International Activism after the Fair: New South Wales, Utah, and the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition

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In 1994, Patricia Grimshaw encouraged historians of nineteenth-century feminism to look west, and reorient the field away from its Atlantic centres to decipher patterns at its frontiers: Australasia and the American West. Her proposal anticipated the invigorating surge of comparative and transnational analysis in feminist history, but was overlooked as a blueprint for Antipodean suffrage studies.¹ Recent enquiries into women’s presence at world’s fairs, the nodal points of steam-era transnationalism, have opened new terrain on which to plot her vision. As well as the usual crowd of boosters, hawkers, and entrepreneurs, beginning with the Women’s Pavilion at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876, these events increasingly attracted women’s rights activists. Among their number were feminists from two apparently unrelated peripheries: New South Wales, a self-governing British colony on Australia’s east coast, and Utah, an organised incorporated territory in the western United States. On the verge of enfranchisement long before their metropolitan counterparts in the eastern United States and Western Europe, they yearned to expound on their political progress before a mass audience.

Despite their isolation from international feminism’s well-charted Atlantic nexus, women from New South Wales and Utah made celebrated debuts at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. An orthodox narrative describes Australia’s only official female representative in Chicago, Margaret Windeyer of New South Wales, as a harbinger of feminist internationalism. Yet historians have overlooked the legacy of her visit and Australian feminists’ chequered participation in international women’s forums before the First World War.² As T.J. Boisseau and Abigail Markwyn argue, revisiting the
fairground allows scholars to reconsider the limits of women’s organising as well as celebrating its capacities. Following their lead, this chapter describes the ambitions and aftermath of each delegation to the World’s Congress of Representative Women (WCRW), organised by May Wright Sewall, president of the United States’ National Council of Women. Juxtaposed against the unexpected success of another group of “outsiders” in Chicago, Utah’s Latter-day Saints, the difficulties that plagued Australian relations with international organisations become apparent. Although New South Wales was peripheral to the “main-springs of the women’s movement,” Windeyer—of the same Protestant feminist background as the WCRW’s organisers—arrived in Chicago convinced that her compatriots had much to contribute to the emerging international women’s movement. Utah women faced a much shorter journey, but approached the Congress with trepidation. They sought, above all, to end sixty years of religious persecution by proving their worth as respectable “Americans,” thus hastening the territory’s quest for statehood and the reinstatement of their political rights. Detailing Utah women’s surprising rise to domestic and international prominence in the decade after the fair, this chapter unravels the uneven fruits of Windeyer’s labour, comparing the reasons for the Utahns’ success with the barriers to Australian women’s participation in transnational feminist endeavours.

“Australia’s Agent: Plucky Miss Windeyer Arrives for the World’s Fair”

On 13 April 1893, Margaret Windeyer alighted from the Mariposa at San Francisco. Unaccompanied and in her twenties, the New South Welshwoman fascinated the American press. Journalists relished her enthusiasm, casting her in a colonial role, whereby her youth, “pluck,” and “charming accent,” signified the distant and exotic.
Overseas recognition delighted Australians, though contemporaries detected hints of condescension in her reception. Responding to an American newspaper report praising Windeyer for speaking “the purest English,” a Sydney columnist quipped, “I wonder did they expect her to speak the native language, and to find her dark skinned!” Born to a patrician family, Windeyer was a rare second-generation feminist and entered adulthood as women began asserting themselves in the public sphere. She had worked on two Sydney exhibitions, in 1888 and 1892, that “idealized and legitimized women’s labour” and joined the Womanhood Suffrage League of New South Wales on its inauguration in 1891. Combining domestic activism with international networking, before leaving Sydney she became the only Australian member of Chicago’s Queen Isabella Association and agreed to speak in America on behalf of the Women’s Progressive Society, a London-based suffrage organisation. Despite Windeyer’s accomplishments, her appointment as a fair commissioner proved controversial. The Women’s Work Committee, headed by her mother, the prominent philanthropist Lady Mary, had campaigned for representation in Chicago since 1891, in the face of official opposition. In early 1892, the New South Wales Commission announced its ninety-four strong male cohort. Although Windeyer was informed of her appointment in July, the Commission did not make a formal announcement until the Mariposa had sailed. With characteristic candour, she explained the imbroglio to a journalist in San Francisco, admitting she held her position because “the chief secretary of the Governor is a personal friend of my father’s.”

