

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

# Study Tour Report

The Hon. Gabrielle Upton

## “ON THE RECORD” - BUILDING KNOW-HOW FOR NEW WOMEN MPs



June 2023

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## OVERVIEW

Women MPs should be better supported in a practical way when they first enter the NSW Parliament. The NSW Parliament, like other Australian parliaments, have traditionally been male-dominated institutions. Their structure and the stereotypes of politicians and politics reflect this, and it has led to a masculine culture being reflected in parliaments' practices and conventions<sup>1</sup>. Although there have been some recent positive workplace changes, this legacy makes parliaments challenging environments for women MPs to work in and succeed<sup>2</sup>.

There is general acknowledgement that a critical mass of women MPs in parliaments would lead to cultural change and make them better places for women to work<sup>3</sup>. This is an important target that must be pursued by all political parties and the electorate. In the meantime, however, a practical induction program for new women MPs in the first three months of a new parliament would better equip them for the everyday reality of their role.

Such a program would help them navigate the unique parliamentary culture, practices and conventions and also build fellowship between women and across the chamber. Importantly, it would ensure that new women MPs make the most of the unique opportunity to serve their communities<sup>4</sup>.

As an additional feature, an All Party Women's Committee should also be established as a formal standing committee of the NSW Parliament. Bipartisan standing committees are commonly found in other Commonwealth jurisdictions and have proven effective in allowing issues across the NSW community, including those relevant to women MPs, to be examined with a gender-sensitive lens.

Although the recommendations in this Report are made to the NSW Parliament, they are equally worthy of strong consideration by other Australian Parliaments.

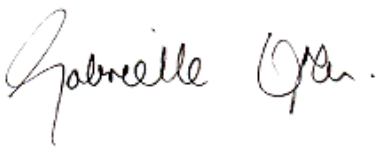
## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendation 1

Introduce a practical induction program for new women MPs within the first three months of a new NSW Parliament.

### Recommendation 2

Establish an All Party Women's Committee as a formal standing committee of the NSW Parliament.



**The Hon Gabrielle Upton**

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<sup>1</sup> The Australian Human Rights Commission "Set the Standard: Report on the Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces", 30 November 2021, reported testimony that the absence of women in senior roles in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces leads to a 'male-dominated and testosterone-fuelled culture dominating', page 15

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, The Australian Human Rights Commission noted testimony that institutional structures, processes and practices across Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces devalue women and consequently foster gendered misconduct

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, the Commission's recommendation 4 proposes a 10-year strategy to achieve gender balance among parliamentarians, page 20

<sup>4</sup> This Report does not purport to be a comprehensive study or a contribution to the academic literature. Rather, it is a practitioner's contribution to the thinking on initiatives that would better equip new women MPs for their roles

## STUDY TOUR SCOPE

To understand the possible models for a practical induction program and other initiatives to equip new women MPs I undertook a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association study tour from 2-17 March 2023.

During the study tour I met with the following organisations that are described in more detail in the Overview of Study Tour Participants section of the Report.

### Massachusetts, United States

- Barbara Lee Foundation
- Caucus of Women Legislators, Massachusetts State House
- Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
- Law School, Harvard University

### Ottawa, Canada

- Australian High Commission in Canada
- Business Council of Canada
- Equal Voice Canada Foundation
- Parliament of Canada
- Public Law Centre, University of Ottawa

### London, United Kingdom

- Australian High Commission in London
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Headquarters
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK, Westminster - Seminar on 'Effective Parliaments'
- Global Institute for Women's Leadership, King's College London
- Queen Mary, University of London
- Royal Holloway College, University of London
- UK Parliament
- University College London
- The Britain-Australia Society

## BACKGROUND

### Women in Australian Parliaments

The NSW Legislative Assembly was the first continuously sitting parliament in Australia, with its Members being directly elected since 1856. However, it was not until 1925 that Millicent Preston-Stanley was elected as the Parliament's first female MP. Despite an increase in the representation of women in the NSW Parliament since that time, the total percentage of women MPs has rarely exceeded 30%<sup>5</sup>. Regrettably, the low level of women's representation in the Parliament is not unique to NSW<sup>6</sup>. It has been said that while Australia was a pioneer in women's policy machinery, the gender equality parliamentary 'architecture' has always been weak<sup>7</sup>.

The complex and sometimes invisible organisational barriers that can inhibit women's success have been called the 'glass labyrinth'<sup>8</sup>. The 'glass labyrinth' is represented by the various pathways to top leadership which can bring both expected and unexpected challenges. The use of the term 'labyrinth' acknowledges that women can navigate a pathway and that successful leadership is ultimately possible. If the various barriers that make up the labyrinth are understood, and how some women find their way around through, their overall experience can be improved. The barriers identified include potential resistance to women's leadership in terms of style and authenticity and women's

<sup>5</sup> NSW Parliamentary Research Service Briefing Paper No 3/2018 (2018), "Women in Parliament", page 8

<sup>6</sup>[https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/FlagPost/2022/May/Gender\\_composition\\_of\\_state\\_and\\_territory\\_parliaments](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2022/May/Gender_composition_of_state_and_territory_parliaments)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.aspg.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Session-8-Prof.-Marian-Sawer-Gender-representation-in-parliament.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://hbr.org/2007/09/women-and-the-labyrinth-of-leadership>

general underinvestment in building networks and social capital. Parliaments, governments and political parties at a whole of organisational level<sup>9</sup> could take further steps to lower these barriers<sup>10</sup>, however, these matters are outside the scope of this Report.

Although parliamentary culture and conventions have changed to better support women MPs in certain aspects of their roles, others have not. As the number of women MPs has grown, parliaments across Australia have evolved their workplace practices, for example, by allowing children in the chamber and introducing more family friendly hours<sup>11</sup>. These changes are important but are not sufficient to retain and increase the number of women MPs in Australian politics<sup>12</sup>. The traditionally combative and divisive nature of the parliamentary chamber is an example of the culture that has not materially changed. It can be a daunting experience for new MPs, especially for women<sup>13 14</sup>. Sharing tips and tools for navigating the chamber through a practical induction program would better prepare women for this experience.

## Preparing Women to Run for Political Office

There are well established programs preparing women to run for political office. An example is the *Pathways to Politics* program<sup>15</sup>, an initiative of the Trawalla Foundation, Women's Leadership Institute Australia and the University of Melbourne and delivered in partnership with state and territory-based universities. Another program is the *Equip Course* run by Women for Election<sup>16</sup>. However, there is no practical induction program specifically catering for new women MPs and this gap should be filled.

## NSW Parliament New MP Training

The role of an MP has three main parts – a parliamentarian, constituency representative and a member of a political party. It is a unique and complex role requiring both governance and executive skills. There are no formal job requirements, so MPs bring diverse skills and experience to the role, and many have steep learning curves<sup>17</sup>.

Before the sittings begin for a new term of government, the NSW Parliament runs a two day induction program for all new MPs, which mainly focusses on legal, procedural and administrative matters. It is an important program which has grown in its scope but does not seek to apply a gender-sensitive lens or address the culture and conventions of the Parliament. Historically, that knowledge is acquired on the job by MPs and sometimes learnt the hard way, through making mistakes.

Professional development courses for MPs have been offered through the Parliament in recent years, often in a piecemeal way, and the participation rate is relatively low. Examples of such programs include those offered by Next25<sup>18</sup> and the McKinnon Institute for Political Leadership<sup>19</sup>.

