

Women-Quota Policy In Australian Labor Party

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Abstract

Women equality recently becomes an issue globally. It becomes debatable since the issue has pro and con, both from men and women. After the women vote was implemented in Australia, government needed to balance the implementation both in public and political life. It was because when government pleased the women to stand up in the parliament, means that women have the same value like men. In 1990s, women as parliament representative became a focus issue on international and national attention. Many arguments rise said that women's interests should be represented well. They suggested that women needed to make differentiate in politics and made change in the representative. But, even the presence of women in legislature, it was still far from women-friendly. It brought the Australian Labor Party to implement the women-quota policy.

Keywords: Women-Quota Policy, Australian Labor Party, Gender Equality

A. Introduction

Decades ago, some activists of feminism arose to speak about the gender equality in society. They spoke out that the role and social position of women should be the same as men. It ran year by year and some states started to implement it in their social sectors. Many welfare states which were described themselves as a women-friendly state commonly aim to convey women's strong representation in positions of political power, as well as their high levels of participation in education and the labour market. (Kjeldstad, 2001:66-97) This women-friendly aimed to emphasize the gender equality within the state so both women and men will get the same activities and services.

Since the twentieth century in the welfare states, gender-equality has been becoming an important analysis. One of them is Australia. In the beginning, Australian government did not implement it in the whole state sectors. It was started by one of the biggest parties there which was Australian Labor Party that implementing the women's quota issue.

Why does the Australian Labor Party implement women-quota policy?

To understand the reason why does Australian Labour Party implement the women-quota policy, the writer will use two frameworks. The first one is using the function of political party which explains about the political party's functions, where party has to show its capacities, which is in political science called as function. The functions of political parties are political opinion-making, integrity, and exercising political power. another framework is the voting behaviour which explains about what is the basic idea of the people to decide the candidates—from party or independent—in an election.

B. Women-Quota Policy Implementation in Australian Labor Party

The implementation of women-quota policy by the Australian Labour Party brought a changing to the women's role and position inside the government. In all decision making process, women could speak their mind whether in small scale or big scale—both national and international system.

The efforts of Australian Labour Party brought success in 1903 when a year before, the Commonwealth Electoral Act passed the rights for women to vote and to be voted. Since then, women's involvement in the parliament had increased eventhough the first women could sit in the parliament in 1943.

Some facts in Chapter III were showing that women could hold the position as the decision maker. Then later in 1994, the Australian Labor Party decided to implement the women-quota policy in its political party structure. It gives more changes to women to participate as the decision maker. There were some reasons why finally the Australian Labour Party proposed that policy.

The United Nations' Conventions

Before the Australian Labor Party finally decided to propose the women-quota policy, the government gave an important role for the party. The input of decision was from the Women's Liberation Movement before 1972 when finally Australian government ratified the Equal Pay Case. Meanwhile the United Kingdom and New Zealand were as environment actors that gave influence to the input later when the Australian government ratified another issue by the United Nations.

That step of government eased the party and gave an indirect support for the party to give more seat for the women. In the case of women-quota policy that implemented by the Australian Labor Party, the environment here came from many ways, whether from international scale or domestic scale. The Australian Labor Party as one of biggest party in Australia saw some chances since Australian government recognised the existence of women's role in the decision making process. After giving the recognition to women, the government sure need to stabilise the condition and improve the involvement of women.

The development of women equality in Australia long after the Commonwealth Franchise Act issued in 1902 could be seen in 1972 when the Equal Pay Case was implemented in Australia. It gave chance to women to receive an equal pay like men based on their work value, without

forgetting the women's must on their family or children. Three years after that, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) issued by the United Nations. The convention actually was the result from the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City. The convention was giving women their rights to participate both in public life and political opportunity—to elect and to be elected. Australia ratified it on 28th July 1983. It gave more light for women to stand in the decision making process. Another act that ratified by Australia is the Sex Discrimination Act in 1984 that have been issued by the United Kingdom in 1975. The Sex Discrimination Act eased women to get a better opportunity to stay working instead of maternity leave—pregnancy, family matter, breastfeeding, or marital status.

Those conventions and act eased the Australian Labor Party to support more about women's rights. Women gave more attention to the politics since the government supported women to keep their existence without leaving their responsibilities toward family or themselves.

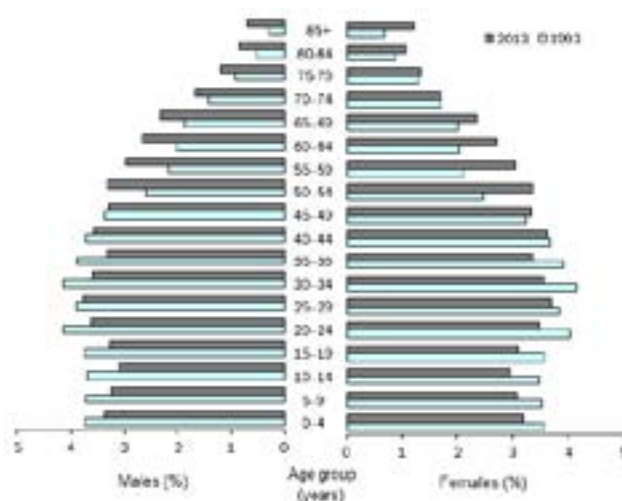
Based on Gough Whitlam's words that taken as the Australian Labor Party's platform to promote the equality, it means that sexual identity does not really matter whether on public or political position since both men and women have the same value and automatically there should be no sexual harassment.

Since women got more attention from the government, Australian Labor Party gave more chance for women to participate and involve in the decision making process. There was an increasing of women's involvement in the parliament since the implementation of the Commonwealth Franchise Act in 1902 and the first women who was chosen as Parliament member in 1943.

