



A PORTRAIT OF PROGRESS

WOMEN IN
WESTERN AUSTRALIA
1899-1999





FOREWORD

The 1999 celebrations of the Centenary of Women's Suffrage in Western Australia are a unique opportunity to review the achievements of women in the 100 years since they gained the right to vote. This compendium of information about women provides a brief overview of women's progress since the days of early settlement.

Such a long term perspective reminds us of the enormous changes in the lives of women in Western Australia over this time. There is much to applaud and I feel great admiration and respect when I reflect on the obstacles that have been surmounted by our forebears.

Each of the chapters in the compendium focuses on a key dimension of women's lives and concludes with current indicators of the status of women in that area. The document therefore both marks women's progress to the current time, and indicates the areas where further improvement is required.

The Government of Western Australia has also produced a *Government Two Year Plan for Women 1999-2001* which outlines how progress will be achieved over the next two years.

I hope this document will be widely used in schools and the general community as we celebrate the last 100 years of women's achievements, and position ourselves to make the best use of the next century.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rhonda Parker".

Rhonda Parker MLA

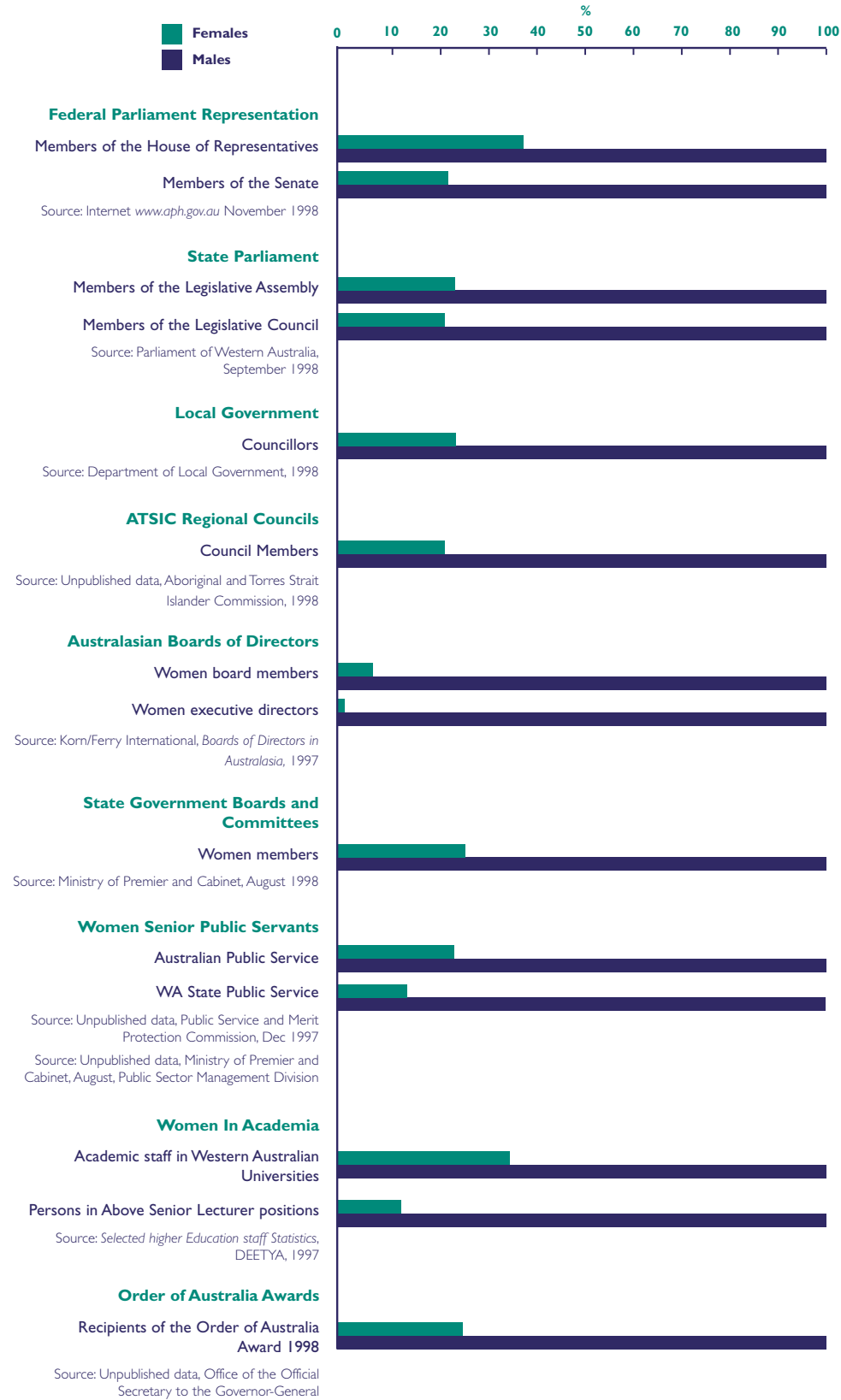
MINISTER FOR WOMEN'S INTERESTS

September 1999



Women Today: Decision Making

Number of Females to Every 100 Males

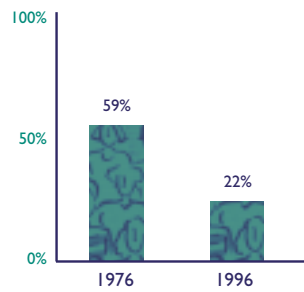




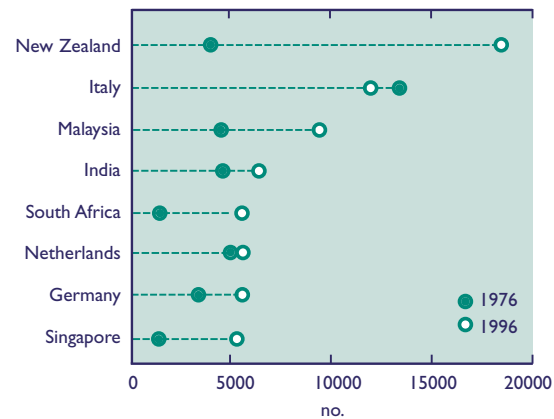
Women Today: Demography

Females Born in the UK & Ireland

The United Kingdom and Ireland has been the predominant birthplace for women born overseas.



