



WOMEN QUOTAS IN THE LIBERAL PARTY

Abalinx 22 December 2018
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The following comments are extracts from my response to a post on women Quotas in the Liberal Party. I apologise in advance as I do not wish to offend anyone as my views are based on political life experiences.

I disagree with the quota system for the reasons given the following: Every woman who has gone for pre-selection has gone on merit but failed to be selected because the methodologies and practices have been manipulated. Every female that I have encountered at pre-selections have been well educated, skilled, knowledgeable, mature the desire to do well. In fact Ms Helen Kroger rejected any suggestion the Liberal party did not support female candidates. "I think it's a load of bollocks," she said. "Fifty per cent of our candidates for the state election were women."

In another twist to the pre-selection of women using the quota system, a small band of very ambitious women have contrived to working to topple Kevin Andrews in the seat of Menzies. They hope to install a well-known long serving female member whose vacant spot will be taken up by another woman who recently lost her seat during the Victorian election in November. They hope to achieve this by lobbying State Assembly to install the quota system for women and thus fulfil their political ambitions without the need for a pre-selection process. This a real scenario if they obtain control of the Administrative Committee. In the past Women have been selected on their merit and for those who were not selected, it was because:

- A. They may (I use the word "may" loosely) not have convinced the delegates they are the right person for the electorate.
- B. They performed badly.
- C. Did not acquire sufficient backing
- E. The pre-selection had already been decided by powerful external interests.
- F. Administrative Committee interference or decision.
- G. Not appropriate for the electorate.

Having said this, I remind readers that the above also applies to all males as well.

I am of the belief that the original concept of pre-selections have their origins in the military system. That is to say the methodologies used to select suitable candidates for officers. It was called the "War Office Selection Board". (WASB). Post WW2 when Menzies collaborated with Womens organizations to form the Australian Liberal Party, he selected suitable candidates using the same concept as the WASB. Over the years the pre-selection system was reformed many times to its present system where it has lost its original design in a sea of restrictive practices.

I do not believe the quota system is a good concept as it does not represent the interests of the electorate. If candidates are to be selected it must be the best individual for the electorate. Women in my life that I have encountered have exceeded their male counterparts in intelligence, maturity and psychologically. Recently a very poor example was set by an alleged senior female Liberal Party member of the Administrative Committee. Her reaction to not being selected for a safe seat at the State and Federal level caused her to become disillusioned with the system and embarked on a personal destructive mission to deceive, undermine and contribute to the collapse of the Liberal election campaign.

She in her own mind thought that she had worked hard enough and deserved a safe seat without the need of a pre-selection. Mind you, she is a decent person at heart, but on realising that she would not be offered a job based on her gender, her alter ego began to control her normal commonsense approach. Despite being advised to heal the rift between her and her colleagues, she and one two others conspired to switch sides. They leaked confidential information that was entrusted to them via models and concepts known only to them and were "QUICK" to follow the leads of other Administrative Committee leakers.

A sad tale, one must admit, but the question remains, did she do it solely for revenge, join another factional power broker or simply create a diversion to hide her own skeletons. Whatever the case may be, she has certainly lost the respect of many for her colleagues by betraying their trust in her and I am of the belief that history will soon write her off as another wannabe politician. An unfortunate decision on her part and that of her co-conspirators. A decision which will forever tarnish her image within the Liberal party. Having provided the above negative example of women seeking power, I must add that women despite being unable to match their male counterparts in the physical sense, compensate by demonstrating resilience their male counterpart's lack.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with women who have ambitions of a parliamentary career and the old saying that women belong in the home looking after the kids is now considered inappropriate and outdated given the changes to society in general. I am therefore of the view that the current pre-selection process requires intelligent and unemotional review to remove restrictive practices and external manipulation. Quotas are not the answer as they will open the flood gates for quotas on religion, colour, culture and hidden agendas. Furthermore the Liberal Party must distance itself from Labor and Greens and not be seen as following their leads.

