‘An Utter Absence of National Feeling’: Australian Women and the International Suffrage Movement, 1900–14’

James Keating (UNSW)
j.keating@unsw.edu.au

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JAMES KEATING

In February 1902 the Victorian suffragist Vida Goldstein helped establish the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) in Washington, D.C. Four months later, the Commonwealth Franchise Act gave white women unprecedented political privileges. Despite these pioneer achievements, Australian women struggled to achieve prominence within the international suffrage movement before the First World War. Discounting traditional explanations that expense and distance kept Australians on the IWSA’s margins, this article reconsiders the concept of national representation—a central tenet of liberal internationalism. In the wake of Federation, deep colonial loyalties persisted and women remained ambivalent about assuming the responsibilities of national and international citizenship.

On 18 February 1902, Vida Goldstein stood before the United States Senate Select Committee on Woman Suffrage and implored those gathered to ‘trust your women’ and ratify a constitutional amendment allowing the female franchise.¹ She had travelled from Melbourne to represent Australia and New Zealand at a gathering of women from nine countries that constituted the International Women’s Suffrage Alliance (IWSA). One week earlier, in what she described as ‘the great memory of my life’—greater even than an

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¹ *Hearing Before the Select Committee on Woman Suffrage, United States Senate* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), 34.

audience with President Roosevelt—the assembly elected Goldstein its secretary.² Unlike South and Western Australian women, who gained the state franchise in 1894 and 1899, as a Victorian Goldstein could not yet vote. Nevertheless, as Clare Wright has observed, she personified the spirit of a new nation ‘pleased to the point of self-righteousness’ with its perceived social and political superiority, engendered by its push toward gender, if not racial, equality.³ Sustained by these certainties, Goldstein assured her audience in Washington, D.C.:

Woman suffrage is with us to stay, and ... the earnest desire of the countries which have sent me here ...[is] that our success may hasten the day when ... American women will stand before the world as the political equals of your men folk.⁴

On her return, Goldstein reiterated the message at a Sydney reception: ‘let us enter the new international alliance, and never rest until we have obtained for the women of other lands the same privileges which we enjoy in Australia’. Her rhetoric would have sounded familiar to anyone who attended the wave of antipodean suffrage celebrations that began when New Zealand became the first self-governing country to enfranchise women in 1893, peaked with the passage of the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902—which allowed white women to vote and stand as candidates in Federal elections—and ended with Victoria in 1908.⁵ Guided by such a clear sense of their historical significance, one might have expected enfranchised Australian women to feature strongly in the

² *Australian Woman's Sphere (AWS)*, 10 April 1902, 165; *Report, First International Woman Suffrage Conference* (New York: International Woman Suffrage Headquarters, 1902), 4.

³ Clare Wright, “‘A Splendid Object Lesson’: A Transnational Perspective on the Birth of the Australian Nation”, *Journal of Women's History* 26, no. 4 (2014): 12–36.

⁴ *Report, First International Woman Suffrage Conference* (New York: International Woman Suffrage Headquarters, 1902), 4.

⁵ *Woman's Journal*, 11 October 1902, 324. Kate Sheppard delivered a similar message in New Zealand in 1893. *Prohibitionist*, 25 November 1893, 3.

international women's suffrage movement, and particularly in its most formalised expression, the IWSA. Yet, they were notable by their absence.

Goldstein's journey, and the impression she made in Washington, has captivated historians as much as it intrigued American progressives.⁶ However, while Australian women's interwar internationalism remains the subject of sustained historical interest—coinciding with a historiography that characterises these years as an 'internationalist moment'—women's participation in international organisations before the First World War has suffered scholarly neglect. Even a 2014 survey of Australian women's international activism omitted the years between 1902 and 1914.⁷ As it stands, the story of Australian suffrage internationalism is considered through histories of women's travel and scattered among authorised chronicles produced by state branches of the National Council

⁶ See for example Shane Maloney and Chris Grosz, 'Vida Goldstein and Theodore Roosevelt', *Monthly*, November 2012, 66; Wright, 12–3.

⁷ Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2012); Natasha Campo and Marilyn Lake, 'International Activism and Organisations', *The Encyclopedia of Women & Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia*, <http://womenustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0200b.htm>, (accessed 3 February 2015). See also Fiona Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific: Cultural Internationalism and Race Politics in the Women's Pan-Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009); Angela Woollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women's Internationalist Activism in the 1920s–30s', *Gender & History* 10, no. 3 (1998): 425–48. Marian Quartly and Judith Smart's work on the National Councils of Women is a notable exception here. See Marian Quartly and Judith Smart, *Respectable Radicals: A History of the National Council of Women of Australia 1896–2006* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2015); Marian Quartly and Judith Smart, 'Making the National Councils of Women National: The Formation of a Nation-Wide Organisation in Australia 1896–1931', in *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship: International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reforms*, eds Irma Sulkunen, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi and Pirjo Markkola (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 339–57.

of Women (NCW).⁸ This lacuna contrasts with a surfeit of European and American analyses on the formative years of the international women's movement that followed Leila Rupp's pioneering 1997 book *Worlds of Women*.⁹

Historians have justified their inattention to the period before 1914 on the grounds that women's internationalism was tepid. As Barbara Caine observed in 1998, Australians 'had acknowledged, but rarely been involved in, pre-war ... organisations like the International Council of Women (ICW)'.¹⁰ However, it was not simply that Australians did not participate in the international sphere. Explanations that cite the colonists' distance from Europe and inability to speak its languages as impediments to women's travel are partial at best.¹¹ Rather, as this article demonstrates, the records of the ICW and its contemporaries show that in the anticipation and afterglow of enfranchisement, Australian women joined a wave of liberal international initiatives.¹² Yet, their engagement with these organisations was circumscribed by international leaders' insistence that 'self-governing nation states or federal states formed the ... foundation of any organization operating at the international level'. The transition from the transatlantic friendship networks forged by mid-century feminists reflected women's desire for political legitimacy in an arena

⁸ Ros Pesman, *Duty Free: Australian Women Abroad* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), 109–20. For a bibliography of these 'authorised' histories, see Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 477–87.

⁹ Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). For an overview of this work, see Francisca de Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purvis, and Krassimira Daskalova, 'Introduction', in *Women's Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present*, eds Francisca de Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purvis, and Krassimira Daskalova (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1–12.

