Lady Northcote: Leading Light and Sponsor of the First Australian Exhibition of Women’s Work

Elizabeth Taylor

Independent scholar
Melbourne, VIC.
grannyliz@bigpond.com

Abstract: This chapter examines the sources and nature of the leadership opportunities available to colonial governors’ and governor generals’ wives in the late Victorian and Edwardian era. It looks specifically at the leadership style of Alice, Lady Northcote, the wife of the third governor general of Australia, in relation particularly to her contribution to the first Australian Exhibition of Women’s Work, held in Melbourne in 1907. This exhibition encapsulated in its rhetoric and agendas crucial aspects of the age relating to class, gender and the emerging nation. A dissonance is observed between the stated themes of the exhibition and its underlying discourse. This may have reflected an ambivalence on the part of Alice herself: she pursued her agenda using traditional feminine skills while at the same time furthering an objective outside the female sphere. The chapter claims that Alice can be seen as having operated at the mid-point of a theoretical continuum in terms of the political and social involvement of governors’ and governor generals’ wives. This continuum of involvement ranged from, at one extreme, those wives who were overtly politically engaged and influential, to, at the other end, those who participated in the bare minimum level of activity, such as nominal philanthropy and obligatory ceremonial duties.

Keywords: colonial governors’ wives, governor generals’ wives, First Australian Exhibition of Women’s Work (AEWW), federation, national identity

Lord and Lady Northcote, Alice and Harry, arrived in Australia in January 1904 for Harry to begin a term of office as Governor General of Australia that lasted until September 1908. Harry had previously acted as Governor of Bombay for three and a half years, and while in India Alice had distinguished herself by organising a magnificent ‘Fancy Fete’ in aid of the Countess of Dufferin’s Fund for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India. Both she and Harry had expressed the hope that she would be able to use her organisational and leadership talents to the full in the newly federated nation of Australia. By the southern winter of 1906, Alice had conceived and begun work on an innovative and ambitious venture: the first national exhibition of women’s work to be held in Australia.

The First Australian Exhibition of Women’s Work (AEWW) took place in Melbourne in the Exhibition Building, a magnificent Italianate Victorian-
era edifice that had previously hosted international exhibitions in 1880–81 and 1888. The opening ceremony on 23 October 1907 was attended by ‘almost every federal and state politician of note ... representatives of consular and judicial rank ... distinguished men in every walk of life’. The exhibition continued for almost six weeks, and by the time it closed more than two hundred and fifty thousand people had visited, enjoying the meals produced by the catering committee, the performances of the choir, the orchestra and the brass band, and the kindergarten. The sixteen thousand exhibits covered a range of items, most demonstrating housewifely skills and displaying the products of bourgeois feminine leisure.

Alice’s role in this exhibition involves reference to social and political issues of the time; it also throws light on the working lives, leadership styles and influence of colonial governors’ and governor generals’ wives during this period of British colonial influence.

The role of vice-regal wives

In assessing the working lives of governors’ and governor generals’ wives in the late Victorian period and early twentieth century, it is helpful to envisage a continuum. At one end of this continuum women seized upon and exploited the opportunities their position had given them, sometimes interfering in affairs of state. Jane Franklin, wife of John Franklin, Governor of Van Diemen’s Land during the period 1837–43, fell into the category of women with an undisguised political agenda. At the other end of the continuum, aristocratic ladies picked opportunities up reluctantly and handled them gingerly, engaging in the minimum of activities: nominal philanthropy and obligatory ceremonial duties. Such a one was Lady Hopetoun, wife of the first governor general of the federated Australia, the Earl of Hopetoun (1901–1903). Alice Northcote came somewhere in the middle. She acted creatively within her own sphere, she took initiatives within constraints, she pushed boundaries gently, to effect her schemes and bring favour upon herself, which, of course, helped make her projects a success.

