

MEDIA RELEASE



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Australian women in parliament: better but still not good enough

The success of Labor's affirmative action quotas in increasing the representation of Labor women in Australian parliaments is another stark indicator of the chasm between the Labor and Liberal parties, a new report released today shows.

The *Status of Women* report compiled by EMILY's List, Australia's only political, financial and personal support network for the election of progressive Labor women candidates, was today launched by Labor Opposition Leader Bill Shorten.

EMILY's List was set up in 1996 by a group of progressive Labor women who had been integral to the introduction of the first rule, but who realized that a rule alone was not going to be enough to ensure Australia reached parliamentary equality.

Since 1996, the organisation has provided financial, personal and mentoring support to over 400 women candidates, with more than 210 of these becoming elected to state and federal parliaments.

EMILY's List National Co-Convenor Tanja Kovac said the report is a welcome reminder of the disparity between the two parties since the introduction in 1994 of the ALP's first affirmative action rule.

"This report clearly shows that the ALP's quota system has been a success - increasing ALP women's representation from single digits in the early 1990s to 43% today. In the two decades since the first rule, Labor has provided Australia's first woman Prime Minister, women Premiers in Queensland, NSW and Tasmania and female chief ministers in the ACT and Northern Territory," she said.

Ms Kovac said, by contrast, the Liberal Party has only provided one woman state leader (Kate Carnell in the ACT) and has decreased the proportion of women in federal and state Cabinets.

"It is plainly not good enough that, in 2015, only 23% of all Liberal MPs are women," she said.

EMILY's List National Co-Convenor Senator Anne McEwen said while the report shows great progress has been made by the Labor Party, there remains room for improvement.

"The ALP's current national target of 40/40/20 has played a significant role in increasing the number of Australian women MPs in recent years, but, as this report reminds us, 40% is not equal."

Senator McEwen said EMILY's List is now campaigning to increase Labor women's representation to 50% by 2020.

“At the ALP’s 2015 National Conference in July, we will be seeking a new rule change to enshrine the provision of 50% of winnable seats and internal party positions to women by 2020,” she said.

“This report is an important contribution to the ongoing debate about the need to ensure that our parliaments reflect the gender make-up of our society. Women having equal access to political power will ensure democratic legitimacy and social justice.”

Spokesperson: Tanja Kovac, National Co-Convenor, EMILY’s List Australia, 0419 910 577

Media Contact: Sophie Arnold, Deputy National Coordinator, 0421 214 334/ deputync@emilyslist.org.au

EMILY’s List Australia is a financial and political support network for progressive Labor women candidates, providing financial support, training, mentoring and gender gap research.