¹⁰ Barbara Caine, 'International Links', in *Australian Feminism: A Companion*, ed. Barbara Caine (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), 164.

¹¹ Rupp, 51–81.

¹² Australian women did not attend radical internationalist ventures like the International Conferences of Socialist Women.

dominated by nation states, their faith in the progressive nature of state building, and European members' fear that admitting sub-national groups would provoke the ire of authoritarian Federal governments.¹³ Nationalism, as Fiona Paisley argues, was not considered anathema to cross-border cooperation, but rather the 'first step along the road to internationalism'.¹⁴ For Australians, who had yet to develop national institutions in the wake of Federation, these new norms for international participation required extensive domestic reorganisation to realise their desire for international solidarity.

Although many of Goldstein's compatriots shared her conviction that they had a 'great obligation to those who blazed the tracks in England & other countries ... many years ago', they appeared reluctant to join the IWSA.¹⁵ The question about whether the states or the Commonwealth would serve as the platform for women's internationalism had been debated since 1899. Then, the ICW—a broad-based conglomerate of national women's organisations established in 1888—was wracked by disputes about how best to accommodate Australia's separate state Councils after Federation. By 1904 it reached a compromise that facilitated Australian women's international participation by preserving the states' autonomy behind a flimsy national facade that remained until 1931.¹⁶ The IWSA, a more radical organisation devoted to women's enfranchisement, adopted a stronger stance on national organisation. To prevent the fragmentation of European

¹³ Susan Zimmermann, 'The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women's Movement: The Hapsburg Monarchy and the Development of Feminist Inter/National Politics', *Journal of Women's History* 17, no. 2 (2005): 87–117.

¹⁴ Paisley, 24, 53.

¹⁵ Vida Goldstein to Rose Scott, 29 June 1909, Scott Family Papers (hereafter SFP), A2272/1019-20, Mitchell Library (hereafter ML), Sydney.

¹⁶ The amalgamation of Australia's state councils occupied the ICW's executive committee more than any other issue between 1899 and 1904. *International Council of Women Report of Transactions during the Third Quinquennial Term Terminating with the Third Quinquennial Meeting* (Boston: n.p., 1909), xviii–xix, 90, 242–3.

suffrage movements, it made national unity an absolute prerequisite for international cooperation.¹⁷

As Vida Goldstein discovered when she returned from Washington, D.C., charged to build a national auxiliary to the IWSA, 'there was as yet no imagined Australian community' among the women who campaigned for the vote.¹⁸ During the 1990s, Marilyn Lake and others demonstrated that in the years surrounding the First World War, Australian nationalism was not merely a 'masculinist quest'. Instead, the post-suffrage era was characterised by a 'collusive relationship of nationalism and feminism' whereby women demanded the benefits of citizenship in return for their 'maternal service' to the nation.¹⁹ While nationalist rhetoric prevailed in domestic political debates, those who entered the international sphere after 1900 continued to mobilise under existing state organisations. Commonwealth enfranchisement prompted women like Vida Goldstein to identify with the nation, a sentiment that underpinned their international endeavours. For others, like Rose Scott, the secretary of the Womanhood Suffrage League of New South Wales, and a leading personality in the colonial women's movement, internationalism offered an opportunity to resist the threat of 'national singularity'.²⁰ Such persistent localism did not marry well with the IWSA's insistence that national unity underpinned feminist internationalism. Although pre-war Australian feminists were enthusiastic

¹⁷ Zimmermann, 90–2.

¹⁸ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 26.

¹⁹ Marilyn Lake, 'Feminist History as National History: Writing the Political History of Women', *Australian Historical Studies* 27, no. 106 (1996): 157. Marilyn Lake expounded on these ideas in a series of articles published in the 1990s, but see in particular Marilyn Lake, 'Mission Impossible: How Men Gave Birth to the Australian Nation—Nationalism, Gender, and Other Seminal Acts', *Gender & History* 4, no. 3 (1992): 305–22; Marilyn Lake, 'Women and Nation in Australia: The Politics of Representation', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 43, no. 1 (1997): 41–52.

²⁰ Alan Atkinson, 'Federation, Democracy and the Struggle against a Single Australia', *Australian Historical Studies* 44, no. 2 (2013): 262–79.

travellers, a heady mix of transnational organisational politics, lingering unease with Federation, and personal tensions circumscribed their participation in international suffragism.

Australia's Feminist Travellers: International Women's Conferences, 1893–1914

Like anti-slavery reformers, pacifists, and trade unionists, European and American women began organising across borders in the mid-nineteenth century. Initially they forged personal ties, but as women gained experience in non-governmental organisations they built institutions to advance their own emancipatory agenda.²¹ New spaces—world's fairs and international conventions—attracted women's rights activists, who created an axis for collaboration based on the belief that their 'universal' oppression necessitated collective action.²² Early organisations like the Swiss *Association Internationale Des Femmes* (1868–72) and the British, Continental and General Federation for the Abolition of Government Regulation of Prostitution (1875) allowed individual and sub-national membership.²³ However, when the ICW—often considered the first important transnational women's organisation—was established in 1888 it curtailed 'any internationalism not based exclusively on the national' by limiting membership to National Councils of Women.²⁴ Despite its firm constitutional requirements, the Council's agenda remained amorphous. At its 1899 congress it established its first standing committees, on peace and the legal status of married women. However, seeking to build an organisation

²¹ Margaret H. McFadden, *Golden Cables of Sympathy: The Transatlantic Sources of Nineteenth-Century Feminism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999).

²² Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 144–81.

²³ *Fédération Britannique, Continentale et Générale Cinquième Congrès International* (Geneva: Secrétariat Général de la Fédération, 1890), 6–7.