It can be argued that this position was the best one to adopt if a vice-regal consort wanted to make her presence felt and see her schemes come to fruition. If she had an agenda and attitudes that placed her at the politically engaged end of the spectrum, and if she acted too authoritatively; if her leadership stance was too close to that of the men, and her opinions and plans overtly crossed over into their domain, she would arouse antagonism and opposition. This would probably render her impotent. Jane Franklin’s public involvement in the politics of Van Diemen’s Land led to accusations of ‘petticoat government’ from colonists and to her schemes being frustrated.
Amanda Andrews suggests that, rather than a continuum, there are two models of the vice-regal wifely role, one before and one after a defining moment: the founding by Lady Dufferin of her charitable fund in India in the 1880s. This, according to Andrews, marked the point at which vice-regal ladies ceased to be merely ornamental and became proactive, hard working and aware of their imperial responsibilities. Alice could be included among these new-style vice-regal consorts to the extent that she was committed to furthering the imperial enterprise, enlisted the support of a female sisterhood and demonstrated initiative, enterprise and independence of mind in pursuit of her agenda; all defining features of Andrews’ new proactive ladies. But Alice was also ornamental, traditional in her attitudes and her agenda was always to support her husband’s. Crucially, she never stepped over the boundaries to dabble in political interference. I see Andrews’ theory as an oversimplification in terms of chronology, as well as restrictive in allowing only two basic models. But it does bring a useful perspective.

All vice-regal wives had working lives characterised by several related features. First, the power these women exerted derived from their relations with men. Alice’s authority in her capacity as governor general’s wife depended upon her being a female appendage of the governor general. There was, however, an extent to which this gave her an independent job: the wives of governors in India and of governor generals in Australia had the official title of ‘Excellency’ and this status was positioned as having an officially sanctioned independent job to do as well as a supportive role to play.

By the time Harry and Alice Northcote reached Australia in 1904, they had developed a symbiotic working relationship. Their joint career as colonial governor and fully involved ‘incorporated’ wife began in 1900 in Bombay when Harry became governor there. The Northcotes had left England mainly in response to Alice’s personal predicament – a rupture in her relationship with her adoptive father – and the couple was able to take this course because of Alice’s personal fortune. By the beginning of the twentieth century, colonial governorship had become a career path smoothed, and in some cases made navigable, by a substantial subsidy of personal wealth. That Alice’s money financed the joint venture inevitably clouds the issue of power transmission, but again, Alice would not have been ‘Her Excellency’ had she not been Harry’s wife.

That men were the source of the power was emphasised by the fact that men were almost always in overall financial control of enterprises organised by women. The crucial finance committee of the AEWW was entirely entrusted to men, and there is no evidence that Alice had any direct dealings with it. There were exceptions to this rule. Lady Munro Ferguson, wife of the sixth governor general, chaired the finance committee of her particular brainchild, the Red Cross Great War effort. Not only was Lady Munro
Ferguson a forceful, business-like woman – she was, after all, the daughter of Lady Dufferin – but also times were changing in the second decade of the new century, and crisis made new ways of acting possible. But even under these circumstances Lady Munro Ferguson apparently had to contend with male opposition to her chairmanship.7

Second, these upper-class women were dependent on men’s approval to carry out their schemes. The degree to which they sought and gained approval was to a large extent the degree to which their efforts in furthering their schemes were successful. Alice’s early approach to leadership is exemplified in the exploratory approaches on the subject of an exhibition that she made to Alfred Deakin, then Prime Minister of Australia. In July 1906 Alice wrote to Deakin, ‘it is interesting that you think there are “possibilities” in my unoriginal suggestion of the women’s work exhibition’ and asked him if she should write to each state governor’s wife asking for cooperation. She ended the letter with the words ‘you will I am sure understand that I have no desire to put myself prominently forward – quite the reverse’.8 On 16 August Alice appealed to Deakin for assistance in taking forward her embryonic plans, but ten days later she was expressing doubts as to their viability. ‘I am so sorry to [illegible] you with another letter ... do you think it really advisable that we should continue with our scheme?’9

These comments reflect a desire, typical of Alice, to keep out of the limelight. More significantly in the context of this chapter, they also reveal feminine deference and the use of influential friends to achieve personally identified goals – without treading on their toes. These characteristics are, of course, time-honoured female ways of achieving objectives; it is a way the relatively powerless gain influence and control without alienating the powerful.

