

## COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

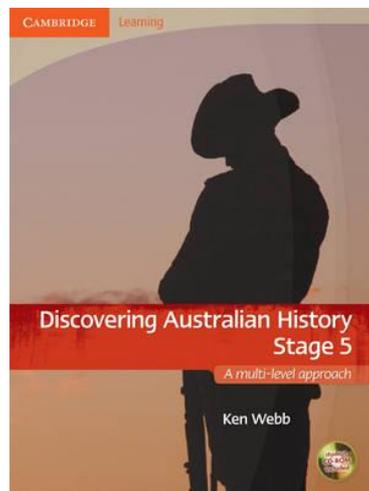
Copyright Regulations 1969

### WARNING

This material has been reproduced and communicated to you by or on behalf of Methodist Ladies' College under Part VB of the Copyright Act 1968 (the Act).

The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act. Any further reproduction or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.

**Do not remove this notice.**



Webb, K. (2008). *Discovering Australian history stage 5*. Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press.



Figure 6.21 Pauline Hanson.

- Following a speech in which she criticised alleged favouritism shown to Indigenous people, Hanson was **disendorsed** by the Liberal Party.
- She went on to win the seat as an independent. Her maiden speech on 10 September provoked much criticism for its alleged racist views.
- In 1997 she established 'Pauline Hanson's One Nation' political party. She remained National President till January 2002. In 1998, One Nation won 22.7 percent of the vote in the Queensland election, gaining 11 seats. In the 1998 Federal election, it gained 9 percent of the vote and one senate seat.
- In 2003 Hanson was sentenced to three years gaol for electoral fraud, but served only 11 weeks following a successful appeal. Her supporters argued that she had been framed. Pauline Hanson polarised the nation with her ideas. She railed against multiculturalism, against preference given to Indigenous people and against the alleged Asianisation of Australia. Older, conservative, mainly working class and often rural Australians were attracted to her views. Many argued that 'Pauline Hanson is only saying what

many people think'. The media and the educated middle classes attacked her as being ill-informed and divisive.

Following her trial and arguments with former supporters, the influence of Pauline Hanson and One Nation was much weaker

## How have the rights and freedoms of women changed during the post-war period?

Although women had played a major role in wartime Australia, it was widely assumed that once the war was over, they would return to the home to resume their traditional roles as mothers and wives. In the late 1940s, few women protested about this. Australian women seemed happy to marry, have children, and have more children, and so the baby-boomer generation was born.

### Women's roles in the 1950s

In 1950s Australia, women's roles were clearly defined and rarely questioned. A woman was expected to be a dutiful wife, keep the house clean, cook and look after her man. She might work before she was married, but working once married was frowned upon. A woman was expected to marry young, have children quickly and be satisfied in her maternal role. Society accepted that the status of a woman was lower than that of a man. The man was seen as the **breadwinner**, the head of the household, and in the marriage ceremony it was the woman who was expected to 'obey'.

There were other ways in which a woman's status was inferior to a man. It was harder for women to pursue an education and a career. Very few women made it to the higher levels of the professions and the majority of women could not borrow money from a bank. Advertising was **sexist**

**disendorsed** being dropped as a political party's candidate for a constituency

**breadwinner** person whose income supports the family

**sexist** stereotypical view, especially of women, on the basis of their gender

and took for granted the joy a woman had in her domestic role. Schoolgirls were taught 'female' subjects like cookery and needlework to prepare them for their future. Teenage girls who became pregnant were either pushed into **shotgun weddings** or had their children taken away from them, similar to the way children of the stolen generation were removed.

Life in 1950s Australia would probably have been a lot more fun for a man than a woman.



**Figure 6.22** Tennis champion Frank Sedgman and his wife and baby, 1954.

### The approach of change

By the late 1960s, the situation was changing for women. The idea that women should accept their role, stay at home and rely on men was being questioned. Figure 6.23 suggests some of the reasons for these changes.