A practical induction program that prepares new women MPs for their role would increase their effectiveness in navigating the day-to-day challenges of the Parliament. The program should include information on parliamentary

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<sup>9</sup> For example, suggestions to prevent the use of gender-based heckling include implementing preventative or disciplinary sanctions in legislatures such as training and using camera angles to identify and remove hecklers from the House of Commons in Canada (2019), *Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women- Elect Her: A Roadmap for Improving the Representation of Women in Canadian Politics*, page 67

<sup>10</sup> The point has been made, for example, that induction programs run by parliaments for all new MPs would benefit from a gender-specific lens. This was raised by the Hon Julia Gillard AC, (Chair, Global Institute for Women's Leadership, Kings College London) in our conversation on 28 April 2023

<sup>11</sup> NSW Parliamentary Research - Women in Parliament – Briefing Paper No 3/2018

[https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Documents/Women%20in%20Parliament\\_FINAL\\_19NOV2018.pdf](https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Documents/Women%20in%20Parliament_FINAL_19NOV2018.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Dixon, R, Jackson K, McLeod M (2022), *Representing Care: Towards a More Family-Friendly Parliament*, Pathways to Politics

<sup>13</sup> The Australian Human Rights Commission "Set the Standard: Report on the Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces", 30 November 2021 recommended that the Standing Orders and unwritten parliamentary conventions including their application in practice should be reviewed with a view to eliminating language, behaviour and practices that are sexist or otherwise exclusionary and discriminatory and improve safety and respect in the parliamentary chambers, Recommendation 10, page 21

<sup>14</sup> It has been observed that gender-based heckling affected women's parliamentary performance and reduced their willingness to participate in debates. See House of Commons Canada (2019), *Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women- Elect Her: A Roadmap for Improving the Representation of Women in Canadian Politics*, page 67. See The Fawcett Society (2023), *"A House for Everyone: The Case for Modernising Parliament"*, page 40

<sup>15</sup> [pathwaystopolitics.org.au](https://pathwaystopolitics.org.au)

<sup>16</sup> <https://wfe.org.au/#POWER>

<sup>17</sup> The Australian Human Rights Commission noted that many people who come to leaderships roles in the Commonwealth parliamentary workplace do so without the people-leadership skills that would be expected in other sectors, page 16

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.next25.org.au/leadership>

<sup>19</sup> <https://mckinnoninstitute.org.au/>

practices and conventions, practical tips and hands-on training including speaking in the chamber. It should also prepare women MPs for responding to the harassment, abuse or intimidation, often through social media, that they more commonly experience than men<sup>20</sup>. It could guide them on the practical steps to follow to decrease the likelihood of experiencing those behaviours and give them ideas on how to respond should an incident regrettably occur<sup>21</sup>. The program would also build fellowship between the new women MPs and create support networks for them across the Parliament.

The program should also encourage women MPs (as it should be for all MPs) to think about their parliamentary career as a transitory one<sup>22</sup>. Although eight years is the average term of a parliamentary career, an MP's career can end abruptly through circumstances unique to the role, including losing their seat at an election.

## Parliamentary Committees and Women's Caucuses

Through the study tour, two types of specialised parliamentary bodies focussed on women and women's issues were identified - standing committees of the parliament and women's caucuses. They play different roles in promoting gender equality and applying a gender lens to legislation, policy and workplace practices and conventions. They can be a source of supportive networks for women MPs<sup>23</sup> and provide additional access for women's organisations to the legislative process<sup>24</sup>. The effectiveness of these specialised parliamentary bodies seemed to depend on the specific nature of the parliamentary culture and the relative strength of its party adversarialism<sup>25</sup>.

Unlike NSW, Canada and the United Kingdom have All Party Women's Committees that are a formal part of the Parliament's organisational structure. The UK has the Women and Equalities Select Committee established in 2015 which seeks to hold the Government to account on cross-departmental work on equality policy and law. It has 11 backbench members from the Conservative, Labour and Scottish National Parties<sup>26</sup>. The Canadian Parliament has the Standing Committee on the Status of Women established in 2004 as a separate committee to examine women's issues. It has 11 members from across the Liberal, Conservative, Bloc Québécois and New Democratic Parties<sup>27</sup>.

The NSW Parliament should establish a standing committee on women's issues along the lines of its existing NSW Joint Statutory Committee on Children and Young People<sup>28</sup>. Such a committee would allow for issues within the Parliament, and those affecting women across the NSW community including MPs, to be examined with a specific gender lens and in a bipartisan way. It could also help publicise and celebrate the achievements of women, including in politics, thereby creating a positive feedback loop.

Another way to have women's issues and organisational barriers elevated in the legislative and policy agenda in Parliament is through a 'women's caucus'. Women's parliamentary caucuses can be either a cross-party type or a single-party type. They allow women to share information, ideas and resources, and build consensus on issues and connections between women MPs and the broader community in an informal way. They can also provide mentoring opportunities for women MPs.

The functions of a women's caucus seem to be determined by the political composition of a parliament. If a parliament has a dominant representation from one political party, it can have a broad range of functions like the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators, from an agreed strategic legislative and policy agenda, to a united voice on workplace issues, through to mentorship and fellowship. However, if the political composition of a parliament is fragmented, as is the case in the UK and Canada, the women's caucuses have a narrower range of

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<sup>20</sup> Global Institute for Women's Leadership London and Westminster Foundation of Democracy (2021), *Women Political Leaders: the Impact of Gender on Democracy*, page 40

<sup>21</sup> For example, the Minerva Network that supports professional women athletes on and off the field, runs 'social media protection' workshops for their members @ <https://www.minervanetwork.com.au/about>. The UK Local Government Association has online resources and guides that support elected councillors @ <https://www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-handling-harassment-abuse-and-intimidation>

<sup>22</sup> <https://new.parliament.vic.gov.au/49e8f9/globalassets/images/news/library-papers/transitioninglifeafterparliament.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> ChatGPT-4's response to the question "How can we make sure women in parliament are more successful?" See 'ChatGPT Response' Schedule of this Report.

<sup>24</sup> Global Institute for Women's Leadership London and the Westminster Foundation of Democracy (2021), *Women Political Leaders: the Impact of Gender on Democracy*, page 30

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.aspg.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Session-8-Prof.-Marian-Sawer-Gender-representation-in-parliament.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/328/women-and-equalities-committee/role/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/FEWO/About>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/listofcommittees/Pages/committees.aspx>

functions, such as a voice on parliament workplace issues. These types of women’s caucuses can also lack continuity and stability over time, and some have fallen into disrepair<sup>29</sup>.

## STUDY TOUR OBSERVATIONS

This section of the Report summarises observations from the study tour.

### MASSACHUSETTS, UNITED STATES

#### **Barbara Lee Foundation**

For over 20 years the Barbara Lee Foundation<sup>30</sup> has conducted nonpartisan research on women in politics. The Foundation’s work is guided by the core belief that women’s voices strengthen democracy.

My discussions with the Foundation’s Executive Director Amanda Hunter were on the practical obstacles that women encounter in politics. The Foundation’s research highlights that there are evidenced based differences between the experiences of women and men MPs in their roles and the public’s expectations of them.

Some of the key findings of the Foundation’s research are that women are held to a higher standard than men in two key areas – qualifications and likeability. Women need to be both confident and competent and they need to provide more evidence of their expertise than men do – that is, women need to ‘show’, whereas men can ‘tell’. Appearance (look and style) also plays a role in building likeability for women in a way that is does not for men.

The research suggests that a program with practical tools and tips specifically for new women MPs would assist them when they enter parliament.

#### **Commonwealth of Massachusetts - Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators**

The *Massachusetts State House* is the State’s capital and the seat of government for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators was established in 1923 and its stated role is to enhance the economic status and equality of women and encourage and support women in all levels of government. Caucus members are made up of any woman legislator who has taken the oath of office and is currently serving as a member of the Massachusetts Senate or House of Representatives.

The Caucus was founded in April 1975 by 14 women from the House of Representatives driven by a desire to pass the state Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and to build a general sense of camaraderie. Members of the group frequently supported each other on the floor of the parliament by relinquishing their debate time for one another despite the issue or position and by giving their undivided attention to a woman speaking at the rostrum.

The Caucus supported a small number of bills and met frequently with state visitors and dignitaries. However, the bulk of the Caucus’ activity focussed on their strategy on the ERA. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, new issues were added to their agenda: affirmative action, domestic violence, sexual harassment, firearms and services for the elderly. The remainder of the 1980s saw their interest grow in the areas of health care, pregnant and parenting teens, surrogacy, gender bias in courts, discrimination and women in the criminal justice system. The 1990s were dominated by a focus on domestic violence, welfare reform and economic empowerment. In recent years, the Caucus has not only supported bills, but also budget items in line with its priority issues and the areas of interest of its various task forces.

For the current 2023-2024 legislative session, the Caucus Co-Chairs are Senator Joan B. Lovely and Representative Hannah Kane and their agreed strategic and practical priorities are as follows:

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<sup>29</sup> Anecdotal evidence shared by various Canadian and UK MPs

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.barbaraleefoundation.org/>

- Empowering Women in Government: fostering opportunities for women to engage in government and identifying and dismantling hurdles that prevent women from engaging in the political process.
- Elevating Women’s Economic Opportunity & Eliminating Barriers: supporting policies to create additional opportunities for women, supporting women in non-traditional employment sectors and encouraging entrepreneurship.
- Addressing Racial and Gender Disparities in Health Care: better understanding disparities, raising awareness and advocating for more accessible, equitable health care.

The Caucus currently has 63 members and a 12 member Board of Directors that agrees the strategic priorities. The Caucus’ success and longevity may well be a result of the fact that the Parliament is dominated by representatives from one political party (Democrats) and the relatively larger number of women in the Parliament – 31.5% (with 51 members in the House of Representatives (32%) and 12 members in the State Senate (30%))<sup>31</sup>.