Females Born Overseas— Selected Birthplaces



Recent Arrivals

In 1976, the Census figures showed that 25 791 females were counted in Western Australia who had arrived from overseas within the previous 4 years. Of these, the main countries were:

United Kingdom & Ireland	59%
New Zealand	6%
India	4%
Malaysia	3%
Singapore	2%
Indonesia	0.2%

In 1996 22 850 females were counted in Western Australia who had arrived from overseas within the previous 4 years. Of these, the main countries of birth were:

United Kingdom & Ireland	22%
New Zealand	12%
Malaysia	7%
Singapore	7%
Indonesia	6%
India	2.4%

Religion

Christian

- In 1976, 79% of females and 74% of males in Western Australia stated that they were Christians.
- Of these females, 41% were Church of England, 32% were Roman Catholic, 9% were Methodist and 2% were Baptist.
- In 1996, the proportion of females who stated a Christian religion had dropped to 68%, and males to 63%.
- Of these 584 724 females, 37% were Catholic, 36% were Anglican, 8% belonged to the United Church and 4% were Presbyterian and Reformed.

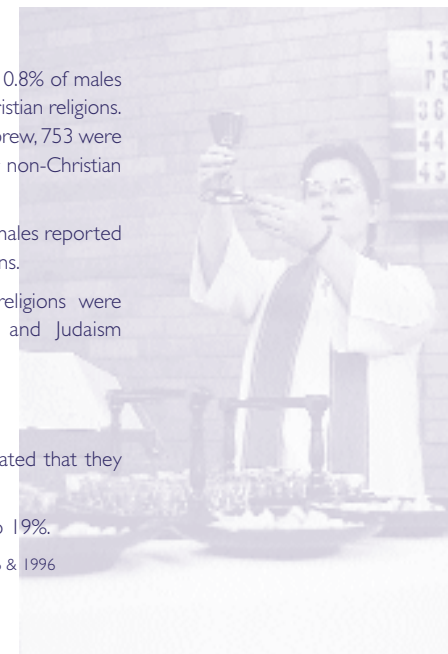
Non-Christian

- In 1976, 0.6% of WA females and 0.8% of males stated that they followed non-Christian religions. Of these females, 1 386 were Hebrew, 753 were Muslim and 1 448 were of other non-Christian religions.
- In 1996, 3% of both females and males reported belonging to non-Christian religions.
- Of these females, the leading religions were Buddhism (40%), Islam (25%) and Judaism (10%).

No Religion

- In 1976, 9% of females in WA stated that they had no religion.
- In 1996, those figures had risen to 19%.

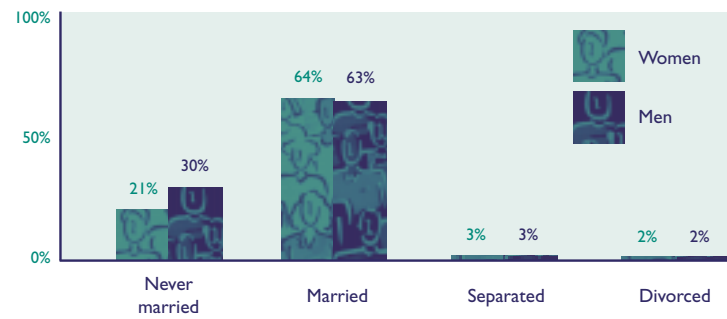
Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1976 & 1996



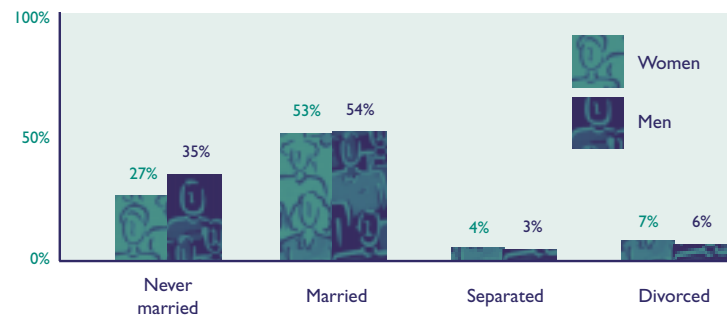


Women Today: Family Status

Registered Marital Status 1976

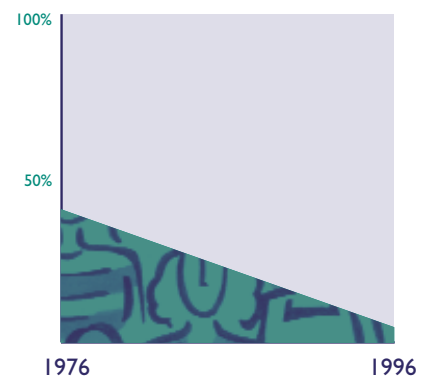


Registered Marital Status 1996



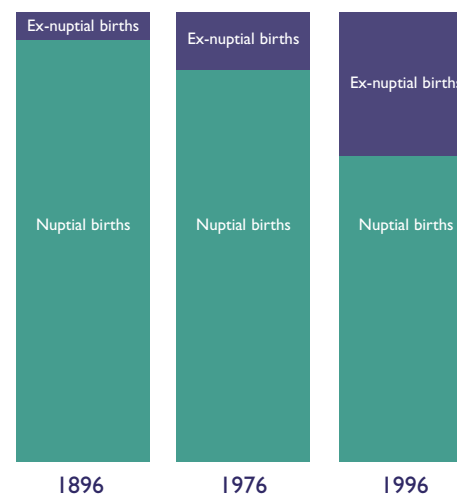
Source: Census of Population and Housing, 1976 and 1996

Brides Aged Under 21 Years



Source: *Demography, Western Australia, 1996* (Cat. no. 3311.5)
Demography, Western Australia, 1977 (Cat. no. 3101.5)
Western Australian Year Book, 1979 (Cat. no. 1300.5)

