



## PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER  
PRESENTATION OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE BANNER  
THE LODGE - 8 MARCH 1988**

---

Margaret Reynolds,  
Jim Kirk,  
Edith Hall.

I am happy to see this banner handed over to the women of Australia today.

Its significance is far greater than its historical importance.

It reminds us that Australian women have conducted a struggle for equality of opportunity over more than eight decades.

And just as Australian women were in the forefront of the achievement of franchise rights in the first decade of this century, they are still trailblazing as we approach the twenty-first century.

Because since the Suffrage march in 1908, for which this banner was painted, Australian women have continued marching - in figurative and in literal terms.

And if the women who marched in 1908 could see how far their cause has progressed today, I believe they could only be impressed.

The women's movement is a story of progress from the margins to the mainstream - from rejection to acceptance as a legitimate and indeed an invaluable force for change and reform of Australian society.

Australian women were trailblazers in their fight for social reform. They led the world by winning the right to vote in Federal elections in 1902.

There was perhaps a lull in social reform for women after the Second World War that lasted until the '60s.

004900

But when the Women's liberation movement did arrive, it came as an intense and sophisticated political movement.

Since coming to power my Government has kept up the momentum of change. We are constantly developing policies and programs to help improve their status in all spheres of society - whether they choose to live and work in the home or to pursue a career in the paid workforce.

Only last week, I had the honour of launching the National Agenda for Women, which sets out the Government's achievements to date and our strategy for the future. It is the most detailed, practical and comprehensive strategy ever produced by an Australian government to achieve equality of opportunity in Australia.

I believe it will be remembered as one of my Government's most important achievements. It further opens the way to a more adequate utilisation of the economic potential of women; and it represents as well a substantial demonstration of our commitment to fairness and equality of opportunity in our society.

In preparing the National Agenda, this Government sought the views of Australian women to an unprecedented extent and we are responding, to an equally unprecedented degree, to their expressed needs.

The National Agenda provides detailed action plans for the next five years and specific objectives to take us through to the end of the century.

The National Women's Consultative Council played a large part in the National Agenda consultations, conducting meetings and inviting submissions.

The Council is the Government's major means of consulting with Australian women. I take this opportunity to applaud the efforts of its members and to pay tribute to the tireless commitment of its convenor Edith Hall.

I believe that just as the women who marched in the Women's Suffrage march in 1908 were part of a movement that is a historical watershed for women so too will the National Agenda for Women be seen as an historical milestone for future Australians.

This banner is a tangible symbol of the earlier struggles for Suffrage. Today, it serves to remind us that while a great deal of progress has been made, much more still remains to be done.

\*\*\*\*\*