More information on the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators and the Women in Massachusetts Legislature 2023-2024 Session is in the Study Tour Participants Schedule of this Report.

### **Dr Diane Rosenfeld, Founding Director of the Gender Violence Program and Lecturer on Law, Harvard Law School**

Dr Diane Rosenfeld<sup>32</sup> is a distinguished academic who writes and teaches in the area of violence against women. She received her LLM from Harvard Law School and served as Senior Counsel to the Office of Violence Against Women of the US Department of Justice. She also served as an Executive Assistant Attorney General in Illinois where she provided legal policy advice on women’s rights.

Dr Rosenfeld argues that strong female-to-female alliances are the single thing that will stop male sexual coercion. She also believes in the importance of women networking, mentoring and third-party endorsements for one another to strengthen their collective efforts. Dr Rosenfeld contends that the single biggest change that would support women at work is to restructure the hierarchies to encourage participation by women who are valued for their work. Her latest book, *The Bonobo Sisterhood*<sup>33</sup>, proposes that our closest evolutionary cousins, the bonobo (pygmy chimpanzees), have a unique social order where females protect one another against male aggression and that we should learn from those practices.

I attended the Harvard College Women’s Centre International Women’s Day forum with Dr Rosenfeld where she discussed *The Bonobo Sisterhood* with the students. The Women’s Centre’s<sup>34</sup> mission is to promote gender equity by raising awareness of women’s and gender issues, developing women’s leadership and celebrating women.

### **Harvard Kennedy School – Women and Public Policy Program**

The Harvard Kennedy School’s Women and Public Policy Program (WPPP) is committed to advancing women and gender equity globally. Through research, publications, teaching and training they offer gender insights into work, politics and conflict that have the potential to reduce gender-based barriers<sup>35</sup>.

WPPP’s research demonstrates that there are a number of explanations for the lack of women in leadership roles including gender discrimination, the lack of female role models, family responsibilities and social norms and that there are three major interventions needed to address these barriers:

1. Gender quotas – Reserving political seats for women increases female electoral participation and improves governments’ responsiveness to women’s policy concerns.

<sup>31</sup> Over the life of the legislature, 234 women have served in the Parliament compared to 20,000 men.

<sup>32</sup> <https://hls.harvard.edu/faculty/diane-l-rosenfeld/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.bonobosisterhood.com/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://hwc.college.harvard.edu/about>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/wappp>



2. Modelling female leadership - Repeated exposure to female elected officials also improves the perceptions of female leaders, leads to electoral gains for women and helps adolescent girls aspire to leadership.
3. Training programs – Mentorship, media training and campaign education increase adolescent girls’ and women’s political aspiration and success.

WPPP has established the Gender Action Portal (GAP) which is a large collection of research evaluating the impact of policies, strategies and organisational practices to advance gender equity. GAP draws on multiple disciplines such as psychology, economics and organisational behaviour and uses experimental approaches to evaluate policies.

WPPP also runs evidence based training programs including the highly respected ‘From Harvard Square to the Oval Office’<sup>36</sup> which is a non-partisan, competitive annual co-curricular political training program. The program is aimed at inspiring participants to run for political office by conducting training, building their networks and connecting them with high profile role models. Topics that are covered include campaigning, media, public speaking, fundraising, polling and resilience building. The program is acknowledged as the inspiration for the Australian *Pathways to Politics* program previously mentioned.

During my visit, I was the guest speaker at a Roundtable with the 2023 ‘From Harvard Square to the Oval Office’ participants. The format was an interview by one of the participants followed by a question and answer session with all of the participants and included the following questions:

- What was needed to accelerate the pace of electing women into office?
- What are some of the biggest challenges facing women once they are elected?
- How do you build the courage to pave your own pathway in politics?

The WPPP does not provide an induction program to new women MPs akin to that proposed in this Report.

WPPP’s Co-Directors are Professor Iris Bohnet and Senior Lecturer Hannah Riley Bowles and Nicole Carter Quinn is the Executive Director. WPPP’s work is supported through individuals, corporations and organisations including the Women’s Leadership Board<sup>37</sup> who I hosted for a forum at the NSW Parliament in 2020.

## OTTAWA, CANADA

### **University of Ottawa, Public Law Centre, Faculty of Law**

Associate Professor Vanessa MacDonnell is based at the Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa and is a Co-Director of the uOttawa Public Law Centre. She researches in the areas of constitutional law, comparative constitutional law and criminal law and has a particular interest in the approach of women jurist and leadership on the judicial bench. She is also an acute observer and commentator on women in politics including the issues surrounding the resignation of Jody Wilson-Raybould, former Canadian Minister of Justice and Attorney-General, and the first indigenous woman to hold that office<sup>38</sup>.

Associate Professor MacDonnell has a particular focus on how some female judges approach their judicial reasoning and leadership – beginning with people and their experiences and being attuned to differences in power and vulnerability. This includes ensuring women’s experiences are placed at the front and centre of legal analysis. She observes that that type of judicial approach reflects a feminist theory of knowledge that is slowly gaining traction on Canada’s highest court and represents a challenge to the legal orthodoxy.

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/wappp/teaching-and-training/harvard-square-oval-office>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/wappp/womens-leadership-board>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/wilson-raybould-racist-sexist-pmo-snc-lavalin-1.5015585>

## Parliament of Canada

*Karen Vecchio – Member of Parliament for Elgin Middlesex-London – Conservative Party  
Shadow Minister Shadow Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth  
Chair – Standing Committee on the Status of Women*

MP Vecchio shared that the Conservative Party has a regular women’s caucus where women MP’s can have an open discussion on issues of concern. The caucus facilitates fellowship, confidence-building, networking, informal mentoring and enables Conservative women MPs to confidentially share their positions on various issues. It also means MPs can share ‘tips’ and ‘know-how’ on navigating their roles in Parliament including informal advice on tactics and media.

MP Vecchio also chairs the All Party Group Standing Committee on the Status of Women which is a Committee of the Parliament. The Committee studies the policies, programs, expenditures and legislation of departments and agencies that conduct work related to the status of women<sup>39</sup>. It has enabled Standing Committee members to frame policy discussion through a gender lens in a way that may not be possible in their respective party rooms. Although the Standing Committee has an all-parliament membership, it is always chaired by a member of the Opposition Party.

The Standing Committee published a seminal report in 2019 called “Elect Her: A Roadmap for Improving the Representation of Women in Canadian Politics”<sup>40</sup>

*Marie-Helene Gaudreau – Member of Parliament for Laurentides-Labelle  
Andreanne Larouche MP - Member of Parliament for Shefford, Deputy Chair - Standing Committee on the Status of Women  
Both Members of the Bloc Québécois - a Canadian federal political party devoted to Quebec nationalism and the promotion of its sovereignty*

MP Gaudreau and MP Larouche shared that the *Bloc Québécois* has a regular women MP’s caucus which provides training, capacity-building, confidence-building, networking and information sharing. One of the issues of deep concern and regular discussion for their caucus is violence against women in politics, especially online abuse.

*Ya’ara Saks MP – Member for York Centre  
Member of the Liberal Party  
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Families, Children and Social Development*

MP Saks shared that a whole of Parliament women’s caucus had failed several years ago but that efforts are underway to try to re-establish the group. One valuable purpose of such a caucus is as a convening tool to host forums on common issues of interest to women such as, for example, cervical cancer. She noted that the Parliament was politically polarised, so it would be hard to re-activate a whole of Parliament women’s caucus and even if it was, trust might be easily lost. MP Saks commented that the Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was very supportive of women into politics and that their Liberal Party had a longstanding women’s caucus which reported to the Liberal national caucus every week.

## Equal Voice

Equal Voice is a national, bilingual, member-based, bipartisan organisation which advocates for the equal representation of women in Canadian parliaments. It runs comprehensive training programs for women who want to enter politics. It also seeks to equip women to succeed in politics by advocating for legislatures that are welcoming and safe workplaces and for policy changes that result in gender-sensitive legislatures<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/FEWO?parl=44&session=1>

<sup>40</sup> House of Commons Canada (2019), “Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women- Elect Her: A Roadmap for Improving the Representation of Women in Canadian Politics”

<sup>41</sup> <https://equalvoice.ca/about/>

Equal Voice’s research reveals that women politicians may experience politics differently to men, especially legislative decorum and parliamentary rules and procedures. More women MPs than men reported gendered heckling and that it negatively affected their parliamentary performance. They also reported that legislative procedures can allow women MPs to be directly or indirectly attacked with language or unintentionally give men ‘member power’ or time to speak in the parliamentary chamber. To address these concerns Equal Voice advocates for gender-awareness training sessions and guidelines for the use of gender-sensitive language in parliaments<sup>42</sup>. Bringing a gender-sensitive lens to the regular NSW Parliament’s induction program for all new MPs could also be a way to better support new women MPs in their role.

