



# Victorian Women Vote 1908–2008

## The Suffrage Bill of 1908

Six years after women in Victoria could vote in Federal elections, women finally gained the right to vote in Victoria with the passage of the Adult Suffrage Bill in 1908.

The Bill was passed through the Legislative Council on 18 November 1908. It was reserved in Parliament on 1 December 1908 and received Royal Assent on 31 March 1909.

The Act gave women over 21 years of age the right to vote. Women had to register if they intended to exercise the right to vote. Aboriginal women were not excluded but few would have realised they had a right to register if they were not dependent on the state.

The main clauses of the Act included:

- In electoral Acts the word 'male' was removed and replaced with the word 'persons' to include both men and women;
- Married women as well as single women would be allowed to vote.

It was not until the next election in 1911 that Victorian women could exercise their right to vote in state elections. Fear of the effect of the women's vote was an important factor in the resistance to women's suffrage in Victoria, despite the fact that women had already won the vote throughout the rest of Australia.

Women in Victoria were granted the right to stand for election to both houses of State Parliament in 1923. Victoria was the last state to concede this right.

To see the first few pages of the original *Adult Suffrage Act 1908*, log onto:

[www.prov.vic.gov.au/peopleparliament/documents/doc\\_a2185-1909.asp](http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/peopleparliament/documents/doc_a2185-1909.asp)

For a perspective of how women won the vote and the history of the vote in Victoria, log onto:

[www.vec.vic.gov.au/files/HistoryoftheFranchiseinVictoria.doc](http://www.vec.vic.gov.au/files/HistoryoftheFranchiseinVictoria.doc)

For a history of democracy in Victoria, log onto:

[www.slv.vic.gov.au/programs/exhibitions/catalogues/nakeddemocracy](http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/programs/exhibitions/catalogues/nakeddemocracy)

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