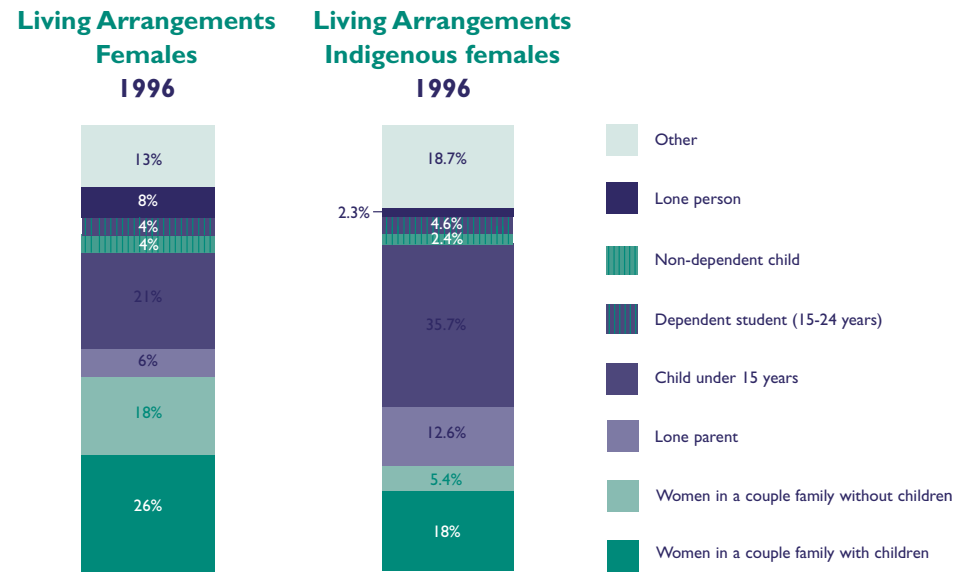
Births



Source: *Western Australian Year Book, 1897*
Demography, Western Australia, 1977 (Cat. no. 3101.5)
Demography, Western Australia, 1996 (Cat. no. 3311.5)



Women Today: Family Status



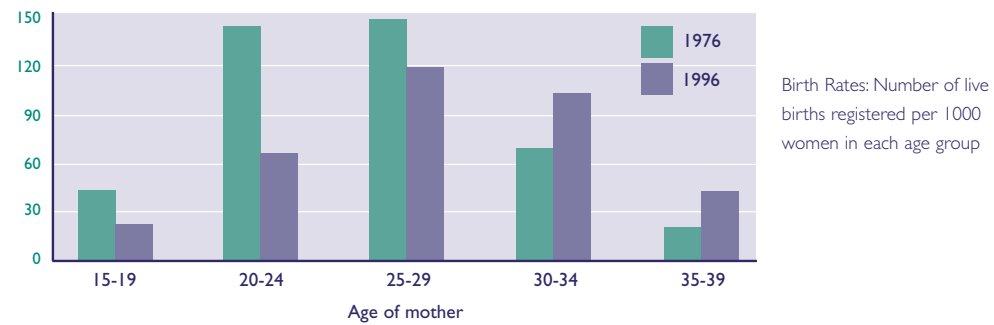
Source: *Western Australia's Young People, 1996* (Cat. no. 4132.5)

Housing Characteristics in WA 1996



Source: *Census of Population and Housing, 1996*

Birth Rates

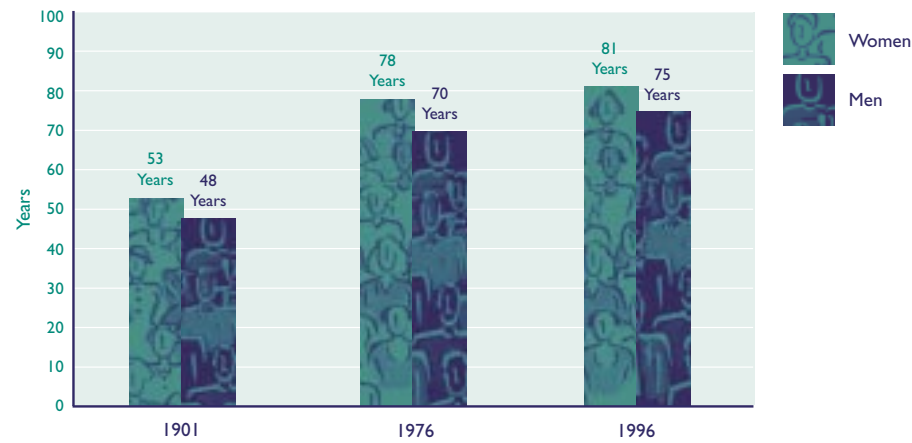


Source: *Demography, Western Australia, 1977* (Cat. no. 3101.5)
Demography, Western Australia, 1996 (Cat. no. 3311.5)

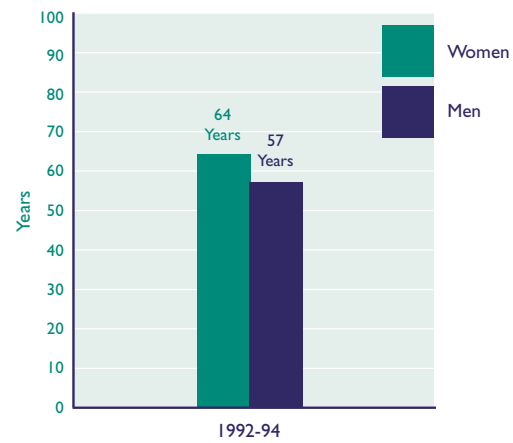


Women Today: Health

Life Expectancy



Life Expectancy for Western Australian Indigenous People



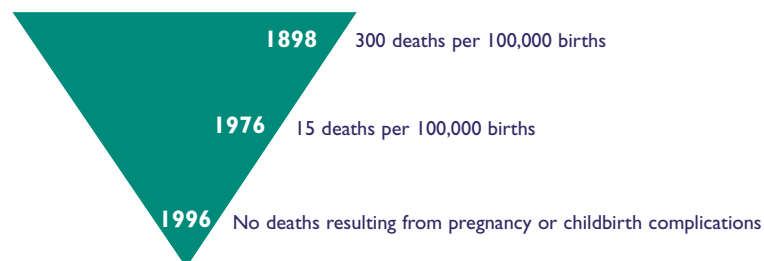
Life Expectancy for Australian Females



Source: *Deaths, Australia, 1996* (Cat. no. 3302.0)

The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 1997 (Cat. no. 4704.0)

