

Victorian Women Vote 1908–2008

Women in Parliament

In 2008, there are 38 women Members of the Parliament of Victoria: 12 are Legislative Councillors, and 26 are Members of the Legislative Assembly.

There are five women in the Brumby Cabinet.

- Jacinta Allan, Minister for Regional and Rural Development and Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation
- Lynne Kosky, Minister for Public Transport and Minister for the Arts
- Maxine Morand, Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development and Minister for Women's Affairs
- Lisa Neville, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Community Services and Minister for Senior Victorians, and
- Bronwyn Pike, Minister for Education

The present number of 38 women Members of the Parliament of Victoria – 30 per cent of the total number of members – contrasts with the absence of female representatives in the past, and is a reflection of changing social, economic, and political processes in the Australian community.

Before 1933 no women had been elected to the Parliament of Victoria.

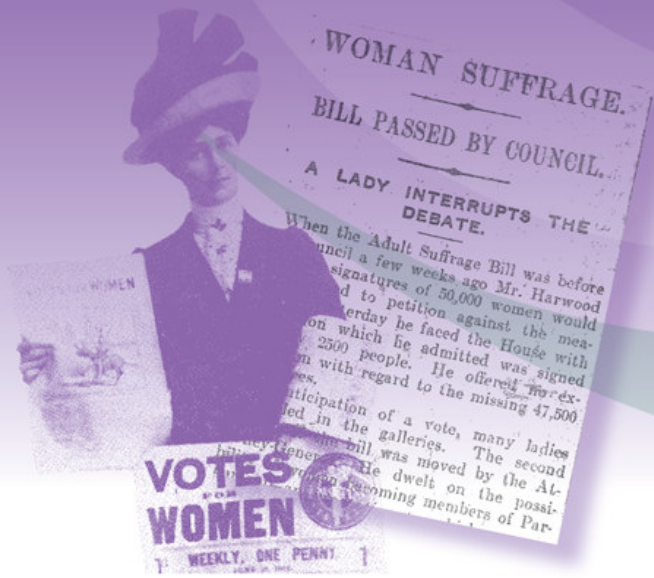
Between 1933 and 1979 no more than two women were Members of the Legislative Assembly at any one time.

Until 1979 no women had been elected to the Legislative Council.

Holding Office in the Parliament of Victoria

Lady Millie Peacock MLA

In 1933 Lady Millie Peacock was the first woman elected to the Parliament of Victoria, having won her seat in a by-election by over 1,500 votes. Because the seat had been left vacant by the death of her husband, Sir Alexander Peacock, it was generally believed her success was the result of a sympathy vote. She made only one speech during her time in Parliament. Lady Millie Peacock served the rest of her term in Parliament, but did not seek re-election. She retired from Parliament in 1935, declaring that it was not a place for women.



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Ivy Lavinia Weber MLA

Born in 1892, Ivy Weber was Victoria's second woman parliamentarian but the first to win a seat at a general election. She won and held the seat of Nunawading as an independent in 1937, 1940 and 1943.

As a Member of Parliament she successfully lobbied for female representation on government boards and espoused equal pay for teachers although she only approved of married women working if in desperate circumstances. She believed that women should be on local councils and juries. She advocated a homemaker's allowance for women with families. She was one of the instigators of the Physical Education course at the University of Melbourne, the first of its kind in Australia. In 1938, Weber was one of two female members of the first National Co-ordinating Council for Physical Fitness, later known as the National Fitness Council.

Gracia Baylor and Joan Coxsedg

Victoria's first women to be Legislative Councillors were Gracia Baylor, Liberal Member for Boronia Province, and Joan Coxsedg, Labor Member for Melbourne West. Both were successful in the 1979 state election.

First Female Minister in Victoria

In 1982, Pauline Toner, Labor Member for the Legislative Assembly seat of Greensborough, became the first female Minister in this State; she was appointed Minister for Community Welfare Services in the first John Cain (Jnr) Government Ministry.

Joan Kirner—Victoria's First Woman Premier

Joan Kirner was first elected to the Legislative Council in 1982 as the Member for Melbourne West Province. In 1988 she moved to the lower house as Member for Williamstown. She was Premier from 1990 to the election of 1992. After the Labor Party's defeat in the 1992 election, she became Leader of the Opposition. Joan Kirner resigned from Parliament in 1994.

For more information about Women in Parliament, log onto: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au>

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