Windeyer’s official role, as the only non-American female commissioner, was to ensure the “proper classification” and “artistic arrangement” of the 185 artefacts the Women’s Work Committee shipped to Chicago. Although the other five Australian colonies had
participated in most major world’s fairs since London’s 1851 Great Exhibition, the onset of economic depression in 1890 curtailed their proud exhibitionary record. New South Wales alone forged ahead in 1893. Rather than responding directly to the Board of Lady Managers’ invitation for objects to display in the Woman’s Building, the Women’s Work Committee followed the New South Wales Commission’s brief to lend the colony’s exhibits an air of refinement, and commissioned objects that used Australian products to showcase traditional feminine skills. In October 1892, the Committee held a preliminary exhibition to select “the best and most significant” examples of colonial women’s work. These ranged from the pastoral: forty-one stuffed indigenous animals and a platypus fur hat, to the modern: a “medicinal” set of electrified belts, towels, and corsets. Through the display of skilled handicrafts, the Committee hoped to prove that settler women “were not behind their sisters” in “older established countries” and further, to convey the inextricable connection between women’s advancement and colonial progress. Windeyer’s official duties in Chicago are largely undocumented, though she did not limit herself to administrative work. With the display in place, she stayed for six months: lecturing, judging exhibits, frequenting auxiliary congresses, and wandering the White City as a spectator.

Dovetailing with the Exposition organisers’ desire that its “crowning glory” be “higher and nobler” than industry or invention, Windeyer’s most celebrated contributions came at the WCRW. The Congress hosted the first convention of the International Council of Women (ICW), which aspired to become a broad-based conglomerate of peak national women’s organisations. Although the National Council of Women of the United States was the ICW’s sole member until 1893, the Exposition drew 600 speakers from thirty-three nations. Ostensibly representing the Womanhood Suffrage League, and despite
the divisions among Australian feminists, Windeyer assumed a continental brief. On 15 May, addressing a body devoted to “the advancement of women and through them the whole human race,” she introduced herself as “the representative of that country of great actualities and greater possibilities, Australia.”19 Two days later she described the New South Wales women’s suffrage campaign—yet, in an indication of her marginality in Chicago, her remarks were neither summarised by the press nor included in the published proceedings—and delivered passionate interjections to discussions on dress reform and women’s political status.20 Responding to the African-American social reformer Frances Harper’s influential speech “Women’s Political Future” in the latter debate, Windeyer espoused her conviction in the ties between feminism, nationalism, and internationalism, the Congress’ animating spirits: “I think it will be the aim of every woman […] to see that by her vote she can free her sisters from the bondage of custom and ignorance […] in the extension of the franchise to women […] the state will be before the family, and the great nation of all, the world, will be before the state.”21

After the Exposition, Windeyer travelled east, lecturing on women’s suffrage, and met with feminists and social reformers in Britain. Little news of her exploits reached the Australian press, which sourced its coverage from telegraphic bulletins and month-old American newspapers.22 Instead, she sated her compatriots’ requests for “information from sympathisers abroad” by posting them conference literature and describing her experiences in Dawn, Australia’s pre-eminent feminist periodical. Her evocation of the “lustre of combination” that burnished the artefacts inside the Woman’s Building foreshadowed the creation of a New South Wales Council, fulfilling ICW secretary Rachel Foster Avery’s directive for delegates to build affiliated national federations.23 On her return to Sydney in 1895, Windeyer explained the “council idea” to women’s
leaders. Her rhapsodies about the benefits of “solidarity of sentiment and purpose among women” found a receptive audience. At the Council’s inauguration in 1896, seventeen groups affiliated, making it the colony’s largest women’s organisation.\(^2^4\)

Buoyed by her success, Windeyer left Australia in 1897, bound for London and old friends at the ICW’s executive meeting.\(^2^5\) Wealthy enough to travel, eager to proselytise, and soon to be enfranchised, Margaret Windeyer epitomised the internationalist spirit that suffused the WCRW.