## **LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM**

### **Kings College Global Institute for Women’s Leadership**

The Global Institute for Women’s Leadership (GIWL) at Kings College focusses on research, advocacy and practice to improve workplace gender equality and women’s leadership. The organisation seeks to create a hub for academics, activists and policymakers to network and share findings, strengthen the evidence base and translate the solutions into action.

One of GIWL’s key work streams is on women political leaders, recognising that they can inspire younger women to become involved in the political process. Their research reveals that globally women only make up 26% of national parliamentarians and highlights the difference those women can make by leading on diverse policy issues and by using a more inclusive leadership style<sup>43</sup>.

My discussions with GIWL Founder and Chair, the Hon Julia Gillard AC, and Director, Professor Rosie Campbell, focussed on their view of the stereotypes, structures and workplace issues affecting women MPs.

The point was made during discussion that a gender-sensitive lens should be applied to the way parliaments operate. This could lead to changes in parliamentary practices and process that improve the workplace for women MPs<sup>44</sup>. It was acknowledged that a practical induction program for new women MPs would be a valuable investment and would better prepare them for how the parliament works - “forewarned is forearmed”. Another benefit would be building new women MP’s networks across the parliament, akin to the networks formed during the *Pathways to Politics* program (noting that those participants may not end up serving in the same political institutions).

It was recognised that women-only parliamentary committees and caucuses are important forums for sharing information and ideas<sup>45</sup>. They can also foster a more inclusive Parliament and lead to better connections between women MPs and women’s community organisations. If they are cross-party in nature, they can also build consensus on policy issues and drive tangible outcomes for women in general.

It was noted that GIWLs’ work revealed a high level of general concern about the harassment and abuse of women politicians, particularly online. There were also serious concerns about violent attacks on several women MPs including the late Labour MP Jo Cox who was stabbed and shot multiple times in 2016 while she was working. Incidents like these lead to women being hesitant to enter and then continue in politics<sup>46</sup>.

### **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Headquarters, London**

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association’s (CPA) mission includes boosting the capacity of Commonwealth MPs and increasing their learning and development opportunities. As an example, the Westminster Seminar on

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<sup>42</sup> Equal Voice Canada & Parliament of Canada (2020), “Gender-Sensitive Legislatures Report”, page 10

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/giwl/who/case-for-change>

<sup>44</sup> Global Institute for Women’s Leadership and the Westminster Foundation of Democracy (2021), “Women Political Leaders: the Impact of Gender on Democracy”, <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/giwl/assets/women-political-leaders.pdf>, page 4

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

<sup>46</sup> UK Parliament, “Gender-Sensitive Parliament Audit 2018”, (2018), Report of the Gender-Sensitive Parliament Audit Panel to the House of Commons Commission and the House of Lords Commission

Effective Parliaments was being hosted in London from 13-17 March 2023, which I attended in part, and included session on leadership and communication skills for participating Commonwealth parliamentarians.

A CPA Alumni Pilot has been initiated as part of the CPA Strategic Plan 2022-2025 to forge stronger links with alumni MPs of Commonwealth parliaments. This will enable their continuing involvement with the CPA post-politics and for alumni MPs to share their expertise and knowledge with serving MPs.

The CPA has previously drawn on alumni as experts for programs including for the Post-election Seminars, Parliamentary Academy Courses and Technical Assistance Programs but the Alumni Pilot will transform their connection into a formal mentoring arrangement. COVID had delayed the Pilot, but the CPA is now developing a mentor list.

This is an important CPA initiative where high-level mentoring will benefit MPs across the Commonwealth, especially if MPs can choose a mentor with experience in a comparable parliament. The unique culture, processes and protocols of each Commonwealth parliament could perhaps limit the transferability of mentorship benefits. On the other hand, having a mentor based in another jurisdiction with different practices could be beneficial and better preserve MP confidentiality. One opportunity discussed would be to focus the mentorships on specific roles in the Parliament, such as the Speaker or Committee Chairs. If MPs can choose their mentors there will also be the opportunity for new women MPs to choose women alumni MPs which will be practically beneficial.

## **UK Parliament**

*Diedre Brock MP – Scottish National Party  
Member for Edinburgh North and Leith*

MP Brock shared that the Scottish National Party has quotas for women's representation within the Party. Her observation was that the UK Labour Party actively works to ensure that women are strongly represented within the Party, including through a specific women's caucus. She agreed that it would have been beneficial to have learnt about the House of Commons 'rules of the game' at the beginning of her parliamentary career, but she had built that knowledge on the job over time.

*The Rt Hon Baroness Anne Jenkin of Kennington, Conservative Party*

Together with the Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Baroness Jenkin founded Women2Win in 2005 to address the need for more female Conservative candidates and MPs. Through regular bespoke support, one-to-one mentoring, and strategic counsel, Women2Win prepares Conservative women to serve in public office<sup>47 48</sup>. The program includes practical training courses on speaking in the parliamentary chamber, social media training and mock elections. The program also gives the opportunity for the general community to learn about the potential candidates and for them to build their profile.

The Women2Win initiative was driven by fact that in 2005 there was a small number of women in the Conservative Party ranks with just 17 women MPs (9% of the parliamentary party) in the UK Parliament. The number of women MPs has now grown to over 20%.

The Conservative Party prequalifies their candidates through a rigorous central Parliamentary Assessment Centre. The Assessment Centre is designed to evaluate the competencies, skills and abilities that are the most crucial for successful candidates and holders of public office. The process quality-assures the candidates and ensures they understand what the opportunity to serve in public office entails. Successful women become an Approved Conservative Party Parliamentary Candidate, are placed on an approved list, and then participate in the Women2Win program.

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<sup>47</sup> <https://www.women2win.com/about>

<sup>48</sup> In Australia, EMILY's List serves as financial, political and personal support network for progressive Labor women and, similarly, Women's Council for the Liberal Party

Although operating before women MPs enter the UK Parliament, the Conservative Party system provides specific training and know-how the like of which should be incorporated into the recommended NSW Parliament new women MP's induction program.

*The Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller MP, Conservative Party*

*Member for Basingstoke*

*Chair, Executive Committee, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK*

Dame Maria Miller MP is a Past Chair (2015-2019) of the UK Cross-Party Women and Equalities Committee, a standing committee of the UK Parliament mentioned previously. The Committee was appointed by the House of Commons in June 2015 following on from the 2014 recommendation of the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Women in Parliament. The Committee examines the policy, administration and expenditure of the Government Equalities Office and holds the Government to account on cross-departmental work in relation to equality policy and law. It is comprised of 11 backbench MPs from the Conservative, Labour and Scottish National parties and is currently chaired by Conservative MP the Rt Hon Caroline Nokes. Committee inquiries include those on preventing violence against women and girls, menopause and the workplace, and misogyny in music.

As a long serving member of the House of Commons since 2005 and former Chair of the UK Cross-Party Women and Equalities Committee, Dame Miller observed that women MPs serve less terms in the Parliament than men (two terms for women versus three terms for men). She also raised the incidence of online abuse of women MPs that included personalised threats of physical violence towards them or their families. That abuse sometimes came in the form of trolling through anonymous social media accounts. Dame Miller's view was that the abuse was aimed at intimidating and therefore silencing women MPs, so that they could not actively contribute to politics. She believed that these instances of harassment, intimidation and abuse had a chilling effect on women's interest and retention in politics.

Partly in response, the 2022 Committee<sup>49</sup> for Conservative Party women was established to provide a monthly opportunity for them to informally discuss Party and parliamentary issues including stress-testing government policy. It is also used as a forum to discuss specific issues facing women MPs including bullying and harassment on social media.

*The Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Conservative Party*

*Member for Maidenhead in Berkshire*

Lady Theresa May MP commented that significant progress had been made for women during her time serving in the UK Parliament. For her generation, there had been a sense of competition between women to be the 'one' possible woman at the 'table' but that had largely dissipated now with more opportunities for all women.

Whilst things had improved, Lady May acknowledged that there were still challenges for women MPs. She mentioned the recent examples of the rezoning of three conservative electorates in which two female sitting MPs lost their seats where the convention was that they would have been preferred candidates for the newly created seats. At the time, one of the MPs was on maternity leave.