²⁴ Zimmermann, 89.

acceptable to women engaged in public work across the world, its leaders refused to take a stance on women's suffrage, prompting radical members to convene the International Woman Suffrage Committee in Washington, D.C., in 1902. Two years later, the committee inaugurated the IWSA in Berlin to assist national suffrage activity.²⁵

Australian participation in these organisations has been underestimated, a consequence of the archival deficiencies that plague historians of international institutions. While the NCWs kept detailed records from their inception, until Marian Quartly and Judith Smart's recent research these records had not been examined comparatively.²⁶ Furthermore, extant personal papers only document distinguished individuals' networks and few of the myriad records produced by the ICW and IWSA are held in Australian repositories. Thus, in the 1990s, when both organisations' archives were largely inaccessible from Australia, historians believed Australian women remained aloof from international conferences after 1893.²⁷ Yet, a recent flurry of digitisation has revolutionised access to the archives of the international women's movement.²⁸ Read alongside the records preserved by state Councils and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), these new materials show that Australian women were enthusiastic members of an international community.

Table 1: Australian attendance at ICW Congresses, 1893–1914²⁹

²⁵ Rupp, 19–22.

²⁶ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*; Quartly and Smart, 'Making the National Councils of Women', 339–57.

²⁷ Pesman, 113.

²⁸ The *Gerritsen Collection* contains over 4,000 monographs and 300 periodicals pertaining to women's rights movements across the world between the 1880s and 1945. It was digitised in 2006. In 2011, Binghamton University and Alexander Street Press launched *Women and Social Movements, International*, a digital archive containing 150,000 pages of published and manuscript material on women's international activism between 1840 and the present.

²⁹ Sources: published reports of the quinquennial conventions of the ICW, 1893–1914.

As table one shows, twenty-two Australian representatives attended the ICW's quinquennial conventions between 1893 and 1914. Australians were also regular attendees at the Council's annual executive meetings. In the Council's first decade, delegations were small, and typically consisted of expatriates or foreign stand-ins. Reflecting the slow formation of state Councils, most Australian representatives hailed from the south-east.³⁰ By the 1910s, this trend had altered. With Councils in every state, the number of proxy representatives fell, and larger parties travelled overseas. However, with the exception of Emily Dobson, a wealthy philanthropist and long-term president of Tasmania's NCW who assumed the ICW's vice-presidency in 1914, few women attended more than one congress, preventing them from accreting the thick networks built by their Northern Hemisphere peers.³¹

Table 2: Australian attendance at IWSA Conferences, 1902–13³²

Over the same period, as table two shows, Australians attended IWSA meetings in smaller numbers. Australian representatives travelled to six of the Alliance's first seven conferences, though not its inauguration in 1904. Although Alliance meetings attracted European and North American suffrage grandees, its Australian delegates seldom enjoyed similar domestic stature. Between Vida Goldstein's homecoming and the First World War, only two women—Dobson and Lille Cowley—travelled to meetings from Australia; the rest lived in Europe. Though Madge Donohoe, Harriet Newcomb, and Margaret Hodge

³⁰ The New South Wales NCW was formed in 1896, followed by Councils in Tasmania (1899), South Australia (1902–09, 1920), Victoria (1902), Queensland (1905), and Western Australia (1911).

³¹ *International Council of Women, First Annual Report of the Fifth Quinquennial Period 1909–1910* (Berlin: Langenscheidtsche Buchdruckerei, 1910), 8.

³² Sources: published reports of the IWSA's biennial conferences, 1902–13.

had all sat on the Womanhood Suffrage League (WSL) of New South Wales' executive, their names were not familiar to women at home or abroad.

Combined with the absence of Australia's best-known suffragists, the country's small delegations alarmed the IWSA. The Alliance's biennial conferences had expanded from the thirteen women who gathered in 1902 to over 300 delegates by 1913, but still featured few enfranchised women. In 1906, its president Carrie Chapman Catt told Rose Scott 'my heart ... yearn[s] for a genuine voting Australian woman!' She explained:

The value of the Alliance depends directly upon the connection of the enfranchised countries with it ... [T]he attendance upon International meetings of ... enfranchised women is doing a far mightier work for the enfranchisement of the world than it is possible for those at a distance to conceive.³³

How can we reconcile Vida Goldstein's earnest proclamations of Australian leadership with her countrywomen's apparent indifference to the IWSA? Geographical barriers are cited as the most significant obstacle to women's participation in international organisations.³⁴ These claims warrant scrutiny. The 14,000 miles separating Australia from the international women's movement's North Atlantic powerbase circumscribed women's ability to attend meetings, which only moved outside Europe and North America in the 1960s.³⁵ For the affluent, the age of rail and steam revolutionised women's mobility. Late nineteenth-century Australian travellers to Europe enjoyed vast improvements in shipping speeds, yet ticket prices remained expensive. Steerage fares were cheap, but comfortable cabin berths lay beyond most women's means.³⁶ Until 1920, when the ICW instituted travel grants, members routinely elected leaders with 'large means' above

³³ Catt to Scott, 30 March 1906 and 16 December 1908, SFP, A2272/980-82, 998–1002, ML.

³⁴ Rupp, 51–81.

³⁵ *International Council of Women, Report of Transactions of the Fourth Quinquennial Meeting* (London: Constable & Co., 1910), 124; Rupp, 73–4.

³⁶ Robin Haines, *Life and Death in the Age of Sail: The Passage to Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), 269–70; Pesman, 23.

worthier candidates who ‘ha[d] not the money for travelling’.³⁷ Few Australians fell into the first category, making even one European sojourn a significant test of their financial and familial freedom.

Table 3: Australian attendance at World’s WCTU Conventions, 1891–1913³⁸

However, the ‘tyranny of distance’ can be exaggerated, as women in other reform organisations demonstrated.³⁹ As table three shows, between 1891 and 1913 thirty-two Australians attended World’s WCTU conventions, travelling as colonial or state representatives until the organisation of national delegations in 1906. During these years, hundreds more departed on Christian missions in Asia and the Pacific.⁴⁰ As an organisation established to combat the transnational drug trade, travel was woven into the WCTU’s fabric. Unlike the ICW and IWSA, all WCTU representatives returned home to local branches, entrenching ties between Australian members and the World’s union, and stimulating fundraising for future journeys.

Australians also benefitted from sharing a common tongue with the WCTU’s American progenitors. As the *New York Tribune* reported in 1904, ‘foreign languages’ were a ‘necessary part of the successful woman’s equipment’ within the upper echelons of less Anglocentric organisations. Nevertheless, while women like the New Zealander

³⁷ Louisa Martindale to Kate Sheppard, 21 March 1904, ARC176/53/327; Isobel Aberdeen to Sheppard, 9 April 1904, ARC176/53/329, Catherine Wilson Sheppard Papers, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch; *International Council of Women Report on the Quinquennial Meeting, Kristiania 1920* (Aberdeen: Rosemount Press, 1920), 32.