### Women's liberationists in the post-World War II period

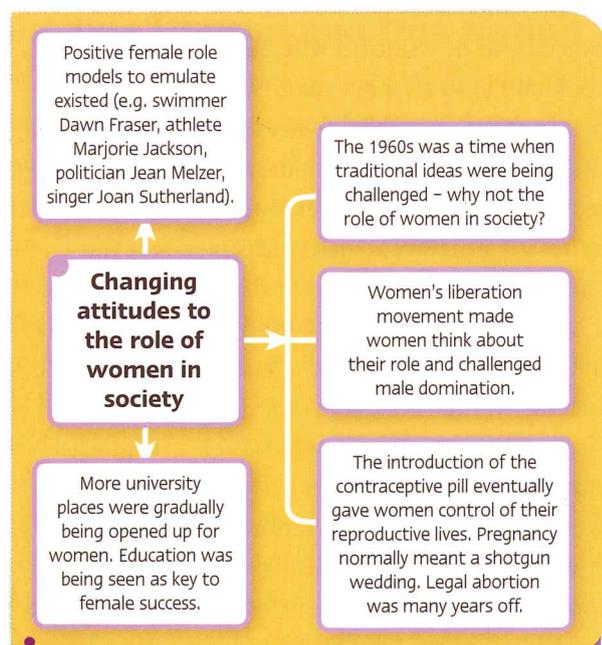
Women's protests in the 1960s and 1970s came together in what became known as 'women's liberation'. The 'women's libbers', as they became

known, aimed to free women from the restraints society placed on them. Today we recognise this belief as feminism: the idea that women should enjoy exactly the same rights as men, have the same opportunities as men and so be able to reach their potential.

The women's libbers started asking some very probing questions such as: Why should women have to stay at home and not men? Why should women have to look after the children, indeed even have children? Why shouldn't our leaders be women? Why should women have to put up with sexual harassment at work? Why is a man who sleeps around 'one of the lads' but a woman who does so is looked down upon?

The women's movement expected governments to legislate for female equality and they wanted measures put in place to re-educate society about **gender roles**. The movement used a range of methods to get its point across.

- Female workers went on strike to gain equal pay. In 1969, even Victorian nurses went out. There were marches and protest meetings.
- One activity that the media enjoyed reporting on was ritual bra-burnings. Women who did this argued bras only existed because men expected women to conform to a male version of what is attractive.



**Figure 6.23** Changing attitudes to the role of women in society.

**shotgun wedding** a forced marriage because the woman is pregnant

**gender role** role specific to male or female



- Female intellectuals also argued their case. One of the leaders of the women's liberation movement was Germaine Greer (see below). Another was Anne Summers, whose book *Damned Whores and God's Police* (1975) challenged the traditional, male interpretation of women in nineteenth-century Australia as either immoral or god-fearing.
- In 1970, a Women's Liberation National Conference was held. It urged women to take action and control their own lives.
- In 1973 the Women's Electoral Lobby held its first national conference. It demanded to know politicians' views on women's issues and lobbied hard for governments to legislate on matters important to women such as childcare.

## Achievements of the women's movement in the post-World War II period

Substantial gains have clearly been made by the women's movement. However, even in the early twenty-first century, it can be argued women are yet to achieve real equality. In fact, it could be argued that the gains made by the women's movement have been lost. Evidence for this can be seen in the resurgence of sexism in magazines and advertising, and pressure from strengthening religious groups for women to 'return to the home'. However, substantial gains have been made. These are summarised in Table 6.2.