LEADING LIBERAL MP MARY WOOLDRIDGE QUILTS, ASKS PARTY TO CONSIDER GENDER QUOTAS

Noel Towell and Benjamin Preiss December 7, 2019 The age

One of the Victorian Liberal Party's most senior women MPs Mary Wooldridge is quitting politics, calling for her party to consider introducing gender quotas as she makes her departure. The 52-year-old Liberal stalwart will publicly call time on her 13-year career in State Parliament on Sunday, with a message to her party colleagues that they should do what it takes to recruit more women. The upper house MP, who has seen more than a few political careers end abruptly and in tears, said she was taking the chance to make the "positive choice" to write her own departure script.

Ms Wooldridge has been one of the state Liberals' most prominent women for more than a decade, serving as mental health and women's minister in the Baillieu-Napthine government and as opposition health spokeswoman under Matthew Guy while leading her party in the Legislative Council. Ms Wooldridge said she wanted to leave politics at a time of her choosing but the moment was also right for her party as it continues to rebuild from its disastrous showing in the November 2018 Victorian election.

The departure will give Liberal leader Michael O'Brien a timely opportunity to reshuffle his front bench in the New Year but deprives the party, desperately short of women in Parliament, of an experienced and capable female frontbencher. Ms Wooldridge said she would like to see a woman take her spot on the upper house benches for the Liberals but that she would not interfere in the process of filling the casual vacancy created by her departure from within her party.

"I've been a long-term champion for more women in the Parliament but the party will make a decision in relation to that," she told *The Age*. On the question of quotas to preselect more Liberal women, Ms Wooldridge said it "should be seriously considered". "I think what's happened in the past hasn't worked. We're having good women standing for preselection and not being chosen." Mr O'Brien paid tribute on Sunday to his departing colleague, congratulating Ms Wooldridge on an "outstanding career" and on her achievements both as a minister and on the opposition benches. "Mary's record is as an intelligent, compassionate and reforming MP and minister," Mr O'Brien said.

"If our society is to be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable, then Victoria is a better, fairer and more decent place as a direct result of Mary Wooldridge's many initiatives as a minister." Ms Wooldridge said her son was a one-year-old when she first was elected and she now wanted to spend more time with her family. "The nature of the role really requires a high level of commitment to the community and party and what's happening," she said. "They're choices you consciously make and you don't begrudge them but it does have an impact on your family life." Ms Wooldridge said she had yet to decide on a career after leaving Parliament but hoped to work in the non-profit sector as a senior manager.

VICTORIAN LIBERALS COMMISSIONED IDEAS TO INCREASE DIVERSITY, THEN IGNORED THEM

The Age Farrah Tomazin December 11, 2018

The Victorian Liberals secretly considered setting time limits on underperforming MPs and creating an "A-List" of women for preselection, but failed to act in time to avoid a rout at this year's election. Internal documents obtained by *The Age* reveal that the bold ideas to deal with a lack of diversity in the party's ranks came out of a confidential Liberal survey five years ago of almost 1400 branch members, amid growing concerns that the party was not doing enough to renew itself.

The study also confirmed that Liberal men and women are treated differently as part of the preselection process, with 13 percent of male branch members believing women do not have the same ability as men to be an MP, and nearly one third of all respondents saying women with children were unable to put in the hours required. The survey was conducted in December 2013 as part of an internal scholarship awarded to then MP Margaret Fitzherbert. It was presented to senior officials months before the Napthine Government lost office the following year after a single term.

But most of its findings were not acted on, and now, weeks after losing another election to Labor, the Liberals are facing the same challenges, with its [conservative power brokers admitting](#) the party is "too male, too white, and too tired." As the post-election soul-searching continues, the documents are revealing of attitudes among Liberal members. Among this is that 79 per cent of party members, male and female, opposed gender quotas - an idea that is now [squarely on the Liberals' agenda](#). However, members were open to other ideas, including a trial of all-female A-Lists, which had been used in the UK to boost the number of female candidates and members of parliament. Essentially these were lists of priority candidates who had been vetted by the Conservatives' organisational wing and considered worthy of preselection for a winnable seat.