The tone of Alice’s letters – warm, conciliatory, self-deprecating and sometimes apologetic – show an intelligent awareness of Deakin’s attitudes. The use of personal skills and empathy characterises most female forms of leadership. The Prime Minister was apparently not in general a supporter of women in public life; certainly his attitude to his wife, Pattie’s, increasing public involvement was less than enthusiastic.10 Nevertheless, Pattie Deakin formed a collaborative friendship with Alice, participated in the initial planning of the exhibition and chaired the subcommittee that organised the nursery and kindergarten. She and her daughter helped in the crèche during the exhibition.11

Harry’s gratitude for the Prime Minister’s support, as well as his loving concern for his wife, was illustrated in March 1907 when he said in a letter to Deakin, ‘I am determined, for Lady Northcote’s sake, that the Exhibition shan’t fail for want of money; no, if there be difficulty in advancing money without Parl’s sanction, don’t hesitate to say so; and I can find some more ...
P.S. We have given … privately, another £1,000 – but it is not to be known. In a letter written just before leaving Australia Harry wrote to Deakin: ‘may I add how specially grateful I am to you for all your great kindness to my wife. It often made the whole difference between the success and failure of more than one task she was engaged in. I shall never forget all you did for her.’

Other governor generals’ wives did not receive such wholehearted support from their husbands and in one case, at least, this caused a scheme to be aborted. Lady Dudley, wife of the second Earl of Dudley, the governor general following Northcote, who could also be seen as in the mid range of this ‘governor’s wife’ operating spectrum, had to abandon some of her plans for a bush nursing scheme when the alienation between herself and her husband became public knowledge. The alienation removed her source of power and made it impossible for her to pursue her own agenda.

The third point to note is that the wives of governors or governor generals engaged in projects that often directly served the purposes of their immediate source of power, their husbands. One of Harry’s main preoccupations as governor general was a desire to hold together and consolidate the still early days of federation. It is reasonable to suppose that the AEWW was a strategy devised by Alice to assist this objective, a view reinforced by the carpet on which she stood as she opened the exhibition. This carpet’s design symbolised federation: it carried the emblem of each state, with a central feature including the initials of Alice herself. There were repeated references in meetings and in the literature accompanying the exhibition to its unifying intentions. At the first meeting of the general committee Deakin said the ‘deep and active interest displayed by Her Excellency in the undertaking … must strongly emphasise the purely federal character of the exhibition’. The exhibition brochure stated:

the various states will be brought into closer touch with each other in bonds of sympathy. Working for an end in common is one great means of uniting people … the fact that Her Excellency has not only initiated this Exhibition but is taking an active practical interest in its conduct is evidence of the Federal nature of the undertaking.

The message was clear and unchallenged: the exhibition presented the work of a community of women within a national context, and divided work by genre. It emphasised unity within this context, rather than division, by not featuring ‘State Courts’: a departure from the geographical emphasis of previous international exhibitions.

Fourth, the upper-class ladies in positions of power in the colonies and dominions were there to serve the wider interests of their class. David Cannadine suggests that the transmission of British culture, through creating a society in settler colonies similar to that in the Mother Country, was crucially served by the transference of the class system, with its sense of hierarchy.
The reinforcement of British class standards and norms was a task integral to the functioning of imperial wives.

Alice had not been born into the upper classes, and had spent her youth trying to become accepted and to move beyond her *arriviste* status. Having risen painfully through the ranks, Alice appreciated her position; as Harry commented to his friend, Lord Selborne, in January 1902, Alice very much ‘enjoys being Her Excellency’. She fulfilled the requirements of a particular brief of governor generals’ or governors’ wives by demonstrating wealth and prestige through conspicuous consumption and signalling her connections to the highest circles. This is demonstrated in a newspaper article about one of the meetings before the exhibition, when it was stated: ‘Her Excellency read the whole list of Royal and titled exhibitors … the reading of which raised the tone of the meeting.’