Windeyer’s transnational vision was intertwined with her personal circumstances. As an individual agent she galvanised the creation of networks linking Sydney with the international women’s movement. Conversely, her departure revealed the fragility of the New South Wales Council’s overseas connections. Enthralled by her American sojourn, Windeyer left Britain in late 1897 to study at the New York State Library School at the invitation of Melvil Dewey, one of the founders of the Woman’s Building Library in Chicago. She returned home in 1901, having missed crucial moments in the suffrage campaign. Despite her success in establishing the Council, not everyone welcomed her return. Perhaps stung by criticism that she struggled to adapt overseas ideas to suit colonial conditions, Windeyer abandoned her former roles with the National Council of Women and Womanhood Suffrage League.\(^2^6\) Her replacement by more prominent women enhanced the Council’s domestic prestige but diminished its cross-border networks. Rose Scott, the leading figure in the New South Wales women’s suffrage campaign, and Windeyer’s successor as secretary, rarely left her home state, let alone Australia. Limited to exchanging letters and reports, she took years to build the relationships Windeyer forged in 1893. Nevertheless, the Council raised the ICW’s £20 affiliation fee and sent two delegates to the 1899 London Congress.\(^2^7\) Yet, in the short
term at least, the impact of Australian federation in 1901, and New South Wales and federal enfranchisement the following year, curtailed members’ international endeavours. Rather than catapult them to the heart of the women’s movement, New South Welshwomen’s struggle to adjust to the demands of national and international citizenship complicated their relations with the outside world.

Comparing Wests: Utah Women Debut at the World’s Columbian Exposition

New South Wales was a rising British “west” intent on establishing an international profile through the display of its wealth, industry, and democratic progress at world’s fairs. Although Windeyer was not inclined to self-doubt, she acknowledged her marginal status as a representative of the “newest country” at the WCRW. Betraying her colonial sensitivity, after the Exposition she fretted that “we did not perhaps quite get the credit we deserved, as we were literally under the shadow of the English flag,” which “appeared to wave over some of the exhibits that our blue flags properly surmounted.” Yet, peripheries existed within as well as outside the “older established countries.” As Windeyer left Sydney, a group of Mormon women started for Chicago from another west, Utah. Whereas Anglo-American intellectuals feted Australasia’s social reforms, many regarded Utah Territory as a backwater, unfit for statehood. Despite its reputed backwardness, Utah, like New South Wales, pioneered women’s political rights, granting the franchise in 1870. Nevertheless, the Latter-day Saints’ practice of polygyny attracted virulent opposition. From the 1860s, the federal government persecuted the Latter-day Saints Church and targeted the territory with anti-polygamy legislation, disenfranchising all those in plural marriages in 1882, and all women in 1887. With the Woodruff Manifesto in 1890, the beleaguered Church ended
the practice, though the spectre of “harem-style marriage” tarnished its adherents when
the Exposition opened.31 Before leaving Sydney, Windeyer likely held similar
prejudices. Upon learning that she was to travel through Salt Lake City in 1902,
Windeyer’s compatriot Vida Goldstein experienced “a horribly gelatinous shivery shaky
feeling.” Confessing to the “usual foreigners” notion about Mormonism, she admitted
having “visions of arriving at the house with my host & two or three dozen wives drawn
up in line to receive me.”32

Unlike the New South Wales Women’s Work Committee, Utah’s Mormon women
targeted the Congress to engage in national dialogue. The status of women had long
been at issue in the Territory’s fraught relationship with the federal government.
Supported by the Latter-day Saints Church, Utah’s Legislative Assembly enfranchised
women in 1870, at least in part to counter the image of subjugated Mormon
womanhood.33 When tensions thawed after 1890, women—as Andrea Radke-Moss has
demonstrated—were central to the “public-relations miracle” the Church staged in
Chicago.34 Whereas Mormon men were still viewed with suspicion by the public at
large, women—considered “victims” rather than perpetrators of polygamy—had already
begun the process of reengaging with the outside world.35 They had represented Utah at
National Woman’s Suffrage Association meetings since 1879, and by 1891 its two
largest women’s organisations, the Relief Society and the Young Ladies’ Mutual
Improvement Association (had joined the National Council of Women and the National
American Woman Suffrage Association). These connections provided a platform from
which they could challenge crude, misogynistic stereotypes about Mormon women, and
an opportunity to demonstrate that “the people of Utah […] were as American as their
neighbors.”36
Utah sent many more delegates to Chicago than New South Wales—the product of a territory-funded effort to refashion the Latter-day Saints’ image. Indeed, Utah’s Fair Commission existed “for the express purpose of removing the prejudice” against the Church. To this end, it arranged for the 250-strong Mormon Tabernacle Choir to perform at the Exposition and encouraged and financed female delegates.\(^{37}\) Utah had one-sixth of New South Wales’ population, yet the overnight rail journey was cheaper and less daunting than a month-long Pacific voyage. The territory’s generous religious and philanthropic institutions enabled sixteen speakers to attend the WCRW and countless others to visit as tourists. Australian women, as Kirsten Orr has shown, exhibited objects at colonial fairs at much higher rates than Europeans or Americans, yet the New South Wales Commission remained unconvinced of women’s value as boosters.\(^{38}\) Although it was better financed than its Utah counterpart—the New South Wales’ display occupied 5000 square meters, crowned by an extravagant mineral exhibit featuring “huge pyramids of tin, copper, and antimony” and “two silver trophies, weighing about 10 tons each”—in 1891 the Commission reminded the Women’s Work Committee to exercise “the utmost economy in carrying out a proper representation.” Thus, the colony paid neither Windeyer’s passage nor expenses, and she relied on family money and her impeccable connections to support her American sojourn.\(^{39}\)