³⁸ Sources: published reports of the biennial and triennial conventions of the World’s WCTU, 1891–1913.

³⁹ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia’s History* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1966).

⁴⁰ Janet West, ‘The Role of the Woman Missionary, 1880–1914’, *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review*, no. 20-21 (1996): 31–60.

Wilhelmina Sherriff Bain felt embarrassed by their 'linguistic ignorance' at European gatherings, nothing suggests linguistic barriers discouraged them from travelling.⁴¹ Although the ICW and IWSA conducted official business in English, French, and German, English doubled as the language of publication. Martina Kramers, the Dutch editor of the IWSA newspaper *Jus Suffragii*, grudgingly accepted the situation as an economic necessity: 'the poor monolingual Americans must ... know what is going on'.⁴² If such sentiments were common, they did not disadvantage English-speakers in Europe. When Madge Donohoe toured the Netherlands in 1908, her hosts supplied an interpreter—a privilege seldom extended to non-speakers of the three official languages.⁴³ Language and travel were obstacles some women's organisations overcame, suggesting that deeper reasons lay behind Australian women's neglect of international suffrage conventions.

Inter/National Politics within the International Woman Suffrage Alliance

Writing to IWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt, Vida Goldstein identified another cause for her countrywomen's lukewarm embrace of international suffragism.⁴⁴ Australians, she told Catt 'over and over again' suffered an 'utter absence of national feeling'.⁴⁵ The statement contrasted with Goldstein's confident self-presentation as an Australian citizen in America. Federation had laid the foundation for the Commonwealth Franchise Act in 1902 and provided women a platform to speak internationally on progressive issues. Yet colonial and imperial loyalties died hard. The Commonwealth eventually became the 'focus of intense ... nationalist identification on the part of (white) women', but it initially

⁴¹ *New York Tribune*, 29 August 1904, 5; *Woman's Tribune*, 12 November 1904, 93.

⁴² *ICW Report of Transactions of the Fourth Quinquennial*, v; Rupp, 71.

⁴³ *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 21 November 1908, 6–7.

⁴⁴ I borrow the phrase 'inter/national' from Zimmermann, 89.

⁴⁵ Catt to Scott, 18 May 1909, SFP, A2272/1017-8, ML.

had little emotional resonance for its citizens.⁴⁶ Politically active women organised themselves along state lines and resisted ceding power to national bodies until the 1920s. Overlooked in the history of twentieth-century feminism, Goldstein's struggle to build a national women's organisation to affiliate with the IWSA revealed a conflict between her notion of the Commonwealth as a 'sphere for patriotic action' and the prevalence of older colonial nationalisms that challenged women's participation in international organisations.⁴⁷

Though there was little to show for it by the end of the decade, Vida Goldstein envisaged Australia's admission to the IWSA as a model of national collaboration. Nominated as the Commonwealth delegate to the 1902 International Woman Suffrage Congress, she issued a nationwide fundraising appeal. Yet, aside from £30 donated by the New South Wales WSL, most remittances came from fellow Victorians. Writing later, the South Australian electoral reformer Catherine Spence believed Goldstein's supporters felt 'sore' that women in other states 'did so little towards sending Vida to America'.⁴⁸ As quickly became apparent, the lacklustre response to the appeal foreshadowed her compatriots' indifference to the Alliance's work.

Another warning of the difficulties Goldstein faced in building a national organisation reverberated from Europe, where the ICW executive challenged Australia's

⁴⁶ Gail Reekie, 'Contesting Australia: Feminism and Histories of the Nation', in *Images of Australia: An Introductory Reader to Australian Studies*, eds Gillian Whitlock and David Carter (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1992), 145.

⁴⁷ Lake, 'Women and Nation', 41; Anne Coote, 'Imagining a Colonial Nation', *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 1, no. 1 (1999): 1–37.

⁴⁸ AWS, December 1901, 128; January 1902, 136; February 1902, 144–5; Womanhood Suffrage League of New South Wales Minute Book (hereafter WSL of NSW MB) 1899–1902, 232, Scott Family (Rose Scott) Papers (hereafter RSP), MSS38/33/2, ML; Catherine Spence to Alice Henry, 27 October 1901 and 19 March 1902, Catherine Helen Spence Papers (hereafter Spence Papers), PRG88/7/10, 14, State Library of South Australia (hereafter SLSA), Adelaide.

sub-national affiliations to the Council. Seeking to demonstrate growth and boost its dwindling coffers before the Council's showpiece London congress, in 1899 the departing executive committee bent its membership rules and admitted the self-governing colonies of New South Wales and Tasmania as full members.⁴⁹ However, the incoming leadership repudiated the decision, branding the colonies' admission a violation of the Council's 'fundamental [national] ideal'. Over the next five years questions of nationality acquired new urgency. As Isabel Dickson, New South Wales' representative at the ICW's 1904 congress explained to her members, the 'Australian question' had 'political application in Europe':

If the federated states of the Commonwealth each have a national council, what is to prevent each federated state, say of the German Empire from making the same demand? That could be regarded ... as in direct opposition to the policy ... [of] the powerful German Empire, & could only have one result, the suppression of Women's National Councils as dangerous political societies.⁵⁰

Staged in Paris, Copenhagen, and The Hague, the ICW's federation debates proceeded without Australian participation. In 1902 the executive vetoed a suggestion that its secretary travel to Australia to persuade the state Councils to unify. The ICW's oversight became apparent in 1903 when, oblivious to the furore, the South Australian and Victorian NCWs sought to affiliate. Perturbed that separate membership would allow Australia twelve votes at executive meetings 'whilst the whole of America only had three', the United States delegation contested the states' admission.⁵¹ The state councils, however,

⁴⁹ ICW Executive Committee Minutes 1897–1900, *Women and Social Movements, International*, <http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy2.library.usyd.edu.au/view/1654707>, (accessed 4 February 2015).

⁵⁰ Isabel Dickson, 'Report on the International Council of Women', RSP, MSS38/46/87, ML.

