in at your peril’.

All MPs experience elections and have perceptions of those central political events. 316 It is unclear however, whether the experience of elections is similar for males and females. 317 At the 1995 election, 21.7% of all candidates for the Assembly were elected, but only 14.6% of females were. This shows that the sex of the candidate is relevant. Table 6.11 shows one aspect of interviewees’ attitudes to elections (C:xiii). While the differences by sex are small any negative reaction is surprising among intensely political people, and three females (no males) said that they never enjoyed electioneering. It is possible that females are expected to be more modest about their achievements while males are more celebratory. 318

316 Most MPs have succeeded at elections, although some MLCs fill ‘casual vacancies’. They are likely to have had experience as candidates and campaigning for colleagues.
317 Leigh Sales, ABC Television’s State Political Reporter (Stateline 25 September 1998) announced that the program would introduce the ‘men’ behind the Federal Election campaigns. This was no slip of the tongue because generally men have been the main campaign managers.
318 A defeated Federal Labor Member reportedly lost ‘95% of my charisma’ while a defeated female colleague said that women coped better with loss because they ‘invest less in the role’ and are not so ‘seduced by the Commonwealth cars’ (Australian 29 June 1996). Camilla Nelson, former ministerial staffer, has drawn on her experience to write a novel, Perverse Acts (1998 Melbourne Text). She has her narrator Venus say: ‘For a man, getting elected is a lot like being in a beauty pageant. He gets voted in often enough and he starts thinking there must be a reason for it’.
Table 6.11 ‘Do you enjoy electioneering?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviewees agreed closely on the importance of some electoral assets (C:xiv). Table 6.12 shows the ‘very important’ responses by sex.

Table 6.12 Very important electoral assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication to hard work</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large circle of friends</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive nature</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political cunning</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamina</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of party</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social standing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High media profile</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plenty of money</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both males and females endorsed ‘dedication to hard work’ and agreed that neither ‘social standing’ nor ‘plenty of money’ were particularly important. There were some differences however, on the importance of integrity and stamina. Sixteen females (11 males) said that stamina was a very important electoral asset. All but one female rated stamina as very important. This was the highest agreed score among female interviewees for any electoral asset. This is consistent with the twelve females (6 males) who rated stamina an important characteristic for an MP (below pp.193 ff.). These results imply either that females get tired more often or that females more readily admit to being tired while there are pressures on males to persist uncomplainingly. Alternatively, females might work longer and harder and so experience tiredness more than males who stop before suffering fatigue. This aspect of campaigning might have surprised females more and made a stronger impression on them. 319

319 This possibility conflicts with common assumptions that males neglect their health.
Asked about qualities likely to lead to promotion (C:xix) nine females (8 males) rated ‘endurance’ very important. This closer agreement is interesting because endurance is considered by some observers to be a quality exhibited by females while stamina is associated with bursts of energy and strength more typical of males.

The highest agreed score among males was for integrity. Fifteen males but only 11 females rated integrity as very important. Two interpretations are possible. One is that both males and females identified the trait for which there was the greatest need. If that is so, then females wish for more stamina while males would like more integrity. The other interpretation is that males are more inclined to believe that their integrity helped them win election. There is a suggestion here of greater idealism among males. Nine males (6 females) rated a ‘competitive nature’ as very important, while nine females (7 males) rated ‘political cunning’ very important. A small but interesting difference was that slightly more males thought that the support of party was important, although neither group rated this highly. Above (Table 6.10) more females thought that party was an important consideration in achievement of ambitions.

Regarding settling in, while acknowledging the assistance of officials in their first speeches, interviewees recalled being left to their own devices. One said that ‘There’s no sort of induction ceremony’ (19) and another that ‘The parliament is very confusing both in procedures and layout’ (24). The problems of isolation are probably felt more by MLAs who work in far flung electorate offices. Table 6.13 shows which factors interviewees thought had been of most assistance in settling them into Parliament (C:vi).

### Table 6.13 Factors assisting interviewees to settle in to parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal contact with seniors</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same date of entry cohort</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party discipline</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament’s administrative services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Informal contact with seniors’ was the most popular single answer, chosen by fourteen interviewees (including eight females). If informal contact with seniors is the dominant means
of culture transmission then this would explain why change is slow. More males endorsed personal staff (5:1) and the nine interviewees who chose a ‘combination of factors’ probably had these factors in mind as well. Male dependence on staff would not surprise those female interviewees who pointed out that male colleagues depend heavily on wives for routine domestic support (below Section 6.5). Interviewee 14 asserted the female MP’s reputation for independence. The females’ reliance on senior colleagues is interesting. While Interviewee 3 argued that men have mentors but women do not, females readily acknowledged assistance and advice in the interviews and in their inaugurals.

Females reported various experiences of obstacles. Interviewee 18 said ‘Not really. No I don’t think anything I encountered could be put down to my sex’. Interviewee 4 admitted ‘only the same number of obstacles that any male encounters’. Later this interviewee made observations about the tension between family and career, and inferred that this was a specifically female problem. Interviewee 1 said ‘No more than male colleagues would find’. She did, however, approve affirmative action ‘to overcome the barriers women face because of their socialisation and family pressures’. While Interviewee 8 answered ‘no’ about obstacles, asked about ‘anything else that affects your role’ she said that the departure of a female colleague placed her under pressure to attend more functions. It is possible that interviewees limited their insights to safe areas previously approved for such criticism.

Interviewee 27 implied that lack of obstacles was fortuitous:

‘When I entered I got in with the assistance of the Leader. But for him it would have been very difficult. I was a woman. I was of non-English speaking background, and the party was just not ready for me’.

Interviewee 3 described difficulties over campaign funds because a male colleague assumed a greater right to these. There was a suggestion that her candidacy was less serious or less important. Another (2) recalled that her status as a young mother made some preselectors doubt her suitability. The family effect is discussed further below (Section 6.5).

Some interviewees said that they had not encountered obstacles but mentioned particular examples. Interviewee 17 answered ‘no’, but added: ‘unfortunately personalities play too strong a role in affecting policy outcomes. Factionalism can mitigate against you participating to the extent that you would like’. Some concentrated on the ‘settling in’ side of the question:

‘Because I’m a woman? Not in seeking election because I didn’t seek election. I was approached by my faction. Settling into parliament I had enormous difficulties but that was because of my fractional position, not because of my gender, but yes, enormous difficulties’ (20).
Interviewee 23 thought that things had improved. ‘When I first entered there was a lot of 
opposition because of my sex, my age, my geography. Thankfully things have improved but 
they’re not perfect’ (23). Males also reported problems. Although answering ‘No. Not really’ 
Interviewee 32 recalled health problems. Another (15) said that ‘Age was a huge barrier, 
among conservative elements in the party. That and lack of mentoring and career structure’.

The diversity in answers shows that males and females encountered obstacles. Females 
described obstacles including sexism. These complaints came from women of all parties, but 
were expressed less by newer Members. This might reflect changing expectations, or the fact 
that newer Members entered at a time when parties wanted to redress an imbalance by 
recruiting more females or at least abolishing barriers to their entry. A feature of responses by 
males is that few acknowledged encouragement, although one said that his experience was the 
opposite of encountering obstacles: ‘Not really. I had the support of community and 
colleagues’ (25) and another said cryptically: ‘Once only but that was easily overcome’ (21).

People who succeed in becoming Members are pro-active individuals unlikely to dwell on 
barriers. Males especially perceived the occupation as intrinsically concerned with 
overcoming obstacles. Females are inclined to regard the political as more personal, but to see 
disadvantage in terms of multiple aspects of their identities and not just sex. Chris McDiven, 
Liberal Party Vice-President and convenor of the Liberal Women’s Forum has observed that 
‘I haven’t met a woman yet who’s overestimated her ability, but I’m meeting men that do it 
all the time’. The Forum’s guide for preselection is called ‘Take your seats’ and begins: 
‘Talent has no sex. It’s in all of us’ (Henderson 1999: 55).

Section 6.7 Assistance: ‘Males have mentors’

Networks are important for transmitting cultural norms, but are also used by outsiders for 
mutual support against a hostile system. Most interviewees expressed interest in helping 
others and acknowledged support in their careers. Interviewees were asked whether the 
promptings of a mentor were important in their reasons for entering parliament and Table 
6.14 shows a difference in the perceptions of males and females.
Table 6.14 Importance of ‘promptings of a mentor’ in decision to run for parliament

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Importance 1, 2</th>
<th>Importance 3</th>
<th>Importance 4, 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eleven females and eight males rated the promptings of a mentor in the top two ranks on a five point scale while eight males and five females rated it in the bottom two. Women might be more conscious of assistance or their perceptions might be more realistic. There were Party differences too. 33.3% Government Members rated this low, while only 5.9% Opposition Members did. This is consistent with images of the Labor Party as a competitive machine, and of the Liberal Party depending more on individual actions and personal networks. This difference in attitude by party was illustrated by a Government female interviewee who volunteered the comment that ‘males have mentors’.

The desire to emulate a role model did not motivate interviewees greatly, and differences were stronger based on party than on sex. Interviewees were asked to identify specific role models (C:xxxiv) and mentors (C:xxxv). Many interviewees did not distinguish the concepts sharply. In some cases role models were named as mentors and while role models can be mentors, hesitations over the latter concept revealed uncertainty about the meanings of the terms. Some interviewees admired people who achieved highly during their formative years, and this carries implications for generations of women, as the influx of more women to parliaments increases the availability of role models. Female MPs disagree however about what constitutes a positive model, and how strong their responsibility should be to provide a model for women.

As role models female interviewees named past and current parliamentary leaders at state and federal levels, international figures and even some current members. Females named 28 (20 males and eight females). Males nominated 10 (9 males, one female). While females named male and female role models, only one male named a female. However, some males did not name role models at all. Those named were people closer to home, but not

320 When President and Mrs Clinton visited Sydney, Mrs Clinton met thirty influential women chosen by the federal government. Minister for Consumer Affairs and Status of Women LoPo’ was not invited, but Opposition spokesperson Chikarovski was. LoPo’ said that Chikarovski had been ‘boring everyone spilless’ for thirty years about her meeting Bobby Kennedy as a child and that another thirty could be expected after she met Mrs Clinton (Sydney Morning Herald 21 November 1996).

contemporaries. 322 The availability of far more male achievers in Australian and State politics helps explain why males did not look to the international sphere so often.

One female (3) mentioned a member of an opposing party as a role model. Some elaborated on the qualities they saw in these models but others did not. One female noted her own father because of the way he ‘worked hard and achieved in his own right’ (34). A male noted that he admired people who stuck to their ideals, although their determination sometimes made them ‘egg bound’ (33) and reduced their ability to negotiate. A female (27) said:

‘I’ve lost a little bit of that idealism… as the years go by you learn about people having feet of clay. You just strive for more. These days I just go by ordinary people’.

One female (23) mentioned ‘icons’ but another (16) said:

‘I don’t go in for role models. I’m my own person. I admired Thatcher and Bjelke-Peterson because they said “I believe this is right for Britain or Queensland” and went ahead and did it and didn’t listen to everybody saying not to do it’.

Interviewee 9 described her role model as ‘a powerful example that you can be a politician and have high integrity and that there are more important things than winning’. Another female (2) took ‘different aspects of different people’. A male (24) said: ‘I’m an avid reader of biographies, political biographies, and every book gives another example of a role model in some circumstances. So I pick up from everybody around’. Another male (7) said: ‘I can’t say I’ve had a real hero. Many of my colleagues talk in rapture about them but I’ve got no strong role model. I’m happy to do it myself’.

There were differences by sex regarding mentors too, but these took a different form. Three males (24, 25, 33) acknowledged assistance from females while just one described a female role model (24). So for males, accepting help from a female has more appeal than wanting to emulate one. Four Labor women (1, 3, 4, 11) nominated other Labor women but two only (4, 27) mentioned Labor men. Both were in the Pre 1988 cohort. On the other hand, while several Coalition women (2, 5, 8, 9, 10) nominated Coalition men, only one (14) named a Coalition woman. Generally, Labor women rely on each other more than Coalition women do. Labor men tended not to recognise mentors, although two (25, 33) nominated Labor women. Coalition men nominated Coalition men (15, 26, 29) or family members (22) but some recognised ‘none’. Crossbenchers named mainly other crossbenchers or outsiders.

Both men and women noted the importance of ‘peer mentoring’. Females commented:

322 Lionel Murphy, Jack Mundey, Bob Brown, Tom Uren, Malcolm Fraser, Ted Mack, John Hatton, Rosemary Foot, Whitlam and Wran.
• ‘There are people for whom I have high regard. It’s difficult when you’re cheek by jowl because you admire them for some things and disagree with them for others. There are ups and downs, pluses and minuses’ (9).
• ‘Not if mentor implies an unequal relationship. It’s more a matter of copying colleagues together’ (11).
• ‘I don’t know when being a mentor ceases but I get encouragement from a lot of people’ (3).

One male (12) mentioned encouragement from his father and other people in the community and another (31) said ‘I’m too independent for that’. An earlier entrant (32) reflected that in his day ‘you either learned quickly or you didn’t’ but many interviewees who entered more recently made statements suggesting that this was still the case.

Some generalisations are warranted about how interviewees understood obstacles and assistance. First, there was a common attitude that political life involves continual confrontation with obstacles. Secondly, most interviewees did not attribute obstacles to their sex. Thirdly, perceptions about more specific obstacles included references that have been considered gender relevant in some other studies. While some females thought they had been stereotyped or made other comments that showed they confronted special obstacles they were reluctant to attribute these to their sex. Fourthly, females more often recognised assistance. It is difficult to discern whether this means they have been trained to think that, whereas men have not, or whether it reflects the relative recency of their arrival and their dependence on former Members who are mostly male. Even if women really do need assistance however, this is not necessarily because they are less resourceful. It is just that some obstacles can be removed only by insiders. Fifthly, men tended to reject the idea that they had mentors, while Opposition females most readily acknowledged male mentors. Labor women commonly mentioned peer mentoring. Sixthly, these differences, while identifiable, were not stark when the group is considered collectively. Seventhly, differences cannot be attributed solely to interviewee sex. To describe their experiences, interviewees raised issues related to other variables such as their party and their time of entry to parliament, and also to highly personal and unique circumstances. Among these personal factors, relationships and family circumstances are prominent.
There are suggestions in the interview data that male and female parliamentarians are perceived or treated differently in many aspects of their roles. While some parts of the role are unique, in other ways the workplace resembles other sites of occupational interaction. It would not be surprising therefore, to find that parliamentary traditions have been established to suit male breadwinners who have traditional family arrangements. For the male, the family provides support in return for income. When females enter this traditional workplace, adjustments are required. Controversy over issues such as parental leave and availability of child care however, suggest that the workplace has not changed enough to place women in an equal position, but that women themselves are forced to adapt.

A recurring theme in interviewees’ comments has been the different role expectations of males and females in their lives beyond politics. When Wendy Machin resigned because pregnant in 1996, some women feared that future preselectors would avoid choosing women of child-bearing age. Interviewee 2 noted that her own pregnancy was an ‘issue’ for some preselectors. Another (5) said that it was ‘sad’ if only women with no family responsibilities were elected. Another (17) argued that unless there is a supportive spouse, women with children ‘can’t do it’.

While many male and female candidates have family responsibilities, these are more commonly identified as a disadvantage for women. There was an attempt to exploit gender-role expectations in the 1994 by-election for the seat of Parramatta. When the Labor Member died, his widow, Gabrielle Harrison became the Labor candidate (Page 1995). A female Liberal nominee suggested that the widow should stay home and look after her young son (Sydney Morning Herald 14 April 1994), but female Coalition MPs disagreed. Minister for Administrative Services Ann Cohen said ‘We are in the 1990s and I think the decisions women have to make certainly does (sic) encompass having children’. Chikarovski said that women could balance career and children. Machin, on maternity leave, noted a difference in generational attitudes. Machin said that male Members leave their families for long periods. Olympics Minister Michael Knight moved his family from his Campbelltown electorate to the North Shore explaining that ‘my wife has effectively been a single parent this year and

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323 Some of this data has been published (Smith 1999c), but it is repeated here because it is important to an understanding of the gender component of interviewees’ attitudes to their roles.

324 Wendy Jones said ‘I don’t see Gabrielle as the best candidate... they’re going for the sympathy vote. I have concerns as a mother that now is not the best time for Gabrielle to be standing... but that is a mother speaking. I guess the majority of mothers out there would... I mean not having to go through the loss of a husband I’m speaking about an area that is grey to me. But certainly from a mother’s point of view I’d be focussed on my child, or children in my case’ (Sydney Morning Herald 3 June 1994).
visiting the kids is like an access visit in a divorced family. It’s not the way to live’ ([*Sydney Morning Herald* 17 July, 19 December 1995]). The Parramatta Liberal contender’s comments implied that Harrison was not a good mother if she aspired to enter Parliament, as though the roles are incompatible. Interviewee 21 raised a similar question about Harrison’s family responsibilities, when Harrison was a busy Minister for Sport. The Machin and Harrison episodes were controversial partly because men are seldom asked about family responsibilities.

When asked about the importance of a spouse, interviewees gave some detailed explanations, but also repeated some clichés. Some interviewees thought that a spouse was part of a political team and boasted that constituents got ‘two for the price of one’ (Section 6.9). Others described the spouse as a crucial personal supporter and emphasised this role where young children were involved. Females noted that it has always been different for female MPs. Indeed, female interviewees were more conscious of the ways that male colleagues rely on spouse support and some were critical of them for this. Several interviewees commented about the role changing, especially as more wives had their own careers and some noted that the career sometimes destroys relationships. Generally however, they felt that ‘everyone should have a wife’ (Section 6.10). Parental responsibilities accentuate the importance of family roles and increase the distance between males and females unless the latter can afford ‘nannies and cleaners’ (Section 6.11).

**Section 6.9 ‘Two for the price of one’**

Male interviewees were ambivalent about whether the wife should be a purely personal supporter or a political one as well. One male interviewee (29) campaigned promising ‘two for the price of one’ because his wife would work hard as a *de facto* MP. Even if the wife does not share the public role, there is an assumption that for every MP, there is a supportive spouse - usually a wife - taking care of domestic affairs. As Sawer and Simms (1993: 141-2) observe there have been ‘normal’ relationships for MPs of both sexes. Some interviewees saw multiple facets to the role.

‘You need somebody to be a reflective listener, and share your ideals and concerns. But also in a physical sense within the electorate there are times when a partner can represent you’ (33).

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325 The ‘political widow’ was an early stereotype for female MPs. Amelia Rygate, Labor MLC 1961-78, succeeded her husband (Radi, Spearritt and Hinton 1979). The first female Member of the House of Representatives, Dame Enid Lyons was the widow of a former Prime Minister (Jenkins 1996, Langmore 1992).
Others used terms such as ‘critical’ (24). ‘I don’t believe it’s possible to do the job without support. A spouse is essential... for effectiveness as a politician’ (13). Campaign launches highlight the normality of the Leader’s family life, but this usually translates into a sex-specific display by a proud and supportive wife and children. When Machin resigned her seat, her successor in Port Macquarie, Rob Oakeshott, caused consternation among female MPs when he announced light-heartedly that he would marry his girlfriend ‘when she learned to cook’.

Most rural MPs had traditional wives. These were predominantly National Party members but there were Liberals and Labor members also. Rural MPs have some things in common.

- ‘Extremely important for a country MP. I leave home Monday morning, arrive back home Friday night. If the bore pump breaks or one of the kids gets sick she has it all and then there are always phone calls. Basically they have to raise the children when you’re not there. It’s a matter of equity. Women politicians complain about their time with the family but the equity burden is not recognised’ (22).
- ‘Very. My wife is totally committed to what I’m doing and is my best critic and one I listen to very carefully because she is constructive and politically aware and my family’s grown up. We’ve acted as a duo. In fact part of my campaign was vote for me and you get ‘two for the price of one’. Her role is greater than my colleagues’ wives’. If I can’t go to something, my wife accepts on my behalf so the two of us can be away from home quite a bit. That’s the downside. We average two nights a week at home. That’s the price you pay for being committed’ (29).
- ‘Being an MP requires cooperation between my wife and myself. My wife is probably a better politician than I am. She’s experienced and capable and we work as a team. I suppose she’s made a thousand speeches in the time I’ve been a Member. She’d average one a week easy. She’s not too bad. She’s great actually. Out in the country they get two for the price of one. She’s got a higher profile than I have. We’ll be walking down the street and I’ll say “who’s that” and she’ll say “that’s such and such”. In the country it’s exceptionally important. She knows all the women in X. She’s been going to things for years. They don’t start something unless she’s there’ (32).

Brian Langton’s family was thrown into the public arena when he was called before I.C.A.C. to explain his use of other MPs’ travel warrants while he was a shadow minister. Langton denied that a trip to the South Coast with his family had been a holiday. He said that ‘it is a

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326 Oakeshott repeated a stereotype but it is one that reflects reality. Research suggests that men gain more from marriage than women do. Women perform most housework, regardless of the number of hours they work outside the home. Sociologist Dr Carol Grbich found that even males who are primary caregivers ignore some household tasks, especially ironing, sewing, and toilet cleaning (Sydney Morning Herald 23 April 1996). Travers and Richardson found that ‘marriage for men was a significant predictor of whether they were happy or not’ whereas women living alone were happier than men living alone (Sydney Morning Herald 2 November 1993). Research by Bryson and Bittman into sexual inequality in Australia and Finland found that policy reforms and programs in parental leave and child care are more effective in addressing inequality in partnerships than trying to change men’s attitudes (Australian 26 April 1993). One female MP, in an unrecorded interjection during a colleague’s speech of congratulations to Oakeshott, disparaged his statement (Observed).

327 ‘It’s important she’s supportive and mine is’ (26).

328 Labor, Kogarah. Minister for Transport, Minister for Consumer Affairs.
job where you very rarely see your children... During the days I hopped in the car and spent all day on the road’ (Australian 27 March 1998). He added that ‘any politician knows that the wife is part of the team. She came with me and she did the job with me. She was part of it’.  

329 There was an implication here that the travel regulations were deliberately vague because most MPs accepted that ‘the’ wife is a de facto Member and that Langton was being punished unfairly. 330 When spouses are regarded as political assets they are affected by the Member’s fortunes. Where the member regards the spouse as a political asset as well, then they can be subject to extra scrutiny. The Olympics Minister dragged the name of the Opposition Leader’s wife into a heated exchange, but quickly apologised (Daily Telegraph 18 April 1997) and the Police Minister rejected allegations that the Government had favoured a travel agency in which his wife had an interest (Sydney Morning Herald 20 December 1998). 331

In his valedictory speech, Mr Zammit (Strathfield) suggested that the spouses of Members should receive the ‘direct contribution’ of a salary (Hansard Assembly 13 December 1995: 4918) and in his valedictory speech Mr Small called his wife ‘assistant Member for Murray’ (25 November 1998: 10677). The idea of ‘two for the price of one’ persists in rural areas, perhaps reflecting the conservatism of country voters and the National Party’s low representation of women MPs. The anxiety that rural MPs feel when away from the electorate while Parliament sits should be relieved through the provision of electorate assistants.