**Confused messages**

There were three main areas pertaining to gender, class and nation in which the exhibition carried messages. In each of these areas the rhetoric and overt themes gave one message while an apparent covert agenda produced another, or confused the picture. The first overt theme claimed the AEWW was a celebration of educational and workplace advances for women and therefore an implicit challenge to the traditional views of women’s work. The second claimed unification across class boundaries. The third attempted to reinforce an emerging Australian identity.

An explanation for these confused messages can be seen in the lack of clarity in discussions about the original brief and in the cumbersome organisation and unclear management structure of the exhibition. Lack of discussion of the goals of the exhibition is noticeable in the minutes of the meetings – especially the first meetings of the two main committees, where discussion about purpose, aims and objectives might have been expected. It was assumed explicitly from the beginning that the exhibition was an exercise in unification, a reinforcement of federation, but there was no mention of women’s place in society and how this was to be represented, or discussion of any other objectives or themes. Alfred Deakin said in the first general committee meeting, ‘the objects of the exhibition … are apparently wide and various and unnecessary to refer to in detail’.

Power and responsibility were theoretically diffused; there was no clear hierarchical structure and there was confusion as to who was responsible for what. There were even anomalies in the original brief. The general committee was something of a public relations exercise and at best a useful communications conduit. It conferred power on the executive committee (implying that the general committee was the ultimate authority) on 14
November 1906. The executive committee had already met three times by then, on 19 September, 12 October and 2 November, and had made many crucial decisions before it received official permission to act. The executive committee was at the apex of the organisational structure in terms of power and responsibility. It was responsible for the exhibition’s ‘business and affairs’, and it had begun with the ‘drafting of a comprehensive list of classes for competition’. The general committee, over which Alice usually presided, was composed of the heads of the state ladies’ committees, who then devolved duties down to their subcommittees and the local ladies’ committees, at the bottom of the committee structure. Their function was clear: they did the donkey work.

The claim that the AEWW was a celebration and vindication of an emerging change of role for women was expressed in the catalogue and in addresses at the opening ceremony. Harry’s speech contained the words ‘the time has passed when women’s energies are to be restricted almost exclusively to the discharge of housewifely duties ... in many walks of life woman is taking her place beside man as competitor, as a breadwinner’.22 This agenda was challenged at the time by Argus journalist, Stella Allan, who expressed her belief the ‘vast bulk of women in the world are at heart purely domestic and only an undertaking which took cognisance of that fact … could have taken so great a hold of their interest … as this exhibition has done’.23

But even more tellingly most of the entries, in the categories offered and the responses to them, were the products of bourgeois feminine leisure and the traditional housewife’s repertoire of preindustrial skills. In the applied arts section ladylike endeavours such as painting on silk or satin, which received 284 entries, dominated the available categories of entry. The largest section, attracting 4,434 entries, was needlework, with a number of varieties of dressmaking, including doll dressing, as well as plain needlework, white-work, lacework, church embroidery, art needlework, fancy work, knitting and crochet. There were 209 in the subsection ‘Best Set of Three d’Oyleys’.24 The Exhibition Building was full to bursting with a huge collection of pot plants, lampshades, cushions, d’oyleys, children’s clothing, embroidered table cloths, lace collars, knitted socks, Madeira cake, hot luncheons provided from remains of cold roast mutton and cold green vegetables, and improved rat-proof hygienic refuse bins.

Women earning their living by their skills did not respond enthusiastically. Out of 16,000 listed objects there were only 103 trade exhibits. An article in the Leader on 5 October highlighted the attempt to include the work of women who earned their own living: ‘the fact that the bulk of the clothing manufacturing in Australia is manufactured by women was in itself sufficient to justify an exhibition’. This small part of the exhibition – small admittedly as a result of poor response rather than organiser
intention – is the only claim the AEWW could reasonably have made to justify its rhetoric on the emergence of women into the workplace.

