



Teacher Resource

Women in Parliament

Focus Questions

Discuss the BTN story as a class and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following:

1. Name one woman who is currently in Australian parliament?
2. Which Australian state was the first in the world to let women run for election?
3. Who were the first women to be elected to federal parliament in Australia?
4. Who was Australia's first female prime minister? When was she elected?
5. Why is it important to have women in parliament? Give one reason.

Activity: What do you see, think and wonder?

Students will watch the BTN Women in Parliament story, then respond to the following questions:

- What did you SEE in this video?
- What do you THINK about what you saw in this video?
- What did you LEARN from this story?
- What QUESTIONS do you have?

Activity: Ask a Question

Do you have a question about women in parliament that you would like to ask as a class? Send it into the PEO's [Your questions on notice](#)

Below are some examples from the PEO's "Your Questions on Notice"

"Have there been any female speakers?" – [Response](#)

"Did any women contribute to the Constitution or was it mainly aimed at men at the time it was written?" – [Response](#)



EPISODE 12

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KEY LEARNING

Students will learn about significant political milestones for Australian women.

CURRICULUM

HASS – Year 3 and 4

Pose questions to investigate people, events, places and issues.

HASS – Year 5

Examine different viewpoints on actions, events, issues and phenomena in the past and present

HASS – Year 6

Examine different viewpoints on actions, events, issues and phenomena in the past and present.

History – Year 6

Experiences of Australian democracy and citizenship, including the status and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, migrants, women and children.

The contribution of individuals and groups to the development of Australian society since Federation.

Civics and Citizenship – Year 6

The responsibilities of electors and representatives in Australia's democracy.

Activity: Historical Timeline

After watching the BTN story students will research and identify key events and people in the history of women in Australian parliament. Students will then create a timeline showing their research. Students will need Post-it notes, pens, pencils and pieces of paper (A3 or long lengths of paper) to record their findings.

In small groups, students will draft their timelines using Post-it notes to record each key event or significant person in the history of women in politics. Students will move the Post-it notes around as necessary and once dates are confirmed write them into their timeline posters. Students will include a title, photos and captions on their timelines.

Students will research the history of women in politics and decide what should or should not be included in the timeline. Below is a list of important Australian milestones for students to research.

Key Milestones in Australia	Who and/or when?
When were women given the right to vote ?	
When could women stand for federal election ?	
Who and when was the first woman elected to state parliament ?	
Who and when was the first woman elected to federal parliament ?	
Who and when was the first woman elected to the office of Speaker ?	
Who and when was the first woman to lead a state or territory government ?	
Who and when was the first woman appointed governor-general ?	
Who and when was the first female prime minister ?	
Who and when was the first female Indigenous federal parliamentarian ?	
How many seats in the House of Representatives are held by women? Compare over the years.	
How many seats in the Senate are held by women? Compare over the years.	

Students will present their information on a timeline and respond to one or more of the following research questions:

- Find 1-3 interesting facts about each significant event on your timeline. Why are they significant?
- Which events on the timeline do you think are especially significant? Why?
- How has the representation of women in Australian politics changed over time? Use a graph to show your findings.
- Why is it important to have gender representation in government?
- Who were the suffragettes?

Activity: Biography

Students will research and write a biography of an Australian woman in politics exploring her life, career, achievements, and impact. Before they begin their biographies, discuss what students already know about biographies. What type of information is included in a biography and what do they tell us about a person.

Class Discussion

Use the questions below to get a class discussion started with your students about biographical writing.

- What does a biography tell us about a person?
- Where can you look to find information for your biographical writing? Why is it important to use more than one source of information?
- What makes a biography interesting? For example, key information and facts, a timeline of events, photographs, illustrations and quotes.



Create your Biography

Using the biography worksheet at the end of this activity, students will research and record information.

Some possible areas of research include:

- When and where was she born? Describe her family life growing up.
- What were some of her achievements? Choose one to explore in more detail.
- What inspired her to enter politics?
- What were some challenges that she faced and how did she overcome them?
- What contributions did she make to Australian society?
- What do you admire about her?
- Interesting facts about her.

Further Investigation

Interview

- Imagine you could sit down and talk to the person. What questions would you ask about her life and achievements?
- In pairs, students can role play the interview – one taking on the role of interviewer, the other, as the person.

Portrait

- Create a portrait of the person.
- Think about expressions, symbolism, and colours that reflect the person, their values, and their impact.
- Explore and experiment with different techniques and mediums.
- Organise a class exhibition.

Timeline

- Create a timeline of important events in their life.
- What are some of the key events in her life? Write a summary for one key event, which answers the 5 W's – Who, What, Where, When and Why?

Activity: Listening and Responding

As a class visit the [ABC Fierce Girls](#) website to find stories of trailblazing Australian women in politics who've made an extraordinary contribution to society, including:



Julia Gillard — the girl who became Australian Prime Minister.
(Source: [ABC Fierce Girls](#))



Edith Cowan — the girl who changed the rules.
(Source: [ABC Fierce Girls](#))



Nova Peris — the girl who won gold in two sports then got elected to parliament.
(Source: [ABC Fierce Girls](#))

After listening to one or more of the podcasts discuss what your student's reactions are to the story and how it made them feel.

- What is your initial response to her story?
- How did the stories about her life make you feel?
- What challenges did she face?
- What important achievements did she make?
- How did she contribute to society?
- What question would you like to ask?

Useful Websites

- [Record-breaking number of women to enter Australian parliament](#) – ABC News
- [Australian Women in Politics](#) – BTN
- [First women in parliament](#) – National Museum Australia
- [Women's suffrage](#) – National Museum Australia
- [1943: First women in Australian parliament](#) – National Museum Australia (Digital Classroom)
- [Australia's first women parliamentarians](#) – Parliament of Australia
- [Edith Cowan](#) – BTN
- [Nova Peris](#) – BTN

BIOGRAPHY

Name

Born

Family

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