Section 6.10 ‘Everyone should have a wife’

Some interviewees (e.g. 12) disagreed that spouses are political assets and saw spouses as personal supporters rather than a ‘public asset to parade around’ (19):

- ‘We all would like to have a wife at home who cooks for us. The funny part about this is that not many men have got it either today. Things have changed but when I came in the men would bring the wife to come and have dinner sometimes, and parade her. She was generally a housewife who had stayed home and sacrificed her whole life to his career. It is very seldom a man does that. Unfortunately because of the personal ambitions this place is full of prima donnas. There is a lot of competition and friends of today can be enemies of tomorrow. So to have somebody at home to whom you can speak frankly is incredibly important’ (27).

331 Felicity Kennett, wife of the Victorian Premier had to close her business and dump a share portfolio because of allegations about conflict of interest. She noted the need to deal with ‘aggressive public scrutiny’ (Sydney Morning Herald 2 November 1996, 18 August 1997). Even the more traditional sort of role adopted by Jeanette Howard has been criticised. When she said that housework was therapeutic, media trivialised her role. Domestic metaphors remain foreign to political life (Australian, Sydney Morning Herald 2 October 1997).
• ‘If you get along with them, incredibly important. The temptation for a single person would be to bury yourself into the work and not keep your feet on the ground and become more isolated’ (28).

Family status is envisaged differently among males and females. Some females felt that their status as wives and mothers was used against them. One interviewee’s (23) husband was teased as ‘Denis Thatcher’. Another (11), noting that it was rare for males to be supportive spouses, concluded that women MPs were probably better off without them. 332 Wendy Machin recalled that when facing preselectors she was single and that one had asked ‘what happens if you get married and have children?’ (Sydney Morning Herald 5 July 1996). She denied that her resignation, pregnant with her third child, vindicated the question: ‘Eleven years is double the average length of service. They’ve had their pound of flesh. Some men… have left politics for the same reasons’. 333 Although Machin was then the only female National MLA ever and a strong advocate for more women MPs, she said ‘I’ve never taken the view that it’s my job to carry the can for all womankind. ‘I don’t want to be superwoman. There’s only so much you can do and do well’. The ‘superwoman’ syndrome suggests that because women are not expected to be MPs, no allowance is made for their family roles, even though they must manage them and are condemned if they do not. 334

When Peta Seaton won preselection in Southern Highlands, the Herald (4 December 1995) announced that ‘Mother-to-be is surprise Liberal candidate’. It is unlikely that a male candidate would ever be described primarily as a ‘father-to-be’. One effect of the coverage in this vein is to reiterate the sexual nature of female candidates, who, unlike males, are never allowed to forget their sexual identities. Collins commented that he thought the preselection a ‘significant statement’ that the party was ‘serious about preselecting women in blue-ribbon seats’. The choice followed calls by Deputy Leader Ron Phillips to ensure that women held half of all seats to avoid becoming a party of ‘dinosaurs’. Seaton said that she did not see the contest as a ‘gender issue’, perhaps because she was in a ‘three-cornered contest’ in which her main opponent was National Katrina Hodgkinson. 335

332 Inglis (1996) describes the ‘boarding school’ atmosphere of Canberra as more intense than in state capitals, where fewer Members travel and stay overnight during sittings. Interviewee 23 however pointed out that her travel to Sydney was a source of adverse comment. Wacjman (1999) found that families tend to relocate for the sake of male managers’ jobs much more commonly than they do for women’s jobs but this is not a problem unique to New South Wales.

333 In 1999, Tim Fischer’s resignation as the Nationals’ federal parliamentary leader and Trade Minister attracted attention because he cited family reasons. Maggie Hickey resigned as Labor Opposition Leader in the Northern Territory because of her husband’s illness, but few women have been in such leadership roles (ABC Radio National News 2 February 1999).


335 Most electorates have a Labor candidate and either a Liberal or a National opponent. ‘Three-cornered contests’ are those relatively rare events in which both Coalition parties run candidates.
Other females acknowledged the need for a spouse, and some envied males who had personal supporters at home. Indeed female interviewees generally were more aware of the situations of their male colleagues than male colleagues were of theirs.

- ‘Depends what sort. Everyone should have a wife. You need a partner who does the shitwork for you, male or female’ (1). 336
- ‘It would be great to have a wife. It’s a difficult role for male spouses. People think if they’ve got a male politician they get the wife for free. It’s different for a male. I don’t require my spouse to be there at my side. Things in my political life I do myself. But he has a vital role. If I’m not there with the family there’s not much point us both being away and the kids helter skelter all over the place’ (4).
- ‘Important for men because their spouses contribute greatly. It’s not very important to most women because spouses are not that kind. They’re probably better off without the sort that’s available. It would be fine if we could have a wife but there are not many men around willing to take that role’ (11).
- ‘It’s more the men rely on wives than women rely on husbands. There’s a certain independence about us. Someone to talk to is important, but I try to keep each part of life separate. I’m Mum in the home environment’ (14).
- ‘Male MPs disproportionately have a non-wage working wife at home. I was shocked. Here there are unequal relationships with the bloke whingeing because he hasn’t got his favourite woolly jumper because his wife hasn’t packed it. It appalls me. It’s from a previous era probably because the salary is high enough to afford it. The sort of blokes that want to be politicians want a wife at home servicing them. I reckon I have three hours a day less because of that’ (20). 337

The answer that ‘everyone should have a wife’ shows that few political leaders have husbands. Images are not necessarily applied the same to males and females. When Premiers Lawrence and Kirner achieved their leadership roles, there was speculation that they were expected to clean up the messes made by male predecessors in the same way that wives and mothers do at home. When women are leaders, their husbands excite little media interest. 338 This suggests that wives influence their husbands as a power behind the throne, but that it is not reciprocal. This reflects an archaic assumption that men make decisions on behalf of their wives but not vice-versa, a throwback to a time when husbands voted on behalf of their families. An alternative explanation is the tendency to sexualise women and to assume that they use relationships to exert power through their male partners.

Certainly, some female interviewees had supportive husbands.

336 Journalist Jane Freeman (Sydney Morning Herald 26 December 1996) has argued that female politicians need a wife. She noted that women have to pay highly for child care and other wifely services while most men got these very cheaply.

337 ‘I get support emotionally and logistically and that makes the job easier. There are different expectations on me as a woman. Single men as MPs were - the word ‘looked after’ is probably wrong, but we never expect men to look after themselves. A great benefit but not essential’ (2). ‘They can take a lot of the workload off you and when you haven’t got one you work a sight harder. They send wives off to speech nights and concerts. It’s amazing. It’s someone to cook, iron, look after them’ (16).

338 Journalist Deborah Hope found that the ‘firm’s’ grip on wives was loosening but that there was no interest in the husbands of women such as Kate Carnell and Cheryl Kernot (Australian 11 April 1998).
• ‘We’re a close family. I have a tolerant husband. He’d need to be to put up with it. If you have a spouse, it’s terribly important that they’re supportive. It’s not important whether you have a spouse or not. There are single people in here who... although it’s hard for single people with small children. Very difficult. You know, if they’ve got custody. But if you have a spouse, politics is a two-person business. It’s very difficult if the spouse is not supportive’ (9).

• ‘My children were 6 and 8. My mum didn’t work and in my husband’s family there was a lot of angst and anxiety about me being in public life but also living 100 miles from home. People had to learn to cook. There a number of MPs of both sexes either managing to rear children, or are single and seem to manage okay. Others say how stressful they find late sitting hours. The hours of parliament are an emotional and logistical problem. I think it’s important to have some emotional support. What happens a bit - I find it bizarre. MPs, people with lower house seats, they’re always male and the spouse seems to be the one who goes to all the meetings and smooths ruffled feathers. She goes to school fetes and morning teas and knows everybody’s name. It’s “2 for price of 1”. I personally don’t think that fair, although many women enjoy the role’ (23).

Some interviewees noted that the career can have a negative influence on family relationships and that there were divorces (18):

• ‘Unfortunately it is an occupational hazard. Some MPs separate or divorce. People don’t realise. There are exceptions, but generally we work long hard hours’ (34). 339

• ‘There are a number of gay MPs who have partners. A lot of MPs don’t have them because they’ve lost them through being in here. You sacrifice your personal life to serve the public. The public don’t appreciate that’ (31). 340

• ‘Politics can drive a wedge between partners. Unless you have the help of a spouse who is sharing the burden, then I don’t think you can be fully effective. A troubling time can be tragic. It causes divisions in a family. There is no formal support and almost no informal support for spouses of MPs. They have all the worst aspects of politics but none of the better parts. They are home alone caring for children without physical let alone emotional support. It’s especially hard on country members who tell you they hear their kids say “Doesn’t Daddy love us any more? He’s never here”. But at least the MP has the personal fulfilment of being engaged in that cerebral side of things, the experience of being involved’ (6).

Kerry Chikarovski (Henderson 1999: 172) has reflected that ‘I’m the first generation that’s been brought up to believe you can have it all, family, career, whatever. But the men in our lives, their expectations haven’t changed quite so fast’. When Chikarovski’s marriage ended,

339 In a debate, a female opponent made an unrecorded interjection to the effect that it was surprising that Chikarovski’s political ambition had destroyed ‘only one’ marriage (Observed: 11 November 1997). A South African woman MP has reported that in the first democratically elected Parliament there were some 30 divorces. Most involved female MPs (Ross 2002: 197).

340 O’Grady, then Australia’s only openly gay parliamentarian, encountered discrimination based on narrow definitions of ‘partner’. His male partner did not automatically qualify for travel assistance in the way that a female partner would have, and he had some difficulties around the precincts with parliamentary employees (Sydney Morning Herald 7 August 1992, interview with author). O’Grady resigned from Parliament and left Sydney in ill health, noting misgivings about the way he might be treated in the country. He filed a complaint with the Anti-Discrimination Board under the Homosexual Vilification Act when an executive member of the Farmers Association published in The Country Leader an opinion piece calling Sydney the world’s ‘poof capital’ and referring to H.I.V. as ‘God’s myxo’(matosis) (Sydney Morning Herald 19 March 1994).
she found that the *Daily Telegraph* ran a story before there had been any announcement. She spoke to *Woman’s Day* to try and stop the flow of rumours (209). One problem faced by the researcher here is that there is little balancing evidence available from spouses.

Other interviewees observed that the role is changing for males because many wives now had their own careers:

- ‘the traditional backup given in years past by a spouse on the ground is these days not as important because a lot of spouses have careers’ (8).
- ‘Some wives work the electorates but others don’t. If you don’t have a spouse at the start it’s different. If you’ve a professional spouse it’s different. If you’re a traditional man with a wife there’s an expectation she’ll come to functions. I have a professional wife. It varies. On balance I’d say a private best friend’ (15).

Interviewees expressed diverse views about the effect of spouse and family. Some related personal experience while others attempted to generalise. Some males endorsed the ‘two for the price of one’ idea and others regarded a wife as a traditional, personal asset, but others saw their wives as partners. Females noted that male MPs have established the norm and that people generally assume the presence of a spouse. Males and females agreed that it is possible to do the job without a spouse, although children made single life more difficult. Males and females acknowledged that the roles are changing as society generally changes, and agreed that the job imposes pressures on relationships. 341

**Section 6.11 ‘Nannies and cleaners’**

Interviewees agreed that having children made a spouse more important.

‘If you don’t have support at home it drags and saps you. It’s like an Olympic athlete. The job consumes time and personal resources. After late sittings you feel tired or depressed about some loss or elated about some win and the body can be present in the house but the kids say “Hello dad! Planet earth calling”. If you don’t have a family and spouse willing to put up with all that it would be a disaster’ (7). 342

Others argued that it depended on the spouse.

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341 Michael Bittman of the Social Policy Research Council at the University of New South Wales has found that women are still disadvantaged in the labour market because of their greater family responsibilities, but Graeme Russell of the Macquarie University has detected a ‘profound shift’ in the attitudes of men aged 35-44 to work and family (*Australian* 19 June 1999). Men drastically overestimate their contributions to housework and tend to think that doing some is shouldering an equal share. On the gap between ideals and reality in domestic task sharing see the discussion of ‘pseudomutuality’ (*Bittman and Pixley 1997: 145ff*). Whether MPs are typical in this regard is unclear, but it is another reminder that generations are important.

342 ‘They’ve got to put up with late nights and so on, so it’s easier to be married to a career woman rather than a real mother and housekeeper waiting at home. Some of the chaps have real spouses but it must be infuriating being rung up in the night and told they’re not coming home after all. I can remember not being at a couple of things at school over the years because I had to be here. Children resent it’ (21).
• ‘It depends on your circumstances. If you’ve got kids it would be almost impossible without somebody at home. It’s also necessary to be able to go home and turn off and not talk politics’ (10).  

Deirdre Grusovin (Henderson 1999: 160) has noted that ‘it’s lovely now for the new women. I had to hide [my children]. You never mentioned the children because it gave them more ammunition’. While both males and females saw the need for a spouse to provide care for children, Interviewee 17 argued that the problem for women was unique:

‘If you have children then you can’t do it without a supportive spouse. The only women who can get into politics are those who have no children, or those who have decided not to have children, or those whose children are adult, or those whose finances allow them to have nannies and cleaners’.

There are some ‘single mothers’ in Parliament and Interviewee 1 said that there were ‘single fathers’ as well but these do not attract public attention, perhaps because they do not conform to stereotype. Sandra Nori (Henderson 1999: 162) said that although there is a reasonable sharing of responsibilities for the children with her ex-husband, she is ‘in effect a single parent. I can leave them now at night for a meeting but in the past even an hour’s meeting meant trying to find a baby-sitter’.

The issue of availability of child care has divided female MPs. Sandra Nori has reported that at key moments in her career she has ‘put the kids first’ (Henderson 1999: 96). She admits that politics is no place for ‘bloody virgins’. Senior Democrat Elisabeth Kirkby suggested that female MPs must be aware ‘that their duties will be manifold’ (87). When Allan’s baby was born, the Herald claimed that its report that the birth was out of wedlock was intended to show how normal this was. Taken to task for finding marital status relevant and for being conservative the Herald conceded ‘we’ve learned our lesson’. When another Minister became a parent the newspaper pointedly refused to mention marital status. The second minister was male, and the report mentioned his ‘partner’ (Sydney Morning Herald 11 April, 1 May 1996).

It has been commonly assumed that women are under greater pressure at work because they accept double responsibilities. Women do the bulk of domestic work. In 1997, for example, Australian Bureau of Statistics research found that on average, women living with men did an

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343 ‘If you have a supportive spouse makes it all easier, but to have a spouse who is not supportive would be very difficult’ (25). ‘If you had the correct spouse who would not feel intimidated and be supportive and didn’t give in to pressure. It would be to help relax and unwind. MPs take themselves seriously. You could share your thoughts with someone. Spouses can be levellers as can children and bring you back to reality’ (5). ‘Members can get by without a spouse but to have somebody supportive, somebody at functions who can present the right image of herself and of two people together. That’s not to say you can’t be divorced and still be successful - Wran is one example - but if you have a spouse it’s important they’re supportive in public’ (30).
average of 1 hour 47 minutes more domestic work than men, although the difference was smaller (1 hour 16 minutes) for couples where both spent a similar time on paid work (ABS 1999). Research into reasons for women’s resignations from business positions shows that there are considerable push factors operating in the work environment, and that these relate to institutional barriers rather than to family pressures. Women leave to seek more flexibility, not because they lack ambition. They leave because the cultures of some firms are hostile to their advancement (Sinclair 1997).

The parliamentary culture must appear hostile to Members at various points because political opponents exploit every opportunity to achieve some advantage. It is difficult to argue that parliament is particularly hostile to females of child-bearing age per se, but when Pam Allan took maternity leave in 1996, parenthood made her vulnerable to attack. Allan was granted a pair but felt that the Opposition did not trust her during this period. National MLA Peter Cochrane commented about Allan’s attendance to Ministerial duties and wondered why someone granted a ‘pair’ could attend functions. The Minister for the Status of Women, Faye LoPo’ argued that ‘it is entirely appropriate for a woman who is on maternity leave to make a gradual transition from her leave back into the workforce’ and claimed that ‘misogyny does not have a place in this House and members opposite are driving women out of this place’ (Hansard Assembly 6 June 1996: 2686).

It is not incumbent upon an Opposition to trust Ministers, but on this occasion, an Opposition Member applied under Freedom of Information legislation to see details of Allan’s travel expenses while she was on leave. Nori asked the Minister what functions she attended on behalf of the people (Hansard Assembly 22 October 1996: 5133-4). Allan’s answer described the Opposition request as anti-woman, because ‘maternity leave from this Chamber was a bit like sick leave - an issue above party politics’. Whether the issue was politicised before it certainly was after the Question and the Minister’s answer.

The Minister’s answer was subject to hostile interjections - such as ‘Dear Diary!’ - and points of order, and a colleague used the term ‘slime-bag’. Allan said that ‘the rights of women are up for grabs’, and that the Opposition Member’s attack on maternity leave ‘should be viewed with contempt by this House’. She noted that

344 The Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner found that most harassment cases involve women in powerless positions such as part-time workers in insecure employment and in masculine organisations (Sydney Morning Herald 10 March 1999). Only ‘superwomen’ break through the ‘glass ceiling’ (Australian 4 April 1998).
‘As a matter of principle, when Labor was in Opposition it did not plot underhand attacks on the former Member for Port Macquarie when she took maternity leave as a Minister’.

The Minister argued that had she been asked a question, she would have tabled all the documents. This undermines somewhat her concerns about the principle involved. It is also a matter for conjecture whether the result would have been different. The Minister might have used the opportunity to express outrage that the question even arose.\textsuperscript{345}

When Machin resigned, Allan with a young baby said that Machin’s ‘going highlights how unsympathetic the whole political system is to working mothers’. While sitting hours have become more family friendly, they are often extended without warning. Parental leave for male MPs has not arisen as an issue\textsuperscript{346} but it is a two-edged sword for females. The President of Australian Women Lawyers has claimed that women receive smaller compensation pay outs when disabled simply because courts assume that their careers will be interrupted for childbirth (\textit{Australian} 17 September 1997). Research by the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that a greater percentage of females (48\%) than males (33\%) use ‘work arrangements’ to meet caring responsibilities. Where they use such arrangements, for males, it is more often paid leave, a rostered day off, flexitime or work from home. For females, it is more often part-time work (ABS 2001).

The effect of family responsibilities on MPs has been long recognised. As it rests on a perennial and essential difference between males and females, it has seldom been discussed seriously as a factor that should be addressed to eliminate the influence of gender. There is an unfortunate dilemma for female MPs here but not for males. The problem arises because of those arguments for more female MPs that are based on their common experience with other women. As long as they share and shoulder those responsibilities however, they face difficulties being elected and being accepted as MPs \textit{per se} rather than as ‘female MPs’. Allan has argued (Henderson 1999: 159) that ‘it’s trendy to have women in politics and it’s trendy

\textsuperscript{345} The rhetoric of this debate reveals ideals different from those of the wider community. In 1998, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission ruled that a woman taking maternity leave from a law firm had been treated unfairly but rejected claims of discrimination, victimisation and the existence of a ‘male atmosphere’ (\textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 27 March 1998).

\textsuperscript{346} Media were hard on Peter Collins. A newspaper criticised him for watering his lawn at three o’clock one Friday afternoon (\textit{Daily Telegraph} 16 April 1997). Given that he might have been home early to receive his sons from school, the newspaper was reinforcing the image of the man entering public life requiring a wife. Alan Corbett (\textit{Daily Telegraph} 13 June 2001) wrote to the Editor to correct errors in a report (11 June) of leave he was granted to care for his bedridden wife.
to have families in politics’. The problems arise however when it is the women who have the families. ‘There needs to be a flood of women for it to change’ (174). 347

Family support is an area of difference between males and females. Most interviewees regarded a spouse as important for MPs, but in different ways. First, males have generally expected that wives will be there for them, either as political partners or as personal supporters. It has been assumed that the alternative is disaster in both spheres. Secondly, younger males have wives with their own careers and several interviewees noted that the role was changing rapidly. 348 Thirdly, females are ambivalent about the effects of family responsibilities. While some gain support from families, they recognise that their opponents turn their family status into a handicap. Fourthly, females generally express more independence from spouses. Fifthly, parental responsibility accentuates differences between the public perceptions of male and female parliamentarians. These differences carry over into more overtly political activities, such as representational ideals, issue advocacy and behaviour.

**Section 6.12 Conclusion**

The interview data suggests that males are less conscious of sex-based differences than are females. This might explain why some males do not think that women face special difficulties. It might also explain why females appear to be more conscious that they have received assistance from mentors, but not why so many females deny encountering obstacles. The women who did identify problems tended to belong to categories that confirm Sawer’s understanding of ‘Sisters’. They were mainly older Labor women.

Males and females reported finding various paths to their political careers. There were differences between Labor and Coalition Members, with the former generally reporting longer involvement in party activities. There were differences between males and females in some general philosophies. Female interviewees share with females generally the belief that higher taxes are justified to ensure that government has adequate funds to guarantee a

347 In a parallel case Wajcman (1999: 2) found that ‘management incorporates a male standard that positions women as out of place’ and that ‘the construction of women as different is one of the mechanisms whereby male power in the workplace is maintained’. Wajcman found that management is ‘premised on a particular organisation of family life’ (9). The slogan ‘two for the price of one’ suggests that institutions of employment benefit from the unpaid domestic labour of female spouses. On the other hand, employers tacitly assume that employing a woman whose spouse will not be as supportive could mean getting less than one for the price.

348 On the eve of the 1999 election, the Catholic Weekly (21 March 1999) interviewed one Government and one Opposition female Member. One was a widow with a child and the other single, with no children but who had a ‘feminist’ mother.
minimum standard of living for the disadvantaged. Asked about their experiences during election campaigns, males and females reported some common perceptions but there were also some differences. In particular, males perceived integrity as a very important electoral asset while females emphasised stamina. In terms of career aims, females were as ambitious as males up to the point of gaining a frontbench position. They were more conscious of the influence of party in their prospects for success.

Interviewees generally downplayed any obstacles they had encountered. Females were readier than men to admit assistance from mentors and Labor women were more likely than other MPs to acknowledge support from colleagues and peer mentoring. The effects of having a spouse and family responsibilities are different for males and females in parliament, as they are in society generally. Most interviewees thought that spouses were important personal supporters and that they were crucial if they had dependent children. Some males tended to think of spouses as political supporters but females did not. Females were critical of male colleagues for using their wives in this way. There was a general perception that divorce was an occupational hazard and that relationships were changing as more spouses had their own careers. Child care and parental leave arose only for women.