The Functions of Political Party

As one of the biggest party in Australia, Labor Party has to attract more voters in every election where it shows that the party still being trusted by the people. If we look at the graphic of population below, there is a balance between men and women population in Australia.

Population Structure, Age and sex - Australia - 1993 and 2013



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistic

When the Labor Party finally decided to implements the quota policy, means Labor Party aimed at attracting the voters especially women, since both men and women have the same right to choose.

However, Labor Party needs capacities, which is called as functions in political science, to get more attention from women. The first function is the political opinion-making where Labor Party articulate or express the women's expectation, when the party propose women as the candidates means it gives a chance for the other women to speak their interests to the government.

The second function is integrity. Labor Party gives more opportunity to implement the quota policy since the government ratified some conventions of the United Nations specialised for women, such as the Equal Pay Case, CEDAW, and Sex Discrimination Act. Those conventions are implemented inside the state as laws. The aim of government and Labor Party is same, to equal the right of women both in public and politics.

The third function is exercising political power where Labor Party participates in the general election to gain charge in the government. The other two functions above are the way to attract more voters especially women since Labor Party implements women-quota policy which is used as the strategy of political party. Besides that, Labor Party has to consider the Australian voting behaviour.

C. Voting Behavior in Australia

All citizens in democratic state have the right to vote the candidates from political parties, and to be voted as the candidate. The reason they vote for their government can be analysed by their voting behaviour. The first is through psychosocial model. Australian citizens especially women will probably look back on their history when all women were not allowed to involve in every decision making process. It brought the Australian Labor Party to support women vote even before the Federal state of Australia established in 1901. Until then in 1902 the Commonwealth Electoral Act agreed to give the right to vote for women in Australia. It means women have allowed to vote and to be voted. Besides that distal factor, there is proximal factor that can be analysed by the issue. If we look at the timeline in Chapter III, women have started to take many important seats in both parliament and minister since 1973. It shows that women's capacity and capability are not weak. This matter reinforced women for having a willingness to take seat in the decision making process.

Another analysis is through the rational choice. This rational choice behaviour figures that both political party and the voters stand based on their interests. The women-quota policy is specialised to attract the non-conservative citizens, especially women since the Australian Labor Party's platform is to "promote equality, to involve the people of Australia in decision-making processes of our land, and to liberate the talents and uplift the horizons of the Australian people". (The Australian Labor Party official website - <http://www.alp.org.au/about>)

The interest of many women in Australia is to support women to sit in the government. It shows on the result of election below:

The percentage of women candidates for Senate by parties from 1983 to 2010:

Election year	Political party						
	DEM %	ALP %	LIB* %	NAT %	GRN+ %	Others %	Total—all parties %
1983	32.3	27.5	11.8	17.7	0	15.6	19.2
1984	34.6	25.0	22.6	25.0	0	26.8	26.7
1987	28.0	23.9	23.4	28.0	50.0	27.8	26.7
1990	52.2	25.0	19.2	18.2	56.3	26.1	29.6
1993	52.2	21.4	22.6	30.0	55.0	29.2	31.6
1996	36.0	48.0	32.1	42.9	64.7	29.4	34.9
1998	28.0	40.7	39.3	22.2	61.9	26.0	30.7
2001	46.2	48.0	22.6	37.5	54.5	27.2	32.6
2004	63.6	44.0	28.6	27.3	56.7	25.2	32.4
2007	33.3	55.5	40.7	10.0	58.6	33.2	36.8
2010	35.7	48.3	30.4	50.0	71.4	29.9	35.5

The percentage of women candidates for the House of Representative by parties from 1983 to 2010:

Election year	Political party							
	DEM %	ALP %	LIB* %	LNP %	NAT %	GRN+ %	Others %	All parties %
1983	23.3	16.0	8.2	-	3.0	-	23.0	17.0
1984	26.8	12.2	11.4	-	9.7	-	23.8	17.4
1987	35.7	17.6	8.7	-	4.8	-	18.6	17.8
1990	27.1	12.8	14.1	-	12.8	39.3	16.0	17.8
1993	25.0	17.7	15.0	-	13.4	46.0	25.9	23.6
1996	34.7	20.3	25.6	-	6.5	42.2	26.5	27.9
1998	28.4	34.5	23.0	-	15.6	46.3	21.7	27.0
2001	36.7	38.7	17.9	-	30.3	48.0	16.4	27.7
2004	35.2	30.7	23.7	-	20.8	46.2	21.4	27.5
2007	37.2	30.0	23.1	-	25.0	38.7	19.6	25.8
2010	12.0	31.3	20.7	20.0	6.3	41.3	24.0	27.1

Source: Dr Joy McCann and Janet Wilson, *Representation of Women in Australian Parliaments*, 7 March 2012.

The total of women in Parliament since 1943:

Senate			House of Representatives			Both Houses		
Total	Female	% Female	Total	Female	% Female	Total	Female	% Female
547	80	14.6	1093	86	7.9	1595	162	10.2

Source: *The Parliament of Australia (Mc Cann and Janet Wilson)*

That shows there are only 10.2 percent or 162 women who have involved in the Parliament from the total Member of Parliament since the women vote has been implemented in 1902, and it marked in 1943 when the first women could take seat in the Commonwealth Parliament.

The Australian Labor Party uses this issue to rise women into the government since both have the same interest. It is also related to the platform of the Australian Labor Party that does not want to be a conservative party. The tables above show the increasing of total of women who involve in both parliaments before implementing the women-quota policy and after proposing the policy. It proofs that the Australian Labor Party also uses this policy to attract more women to involve in the parliament, and automatically, the other women give more support to the party since many women candidates inside the party.

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