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The Deakin Sisters: Becoming 'New Women' in Twentieth-Century Australia

Louise Scott-Deane

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The Deakin Sisters: Becoming ‘New Women’ in Twentieth-Century Australia

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Supervisors:

Doctor Jane Carey, and Associate Professor Sharon Crozier-De Rosa

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Abstract

Using the rich and largely unexplored archival records of the Deakin sisters, this thesis presents the first in-depth collective biography of their lives. While they were the daughters of Australian Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin (1856-1919), the Deakin sisters, Ivy (1883-1970), Stella (1886-1976) and Vera (1891-1978), are not the subjects of this historical examination because of their connection to a powerful man. They are instead being studied because of the significant insights they provide into individual (elite) women's experiences of the new opportunities which emerged for Australian women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Examining their lives reveals the impact of both the emancipating ideas and opportunities of the 'new woman' era as well as the continuing expectations for women to remain in the domestic sphere and be 'angels in the house'.

The thesis reveals how the Deakin sisters took advantage of the liberating opportunities of the 'new woman' era to achieve both their individual ambitions and contribute to women's advancement and social reform efforts throughout their lives. The sisters enjoyed substantially expanded opportunities compared to women of earlier generations. Stella completed a science degree at the University of Melbourne and travelled to Europe to pursue postgraduate studies. Ivy and Vera studied music, performed in public and later devoted themselves to philanthropic work where they enjoyed significant public prominence, influence and authority. They harnessed their influential positions to advocate for increased rights and freedoms for women and to champion the expansion of women's involvement in society. They strongly believed that women, including themselves, should play an increased role in the nation's decision-making processes. At the same time, while each of the Deakin sisters capitalised on new freedoms and opportunities for women, their lives were also curtailed by the obligations and societal expectations of their gender and class, particularly after marriage. Each married an influential man, became a mother, and fulfilled the domestic and social obligations associated with their class and position. They also subscribed to a maternal feminist vision that saw men and women as 'equal but different'.

Due to their connection to a powerfully positioned father, privileged social standing, wealth, and personal ambition, each of the Deakin sisters were able to craft distinct life pathways that allow us to more fully understand the changing and varied conceptions of womanhood that existed between the more radical 'waves' of feminism. This examination of their lives thus extends our understandings of how Australian women negotiated their identities as females in this period and navigated patriarchal systems and norms to create a space for themselves in a male dominated public realm. The experiences of women like the Deakin sisters have often been rendered benign in previous scholarship due to their political conservatism and commitment to the ideal of 'equal but different'. They have suffered by comparison to seemingly more 'radical' feminists and their significance has been under-appreciated. This thesis seeks to shift such views by recovering the lives, impact and at times 'radicalism' of Ivy, Stella, and Vera Deakin.

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I would first like to thank my supervisors, Doctor Jane Carey, and Associate Professor Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, for their guidance and support throughout this project. Without their knowledge and input this project would have been impossible. I am grateful for their advice and assistance during this process.

I also need to thank my mother, Elizabeth and husband, Steve, for their constant support, love, generosity, and patience during this process.

This project could not have been completed without the assistance of the staff at the National Library of Australia and the University of Melbourne in navigating their archival collections.

I am grateful to Dr Campbell Aitken, who provided professional editing services in accordance with the Institute of Professional Editors' *Guidelines for editing research theses*.

I would also like to thank Alanna Dargan-Miller for taking the time to read various drafts from this thesis and give advice. Finally, I extend my thanks to my friends outside of academia for their support, kindness, and understanding over the course of this journey.

Certification

I, Louise Scott-Deane, declare that this thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the conferral of the degree Doctor of Philosophy, from the University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Louise Scott-Deane

24 August 2022

List of Abbreviations

ACF	Australian Comforts Fund
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AWNL	Australian Women's National League
BSc	Bachelor of Science
BWMPW	Bureau for Wounded, Missing and Prisoners of War
CLP	Commonwealth Liberal Party
ICW	International Council of Women
JRC	Junior Red Cross
MCEGGS	Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School
NCW	National Council of Women
NCWA	National Council of Women of Australia
NCWV	National Council of Women of Victoria
OBE	Order of the British Empire
POW	Prisoner of War
PRAV	Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
USA	United States of America
VAD	Voluntary Aid Detachment
WAAAF	Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force
WCC	Women's Central Committee
WMIB	Wounded and Missing Inquiry Bureau
WUF	Women of the University Fund
WUPF	Women of the University Patriotic Fund
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

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Introduction

What I am anticipating is no marked eminence, no public renown, but lives of secluded study, domestic duty, quiet cheerfulness, intellectual in cast and unselfish in end, such as shall ensure happiness to you and to all connected with you if undertaken with religious zeal, humility and constancy. – Alfred Deakin, 1890 Testament¹

In July 1890, after a period of deep contemplation, Alfred Deakin (later three-time prime minister of Australia) produced a highly detailed document in which he set out his wishes for how his three daughters, Ivy, Stella and Vera, should be raised, educated, and later live their lives. In these ‘testament’, while he did encourage some aspects of socially progressive notions of womanhood for his daughters, Alfred ultimately concluded that they should occupy a version of womanhood that strongly aligned with the mid-Victorian middle-class ideal of the ‘angel in the house’. This thesis presents a collective biography of Ivy, Stella, and Vera Deakin. It will reveal that their lived experiences were far from the stereotypical image of middle-class female domesticity that their father wanted them to embody. Each of the Deakin sisters, instead, used their privileged social standing to take advantage of many of the freedoms associated with the newly emerged concept of the ‘new woman’. Each of the Deakin sisters used these new opportunities to pursue their own ambitions, which were primarily related to higher education and establishing an independent presence in the public sphere. They also harnessed them to contribute to post-suffrage social reform efforts to enable more women to participate in, and contribute to, Australian society.