There is sufficient evidence of different perceptions in these areas to raise the possibility that behaviour in parliament also differs. There are differences between the broad approaches of males and females to their roles, and differences between the limitations that are imposed upon them. Whether these approaches and limitations translate into parliamentary behaviour is explored further in the following chapter.
Chapter 7 Parliamentary Behaviour

Section 7.1 Introduction

The *Sydney Morning Herald* (27 August 1925) was enthusiastic about Preston-Stanley’s first speech and referred to her oratorical gifts, clarity, eloquence and authority. It hailed the address as well reasoned, temperate and concise and said that Preston-Stanley was ‘amply armed to deal with that ever-present irritant, the interjector’. The report also referred to ‘a woman’s banter’, called her tongue a stiletto ripping into Labor’s policy and said that ‘Labor writhed, it squirmed under the lash of it’. While females would meet the challenge of speaking in parliament, there were suggestions that political opponents would treat them first and foremost as MPs when convenient but as women should that promise advantage.

Some sources of male-female difference were identified in Chapter 6. Interviewee perceptions about politics, motivations and career obstacles suggest some distinct approaches to parliament. Once the MP is elected his or her behaviour is subject to particular constraints, some of which have gender implications. If the behaviour displayed in parliament is gender-neutral, then it should be used by and affect males and females evenly. Yet disadvantage begins when preselectors ask only female candidates if they are tough enough for the parliamentary life, or when electoral opponents charge that they are not. 349

Broughton and Palmieri (1999) have demonstrated that when free of party discipline, the content of speeches by female Federal MPs is distinct. In a debate over euthanasia female MPs used arguments about palliative care while males referred to morality or the legislative rights of States and Territories. Females personalised their speeches more with anecdotes.

349 When Carmel Niland sought preselection for the second time she reckoned that she was ready because she was ‘tougher’ and politics was now ‘less sleazy’ (*Sydney Morning Herald* 26 July 1997).
from experience. This Chapter examines opportunities for speaking and differences in voice in the New South Wales Parliament. Sections 7.2 and 7.3 report interviewee perceptions of aspects of the parliamentary role, while Sections 7.4 to 7.8 investigate behaviour in the chambers using direct observation and scrutiny of Hansard. Section 7.2 examines perceptions of parliament as an institution and of the role of the MP individually. Perceptions were strong on parliament’s roles as legislature, check on the executive and provider of services to Members. There were diverse perceptions about qualities likely to secure promotion, with males tending to take a more idealistic view. Asked about qualities that are desirable in a colleague, interviewees emphasised stamina and integrity. They made some surprising claims about their own effectiveness and about the comparative strengths of males and females.

Section 7.3 examined feelings of enjoyment of aspects of the role and comfort in parts of the precincts. Among several differences that emerged, some were predictable such as levels of comfort in the chambers but others were surprising including attitudes to the salary.

Close observation of Parliament shows that media routinely address questions of dress and other trivia while important events escape attention. 350 On 15 April 1997 the Speaker allocated the first question to the Government despite Opposition protests that convention allowed this to the Opposition Leader. The second question was disallowed and the third went to the Government. The fourth question was the rephrased second question. This meant that the Government did not have a hostile question in the first ten minutes, or almost a quarter of the forty-five minutes allocated to Question Time. On another occasion lengthy answers and interruptions meant that the Opposition did not ask its second question until twenty-five minutes had elapsed. Media did not report this. Serious research cannot rely completely on media reports. Nor does Hansard notice when males exploit their numerical majority, their physical size, or sexist tactics such as ‘the gaze’. Visual evidence is important in an age when television stresses appearance. 351

Speech is important, as the employment of professional speech writers by leading parliamentarians shows. Inglis (1996) notes however, that as few females have become leaders, they tend to speak their own words rather than those of speech writers. So the ability

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350 In the ‘Page 13’ gossip column (Daily Telegraph 10 August 1999) both Meg Lees and Natasha Stott Despoja are pictured in Royal Blue outfits. The writer says that ‘Stott-Despoja has in the past lamented the monotony of a sea of men in suits in Parliament House, but the fashion faux pas….’. The problem is not necessarily specific to parliament but could affect all women in public life. Dress was politically significant too when Italian female MPs protested a judge’s comments about a rape victim wearing jeans. Allegations of discrimination arose when a New Zealand woman’s public service career suffered because a male superior thought her dress and jewellery too ‘sexual’ (Australian 13 February 1999, 4 July 2001).

351 Senior female news presenters have complained that male newsreaders are expected to age but producers favour younger women (Australian 23 January 1999).
to use confidently the words that come naturally is even more important to females than to male colleagues. While women in the parliamentary arena might have more at stake than men have, they face added difficulties in having their voices heard.

Several observers (Gorman 1993, Inglis 1996) note that speeches by backbenchers are often given late at night. When there is unlikely to be a large audience, Hansard is crucial, and few people read the official reporter. This can work against the MP whose strength lies in oral communication, and it has been argued that ‘orality’ is an important female counter to a ‘clerical, scribal tradition’ (Quilligan 1991: 54). Chaucer’s deafening of the Wife of Bath for tearing the page of a book (80) symbolises the tension between the oral and written approaches, and yet the transcription of speeches is a routine feature of parliamentary procedure. The nature of the translation between the observed events and the page is an important issue.

On 11 November 1997 for example, the galleries in the Assembly were deserted, partly because of the situation in the Council. Most interest concerned the Coalition attitude to Franca Arena and the implications for Collins’ leadership. For anyone present the importance of visual aspects of parliamentary conduct was made obvious in a censure motion about an alleged obscene gesture made by the Environment Minister. To appreciate parliamentary behaviour requires consideration of matters beyond the scope of Hansard. Observation is needed to make such matters visible. While it is difficult to establish conclusively that appearance and the gaze are additional burdens for female MPs, the possibility is strong. In a setting where the seeking of advantage is the norm it is unlikely that these factors would be neglected should they provide such an opportunity.

352 Susan Faludi, author of Backlash claimed to ‘write so forcefully precisely because I speak so tentatively’ (Australian 9 May 1992). Faludi argues that the two waves of the women’s movement were not started by literature but by feminists using their voices in public: ‘Public speech is a more powerful stimulus because it is more dangerous for the speaker. A more physical act, it demands projecting one’s voice, hurling it against the public ear’. Writing on the other hand occurs behind a veil, at one remove. Faludi relates the importance of finding that people were actually listening to her: ‘Until you translate personal words on a page into public connections with other people, you aren’t really part of a political movement. Public speaking is to reform public life. I hadn’t realised the transforming effect it could have on the speaker herself. Women need to be heard, not just to change the world, but also to change themselves’.

353 Indeed, Shlain (1998) argues that the written alphabet favours males because it develops male neurological advantage and that transcription of oral into written language is masculinising. All MPs know that their words must be convenient for transcription, and so adjust the things they say accordingly. Some acknowledge this in their inaugurals (Smith 1999e). As a result they might not speak in a style that is personally natural. This could apply doubly to females who are forced to speak in a style that is not natural to women.
Sections 7.4 to 7.8 concentrate on Members speaking in the chambers. While *Hansard* is dedicated to recording speeches, *Hansard* omits much of importance. Observation both fills those gaps and allows the researcher to read *Hansard* more accurately and more richly. In Section 7.4, non-verbal behaviour is examined with special reference to the censure debate about a gesture. In Section 7.5 the impact of television is considered. In Section 7.6 the more passive, but important communication skills of presence and listening are discussed. Section 7.7 considers the effects of visual appearance and the ‘gaze’ and Section 7.8 examines the notion of parliamentary language and the silencing of the voices of some Members.

Section 7.2 Perceptions of Parliament and MPs

Several questions allowed interviewees to express opinions about parliament and MPs. Table 7.1 shows perceptions about parliament’s effectiveness (B:ii).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Very effective</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 Not very effective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Check on executive</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Forum for discussion</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information source for MPs</td>
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</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of leadership</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community safeguard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the differences found here support evidence from earlier Chapters. In Chapter 5 it was found that females depend on party support for women’s issues and that fewer females than males have held portfolios. Table 7.1 shows that more females (7: 2 males) rated
Parliament ‘very effective’ as a legislature but more females (11:3 males) rated it ‘4’ or ‘5 not very effective’ as a check on the executive. They were also less convinced that it was a community safeguard. These differences are consistent with females having greater dependence on their parties for ‘mainstreaming’ and with them being historically more remote than males from the executive.

Part of the explanation for females remaining in backbench roles lies in the relatively inadequate support that they receive. Table 7.1 shows that six females and three males rated parliament ‘4’ or ‘5’ as a support service for MPs. In Chapter 6 it was revealed that the careers of males have depended on spouse support, but the arrival of more female MPs has raised questions about what kind of institutional support should be built into the position. Parliament lacks organised child care. Interviewees 1 and 34 drew attention to this need in Parliament and in the broader community. Another (4) lamented the lack at the relevant time for her. No male interviewee mentioned this problem, but when Stephen Mutch was making his last speech in the Council, he noted Pericles’ suggestion that decision-makers should consider their responsibilities as ‘fathers’. Mutch argued that it was time that Parliament had a crèche and baby-sitting services off the precincts (Hansard Council 6 December 1995: 4156ff). Dr Burgmann interjected that Pericles was sexist and said: ‘We don’t want a crèche. We want sensible sitting hours’.

In discussing potential improvements in services interviewees emphasised technology, staff and space. Interviewee 5 expressed sympathy for older Members trying to cope with technology and some interviewees (6, 10) drew attention to the need for training. Interviewee 23 observed that ‘if you gave some 25 computers and 10 researchers, it wouldn’t make a better parliament. Most around here are about as computer literate as I am and I use it as a word processor. Tools won’t make you better’. Interviewee 30 said that ‘each time you obtain some facility to better do the job, it’s like putting in a freeway. It attracts more traffic’.

Some MLCs expressed concerns about conditions for staff. Interviewee 11 said that ‘on the whole we’re pretty well looked after’ but added that ‘there are long drawn out claims and people are not happy’. A male (32) stressed the importance of staff relations:

‘We’re a closely knit group. There’s never any friction in my office. We sort it out straight away. If you can do something better than the staff, you show them. Then they respect you because the boss is prepared to jump in’.

A female (16) noted the need for a ‘stress free office’. During one interview, a secretary entered and Interviewee 34 said that we were discussing her importance. These comments
indicate that all Members rely on staff, many of whom are female. Generally, suggestions were meant to improve the service MPs give constituents and some interviewees specified this. One female (17) saw a more human need:

‘I’d like to see the hours readjusted in a way that acknowledges you are a person with personal relationships. I don’t believe that people who ignore or neglect their personal relationships can be effective in representing the community. People who neglect their personal relationships shouldn’t be trusted to make decisions about public policy’.

One upper house interviewee noted that MLAs do not utilise fully the space available. Although they have an inner office and outer office for a secretary, most are not used except when Parliament is sitting, and then many MLAs leave their secretaries in their electorate offices. Meanwhile the secretaries of MLCs operate in shared party offices at some distance from the MLCs’ offices. MLCs are in more frequent contact with one another because usually their only office space is in Parliament. This proximity however, does not eliminate isolation. Distrust and insularity remain because of the competitive nature of politics, even within parties. Simms (1993: 29) points out that ‘factors militating against cross-party cooperation are greater in Australia than in comparable countries such as Britain’, but it is not clear whether this applies more to females or whether it has deeper implications for the special aims and approaches of females.

Interviewees held various attitudes to relationships with colleagues. Table 7.2 shows perceptions of formal contacts between MPs (B:iii).

### Table 7.2 Formal contacts between MPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Largely partisan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined by</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personalities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another answer *</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Combinations of the above.

The fact that no female chose ‘hierarchical’ or ‘egalitarian’ suggests that they rejected whole of parliament explanations in favour of direct individual relationships. As only two males chose these mass options however, the difference was not great. Seven females but only four

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354 This study does not test whether having female staff makes important differences to Members.
355 Space concerns forced the Parliament to expand into the Nightingale Wing of Sydney Hospital to accommodate the extra staff made necessary by the increase in crossbench MLCs (Sydney Morning Herald 19 November 1996, 3 March 1998).

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males chose ‘largely partisan’. Most parliamentary business is organised by Government and so is intrinsically partisan, so perhaps females take a stricter attitude to business, whereas males can relax more and see other connections to colleagues. Interviewee 22 said that when he was on a committee tour with a male of extremely different political view, they had enjoyed one another’s company greatly. No female interviewee volunteered such information. Indeed, Table 7.3 shows that when asked about contacts across the chamber (B:iv), 14 males but only nine females agreed that ‘relations are amicable’. As family responsibilities impinge on the roles of females more than of males, females might not find time for the extra-curricular socialising that builds rapport between political foes. A broader explanation is that separating the personal and political is a feature of the MP ‘model’ established in a masculine tradition and that females are less adept at this. 356

**Table 7.3 Contacts across the chamber**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relations are amicable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contacts are frequent</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacts are useful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is common ground</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You enjoy their company socially</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Parliament exists to house MPs, a full examination of the institution would include clerks, administration officers, attendants, secretaries, journalists and even cleaners. 357 Franca Arena, opposing a motion for her expulsion, noted that while colleagues shunned her, general staff expressed support:

‘This morning they came into my room and brought me the most beautiful bunch of Australian flowers. They are all women of ethnic background, like myself, and they did this most touching thing’ (*Hansard Council* 11 November 1997: 1403ff).

356 When Labor referred a matter involving Peter Collins to I.C.A.C. a Labor MP told Collins that it was nothing personal, it was just political (Collins 2000: 225).
357 Two males (12 and 24) mentioned that the food was a concern. One described it as ‘truly atrocious’.
The incoming Government in 1995 provided sexual harassment workshops for staff following a Report into the conduct of a Minister. Former Police Minister Terry Griffiths (Liberal, Georges River) lost endorsement after being accused of sexual harassment (Sydney Morning Herald 27 October 1994, Niland 1994). After the election, some staff of Dr Elizabeth Kernohan (Liberal, Camden) made accusations of harassment but Collins warned against making political capital from the incident because ‘instances on both sides of the House’ might be aired (Sydney Morning Herald 5 May 1995). 358

Former Anti-Discrimination Board Commissioner Carmel Niland 359 who conducted the seminars described the political workplace as unique:

‘Your Minister becomes a champion who goes into battle. There is a heightened sense of power. Normal boundaries of behaviour shift. Most of us separate our behaviour at work from our behaviour at a party, in the pub, at home with our families. But in a Ministerial office where people work long hours under heightened conditions, boundaries tend to blur’ (Sydney Morning Herald 2 June 1995).

This language suggests a political droit de signeur and allusion to the masculine ‘champion’ reflects a traditional public/private dichotomy between protector and protected. The visibility of staff is relevant for an inquiry into gender because the tendency to foreground Ministers contributes to an image of male domination of the parliamentary workplace. 360

This possibility can be explored further by examining interviewee perceptions of parliament as an avenue to a career. Interviewees were asked several questions about what makes a good Member. One series of questions asked about qualities ‘likely to advance the career of the MP’ (C:xix). Table 7.4 shows that respondents endorsed ‘determination’ the highest, with 26 (13 females) rating this quality ‘very likely’. Lowest endorsement was given ‘a prosperous lifestyle’ (none chose ‘very’), and ‘independence of mind’ scored only four ‘very’ (one female). Highest ‘not very’ scores were for ‘prosperous lifestyle’ (seventeen) followed by ‘independence of mind’ (seven). ‘Sensitivity’ scored 17 fourth and fifth responses, so that half the respondents placed this quality below halfway as a quality for advancement. Accurately or not, sensitivity is a quality popularly associated with femaleness.

358 Kernohan raised privilege and heated exchanges occurred (Hansard Assembly 1 June 1995).
359 Niland contested Labor preselection. Later she became head of the disrupted Department of Community Services, which had lost two chief executives and a Minister (Sydney Morning Herald 28 April 1998).
360 Staff welfare almost became an issue in the 1999 election when employees were dismissed from two electorate offices. One woman was involved in an ongoing legal dispute. Claiming unfair dismissal, she reported victimisation. The matters were subject to a media ban (Sydney Morning Herald 1 July 1999).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>1 Very likely</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tr>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Ambition</td>
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<tr>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One male gave another answer.
Males and females are positioned differently in relation to political leadership. To the extent that promotion and achievement of leadership positions indicate success, some criteria for political efficacy arise from a male paradigm. Marian Simms, commenting on the electoral defeat of Victoria’s Kennett Government argued that the association of arrogance with strength of leadership is a result of male dominance of politics and resultant stereotyping. If the paradigm of strength includes arrogance, then women might have difficulty projecting an image of strength. Simms noted Kennett’s popularity amongst young working class men and argued that Kennett’s image of toughness included economic ‘competence’. This appealed to male voters who generally favour tax cuts while women want welfare standards maintained (ABC Radio 2BL Evening 19 October 1999).

Table 7.4 shows some differences by sex. Adding together the ‘1 Very likely’ and ‘2’ responses shows that more males rated the qualities intelligence (12:8 females), integrity (11:9), independence of mind (6:4), sensitivity (5:3), assertiveness (17:13), charisma (13:12) and ambition (16:15). More females rated endurance (16:13 males), emotional resilience (16:15), ruthlessness (13:12) and a handsome appearance (10:7). This parallels the different values placed on integrity and stamina as electoral asset by males and females (Table 6.12 above). The qualities preferred by males are more idealistic while those chosen by more females are slightly more pragmatic.

As well as describing objectively the qualities that appear to have ensured success for some MPs, interviewees rated qualities that they would value in an ideal colleague (C:xx). The ‘ability to speedily grasp the essence of an issue’ received high endorsement with all respondents choosing one of the two top options. Twenty-eight rated this ‘very important’ and responses by sex were uniform. ‘Honesty and integrity’ scored 28 ‘very’, again with equal numbers by sex. Interviewee 21 asked whether I would interview Ministers and said that ‘they wouldn’t be frank with you anyhow’. Given the dominance of the frontbench by males, this implies that females are more frank, but this is difficult to test. A ‘logical mind’ and ‘an ability to empathise’ each scored 22 ‘very’ with the latter quality endorsed by slightly more males (twelve). Table 7.5 below indicates qualities with the highest ‘very important’ responses.
Table 7.5 Very important qualities in a colleague

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality in colleague</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to speedily grasp essence of an issue</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty and integrity</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A logical mind</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An ability to empathise</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical stamina</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robust enough to ignore insults</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of humour</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political idealism</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional experience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The only qualities given more ‘very important’ scores by females than by males were ‘physical stamina’ (12:6) and a ‘sense of humour’ (10:7). One female interviewee drew an arrow to indicate the latter quality leaping off the scale. The figures on stamina reflect those for electoral assets (Table 6.12) and advancement (Table 7.4 above), where no female rated endurance ‘4’ or ‘5’ but three males did. Perhaps females find the job more tiring, they are more surprised by the call on stamina, or they more readily admit to being tired. Each possibility has different implications. At one extreme it could be argued that females are unsuited to the job because stamina is a requirement. This prompts questions about whether the role needs to be re-designed to remove an unnecessary barrier. At another extreme it could be argued that females throw themselves into their activities more whole-heartedly. The most likely explanation lies between these extremes. It is possible that in the circumstances in which MPs operate, the support received by males, which includes spouse support, is more effective than that provided females.

Continuing the theme of ideals, interviewees were asked to describe the likely characteristics of their ‘most respected’ colleagues (C:x). Interestingly 21 interviewees rated ‘those you sit nearby in the Chamber’ 4 or 5 – not very important, so party colleagues are not automatically respected. Table 7.6 below shows that there were some differences by sex.
Table 7.6 Characteristics likely to be displayed by most respected colleagues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 Very likely</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 Not very likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sit nearby you *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are same gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show courteous behaviour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Display ability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are senior to you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One male and one female gave other answers. One female gave other answers to all characteristics.

Eight females compared with three males rated those sitting nearby ‘5’, so females particularly do not respect party colleagues unreservedly. In response to ‘the same sex as yourself’, 22 interviewees rated this 4 or 5. This time, only four females but seven males rated the explanation ‘5 – not very important’. This suggests that females respect colleagues because they are female to a slightly greater extent than males respect colleagues because they are male, but there is not great support for this. Interviewees were only slightly more impressed with ‘senior’ colleagues. Eighteen, including ten males rated this 4 or 5.

High respect was afforded colleagues who ‘display ability’ (30 interviewees rated this 1 or 2) and who ‘display courteous behaviour’ (23 interviewees rated this 1 or 2). The differences by sex here were not large, but for the top answer ‘1 - very likely’ there was an interesting difference. Table 7.7 shows that while both males and females placed ability above courtesy, the gap for males (8) is much greater than for females (2).

Table 7.7: Qualities likely in a respected colleague rated ‘very important’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Courtesy</th>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Ratio: 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviewees were asked to nominate the three colleagues they respect most, on the understanding that this was confidential and not a popularity contest. Four declined to
nominate, some managed only two and another named four. Some would not put an order but insisted that all were equal. In some cases, the three names ranged across chambers, parties and sexes. Nominees included Leaders, Ministers, and others with seniority. Frontbenchers were named more often than backbenchers (47:41) although not greatly. Twenty-four women’s names were included in the eighty-eight. This is greater than women’s presence in the parliament, but not as great as their proportion of interviewees.

As well as considering qualities likely to secure promotion and characteristics of respected colleagues, interviewees were asked to rate their own effectiveness in various activities (C:v). Table 7.8 shows some differences between the self-perceptions of males and females.

### Table 7.8 Rating own effectiveness in aspects of the role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legislating</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Committee work</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking in the chamber</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparedness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Making representations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influencing party room decisions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lobbying colleagues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scoring debating points</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dealing with media</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Receiving delegations</strong>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Three males were not on committees. ** One female and two males gave another answer. + One female gave another answer.
Females collectively gave 28 ‘low’ responses while males gave 15. Six females and nine males rated themselves high in ‘contributing to legislation’ while five females and two males rated themselves low. This is an interesting finding given that more females (7:2) thought the parliament effective as a legislature (see Table 7.1 above). At least some males think that they do a good job but the parliament as a whole is not so efficient, while some females are impressed with the parliament as a whole but would like to contribute better. In ‘speaking in the Chamber’ eight males and five females rated themselves high, while two females (no males) rated themselves low. Females wish that they could contribute better in both law making and speech making, but these answers do not explain why they might not be able to do so. Section 7.8 below offers some possible explanations. Three females but no males rated their preparedness low. This is interesting given that when asked about the time they spent on various activities (C:iv) 12 females but only eight males said that they spent too little time researching and being briefed. Overall then males are more content with their preparedness. Table 7.9 shows how much time interviewees thought that they spent on various activities.

361 Another interesting difference was that no interviewee responded ‘too much’ to time spent on relaxing and making personal arrangements, more females than males (15:12) answered ‘too little’. This could reflect the different positions identified (above Chapter 6) regarding support and family responsibilities.
Table 7.9 Time spent on activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Too much</th>
<th>About right</th>
<th>Too little</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislative debates</td>
<td>F 2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee work *</td>
<td>F 1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions in chamber</td>
<td>F 2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching, being briefed</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving constituents **</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making representations **</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending party meetings *</td>
<td>F 4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal contact with colleagues</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with media</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxing, personal arrangements</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Three males gave another answer. ** One female gave another answer.