Deaths in Childbirth





Women Today: Health

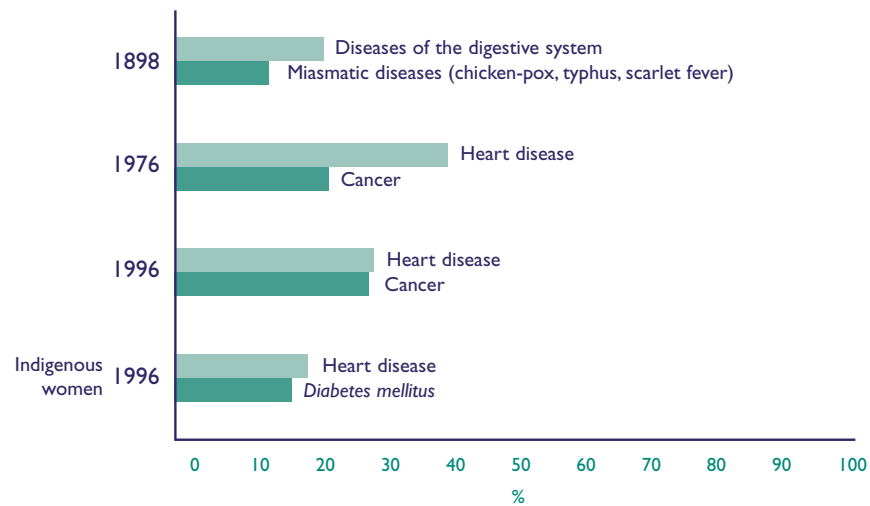
Health Risk Factors

Data is for women aged 18 years and over



Source: Unpublished data, National Health Survey 1989-90 & 1995

Causes of Death for WA Females

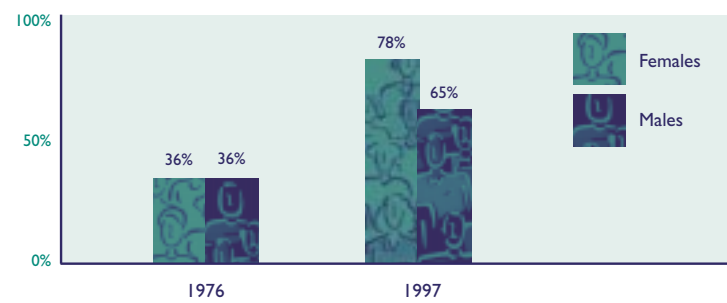


Source: Causes of Death, Australia (Cat. no. 3303.0)



Women Today: Employment Education and Training

Retention Rates of Full-Time WA Students to Year 12



Source: *Retention and Participation in Australian Schools, 1967 to 1992*, DEET 1993
 Unpublished data, *Schools, Australia, 1997*

Post-School Qualifications

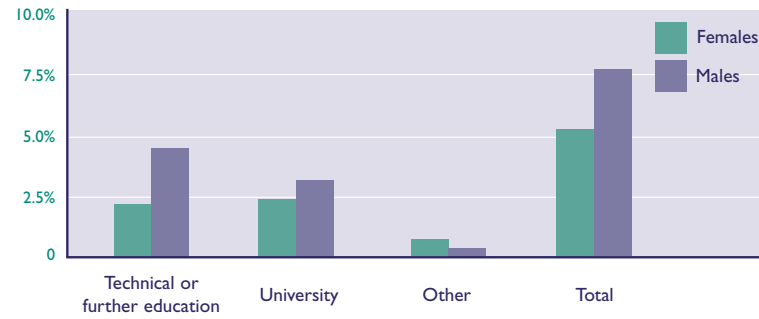
	Females %	Males %
Business and Administration	7.2	4.6
Health	6.3	1.6
Education	4.8	1.8
Society and Culture	4.6	2.9
Miscellaneous fields (a)	2.4	2.8
Natural and physical sciences	1.3	2.5
Engineering	0.8	17.3
Agriculture and related fields	0.3	1.3
Inadequately described	0.3	0.4
Architecture and building	0.2	5.1
With post-school qualifications	28.4	40.7
Not qualified	63.9	51.2
Not stated	7.7	8.1
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: 1996 Census of Population and Housing

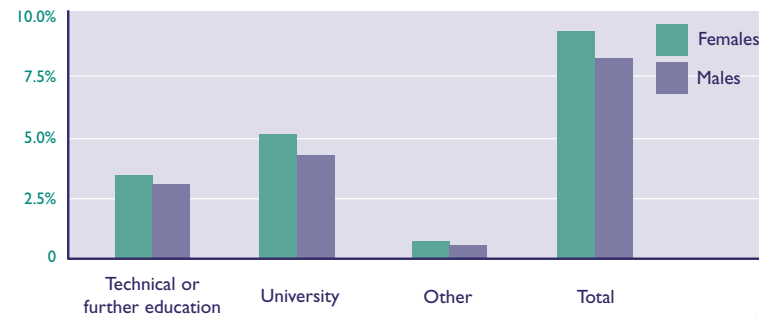


Women Today: Employment Education and Training

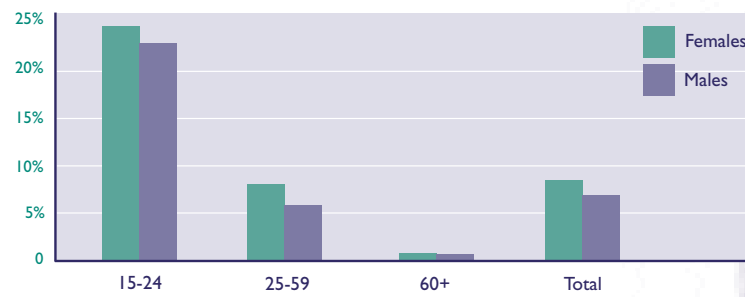
Attendance at Post-School Institutions 1976