The exhibition certainly recognised the importance of women to the future of the new nation. Before increasing urbanisation, women could be seen to have contributed their labour in a colonial pioneering society on something of an equal basis. But by the beginning of the twentieth century, anxieties about the falling birth rate to Anglo-Saxon mothers in what was seen as a white settler continent underpopulated by people of white European origin, were exercising those in power. The Harvester Judgement, made in the same year as the exhibition, ruled that a fair basic wage for an adult man should be sufficient for him to support a wife and children, thereby compromising women who were not already relegated to domestic duties and motherhood.

It can be argued that by raising the status and profile of women’s traditional contribution and crucially defining it as work, while at the same time paying lip service to her increasing ambition, the exhibition aimed to set women up in the new federated nation as housewives and, particularly, as mothers. This was as important an objective in the context of the new nation as the buttressing of its recent unity.

Despite the rhetoric claiming unification across class boundaries, the exhibition was structured and controlled by middle- and upper-class women. One only has to look at the posters accompanying the exhibition to realise that the corseted, large-hatted ladies depicted were affluent and privileged. There were a number of categories of entry in the exhibition probably aimed at encouraging higher standards of domestic work – day-to-day cooking and laundry work, for example – probably partly to train more efficient servants. The privileged ladies apparently wished to instil in their working-class sisters bourgeois values of thrift, cleanliness, sobriety and industriousness; according to Beverley Kingston an attempt to enrol working-class women into a middle-class hegemony. But working-class women chose not to play the part apparently assigned to them, and did not send many entries into the relevant categories.

Fundamental to the exhibition’s purpose was an emerging sense of national identity. Angela Woollacott notes that white settlers in the Dominions were originally regarded as mere replicas of Britons, although growing differentiation of the Australian character emerged in the populist late nineteenth-century narrative of the Australian nation that centred on male mateship. Philippa Levine claims that towards the end of the century the male frontier culture began to change in response to white settler demands that it be more domesticated. The rhetoric associated with this male culture began to be tempered by the need for women to participate in the national project by acting as ‘citizen mothers’.
Despite evident attempts to reinforce a new sense of national identity, much was made of the contributions from overseas. Alice herself was party to this. In a letter to Deakin she argued ‘I felt other countries sharing in our undertaking was for Imperial reasons good and also was a good advertisement for Australia’.\(^3\) Deference to the British aristocracy is shown in newspaper reports on the AEWW: ‘specimens of work wrought by members of Royal families throughout Europe, and by the nobility of Great Britain … will give an eclat that perhaps a purely Australian exhibition might lack’.

**Alice as initiator and grasper of opportunities**

Alice was unlikely to have been complicit in any attempt to subvert the overt messages. There is little evidence in the archive to suggest that she was a conceptual thinker. She was a practical operator; she enjoyed the processes by which the endeavours she had initiated were carried forward, but she did not analyse their purposes and underlying implications, other than the most obvious. She would have seen herself as a pragmatic taker of opportunities, someone who wanted to support her husband’s objectives and also usefully occupy herself, using what power she had as a result of her position. Alice would not have seen her job as equal to Harry’s. She shared the vision of the Victoria League, to which she belonged, with its conventional views of gender differences and womanly work: to complement and build upon male achievement, while always seeing female contributions as secondary.\(^3\)

Alice certainly used her ‘womanliness’, which was applauded in the press on a number of occasions. *Table Talk* recorded in March 1908, for example, that Alice’s ‘true womanliness was exemplified ... when she called at the home of one of our State legislators, where the stork had recently visited, to enquire after the health of the mother and her little one’.\(^3\) Successful conformity to expected and admired gender roles made her popular, which enhanced her efficacy.