Females collectively made 60 identifications of activities on which they spent too little time while males made 50. Whatever the explanation, the evidence of Tables 7.8 and 7.9 is that the desire to do the job better is stronger among females than among males.

To seek further insights into these perceptions, a series of questions (C:viii) asked how important interviewees regarded aspects of the parliamentarian’s role. Four females (no males) rated the importance of the MP ‘as a watchdog on government’ 4 or 5 (not very important) on a five point scale. This could mean either that they gave it low priority, or that this was their judgment about parliament as a whole. Fewer females thought the parliament an effective check on the executive. Table 7.10 compares male and female ‘very important’ responses on some other aspects of the parliamentary role.
Table 7.10 Interviewees who saw aspects of the parliamentarian’s role as ‘very important’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Representative</th>
<th>Legislative</th>
<th>Symbol of democracy</th>
<th>In general</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pattern emerging from these differences is that more males than females think that parliament and MPs are important in most respects. The more modest perceptions held by females could reflect sensitivity to public perceptions, with females anticipating public attitudes to the importance of the MP rather than reporting their own. When asked whether the ‘public understand MPs’ work’ (C:ix) no interviewee agreed. Thirteen females and six males strongly disagreed. This implies that females have a different perception of the public’s understanding of parliamentarians generally, or at least that they think that the public finds it more difficult to understand their personal work. This is compatible with a perception that people do not understand the special roles of female MPs. This failure suggests that the female role is more complex, and cannot be understood by applying general, apparently neutral criteria that have been developed by males.

As well as discussing the importance of the MP, interviewees were asked their reactions to a series of statements about the career (C:ix). Table 7.11 shows some interesting differences between the perceptions of males and females.
Table 7.11 Positions on various statements about parliamentary life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public understand MPs’ work</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public appreciate MPs’ efforts *</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs are well qualified</td>
<td>F 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs work hard *</td>
<td>F 10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public respect for MPs is too low</td>
<td>F 11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remuneration is too low</td>
<td>F 4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs see power as aphrodisiac **</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs stay only if they achieve</td>
<td>F 0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs have prestige individually</td>
<td>F 8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs need a high sense of duty</td>
<td>F 10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M 7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* One male gave another answer. ** One female gave another answer.

Despite general agreement that the public lacked understanding, seven males and two females agreed that people appreciate MPs’ efforts. Were the scores on these statements similar, the correlation would suggest that faulty understanding of the MP’s role leads to a lack of public appreciation. The difference suggests that some interviewees considered Members generally while others answered from personal experience. Asked whether ‘public respect for MPs is too low’ 11 females and six males strongly agreed. This suggests that they wish the level of respect were higher, but not necessarily that they find it currently inappropriate. On the other hand, asked whether ‘MPs work hard’ 10 females and seven males strongly agreed. Interviewees probably have diverse understandings of what constitutes hard work. As all interviewees were likely to say that they work hard themselves, perhaps females were more
prepared to acknowledge that others work just as hard as themselves, while males were inclined to be critical of colleagues.

The fact that 12 females and eight males said they spent too little time ‘researching and being briefed’ (above Table 7.9) suggests that more females want to be better prepared. One reason could be a difference in attitude to the MP’s responsibilities. Admission of ‘too little’ could be admission of personal failure while ‘too much’ could be a complaint that the system imposes unduly on them. Fifteen females and 12 males reported spending too little time on ‘relaxing and making personal arrangements’. This finding has resonance in the responses about the provision of services and the ability to develop amicable relations across the chamber. It is likely that female MPs spend more of their spare time on family duties.

The ways that female and male interviewees perceive parliament and the role of the MP show some similarities. There are also some interesting differences, most of which support findings in previous Chapters. A strong theme of the data is that males have a slightly more idealistic view of the status quo. Females are slightly more cynical about parliament’s ability to keep a check on the executive and about the qualities that ensure promotion. This slightly more critical view however, contrasts with the inclination of female interviewees to set higher standards for themselves, particularly in terms of time available to prepare. This either reflects general differences of disposition between males and females, or the degree of criticism encountered by them. If males are less inclined to accept criticisms and less inclined to be self-critical, then it is not surprising that they are more satisfied that they are performing well and that the job is important.

Section 7.3 Comfort in the role

Males experience all organisations differently from the way that females do and critical studies have identified organisations per se as masculine rather than feminine (Hearn and Parkin 1987, Hearn et al 1989). 362 Parliament is an organisation but it also has unique features. Interactions there are influenced by factors that do not exist elsewhere. To test the extent of the difference between the ways males and females experienced the Parliament, interviewees were asked to rate the enjoyment they derived from various activities and the comfort they felt in various parts of the precincts.

Table 7.12 shows the how interviewees rated the enjoyment they derived from a number of aspects of parliamentary life (C:xxv).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.12 Enjoyment ratings for aspects of the parliamentary role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Table 7.12" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other answers were given.*

In Table 7.11 above, different perceptions about the workload were reflected in attitudes to the salary. Four females but only one male strongly agreed that the ‘remuneration is too low’ and three males (no female) strongly disagreed (Table 7.11 above). Female interviewees compared themselves with other professional women and shared their concerns about low
salaries. 363 Comments about spouses suggest that some males but few females are the sole breadwinners in their families and so women’s need for remuneration is based on different assumptions. Traditionally, women have not been as ambitious as men about pursuing salary increases. Indeed, Interviewee 9 said that before her election she had assumed that the role of MLC was an honorary one. Generally however, females are at least as career oriented as males are. Table 7.12 shows that eight females and two males rated the enjoyment of salary on the lowest level of a five point scale. Only three interviewees (all males) rated the salary in the top two levels. Whatever the reasons, females are less satisfied with the financial returns. So if strongly populist campaigns by the media prevent the awarding of properly researched and justified salary increases, this could be felt more keenly by those MPs who are dissatisfied with current levels. 364 Among the interviewees, these are likely to be females.

Perhaps one explanation lies in the notion of psychic salary that accrues in the form of job satisfaction. It is possible then that male interviewees rather than females derive more from aspects of the career such as subjectively conceived status and expressions of community respect. Asked about the importance of the ‘MP in general’ (Table 7.10 above) 16 males but only six females answered ‘very’ and 10 males but only five females saw the role as very important as a ‘symbol of democracy’. This suggests that males feel more valued by their colleagues and engage in more ego-boosting activities. With the smaller numbers of women in the parliament, political divisions might have a more serious impact on the ability to find support in same sex networks. Asked whether ‘MPs see power as an aphrodisiac’ (Table 7.11 above) four males strongly agreed (no females). Interestingly, several females commented ‘males do’, and apparently they may have been correct. Whether this is borne out in behaviour, or it is part of the ‘psychic salary’ is unclear. 365

Table 7.12 shows that four males but no female rated ‘acclaim of colleagues’ as ‘very enjoyable’ and two males but no female rated ‘status as a community leader’ as ‘very enjoyable’. Ten males but only one female rated ‘helping make laws’ as ‘very enjoyable’.

363 See above Chapter 4. A Morgan and Banks survey of 1000 workers found that 37% females compared with 31% males felt that their salaries did not match their responsibilities. Middle level managers, where females cluster, were very dissatisfied (Australian 25 January 1997).

364 Media expressed outrage when MPs voted themselves increases in salary and superannuation and worse when it emerged that the legislation had snuck through in the Christmas break, ‘burglar’ fashion in the dead of night. The Premier promised to stop the legislation. An Editorial referred to the incident as ‘SuperRort’ (Sydney Morning Herald 14, 15 January 1998) and noting the ease with which the legislation avoided the Council’s process of review asked ‘what is the point of having an Upper House at all?’ The Premier had set an example upon election by taking a salary cut.

365 Sally Loane (Sydney Morning Herald 15 February 1997) says that Federal Parliament is affected by the aphrodisiac of power - the ‘ultimate turn-on’ for careerists. Adrenalin and testosterone rule, and the ‘cleverest and most powerful bull in the paddock survives’. Loane used the bull analogy in relation to ‘matador’ Carr and the lawyers (above p.47).
Males are more inclined then, to acknowledge this psychic component of return on their efforts. Some males are more likely to have secure alternatives to fall back upon post politics. One male said that he would work hard for about ten years then get out of politics. Perhaps females did not see themselves as serving an apprenticeship with ministerial rewards ahead, but were in their permanent role, while males might have their eyes on other prizes. Although 30 interviewees (15 females) expressed pleasure in meeting interesting people, Interviewee 20 commented ‘You haven’t met many politicians, have you?’ Eleven females and 9 males rated the pleasure gained ‘attending community events’ ‘1’ or ‘2’. Pleasure in attending community events results from seeing such events as intrinsically important, rather than as necessary political chores.

The most ‘very enjoyable’ responses were given ‘serving constituents’. Fewest ‘very’ votes went to ‘the salary’ and ‘conflict’ (one each). Eleven females but only four males rated ‘the hours’ as ‘not very enjoyable’. Nine females and four males rated ‘public criticism’ as ‘not very enjoyable’. In response to ‘the atmosphere in the chamber’, eight females but only two males chose one of the two less enjoyable options. Five females but no male rated ‘committee work’ as ‘very enjoyable’. These patterns suggest that the style of interaction that occurs in committees suits women more than men and suits women more than participation in the larger chambers. Perhaps it is only when women are comfortable that they are confident enough to behave naturally.

The sex-based difference on hours is not surprising given comments about family responsibilities. Enjoyment of the atmosphere of the chamber relates to female interviewees’ comfort levels (see below Table 7.13). Females’ preference for committee work suggests a different style around the legislature and a distinct attitude to the backbench role. Committee work is an alternative to frontbench positions, towards which committees can be antagonistic. Enthusiasm for committee work characterise less ambitious MPs. Membership of a committee is time consuming and requires dedication.

366 Responses to the question ‘How long do you intend to stay in politics?’ are discussed above p.157. 367 Interviewee 23 had another view: ‘Being an MP has provided me with opportunities to meet different people and learn about issues I wouldn’t have otherwise’. When Premier Carr addressed a breakfast fundraiser for the Council for Civil Liberties, he accused the Council of false advertising because it raffled lunches with ‘exciting and interesting parliamentarians’. Carr objected because ‘There are no exciting and interesting people in New South Wales politics. We have a constitutional bar against that’ (Sydney Morning Herald 11 October 1997). 368 Sarah Childs (2002: 152) found in Britain that ‘the extent to which women MPs substantively represent women varies according to the site of the representation, for example between the floor of the chamber and in select committees’. 
A series of questions asked about comfort levels in various areas (C:xxvi). Table 7.13 shows that females’ responses included more of the ‘very comfortable’ ratings in almost every area: their own office, the party room, executive areas, the library, members’ communal facilities, and the car park. Equal ‘very comfortable’ scores were recorded for ‘colleagues’ offices’ and ‘the public areas, foyer, verandah’. The only area where females appear to be less comfortable is ‘the chamber’, where only three females compared with five males said they were ‘very comfortable’ and one female but no male chose the least comfortable option.

Table 7.13 Comfort levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>1 Very comfortable</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 Not very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own office</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues’ offices *</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party room *</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chamber</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive areas</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members’ facilities</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The library</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public areas: foyer, verandah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car park *</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Included other answers.

These responses suggest different expectations of comfort level. It is possible that females are able to feel comfortable under greater stress. It is also possible however that some
respondents thought of physical comfort while others thought about psychological comfort. Still, the fact remains that the chamber is an exception. 369

The question about ‘executive areas’ is interesting because one would expect Government Members to be more comfortable there. Yet only one female and no male Government MP responded that they were ‘very comfortable’ there while three females and one male from the Opposition said they were. Indeed, on this question, no Opposition Member chose below option three ‘moderately comfortable’ while three Government and one crossbench Member did. These responses could indicate that the only Labor Members prepared to give interviews were those who for some reason were prepared to express criticism of the Government, such as those who felt alienated from the executive. These questions that ask about enjoyment and comfort as opposed to effectiveness, could fit more naturally either male or female attitudes. It is possible that some MPs do not separate the two aspects but enjoy and feel comfortable in only those situations where they feel that they are contributing. Conversely, lack of enjoyment and comfort can prevent some Members realizing their full potential.

Evidence has emerged from Sections 7.2 and 7.3 that there are differences between the ways males and females perceived the Parliament and their colleagues. More males thought that parliament was an important institution and that MPs did valuable work. Males had a more idealistic view of the qualities likely to see a Member promoted. Males were more content with their research and preparedness. Females noted the importance of stamina and a sense of humour more than males did and were more impressed by courteous behaviour while males stressed ability. Females were more convinced that the public does not understand their roles. Males are more comfortable dealing with opponents and happier with support services. When these differences are viewed collectively, they reinforce the suggestion that the role ‘MP’ is an easier fit for males. The characteristics that lead to promotion are more likely to be masculine traits or those learnt within traditional male occupations. Public expectations have been built around a masculine paradigm and so females are subject to extra criticism when they appear to fail to conform. It is likely then that females will behave differently, and so closer examination is needed of the ways that males and females participate in parliament.

Section 7.4 Body language

Gender is defined in this thesis as an aspect of behaviour. The investigation so far has relied heavily on interviewee role perceptions. These have elicited important data. An examination

369 Despite some evidence that the upper house is more female-friendly, Council females seemed no more comfortable in their chamber than Assembly females did in theirs.
of parliamentary speech brings observation and document study to the foreground. While Parliament’s procedures and cultural norms should allow males and females to participate equally, they might have a bias towards the communication styles of males or females.  

While *Hansard* records speech, it largely ignores body language, presence and appearance and these are aspects of behaviour that are important in an age dominated by television images. Interpretation of non-verbal language is a problem. Dr Angus McLachlan found a general tendency for women to laugh to be affiliating, reciprocal and relaxing while men laugh in response to something they perceive as funny (*Sydney Morning Herald* 27 January 1996). There are some commonly agreed signs, but many actions and gestures are contentious. As *Hansard* records only speech, those who do not speak are seldom mentioned. Perhaps this seems unremarkable, but it has consequences. Although the victim of stereotyping, marginalisation, patronisation, intimidation and silencing might not speak, his or her body language can be informative. Female Members of the Swedish Parliament use hand signs to indicate sexist behaviour visually (Theorin 1995). The researcher can appreciate such unspoken activities only when present to observe the chambers in action.

Parliamentarians are conscious of these effects and this was illustrated clearly when Kerry Chikarovski moved censure against Pam Allan for allegedly making an obscene gesture (*Hansard Assembly* 11 November 1997: 1470ff). The debate is a rich source of data for both participants and researchers interested in gender. It is given extensive treatment here as a case study that demonstrates the importance of observation. Chikarovski reminded the Speaker of his appeal to Members about their behaviour with schoolchildren in the Gallery and ‘in this age of television’. The censure debate discussed and demonstrated elements of body language. It had its origin in Chikarovski’s claim that Allan had gestured with one finger towards an opponent in an exchange across the chamber. Allan responded that the House’s

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370 A researcher has claimed that curricula in modern education were pitched towards sophisticated communication techniques that girls use naturally and suggested that these environmental factors make it more difficult for boys to participate (*Australian* 15 April 2000).

371 During the 1999 election campaign, the Premier and Opposition Leader met between radio studios. When covering the chance meeting, a television reporter commented that the Premier was first to abandon the ‘defensive body language’. The Premier was first to uncross his arms (*Prime News* evening 26 March 1999). When seeking signs of specifically gendered behaviour, this can reduce to seeking evidence of masculinist swagger, and so is one-sided and runs the risk of missing important cues. Some research suggests that men use body language well, especially for competition, but that women are better interpreters of subtle signs (*Sydney Morning Herald* 19 June 1991). The male television reporter might have read the crossed arms as defence but it can also mean uncertainty. It is possible then that the postures meant different things to Carr and Chikarovski. It is possible too that the Premier uncrossed his arms to avoid giving a sign of empathy.

372 Norton (1993: 12) argues that: ‘coverage of parliament in a news program on television is watched by as many people as could sit in the gallery of the House of Commons over one thousand years’. The Assembly galleries combined seat about 160 people and the Council Galleries 150.
time should not be wasted talking about ‘insignificant and unparliamentary signs’ and called the motion ‘a superficial issue when the Liberal Party is in crisis’.

Speaking to the censure motion, veteran MP Ian Glachan (Liberal, Albury) pointed out that:

‘From where I sat I was able to see the Minister very clearly. I clearly heard what she said and clearly saw what she did. I noticed immediately afterwards from the body language that she displayed and from her chastened personal demeanour, that she realised that what she had said and what she did were wrong’.

Reba Meagher objected that:

‘Opposition Members have talked about demeanour and body language. I cannot understand why the House is debating such matters. They are impossible for Hansard to record. They are not matters that form the record of this place’.

Marie Ficarra called the gesture a ‘disgrace’ and argued that ‘A Member of Parliament would never stick his or her fingers up in public because if that were to occur the member would be censured by the community’.

Perhaps different standards apply to males and females here. In an article ‘Petty pollies bore with parrot-fashion speeches’, the convenor of the National Voice symposium argued that expansive gestures in a female ‘decrease her credibility’ (Australian 20 May 1995). So had the gesture been used by a male, it might have gone uncontested. When Opposition frontbencher Michael Photios was placed on two calls for example, Deputy Premier Andrew Refshauge held up two fingers in mock warning. It was returned by Photios, using two, then three (Observed: 25 June 1998). Each signal resembled Allan’s ‘one-digit’ gesture that led to the censure debate. Unless signs are discussed, Hansard does not record the exchange. When the Premier was asked whether he approved of the Treasurer’s disparagement of police officers, he replied that this was nothing to what ‘she’ called ‘him’, pointing to Chikarovski and Collins (Observed, 23 October 1997). Hansard cannot say: ‘here the Premier pointed to the Member for Lane Cove’. Given that so much communication consists of body language Hansard omits vital evidence.

Speakers in the censure debate on Allan referred to the participation of women in politics, expectations that their presence might improve parliamentary standards, and reasons that few women seek election. There were references to appropriate voice volume for women, and some interesting use of metaphor. Analogies are informative because they indicate the intended audience, because they show that there is a common vocabulary and because they

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373 The parliament is not broadcast publically, but proceedings are videotaped and television networks use excerpts for their news programs.

374 80% of communication according to one expert (Sydney Morning Herald 24 August 1996).
indicate who has the power to construct images and set conceptual boundaries. Lather (1991: 8) quotes Adrienne Rich’s saying ‘this is the oppressor’s language, yet I need to talk to you’. In many sub-cultures, masculinist discourse is the norm. Given parliament’s history and its external links, it should not surprise if much of its language has masculinist overtones. 375 Parliamentary speech has its jargon, perhaps because of close links between the legislature and legislation. 376 In reporting parliament, media often resort to masculinist analogies.

Chikarovski argued that the ‘bear pit’ image did not excuse outrageous behaviour. Labor’s Beamer suggested that ‘people with glass jaws should not throw dirt’ and Allan mentioned that a female Ministerial colleague ‘would also like to have taken a glove in this debate’. One participant pushed her sleeves up her arms on several occasions and this emphasised the combative nature of the debate. Another leant over the table often to point at opponents, thus provocatively invading their space. 377

Chikarovski later expressed disappointment at Allan’s response to the motion. Although she thought it a ‘fairly measured debate about how we’re all leaders in our community and should be setting standards, her response was to attack what I wear, my voice, the fact that my marriage had broken down. Oh, it was a charming debate’ (Henderson 1999: 153). Allan complained that a male journalist with the Daily Telegraph attacked her personally over the incident, referring to her ‘appearance and the need to be feminine’ (210). The report included phrases such as ‘a wailing cat at midnight’, ‘bullies in blouses’, and ‘viperish’. Allan felt that journalists describe the same behaviour as ‘assertive’ in a man and ‘aggressive’ in a woman. The Australian public is accustomed to men debating other men and has some experience of men against women, but women debating women is unusual territory. Peta Seaton has argued (154) that ‘women are particularly hard on other women’ because they are so few. Women do

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375 The Police Association objected when the Minister threatened to intervene in a Police tribunal case. A complaint against a senior officer for swearing at a female junior had been dismissed because there was a 100 year tradition of officers swearing at one another. By mid 2000, females filled five senior positions in crime units for the first time. They remarked that the Police Royal Commission moved ‘the culture’ away from the blokey, ‘drinking with the boys’ atmosphere. They hoped that promotion could be based on merit rather than old boys’ networks (Sydney Morning Herald 5 June 1995, 18 April 2000). The Equal Employment Tribunal heard that sexual banter was common at the Sydney Futures Exchange where it was a ‘male bonding’ thing (Sydney Morning Herald 25 January 1996).

376 The Sydney University’s Centre for Plain Legal Language and the Parliamentary Counsel’s Office designed guidelines to ensure that legislation was in plain language (University of Sydney News 31 May 1995). The Language and Literacy Council recommended that ‘plain English becomes the staple of government communication’ and that acronyms and jargon be eliminated (Sydney Morning Herald 9 July 1996). Just one interviewee (6), a male, indicated that in hindsight he would have liked some legal training to assist his legislative activity.

377 One female Member invaded a Minister’s space by approaching the Table. First there was a Point of Order, then a drink from the water carafe, then a trip to the wastepaper basket. Each time the Minister stopped speaking, perhaps believing that the Member would seek the call. The Speaker described the Member’s antics as ‘grossly disorderly’ (Observed, see Hansard Assembly 7 June 1995: 807).
not want other women to fail, because they see women MPs as standing for all. Interviewee 
(32) mentioned being in the Chamber when two female MPs ‘tore strips off one another’. 
They desisted only when the Chair threatened them with suspension. Certainly, when conflict 
occurrs between females it is an immediate cause for comment, while debate and discord 
among male MPs is dismissed as normal politics. 378

Government strategy in the censure was to relate Chikarovski’s motion to her leadership 
ambitions. That day, the Coalition refused Collins’ request to vote for the expulsion of Arena. 
Meagher said: ‘I feel very sorry for Peter Collins. The gesture has been misrepresented as 
representing the number of votes that he received in the party room’. Allan concluded: 

‘I am delighted with my performance as Minister, both inside and outside the Chamber. 
I make no apology for that. I do things in a direct way, unlike the treacherous Member 
for Lane Cove’.

The motion failed on party lines. Five women and one man participated, and the Minister 
mentioned that other women on her side wanted to contribute. The male MP argued that the 
Minister was an important role model for young women, but stressed the need for similar 
parliamentary standards for men also. Opposition Members described a responsibility of 
female MPs to encourage the interest of other women. Chikarovski said Allan ‘undermines 
that view’ and Ficarra accused Allan of doing ‘a great deal to turn women off ever getting 
involved in politics’. Chikarovski concluded by noting the desire of all Members to improve 
‘the image of politicians in the community - and that includes and starts with our behaviour in 
this place’. The terms ‘view’ and ‘image’ might not be used literally here but they are a 
reminder of the importance of the visual. Observation by Members in this case brought non-
verbal behaviour into the written record. Observation enabled the researcher to identify 
behaviours with important gender implications.