Mormon leaders’ familiarity with the WCRW’s convenors allowed them to play a significant role in Chicago. The Relief Society and Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association helped organise the Congress, each convening a session. Emmeline B. Wells, president of the Utah Women’s Suffrage Association, chaired another. Directed at an American audience, their speeches lacked Windeyer’s bold internationalist
rhetoric, focussing on Utah women’s worthy social endeavours and, above all, their loyalty to the Union.\textsuperscript{40} However, as the New South Wales Committee had in 1891, Wells drew comparisons between Utah and those in “the older settled states,” noting that, per capita, the territory “had more literary and musically inclined women.”\textsuperscript{41} Her colleague, Emily Richards outlined Utah women’s legal rights, reminding listeners that they had already exercised the vote, and enjoyed equal property rights.\textsuperscript{42} Impressed by their comportment at the Congress, May Wright Sewall amplified Utah delegates’ speeches by ensuring they featured prominently in the proceedings. To her surprise, she admitted they “reveal[ed] fertility where, in the absence of knowledge, barrenness has been presupposed.”\textsuperscript{43}

Mormon women reaped immediate benefits from their poise in Chicago. Unlike the New South Wales press, Utah newspapers—especially Wells’ \textit{Woman’s Exponent}—published detailed reports of women’s contributions to the Congress, which cannot but have invigorated the Territory’s feminists.\textsuperscript{44} In the longer term, the decline in anti-Mormon prejudice—the result of strengthened ties with groups like National American Woman Suffrage Association—expedited Utah’s admission into the Union and the reinstatement of women’s enfranchisement, both achieved in 1896. On the national stage, their outward modernity converted critics into allies—a remarkable feat, given several of its delegates remained advocates of plural marriage.\textsuperscript{45} In the press, they received praise, not for their command of English (as Windeyer had), but for their “purity and intelligence,” which contradicted “the prevailing opinion [regarding] women in Utah.”\textsuperscript{46} By dint of their recently affirmed Americanness, Utah women’s display at the Fair entrenched them in the national feminist firmament. It also
introduced them to the world of international women’s organisation, to which they became enthusiastic adherents.

As women’s encounters formed part of the Latter-day Saints Church’s mission to transform itself from a regional sect into a global religion, and the territory’s push to divest itself of the “Mormon stigma,” Utah sponsored the expansion of feminist networks abroad. Unlike New South Wales feminists, Mormon activists enjoyed “harmonious relations with the [territory’s] ecclesiastic hierarchy.” Thus, when the ICW reassembled in 1899, sixteen women travelled from Utah to London, far outnumbering New South Wales’ two delegates. They did not arrive as mere spectators, several having risen to national prominence. Emmeline B. Wells arrived in London as the American National Council of Women’s recording secretary. Her colleague, Susa Young Gates, attended five ICW congresses and like Wells, befriended May Wright Sewall. A year after Sewall visited Utah in 1901 she entertained Gates at her Indianapolis home. Months later, Gates travelled to Copenhagen as Sewall’s presidential envoy to the ICW’s executive meeting. Within a decade, both women became esteemed Council members and important donors. As exemplified by their dedication to the ICW, Mormon women had ended their seclusion in the “Great Basin Kingdom’ and become regular participants “in the congresses of the world.”