In maturity, Alice adopted the mores of the branch of the aristocracy to which Harry belonged: conservative, diligent, with a strong sense of duty, as described by Lady Dorothy Neville. Lady Dorothy wrote that ‘the only real happiness lies in useful or interesting work of some kind’.\(^3\) Alice’s Red Cross obituary commented on how much she valued being able to do useful work, as did Harry in reports to Selborne from Bombay.\(^3\)

Alice was described by the *Bulletin* as being a ‘perfect general of a Governor’s lady ... working and commanding’.\(^3\) Certainly, once the exercise was underway she became confident, forthright and determined in dealings with the Prime Minister. Theo Heide, the exhibition manager, mentioned that Alice had on one occasion called him aside to tell him:
Mr Deakin had been up at the Exhibition Building and reported to her that the getting ready process was disappointing ... She then said that ‘I, as President and one who visits the Exhibition almost daily wish to tell you that the work is well ahead and that everything is going along quite well’ and she added that he should take no notice of what Mr Deakin was saying.36

It is evident from the minutes of the meetings attended by Alice that she was clear thinking and focused, authoritative but diplomatic, as demonstrated in the minutes of the executive committee meeting held on 1 March 1907. During this meeting there was a discussion on insurance, packing and safety of the goods sent for display, and Alice briefly outlined the progress she had recently made in collecting promises of exhibits.37 Her verbal contributions to the meetings were brief and to the point; she engaged in no discussion on minutiae unless it was immediately relevant to a task she had undertaken, in contrast to the irrelevant and time-wasting meanderings of some of the other ladies.38 Alice was also an efficient and energetic president; she made sure progress was made in all ways she could directly help. She lobbied energetically behind the scenes. Lord Elgin wrote to Harry in June 1907 replying to a request from Alice to find a member of the royal family to open the exhibition. None was available, and Elgin suggested ‘the ceremony rests ... with you. It seems to me that nothing could be more right and fitting.’39

Time and again Alice’s efforts of persuasion were visible in the minutes of the meetings, including towards those in power in England and Australia, European royalty, aristocratic ladies and others in a number of countries, to assist and to contribute. At an executive committee meeting on 8 February 1907, Alice reported she had had discussions with the Premier of New Zealand, Sir Joseph Ward, regarding a proposed display by Maori women (there was almost no participation by Aboriginal women); that she had talked to the Minister for Railways in Tasmania and obtained his agreement that exhibits would be carried free by the railways in that state; that she had received promises of articles to be exhibited from Lady Minto in India, Lady Grey in Canada and Lord Aberdeen in Ireland; and that she had been in regular communication with Lady Jersey in London regarding support raised in England.40

It is clear that Alice was determined to keep her own hands firmly on the reins, perhaps in an attempt to ameliorate the problems inherent in the diffuse responsibility and to remind the gentlemen of the executive committee that she was in overall control. This leadership role was enshrined in the brief given the committee on 14 November 1906: ‘the President shall from time to time as her opinion occasionally may require summon the General Committee and the Executive Committee shall report progress to it.’41 Alice was particularly determined to allow the ladies actually doing the work to have some say in how proceedings were conducted. Thus she delivered
diplomatically worded but nonetheless steely injunctions such as the one on 6 August: ‘Her Excellency expressed the opinion that it would be well that the wishes of the ladies might receive the fullest consideration’. Alice was aware that thousands of unsung women had contributed, and she expressed her thanks in a letter to the newspapers when the exhibition was over. ‘May I be permitted’, she wrote, ‘to tender the expression of my gratitude and warm thanks to all those who have worked so hard to secure (the exhibition’s) success. Willing workers have come forward from every State of the Commonwealth and have cheerfully sacrificed their valuable time and strength.’

Conclusion

Alice Northcote used the opportunities available to her as a governor general’s wife in an individual and innovatory fashion. Alice was not a politically forceful vice-regal wife, but she demonstrated independence of action, and in her initiation of and participation in the AEWW she managed an event with political and social implications. Her independence of action was, however, employed in the service of her husband’s agenda: the reinforcement of federation. Alice’s leadership approach, which was dependent on the use of traditional feminine diplomatic skills, is shown to have been effective in view of the fact that elite women acting as governors’ wives derived their power from men in the first place, and were dependent on the continuing approval of men in order to carry out their projects.