In Victoria, 48 percent of Liberal members surveyed said they would support such a trial, and 30 per cent were neutral. Only 14 per cent disagreed with the idea. Another proposal involved requiring MPs to quit if they were not promoted to the front bench after a designated time. This would allow the parliamentary team bring in fresh talent, including women and younger people, much sooner than is currently possible, due to long-serving MPs often refusing to give up their safe seats. The study, which has never been publicly released, also found:

- Only 39 per cent of Liberals believed men and women were treated equally in their party.
- Women branch members were less likely than men to believe they were qualified to run for preselection (46 per cent to 27 per cent) and much less likely to believe they had the skills to be an effective MP.
- Asked why so few Liberal women sought preselection, one fifth of women said family and work commitments seemed to take precedence, while 15 per cent said it was because the Liberal Party was a boys' club.
- Thirty-eight per cent of respondents said it was fine to ask female preselection candidates who would look after their children if they entered politics. Men rarely, if ever, were asked the same question.

The details come as the Victorian Parliament reopens next week, with the Andrews Government bolstered by an increased majority, greater gender diversity, and a cabinet in which 50 per cent of its ministers are women. The Liberals, meanwhile, enter the new term with only of four female MPs in the lower house, and another four in the upper house. Ms Fitzherbert, who was the party's parliamentary secretary for health, was among the many casualties of last month's poll. Since the election rout, prominent figures across the factions, including former premier Ted Baillieu, conservative powerbroker Marcus Bastiaan, and senior state MP Mary Wooldridge have agreed it's time for a dramatic rethink on gender quotas - an initiative that Labor introduced in 1994.

Asked about the matter last week, newly appointed Opposition Leader Michael O'Brien said he wanted to see more women joining the Liberals and being elected to parliament, but stopped short of supporting quotas as a way to achieve that. He also talked up his new leadership team, whereby two of the four positions belong to women: Eildon MP Cindy McLeish is new state Liberal deputy leader, and southern metro MP Georgie Crozier is the new upper house deputy leader. "I'm far more interested in the outcome than the mechanism," Mr O'Brien said when asked if he backed quotas. "I will work with my colleagues and the party organisation to make sure that we get a better outcome."

GENDER QUOTAS SQUARELY ON LIBERAL AGENDA AS BLOODLETING CONTINUES

Farrah Tomazin and Royce Millar & Ben Schneiders December 2, 2018 — 12.00am

Quotas for women in the Liberal Party are squarely on the agenda for the first time after a disastrous election loss that could see as few as nine women representing the entire party in the 128-seat Victorian Parliament. The push for affirmative action comes as *The Sunday Age* can also reveal that both female membership of the Liberal Party, and the proportion of women members, has declined over the past decade. Liberal leader Matthew Guy announces defeat in the state election last Saturday.

Days after Matthew Guy's opposition suffered a humiliating defeat against the Andrews Government, former premiers, Liberal MPs and senior officials from across the factions concede that quotas may be the only way to tackle the party's long-standing "women's problem". Even arch conservatives, who contributed to the state branch moving further to the right, say the party's parliamentary line-up does not reflect the wider community.

At a state assembly meeting on Friday night, moments after [party president Michael Kroger resigned](#), conservative powerbroker Marcus Bastiaan pushed for quotas to be considered. He has also suggested introducing US-style primaries to choose future candidates, along with fixed terms in which state MPs in safe seats would get a maximum of eight years to make the front bench - or step aside for fresh blood to be preselected Liberal administrative committee member Paul Mitchell, a right faction warrior aligned with Mr Bastiaan and Mr Kroger, agreed serious reform was needed.