Section 7.5 The impact of television

Videotaping of Assembly sessions has become routine, and the visual element is now 
recorded. It is difficult to know precisely how this additional record affects behaviour. A 
major debate took place when television coverage of the Federal Parliament was proposed, 
but there was little public comment about the proposal in Sydney. 379 Perhaps this is because

378 The Telegraph (27 August 1925) highlighted Preston-Stanley’s attack on Adela Pankhurst Walsh as 
a ‘demagogistic philosopheress’, whom she blamed for aggravating a waterfront dispute. 
379 When television cameras were first allowed in the Assembly the Herald (Editorial 15 May 1993) 
argued that ‘the legislative process survived the intrusion of the cameras. Democracy didn’t collapse in 
New South Wales’. It approved televising as a boost to open government.
the proceedings in the Federal Parliament are recorded for routine transmission by the national broadcaster, but the tapes in Sydney are used selectively for news grabs. 380

Members have noted the importance of television footage. 381 Interviewee 6 argued that the Premier ‘plays’ to the camera. On 5 May 1998 Labor Whip Bill Beckroge (Broken Hill) received the call from the Speaker although Opposition Members thought that one of their number had been called. Beckroge said that the truth would be ‘on the television’. Deputy Premier Refshauge raised a Matter of Privilege (Hansard Assembly 28 May 1998: 40):

‘Hansard is a record of what happens in this House and I remember clearly that yesterday the Member for Gosford moved a motion and four times he said “I condemn the Fahey Government”. Hansard does not record those words. It records different words. I would ask you to get the tapes (interrupted here) of yesterday’s proceedings and ensure that Hansard is correct’.

Mr Speaker replied: ‘Order! I will take up the matter with the Acting Editor of Debates’. Perhaps Refshauge should have said ‘what is said’ rather than ‘what happens’, but it is clear that Members have taken note of the televising process.

There is some evidence that Members adapt their behaviour because of the presence of the cameras. When Shadow Health Minister Skinner asked the Health Minister about the effect of the millennium bug on hospitals she was subjected to ridicule. She said that the Question was serious and turning towards the Gallery added ‘I hope the cameras are recording this’ (Hansard Assembly 27 October 1998). During the Censure Debate, Allan showed keen awareness of the visual element when she turned to the television camera and directly addressed ‘Andrew’ (Mr Tink) in his office (Observed). 382

The presence of the cameras in the Legislative Council brought about an historic change. In mid 1998, Max Willis resigned as President after taking alcohol at a celebration for retiree Elisabeth Kirkby (Hansard Council 29 June 1998: 6713ff). During the evening sitting, his

380 Generally, Members demand equal access to information and communications in debate. If a Member reads from a document then it is ‘tabled’ to make it public. If a Member says something but will not repeat it, other Members check the Hansard record of debate. Body language belongs to a different category because nobody can be expected to repeat a gesture, but television footage could provide a record. Eventually, Members might be forced to watch instant replays to check their techniques just as cricketers do at the Sydney Cricket Ground. When the Parliament opened in spring 1997, the ceremony appeared on a huge screen in Macquarie Street. Tight controls are kept over videotapes. Media have access and grainy video images sometimes turn up in the Daily Telegraph. Scholarly requests are made to the Speaker for permission to view a specific tape. Requests are passed to the Clerk’s Office and it contacts Members as privilege is involved.

381 Note the intruder and the late night taxi incidents (Daily Telegraph 22 May 1997, 31 March 1998).

382 Standing Orders require that Members address remarks to the Chair. They must refer to others in third person and it is unparliamentary to address others in second person. The television camera is probably covered by this ruling, but there is no record of the remark in Hansard anyway.
speech was slurred and his actions were noticeably affected. At most times this might have been overlooked, but television cameras were present because this was a serious occasion when the Council was considering a motion that a judge be dismissed for misbehaviour involving procrastination. *Hansard* does not convey any particular impression of the President’s state, and a journalist reporting it would be taking a risk. 383

Non-verbal behaviour is not generally recorded in *Hansard*. The censure motion against Allan was exceptional because an alleged gesture was the subject of debate and the approaches of participants were informative. Televising of debates has some effect on behaviour, but it is difficult to know whether the impact will be simply to reinforce existing power relations or to provide new opportunities for those whose debating skills are neglected by the verbal record. There is enough evidence in Sections 7.4 and 7.5 to suggest that females and males are positioned differently in relation to these skills, but further investigation is needed into the ways that females and males participate in parliamentary debates.

**Section 7.6 Presence and listening**

Aspects of behaviour omitted by *Hansard* but made visible through observation include the presence of Members and their attentiveness. While presence is not recorded unless the MP speaks or division occur, it automatically occurs to observers to ask who is present. Members cannot be present at all times, even if they have a particular interest in proceedings. 384 When the Council (3 December 1997) discussed fisheries legislation and the talk was of quotas and licences, scattered around the red benches were thirteen males. One female was present, presumably because as Presiding Officer she had to be. *Hansard* shows that only one female

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383 President Willis excluded journalists who lampooned his opening of the Parliament in spring 1997 (*Hansard Council* 11 November 1997). Little has been written about the interaction between Press Gallery and Parliament (since O’Reilly 1989). Journalists attend Chambers when they anticipate important events, and give Question Time priority. If an MP wants to grab headlines the best opportunity is while the Gallery is packed. The presence of journalists has a self-fulfilling effect: they attend to important things so whatever happens when they are there is important – or can be made so. The televising of proceedings affects the Gallery but in the absence of research it is not possible to specify the nature of the changes. Perhaps journalists will stay in their offices and watch proceedings there. During observation, I counted journalists in the Press Gallery with a view to ascertaining whether the sex ratio there was significant, but the televising means that presence is no longer as necessary, and this complicates the interpretation of presence. Generally, senior reporters drift away after the first few questions, assuming that if the Opposition had anything important they would use it early. On one occasion there were 13 males and eight females at the beginning, but only seven females at the end. 384 MPs are busy and are rostered on to the Chamber. They attend when the bells are rung and for Question Time. Missing a division is serious because a vote could be lost.
Member spoke on the legislation, but the male dominance of the debate is not otherwise noticed. 385

The system of ‘pairs’ allows MPs short-term leave. This prevents opponents exploiting unavoidable absences by bringing on votes. This convention benefits both Government and Opposition. The Sessional Summary records leave and pairs granted, and together with attendance records, is some guide to activity. There is no discernible difference in patterns for males and females. All are conscientious in their attendance to parliamentary duties. 386

Presence can be exploited politically when a quorum is called. The quorum arises when Members draw attention to an empty chamber and they do this only when there is a point to be made. Sometimes it is used as a filibuster or to annoy opponents who happen to be involved in party meetings elsewhere. The calling of a quorum was necessary when Elaine Nile spoke on termination of pregnancy and most female MPs boycotted her speech. Goldsmith (Hansard Council 12 September 1991: 1091) stayed, criticising the attempt to silence a Member as a breach of parliamentary privilege.

When the Government established an inquiry into Arena’s paedophile allegations, shadow Attorney Hannaford said that it would have power to compel Arena to appear and give evidence. If she refused to testify therefore, she would be in contempt (Sydney Morning Herald 23 September 1997). So while it is an offence to inhibit the free speech of Members, there is some debate about the freedom to remain silent. On the other hand, political constraints continually impose silence on those who might otherwise speak. Arena noted that Labor backbenchers spoke against her expulsion within the Party Room but not in the Chamber (Hansard Council 11 November 1997). 387

Members who are present but do not speak can still be performing active roles such as seeking the call and listening. While presence does not ensure that a Member is listening, it raises the possibility. Failure to record presence downgrades listening, although that is an

385 Nor does Hansard record comings and goings. One day, Council Deputy President Gay from the Chair warned a Labor Member about his speech (Hansard Council 30 April 1998: 4204). Later (4206) Gay interjected in a partisan way. While Gay is no longer called ‘Deputy President’, Hansard does not note when he left the Chair. This could create the impression that he leapt from the Chair to interject. 386 There are threats to ‘pairs’ when one side thinks that the system is being abused. When the Government resisted Council moves to have the Treasurer produce documents, Opposition Leader Collins threatened to deny the Government ‘pairs’ in the finely balanced Assembly (Sydney Morning Herald 27 October 1995). 387 In Pulse of Victory, Millicent Preston-Stanley wrote: (Smith, E.F. 1977: 55) ‘A wise man once said “silence is golden”, and “sometimes it is just yellow” was the retort of one who was more penetrating. Mark Twain… called it the lie of silent acquiescence’. This echoes Waring’s observation (above p.145) that the silence of female MPs, especially ex-MPs, can be likened to the silence of the battered woman. It does nothing for her sisters, but buys her a little respite from immediate threats.
important activity and one that some studies identify as a special skill of females (Tannen 1990: 123ff.). This convention might also encourage Members to speak for the sake of having some contribution noted.

Women’s communication skills are continually the subject of speculation. In the Assembly (Hansard Assembly 31 March 1998: 3441) Clover Moore asked Police Minister Whelan a Question Without Notice. The Minister replied that both he and she had attended a meeting where the matter was raised. When Moore said she had no recollection, Whelan replied: ‘You may not have been listening. You might have been doing what you are always doing - talking. Perhaps you should just listen’.

Some feminist critics complain that men attack women for failings that are more characteristic of men (Quilligan 1991: 162). Listening is an important communication skill, but is neither elevated nor encouraged in parliament. Occasionally Members raise points of order about inability to hear, but usually only when seeking partisan advantage. During the highly politicised Question Time, Opposition MPs are shut out and use the ‘Point of Order’ as a tactic to be heard. These spurious Points of Order are used almost exclusively by men. Members raise Points of Order also to render non-verbal sounds into speech. Andrew Fraser complained that Members could not hear because a Minister had ‘dropped his bone’ and was ‘barking’, but his real aim was to ensure that Hansard noted the immature behaviour (Assembly 5 June 1996: 2558). Clover Moore showed the importance of knowing the procedures. Once she called the Premier a ‘liar’, knowing that were she ejected, at a subsequent press conference she could put her case but the Speaker ignored the unparliamentary language at Carr’s request (Sydney Morning Herald 9 December 1995). Faye Lo Po’ described listeners as ‘mother deaf’, like children in a school of her experience where only male authoritarian voices could control students from homes with chauvinistic fathers. Lo Po’ said that ‘while the males are dominant they will call the shots and set the tenor’ (Henderson 1999: 149). 390

388 Commenting on the 1999 Drug Summit, Richard Walsh, chair of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs, commented on the ‘dispiritingly low calibre’ of the speeches (Sydney Morning Herald 27 May 1999). While female MPs ‘shone like jewels’, the male tended to arrive just in time for his speech, ‘stride purposefully to the podium’ and give a speech that seemed to have been prepared weeks before. While few speeches acknowledged what had already been discussed, the MP would ‘leave the chamber with the triumphant look of a man who might well at that very hour have cracked the front pages of his local paper’. Walsh advocated a parliament where ‘MPs would be good listeners rather than gifted rhetoricians. But on the evidence of this summit, the present mob are not trained to listen’. The MPs brought aggressive working habits to what was essentially a conference. 389 As Hansard does not describe incidents, a Member wanting an incident noted must speak about it, but getting the call can be difficult. 390 Federal MP Kathy Sullivan claimed male colleagues shut their ears when she spoke about women in the party room. They thought they heard but what they reported was a grotesque misrepresentation of
Some interview questions elicited data relevant to these concerns. Interviewees were given 10 statements about the comparative strengths of male and female Members (C:xxix). Eleven interviewees strongly agreed that women are better negotiators and better listeners but just one interviewee strongly agreed that women are better speakers. The only other statement with so few in strong agreement was ‘women are more ruthless’.

The sex of the interviewees agreeing strongly is of interest because on eight of the ten statements, there were more females in strong agreement than males. Males exceeded females only on two statements where the numbers are small (women are more ruthless 1:0 and more loyal to party 2:1). Strong disagreement by interviewee sex was also informative. At least one male disagreed strongly with each statement. The only statements with which some females strongly disagreed were that women were more loyal to party, more ruthless and more ambitious. Six males strongly disagreed with the claims that women are more conscientious and prepare better. Table 7.14 shows the numbers by sex who agreed with the statements.

Table 7.14: Interviewees agreeing with perceptions of comparative strengths of women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women MPs</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are more approachable</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are more conscientious</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are better listeners</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentrate on different issues</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are better negotiators</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are more ambitious</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare better</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are more loyal to party</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are better speakers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are more ruthless</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost two-thirds of interviewees (64.7%) agreed that female MPs are better listeners. Only one in seven (14.7%) agreed that women are better speakers. The meaning of this data depends upon whether perceptions are seen as effect, reflecting the reality in parliament, or cause, setting the expectations to which Members conform. It is likely that both are partly true and the perceptions help to perpetuate the status quo. The differences between male and

what she had said. This convinced her that mere presence is not enough for women to be heard, because their claims are dismissed as ‘fringe feminist rhetoric’ (The Age 28 September 1993).
female perceptions is marked on most statements about female distinctiveness. Indeed, these differences are among the clearest for any set of survey questions. This is a potentially divisive area.

Another set of questions (C:v) asked interviewees to rate their own effectiveness in certain aspects of their roles. Interviewees responded high, moderate or low. Table 7.15 shows the ‘high’ responses on various activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Own effectiveness in activity</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making representations</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving delegations</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee work</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislating</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking in the chamber</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparedness</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobbying colleagues</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with media</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing party room decisions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoring debating points</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only on making representations did over half the interviewees rate their effectiveness high. Almost half rated their effectiveness high on receiving delegations, in committee work and legislating. Fewest high rankings were for scoring debating points and influencing party room decisions. Table 7.8 above shows that on scoring debating points five males rated their effectiveness high compared with two females. 391 While females did not rate themselves highly here, nor did they find ‘defeating opponents’ enjoyable (C:xxv). Only two females and three males rated this ‘very enjoyable’. As they do not find this particularly satisfying, they may either not pursue it or fail to regard it as an achievement. More males rated themselves highly effective at speaking in the chamber. Added to females’ lower comfort level in the chamber (Table 7.13 above) and lower enjoyment of speaking in the chamber and point scoring (Table 7.12), these differences identify an area for concern.

391 Also, six females rated themselves ‘low’ compared with three males.
Female responses were highest for committee work and making representations, but lowest for scoring debating points, dealing with media, influencing party room decisions and speaking in the chamber. The difference between males and females on rating their effectiveness speaking in the chamber (5 females, 8 males) is just 3, but this is as large as the difference by sex becomes on this set of questions. While listening is not specified among the activities, ‘receiving delegations’ approximates listening. More females ranked themselves highly effective in this area than all areas except committee work and making representations. Yet more males (9) than females (7) thought themselves highly effective in this area. While males made more ‘highly effective’ responses overall (67: females 60) this result is surprising. It is possible that males are confident that they have addressed constituents’ concerns, but this could be based on their interpretations of demands. If females listen better they might hear and understand the demands of constituents better and so might have a more objective view of their success in meeting expectations. This would be consistent with a tendency to set high standards for oneself, but there is no strong evidence for this conclusion.

Clearly, it is important to have accurate knowledge of who is present in the chambers at specific times. Presence cannot be assumed, and nor is presence a certain indication of interest. Interviewees generally assumed that females are good listeners, and if that is the case, then their presence might be more likely to ensure active participation than the mere presence of a male. Hansard’s attention to speaking but not necessarily to presence downgrades female communication skills.

Section 7.7 Appearance and the gaze

Observation produces so much data that a critical focus depends on filtering the evidence. Some data is ephemeral, insignificant or distracting. On one occasion (14 May 1996) all female MPs in both Chambers wore red and/or black and on other occasions they all appeared in navy blue. These patterns might be mere coincidence or a form of telepathic empathy, but without further evidence they are of dubious relevance. On the other hand, dress can be an issue if different standards apply to males and females. Interviewee 16 complained that females’ appearance is subject to comment. While crossbench males in the Council sometimes appear without ties, the dress of male MPs is remarkably uniform. Consequently, variety depends upon female appearance. This places females under greater pressure, causes
vulnerability and creates a power imbalance. A yellow or red jacket that makes a female Member visible also makes her a target for attention. 392

While the visual element might seem unremarkable to some MPs, others exploit it. If the appearance of females is more likely to be a source of comment, then they are more vulnerable to attack on this basis. During the 1999 election a Herald journalist (13 March 1999) said that both Carr and Chikarovski had been ‘whacked with the ugly stick’, but Carr’s description by one colleague as ‘the blind woman’s sex symbol’ did not prevent him becoming Premier (Australian 11 March 1995). 393

Females can be objectified by the male ‘gaze’ (Mulvey 1975). When Leader of Opposition Business Chris Hartcher (Liberal Gosford) accused the Premier of playing to the camera in the Gallery 394, an opponent interjected that this was exactly what Hartcher was doing. Hartcher replied that it was better than looking at his opponent, but that looking at the Minister for Sport was ‘another matter’. The Minister was a young female who blushes easily. Hansard (Assembly 21 May 1997: 8851) does not say whether the Minister was present but nobody criticised Hartcher. 395 Other informative incidents have concerned the Minister for Sport. She had to walk from the far end of the Assembly to answer questions at the table. This invariably allows a few seconds for the Opposition to comment and attempt to upset her. Occasionally, there are ‘wolf-whistles’ from across the Chamber. On one occasion, the Minister for the Olympics rose on a point of order. He asserted that Opposition Members were making so much noise that he could not hear the answer of the Minister for Sport (Hansard Assembly 11 June 1996: 2720). When he rose, he touched the Minister on the back and directed her to a seat with a facial expression that suggested he would assume control. He

392 The visibility of female dress is exploited politically. In the House of Representatives, placing females in seats behind the Prime Minister and Opposition Leader creates in television footage, an impression of disproportionately high presence. Rules for televising Question Time therefore become significant. The images are neither accidental nor inevitable. In most chambers cameras must focus on the member asking the question and the Minister answering, and these activities occur at the Table. According to one report, a former Leader of the Democrats in the Senate moved her younger Deputy away from behind her to avoid distracting viewers (Sydney Morning Herald 13 December 1997).

393 More recently, a Labor backbencher advised Chikarovski to get a ‘facelift’. The Speaker had not heard the remark and so could not rule (Sydney Morning Herald 23 November 2000). The MP responsible apologised the next day because a colleague was being blamed.

394 The Opposition moved no confidence in the Speaker for alleged bias. With the camera in the Speaker’s Gallery, the Premier often had his back to the Speaker who could not hear the Premier correctly, nor see his facial expressions. This limited his ability to adjudicate. When the Speaker called the Premier to order, the Premier did not hear and continued speaking, so seeming defiant. On 28 April 1998, a camera was placed behind the Speaker as an experiment but was removed.

395 Janine Haines (1992a) relates how a Liberal Senator implied that Margaret Reynolds was made a token Minister because of her ‘hormones’, not her ‘neurones’. Had Haines not been present in the Senate, the story might never have been told. While there is no record that Labor Senators were present Haines expressed dismay that no colleague of Reynolds defended her.
buttoned his lounge suit and pulled himself to his most commanding height before turning to
the Speaker with a swaggering gait (Observed). One Labor interviewee (32) said that the rest
of the Cabinet were defensive of the Minister for Sport.

When I asked a Member about behaviour I had observed, she dismissed it as unimportant.
Each time she entered the chamber, a male Member from another party would speak to her,
and on some occasions nudge the male beside him. The female Member would smile and
sometimes speak back. The Member said of the male that ‘he’s all right’ and explained that
she was treated as ‘one of the boys’ because she was noted for speaking plainly. These
incidents are meaningful in the light of studies that suggest males use teasing interactions to
test females (Thorne 1997: 53). This gives them control of behavioural expectations (Spender
1982: 58-62). The female reaction can be part of a ‘plastic armour’ but it legitimises the
males’ informal approach and gives them licence to abandon formal constraints (Cline and
Spender 1982: 99). Had the Member rejected these interactions, then she might easily have
been depicted as over-reacting, so her complaints could be dismissed as radical or irrational
and her concerns ignored. The female Member in this case was placed into a subordinate
position because the smiling response was imposed as an ‘obligation’ (LaFrance and Hecht
1999: 64). Although the Members concerned here were from opposite sides of the chamber,
an incident observed above (p.75) involved Members on the same side.

MPs ignore incidents for various reasons. They lack of gender awareness and so do not notice
some behaviour. They practice deception for political gain. They deliberately try out sexist
behaviour to see how far one can go, or to seek reactions in order to discomfort opponents.
They might also decide not to pursue every piece of questionable behaviour in the hope that
objections on a few occasions will be taken more seriously. Female MPs might decide not to
keep on taking responsibility for supervising the behaviour of all MPs. There is no reason that
they should and such supervision places them in danger of being stereotyped. It is of always
possible that the incidents really are unremarkable in the context and the researcher's
observation inflates their importance inappropriately.

Section 7.8 Unparliamentary language and silencing

Parliament is a workplace, and research shows that women and men speak differently in most
occupational settings. Tannen (1990) for example, found that men tend to give orders while
women speak rituals such as ‘please’, ‘sorry’ and ‘thank you’. Consequently, women might
get less credit for what they do (Sydney Morning Herald 14 February 1995). Care is needed
when examining the contributions made by males and females in legislative debates (see also Chapter 5).

Widely varying perceptions of female communication skills reflect either essential or culturally determined differences. Ivy and Backlund (1994) argue that formal models of interaction emphasise ‘objectivity, separateness, competitiveness and hierarchical structure’ suggesting that conventions are built on masculine characteristics. Males initiate, discipline and dominate classroom discussions, while female speech is characterised by hesitations, tag questions, qualifiers and deferential patterns. In parliament, it is possible that the conventions that allow some forms of speech and discourage others have a bias.

Several rules distinguish parliamentary from unparliamentary language. MPs are theoretically free to say anything without fear of prosecution and MPs regard seriously the right to ‘speak out’. Parliamentary privilege became an issue when Arena asked whether a judge was under investigation by the Wood Royal Commission. Some interviewees referred to this privilege. Standing orders and precedent established by presiding officers limit the language that can be used by parliamentarians (Legislative Assembly of New South Wales 1996). Before the chair can rule Members must ask that a term or statement be withdrawn. Refshauge called Skinner ‘Nurse Ratchett’ and withdrew after the laughter had subsided (Observed Assembly 8 April 1997).