⁵¹ National Council of Women of New South Wales (NCW of NSW) Minutes, August 1904–March 1910, 14–5, MSS3739, Box MLK3009, ML; *ICW Report of Transactions during the Third Term*, 92, 117, 129; May Wood Swift to Scott, 8 April 1904, SFP, A2274/191-4, ML.

were reluctant to implement the ICW's proposal to create 'one large National Council for the whole of Australasia'.⁵² Even after Federation, the state, rather than the continent, remained women's primary point of reference. Rose Scott's 1903 speech to the New South Wales Council encapsulated members' concerns:

The difficulty here is scarcely realised by people who have never been in Australia ... I cannot personally agree ... that our position is analogous to that of the 45 American States ... Our States are really so huge, so far apart, so sparsely populated, that it would be almost impossible for an ... Australian National Council ... to do business.⁵³

Faced with antipodean intransigence, the ICW yielded. Though as Emily Dobson admitted, the American delegates had protested 'justly', many Australian members believed 'the time was not yet ripe for actual federation'.⁵⁴ After lengthy debate at an interstate conference in Melbourne, in late 1905 the Australian Councils rejected complete unification in favour of a 'limited federation in matters such as finance and [international] representation'.⁵⁵ The ICW accepted the Australian proposal, yet the separate recognition afforded to the state Councils 'reinforce[d] provincialism over national interest'. While the Councils' common ICW membership channelled their domestic activism 'into common patterns', it also entrenched provincial power structures and saw state leaders guard separate international lines of communication.⁵⁶ Despite a host of interstate conferences

⁵² *ICW Report of Transactions during the Third Term*, 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 6; Rose Scott, 'Speech to the National Council of Women of New South Wales', 26 May 1903, RSP, MSS38/49/97-123, ML. Emily Dobson made similar arguments the following year. *Mercury*, 12 February 1904, 6.

⁵⁴ NCW of NSW Minutes, August 1904–March 1910, 13–7, MSS3739, Box MLK3009, ML.

⁵⁵ *Argus*, 26 October 1905, 6; *Mercury*, 25 February 1906, 6.

⁵⁶ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 33–4. The states reported individually to the ICW's standing committees and sought the right for separate representation at the ICW's executive meetings. For example, see NCW of NSW Minutes, April 1910–May 1917, 70, MSS3739, Box MLK3009, ML.

over the following twenty years, the problems of distance and poor communication Scott raised in 1903 delayed the formation of the National Council of Women of Australia (NCWA) until 1931. Even then, some members decried the ICW's push for unification as an insidious form of 'sovietism', and it took the Second World War to give the NCWA a truly national focus.⁵⁷ The ICW's solution was imperfect, yet the bifurcation of state and national responsibilities did encourage international participation. As the IWSA would discover, there was little to be gained by insisting Australian women unite under a single, national banner.

As a member of Victoria's NCW, Vida Goldstein understood the size of her task. In spite of her belief that a united Australia was a beacon for progressives across the world, before she left America Goldstein reflected on the challenges ahead. 'The new Federated Australia', she told the *San Francisco Chronicle*, was 'premature', and lacked 'sufficient statesmanship to manage such a large concern'.⁵⁸ She was returning to a country that its Attorney General and one of the architects of Federation, Alfred Deakin, described as 'a loosely allied set of communities divided from each other by vast distances and preoccupied by parochial aims'.⁵⁹ Despite her doubts, Goldstein responded pragmatically to the shifting locus of political power by forming the Australian Women's Federal Political Association (WFPA) on her return to Melbourne.⁶⁰ Yet, she would discover that women further from the new seat of federal power were less willing to enlist in continental endeavours.

⁵⁷ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 133; Emily Dobson, 'Report of Quinquennial Meetings in the University Buildings, Toronto, June, 1909', RSP, MSS38/46/273-7, ML.

⁵⁸ *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 July 1902, 2.

⁵⁹ *Morning Post*, 10 February 1903, n.p.

⁶⁰ Judith Smart and Marian Quartly, 'The National Council of Women of Victoria: Suffrage and Political Citizenship 1904-14', *Victorian Historical Journal* 79, no. 2 (2008): 230.

From the outset, Goldstein struggled to balance her state commitments with the demands of national organisation. In 1902 she returned to Victorian politics and quickly announced her decision to stand for the Australian Senate. Furthermore, in order to recoup her travel expenses, Goldstein deferred her plans to create a new political organisation, instead taking her travelogue 'To America and Back' on the colonial speaking circuit.⁶¹ Whereas the successful WCTU was built on the effort of touring evangelists and strong local leadership, Goldstein was forced to create an organisation from the top down. From her Melbourne apartment she sketched proposals for a national body in interstate correspondence with women's leaders, yet the idea lacked wider appeal and fell into obscurity.⁶²

Alone among the countries present in Washington, D.C., Australia had no national women's political organisation, and was unable to join the IWSA at its inauguration in 1904. The setback inspired Goldstein to revive the WFPA, a scheme she proposed to Rose Scott before visiting Sydney that year. However, the month she spent immersed in the rivalry between Scott's non-partisan Women's Political Educational League and the Labor-aligned Women's Progressive Association epitomised the local difficulties her nationalist project faced. The leaders of the more numerous Association already considered her newspaper, *Australian Woman's Sphere*, 'an advertisement for Miss Scott'. So when Goldstein stayed in Scott's Woollahra home, her neutrality came under further scrutiny.⁶³ As she privately admitted, the speaking tour was a disaster. She sustained 'heavy financial loss[es]' and in misreading the city's organisational politics had jeopardised her

⁶¹ Janette M. Bomford, *Vida Goldstein: That Dangerous and Persuasive Woman* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993), 47–50.

⁶² Goldstein to Scott, 13 and 21 January 1903, SFP, A2272/791, 806-7, ML; AWS, 10 October 1903, 363.

⁶³ Goldstein to Scott, 9 March 1903, 11 and 24 August 1904, SFP, A2272/791, 969, 974, ML.

international ambitions. Louisa Lawson, already outside Scott's camp, reported that 'Miss Goldstein ... totally ignore[d] me'.⁶⁴ Within a small, politicised community, such actions had serious repercussions. In future, Lawson's *Dawn*—Australia's largest feminist newspaper—denied Goldstein's WFPA venture publicity.