Attendance at Post-School Institutions 1996

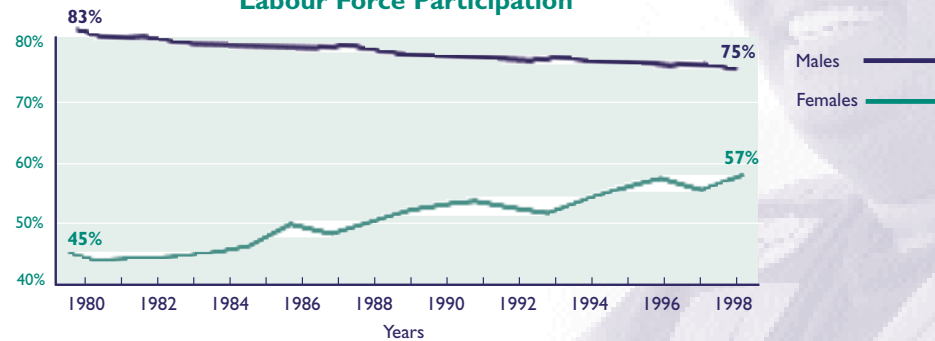


Post-School Attendance, by Age 1996



Source: Unpublished data, 1996 Census of Population and Housing

Labour Force Participation

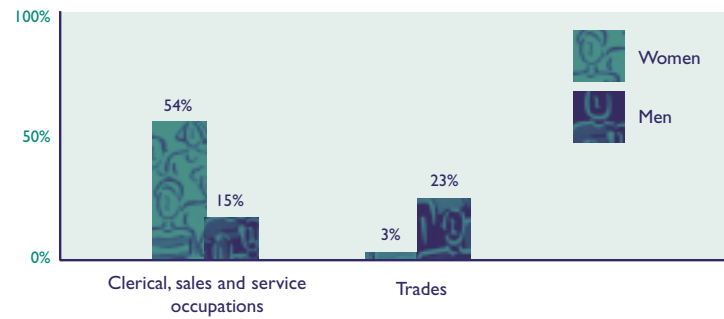


Source: Unpublished data, Labour Force Survey, August 1976 & 1998



Women Today: Employment Education and Training

Occupations 1998



Source: Unpublished data, Labour Force Survey, August 1976 & 1998

Indigenous People

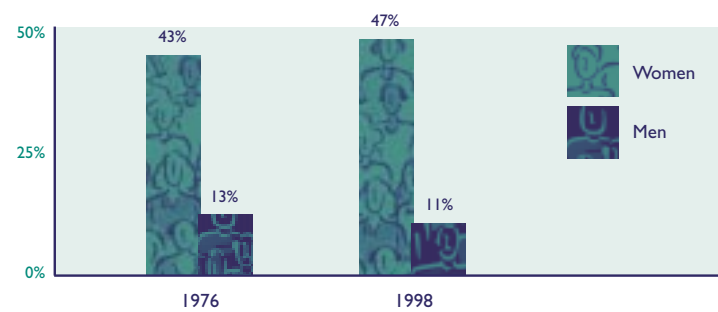
The labour force participation by WA Indigenous women and men is lower than for the general population.

- In 1994, WA Indigenous women had a participation rate of 48%, while Indigenous men had a participation rate of 69%. The corresponding figures for all WA women and men at this time were 54% and 77% respectively.

Source: *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey, Western Australia, 1994* (Cat. no. 4190.5)
Unpublished data, Labour Force Survey, August 1994

Part-time Employment

A significant number of employed women work part-time.



Source: Unpublished data, Labour Force Survey, August 1976 & 1998

Underemployment

The majority of women who worked part-time did not want to work longer hours.

- In 1996, 17% (28,199) of women and 36% (19,931) of men who worked part-time considered themselves underemployed and wished to work longer hours.

Source: Unpublished data, Underemployed Workers, September 1996



Women Today: Employment Education and Training

Unemployment

While the unemployment rate for WA women in 1998 was similar to what it was 23 years ago, the unemployment rate for WA men has increased.

- The unemployment rate for women was 6.0% in 1976 and 5.7% in 1998.
- The unemployment rate for men has increased from 3.2% in 1976, to 7.4%, in 1998.

Source: Unpublished data, Labour Force Survey, 1976 & 1998

Indigenous People

- WA Indigenous women and men had similar unemployment rates in 1994, with 36% and 37% respectively. These were significantly higher than for the general WA population, which at that time had unemployment rates of 8% for women and 8% for men.

Source: *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey, Western Australia, 1994* (Cat. no. 4190.5)
Unpublished data, Labour Force Survey, August 1994

Employment Status

The proportion of women who participate in the labour force as employers or self employed has remained the same between 1976 and 1996. Women are now more likely to be self employed than employers.

Source: Unpublished data, Labour Force Survey, 1976 & 1998

Main Activities When Not in the Labour Force

Women were more likely than men to be out of the labour force at some time during the year. The main activities of these women were home duties and child care activities.

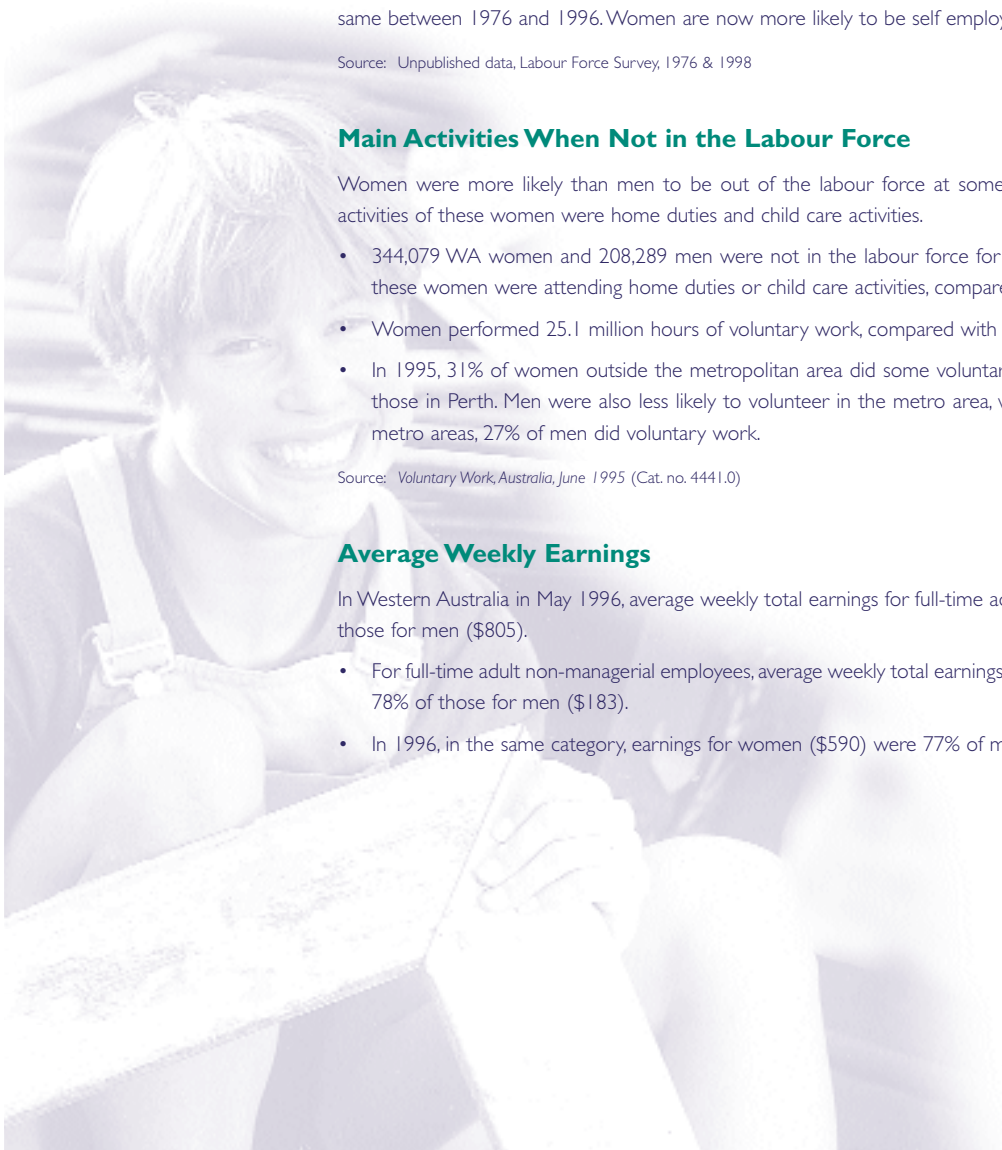
- 344,079 WA women and 208,289 men were not in the labour force for some time during 1997. 58% of these women were attending home duties or child care activities, compared with 5% of men.
- Women performed 25.1 million hours of voluntary work, compared with 20.9 million hours for men.
- In 1995, 31% of women outside the metropolitan area did some voluntary work, compared with 19% for those in Perth. Men were also less likely to volunteer in the metro area, with 14% doing so, while in non-metro areas, 27% of men did voluntary work.