Males and females have different ideas of what behaviours are intimidating. When the Budget Estimates Committee was examining the Transport Minister’s expenditure in 1996, Goldsmith asked for a point of clarification. Minister Langton, who was later interrogated by I.C.A.C. over his use of travel warrants while in Opposition, became impatient and said ‘one more time for the dummies’. Goldsmith asked for a withdrawal, but Chair Patricia Staunton suggested that MPs were called much worse. Langton said he would withdraw ‘for now’ (Sydney Morning Herald 4 June 1996). In view of the readiness with which Members withdraw, however, it appears that some Members exploit the conventions. Elisabeth Kirkby referred to Opposition ‘sound and fury’ directed at her and said she was ‘personally insulted’. John Jobling interjected that it was ‘robust debate’. Kirkby responded that ‘one can have

396 When environmental protestors invaded Kirribilli House, a magistrate excused them as they had acted conscientiously. When John Brogden criticised the magistrate, he threatened to sue should the MP repeat the allegations outside Parliament. Brogden reported the exchange to the House, saying that for any outsider to attempt to silence an MP was a breach of privilege, but for a member of the judiciary to do this was an outrage (Sydney Morning Herald 21 November 1997).
397 See discussion of disobeying whips above pp.135 ff..
robust debate without being insulting’. Jobling insisted: ‘it wasn’t insulting’ but he apologised for his comments (*Hansard Council* 17 June 1997: 10306). 398

Other conventions are be more or less encouraging for male or female speakers. In the Council, the President has at times called the House to Order, noting that Question Time is not a period for ‘continuous interrogatives’ (*Hansard Council* 26 June 1996: 3670) or ‘intimate conversations’ (*Hansard Council* 16 October 1996: 4832). Once a Question has been put, the Minister’s answer is to be heard in silence. While most calls to order in the Council are general rather than directed at a specific Member as they are in the Assembly, and men are responsible for most of the interjections anyway, the pattern of communication being discouraged is identified by Tannen (1990) and Ivy and Backlund (1994) as a female rather than male form. The convention that Members are not addressed directly in second person, but only in third person through the Chair, further inhibits conversational style.

Theoretically, when a Member has the ‘Call’ others should listen in silence, but male and female Members might adopt different attitudes to this responsibility. The analysis of interruptions in the following Tables shows that interruptions are common. 399

### Table 7.16: New South Wales Parliament – Sex Composition June 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chamber</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Ratio M:F(1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 7.17: Interruptions of Question Time *Hansard* June 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chamber</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>By males</th>
<th>By females</th>
<th>Ratio M:F(1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Assembly, the 5.2 males per female made 8.4 times the interruptions. Eighty-three males caused 336 interruptions (about 4 each) while 16 females caused 40 interruptions (2.5 each). In the Council, the 2 males for each female made 3.6 times the interruptions. 28 males

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398 In the New Zealand Parliament, females make fewer personal attacks than males, are less aggressive, make fewer interruptions and make fewer remarks about opponents’ gender, but were more susceptible to such attacks (Grey 2002: 24-5).

399 The analysis is of *Hansard* for June 1996. There is no reason to suppose that the month’s proceedings are atypical.
produced 117 interruptions (about 4 each) while 14 females caused 32 (2.3 each). Males seem more disruptive, but the data show only that males’ interruptions are more usually recorded, so further exploration is required.

**Table 7.18: Question Time: interruption types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Assembly</th>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interjections</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points of order</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls to order</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.19 shows the average numbers of interruptions. In the Assembly, for example, there were 41.7 interruptions for each Question Time, while in the Council there were 16.5. To allow for the different numbers of Members in the chambers, the averages have also been shown per Member. In the Assembly, there were 3.8 interruptions per Member, while in the Council there were 3.5 interruptions per Member.

**Table 7.19: Chamber comparison of interruptions: averages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Assembly/session</th>
<th>Council/session</th>
<th>Assembly/MP</th>
<th>Council/MP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interjections</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points of order</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calls to order</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 7.18 and 7.19 show that interjections are tolerated in the Council to a greater extent than in the Assembly where Points of Order are the standard Opposition tactic.

**Table 7.20: Sex comparison: interjections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chamber</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>By males</th>
<th>By females</th>
<th>Ratio M:F(1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.20 in conjunction with Table 7.16 shows that men dominate interjections. They outnumber women in the Assembly by 5:1 and the Council by 2:1, well below the 17.3:1 and slightly below the 3.7:1 that might be expected from their interjections.
Table 7.21: Sex comparison: calls to order

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chamber</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Of males</th>
<th>Of females</th>
<th>Ratio M:F(I)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assembly</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Males are called to order roughly in keeping with their proportion of membership of the Assembly (5:1) and precisely equal to their Council membership (2:1).

Table 7.22: Sex comparison: Assembly: ratio of calls to interjections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interruption type:</th>
<th>Calls to order</th>
<th>Interjections</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In comparison with their recorded interjections however, female MLAs are called to order much more frequently (11.3 times) than are males (4.5).

Table 7.23: Sex comparison: Council: ratio of interjections to calls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interruption type:</th>
<th>Interjections</th>
<th>Calls to order</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.23 reverses the relationship for convenience because the Council experiences more interjections than calls to order. In this Chamber also, males are allowed more interjections before being called to order. In the Assembly the male advantage is 11.3 to 4.5 (over double) while in the Council it is 17.3 to 9.3 (just under double).

There are several possible explanations. Hansard might be a misleading record. Women’s interjections might be punished because the Chair hears them but Hansard does not hear and record them. Despite efforts to be fair, the Chair might disadvantage women. Different behavioural expectations might be applied to males and females. Women’s voices are silenced to an extent that bears little relationship to their behaviour. Disciplining of males on the other hand, seems to be explained more clearly by their behaviour. There are also instances where women’s voices have been singled out for criticism. Each explanation suggests that Parliament undervalues women’s voices and inhibits their participation.

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400 Calls exceed interjections because they are made for attempted interjections and other misdemeanours such as ‘conversing’.

401 Hansard’s Gallery is behind the Opposition and reporters cannot see the lips of interjectors.
Participation data are complicated by party. Governments aim to avoid scrutiny during Question Time and so their backbenchers have little incentive to be actively involved except by asking ‘Dorothy Dixers’. Following the 1995 election, nine of the 15 female MLAs were Labor women, including three Ministers, and so participation in Question Time was discouraged for most women. While Government males are less active than Opposition Members during Question Time, their greater numbers reduce the impression of passivity. If the aim were to examine the participation of any individual male, these special effects would require consideration. The presence of only six female Government backbenchers among thirty-three backbenchers means that on some days, no woman will ask a question, because the Government might be allocated as few as six questions. The tone of Question Time with its histrionics and jeering might act as further disincentive to females and those males whose style is more moderate and measured.

The Government’s control of the Speakership means that Opposition Members are more likely to be called to order. If Hansard is analysed for calls to order according to Members’ sex, Opposition females feature more prominently than Government females. On 4 June 1996, three Opposition females were called but only one Government female. On 5 June, two were called on each side. On 6 June, the score was two to one. The score over the week was seven to four. Although these numbers are similar, as the Opposition had only five females, this meant that their females were called an average of 1.4 times each. The Government had nine females and so they were called on average under 0.5 times each. Also, Opposition Members are likely to be called more than once, while Government Members rarely receive multiple calls. Government Members are ejected very rarely. While similar trends apply to males, the relative numbers and different voices make the situations difficult to compare. The overall impression is that individual female Government backbenchers are inactive but their party position not their sex creates this effect. Serious analysis of parliamentary contributions must acknowledge the practical and tactical reasons for participation.

Ministers can place Opposition Members in difficult positions. Deputy Liberal Leader Ron Phillips, in speaking to a Point of Order (Hansard Assembly 28 May 1998: 38), said that ‘the Minister is deliberately provoking Opposition Members and speaking directly across the chamber, baiting members who are on three calls to order to interject’. The data suggest that women are not as easily baited but Chikarovski (Henderson 1999: 135) has described as

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402 Canberra Times journalist Ian Warden used the less sexist term ‘David Dixers’.
403 When opponents said that federal MP Carmen Lawrence was ‘politically dead in the water’ and lacked the credibility to ask questions in parliament, Lawrence explained that as Shadow Environment Minister she found that she got better results by having Senator Faulkner ask questions directly of Environment Minister Senator Hill in the other chamber (Australian 15 March 1997).
‘disgusting’ the way that Labor Members go ‘yip, yip, yip’ when Skinner\textsuperscript{404} rises to speak because they claim that she

‘barks like a dog. My big bitch with Carr is that as Premier of the State he sets a standard. He’s into huge personal denigration. Not just with me. When he made the remarks about my voice, the female members of the press gallery said I was being precious…. But the press gallery loves it’.

Members either approach the Table or speak from their seats.\textsuperscript{405} The former means that the Member is placed in full attention and the latter can mean the Member struggles to be heard. When the Chamber is full the bodies have a deadening effect on acoustics. There were just two females on the Opposition frontbench and only one was within earshot of the Speaker.

Whenever voices have been discussed in Parliament it has been to the detriment of female MPs who are condemned either for being hysterical or for resembling males. With inaugurals the conventions ensure a silent hearing for most speakers, so removing some of the boisterous context in which much parliamentary speech occurs. Vocal volume is not as great a consideration in a first speech, but without the traditional courtesy females are be disadvantaged.\textsuperscript{406} Interviewee 23 said that during her career she kept her voice low to avoid being called hysterical,\textsuperscript{407} but the Premier made the disparaging comment about an opponent’s voice being so low she must be on hormones (above Chapter 1). He was forced to apologise, but Allan lampooned an opponent’s voice (\textit{Hansard Assembly} 11 November 1997: 1478):

‘I must apologise because my voice is not as loud as that of the honourable member for Georges River. She demonstrates a fantastic capacity in question time to push her voice across the Chamber… she kept trying to shout us down. Why do we have such a loud noise in the Chamber? Why do these women opposite feel the need to project their voices so loudly when they could be doing something purposeful such as issuing press releases or developing policy?’

Ms Ficarra: You are just so personal and tactless.

Ms Allan: Your voice is so loud. It should come from the chest’.

Speech pathologists at Flinders University have found that women’s voices had lowered in pitch from 1945 as their status in society has risen. A voice coach said that a lower voice carried greater weight and more authority (\textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 14 April 1993). Speakers at the Australian Voice Symposium commented that men tended to suppress their ‘light and

\textsuperscript{404} Note the \textit{Herald’s} accusation that Skinner was a ‘serial interjector’ (above pp.55-6 fn 116).

\textsuperscript{405} On one occasion an Opposition frontbencher attempted to claim the right to approach the Table but the Speaker refused, saying that speaking from his seat would expedite ‘an endeavour to complete Question Time as quickly as possible’ (\textit{Hansard Assembly} 22 October 1996: 5134).

\textsuperscript{406} In the Senate (1 October 1997) Jocelyn Newman accused the Opposition of deliberately using a ‘chorus’ of male voices to drown out female speakers and in particular to quash Senator Vanstone.

\textsuperscript{407} Australia’s only female race caller reportedly works on ensuring her voice is low-pitched and controlled to avoid being ‘accused of being a screamer’ (\textit{Australian} 29 September 1999).
high’ voices to sound more manly and that women ‘found it hard to use authority without sounding interfering’ (*Australian* 20 May 1995). Elsewhere, Allan (Henderson 1999: 131) said that Chikarovski did not fear the chamber during debates but that she ‘gets right into it. And she’s got a very deep macho voice. It carries. Shouting across the house is the way it goes. You just get sucked into it. Until you read about it in the paper the next day - that politicians behave like idiots’. Chikarovski has noted the pitfalls of becoming involved in ‘boys’ games’ (132). ‘To be successful you need to be aggressive... part of the crowd making the noise’. She alluded to the ‘twofold’ difficulties for women.

‘There’s the physical image. Women shouting tend to be labelled as harridans or shrews, shrill and so on… Then there’s the psychological. Unless you’re aggressive you’re not tough enough… for the community. They cry out for a more civilised parliament, but they like a bit of hardness’.

Meagher (77) observed that the ‘key to political survival is a thick hide’ because while the community wants more ‘sensitive’ politicians, ‘when they get them they beat them up’.

Women take various attitudes to abusive language. Some say that MPs have to be able to handle it, but others condemn its use to discomfort opponents. When Janice Crosio arrived in caucus, the chairman would correct members who used terms such as ‘bloody’ and ‘buggered’. Crosio commented “Chairman, I am a lady and proud of it. I happen to also be a politician and to have topped the vote in this state. If you haven’t sufficient control of the English language and you have to stoop to bad language then don’t direct it at me because I’ll give what I take and I’ll take what I give’ (Henderson 1999: 136). Crosio had the apparent advantage of a very deep voice. Nori (Henderson 1999: 96) notes the importance of adjusting to audiences. ‘There are expectations of me as a female politician and liberties are taken with me that would not be dreamt of with a male MP. They will not accept aloofness from a woman. Acerbic behaviour is okay in a male, not a female’. Women must walk a fine line between being professional and personal. 408

Males make the longest speeches. In a debate on corporal punishment in schools, Fred Nile spoke from 2 to 4 a.m.. As the cost of a ten hour sitting of the Council is some $300,000, Richard Jones reckoned that Nile’s speech cost about $60,000 and said that ‘It just wasn’t that

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408 Ivy and Backlund (1994) found that in college classrooms men talk more than women, men talk for longer periods, men have more turns at speaking, men exert more control over topics of conversation, men interrupt women more than women interrupt men, and men’s interruptions introduce more trivial or inappropriate personal comments that end women’s discussion or change its focus (distract). Kathlene’s (1994) study of US committee chairing styles made similar findings. No study has replicated Kathlene’s methodology here.
good’ (Sydney Morning Herald 19 December 1995). The Honourable Ian Macdonald spoke for three hours and thirty-nine minutes on a forestry bill, breaking the record of another male, John Jobling (Sydney Morning Herald 6 November 1993). Some MPs speak for the sake of speaking. Two senior MLAs took spurious points of order to make contributions they considered to be humorous. One peppered protests about Ministers’ answers with unusual words and asked the Speaker to ‘excoriating’ Ministers. The other, whose vocabulary was more limited, would comment on the other’s ‘verbal diarrhoea’ (Sydney Morning Herald 9 December 1995).

The issue of the tolerance of the rowdiness of the Assembly is important. The Speaker often acknowledges that a degree of latitude is expected, but it easily deteriorates. The Herald Editorial (22 October 1996) noted that Speaker Murray made the Deputy Leader of the National Party withdraw when he told the Environment Minister to ‘shut her fat face’, and that as a result, the reference was erased from Hansard. Associate Professor Paul Corcoran notes that while it is popular to castigate parliamentarians, elsewhere, those who misbehave are regarded as victims in need of understanding (Sydney Morning Herald 24 August 1995).

It would surprise if the language used by Members were always polite. Some participants and close observers believe that heat generated in the chamber expresses differences in broader society, acts as catharsis and contributes to social harmony (Campbell 1994).

The Government has used humour to invite onlookers to laugh at the Opposition. Rarely has the Opposition had the last word in Question Time exchanges but on one occasion the Premier found it advisable to laugh with the Opposition. When the Premier likened Collins and Chikarovski to Basil and Sybil Fawlty, John Brogden continuing the analogy, interjected ‘You’re Manuel!’ The Premier had no answer to the retort, which likened him to another character in the series, a Spanish waiter who struggles to understand what is going on around him. The Premier left the response to the Speaker. Clearly Brogden’s wit softened the

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409 Then Senator Coulter pointed out (ABC Television Order in the House 9 May 1992) that every word spoken in the Senate costs $23. There has been no audit in Macquarie Street, but following the 1999 election, the National Party claimed that One Nation MLC David Oldfield had spoken so little that his contributions cost some $35 a word (Australian 23 September 1999).
410 In his Valedictory Gerry Peacocke admitted engaging in the ‘turgid diatribe’ and used his favourite terms ‘prolix.. propinquity and perspicacity (Hansard Assembly 25 November 1998: 10672).
411 One female ex-MP when asked about the use of the gag, mentioned another female and suggested that it was definitely needed in her case. Most interviewees did not approve of its use.
412 He argues that ‘a male politician’s petulance and sneering insults are a fragile identity’s cry for help’ and that we are asked for sympathy rather than taunting criticism. Corcoran says that ‘the deplorable language’ arises from ‘underlying institutional defects’ and describes the ‘churlish behaviour’ as ‘comic relief from the tedium of arcane procedures and pompous, prepackaged rhetoric. Formal parliamentary debate, a nostalgic tribute to democracy as a public forum, is simply obsolete’.
413 They run a chaotic Torquay hotel in the British television series ‘Fawlty Towers’.
Speaker’s attitude, but equally clearly, Brogden did not want the Premier’s remarks to pass unchallenged. Brogden’s ability to assert himself depended upon determination, a loud voice, a quick mind and a willingness to play the Premier at his own game. It is difficult to know whether then leadership hopeful Chikarovski could, or would take this approach, and if she did, how it would be received. Standing and yelling and pointing are attributes not usually approved in women’s public behaviour. Brogden was admired for the outburst especially as he was smiling and maintained his composure (Observed, see Hansard Assembly 19 November 1996: 6426).

This Section shows that males and females are positioned differently regarding the important parliamentary activity of speaking. Females are less likely to exploit procedures such as the Point of Order or the conventions relating to unparliamentary terms and withdrawal. Females are less likely to interject but more likely to be disciplined if they do. Males speak for longer. Females are silenced to a greater extent and their voices are subject to more frequent disparagement. The numbers and positioning of females in the Assembly inhibits participation and the rowdy, bantering exchanges across the chamber tend to alienate them. As with many other aspects of the parliamentary role, parliamentary speech has a masculine bias.

Section 7.9 Conclusions

Preston-Stanley entered seven decades after the Assembly was established, a fair time for a masculine ethos to be entrenched. When she speculated in her first speech about the possibility that men had made Parliament a place unfit for women, ‘Members were silent under the soft impeachment’ (Sydney Morning Herald 27 August 1925). Had Preston-Stanley entered the Assembly in 1995 rather than 1925, as perhaps the twenty-fifth female MP rather than the first, she would not have been able to refer to an ‘exclusive male domain’, but it is debatable whether the parliament’s gender environment has changed greatly in the intervening seventy years.

Male and female interviewees exhibited some differences in the ways that they perceived the parliament to which they belonged and their roles within it. Section 7.2 found that more males than females regarded parliament and the work of the MP as important. The differences were not great and applied in only some areas, but they might well be explained by different experiences. Males held a slightly more idealistic view of the qualities likely to see an MP promoted. The slightly more cynical view shown by females could arise from a perception that many less capable males are promoted before capable women. Females noted the
importance of stamina and a sense of humour, and were more impressed by courteous behaviour. Section 7.3 revealed that males were more content with their effectiveness and preparedness. Males were more comfortable dealing with opponents and more satisfied with services, staff and the salary, but females perceived their comfort levels as high in most areas around parliament.

Viewed collectively these responses suggest that the role ‘MP’ is a slightly easier fit for males. There is no guarantee however, that males and females start with the same expectations. The contradictory popular perceptions of family responsibilities identified in Chapter 6 above distorts perceptions. In domestic situations, males tend to inflate the amount of work that they perform and so have higher levels of satisfaction than might be expected. In parliament, females might well set higher standards for themselves, but might also go close to realising them. It is possible that female MPs undertake more of the tasks that males delegate to secretaries.

When direct scholarly observation is added as a technique for inquiry, interesting features of the culture are identified. In Section 7.4 it was found that *Hansard’s* inability to record body language or non-verbal behaviour means that important influences on the participation of males and females can be overlooked. In a television age, understandings of appropriate gesture can be crucial politically, and it is possible that these are not gender-neutral. Section 7.6 noted that the lack of a record of presence in the chamber gives greater emphasis to speaking than listening. Listening is widely regarded as a skill of females. While it is popularly assumed that women are good speakers, this was not the perception of interviewees. There is a suggestion then that something inhibits women’s speaking abilities.

Sections 7.7 and 7.8 explored some difficulties experienced by female MPs. Section 7.7 showed that visual aspects of behaviour can be appreciated only by direct observation. Physical appearance, dress and the gaze can all be exploited by Members to intimidate opponents. These techniques are not used exclusively by males against females and not all males use them, but there is some evidence that females are the subject of special attention.

Section 7.8 found that both parliamentary conventions and unparliamentary behaviour are used to silence some MPs. Outsiders are most vulnerable as is shown by interruptions by Opposition Members and their ejection from the chamber. Males and females have distinct

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414 This applies only to the parliamentary role, which has been the subject of this inquiry. Some British Labor women MPs have noted that as far as constituency work is concerned, women are more suited to be MPs. Issues that constituents bring to their MP are predominantly the kinds of issue that are widely considered to be the special responsibilities of women (Childs 2002: 148).
styles for participating and in this regard, women are outsiders. While MPs generally agree that women are better listeners, few think that they are better speakers, and their unique skills are undervalued. In Question Time, females are less likely to interrupt but more likely to be disciplined for those interruptions, possibly because of their visibility. Different perceptions of appropriate behaviour were identified, especially relating to the notion of parliamentary language. Women prefer a more conversational and less formal debate than that allowed by Standing Orders. However, there are practical and tactical reasons that women participate less. It is important when examining parliamentary contributions then, to note that men and women have different natural affinity with established norms. While all males face obstacles, in respect of their acculturation into masculine modes of behaviour they fit naturally into the framework that had evolved by 1995. Female MPs face an additional dilemma because they must decide whether to adapt to the expectations built into the role. The dilemma occasionally causes silencing and sometimes erupts into conflict, but is likely to remain present as an underlying tension for females most of the time.
Chapter 8 Conclusions

Section 8.1 Introduction

Section 8.2 Differences between the perceptions of male and female interviewees

Section 8.3 Conclusions about gender

Section 8.4 Conclusions about methodology

Section 8.5 Hindsight and foresight

Section 8.1 Introduction

Following Preston-Stanley’s inaugural speech, the Herald (27 August 1925) concluded ‘it will probably become incomprehensible with the passage of a few years, why we ever considered it wrong for women to vote or to enter parliament’. Preston-Stanley was realistic about her potential effectiveness and wrote in Punch:

‘I’m not fool enough to suppose my going into the House is going to make any sweeping alteration. The heavens won’t fall because a woman’s skirts rustle on the sacred benches, so long the sacrosanct seats of the lords of creation’ (Smith, E.F. 1977).

This study began by noting the popular interest in the sex of the MP in the early to middle 1990s. It then became systematic by examining literature in the general area. Because there was so little written about gender in the New South Wales Parliament, a broad methodology was devised for the project. The research was undertaken and it is now possible to decide the extent to which the aim and objectives were met.

The study confirms the hypothesis that some gendered forms of behaviour were privileged. It did this by pursuing a specific aim and three objectives. The aim was to study ‘gender in the Fifty-first Parliament’. The objectives were to contribute data to the literature on gender politics and specifically on gender in parliamentarians’ role perceptions and behaviour, to add to the knowledge about the New South Wales Parliament, and to make critical findings about methods for studying parliamentary behaviour. Here, the main findings of the thesis are analysed. The overall aim permeates this entire chapter. In Section 8.2 identifiable gender differences in interviewee perceptions are summarised and some comment is made about general literature. In Section 8.3 conclusions are drawn about the way that ‘gender’ should be understood in the Parliament. In Section 8.4 some comments are made about the suitability of the methodology adopted. Section 8.5 suggests avenues for further research.
Section 8.2 Differences between the perceptions of male and female interviewees

The interview data revealed many similarities between the ways that males and females see their roles. 415 In Chapter 4, interviewees revealed some shared perceptions about representation. Except for a few males who referred to ‘merit’ and existing arrangements, interviewees shared the popular ‘mirror’ view that a sex proportion of 50:50 is ideal for parliament. This is not surprising given that both major parties have approved affirmative action to achieve more sex-balanced assemblies. In keeping with their general philosophies, Labor adopted quotas while the Liberal Party favoured empowering individual women.

