



Fact Sheet: Queensland Women's Right to Vote

2005 marks 100 years since the majority of Queensland women gained the right to vote ('suffrage') in State elections. Indigenous women's and men's struggle for voting rights continued for many years with universal Indigenous suffrage not being achieved until 1965. Therefore, 2005 also marks the 40th anniversary of all Indigenous people, women and men, gaining the right to vote.

Voting in Queensland

The first Queensland State election was held in 1860. Only males over the age of 21 who met the three-year residence qualification (or six-month residence qualification if they were the owner or lessee of property) were enfranchised. Men who owned multiple properties could make multiple registrations to vote.

Queensland Women's Suffrage Movement

- In 1902, Australia became the first country in the world where most women over the age of 21 had the right to vote and to stand for the national parliament
- In 1905, Queensland became the second last Australian State to grant women the right to vote in State elections
- The Act of Parliament giving Queensland women the right to vote was passed on the 25th January 1905 and was assented to by the Governor on the same day
- The first Queensland State election in which women could vote was held on 18 May 1907
- Despite gaining the right to vote in 1905, women could not stand for the Legislative Assembly until 1915
- However, it wasn't until 1929 that the first woman, Irene Longman, was elected to State Parliament
- Suffragists campaigned not only for voting rights but also to reduce wife battering and poverty and improve women's moral purity, property rights and working conditions
- The three main suffrage organisations in Queensland were the Women's Equal Franchise Association (WEFA), the Women's Suffrage League (WSL) and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)
- Key Queensland women involved in the suffrage movement were Leontine Cooper, Emma Miller, Eleanor Trundle and May Jordan McConnel

Universal Indigenous Suffrage

- Indigenous people were denied voting rights under the Queensland *Elections Act 1885*. Section 6 of the Act defined Indigenous people as any 'aboriginal native of Australia, India, China or of the South Sea Islands', unless they were 'freeholders and male'.
- The Queensland *Elections Act 1885* also had the effect of excluding Indigenous people from voting in federal elections
- However, some Indigenous Queenslanders ('half caste' born) who were not defined as 'Aboriginal natives' could enrol to vote
- The *Elections Act Amendment Act 1930* later removed the entitlement of 'half-castes' from enrolling to vote
- Constant changes to the definitions of 'half-castes' and 'Aboriginal natives' meant more Indigenous people were removed and/or disqualified from enrolling
- There was no specific Indigenous suffrage movement in Queensland as voting rights were just one aspect of broader human rights for which Indigenous people were fighting
- The universal right of Indigenous people to vote in Queensland State elections occurred in 1965, with the *Elections Acts Amendment Act 1965* assented to by the Governor on 17 December 1965
- 90 per cent of Queensland voters in the 1967 referendum to amend the Commonwealth Constitution supported the removal of discriminatory provisions against Indigenous people
- Voting for Indigenous Queenslanders remained voluntary until 1971
- There has only been one Aboriginal elected representative in the Queensland State Parliament, Mr Eric Deeral. There has not been a Torres Strait Islander representative in State Parliament



Look how far Queensland women have come!

Gaining the right to vote empowered women politically, economically and socially. As a result, there have been many significant achievements for and by Queensland women.

1905	Queensland women won the right to vote in State elections	1973	<i>Elections Act and the Criminal Code Amendment Act: Voting age reduced to 18 years</i>
1915	Women won the right to be elected to Queensland Parliament	1984	The <i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984</i> was passed by the federal government
1929	Irene Longman was the first woman elected to Queensland Parliament	1989	The <i>Domestic Violence Family Protection Act 1989</i> was proclaimed in Queensland
1929	International Women's Day was celebrated for the first time in Brisbane	1991	The <i>Anti Discrimination Act 1991</i> was proclaimed in Queensland
1940	The Australian Women's Land Army was formed in Queensland	1992	Leneen Forde was commissioned as the first female Governor of Queensland
1950	The female rate of pay was set at 75 per cent of the male rate in the Commonwealth Basic Wage Case	1996	Joan Sheldon became the first female Deputy Premier and Treasurer of Queensland
1955	Deidrie Mary Vance was the first female in Queensland to be awarded a Bachelor of Engineering (Civil). It was awarded by the University of Queensland	2000	Queensland born Cathy Freeman lit the Olympic flame and won gold in the 400m track event at the Sydney Olympics
1961	Oral contraceptives went on sale in Australia	2001	Queensland Parliament attained the highest proportion of women representatives of any Australian parliament, and one of the highest proportions in the world, with 33 of the 89 elected members being women
1962	Indigenous Australians gained the right to vote in federal elections	2002	Queensland architect Brit Anderson was the first woman to receive the annual Gold Medal from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects
1965	All Indigenous Queenslanders gained the right to vote in State elections	2003	Queensland Government released the State's first five-year plan for Queensland women – the <i>Women in the Smart State Directions Statement 2003–2008</i>
1965	The first female Queensland police officers were sworn in	2004	Ms Loris Williams became Queensland's first Indigenous archivist
1966	Naida Haxton was the first female barrister admitted to the Queensland Bar	2004	Queensland Parliament remained Australia's top-performing parliament in terms of women's representation
1969	The ban on married women as permanent employees in the Queensland State public sector was abolished		
1970	Women were no longer excluded from drinking in public bars in Queensland		



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