**Table 6.2** Gains made by the women's movement

The positive story	The negative story
In 1973, a Women's Advisor to the Prime Minister is appointed for the first time.	Women still end up having to do most domestic chores, hence the appearance of the 'supermum'.
In 1975, unmarried women were entitled to the widow's pension.	A ' <b>glass ceiling</b> ' seems to be in place that still prevents most women ever reaching the top.
In 1975, no-fault divorce was introduced.	When women achieve important positions it often appears to be no more than ' <b>tokenism</b> '.
In 1977 the <i>Anti-Discrimination Act</i> (NSW) makes it illegal to discriminate against women on grounds of gender.	
In 1980, women are granted twelve months maternity leave.	
The <i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984</i> (Cwlth) says women cannot be discriminated against on the grounds of pregnancy.	Physical appearance and attractiveness still seem to matter.
The <i>Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act 1986</i> (Cwlth) says large employers must have a person whose job is to remove practices that discriminate against women.	There has been a resurgence in sexist attitudes in advertising and the rise of 'blokey' magazines.
There have been moves towards equal pay. (See below.)	Average female pay is still significantly below that of men.
It is now accepted all careers are open to women.	There has been a rise in the influence of right-wing religious groups that urge women to resume their 'proper' role.
More women are involved in politics, even at the top level, e.g. former Victorian State Premier Joan Kirner.	There is a growing view that social problems are the result of women not being at home with their children.

**glass ceiling** idea that women can only progress so far in an organisation

**tokenism** occasionally allowing a woman to be promoted to give the impression all women are able to achieve this

## Exercise 6.8

### Did you get it?

- 1 Name two female intellectuals who promoted women's rights.
- 2 What was the aim of the Women's Electoral Lobby?
- 3 List three gains women achieved due to government legislation in the 1970s and 1980s.
- 4 Who was Joan Kirner?

### Consider this!

- 5 In groups, examine what Pauline Hanson has to say and then:
  - a Identify her main ideas.
  - b Take sides and produce arguments both in favour and against what she has to say.
  - c Discuss why her speech was so controversial.

### Interact with history!

- 6 Divide the class into groups of three. Prepare a discussion, which is to be presented to the class, in which one person takes the role of a moderator, one person takes the role of an opponent of women's gains and one person takes the role of a supporter of women's gains. In your discussion, deal with the issues mentioned in the text and which still affect women today. Each group could deal with the issue as a whole, or focus on just one aspect or topic such as 'equal pay', 'the family', 'the workplace', 'the media', 'leadership', 'responsibilities'.

### Useful website

Pauline Hanson's maiden speech to parliament in September 1996 caused a stir throughout Australia and gained international notice. She was greatly criticised for it. It is possible to download her speech from her website at: <http://www.paulinehanson.com.au> Click on politics > maiden speech. It appears in a PDF file.

## Germaine Greer and women's liberation

- Germaine Greer was born in January 1939 in Melbourne.
- She attended school at the Star of the Sea Convent and went to Melbourne University in 1956. She gained a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1959 and then went to Sydney University to work on a Master of Arts.
- Her thesis on Lord Byron earned her a Commonwealth Scholarship which enabled her to study at Cambridge University, in England. In 1968 she gained a PhD.
- Germaine Greer began her academic career as a lecturer at Warwick University, later becoming Professor of English and Comparative Studies there.
- She has not lived in Australia since the 1960s, but has remained one of Australia's best known **expatriates**. She is well known for her forthright views on women's issues and is the author of several influential books on women's matters including *The Female Eunuch* and *The Change: Women, Ageing and the Menopause*. Germaine Greer brought the women's liberation movement right into the spotlight in 1970 with her book *The Female Eunuch*. Greer challenged people to examine the position of women in society and why they had this position. Her book was an account of her views on sexism and gender roles in society rather than a plan of action for women to follow. She never became a leader of the movement, being too much