**Negotiating Nationhood After the Fair**

What explains the divergent impact of Margaret Windeyer and the Utah delegates after 1893? In part, it was the product of the interconnected problems of state sponsorship and the absence of statehood. Windeyer cast herself as an Australian representative in
Chicago, yet she carried no national mandate. The creation of a single national pavilion had been debated since the 1867 Exposition Universelle, yet such discussions were undermined by intercolonial suspicions. Plans to erect an Australian building, which would showcase the “spirit of Federation” in 1893, were undermined when New South Wales insisted on appointing the executive commissioner, collapsing the coalition.\textsuperscript{50} In feminist circles, national federation proved as divisive. The Australasian Woman’s Christian Temperance Union’s plan to present a united front backfired when the colonies insisted on sending individual pennants to Chicago. Ten years later, the “unanticipated” prevalence of parochialism prefigured the collapse of the Union’s national newspaper, \textit{Our Federation}.\textsuperscript{51}

As Marian Quartly and Judith Smart argue, Australians retained strong provincial and imperial loyalties after the popular vote to federate in 1899. Whereas Utah’s Mormon pioneers had desired statehood since they began settling the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, Australians found “the national […] an unfamiliar and uncomfortable identity.”\textsuperscript{52} In 1903, the federal Attorney-General, Alfred Deakin, observed that despite the ascendance of federal ideals, the country remained “a loosely allied set of communities divided from each other by vast distances and preoccupied by parochial aims.” He attributed the lack of “national self-consciousness,” in part, to a provincial press. Rollo Arnold’s assertion that New Zealand’s nineteenth-century newspapers fostered a “village and globe” mentality—local news and international clippings outnumbered national stories—holds true of Australia. Events such as Windeyer’s travels were reported in the protagonists’ home colony, but ignored elsewhere.\textsuperscript{53} Martha Sear insists that, liberated from the strictures of colonial life, Windeyer reinvented herself as an internationalist. Inspired by American federalism, in 1894 she vowed to “work heart
and soul” for Australian federation. Nevertheless, upon her return to the “negative atmosphere of the colony,” Windeyer did not spread the council idea beyond Sydney. Rather, the piecemeal formation of six Australian state Councils dragged out until 1911.54

By the late nineteenth century, the imagined community of the international women’s movement was nationally tethered. As Susan Zimmermann explains, the shift from the transatlantic friendship networks of the mid-century into formal organisations from the 1880s was predicated on the idea that “self-governing nation states or federal states” formed the bedrock “of any organization operating at an international level.”55 While Utah sat within the American National Council of Women, its interests represented by the Relief Society and Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association, Australians lacked national institutions, complicating their relations with international organisations.56 Under Lady Ishbel Aberdeen’s leadership, the ICW admitted the self-governing colonies of New South Wales and Tasmania in 1899, seeking to demonstrate growth before its London congress. When Sewall, the architect of the ICW’s council idea, resumed the presidency she recognised that Australia’s impending federation problematised separate representation. Predating the ICW’s struggle to accommodate national groupings within Europe’s federal states, the “Australian situation” dominated the executive’s agenda between 1899 and 1904. It exploded in 1903 when Victoria and South Australia sought separate affiliation.57 As the pair were “no longer […] nation[s],” their applications proved controversial. Aggrieved by the prospect of affording Australia twelve votes at meetings “whilst the whole of America only had three,” the United States’ representative blocked the states’ admission.58 Although the states rejected the ICW’s proposal to establish a “National Council for the whole of
Australia,” after lengthy debate they agreed to “limited federation in matters such as finance and [international] representation” in time for the 1909 congress.⁵⁹

At home, the Windeyers’ hope that suffrage would transform “parochial minds” into “national minds” was misguided.⁶⁰ Rather than unity, the ICW’s diktat “reinforce[d] provincialism over national interest.” While the Councils’ common ICW membership ensured their activism followed similar trajectories, separate affiliation entrenched state power structures and saw leaders guard their international lines of communication.⁶¹ Inter-state disagreements hindered women’s participation in the ICW until they established the National Council of Women of Australia in 1931. Then, international pressure for the state Councils to unify coincided with members’ realisation that their political objectives required Federal solutions, and an emerging sense of national identity.⁶² The tension between provincialism and national consolidation arose again in 1904. To join the IWSA, Australians were required to form a national suffrage association. Constituted in 1905, after women in most states had won the vote, the National Australian Women’s Political Association was, as its founder Vida Goldstein admitted, “nothing but a paper organisation.”⁶³ It provided a convenient fiction for its leaders but, without a domestic constituency, failed to expose the “Australian people to international propaganda in connection with any movement for social reform.”⁶⁴

