

Labor faction fails to promote gender equality in politics

By Peter Wicks

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Equality is something every employer should strive for and our Federal Parliament should be no different.

The [male-to-female ratio](#) of the major parties is something that much has been written and spoken about across all forms of media. It is something both the Greens and the Labor Party in particular campaign particularly hard on.

The Coalition, on the other hand, has [dragged the chain](#). However, it is also fair to say progress is being made in the Coalition, but is painstakingly slow. They have seemingly had to be dragged kicking and screaming towards the equality table and it is a table where they are yet to take a seat.

Last Federal Election campaign, Labor [proudly launched](#) its 'Australian women. Labor's plan for equality' policy in Melbourne with former leader [Bill Shorten](#) talking up the fact that Labor would have an equal number of men and women in its ministerial team should

he win government.

Even better, it wasn't just the ministerial team, Bill announcing:

'...if we win the election on May the 18th, we will be the first government in the history of the Commonwealth with 50 per cent women in our ranks.'

It was fitting that this policy was launched in Victoria, Bill's home state and a state with [strong rules](#) regarding the role of women in the Party.

The Labor Party's [Affirmative Action](#) platform means there are strict party rules regarding the equal representation of women across all party positions, including elected positions.

The Coalition has no such rules nor does it seem to have any inclination of putting any in place. Maybe Prime Minister [Scott Morrison](#) is hoping for another miracle.

However, things aren't quite as rosy in Labor as Shorten would have had us believe.

Ironically, it was Shorten making this equality policy speech and also ironic that he was making it in Victoria.

The Labor *Affirmative Action* rules

cover virtually every aspect of the Party, however, it doesn't cover one crucial area — the factions.

The leading Labor faction in Victoria is the [Victorian Right](#), Bill Shorten's faction. As [published by Fairfax](#), the Victorian Right has 13 members in Federal Parliament, three of which are women. That's 23%, or less than half of the 50% Shorten bragged so proudly about. With the Right holding the power across Labor's internal committees, is it any wonder the *Affirmative Action* rules don't apply to factions?

VIC ALP

ON THE LEFT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Andrew Giles (pictured)
Julian Hill
Catherine King
Libby Coker
Ged Kearney
Peta Murphy
Brendan O'Connor
Lisa Chesters
Maria Vamvakinou
Kate Thwaites

SENATE

Kim Carr
Jess Walsh

ON THE RIGHT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Richard Marles (pictured)
Bill Shorten
Mark Dreyfus
Peter Khalil
Anthony Byrne
Rob Mitchell
Clare O'Neil
Josh Burns
Daniel Mulino
Joanne Ryan
Tim Watts

SENATE

Raffaele Ciccone
Kimberley Kitching

(Source: [The Sydney Morning Herald](#))

To put things in perspective, [29%](#) of the National Party's Federal Parliamentarians are women. A pathetic amount sure, but still 26% better than Labor's Victorian Right faction can manage.

No member of the Victorian Right has any moral authority to be critical of the Coalition when it comes to equality, but of course, that hasn't stopped some of them blowing their trumpet based on the willingness of others to observe their own party rules.

It may be the director of the "boys club" over at the Victorian Right Zionist think tank, [John Curtin Research Centre](#), publicly berating [EMILY's List](#), an organisation dedicated to promoting women in Labor and telling them to 'get in the bin'. It may be the fact that the largest faction in the state's dominant political

party can't find a handful of women amongst its thousands of members that it thinks are worthy of preselecting in winnable seats. Any way you cut it, this is a faction that makes the party of [Barnaby Joyce](#) and [Matt Canavan](#) look progressive by comparison.

Supporters of this faction may think that the public doesn't notice so therefore, it doesn't matter. The [Victorian Left](#) supports both women and the party rules and makes up for the failings of the Right so what does it matter?

There are three unwritten party rules that decide who will be Labor's federal deputy leader. They are that *Affirmative Action* rules apply to party leadership, that leadership must be made up of both Left and Right members and that the leader and deputy should not be from the same state.

With current Labor leader [Anthony Albanese](#) coming from the NSW Left, this means the deputy should be from the Right, female, from another state and an elected member from the House Of Representatives.

Outside of NSW, the dominant faction is the Victorian Right, unfortunately leaving the choice of only two women from the HOR rather than the six they would have had if they followed the party platform.

While I think [Clare O'Neil](#) would have made a fine deputy leader, certainly one that would run rings around [Richard Marles](#), the Victorian Right decided that the unwritten rule about Left and Right was more important than the one about gender equality, so we ended up with Richard Marles as deputy leader. A less than inspiring

bloke rather than a strong woman.

The party spin was that there were two female leaders in the Senate so that provided the balance of half the leadership team.

Quite frankly, that is bullshit.

[Penny Wong](#) is Labor's Senate leader. She is the Senate equivalent of [Tony Burke](#), not the Party equivalent of Richard Marles.

The Labor Party leadership is the leader and the deputy, currently this is made up of two men. A less-than-fantastic achievement that nobody had to burn a bra to achieve.

The Victorian Right is a rogue boys club that operates well outside the party platform and sadly, even after being put into administration due to the [branch stacking](#) from one sub-faction of the Right, the other sub-faction carries on as nothing has happened.

Some members of the Victorian Right will tell you that all Labor leaders that have won a federal election have come from Labor's Right.

Others will tell you that every Labor leader from the Left has been undermined and white-anted by members of the Right, a phenomenon we've [seen in the UK recently](#) from the turncoats that brand themselves "Blue Labour" like some kind of toilet cleaner or mouthwash with a septic aftertaste.

Every time you read a headline that questions Anthony Albanese's leadership, be under no illusion what rock the "unnamed source" crawled out from under.

If Labor ever seeks to form government again, they need to rein in its rogue conservative members.

Victoria is a great place to start.

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