Australia ultimately joined the IWSA in 1905 under the auspices of the little-known National Australian Women's Political Association (NAWPA). Despite its name, NAWPA had no presence outside Victoria, the only state where women still lacked the vote. Goldstein confessed as much in 1909, admitting it was 'nothing but a paper organisation'.⁶⁵ From her Australian correspondence, Carrie Chapman Catt knew the association fell short of the Alliance's membership criteria, yet the prospect of proceeding without representation from a country she believed had taken 'the principles of democracy ... furthest and nearest to their logical conclusion' compelled her to show leniency.⁶⁶ However, her hope that membership would stimulate Australian interest in the IWSA was misplaced. Reporting to the Alliance in 1906, Goldstein lamented: 'most disappointing progress has been made in national organization'. With the state campaigns largely concluded, suffrage proved an unpopular premise for a national organisation. Stung by her countrywomen's unresponsiveness, she counted her herself among 'the handful of Australian women ... awake to the value of international ... comradeship'. Elsewhere, she complained, enfranchised women turned inwards, determined to 'enjoy opportunities for obtaining social and domestic legislation'.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Goldstein to Miles Franklin, 16 October 1904, Miles Franklin Papers, MSS364/10/107-9, ML; Bomford, 76–7.

⁶⁵ Goldstein to Scott, 21 January 1909, SFP, A2272/1019-20, ML; *Report, Second and Third Conferences of the International Womanhood Suffrage Alliance* (Copenhagen: Bianco Luno, 1906), 60.

⁶⁶ Catt to Scott, 18 May 1909, SFP, A2272/1017-8, ML; *New York Times*, 16 February 1902, 2.

⁶⁷ *Second and Third Conferences of the IWSA*, 60–1.

Despite Vida Goldstein's despairing admission, she remained Australia's official conduit to the IWSA for another thirteen years. In 1908, she discarded the charade of national unity. Removing the words 'National Australian' from the Alliance's membership register, she made the Women's Political Association of Victoria (WPA) the vehicle for organised Australian suffrage internationalism. By then, a handful of women, including Rose Scott, had joined the Alliance as individual affiliates, which freed them from working through Goldstein. Bereft of support from state leaders, Goldstein abandoned her attempt to build an IWSA auxiliary.⁶⁸ Instead, she redoubled her pursuit of federal office and, at the request of the Women's Social and Political Union, fulfilled her sense of obligation to her suffragist foremothers by spending 1911 as an activist in Britain. Although Goldstein returned to Europe for three years in 1919, she avoided Alliance meetings. As a welter of scholarship on women like Alice Henry, Jessie Street, and Nellie Martel has shown, women of Goldstein's generation were receptive to her exhortations to help 'our English sisters and American cousins in their struggle for freedom'. However, in the absence of a national women's organisation, they travelled and worked individually, relying on personal networks, rather than working through the peak body of international suffragists.⁶⁹

'I think I am justified in describing myself as a veteran representative!'

⁶⁸ Catt to Scott, 16 December 1908, SFP, A2272/980-2; Goldstein to Scott, 5 November 1906, SFP, A2272/989, ML; *International Woman Suffrage Alliance Report of Fourth Conference* (Amsterdam: F. van Rossen, 1908), 3.

⁶⁹ See Barbara Caine, 'Vida Goldstein and the English Militant Campaign', *Women's History Review* 2, no. 3 (1993): 363–76; Diane Kirkby, *Alice Henry, The Power of Pen and Voice: the Life of an Australian-American Labor Reformer* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 68–206.

The tensions between state loyalties and new demands for women to embrace their continental citizenship were encapsulated in Sydney feminist Madge Donohoe's international career. Though contemporaries considered her 'a charming and eloquent lecturer and platform speaker', as with many 'mid-level' suffragists, she is invisible in Australian historiography.⁷⁰ After immigrating to London in 1899, she became a conduit between British and New South Wales suffragists. Combined with her command of four European languages, these connections made Donohoe an attractive candidate to represent the Commonwealth abroad. Ten years after she left Australia, Donohoe had attended seven international women's conferences on subjects ranging from suffrage to human trafficking, and considered herself a 'veteran representative' on the international scene.⁷¹ Yet the question of 'who' she represented remained open for debate. Could a New South Welshwoman who had never set foot in the Commonwealth, much less voted there, speak for all Australian women? It was answered in 1909, when her stint as an international suffragist ended abruptly, as Vida Goldstein's national vision collided with Rose Scott's opposition to Federation. An exceptional woman in her own right, Donohoe's career invites an examination of Australian contributions to the international suffrage movement, and the internal struggles that paralysed Australian participation in the IWSA.

Born Margaret Tilley in Sydney in 1864, Donohoe claimed to have been a suffragist from girlhood. An evangelical upbringing neatly led to WCTU membership in adulthood. After joining the New South Wales union in the late 1880s, Donohoe sat on its executive from 1890 to 1894. In 1892 she joined the WSL and sat on its executive for the next seven years. The position brought her close to Rose Scott, with whom she maintained a lifelong

⁷⁰ *Lady's Realm*, May–October 1902, 510–1.

⁷¹ Madge Donohoe to Scott, 16 October 1908, SFP, A2274/381, ML; Mrs Leonard W. Matters, *Australasians Who Count in London and Who Counts in Western Australia*, (London: Jas. Truscott & Son, 1913), 42–3.

friendship. Yet, prominence in Sydney feminist circles did not translate into national recognition. When she left for London to marry the Irish-Australian journalist Martin Donohoe, few outside the colony would have identified her as a pioneer suffragist.⁷²

Contrasting with previous émigrés like Dora Montefiore, who ended her association with the New South Wales suffrage campaign after returning to London in 1892, Donohoe departed with a sense of unfinished business. At her final WSL meeting she promised to ‘help our cause during my residence [overseas]’. Her opportunity came in 1900, when the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) invited colonial activists ‘to attend our Ordinary Meetings ...[and] act as intermediaries [with] ... their respective Societies’. Alongside the Victorian journalist Mary Hirst Alexander, with whom she founded a social club for Australasian women in London, Donohoe began attending meetings in May.⁷³ Evidence of her value came in 1902, when the union retained her as an intermediary—despite the WSL’s dissolution—to satisfy Englishwomen’s ‘intense interest’ in the fortunes of her enfranchised compatriots.⁷⁴ Three years with the NUWSS and intermittent work as a suffrage lecturer furnished Donohoe with numerous contacts in Britain. From 1903 she was a fixture in the *Englishwoman’s Year Book*, a who’s who of British feminism, and numbered among the forty-seven women profiled in Muriel Matters’ 1913 book, *Australasians who Count in London*.⁷⁵ A gift for languages allowed Donohoe to extend her political networks into Europe. After moving to Paris in 1906 she joined the

⁷² *Evolutie: Veertiendaagsch Blad voor de Vrouw*, 18 November 1909, 143.