Interviewees saw themselves representing on a variety of levels simultaneously. Their clearest responsibility was to a specific electorate followed by their party and many saw themselves as trustees exercising their consciences. Only a few claimed to represent a segment of society. Among those who did, their sex was one consideration but there were others, including youth. Representation does produce ‘dilemmas’ for MPs (Sawer 1999). 416

More evidence is needed to determine whether these subjective perceptions of representation influence behaviour. One feminist critique suggests that male MPs represent male interests while claiming to represent all, but assume that females give priority to women and women’s issues. This creates a methodological problem. While this study sought to identify evidence of difference against a background of similarity, the normal attitudinal positions for MPs conforming to the male paradigm are themselves gendered. Strong differences between male and female perceptions arose particularly in discussion of female MPs. Some female interviewees explained that their roles differed from those of male colleagues, and that they must specialise. 417 Saddled with this expectation, women might decide that they will be stereotyped regardless of their actions and so make the most of the situation by emphasising their value to other women. In inaugurals all men and most women entering in mid-decade gave greater priority to electorate and party than to their sex. Although party featured strongly in inaugurals, it was downplayed by interviewees. This might have been a conscious decision or it could show that party so permeates the thinking of most MPs that they do not separate

415 The Appendix contains all questions asked of interviewees. In general the thesis refers only to those questions on which differences were apparent.
416 In contrast an Inter-Parliamentary Union survey found that 89% women MPs believed that they had a responsibility to represent the needs and interests of women. In Sweden where over 50% women MPs accepted this responsibility, only 10% men did (Sawer 2002: 8).
417 In a comparable situation female General Practitioners have developed a de facto specialisation for treating women and ‘psychological and social problems in patients’ (Britt 1994: 278, Britt et al 1994). While patient demand has been determinative, stereotyping affects women’s careers by eliminating them from the more ‘entrepreneurial’ activities such as consultancies with medical and pharmaceutical companies (Scutt 1996b: 330). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the practices of female GPs sell slowly because male GPs avoid patient populations with specific expectations that they do not meet.
their personal ideas from those of their parties. This reinforces the findings of those studies that stress ‘mainstreaming’ (Considine and Deutchman 1994a).

Chapter 5 checks the apparent neglect of gender representation by examining issues that interviewees address. Women’s issues can be seen either as ones espoused by female MPs or as ones that impact disproportionately on women. Portfolio allocation, committee membership and speaking records are congruent with either perspective. While it is convenient to refer to ‘women’s issues’ and ‘men’s issues’ the difference is conceptual distinction rather than practical separation. Issues range along a continuum rather than falling into dichotomies. They are neither constants nor monolithic. The definition of ‘women’s issue’ is arbitrary and asymmetrical when participation can place MPs on opposite sides of a debate. When Members speak on an issue, they can do so knowing that their status as a male or female informs their approach so they do not need to mention women or men specifically in order to represent that group. Indeed, males seldom make such specific references.

MPs espouse a huge range of issues, only some of which receive public attention. There was a perception among interviewees that it is possible to characterise the issues adopted by women. It is true that females gave greater priority than males to issues that fall into social portfolios but there is more evidence of fragmentation than of issue packages or clusters. As a perception of stereotypical concentration marginalises MPs and hinders careers, ambitious MPs might stress their approachability on all issues. 418 In contrast to the stereotype however, female interviewees nominated a broader range of issues than males did.

While the sex of the MP is influential, other explanations for high profile advocacy are possible. The impression that males take more interest in law and order issues, for example, could result from women being discouraged from an area where toughness is thought desirable. Males, especially ambitious ones, might shun portfolio interests where softer images are needed. Female Members occupied frontbench positions and served on committees in proportion to their overall presence. 419 The portfolios allocated to female Ministers were stereotypical but in a Labor Government, the factional system limits the Premier’s options in that Caucus chooses the Ministry. In numbers and portfolio allocation, females were treated much as they have been in other governments around Australia (Moon

418 Crossbench MLCs lacking promotion prospects and specific geographical electorates admitted some highly specialised interests, but this could be because they identified opportunities in a neglected niche. 419 Karen Ross (2002: 200) found that some British women MPs felt that they had made some difference to the ways that committees operated. As the committees of the New South Wales Parliament have not received much scholarly attention, an examination of gender in this environment might well produce interesting findings.
and Fountain 1997). Nowhere is there a full time Minister for Women and it must be remembered that Departments of State are administrative categories that are not natural and inevitable but arbitrary and politically determined. The paradigms of government limit opportunities for advancement.

Chapter 6 examined personal experiences that influenced interviewees’ careers. There were discernible differences in general philosophies, political socialisation, reasons for entering parliament, obstacles encountered and assistance received. The most important conclusion was that family responsibilities affect males and females differently. Male interviewees were less conscious of sex-based differences than females were. This might explain why some males do not think that women face special difficulties. Many females denied encountering obstacles, but several later described incidents that seemed to be obstacles. This implies that some women are ‘closet feminists’ (Tremblay 1996). The main exceptions were experienced Labor women who fit Sawer’s category of Sisters (Sawer 1986). More females than males acknowledged assistance from mentors, and Labor women were more likely to acknowledge support from Labor colleagues and peer mentoring.

There were differences in aspects of political socialisation and general philosophies. Males perceived integrity as an important electoral asset while females emphasised stamina. Female interviewees shared with females generally the belief that higher taxes are justified to ensure that government has adequate funds to guarantee a minimum standard of living for disadvantaged people. On balance however, the perceptions of female interviewees mostly resembled those of males. This can be interpreted variously. Kathlene (1994: 561) notes that ‘Gender is a complex and interacting construct representing struggles over the use and definition of power…paths toward implementing change, and resistance by supporters of the status quo’. If women are treated equally, this is an encouraging sign of acceptance. If perceptions of sameness disguise tensions however, female Members might not be able to participate specifically as females. As Sawer’s (1986) typology demonstrates however, there are many models for female behaviour, and only some models are discouraged. A further complication is that each interpretation of sameness applies in different aspects of the parliamentary role, with women accepted as women in some matters and forced to conform in others. Generally, similarities are less obviously interesting than differences, and the latter provide most material discussed in Chapters 4 – 7 above. Because this study examined parliamentary behaviour, it is natural to conclude that socialisation inside the institution is strong, but party influence is so dominant that pre-entry experiences might well homogenise candidates and minimise conflict within parliament.
Relationships, marital status and family responsibilities affect males and females differently. Most interviewees thought that spouses were important personal supporters and that they were crucial if MPs had dependent children. Some males conceptualised spouses as political supporters. Females did not and were critical of male colleagues who involved wives in this way. Family responsibilities, particularly involving dependent children, were perceived as a problem for females but usually not for males. All acknowledged the pressures that the career places on family relationships. There was a general perception that the roles were changing as more spouses had their own careers, but while traditional perceptions can be exploited to disadvantage some Members it is likely that they will survive. 420

Chapter 7 found that male and female interviewees saw differently the role of parliament and the ways that MPs participate. More males regarded parliament and the work of the MP as generally important. The differences were small and applied in only some areas, but they reflect different experiences of the institution. Males were more idealistic about qualities likely to secure promotion. The slightly more cynical view shown by females reflects a perception that males are promoted before more capable females. Males were more comfortable dealing with opponents and more satisfied with services, staff and the salary, but females perceived their comfort levels as high in most areas around parliament. Females were less satisfied with the salary and conditions. Perhaps the psychic salary compensates males more. Males placed greater importance on the role of the MP and valued community respect more highly and some females commented that males regarded power as an aphrodisiac.

Females set high standards for themselves. Although they go close to attaining those standards, they are not self-satisfied. Female MPs might undertake more of the tasks that males delegate to secretaries and so develop a broader range of skills. 421 More females thought that parliament was effective legislating but less so at checking the executive. Interestingly, females rated their own effectiveness as legislators lower than males rated theirs. Rating qualities in a colleague, females noted the importance of stamina and a sense of humour, and were more impressed by courteous behaviour. Males were more content with their own effectiveness and preparedness.

420 The stereotypes are that the public sphere is masculine and the domestic feminine. Historian Helen Irving (1996: 2-3) refers to 1890s attempts by women to ‘think of themselves as legitimately political’. Suffragist Maybanke Anderson attempted the ‘transition from the domestic to the public woman’ and her newspaper Woman’s Voice mirrored ‘her own life’s blend of the public and the domestic’ (Roberts 1996: 21, 31). The blend is different for each woman and is slowly becoming an issue for men.

421 Sandra Nori (Henderson 1999: 157) says that women MPs play social worker towards men: ‘They expect you to sit and listen to a proposal being outlined for an hour or so, something you could have dealt with in five minutes. Male MPs expect you to mother them’. When male and female colleagues meet without secretaries present, personal skills could become more important.
Speaking in the chambers is a basic parliamentary activity, but males and females participate differently. Analysis of interruptions shows that females find participation more difficult, and also that the upper house provides the friendlier environment in which to speak. The Assembly favours MPs with loud voices, a theatrical flair and a good knowledge of formal rules of debate. Interviewees thought that women’s communication advantages lay in listening rather than speaking but lack of a record of presence in the chamber means that it is difficult to discover evidence of listening. Hansard’s inability to record appearance, actions and non-verbal behaviour makes invisible important aspects of the participation of males and females. In a television age, understandings of appropriate gesture can be crucial politically, and these are not gender-neutral. Observation revealed the effects of crowding in the Assembly and assisted interpretation of the record of debates by adding important contextual data. Position in government or opposition is vital and there are tactical reasons that MPs choose to speak or remain silent.

Participation has other gender-specific limitations. Aspects of the visual including appearance, dress and the gaze are exploited to intimidate opponents. Such techniques are not used exclusively by males against females and not all males use them, but females receive special attention. Both parliamentary conventions and unparliamentary behaviour are used to silence some MPs. Outsiders such as Opposition Members are particularly vulnerable and they are occasionally ejected from the chamber. Women interrupt less frequently but are more likely to be disciplined. Women prefer a more conversational and less formal debate than that allowed by Standing Orders and seldom use unparliamentary terms. As women as a group have not adopted these dominant practices unreservedly, they cannot be characterised as being fully acculturated. While these practices remain normal behaviour however, women will not be fully accepted as insiders. Their reluctance to adopt some behaviour remains an implicit criticism of the norms, and male colleagues remain inclined to see them as different and treat them with suspicion. This influences perceptions about the ways that women relate to the institution, and about positions and tasks that are deemed suitable for them.

The finding that families affect males and females differently confirms data from other studies. The finding that female interviewees did not give a strong priority to representing a segment of society means that they do not conform to the expectations of some advocates of women’s presence. This is not necessarily a matter of choice. Males do not see themselves as overtly representing male constituents, and as males have established the paradigms, it is understandable if a desire to represent one’s sex is regarded as aberrant. As Whip (1991)
concluded, a change in the sex balance in Parliament does not necessarily produce changes in political practices such as representation.

**Section 8.3 Conclusions about gender**

Gender cannot be explained entirely by reference to male-female differences. As Kathlene (1994: 561) argues ‘gender, like class, is a fundamental category of political analysis, not simply another independent variable representing biological sex’. Accurate interpretation of differences in perception demands an understanding of their contexts, both political and scholarly. Then it is possible to understand why some expressed differences are more important than others.

Chapter 3 examined the specific political environment of the period. Several interviewees regarded media reporting of parliament as negative, and there are particular problems for the images of females. These include a cynical view of the political process, trivialization of the work of backbench Members and especially MLCs, attacks on alleged ‘perks’, sexualisation of MPs, suspicion of female leaders, masculine metaphors, and campaigns by male ‘shock-jocks’ against issues likely to be espoused by feminists. Female interviewees were more keenly aware of these problems, but generally accepted some responsibility for any shortcomings in their image.

The ascendancy of the State Labor Party and the strength of the Premier created specific conditions within which MPs operated. The dominance of Labor’s conservative right wing might have retarded female advancement. The branch was slow to adopt effective affirmative action policies, the Left has been relatively powerless, and Labor women have found some problems with the Party’s tradition of mateship. A perceived ‘gender gap’ in support has tied Labor’s mainly male electoral strategists to a natural constituency that is predominantly male. Gendered behaviour is encouraged by some aspects of Labor’s approach to the robust Legislative Assembly and by aspects of the Premier’s leadership style. Predictably, most complaints about parliamentary behaviour came from Opposition Members and the sex of Opposition females was an additional avenue for attacks on them. On the other hand, some Government females criticised the party’s leadership on some issues, and an Opposition female expressed admiration of the Premier’s skills. While these were the specific features of the period however, there is no evidence that another Government and another Premier would create markedly different gender conditions. A gender critique inevitably produces expressions of power imbalance.
Examination of dimensions of time and space prompt other questions about the culture. The period (1995-99) saw increased focus on the sex of the MP. This extra attention brings advantages and disadvantages to females, but affects males little. The period began with the 1995 election campaign in which ‘gender’ issues were pitched in specific ways. Women’s policy achieved some prominence but law and order was emphasised and there were allegations of sexual harassment. Female interviewees were less convinced that harsher penalties would deter crime and Labor’s Left clashed with the party leadership over civil liberties issues. Interviewees said that the shortage of time restricted their activities and there is evidence that the passing of time modifies perceptions.

Some aspects of the spaces in and around parliament have gender implications. The environs and architecture raise questions of security, access, working conditions, facilities and routines. Spatial factors explain some of the behavioural differences observed between the chambers. When asked about comfort however, females were at least as comfortable as males in most areas except the chambers. Interestingly, female MLCs were no more comfortable in their chamber than female MLAs were in theirs.

Most scholarly inquiries into gender begin by investigating differences between male and female Members. This can direct attention disproportionately toward females because their relative rarity makes them convenient subjects. 422 This concentration can impose an additional burden on female MPs. Thomas (1994) for example, suggests that female MPs fit one of four possible combinations on a matrix of reformist and adaptive attitudes to legislative procedures and products. They can be: reformist towards procedures and reformist towards products, reformist towards procedures but adaptive towards products, adaptive towards procedures but reformist towards products, adaptive towards procedures and adaptive towards products. While this approach has some utility, it depends upon a perception that female MPs are outsiders. As the typology is not applied to males, it can perpetuate a narrow perception of women’s roles. It assumes also that MPs can participate in any manner that they choose, but much of the research in this study casts serious doubt on this assumption.

Scholarly concentration on female MPs can impose conceptual limitations that are not imposed on males, and these can affect how they are perceived. 423 If the sex of the MP is

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422 First they are fewer and so it is tempting to think that it is possible to cover them all. Secondly, they seem to form a coherent group. Thirdly, their dress makes them physically visible. Fourthly, their presence should produce some challenges to the status quo and so they are likely to be involved in interesting incidents. Fifthly, most gender research is conducted by feminist scholars.

423 In reality, female MPs should be able to adopt a variety of attitudes to their roles. Clover Moore (Henderson 1999: 147) has described the frustrations of being a ‘loner MP’ because as a ‘sociable
regarded as significant for females but not for males, then it is dangerous for women but not
for men. This was a theme of the research. Interviewees associated the term ‘gender’ with
sex, and generally assumed that gender is of interest mainly to women and only the feminists
among them. 424 It is difficult to define ‘feminist’ when the term changes over time, when the
meaning of the term in the Parliament might be unique and when it is mired in ideology. On
the other hand, the behaviour of males is seldom categorized using gender criteria and labels
such as ‘masculinist’.

Gender features infrequently in the thinking of interviewees. Males rarely consider it.
Females think about gender more often than males do but see it mainly in terms of sexist
behaviour exhibited towards them. Females do not raise gender issues often, perhaps because
identification as a feminist creates the dilemmas described above. It is mostly women who are
disadvantaged by gendered behaviours, but it should not be assumed that all women are
disadvantaged to the same extent, or that men are advantaged to the same extent. Women’s
presence does not necessarily improve behaviour but can expose, challenge and cause
modification in prevailing patterns of advantage-seeking behaviour. Adaptations forced on the
system by the demands of women make gender more subtle. Female MPs are compelled to
seek acceptance as MPs according to a male paradigm, and yet everyday processes are
determined by the discriminatory assumption that they are essentially women and will
continue to be judged as such. Conflicts within and between these two contradictory demands
produce the incidents and the perceptions that have been the focus of this study. In some
respects the parliament is a fit place for people of either sex, but much of the negative
behaviour designed to score political points has a gender dimension.

Males do not face this dilemma because there is no obvious tension between being present as
a male and as a general representative. Women must either choose to be present specifically
as women and risk stereotyping, or emphasise that they are first and foremost MPs and
conform to a supposedly neuter paradigm established over decades by male MPs. Whether
they succeed or fail they are criticised. If they are effective then they are derided as ‘iron
women’. If they do not adapt to the paradigm, then they are denigrated and the failure is
transferred to all women MPs.

being’ she would prefer to be ‘in the women’s social movement’. Whether this matters more to women
is unclear, but groups dedicated to advancing women’s careers often emphasise networking. On the
other hand Elizabeth Kernohan (Liberal, Camden) claims not ‘to play women’s games’ (Henderson
1999: 149): ‘People treat you as you expect to be treated. Nobody treats me as second-class’.
424 Rosenthal’s (1994) research in the USA suggests that women’s representation is an issue only for
women, and only for some women. These are the generation of women who grew to maturity in the
1960s and 1970s and among them it is only the feminists anyway.
Some research obscures this dilemma by asking questions that seem to be suitable for all MPs but which contain male assumptions. Female MPs only are engaged in a constant process of identification and a perennial but fluctuating debate about their status. It is understandable if many female MPs do not accept this additional burden enthusiastically. Every study of MP behaviour confronts this unequal situation, but few researchers acknowledge the problem. This study made some observations about sex-based differences but aimed to move beyond biologically determined and culturally determined essentialism. To do this, it avoided the concentration on females and asked questions about behaviour. This is one reason that the interviews were supplemented using other methods.

Role perceptions are ideals that belong in one world while behaviour belongs in another. MPs are constantly forced to explain or rationalise their behaviour. This is not deception or self-deception, but it is a unique discourse. Describing one’s role perceptions is an intrinsically political activity and so resembles other activities such as speaking in debates, dealing with the media and receiving constituents. Thus isolating and analysing perceptions is difficult. Faithfully reported interviewee responses are the terms of a specific political discourse. Faithfully reported interviewee responses are the terms of a specific political discourse. 425

The relationship between visible and invisible cultures remains mysterious (Smith, R. 1999), but this thesis has illuminated that relationship by placing the cultures together and studying their interaction.

Sawer’s (1986) study notes that women bring to parliament not monolithic but pluralistic gender perspectives. This study agrees that the role perceptions of women MPs vary widely, with lines of difference reflecting the variables of Chamber, Party and Date of Entry. While it is dangerous to generalise about the type of woman likely to adopt a feminist stance, among these interviewees being an MLC, Labor, and entering comparatively early are characteristics that correlate with Sawer’s ‘Sister’ category.

In an environment where most interviewees reject the idea that women colleagues are treated differently a gender critique is not valued highly. There is little evidence that male MPs are conscious or critical of gender, any more than say, male judges are. As males have established general norms of parliamentary behaviour, it is reasonable to assume that they have constructed the attitudes in the specific area of gender awareness. Women MPs avoid

425 The terms are reflected in metaphors. Preston-Stanley knew that her reference to ‘old women’ among males could offend. In 1995 it might have offended women rather than men. While this study has tried to identify Mothers, Individualist and Sisters as described by Sawer (1986), many other allusions have been encountered in parliament and media. Often these have reflected masculine subcultures such as sports. Interviewees referred to ‘prima donnas’ and ‘the Colosseum’.
adopting a stance that threatens to marginalise them. Moderate criticism of overtly sexist behaviours that disadvantage women of all parties equally is acceptable and gender role critiques that benefit females and males are welcome. More radical critiques of systemic or cultural factors, critiques that are likely to be used not by all women but only by those feminists who are ‘Sisters’, are regarded as eccentric, or ignored. In this context, Meredith Burgmann’s ‘Ernie’ awards, for example, pose little threat, and are parodied by the ‘Merediths’ (Burgmann 2000). This has implications for the data because it suggests that interviewees’ statements might conform to a safe, stereotyped orthodoxy.

Labor women are most likely to pursue feminist issues, but their interest is assured only when they can see partisan advantage in that approach. They are likely to identify sexism when it is exhibited by political opponents, but not when it is caused by their own side while it is in Government. Clearly, there are important differences among women just as there are among men. The concepts of ‘male MP’ and ‘female MP’ are not overly useful as descriptions of political cleavage when behaviour is determined so strongly by party, faction and ‘fraction’. As Labor women seek to ‘mainstream’ issues, then they place most energy into debates in the closed world of caucus. Sawer’s study suggested that only ‘Sisters’ threaten ingrained gender roles but in this Parliament existing cultures and gender roles were secure.

While numerous MP role typologies conceal male assumptions, scholarship has not identified specific types among male MPs. This reinforces the notion that they are normal MPs. Interviewee 24, a male, suggested that older ‘chauvinist’ Members would retire soon. This hinted at the possibility that some males are aware of the operations of gender while others are not. The polarization between those who are gender aware and those who reject gender awareness is a categorization that can be applied to both males and females. Those who reject gender critiques might be described by Sawer’s ‘individualist’ tag, and this is a dominant type.

Gender aware MPs are powerless to implement change and so exploitation of gender processes continues unchecked and often unremarked. There is some rhetoric about ‘family friendly’ sitting hours, but the ‘blood on the floor’ style remains unchallenged. One interviewee remembered the 1978 Parliament as an ‘old boys’ club. By 1998 it had changed into a young man’s club. The conventions of gender relations have changed, but they still have subjects and objects and produce ‘in’ and ‘out’ genders.

The experiences of women as outsiders illuminate the gendered nature of parliaments. Some feminists have attacked the notion that it is enough to add women and stir to see what happens
but Bacchi and Eveline (1996: 79) note that in most cases, women are added without stirring anyway. As Sawer (2002: 9) observes of the Federal Parliament, being ‘identified as advocates for women or belonging to the sisterhood’ can have ‘career threatening implications’. The addition of women to the New South Wales Parliament barely disturbs the status quo. The decade of the nineties has seen a greater working out of the position of female MPs as it has of female members of many occupations. Where once women MPs were seen as pioneers, their efforts to be regarded as normal have resulted in acceptance of their positions as MPs, but not necessarily as ‘women MPs’ per se. Just as recent research raises doubts about the notion of a female managerial style (Wacjman 1999), there is little evidence that there is a discernible way of being a specifically female MP. Most role models for aspiring parliamentarians are male, and the criteria for success in the occupation are predominantly masculine. Ironically, it is harder and riskier now for women MPs to excite concern about their positions when formal barriers to participation by individual women have been removed.