Furthermore, Australia’s isolation from the ICW’s Atlantic powerbase mattered. Though the ascendancy of transnational history has rendered Geoffrey Blainey’s thesis that the “tyranny of distance” (from Europe) shaped Australian history unfashionable, it remains useful to consider how the continent’s remoteness shaped cross-border feminist organising. Until the 1960s, international conferences were staged in Europe or North
America, making attendance at meetings a serious test of a woman’s financial and familial freedom.\textsuperscript{65} New South Wales aside, the drought-ravaged colonies withdrew from the exhibitionary circuit altogether in the 1890s, preventing women from attending what had become important forums for international feminism.\textsuperscript{66} Even in the steam-era, the cost and duration of Pacific voyages prevented the predominantly middle-class feminists from reaching overseas gatherings. In this respect, Margaret Windeyer, who chartered “a special train” from Nevada to San Francisco to avoid missing her homebound liner in 1901, was anomalous.\textsuperscript{67} So too was her compatriot, the electoral reformer Catherine Helen Spence, the only other Australian woman who spoke in Chicago. Although she travelled without the “unquestionable letters [of introduction]” or family money that eased Windeyer’s passage, Spence funded a ten-month tour of the United States by working as an itinerant lecturer and journalist.\textsuperscript{68} Few colonial women’s associations could raise the $600 that the Relief Society gave Emmeline B. Wells before her visit to London in 1899.\textsuperscript{69} As their generous donations to the Dutch feminist Alleta Jacobs’ library at the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle indicated, Australian women were eager to have their achievements recorded alongside their Euro-American counterparts.\textsuperscript{70} Nevertheless, the ICW’s all-important executive meetings, convened in European capitals at short notice, lay beyond their reach.

The alternative, representation by proxy, was a compromise that Utah’s well-resourced feminists rarely faced. As the New Zealand suffragist Kate Sheppard lamented in 1891, distance “compelled [Australasians] to accept as delegates those whose only suitability to the position would be that they could afford to pay their own expenses, or we should suffer from meagre representation.”\textsuperscript{71} Even Madge Donohoe, a former Sydney suffragist and a Paris-based representative for New South Wales and Australia at
numerous international summits in the 1900s, proved an inadequate replacement for women grounded in local activism. When a “misunderstanding” prevented news reaching her from Sydney before the ICW’s 1906 meeting, Donohoe contributed little to the proceedings. The oversight prompted a colleague to complain: “of course Mrs Donohoe […] is always available but […] I am sure the officers would be still more pleased to have a delegate fresh from Australia.” Similar misfortune beset the New South Wales Council in 1909, when its delegates for the Toronto congress, Harriet Newcomb and Margaret Hodge, teachers returning to Britain after a decade in Australia, withdrew at the last minute. As Leila Rupp argues, and Mormon women like Wells and Gates embodied, personal interaction reinforced international commitment. New South Wales women’s spectral presence in international bodies supports her argument. Australia’s interwar feminists—confident in their nationality and excited by formation of new regional forums like the British Commonwealth League (1925) and the Pan-Pacific Women’s Association (1928), and the panoply of organisations that proliferated around the League of Nations—played an important role in an expanded international women’s movement, their suffragist forebears travelled and worked as individuals, rather than as national envoys. As uncertain participants in the pageantry and politics of world’s fairs and conventions, enfranchised New South Welshwomen remained outside the “international family.”

The phenomenon of Antipodean women’s pioneer engagement with international organisations, encapsulated in Margaret Windeyer’s bold showing at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, was profound. New South Wales women followed her exploits abroad and committed to the council idea on her return to Sydney. By 1911, the former colonies accounted for seven of the ICW’s twenty-three members, and Australia was an
early affiliate of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA). Yet, for metropolitan women, as IWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt articulated in 1908, the taint of the periphery lingered. Privately, she flattered her Australian correspondents, hoping to persuade them to travel abroad, yet in public she criticised antipodean achievements. Celebrating Norwegian women’s partial enfranchisement in 1907 she lauded the example set by a “country with an honourable history,” subtly undermining the work of enfranchised women in “nations which […] were too new […] too impulsive […] which had no history and gave no assurance of a stable future.” By then she had tired of Australians’ indifference to the IWSA, omitting the Dominion from her 1911–12 “world suffrage tour” despite her repeated promises to visit. Mirroring Catt’s dismissive attitude, the mechanics of Australian participation in such organisations has been effaced, both in Australian historiography and the welter of scholarship produced during feminist history’s global turn.