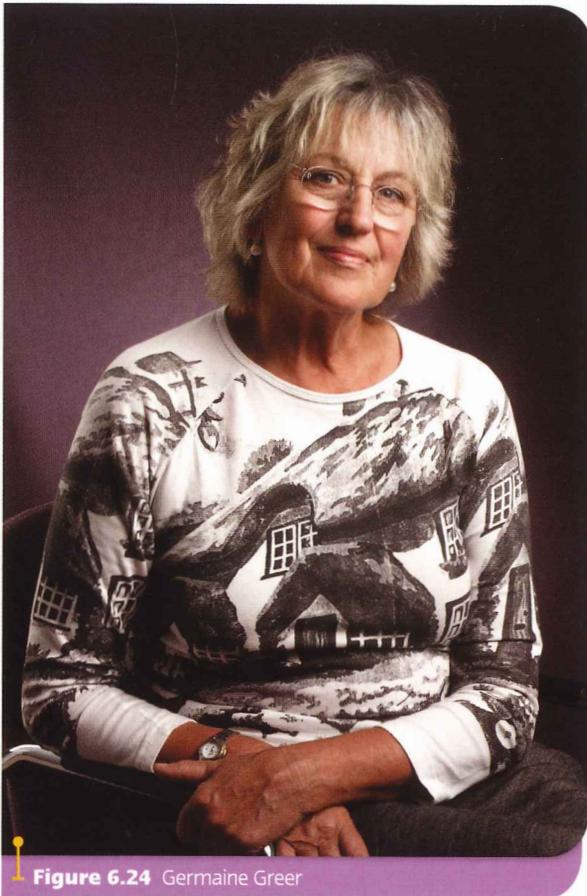


Figure 6.24 Germaine Greer

of an individualist and often a critic of other feminist figures.

In *The Female Eunuch*, Greer argues that the differences between the sexes have been exaggerated and that gender roles are learned, not natural.

- The first six chapters deal with the body to support her assertions.
- The rest of the book looks at the processes that condition girls to conform to a feminine stereotype.
- Greer argues that history, art and literature are produced from a male perspective in which women end up submissive and powerless.

### Interesting fact

In January 2005, the intellectual and feminist campaigner Germaine Greer entered the Big Brother House in the British version of the show. She lasted four days.

- She totally debunks the notion of romantic love and the happy family.
- She says that **misogyny** is all around and that most women live unfulfilled, miserable lives.

## The fight for equal pay for women

Women have struggled for equal pay to men for over a century and even in the twenty-first century there is still a way to go. Before 1914, women often earned no more than 50–55 percent of a man's pay, even if they were doing the same work. The Harvester Judgment of 1907 (see Chapter 1), which established the idea of the basic wage, was concerned only with men. Men were the breadwinners.

Wages for women remained well below that of men, even when they were doing the same work, until World War II. During the war, women's wages rose to 60 percent of a man's wage in some areas, and in a few Federal public service jobs they gained parity.

With the development of the women's movement in the 1960s, the campaign for equal pay for women intensified and women gradually started making gains.

- In 1945, the basic wage for a woman was set at 75 percent of that of a man.
- In 1951, the United Nations issued a declaration calling for equal pay for women, but this was ignored in Australia.
- The NSW Government granted women equal pay if they were doing the same work as men in 1958.
  - The following year, NSW teachers gained equal pay.
- The **ACTU** called a National Equal Pay Week in 1961 in an attempt to increase pressure for equal pay for women.
- A major step came in 1969, when the Arbitration Commission stated that if men and

women were doing the same job, they had to receive the same pay.

- This was a positive move, but it did little for those in industries with a mainly female workforce.
- Only 18 percent of female workers gained from this decision.
- In 1970, Victorian nurses gained major pay increases following strike action.
- In 1972, the Industrial Relations Commission stated that women should receive equal pay for

work of equal value. The effect of this was to extend the 1969 decision to women in female-dominated occupations.

- In 1974 it was decided that the minimum wage for women and men should be the same.

For all the advances made, the average female wage is still below that of a man. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, women earn on average about 85 percent of what men earn. Women still often face a glass ceiling as they try to achieve the top jobs in the corporate and professional world.