Source: *Voluntary Work, Australia, June 1995* (Cat. no. 4441.0)

Average Weekly Earnings

In Western Australia in May 1996, average weekly total earnings for full-time adult women (\$604) were 75% of those for men (\$805).

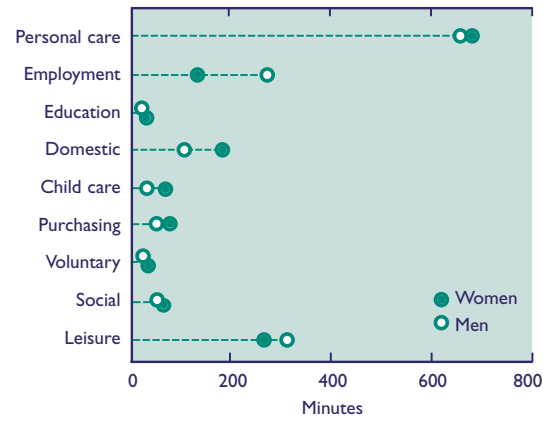
- For full-time adult non-managerial employees, average weekly total earnings in 1976 for women (\$143) were 78% of those for men (\$183).
- In 1996, in the same category, earnings for women (\$590) were 77% of men's (\$768).





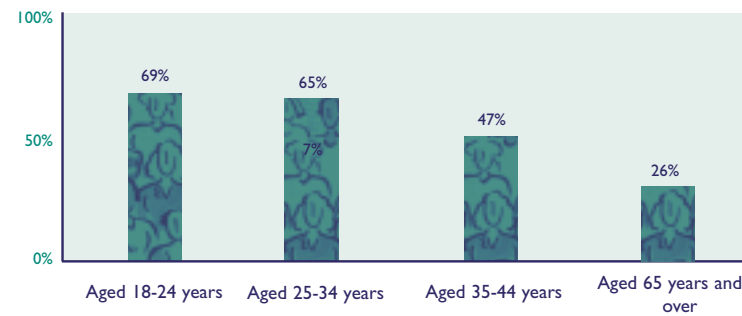
Women Today: Sport and Leisure

Average Leisure Time Spent Per Day On Main Activities, Australia, 1997



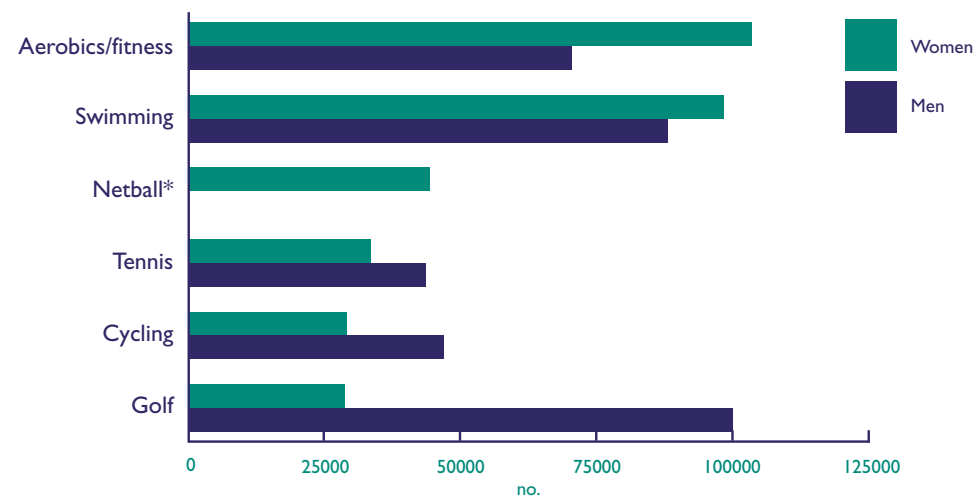
Source: *How Australians Use Their Time, 1997* (Cat. no. 4153.0)

Participation of Western Australian Women in Sport and Physical Activities 1997-98



Source: *How Australians Use Their Time, 1997* (Cat. no. 4153.0)

Leading Sports/Activities



* Men's data not available because of high sampling variability.

Source: *Participation in Sport and Physical Activities, Australia, 1997-98* (Cat. no. 4177.0)



SIGNIFICANT DATES

1899

Woman's Franchise League established in April to consolidate all supporters of the campaign into one organisation.