The UK House of Commons has a formal induction process for new MPs which is run by the Clerk and focuses on parliamentary rules and processes. Lady May commented that the informal structures of Parliament were not covered in the induction, and it was therefore easy for women MPs to fall into the trap of thinking that hard work and discipline alone would lead to their advancement. But as the Parliament was not a regular work environment, there were other factors relevant to career advancement such as an MP's relationship with the Whip's Office and the location of their electorate. She shared that she had tended to prioritise work and believed that this approach had potentially come at the cost of building her political 'networks' which may also have been helpful for advancement.

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<sup>49</sup> The '2022 Committee' is a play on the '1922 Committee' ('the 22') which is a committee of all backbench Conservative MPs that meets weekly when the House of Commons is sitting. Its chair, usually a senior MP, is elected by the committee members and has considerable influence within the Parliamentary Party

Lady May shared that she hosts Women2Win forums which created a regular safe space for Conservative women to meet and discuss the issues of the day.

### **Dr Sofia Collignon, Lecturer in Comparative Politics, Queen Mary University of London**

Dr Collignon facilitates the Go.Run.Lead Royal Holloway, University of London program for female students and staff interested in running for elected office or having a career in campaign politics. The program seeks to respond to research that shows that women who run for office experience gendered expectations and harassment and are at a fundraising disadvantage compared to their male counterparts<sup>50</sup>. The program covers what candidates need to know about running for office including campaigning, elections and voting and strategies to address the gendered aspects of the experience. The training is based on Dr Collignon's research and experience as a consultant with insights also gleaned from police and elected politicians.

Dr Collignon's research focusses on the study of political candidates, elections and parties, and, in particular, the theoretical and empirical understanding of violence towards women in politics and gendered political violence. Her studies show that harassment, intimidation and abuse is more likely experienced by women candidates than by men. It is gendered both in its motives and outcomes and has a negative electoral effect on those women and forces them to modify their campaign activities in ways that reduce their chance of gaining office<sup>51</sup>.

Regrettably, women candidates in the 2019 UK general election reported higher rates of harassment, abuse and intimidation than during the 2017 general election<sup>52</sup>. Dr Collignon observed that the level of this harassment, abuse and intimidation in the UK is higher than in the general community, whereas in other countries there is a correlation. She has been commissioned by the UK Local Government Association to develop resources and guides for the UK Local Government Association to support elected councillors dealing with this issue and to help improve their digital citizenship<sup>53</sup>.

## **CONCLUSION**

Australian parliaments have traditionally been male-dominated institutions which has led to a masculine culture being reflected in parliament's practices and conventions<sup>54</sup>. A critical mass of women MPs in the NSW Parliament would lead to a welcome cultural change<sup>55</sup>. In the meantime, a practical induction program for new women MPs in the first three months of a new parliament would better equip them for their role<sup>56</sup>.

An All Party Women's Committee should also be established as a formal standing committee of the NSW Parliament. Such committees have proven effective in allowing issues, including those relevant to women MPs, to be examined with a gender-sensitive lens.

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<sup>50</sup> <https://intranet.royalholloway.ac.uk/students/news-events/news-articles/2022/january-2022/go-run-lead-programme.aspx>

<sup>51</sup> Collignon, S., and Rudig, W., *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, (2021), "Increasing the cost of female representation? The gendered effects of harassment, abuse and intimidation toward Parliamentary candidates in the UK"

<sup>52</sup> Collignon, S., Campbell, R., and Rudig, W., *The Political Quarterly*, (2021), "The Gendered Harassment of Parliamentary Candidates in the UK"

<sup>53</sup> Councillors Guide to Handling Abuse, Harassment and Intimidation: <https://www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-handling-harassment-abuse-and-intimidation>  
Advice to councils to support councillors to deal with abuse: <https://www.local.gov.uk/advice-supporting-councillors>  
Research and good practice to improve councillors' digital citizenship: <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/improving-digital-citizenship-research-and-good-practice>

A practical guide for councillors to improve digital citizenship: <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/improving-digital-citizenship-practical-guide-councillors>

<sup>54</sup> The Australian Human Rights Commission "Set the Standard: Report on the Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces", 30 November 2021, reported testimony that the absence of women in senior roles in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces leads to a 'male-dominated and testosterone-fuelled culture dominating', page 15

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, the Commission's recommendation 4 proposes a 10-year strategy to achieve gender balance among parliamentarians, page 20

<sup>56</sup> ChatGPT-4's response to the question "How can we make sure women in parliament are more successful?" included this strategy, see schedule 1 on page 33

## STUDY TOUR SCHEDULE

Date/Time	Meeting	Organisation	Location
<b>Thursday 2 March 2023</b>	<a href="#">Amanda Hunter</a> Executive Director	<a href="#">Barbara Lee Foundation</a>	Boston Massachusetts
	MA Caucus of Women Legislators including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Rep Hannah Kane</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rep Christine Barber</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rep Marjorie Decker</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rep Kate Hogan</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rep Jessica Giannino</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rep Brandy Fluker Oakley</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rep Vanna Howard</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rep Tram T. Nguyen</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rep Dawne Shand</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Senator Anne Gobi</a></li> <li>• Nora Bent, Executive Director</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Massachusetts State House,</a> <a href="#">Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators</a>	Boston Massachusetts
	<a href="#">Dr Diane Rosenfeld</a> Founding Director of Gender Violence Program  <a href="#">Harvard College Women's Centre Forum</a>	<a href="#">Harvard Law School</a>	Boston Massachusetts
<b>Friday 3 March 2023</b>	Harvard Kennedy School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guest speaker at Roundtable with participants of the Women and Public Policy Program's "<a href="#">Harvard Square to Oval Office</a>" training program</li> <li>• Meeting with Professor <a href="#">Laura Sjoberg, Director of the Gender Institute</a> (Royal Holloway University of London)</li> <li>• Meeting with <a href="#">Nicole Carter Quinn, Executive Director of the WAPP Program</a></li> </ul>	<a href="#">Harvard Kennedy School, Women and Public Policy Program</a>	Boston Massachusetts
	<a href="#">Natalie Colbert</a> Executive Director	<a href="#">Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center for Science Arts and International Affairs</a>	Boston Massachusetts
<b>Saturday 4 March 2023</b>	<a href="#">Visit to the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum</a>		Boston Massachusetts
<b>Tuesday 7 March 2023</b>	Address and reception for <a href="#">Her Excellency Ursula von der Leyen</a> , President of the European Commission, hosted by Canadian <a href="#">Prime Minister Justin Trudeau MP</a>	<a href="#">Parliament of Canada</a>	Ottawa Canada

	International Women's Day Reception on Parliament Hill		
<b>Wednesday 8 March 2023</b>	Announcement of Canada's first <a href="#">Women Entrepreneurship Strategy</a> by the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, <a href="#">the Hon. Mary Ng</a>  Budget Breakfast Forum	<a href="#">Canadian Government</a>	Ottawa Canada
	<a href="#">Associate Prof. Vanessa MacDonnell</a> Co-Director	<a href="#">University of Ottawa Public Law Centre</a>	Ottawa Canada
	<a href="#">Karen Vecchio MP</a> Member for Elgin-Middlesex-London	Parliament of Canada	Ottawa Canada
	<a href="#">Ya'ara Saks MP</a> Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development	Parliament of Canada	Ottawa Canada
	<a href="#">Marie-Helene Gaudreau MP (Member for Laurentides)</a> and <a href="#">Andreanne Larouche MP (Member for Shefford)</a>	Parliament of Canada	Ottawa Canada
<b>Thursday 9 March 2023</b>	<a href="#">Chi Nguyen</a> Executive Director	<a href="#">Equal Voice Canada</a>	Ottawa Canada
	<a href="#">High Commissioner the Hon Scott Ryan</a>	<a href="#">Australian High Commission in Canada</a>	Ottawa Canada
	<a href="#">Antony Rota MP</a> Speaker of the House of Commons	Parliament of Canada	Ottawa Canada
	Meeting of the <a href="#">Standing Committee on the Status of Women</a>	Parliament of Canada	Ottawa Canada