"The Liberal Party's politicians are too male, too white and too tired," Mr Mitchell said. "In case no one realised, females account for 50 per cent of the population. With limited female representation how can you expect female voters to identify with brand 'Liberal'? This needs urgent addressing." By the time votes are counted, it is estimated that less than a third of the Liberals' depleted party room will be women. In contrast, Labor looks set to have 35 female MPs (representing 48 per cent of Daniel Andrews' team), with half of the Premier's new cabinet made up of women.

While most Liberals have resisted affirmative action for years - arguing that it undermines "merit" - many warn that without dramatic action a widening gender gap would continue to alienate voters and fuel the perception the party does not represent the broader community. Senior state MP Mary Wooldridge told *The Sunday Age*: "Targets have been set and ignored, so now it appears that some sort of quota is likely to be the only way that we can ensure that more good Liberal women are elected into our parliaments." Former premier Ted Baillieu said he also supported the idea of quotas, but noted it would require much more to reconnect with Victorian voters - a process of renewal that he believes could take the party up to eight years.

Former backbencher Donna Bauer, who lost her seat of Carrum in 2014 and failed to reclaim it from Labor last weekend, said the ALP had seen a steady increase in female MPs through affirmative action policies introduced in 1994. Liberal candidate for Carrum, Donna Bauer, says it's time for her party to adopt quotas to ensure more women are preselected. "I think it's time for us to do similar," she said. Ms Bauer said that while Liberals were inclined to cling to arguments about merit, she had been asked at preselection forums about who would cook meals at home if she were to become an MP. "We are so far behind now (in female MP numbers) with the loss of some great women MPs and candidates.

It's time for us to have a similar model to Labor and to get more women into parliament." The Liberals have also come under increasing criticism for their treatment of women, particularly after the defection of federal Victorian MP Julia Banks this week following her claims of bullying during August's leadership coup. Equally troubling for the party is that female membership has fallen from where it was a decade ago. Figures obtained by *The Sunday Age* show that of the Liberal Party's 12,000-plus membership across Victoria about 57 per cent are male and in metro Melbourne it is closer to 60 per cent. Yet a Liberal Party review in 2008 recorded male membership state-wide at 52 per cent and female membership at 48 per cent. As opposition leader, Matthew Guy sought to address the gender imbalance at parliament by setting an ambitious target to boost female representation by 10 percentage points at every election, rising to 37 per cent in 2018, and to almost half by 2022.

He also outlined plans for a new group, *Women to win*, headed by former Liberal MP Andrea Coote, which was meant to be responsible for recruiting, training and mentoring women in hope that more would seek preselection. However, Mr Guy's targets were undermined not long after he announced them, when four Liberal pre-selections were held in quick succession for the safe seats of Brighton, Sandringham, Nepean and Evelyn. All but one, Evelyn, resulted in men being preselected. At the election, the party fell short on gender yet again: so far, only three of the Liberals' lower house seats – Evelyn, Eildon and South West Coast are held by women – along with four in the upper house. Two lower house seats, Bayswater and Ripon, remain too close to call.

Some blame the lack of will among branch members and flaws in the party's pre-selection system, which doesn't allow enough Liberals outside the branch itself to have a say. "We have a pre-selection system that too often rewards people who have the time to spend a couple of years having regular daytime coffees with branch members, and that's not merit," says former upper house MP Margaret Fitzherbert, who, despite being seen as a rising star within the party, was overlooked for pre-selection in Brighton in 2016 and lost her seat on Saturday.

"We need a blunt conversation about what merit really looks like." Former state Liberal president Michael Kroger argued on Thursday that while the lack of women in parliament was a "blindingly obvious issue", long-serving party members in safe seats should also consider standing aside in the interest of party renewal. In the current parliament, some of the longest serving Liberal MPs include Kim Wells, Bruce Atkinson and Bernie Finn, all of whom were first elected to Spring Street in 1992. "It's not about putting women in marginal seats – it's about putting women in safe seats," Mr Kroger told Sky News. "The only way that can happen is for members who are there to retire."

<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/victoria/gender-quotas-squarely-on-liberal-agenda-as-bloodletting-continues-20181201-p50jks.html>