⁷³ National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies Executive Committee Minutes, October 1899–September 1903, 2NWS/A/01, The Women’s Library, London School of Economics; WSL of NSW MB 1899–1902, 20, 98, 100, RSP, MSS38/33/2, ML.

⁷⁴ Donohoe to Scott, 2 January 1903, SFP, A2272/787, ML; WSL of NSW MB 1899–1902, 258, 284, RSP, MSS38/33/2, ML.

⁷⁵ Donohoe’s name appeared between 1903 and 1908. For example, see *Englishwoman’s Year Book 1903* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1903), 327.

Conseil International Permanente des Femmes, and supported herself by writing for British and South African newspapers.⁷⁶ Cosmopolitan, sociable, and unrestrained by her marriage, Madge Donohoe was well positioned to mediate between enfranchised Australian women and the nascent international suffrage movement.

In 1904, Donohoe's friendship with Scott saw her chosen to represent New South Wales for the first time at the ICW's Berlin congress. The decision to select her as an IWSA delegate is undocumented. However, having received multiple invitations to attend IWSA meetings, Scott likely recommended Goldstein appoint Donohoe in her place.⁷⁷ For a few years, Goldstein's arrangement with Donohoe flourished. Alongside Emily Dobson, she represented Australia at the IWSA's Copenhagen summit in 1906. While Dobson conveyed Goldstein's regrets that Australians had not embraced the Alliance, Donohoe's address was uplifting. Her speech outlined the 'chief benefits' of women's enfranchisement. Hoping 'Australia's experience' would 'cast [critics] to the ... winds of heaven', she recited an exhaustive list of progressive reforms, all attributed to the transformative power of the ballot.⁷⁸

The pair reprised their roles at the IWSA's 1908 conference. While Goldstein believed the Alliance best served its members by encouraging the discussion of 'tactics' and 'election policy'—matters left to national discretion—Donohoe appreciated international conferences foremost as a source of solidarity. She enjoyed the spectacle of Alliance meetings, and contributed to its glamorous image with her stylish attire. Donohoe also threw herself into committee work, and contributed to the invention of the Alliance's

⁷⁶ Matters, 42–3; *International Woman Suffrage Alliance, Report of the Fifth Conference and First Quinquennial* (London: Samuel Sidders & Co., 1909), 32.

⁷⁷ NCW of NSW Minutes, November 1895–April 1905, 172–4, MSS3739, Box MLK3009, ML; Goldstein to Scott, 21 January 1903 and 8 February 1904, SFP, A2272/806-7, 913, ML.

⁷⁸ *Second and Third Conferences of the IWSA*, 12, 60–8.

unifying traditions—its badge and song.⁷⁹ After several encounters, Carrie Chapman Catt praised Madge as ‘a most creditable, conscientious, pleasing delegate to send to any International meeting ... we all admire and like her very much’. As a subsequent lecture tour of the Netherlands, sponsored by the Dutch Woman Suffrage Association and invitations to speak in Denmark and Belgium attested, Donohoe fulfilled the Alliance’s brief to inspire disenfranchised women and ‘send ... them home to work with faith and courage which they never would possess otherwise’.⁸⁰

Although she was beloved abroad, interstate jockeying arrested Donohoe’s career. Here, reading members’ correspondence alongside the Alliance’s records illuminates the tensions that beset their utopian project. As revealed through her correspondence with Catt, Rose Scott mistrusted Vida Goldstein’s leadership. The pair were friends, and drawn to the international through their alienation from domestic party politics. Nevertheless, they endured an uneasy political relationship. Scott’s reservations first manifested on Goldstein’s return from America. Upon receiving the proceedings of the Washington conference, Scott was incensed to find it made no reference to her or to New South Wales. Unconvinced by Goldstein’s apologetic explanation that she had spoken ‘frequently to Mrs Catt about you’ and even ‘showed her your photo’, Scott questioned Catt about the omission in 1906.⁸¹ The oversight fortified Scott’s conviction that her ‘personal individuality was ... threatened by any scale of nationality beyond that which already existed’ in the 1890s. As ‘one of the angriest opponents of federation’, Scott opposed the removal of power from citizens—particularly women, whose politics were ‘immersed in

⁷⁹ *De Telegraaf*, 16 November 1908, 5; Paisley, 112; *IWSA Report of Fourth Conference*, 8, 10, 16, 29, 44–5, 82–4.

⁸⁰ Catt to Scott, 16 December 1908, SFP, A2272/998-1002; Donohoe to Scott, 16 October 1908, SFP, A2274/381, ML; *De Telegraaf*, 14 November 1908, 2; *Jus Suffragii*, 15 November 1908, 17.