	<a href="#">Anita Vandenberg MP</a> Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development (Member for Ottawa West-Nepean)	Parliament of Canada	Ottawa Canada
<b>Friday 10 March 2023</b>	<a href="#">Trevor Kennedy (Vice-President of Trade and International Policy)</a> and <a href="#">Jack Hughes (Senior Vice-President of Planning and Operations)</a>	<a href="#">Business Council of Canada</a>	Ottawa Canada
<b>Monday 13 March 2023</b>	<a href="#">Stephen Cartwright OAM</a> NSW Agent General to the United Kingdom	Investment NSW	London United Kingdom
	<a href="#">Professor Rosie Campbell</a> Executive Director	<a href="#">King's College London Global Institute for Women's Leadership</a>	London United Kingdom
	<a href="#">Dr Michael Spence (President &amp; Provost)</a> and Kirsty Walker (Executive Director of Media & Public Affairs)	<a href="#">University College London (UCL)</a>	London United Kingdom
<b>Tuesday 14 March 2023</b>	<a href="#">Deidre Brock MP</a> Member for Edinburgh North and Leith	UK Parliament	London United Kingdom
	<a href="#">Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Headquarters including:</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stephen Twigg, Secretary-General</li> <li>• James Pinnell, Deputy Head of Programmes</li> <li>• Benite Dibateza, Program Manager</li> </ul>		London United Kingdom
	<a href="#">Baroness Anne Jenkin of Kennington</a> Co-Chair of Women 2 Win	<a href="#">House of Lords</a>  <a href="#">Women 2 Win</a>  <a href="#">UK Conservative Party</a>	London United Kingdom
	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, UK Westminster Seminar on Effective Parliaments - session on "Ensuring Representation and Diversity in Parliaments"	<a href="#">CPA UK</a>	London United Kingdom
<b>Wednesday 15 March 2023</b>	<a href="#">The Rt Hon. Dame Maria Miller</a> Member for Basingstoke	UK Parliament	London United Kingdom

	<a href="#">"Go.Run.Lead" Training Session hosted by Royal Holloway College London</a>	Royal Holloway College, University of London	London United Kingdom
<b>Thursday 16 March 2023</b>	<a href="#">Elisabeth Bowes</a> Deputy High Commissioner  Katie McBryde First Secretary (AUKUS & National Security)	Australian High Commission in London	London United Kingdom
	<a href="#">The Rt Hon Theresa May MP</a> Member for Maidenhead in Berkshire	UK Parliament	London United Kingdom
	<a href="#">Dr Sofia Collignon</a> Lecturer in Comparative Politics Convenor of the "Go.Run.Lead" Training Session hosted by Royal Holloway College London	Queen Mary, University of London	London United Kingdom
<b>Friday 17 March 2023</b>	Damian Walsh Chair	<a href="#">The Britain-Australia Society, London</a>	London United Kingdom
<b>Friday 28 April 2023</b>	<a href="#">The Hon. Julia Gillard AC</a>	<a href="#">King's College London Global Institute for Women's Leadership</a>	Video Conference
<b>Friday 5 May 2023</b>	<a href="#">The Hon Ros Kelly AO</a>	Former Australian Federal Minister	Sydney Australia
<b>Tuesday 9 May 2023</b>	<a href="#">Kate Jenkins</a>	Former Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner	Phone Call Australia

# OVERVIEW OF STUDY TOUR PARTICIPANTS

## BOSTON, UNITED STATES

### **Barbara Lee Foundation**

The Barbara Lee Family Foundation (BLFF) advances women’s equality and representation in American politics and contemporary art. For over twenty years, the BLFF has conducted nonpartisan research on women in politics and it is the only organisation dedicated to specifically studying women running for office in the United States.

The Foundation works with local and national partners to develop strategic, nonpartisan approaches to advancing their mission. They also administer an invitation-only grant program to support projects aligned with their mission.

The Foundation is led by Founder & President Barbara Lee and Executive Director Amanda Hunter.



With Amanda Hunter, Executive Director, Barbara Lee Foundation

### **Commonwealth of Massachusetts – Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators**

The Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators was established in 1975 by 14 women from the Massachusetts House of Representatives. The Caucus’s mission is to encourage and support women in all levels of government and to serve as a resource for women in Massachusetts in matters ranging from health care to business.

As legislators, Caucus members have the opportunity to address the needs of women in the Commonwealth through various ways including laws, oversight of the Executive Branch and the annual State Budget. Over the years, the Caucus has developed into a sophisticated organisation, committed to strengthening the position of women and ensuring their economic self-sufficiency both inside and outside the government.

A full Caucus vote must include participation by more than one-half of the Caucus membership and approval by at least two-thirds of those voting. The Board of the Caucus meets at least annually with the Governor, the Speaker of the House, the Senate President, and the House and Senate Minority Leaders. It also appoints Commissioners to the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW) when vacancy arises. The MCSW is a state-established body charged with reviewing the status of women in Massachusetts and offering recommendations regarding policy that would improve access to opportunities and equality. The Caucus also appoints six of the nineteen Commissioners of the Massachusetts Committee on the Status of Women.

The Caucus also serves as a resource for all Massachusetts women and maintains a comprehensive list of organizations and material on matters ranging from health care to business. It also provides internship opportunities tailored to each intern's individual needs, talents, and interests. The Caucus' success include:

- Women's Rights History Trail 2022 - *established a women's rights history trail, and an advisory commission to recommend appropriate sites. It honours the many diverse women who have contributed to history through advocating for women's rights and suffrage; and*
- Pay Equity 2016 - *closed the gender wage gap by preventing employers from requiring salary history on job applications and allowed employees to discuss wages without fear of termination or retaliation from their employer.*

More information is available through the following links:

- [Current strategic priorities](#)
- [Legislation the Caucus has passed previously](#)
- [Number of women elected to the MA legislature](#)
- [Women's Caucus history](#)
- [Information on the Board of Directors](#)



With the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators

### **Women in Massachusetts Legislature 2023-2024 Session**

The Senate is headed by its third female President, Karen Spilka and her leadership team includes:

- Senator Cynthia Stone Creem: Majority Leader
- Senator Joan B. Lovely: Assistant Majority Leader
- Senator Cindy F. Friedman: Vice Chair of the Senate & Joint Committees on Ways and Means
- Women chair 12 Committees in the Senate; 14 Senate Committees have women as their Vice Chairs

In the House of Representatives, Speaker Ronald Mariano appointed the following women to his leadership team:

- Representative Kate Hogan: Speaker Pro Tempore. Rep. Hogan made history in 2021 as the highest-ranking openly LGBTQ member in the House's history.
- Representative Alice Hanlon Peisch: Assistant Majority Leader
- Representative Sarah K. Peake: Second Assistant Majority Leader
- Representative Ruth B. Balsler: Division Chair
- Representative Danielle W. Gregoire: Division Chair

- Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante: Vice Chair of the House & Joint Committees on Ways and Means
- Women chair 5 Committees in the House; 15 Committees have women as their Vice Chairs
- There are two women in leadership positions in the House Republican Caucus
  - Representative Kimberly N. Ferguson: First Assistant Minority Leader
  - Representative Susan Williams Gifford: Third Assistant Minority Leader

### Political Representation by Women in the United States

In the US Congress women currently hold 124 or 29% of the seats in the House, in the Senate they hold 25 or 25% of the seats and 12 women serve as state governors. This level of representation was a new record set in the 2022 elections.

### Dr Diane Rosenfeld, Lecturer, Harvard Law School

Diane L. Rosenfeld, J.D., LL.M., is Founding Director of the Gender Violence Program and a Law Lecturer at Harvard Law School.

Her breakthrough legal work and research have appeared in the New York Times, Washington Post and Glamour magazine. Her op-eds have been featured in the Washington Post, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, cnn.com, and the Harvard Crimson.



With Dr Diane Rosenfeld at Harvard College Women’s Center

### Women and Public Policy Program, Harvard Kennedy School

The Women and Public Policy Program (WPPP) at the Harvard Kennedy School advances women and gender equity through leadership development programs for their students, emerging leaders and global executives. WPPP also fund and produce research in the areas of Work and Gender Equity, Gender and Politics and Gender and Conflict.

Their internationally recognised Harvard Square to Oval Office program functions as a “pathway” to equip Harvard graduate students with the skills and support to participate in the United States electoral process at the local, state and national levels.

The WPPP is led by Co-Directors Iris Bohnet and Hannah Riley Bowles and Executive Director Nicole Carter Quinn.



With participants of the “Harvard Square to Oval Office” Program

### **Natalie Colbert, Harvard Kennedy School - Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs**

The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs is the Harvard Kennedy School's centre for research, teaching, and training in international security and diplomacy, environmental and resource issues, and science and technology policy. The Centre has a dual mission to provide leadership in advancing policy-relevant knowledge about the important challenges of international security and other critical issues where science, technology, environmental policy, and international affairs intersect; and to prepare the future generations of leaders in these areas.

The Center is led by Executive Director Natalie Colbert and Co-Director Eric Rosenbach.