Constitution Acts Amendment Act, which gave Western Australian women the vote, reserved on December 16 for Royal Assent.

1900

Slander of Women Act passed by the State Government to protect women against false claims of adultery and unchastity.

Federal referendum on the Commonwealth Constitution in which women only from Western Australia and South Australia were eligible to vote. Western Australia supported Federation.

Constitution Acts Amendment Act of 1899 proclaimed on May 18.

1901

Commonwealth of Australia officially proclaimed, first Federal elections held and first Federal Parliament opened.

Western Australian parliamentary elections: women vote for the first time; more than 55% of those enrolled cast a vote.

Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 heralded the White Australia Policy which was not formally abandoned until 1973.

1902

Criminal Code Act, passed by State legislature, included issues of conspiracy and liability in marriage, defilement of girls under ten and matters of sexual abuse and violence to minors, procurement, abduction, abortion, rape, indecent assaults, kidnapping, deprivation of liberty, bigamy, child stealing, desertion of children and custody of girls under 17. It also defined when a girl became an adult.

Commonwealth Franchise Act became law. Non-indigenous women in every State could vote in Federal elections and became the first women in the world eligible to sit in their national parliament (though this did not happen until 1943).

1903

Second Federal election in which all non-indigenous women could vote or contest a seat.

1905

Women's Political and Social Crusade (later the Western Australian Labor Women's Organisation) formed by Jean Beadle at a meeting in Fremantle in October.

Aborigines Act made the Chief Protector the legal guardian of every Aborigine in Western Australia.

1906

Eastern Goldfields Women's Labour League set up by Jean Beadle.

1907

State Children's Act defined and made provision for the State's neglected children, established Children's Courts and ordered the licensing of lying-in homes and foster mothers.

Harvester Judgement established a basic wage for men.

1908

International Women's Day established in the USA, though it was not celebrated in Western Australia until 1938.

1909

Women's Service Guild founded by among others, Edith Cowan.

Invalid and Old Age Pensions Act passed by Federal parliament, giving women of 60 years of age a means-tested pension.

1911

Western Australian branch of the National Council of Women founded.

University of Western Australia Act admitted women to the institution on an equal footing with men.

Perth Modern School, a co-educational secondary school, opened.



1912

First Labor Women's Conference in Perth. The cause most at issue was full citizenship for women.

Maternity Allowance Act, passed by Federal parliament, paid after 1912 a £5 grant to new mothers. Aborigines, Asians and natives of the South Pacific were exempted.

Mr Justice Higgins set a minimum wage for women in the first Commonwealth Arbitration award for women—mostly 54% of the male wage until 1950.

Matrimonial Causes Act made divorce laws in Western Australia more equitable for men and women.

1915

State Children's Act amended to allow the appointment of women justices in the Children's Court.

Health Act amendments relating to contagious diseases passed by the State legislature divided the local women's movement.

Women's Service Guilds (WA) promote Guiding—first meeting in June.

1916

King Edward Memorial Hospital established as a maternity hospital.

Western Australian women vocal in the national referendum conscription issue.

1918

Labor Party appoints Jean Beadle its Women's Organiser.

1919

Justices Act amendment provided for Western Australian women to be appointed as Justices of the Peace.

1920

Parliament (Qualification of Women Act) allowed eligible women to sit in the State Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council.

The Dawn, the official organ of the Women's Service Guilds (WA published). It had been previously published as a newsletter for the Guilds' Fremantle branch.

YWCA formed in Perth.

1921

Edith Cowan became the first woman Member of Parliament in Australia, and the second in the British

Commonwealth, successfully standing as a Nationalist Party candidate for the seat of West Perth. Three other women who stood for seats at the same election were unsuccessful: Nell Dungey, Ada Bromham, and Ada Butler.

Australian Federation of Women Voters established by the Women's Service Guilds under the leadership of Bessie Rischbieth.

1922

Married Women's Protection Act made it easier for Western Australian women to obtain protection against cruel and negligent husbands.

1923

Women's Legal Status Act introduced into State Parliament by Edith Cowan. Once passed it admitted women to practice law.

1924

Edith Cowan lost her seat in the Legislative Assembly.

1925

Mary Alice (May) Holman became Australia's second woman MP and Western Australia's first woman Labor Member of Parliament when she was elected to the Legislative Assembly for the seat of Forrest. She held her seat until her death in 1939.

1926

State Court of Arbitration's first basic wage of £4.5s.0d for men and £2.5s.11d for women.

1927

Four women stand for election to the Legislative Assembly—Ada Bromham (Claremont), Christina Blake (Leederville), Edith Cowan and May Holman. Only Holman was elected.

1930

Mary Montgomerie Bennett, missionary and Aboriginal rights campaigner, arrives in Western Australia.

1934

Florence Cardell-Oliver stood for the federal seat of Fremantle and with 18,000 votes almost defeated John Curtin who had previously held the seat from 1918 to 1931.

**1935**

Mary Durack, author, published her first book *All-about*.

May Holman became the first woman in the British Empire to serve ten years continuously in Parliament.

1936

Florence Cardell-Oliver elected to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly as a Nationalist Party candidate for the seat of Subiaco.

1939

Compulsory voting at elections for the Western Australian Legislative Assembly.

Testators' Family Maintenance Allowance Act allocated to family and dependants not provided for in a Will.

1941

Federal Child Endowment Act provided for a payment of five shillings per week to the mother of each child, after the first, under 16 years.

1942

Women's Employment Board formed to draft women into essential wartime work at higher rates of pay.

Widows' Pensions Act.

1943

Dorothy Tangney became the first woman in Western Australia and Australia to be elected to the Senate.

1944

Federal Unemployment and Sickness Benefits Act.

1945

Re-establishment and Employment Act passed by the Federal Parliament to reinstate returned servicemen in former jobs, forcing many women to relinquish their wartime positions.

1946

Western Australian Women's Parliament presented by the Women's Service Guilds (WA) to promote women's issues.

Factories and Shops Amendment Act provided for paid sick leave in Western Australia—half a day for each completed month of service.

Katharine Susannah Prichard, author, published *The Roaring Nineties*, a trilogy of the Western Australian goldfields.

1947

Florence Cardell-Oliver, elected to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly in 1936, became Australia's first woman cabinet minister.

1949

Agnes Robertson became the second West Australian woman elected to the Federal Parliament.