⁸¹ *Report, First International Woman Suffrage Conference*, 27–33; Goldstein to Scott, 13 January 1903, SFP, A2272/791; Catt to Scott, 11 November 1906, SFP, A2272/976-8, ML.

home and family’—to a ‘faraway national parliament’.⁸² Her concerns resonated with others in New South Wales women’s movement, who resented the newfound prominence of Melbourne as the nation’s capital. In 1904 *Ladies’ Own Paper* opined that ‘the ignoring of New South Wales since ... Federation has been too flagrant to pass over without comment’.⁸³ Unlike the well-travelled Goldstein, Scott only left New South Wales twice, and never came to identify with the Commonwealth. Her profound ‘Anti-Billite’ sentiments contributed to the WSL’s disintegration, and Scott never forgot the cost of her opposition. When Goldstein first ran for the Senate, Scott told *New Idea*, ‘I broke my heart over federation’.⁸⁴ Five years later, Catherine Spence believed her friend remained ‘most bitter against federation’. She ‘hate[s] and fear[s] everything the Commonwealth does or proposes to do’.⁸⁵

Scott’s disdain for the centralisation of power extended to women’s organising. In 1906 she freed herself from working through Goldstein by enrolling as an associate member of the Alliance. Over the next two years she worked to alter the Alliance’s constitution, seeking separate membership for New South Wales, along the lines the states had brokered with the ICW.⁸⁶ By the late 1900s Goldstein accepted that her reliance on Scott had undermined the NAWPA. In January 1909 she enumerated the Association’s failings, including Scott’s refusal to ‘have anything to do’ with her political enemies. She then challenged Scott to ‘undertake the work of organising ... [an] Australian body ... [a]s

⁸² Atkinson, 268–9, 279; Lake, ‘Feminist History as National History’, 164–5.

⁸³ *Ladies’ Own Paper*, 1 May 1904, 2.

⁸⁴ Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 29; *New Idea*, 1 January 1903, 430.

⁸⁵ Spence to Henry, 11 May 1908, Spence Papers, PRG88/7/95, SLSA.

⁸⁶ *Second and Third Conferences of the IWSA*, 60–1; Catt to Scott, 16 December 1908 and 18 May 1909, SFP, A2272/998-1002, 1017-8, ML.

the leading Australian pioneer the privilege & honour should be yours', an offer Scott refused.⁸⁷

Differences over Federation and lingering interstate suspicions curtailed Madge Donohoe's career. Outwardly, she appeared to be the 'genuine voting Australian woman' Carrie Chapman Catt so desired to meet in 1906.⁸⁸ Yet, as her career demonstrated, the Commonwealth did not conform to the IWSA's notion of a nation state. Despite Donohoe's personal ties with European feminists—the lifeblood of any international organisation—in 1909 Goldstein moved to replace her with a 'delegate fresh from Australia'.⁸⁹ The conflict between her national ambition and Scott's localised vision of international participation had culminated the previous year. Though Scott denied accusations that she was a 'provincialist' during the Federation debates, by 1908 she sought to put New South Wales on an equal footing with the Commonwealth.⁹⁰ In advance of the IWSA's Amsterdam conference she supplied Donohoe a separate state report to read alongside her notes on Australia, and unsuccessfully demanded her accreditation as the state's international representative. Though Donohoe travelled to the IWSA's London congress in 1909, her appointment went against Goldstein's better judgement, and she never attended another Alliance meeting. Instead, she was succeeded by a string of London-based expatriates united—it seems—by their antipathy to Scott.⁹¹ The IWSA would wait until 1923 to receive another 'delegate fresh from Australia'.

Read alongside Australian suffragists' personal papers, the IWSA's records reveal a more ambivalent relationship between women and nation in the early Commonwealth than

⁸⁷ Goldstein to Scott, 29 January 1909, SFP, A2272/1019-20, ML.

⁸⁸ Catt to Scott, 30 March 1906, SFP, A2272/980-2, ML.

⁸⁹ Goldstein to Scott, 29 January 1909, SFP, A2272/1019-20, ML.

⁹⁰ Rose Scott, Federation Speech Notes, c. June 1899, RSP, MSS38/27/31-185, ML.

⁹¹ Catt to Scott, 16 December 1908, SFP, A2272/998-1002; Goldstein to Scott, 29 January 1909, SFP, A2272/1019-20, ML; *IWSA Report of the Fourth Conference*, 11.

has recently been asserted. For Australians to join the international women's suffrage movement, they first had to unite under a single banner. To Vida Goldstein, suffused with optimism after the Washington conference, the task and Australia's path to international leadership appeared straightforward. Within two years, Federation and the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902 had transformed colonial women into national citizens with unparalleled political privileges. Yet, while Goldstein embraced the Commonwealth as an arena in which to forward feminist ambitions, others viewed continental collaboration with suspicion. Although international solidarity in the fight for women's enfranchisement seemed necessary to Victorian women, who lacked the state vote until 1908, it did not resonate as much elsewhere. State legislatures retained control over the matters that concerned women activists. Women fought for child protection, marriage and divorce law reform, and economic independence in the states, limiting the need for national organisation.⁹²

Instead, women like Rose Scott resisted the sway of the national and sought to share their state-situated experiences with other transnationally oriented individuals and groups. For all its flaws, the ICW reached a solution that melded these approaches: the state Councils retained distinct identities, but lost their international voting rights. The IWSA, however, demanded unity, a policy that precluded the participation of Australian women. The situation began to change in the 1920s, 'a golden age of feminist citizenship' in which a more federally minded generation of feminists became prominent contributors to an expanded international women's movement that included regional forums like the Pan-Pacific Women's Association and British Commonwealth League, and global bodies like

⁹² Helen Irving, 'A Gendered Constitution? Women, Federation and Heads of Power', in *A Woman's Constitution? Gender and History in the Australian Commonwealth*, ed. Helen Irving (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1996), 106.

the ICW and IWSA.⁹³ They joined new organisations like the United Association of Australian Women, and the Australian Federation of Women Voters, which combined an ‘All-Australia outlook’ with a ‘firm sense of belonging to nation, region, Empire and ... world’.⁹⁴ Most of all, they were motivated by the recognition that they no longer led the way, which Miles Franklin articulated upon her return to Sydney in 1924 after seventeen years abroad: ‘it seems to me that Australia, which took a wonderful lurch ahead in all progressive laws & woman’s enfranchisement about 20 y[ea]rs ago ha[s] stagnated ever since’.⁹⁵

⁹³ Marilyn Lake, ‘The Inviolable Woman: Feminist Conceptions of Citizenship in Australia, 1900–1945’, *Gender & History* 8, no. 2 (1996): 198.

⁹⁴ Zora Simic, ‘A Hall of Selective Mirrors: Feminism, History and Identity 1919–1969’ (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2003), 31–70.

⁹⁵ Franklin to Margaret Dreier Robins, 13 March 1924, in *My Congenials: Miles Franklin & Friends in Letters*, ed. Jill Roe (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 2010), 169.