While the presence of female MPs was expected to provide challenges that expose gendered behaviour, it appears that they are inclined to consider problem signs carefully before reacting. MPs generally have modified behaviour not so much to prevent sexism but to prevent sexism becoming an issue. This does not mean that the research is useless. Rather, the discovery of the low key reactions of women MPs provides some evidence of gendered behaviour: by passing as insignificant or positively defending, actions that seem to be embedded with gender, they illustrate one way that the parliamentary culture is gendered. The thesis began by asking whether gender could be defined tightly before undertaking the study and concludes that gender can be understood only after intensive study of the data. Exchanges over obviously or potentially gendered behaviours and perceptions constitute the description of gender in the Parliament. That is, the answer to the question of whether the Parliament is gendered is best explained by describing events.

The responses of interviewees are not just evidence of gender in role perceptions but are part of the gendered behaviour itself. Similarly, behaviours described here after observation are not symptoms of something less tangible but they are expressions of gender. In most cases these behaviours, such as the Premier’s comment about Chikarovski’s voice, draw a response. The nature of the ensuing debate provides a description of gender in operation. Chikarovski’s reply in the media was reactive and defensive, but it was also a use of gender. This study found MPs referring to boys’ games and women’s games. Gender is a serious game played in the Parliament. As Butler (1990) might put it: these are local gender performances.
Section 8.4 Conclusions about methodology

As parliament is a human institution with a distinctive culture a sociological approach is appropriate for studying the behaviour of MPs. The project has drawn on feminist scholarship which attempts to ensure that methods have minimal gender bias. The research emphasised qualitative methods centering on interviews and included examination of relevant documents and observation of behaviour for triangulation. The strengths of the threefold approach should be reiterated.

Planning the interviews required development of an instrument and establishment of principles of interpretation. In the pilot study one ex-MP warned that interviewees might be less than honest. There is no certain way to judge responses, and so it is important to report faithfully that ‘interviewees said…’ rather than ‘MPs believe…’. There are indications that interviewees gave honest responses. They were not conscripted. Some seventy requests were needed to secure the thirty-four interviews. Examining answers together provided a check on extreme contradictions. Interviewee 4 worried about a diagnosis of schizophrenia. In most cases response times to questions were very quick. Interviewees were invited to participate in a project about role perceptions in general and were told about the specific purpose at the end of the interview. By conducting all interviews personally, I was able to show MPs that I was familiar with proceedings in their Chamber and was able to compare body language and intonations.

Interviewees appeared to behave naturally. The situations were relaxed. MPs were welcoming and some produced family photographs and news clippings, cups of coffee and copies of inaugurals. Interviewees added questions or comments where they thought this important and some exercised the ‘no answer’ option. A few changed answers frequently and several wanted questions clarified. Overall, inconsistencies in the data are rare and the interviews included some survey questions that elicited quantifiable data.

It was correct to concentrate on backbenchers. Interviewee 16 described the backbencher as ‘the lowest of the low’, and this shows that they are distinct. An interviewee’s warning that Ministers would not be candid implies some confidence that backbenchers would be. The decision to interview males and females was centrally important, but so was the decision to

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426 The empirical method used here differs from the psychoanalytical approach of some biographical studies that ponder early formative influences on political leaders (see Brett 1997).
427 Four declined to nominate the colleagues they most respect and four retracted a remark or requested that it be ‘not for publication’.
balance the chambers, parties and dates of entry. Males and females approached the interview process slightly differently. Women responded more quickly to requests for interviews. The first five interviewees were female as were eight of the first ten. This need not necessarily mean that they are more conscientious or reflective about their roles. Interviewee 23 reported completing ‘hundreds’ of questionnaires about being a female MP and this is consistent with scholarly interest in the abnormal. A set of questions (C:xxix) enabled interviewees to compare female with male MPs\(^{428}\) and in total 24 interviewees agreed (7 strongly) that ‘women are more approachable’ while 22 agreed (6 strongly) that ‘women are more conscientious’.\(^{429}\) The sex distribution is important. Fourteen female interviewees agreed that women MPs ‘are more conscientious’ while only eight males did. Six males strongly disagreed. This shows that female interviewees believe in the conscientiousness of women MPs more strongly than male counterparts do. This might lead women to set higher ideals for themselves and this includes a determination to assist research.\(^{430}\) The average time for interviews of males was slightly longer, possibly because of the sex of the interviewer (male) or different rapport.\(^{431}\) Perhaps males take slightly longer to say things. Perhaps they are more conscientious or less efficient.

The study identified male-female differences in perception (Section 8.2 above) but showed the significance of other variables including chamber, date of entry and party. The Council’s culture was different to that of the Assembly. Some observers argue that upper houses are nuisances.\(^{432}\) MLCs have distinct perceptions of their representative roles. As they are elected by the whole State MLCs adopt specialised constituencies. Interviewee 20 for example saw herself representing unionists, women, prisoners and Aboriginal people. The subcultures in the two chambers are distinct and a comprehensive study needs to include both, and to avoid disguising the different chambers to which subjects belong. In interviews some MLCs referred to ‘our house’ but no MLA did.\(^{433}\) MLAs tended to speak of ‘the house’ and

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\(^{428}\) Eleven strongly agreed that women are ‘better negotiators’ and ‘better listeners’, five strongly agreed that women ‘prepare better’ and ‘concentrate on different issues’, three that women are ‘more loyal to party’, one that they are ‘more ruthless’ and one that they ‘are better speakers’. No interviewee strongly agreed that ‘women are more ambitious’.

\(^{429}\) In a study of British Labor women MPs, one-third of interviewees agreed that constituents are more likely to prefer to talk to women (Childs 2002: 149).

\(^{430}\) Thomas (1994: 142) found that female USA legislators believed that they were more ‘thorough and detail oriented in planning’.

\(^{431}\) Average time for females was 53.3 minutes and for males was 57.3 minutes. Ten females were below the overall average and nine males were. Females ranged from 30 to 90 minutes and males from 30 to 95 minutes.

\(^{432}\) Some interviewees (13, 22) suggested that the ‘disproportionate power’ of the Council crossbench should be curtailed by changing the electoral system to ‘increase the quota but others (7, 17, 18, 19, 21, 27, 31) saw benefit in the ‘balance of power’ situation. Following the 1999 election when the increase in crossbench numbers to 13 forced rearrangement of the furniture, major parties proposed reforms.

\(^{433}\) This arose in several contexts, for example when MLCs needed to explain that the gag (Question C:xxvii) is not used in ‘our house’.
‘my’ electorate, suggesting exclusivity and individuality. Presiding Officers refer to MLCs by name (e.g. ‘the Honourable Helen Sham-Ho’), but to MLAs by electorate (e.g. ‘the member for Parramatta’). Interviewee 11 said that the questionnaire seemed to be pitched more at MLAs than MLCs. Members of the two chambers hold distinct role perceptions and there are observable differences in behaviour.

A more polite tone of debate could result from the better sex-balance in the Council but other explanations are possible. Minor parties moderate government-opposition conflict and committee systems provide opportunities for cooperation. With only three Ministers present Council Question Time was less boisterous. The Premier and Opposition Leader sit in the Assembly where the main political contest occurs, and this might explain why the Assembly Press Gallery is well attended during Question Time but the later Council Question Time is ignored. Alternatively, rather than resulting from the calmer atmosphere, the comparative absence of journalists contributes to the more moderate behaviour of Members.

It need not be that the greater presence of women in the Council actively creates a difference. Rather it is possible that women’s presence is allowed to make a difference there just as women have been allowed more ready entry to the Council. Assembly females are under greater pressure to conform to party expectations of good local Members and loyal partisans than they are to impose themselves as women. Being successful requires traits they see exhibited daily by leaders and until 1999 the image of a parliamentary leader was masculine.

The chamber difference highlights the importance of concepts of representation. Members tied to diverse electorates adopt a more agent like approach to their roles, while Members with statewide electorates tend to adopt specialised interests. The position of the MLC is more secure as long as party endorsement is maintained. The MLA is more likely to face electoral

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434 MLAs are less aware of what happens in the Council than MLCs are of proceedings in the Assembly. Much Council business is determined by the progress of legislation in the lower house or by intensive political campaigns set around events that are considered important there. MLCs have their only offices in the Parliament, whereas MLAs have electorate offices as well. Interviewee 20 said that MLAs were seldom there and did not need so much office space.

435 The styles of the Assembly and Council are also different. Jan Burnswoods noted that females monopolised one night’s debate (Hansard Council 18 October 1995: 1933), and while this is unusual, the greater female proportional presence there could help explain differences. Speech patterns in the Federal Parliament’s Chambers differ (Peters 1994).

436 The heat dissipates when questions are referred to an appropriate lower house Minister for attention. Television reporters tend to file their daily stories around 4 p.m., the time of the Council’s Question Time. In 2001, the Council moved Question Time to noon on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

437 When the Council considered a motion to expel Arena the galleries were full. Arena made an emotional speech and the President called her to order, reminding her to address the Chair not the galleries (Hansard Council 11 November 1997: 1407-8). The President was a Liberal.
defeat than disendorsement and faces elections more frequently. So the MLC is freer to pursue issues on behalf of statewide social segments. This is reflected in interview data as well as in documentary evidence. While the data does not establish conclusively that MLCs attempt to represent sex or gender, it shows that MLAs tend to reject any notion of representation that cuts across and competes with their commitments to electorate and party.

Generational differences are important for understanding the attitudes of women and men to the roles of women in politics. Generations of women have different attitudes to feminism and generations of feminists differ in their approaches. Interviewee 15 recalled that his youth was a difficulty in the minds of some. Another (21) advised candidates to start ‘young’ by which he meant get in before you are fifty. He joked that he was suitable for a career in China’s gerontocracy. So age is relative but remains relevant. If rapid turnover is the trend, then youth should not be considered a disadvantage. 439 Historically, it has been assumed that women are likely to be older when they enter because they raise families first. If this pattern persisted but the general age of entry fell, then women would be disadvantaged. The situation is changing however, as between 1994 and 1998 several younger women entered including Meagher, Harrison, Seaton and Tebbutt. While the last MLA to enter the Fifty-first Parliament, Lorna Stone, remarked that it seemed late for her to be embarking on another career, generally, the women elected in mid-decade were younger. Beamer had new twins. Seaton was pregnant when preselected. Allan gave birth as did Tebbutt during the next parliament. 440

The role of MP changes continually. In his valedictory speech (Hansard Assembly 25 November 1998: 10667) Mr Schipp (Wagga Wagga) expressed disappointment about the ‘division between a lot of the newer members’ and said that ‘in the early days, it was much more of a fraternity, and that should be re-created’. There is no indication that he meant to imply that the breakdown in relations was attributable to the loss of the opportunity to engage in masculine bonding.

The influence of party emerges strongly from the data. 441 Differences between the the perceptions of interviewees of different party were often more marked than those between males and females, especially regarding issues traditionally associated with the ideological

439 Collins (2000) reckons that average tenure for an MP is seven years.
440 Stone lost her seat at the 1999 election, so her new career lasted a little over one year (December 1997 – March 1999). New federal female MPs have shown that politics is not just for ‘empty nesters’. When Michelle O’Byrne noted that she and Tanya Plibersek were expecting babies, she said that this was a by-product of having a youthful Labor Party (Daily Telegraph 1 November 2000).
441 However, some Government interviewees noted lack of consultation between Cabinet and caucus. This raises two important considerations. First, the influence of the executive is so strong that had Ministers been interviewed, yet another variable would have complicated the data. Secondly, it dashes the expectation that the party room might fare better than the chambers in constraining the executive.
divide such as trade union influence. Perhaps more significantly for a study on gender, in many cases where there was little evidence of difference between the perceptions or behaviour of males and females, the uniformity reflects the influence of party as a stronger determinant. In this regard, it was important to note that the party with more women was in Government. Some works on women’s issues suggest that real advocacy occurs in party rooms and that parties have willingly ‘mainstreamed’ women’s concerns (Considine and Deutchman 1994a) but interviewees’ expressions of frustration cast doubt on these conclusions. 442 Labor women are more likely to be encouraged by their party to pursue women’s issues through legislation and policies and programs, and Labor Left women are more likely to adopt a consistent feminist stance across issues. Older parties seem to be slower accepting women, but all larger organisations are resistant to change. The organisational problems surrounding preselection are different in Labor and the other parties. Discipline creates different problems in Government and Opposition.

In her study of British Labor women MPs, Sarah Childs (2002: 151-2) observed the importance of the ‘intersection of gender and party identities’. While the Government women in Childs’ study thought of the intersection in positive terms, the evidence in New South Wales is suggestive of a collision. In terms of creating what Childs called ‘safe spaces’ for the participation of female MPs, parties might have positive effects on women’s constituency work but there is little evidence that they advance women’s parliamentary participation.

Interview data must be placed into perspective using other techniques. Problems of circularity in perceptions and of false consciousness are ameliorated by examining records and observing behaviour. It would be very difficult to appreciate the reception afforded Preston-Stanley’s inaugural speech for example, had not observers written their impressions of the writhing and the squirming and the reasons for the laughter. Observation and document study complement one another well. Availability of different viewpoints is a reminder that the scholar should be present for observation. 443 A future project could use a more systematic method to ensure

442 McAllister and Studlar (1992: 402) found that ‘women political candidates in Australia represent first their political parties, secondarily the voters in their constituencies and least of the three their gender’. This study broadly agrees that party is an extremely strong determinant of behaviour and attitudes but it does not attempt to quantify the strength of the difference. Nor is it possible to establish whether party influences behaviour directly or through general attitudes to politics.

443 In the Assembly Gallery (24 October 1995), a teacher accompanying students used hand signs to communicate her understanding of the proceedings that she could hear. The students nodded, absorbed. During Question Time an incident required the teacher to look at proceedings. The Premier baited the Opposition who complained loudly. Mr Carr stood back from the table to await silence. The Leader of Opposition Business accused the Premier of signalling the Speaker to intervene. Until then, the written record made no reference to the incident. The teacher made more signs and the students tittered audibly, perhaps unaware of the volume of their laughter. It is possible to perform parliamentary duties without vision. A blind MP David Hunter held the seat of Croydon (later Ashfield) for the United
that observation was less random. On the other hand, viewing Question Time from the public
gallery revealed behaviour in its realistic political setting. There is potential for future
research to systematically examine non-verbal behaviour. Examination of primary sources has
provided important information. A clear outcome of the study is that scholars must acquaint
themselves with *Hansard*’s conventions. Reading the parliamentary record produces only a
partial understanding unless these conventions are appreciated. One way of ensuring
confidence in this exercise is to observe parliament in action for a period and then to read the
*Hansard* record of the period. It was found that some conventions have specific impact on the
reader’s ability to understand aspects of gender. The three methods are used here in a loose
mixture. A future scholar should attempt a genuine synthesis but a unified methodology will
require careful compilation and it will be precarious to implement. ⁴⁴⁴

There are some important findings regarding interviews. First, there are reasons to doubt that
role perceptions either reflect behaviour in an unqualified way or translate into behaviour
consistently. Secondly, the search for archetypes such as Mothers and Sisters is a useful
device but the situation of most MPs is too complex to distil into this form. Thirdly, data
needs to be reported as perceptions of a specific group of interviewees at a particular moment,
prompted by set questions. Any generalisation must be made carefully.

Examining role perceptions is an interesting way to approach the problem of understanding
gender but its value is epistemological rather than ontological. MPs make decisions on the
spot and multiple, conflicting perceptions are involved. While these decisions are restrained
by many factors, attitudes to whips reveal that MPs retain some autonomy.

Australia Party and the Liberals from 1940-76 (Radi, Spearitt and Hinton 1979). The disability
presented obvious difficulties and he has been the only blind Member. Generally the visual is
acknowledgement of the visual element. The Speaker of the Commons ruled that Members could not
hold up graphs because they should be articulate enough to do without visual aids. Conventions make
Members reluctant to use visual material. When Jim Samios referred to a newspaper picture of the
Premier and Governor, Jan Burnswoods asked that Samios ‘table’ the document. This is a common
demand placed on Members who refer to a letter or article. It demonstrates the item’s existence and
gives Members access to the material. Tabling incorporates material in *Hansard*. It is common practice
to incorporate a Minister’s ‘second reading’ speech. The President threw the emphasis back onto the
verbal: ‘Order! The photograph is readily available in the Library. It would be a burden on the
resources of the Parliament to have it incorporated in *Hansard*’ (*Hansard Council* 6 June 1996: 2602).
⁴⁴⁴ MPs could be observed in action, and then in an interview, be asked to interpret their behaviour and
relate it to documentary evidence. This method would require testing and the addition of a control
group alongside the study’s subjects. Such a study would be more threatening to MPs and would be
more interventionist, because it would have greater potential to modify behaviour.
Section 8.5 Hindsight and foresight

When asked about doing things differently in hindsight Interviewee 17 said:

‘I can’t see what I could have done differently. Maybe the only thing I could have done
was not get involved in politics at all. What you have to come to terms with is whether
you should be trying to influence a policy which has an impact on the whole population
or devote yourself to a small target group with which you can interact on a personal
level. That might be more satisfying than doing the objective policy thing with its
attendant frustrations’.

Interest in women’s participation as MPs peaked in the period 1994-1996, but it is waning.
Women’s numbers were increasing but it is unclear whether this was attributable to advocacy,
to general social trends or to politically cynical factors. 445 The notion of critical mass is of
dubious value. As historical moments have unique gender characteristics it would be difficult
to construct a study that could isolate the effects of the sex ratios. There is little evidence in
this study that Labor women, who had greater numbers than their opponents, had things
easier. 446

In the 1999 State Election, three female MLAs lost or vacated seats and four gained them,
bringing the total to 17 and the all time roll to 30. There were 19 new males. Two women
replaced two others as Ministers. A case for more women MPs per se was not made to the
electorate and the results cast doubts on arguments that a natural increase would make
affirmative action unnecessary. 447 Before the 1999 election there was some media
speculation that the Premier’s perceived lack of appeal among female poll respondents was
important but the same was said in 1995. 448 Although there was a female Opposition Leader
the women’s vote does not seem to have been important. 449

In the 1999 campaign, the media criticised Chikarovski and the Opposition consistently.
Media were pre-occupied with appearances, personal lives and leadership qualities such as
toughness. While most coverage was not overtly sexist, it might well have been motivated by

445 There is an argument that the first Colonies to enfranchise women wanted to counter radical male
working class movements or achieve a ‘yes’ vote in Federation referenda (Oldfield 1992: 212). Parties
might endorse women candidates solely for public relations advantages.
446 A study of New Zealand MPs suggests that critical mass should be interpreted as a proportion of
women in the government party rather than in the parliament as a whole (Grey 2002: 22).
447 Carlton (Australian 18 May 1993) estimated that on current trends women would achieve equality
448 Carr took the Government from a notional 46 seats to 55 in the 93 seat Assembly.
449 Commenting on Carr’s scholarly image, journalist Mike Steketee said that Carr’s continuing success
shows that voters ‘no longer expect their leaders to be like them’ (Australian 16 September 2000).
an aversion formed earlier to Chikarovski. Two months before assuming the Liberal leadership, Chikarovski was highly critical of media portrayals of women in politics and declared that she would not perform as editors and other commentators demanded. This might well have been interpreted as a challenge and might explain the way that tests were continually applied to Chikarovski. If that was the motivation behind the critical coverage then it is difficult to conclude that there was no gender element involved.

It is dangerous to assert that a higher ratio of female MPs will improve behaviour. It is difficult to define good behaviour and interviewees did not say that females behave better. Indeed the popular perception that women are superior can lead to the imposition of additional responsibilities. Neither review of the relevant documents nor observation shows that females per se are superior. Certainly, much faulty behaviour is attributable to some males, and their example might establish norms but there is no dichotomy. Perhaps females, as a group, as relative newcomers from outside, would be more ready than males to adopt other, less confrontational approaches, but this has not been proven here. Female MPs do not constitute a distinct ‘group’ for many practical purposes but remain partisans.

For every example of women co-operating there is an example of men doing so, and an example of women attacking other women. The idea that there is something amiss with this situation arises mainly because assumptions of female difference and superiority have been accepted. The case for a better balanced assembly should not be mistaken for a case for a ‘better’ politics. When it suits the parliamentary leadership, women are different. The quality of that difference is constructed to advantage and is presented as a defect in enemies and as a strength in friends. The penultimate word in the Parliament’s Hansard (Council 3 December 1998: 11155) went to Helen Sham-Ho who stressed her admiration for Virginia Chadwick: ‘you have been the greatest role model for all women who aspire to be members of Parliament’. The last word went to President Chadwick who simply expressed thanks to Sham-Ho for her words. Interestingly, Chadwick was retiring. Sham-Ho had been a Liberal colleague until her resignation from the party. As an Independent she accepted Labor’s nomination to secure the Presidency when Willis stood down (Hansard Council 29 June 1998: 6713-20). Relations with former colleagues were strained.

450 Meredith Burgmann (Sydney Morning Herald 12 December 2000) notes that many discussions of community values assume that women are responsible for binding community together. 451 Reforms that seem to be particularly relevant to the participation of women are matters of complexity. Dorothy Isaksen (Hansard Council 3 December 1998: 11136) attributed improved working hours to an undertaking given by House Leader Michael Egan ‘to the crossbench’.
Women MPs generally do not make ‘comebacks’ but some males do. This suggests a different attitude to politics. Perhaps the taste of parliament deters women from wanting to go back but gives men an appetite for it. It reinforces the societal stereotype that mistakes are tolerated as a normal part of male adventurism while parties tend to give women only one chance. It helps explain why many women employ extra-parliamentary avenues. 452 Perhaps Preston-Stanley considered males slow learners. During her one term in Parliament (1925-27) Preston-Stanley introduced the ‘Guardianship of Infants Bill’ after adopting the case of a mother in a custody dispute. The Bill lapsed after one reading. In 1932, her play ‘Whose Child’ was performed publicly and at interval, the Justice Minister promised to legislate. Many male MPs serve only one term and few would claim to have achieved all of their aims while in Parliament, but in returning to the female tradition of extra-parliamentary activism Preston-Stanley might have taken a course that has been forced on females historically. In the nineteenth century gender forced the legal exclusion of some persons from parliament on the grounds of their sex. When legal barriers were removed, female candidates still faced considerable discouragement. When women were elected their participation was hindered by masculine norms in the system. Parliament in the middle 1990s retained some ‘sacrosanct’ masculine traditions and there was still some disadvantage for MPs who could not or would not adopt these privileged forms. While gender should not be conflated with sex, the most obvious danger of these traditions is for females. The topic has proved to be a valuable one. The area has been little studied and it contains rich potential for further research.

452 Women might also be quick to seize new opportunities for participation. Sawer (2002: 16) notes that the largest electronic petition tabled in the Senate protested the imposition of a new tax on tampons.