Nevertheless, comparing New South Wales women’s cross-border forays with those of their American frontier counterparts complicates any case for Australian exceptionalism. For both, the WCRW opened new vistas. Utah women’s attendance was intertwined with the LATTER-DAY SAINTS Church’s reengagement with the world. Encouraged and funded by robust institutions, women travelled with the aim of dispelling anti-Mormon prejudices. Their accomplished performance at the Exposition won them friends in Chicago, leaving them poised to join the international women’s movement. Alongside continued state support, Utah’s acceptance within the National Council of Women and admission to the Union allowed leading women to become familiar faces on the ICW’s circuit and nodal figures whose friendships bound Mormon organisations into an international sisterhood. New South Wales, by comparison, was
reluctant to use women to enhance its image overseas and even more unwilling to subsume itself within a “national singularity.” 79 In the twenty years after the WCRW only a handful of New South Welshwomen travelled to international congresses, their participation hindered by the lack of national organisations. Mirroring the rivalries that complicated Australia’s position with the ICW and IWSA, men and women alike struggled to adjust to international cooperation. Despite Australia’s federation in 1901, the states exhibited separately until London’s Franco-British Exhibition in 1908. Yet, inside that year’s Australian pavilion, the states erected a series of “intensely competitive courts,” each vying to attract migrants, investors, and tourists. 80 Only at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exhibition did Alfred Deakin revise his assessment of his country’s path to nationhood, noting that in San Francisco—twenty-two years after Margaret Windeyer disembarked from the Mariposa—Australia “finally took her place among the nations.” 81


5 For an examination of Utah’s path to statehood, see Edward Leo Lyman, *Political Deliverance: The Mormon Quest for Utah Statehood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

6 *San Francisco Morning Call (SFMC)*, 15 April 1893, 3

7 *Chicago Daily News*, 20 May 1893, 1; *New York Tribune*, 6 April 1894, 7; *San Francisco Chronicle (SFC)*, 20 April 1893, n.p., in Margaret Windeyer Scrapbook 1866–1939, MSS4653/1X, Mitchell Library (ML), Sydney.

8 *Maitland Mercury*, 8 July 1893, 4.


10 Catherine Wallace to Margaret Windeyer, 31 March and 3 May 1892, MSS186/17/121-29; Warner Snoad to Windeyer, 24 January 1893, MSS186/17/167, Windeyer Family Papers (WFP), ML. The Queen Isabella Association, named after Isabella I of Castile, who financed Christopher Columbus’s 1492 voyage, was established to lobby for an official role for women at the 1893 Exposition. Although the Association’s purpose ended when the Exposition closed, some within its largely professional membership formed the National League of Women Lawyers to maintain the networks they had built in Chicago. Gwen Hoerr Jordan, “Agents of (Incremental) Change: From Myra Bradwell to Hillary Clinton,” *Nevada Law Journal* 9, no. 3 (2009): 626–27. See chapter 4 in this volume.

11 Wallace to Windeyer, 1 July 1892, MSS186/17/131-33, WFP; *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 21 March 1893, 2303; 19 May 1892 and 6 January 1893, Reports of Committee XII 1891–1893, Women’s Work Department, New South Wales Commission, World’s Columbian Exposition 1893, MSS932, ML.

13 19 May 1892, Reports of Committee XII, MS932.

14 *Exhibition of Woman’s Work in the Centennial Hall, Sydney, 1892* (Sydney: W.M. Andrews & Co., 1892).

15 *Catalogue of New South Wales Exhibits, Department of Women’s Work* (Sydney: Charles Potter, Govt. Printer, 1893).


20 May Wright Sewall admitted that not all Congress sessions had been recorded and asked participants to send her copies of their speeches. It is unclear if Windeyer received such a request. Sewall, “Editor’s Concluding Note,” in Sewall, ed., *The World’s Congress*, 927.