### **OTTAWA, CANADA**

### **Ministerial Budget Announcement on Women Entrepreneurship Strategy**

I attended a Budget announcement by the Canadian Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development Mary Ng at the launch of the ‘Women Entrepreneurship Strategy’ on International Women's Day 2023. The Strategy aims to increase women-owned businesses' access to the finance, talent, networks and expertise they need to start up, scale up and access new business markets.

### **Associate Professor Vanessa MacDonnell, Co-Director of Public Law Centre, Law School, University of Ottawa**

The uOttawa Public Law Centre at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law is Canada’s leading centre for public law research and debate. The Co-Directors of the Centre are Associate Professor Vanessa MacDonnell and Associate Professor Terry Skolnick. Vanessa MacDonnell researches and writes in the area of women in law and politics.

## Meetings with Canadian MPs

<b>Karen Vecchio MP</b> Member for Elgin-Middlesex-London (Ontario)	Conservative Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shadow Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth</li> <li>Chair – Standing Committee on the Status of Women</li> <li>Chair – Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women</li> <li>Vice-Chair – Liaison Committee</li> <li>Vice-Chair – Subcommittee on Committee Budget of the Liaison Committee</li> </ul>
<b>Marie Helene Gaudreau MP</b> Member for Laurentides – Labelle (Quebec)	Bloc Québécois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caucus Chair for Bloc Québécois</li> <li>Vice-Chair of Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs</li> </ul>
<b>Andreanne Larouche MP</b> Member for Shefford (Quebec)	Bloc Québécois	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vice-Chair – Standing Committee on the Status of Women</li> </ul>
<b>Ya’ara Saks MP</b> Member for York Centre (Ontario)	Liberal Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development</li> </ul>
<b>The Hon. Karina Gould MP</b> Member for Burlington (Ontario)	Liberal Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minister of Families, Children and Social Development</li> </ul>
<b>Anita Vandenbeld MP</b> Member for Ottawa West-Nepean (Ontario)	Liberal Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development</li> </ul>
<b>The Hon. Anthony Rota MP</b> Member for Nipissing-Timiskaming (Ontario)	Liberal Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speaker of the House</li> <li>Chair of the Board of Internal Economy</li> </ul>



With Parliament of Canada’s Speaker Anthony Rota MP



With Marie Helene Gaudreau MP and Andreanne Larouche MP (L), and Karen Vecchio MP (R)

### **Equal Voice Canada**

Equal Voice Canada was founded in 2001 and advocates for gender diverse candidates at all levels of government and offers training, resources and support to create pathways to politics. It also runs national Campaign Schools (general skills for eight hours over four weeks), Online Pop-up Campaign Schools (two hours on bespoke topics), and In-Person Campaign Schools (one day course) to equip women with the skills and resources needed to run for political office in Canada. Equal Voice’s work is funded by a charitable foundation.

The Executive Director is Chi Nguyen.



With Equal Voice Executive Director Chi Nguyen

### **The Canadian Parliament’s Standing Committee on the Status of Women**

The Standing Committee on the Status of Women is a committee of the Canadian National Parliament. It examines the policies, programs, expenditures, legislation, departments and agencies, including the Department for Women and Gender Equality, that relate to the status of women.



The Committee Membership is as follows:

Chair	Karen Vecchio MP, Member for Elgin-Middlesex-London	Conservative Party
Vice-Chair	Sonia Sidhu MP, Member for Brampton South	Liberal Party
Vice-Chair	Andreanne Larouche MP, Member for Shefford	Bloc Québécois
Member	Michelle Ferreri MP, Member for Peterborough-Kawartha	Conservative Party
Member	Leah Gazan MP, Member for Winnipeg Centre	New Democratic Party
Member	Emmanuella Lambropoulos MP, Member for Saint-Laurent	Liberal Party
Member	Anna Roberts MP, Member for King-Vaughan	Conservative Party
Member	Marc G. Serre MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Official Languages & Member for Nickel Belt	Liberal Party
Member	Jenna Sudds MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth & Member for Kanata-Carleton	Liberal Party
Member	Anita Vandenberg MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development & Member for Ottawa West-Nepean	Liberal Party
Member	Dominique Vien MP, Member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis	Conservative Party



With Anita Vandenberg MP (L) and Karen Vecchio MP (R), Standing Committee on the Status of Women

## Business Council of Canada

The Business Council of Canada is a non-partisan advocacy organisation of chief executives and entrepreneurs of Canada's leading companies.

The Council is led by President and CEO Goldy Hyder. I met with Senior Vice President, Planning and Operations Jack Hughes and Vice President, Trade and International Policy, Trevor Kennedy.



With Jack Hughes, Business Council of Canada

## **LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM**

### **King's College Global Institute for Women's Leadership, London**

The Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL) is based at King's College London. GIWL brings together rigorous research, practice and advocacy to better understand and address the causes of women's underrepresentation in leadership positions across countries, and the way gender negatively impacts the evaluation of women leaders.

GIWL has a global network of research partners working towards the common goal of improving gender equality and women's leadership around the world. In 2020, GIWL ANU was launched as a sister institute based in the Australian National University with a focus on improving gender equity in Asia and the Pacific. GIWL AN is led by Michelle Ryan, an expert on gender and leadership who identified the "glass cliff" phenomenon.

The GIWL was founded and is chaired by Australia's first female Prime Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard AC, and the Director is Professor Rosie Campbell.

### **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Headquarters, London – Support for Commonwealth MPs**

Founded in 1911, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is one of the oldest established organisations in the Commonwealth. It is a membership association who are united by respect for the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms and by the pursuit of parliamentary democracy. The CPA is made up of over 180 Branches divided up between nine geographic Commonwealth regions and provides opportunities for Parliamentarians and staff to collaborate on issues of mutual interest and to share good practice.

Alumni already participate in CPA programs including Post-Elections Seminars and Parliamentary Academy courses. However, a new CPA Alumni initiative was announced as part of the CPA Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025 which aims to increase the engagement with former Parliamentarians and staff and use their experience through creating mentorship partnerships for current members. It is envisaged that the alumni mentors would support and guide current MPs and staff in achieving their goals and expanding their professional careers. The CPA's next step is to generate a list of mentors.

The CPA is led by Secretary-General, Stephen Twigg.

## Women2Win

Women2Win is a UK organisation that encourages and supports Conservative women to run for public office. Through one-to-one mentoring and training, the organisation helps to prepare women to serve and lead in public office.

The Patron of Women2Win is Rt Hon Theresa May MP and the Co-Founders are Theresa May and Baroness Anne Jenkin of Kennington. Charlotte Carew Pole is the Director.

## Go.Run.Lead Programme

The Go.Run.Lead Programme seminars are hosted by the Royal Holloway, University of London for female students and staff interested in running for elected office or a career in campaign politics.

## Meetings with UK MPs and House of Lords Peers

<b>Deidre Brock MP</b> Member for Edinburgh North and Leith Shadow SNP Spokesperson (House of Commons Business)	Scottish National Party (SNP)
<b>The Baroness Jenkin of Kennington, Anne Jenkin</b> Member of the House of Lords	Conservative Party
<b>The Rt Hon Mrs Theresa May MP</b> Member for Maidenhead Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (13 July 2016 – 24 July 2019)	Conservative Party
<b>The Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller MP</b> Member for Basingstoke Chair, Executive Committee, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK	Conservative Party



With Baroness Anne Jenkin



With Rt Hon Theresa May



With Dame Maria Miller

## STUDY TOUR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

### LinkedIn Post on Visit to Boston, MA



The Hon Gabrielle Upton FAICD • 3rd+

Innovation | Sport | The Arts

3w • 🌐

...

Visiting Boston to get some valuable insights on how to better support women elected to Parliament, as part of my [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association](#) Study Tour. I'm drawing on my 12 years of experience to 'pay it forward' to new women in Parliament by identifying new and practical ways to support them.

During the visit I met with:

- Amanda Hunter, Executive Director of the [Barbara Lee Family Foundation](#).
- The Women's Caucus of Massachusetts Legislators: <https://lnkd.in/geXurXF>
- [Women and Public Policy Program at the Harvard Kennedy School](#) with Executive Director [Nicole Carter Quinn](#) and Fellow [Laura Sjoberg](#).
- [Diane Rosenfeld](#) at [Harvard Law School](#); and
- [Natalie Colbert](#), Executive Director at [Harvard's Belfer Center](#)

The [Barbara Lee Family Foundation](#) does unique research on women's experiences campaigning and in public office and provides practical tools to increase their success. Like it or not, their research says that women must provide more evidence of their expertise than men - women just show, where men can tell! Thanks for marking time to share some of your findings with me Amanda.