---

1 Letters from Alice and Harry Northcote to Lord Selborne, 1903, Selborne papers 33, Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK.
2 Age, 24 October 1907, 7.
3 Report of the Executive Committee to the General Committee at meeting held 9 July 1908, MS 44/3, Manuscript Collection, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.
6 An ‘incorporated’ wife is a woman performing a subordinate but crucial role in the accomplishment of a joint enterprise where the job, and the glory, belong to the husband. The term was widened to apply specifically to aristocratic (but not necessarily governors’) wives. See S. Ardener and H. Callan, The Incorporated

7 See Melanie Oppenheimer, ‘The “Imperial Girl”: Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, the Imperial Woman and her Imperial Childhood’, Journal of Australian Studies 34, no. 4 (December, 2010): 513–25 and Melanie Oppenheimer, ‘Lady Helen Munro Ferguson and the Australian Red Cross: Vice-regal Leader and Internationalist in the Early Twentieth Century’, Founders, Firsts and Feminists, ed. Fiona Davis, Nell Musgrove and Judith Smart (Melbourne: eScholarship Research Centre, University of Melbourne, 2011)

8 Alice Northcote to Alfred Deakin, 1540, 1/1435–1539, 13, Deakin papers, National Library of Australia, Canberra (NLA).

9 A. Northcote to Deakin, 16 August 1906, DP, 1540, 15; A. Northcote to Deakin, 26 August 1906, 1540, 1/1435–1539, 13, Deakin papers.

10 The Prime Minister was described by his sister, Catherine, as disapproving of his wife’s new activities. Catherine Deakin to unknown, letter 21 September 1909, Catherine Deakin papers, NLA. Deakin’s daughter, Vera, commented on his general disapproval of women who had activities of their own. D. Langmore, Prime Ministers’ Wives (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1992), 30. In Pattie Deakin’s Reminiscences she said ‘Alfred never praised ... but was very liberal in his criticisms’, Unpublished MS, 19/312, 1540, Deakin papers.


12 Harry Northcote to Alfred Deakin, 5 March 1907, 15/1052, 1540, Deakin papers.

13 H. Northcote to Deakin, 24 August 1908, 19/403, 19, 1–478, 57, 1540, Deakin papers.


15 Minutes of meeting of the General Committee, 14 November 1906, MS 44/3, Manuscript Collection, SLV.

16 AEWW Official catalogue, MS 44/3, Manuscript Collection, SLV.


18 Harry Northcote to Selborne, 10 January 1902, 33, Selborne papers.


20 Minutes of meeting, 14 November 1906, MS 44/3, Manuscript Collection, SLV.

21 Minutes of General Committee meetings, MS 44/3, Manuscript Collection, SLV.

22 Argus, 24 October 1907, 5.

23 Stella Allan correspondence, Melbourne Museum Archives.
26 Doyle.
29 Levine (ed.), 8.
30 The Victoria League was devoted to fostering Imperial connections, mainly using the capacities and interest of women.
32 *Table Talk*, 26 March 1908, 23.
34 Harry Northcote to Selborne, 10 January 1902, SP 33.
36 Theo Heide Papers, 1864–1951, MS 13375, State Library of Victoria (SLV).
37 Minutes of meeting, 1 March 1907, MS 44/1, SLV.
38 See meeting 14 November 1906. MS 44/3, SLV.
39 Elgin to Harry Northcote, 7 June 1907, PRO 4098, 30/56, Northcote Papers, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
40 Minutes of meeting, 8 February 1907, MS 44/1 Manuscript Collection, SLV. See also minutes of meetings, 1 March 1907, 2 May 1907, 6 August 1907, MS 44/1 and MS 44/2, Manuscript Collection, SLV.
41 Minutes of meeting, 14 November 1906, MS 44/3, Manuscript Collection, SLV.
42 Minutes of meeting, 6 August 1907. MS 44/2, Manuscript Collection, SLV.
43 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 December 1907, 6. The same letter appeared in newspapers in every other state.