Women admitted to the third division of the Commonwealth Public Service.

1950

Commonwealth Arbitration Court set the female basic wage at 75% of the male basic wage.

1954

Ruby Florence Hutchison became the first woman elected to the Western Australian Legislative Council.

1957

Jury Act provided for the admission of women jurors on an equal basis as men. Western Australia became the first State in Australia to do so.

1958

Sadie Canning became the first Aboriginal matron in Western Australia when appointed Matron at Leonora Hospital.

1962

Commonwealth Electoral Act gave Aborigines the vote in Federal elections.

Agnes Robertson, at 79 years and 11 months, was the oldest woman to sit in an Australian parliament when she ended her career in the Senate.

1963

The Women's Bureau created in the Department of Labour and National Service (now the Department of Employment, Education and Training and Youth Affairs).

1965

Franchise and membership requirements identical for both houses of Western Australian Parliament.

1966

Bar on employment of married women as permanent employees in the Commonwealth Public Service abolished.



1967

Federal referendum gave the Commonwealth power to legislate over Aborigines and to count them in the census.

Bessie Rischbieth, feminist, activist and conservationist, died.

1968

Dorothy Tangney became Australia's longest serving woman Member of Parliament when she ended her parliamentary career after almost 25 years in the Senate.

1969

Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission ruled that 'equal pay for equal work' was to be phased in by 1972.

1970

Western Australia became the first State to broaden the franchise to allow 18–21 year-olds the vote.

1971

Native (Citizenship Rights) Act Repeal Act granted full citizenship to the Western Australian indigenous population.

1972

Commonwealth and Conciliation and Arbitration Commission extended the equal pay concept to 'equal pay for work of equal value', to be fully implemented by June 30, 1975.

Child Care Act provided for Federal involvement and funding for child care.

Community Welfare Act established a State Department of Community Welfare to promote individual and family welfare.

1973

Maternity Leave Act provided for maternity leave for Federal public servants.

Women's Electoral Lobby Perth branch founded.

Social Service Act 1947-73 amendment provided for supporting mothers' benefits.

1974

Three women elected to **Western Australian Parliament**: Margaret McAleer (MLC) pictured at left, Grace Vaughan (MLC), and Margaret (June) Craig (MLA). June Craig was the second woman in Western Australia to be promoted to ministerial rank.

1975

Family Law Act meant that marriages were dissolved on the principle of 'irretrievable breakdown'.

Racial Discrimination Act outlawed discrimination on grounds of race in employment, education and services. The Act was amended in 1995 to include incidents of racial hatred that occurred in public places.

Western Australian Women's Fellowship established.

1977

Raigh Roe elected World President of the Associated Country Women of the World.

1978

The National Women's Advisory Council established but was replaced by the National Women's Consultative Council in 1984.

1979

ACTU maternity leave test case set the standard in all awards for 52 weeks unpaid maternity leave for women.

1983

United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ratified by Australia.

Wendy Fatin became the first Western Australian woman to be elected to the House of Representatives.

Western Australian Women's Advisory Council to the Premier established.

1984

Federal Sex Discrimination Act banned discrimination based on sex, marital status or pregnancy.

State Equal Opportunity Act promoted the equality of opportunity in Western Australia and provided remedies in respect of discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy, race, religious or political conviction, or involving sexual harassment.

1985

Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission affirmed the equal pay principles of the 1972 equal pay case but rejected the comparable worth concept.



**1986**

Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act included requiring certain employers to promote equal opportunity for women in employment and to establish the office of Director of Affirmative Action.

1987

Equal Employment Opportunity (Commonwealth Authorities) Act, required certain Commonwealth authorities to promote equal opportunity in employment for women and persons in designated groups.

1988

'A say, a choice, a fair go: the Federal Government's National Agenda for Women' was released.

1990

Carmen Lawrence, Premier of Western Australia, the first woman Premier in Australia.

Lawrence Government the first to have five women cabinet ministers simultaneously—Carmen Lawrence, Kay Hallahan, Yvonne Henderson, Pamela Beggs and Pamela Buchanan.

International Labour Organisation Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities ratified by the Australian Government. This aimed to enable those who were employed, or wished to be employed, to work without discrimination or conflict between their employment and family responsibilities.

1992

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs completed its inquiry in Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Women in Australia and published its report *Half Way to Equal*.

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 provisions relating to sexual harassment strengthened and extended to industrial awards.

1993

Women—Shaping and Sharing the Future: the New National Agenda for Women, 1993—2000 was released.

The National Strategy on Violence against Women released.

Cheryl Edwardes, MLA, appointed as first female Attorney-General in Western Australia.

1994

Report by the Chief Justice's Taskforce on Gender Bias in the Law.

Tenth anniversary of the Sex Discrimination Act and the announcement of significant changes to improve the effectiveness of the Act.

1995

Domestic Violence Prevention Unit established to coordinate the Western Australian Government response to domestic violence following recommendations of the Family and Domestic Violence Task Force.

1996

Workplace Relations Act provided the framework for industrial relations law in the federal system and included provisions to help prevent and eliminate discrimination on the grounds of race or colour, sex, sexual preference, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, family responsibilities, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin. The Act also covered equal pay for work of equal value without discrimination based on sex.

Patricia Giles, Senator for Western Australia 1983-93, appointed President of the International Alliance of Women.

Christine Wheeler appointed to the Supreme Court bench

1997

Women's Service Guild (having dropped the plural from its name in 1993) closed. It is remembered in *The Women's Service Guild Research Scholarship* to promote and support research in medicine and associated fields intended to particularly benefit women and children in Western Australia.

Child Care Payments Act provided for payments in respect of child care.

Restraining Orders Act allowed telephone applications for violence restraining orders.

1998

The Acts Amendment (Abortion) Act, known as the Davenport Bill, passed both houses of State parliament in May to reform the abortion laws. The Bill, voted for on conscience, was introduced after two Perth doctors were charged on February 10 with attempting to procure an abortion.

Freedom From Fear, a community education campaign regarding domestic violence launched.

State Living Treasures: Kira Bousloff, Alice Carrard, Margaret Ford, Elizabeth Jolley and Queenie McKenzie named as five of the first eleven living treasures.

Elizabeth Jolley, author, conferred Professor in Creative Writing, Curtin University.

1999

Centenary of Women's Suffrage in Western Australia.