The [Women and Public Policy Program at the Harvard Kennedy School](#) run the world class 'From Harvard Square to Oval Office' Program which supports women into public office. At their hosted roundtable, I shared my own experiences with the women participants. Raie Genesi asked some great questions including how women can build and use their political capital!

Thanks to Massachusetts Representative [Sean Garballey](#) who facilitated my meeting with the Women's Caucus of Massachusetts Legislators. Established in 1975 and made up of the 63 women in the State House, the Caucus ensures 'women's voices' inform the State's laws and policies.

I look forward to the next chapter of the study tour when I will both share and learn about better supporting women in the Canadian and UK Parliaments.



**Twitter Post on meeting with Massachusetts Women's Caucus**

 **The Hon Gabrielle Upton**  @gabrielleupton · Mar 4 ...  
Thank you for sharing how the @MAWomensCaucus works to support women in Parliament! 🙌

 **Tram T. Nguyen**  @TeamTram · Mar 4  
Such a pleasure joining the @MAWomensCaucus in meeting @gabrielleupton, an Australian politician, who is on a parliamentary tour conducting a study to better understand approaches to supporting newly elected women. We were glad to share how the caucus has been helpful to us.



**Twitter Post on meeting with Amanda Hunter of the Barbara Lee Foundation**

 **The Hon Gabrielle Upton**  @gabrielleupton · Mar 4 ...  
Thanks for sharing the amazing work which @BLFF\_org does Amanda! 🙌

 **Amanda Hunter** @Ahuntah · Mar 4  
What a delight to meet with the inspiring @gabrielleupton IRL! Loved hearing how our @BLFF\_org research applied to her experiences.



**LinkedIn Post on visit to Ottawa, Canada**



The Hon Gabrielle Upton FAICD • 3rd+  
Innovation | Sport | The Arts  
2w •



A productive few days in Ottawa, Canada as part of my [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association](#) parliamentary study tour to identify new ways to support women in their first term of parliament - the findings have been diverse!

In Ottawa, I:

- Attended an address to the Parliament by Her Excellency [Ursula von der Leyen](#), President of the [European Commission](#), hosted by Prime Minister [Justin Trudeau](#);
- Met with with [Karen Vecchio](#), [Marie-Hélène Gaudreau](#), [députée fédérale de Laurentides-Labelle](#), [Andreeanne Larouche](#), [Ya'ara Saks](#), [Anita Vandenberg](#), [Karina Gould](#), Speaker of the House [Anthony Rota](#) and members of the Canadian Parliament's Standing Committee on the Status of Women: <https://lnkd.in/g3VkdCPS>
- Was briefed by [Chi Nguyen](#), Executive Director of [Equal Voice](#);
- Joined Canadian Minister [Mary Ng](#) at the launch of the 'Women Entrepreneurship Strategy': on [International Women's Day 2023](#): <https://lnkd.in/giNXU3g4> and
- Met with [Vanessa MacDonnell](#), Co-Director of the [University of Ottawa](#) Public Law Centre; and
- Australian High Commissioner in Canada [Scott Ryan](#).

Equal Voice Canada advocate for gender diverse candidates at all levels of government, offering training, resources and support to create pathways to politics.

Bipartisan meetings with [Karen Vecchio](#), [Marie-Hélène Gaudreau](#), [Andreeanne Larouche](#), [Ya'ara Saks](#) and [Anita Vandenberg](#) gave me insights into how women in Parliament can be supported through Party and Parliamentary Caucuses.

Looking forward to my next steps in London.



**Twitter Post on address by Her Excellency Ursula Von der Leyen**



**Twitter Post on launch of Canada's 'Women Entrepreneurship Strategy'**





**LinkedIn Post on visit to London, UK**



**The Hon Gabrielle Upton FAICD** • 3rd+  
 Innovation | Sport | The Arts  
 1w • 🌐



Rounding out my Parliamentary Study Tour with Commonwealth colleagues in London. During the Study Tour I've had the opportunity to learn about the various ways women are supported into and throughout their political careers.

In London, I:

- Was briefed by the [King's College London](#) Global Institute for Women's Leadership Director Professor [Rosie Campbell](#);
- Had meetings in the UK House of Commons with Lady Theresa May MP, Co-Chair of [Women2Win](#), [Deidre Brock](#) MP and Dame Maria Miller MP Chair of [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK \(CPA UK\)](#) and in the [UK House of Lords](#) with Baroness of Jenkin of Kennington, Anne Jenkins;
- Met with Dr [Sofia Collignon](#) of [Queen Mary University of London](#) and observed the [Royal Holloway, University of London's](#) Go.Run.Lead program which prepares women for running for elected office;
- Was briefed by the [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association HQ](#) branch including Secretary General [Stephen Twigg](#), [James Pinnell](#) and [Benite Dibateza](#);
- Joined the [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK \(CPA UK\)](#) hosted Westminster Seminar on "Ensuring Representation and Diversity in Parliaments" with CPA international parliamentary leadership; and
- Met with President & Provost Dr [Michael Spence](#) and Vice-President (External Engagement) [Kirsty Walker](#) at the UCL; and
- Was briefed by First Secretary [Katie McBryde](#) at the [Australian High Commission](#).

Thanks to NSW Agent-General [Stephen Cartwright OAM](#) and [Lorraine R-Suka](#) for their assistance in London.

[Britain-Australia Society](#) [Helen Haywood](#) [Australia-United Kingdom Chamber of Commerce](#) [Australian British Chamber of Commerce](#) [Commonwealth Foundation](#) [Chief Executive Women \(CEW\)](#) [Minerva Network](#) [Parliament of NSW](#) [Rosalind Dixon](#) [Trawalla Group](#) [Sarah Buckley](#) [Women on Boards International](#) [Women's Forum](#) [Fawcett Society](#) [Karen Vecchio](#) [Nicole Carter](#) [Quinn Laura](#) [Sjoberg](#) [Christine McLoughlin AM](#)



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## CHATGPT RESPONSE

### Response from ChatGPT-4 to the question - How can we make sure women in parliament are more successful<sup>57</sup>?

Ensuring the success of women in parliament requires a multifaceted approach that addresses various factors contributing to their success. Here are some strategies that can help:

1. **Promote gender equality and inclusive policies:** Implement and enforce policies that promote gender equality in politics, such as quotas or affirmative action measures, to increase the representation of women in parliament. This provides women with more opportunities to participate and succeed in political leadership roles.
2. **Address structural barriers:** Identify and remove barriers that hinder women's success in parliament, such as gender biases, discriminatory practices, and cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequalities. Encourage fair and transparent electoral processes that level the playing field for all candidates.
3. **Support women's leadership development:** Provide training programs, mentorship initiatives, and networking opportunities specifically tailored to women in politics. These programs can enhance their leadership skills, build confidence, and offer guidance on navigating political landscapes effectively.
4. **Foster supportive political environments:** Create a conducive and supportive environment within political parties and parliament that encourages women's participation and success. This includes establishing safe spaces, combating harassment, and fostering inclusive decision-making processes.
5. **Encourage women's political engagement:** Encourage women's active participation in politics from an early stage, including through educational programs, awareness campaigns, and grassroots initiatives. Promote a political culture that values and appreciates women's voices and contributions.
6. **Provide adequate resources and support:** Ensure that women parliamentarians have access to necessary resources, such as funding, staff, and research support, to effectively carry out their duties. This can help overcome potential disadvantages and empower women to succeed in their roles.
7. **Promote work-life balance and family-friendly policies:** Recognize the unique challenges faced by women in balancing their parliamentary responsibilities with family obligations. Implement family-friendly policies, such as flexible working arrangements, parental leave, and childcare support, to enable women to fully participate in parliamentary work.
8. **Encourage collaboration and networking:** Facilitate opportunities for women parliamentarians to collaborate, share experiences, and learn from one another. Establish platforms and forums where women can exchange ideas, build alliances, and collectively advocate for gender-responsive policies.
9. **Promote media representation and visibility:** Encourage fair and balanced media coverage of women in parliament, highlighting their achievements, expertise, and policy contributions. Increasing positive visibility can challenge stereotypes and contribute to the success of women in political leadership.
10. **Monitor progress and hold institutions accountable:** Regularly monitor and evaluate progress in women's political representation and success. Hold political parties, parliaments, and other relevant institutions accountable for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

It is important to recognize that these strategies are not exhaustive and can vary depending on the specific socio-political context. Implementing these measures collectively can help create an environment that supports the success of women in parliament and advances gender equality in political leadership.

<sup>57</sup> Accessed on 24 May 2023 at 10.47pm