22 Indianapolis News, 9 May 1894, 8. For example see Australian Star, 28 December 1893, 5.

23 Dawn, 1 August 1893, 10; Magarey et al., 245, 253, 281; New York Herald, 25 April 1894, 14; May Wright Sewall to Windeyer, 21 October 1893, MSS186/17/203; Rachel Foster Avery to Windeyer, 21 October 1893 and 29 January 1896, MSS186/17/183, 243, WFP; Avery to Windeyer, 4 August 1896, MSS4653/1X, Windeyer Scrapbook; Report of the Womanhood Suffrage League of New South Wales (Sydney: n.p., 1892), 2; Report of the Womanhood Suffrage League of New South Wales (Sydney: Jas. A Ross, 1894), 9.

24 Dawn, 1 September 1896, 14; The National Council of Women of New South Wales (Sydney: Christian World Printing and Publishing House, 1896), 4; Woman’s Voice, 23 November 1895, 398–99; Windeyer to Rose Scott, 1 May 1896, A2274, Scott Family Papers (SFP), ML.

25 20 November 1896 and 11 February 1897, National Council of Women of New South Wales (NCW of NSW) Minutes, November 1895–April 1905, MSS3739, Box MLK3009, NCW of NSW Records, ML.

26 Louisa Macdonald to Eleanor Grove, 21 July 1894, 7 October 1894, and 30 March 1895, SC Box 1/1, 20/01/2, Louisa Macdonald Papers, Women’s College Archives, University of Sydney.


39 The New South Wales Commission spent £30,000 on the Exposition, more than twice the Utah Commission’s budget. However, it only allocated £500 to the Women’s Work Committee, designated solely for purchasing exhibits and paying a secretary. *Advertiser*, 29 May 1893, 5; Neilson, *Exhibiting Mormonism*, 56–58, 93–100, 179; *Report of the President of the New South Wales Commission* (Sydney: Charles Potter, Govt. Printer, 1894), 35, 51–52; *SMH*, 19 December 1891, 10.


46 *Deseret Evening News*, 27 May 1893, 12.


49 *Woman’s Exponent*, October 1907, 31.


54 New York Herald, 25 April 1894, 14; Martha Sear, “Fair Women’s World’s: Feminism and World’s Fairs 1876–1908,” in Volker Barth, ed., Identity and Universality/Identité et Universalité (Paris: Bureau International des Expositions, 2002), 31. Councils were formed in Tasmania in 1899, South Australia (1902), Victoria (1902), Queensland (1905), and Western Australia (1911).


58 NCW of NSW Minutes, August 1904–March 1910, 14–15, MSS3739, Box MLK3009, NCW of NSW Records.


60 *Daily Telegraph*, 30 July 1892, 9.

61 Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 33.


63 Goldstein to Scott, 21 January 1909, A2272/1019-20, SFP.


66 The lone exception was the Tasmanian, Emily Dobson (1852–1932), who travelled to Europe thirty-three times during her life. Douglas, “Representing Colonial Australia,” 16–19; Pesman, *Duty Free*, 9.

67 Mary Floyd Williams to Windeyer, 28 May 1901, MSS4653/1X, Windeyer Scrapbook. For example see *SFC*, 10 May 1901, 8.

68 Spence attended the International Conference on Charities, Correction and Philanthropy and the Proportional Representation Congress. Jessie Ackermann and Mary Love, Australia’s representatives at the World’s WCTU convention—held during the Exposition—were both American expatriates. *SFMC*, 15 April 1893, 3.
69 Madsen, “‘The Power of Combination’,” 656.

70 H.J. Mehler, ed., La Femme et le féminisme: Collection de livres, périodiques, etc. sur la condition sociale de la femme et le mouvement féministe (Paris: V. Giard & E. Brière, 1900), 143, 210, 233–34.

71 Prohibitionist, 15 August 1891, 3.

72 Madge Donohoe to Scott, 14 June 1906, A2274/381; Vida Goldstein to Scott, 29 January 1909, A2272/1019-20, SFP.

73 Harriet Newcomb to Scott, 15 May 1909, A2274/413-14; Margaret Hodge to Scott, 22 May and 29 July 1909, A2274/415-19, SFP.


75 Rupp, Worlds of Women, 180–204.


77 Carrie Chapman Catt to Scott, 20 March 1906, 6 May 1907, and 18 May 1909, A2272/980-82, 990f, 1017-18, SFP.


79 Alan Atkinson, “Federation, Democracy and the Struggle against a Single Australia,”


81 Alfred Deakin, Report to Prime Minister, 10 August 1915, A2, 1915/1526/68, National Archives of Australia, cited in McKay, 72.
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