This biographical and micro-historical study illustrates many of the ways in which (elite) Australian women were able to take advantage of the new freedoms epitomised by the so-called ‘new woman’, thereby resisting conforming to the ideal of the angel in the house. In Australia, as in Britain, the angelic ideal directed women to exist happily in the domestic sphere: maintaining the home, raising children and being a supportive presence for their husband. The ‘new woman’ was an emancipating social and literary construct of womanhood that was prominent between the 1890s and 1910s and was linked to what is commonly referred to as first-wave feminism. Women were encouraged to participate and engage in areas of society that men had dominated. They were urged to navigate previously masculine spaces, for example, travelling abroad; gaining employment in the public sphere; participating in university-level education; gaining suffrage and economic autonomy; prioritising intellectual and economic aspirations over domestic duties; being physically active, including riding bicycles and playing sport such as tennis and golf; dressing practically and possessing equality and shared responsibility within marriage. Given their privileged social position and class, the Deakin sisters appeared to be well positioned to take advantage of these emerging opportunities for women, and they certainly enjoyed greater freedoms and opportunities, especially early in their lives, than previous generations of women of their social class. For the Deakin sisters specifically, these opportunities included education, including university studies, public performance, overseas travel, and executive-level philanthropic work, both in Australia and overseas (albeit of a voluntary nature).

¹ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

While the Deakin sisters capitalised on new freedoms and opportunities for women, their lives were curtailed by the obligations of their gender and class. All three married influential men, became mothers, and fulfilled the domestic and social obligations associated with their class and position. At the same time, they enjoyed substantial social and class-based authority that stemmed from coming from a family of high social standing and its associated benefits, including wealth, social connections and the self-confidence that derived from this and from being raised by an attentive father. They harnessed their influential positions to advocate increased freedoms for women and to champion the expansion of women's involvement in society. They strongly believed that women, including themselves, should play an increased role in the nation's decision-making processes.

This thesis is the first to analyse the lives of all three Deakin sisters, collectively examining the freedoms they experienced and the restrictions they faced as privileged women in twentieth century Australia. It will reveal how they took advantage of the liberating opportunities associated with socially progressive notions of womanhood to achieve both their individual ambitions and contribute to women's advancement and social reform efforts during their lives. While carrying out a close analysis of the lives of the Deakin sisters, it also will contribute wider knowledge about middle-class family life, women's contributions to voluntary work and social reform, and their participation in education and mobility. This examination of the lives of Ivy, Stella and Vera Deakin will provide greater understandings of the impact of the diverse conceptions of womanhood that existed between the more prominent feminist movements of the twentieth century. The experiences of women like the Deakin sisters have often been rendered benign in previous scholarship due to their political conservatism and commitment to the ideal of equal but different, which came to be viewed negatively by future generations of feminists due to its perceived continuation of women's oppression. They have suffered by comparison to seemingly more 'radical' feminists and their significance has been under-appreciated. This thesis seeks to shift such views and contribute to the ongoing re-evaluation of Australian women's lives and activism between the so-called feminist wave of the early twentieth century suffrage era and the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s-70s. More specifically, it evaluates the impact of the reforms, ideas, and ideals of the 'new woman' era on women's lived experiences across this period.

The first four chapters of this thesis, which examine the early lives of the Deakin sisters, draw upon the extensive Deakin family archives housed in the National Library of Australia, especially the Papers of Alfred Deakin, Papers of Catherine Deakin, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes and Letters from Stella, Pattie, and Catherine Deakin. The archival collection of Alfred Deakin provides significant insights into the Deakin family's private life, especially the close relationship between him and his children. It contains numerous letters that he wrote to them while they were young that provide a rare opportunity to gain insights into their relationship. This collection also contains a copy of the testament that Alfred wrote in 1890, in which he stated his wishes concerning how he wanted his children to be raised and his beliefs about the best way they should live their lives. This extremely rare document provides unique insights into Deakin's views on childrearing and women's roles.² The Papers of Catherine Deakin collection also contain letters Alfred wrote to his children that offer insights into the Deakin's family life, and letters written by Catherine to her friends in Melbourne while accompanying Stella and Vera

² Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540.

during their periods in Europe.³ The collection Letters from Stella, Pattie and Catherine Deakin contains Stella's letters and diary entries written while she was conducting her postgraduate scientific studies in Berlin and London, the only personal archival material available pertaining to her.⁴ The extensive archival collection of Herbert and Ivy Brookes contains personal material spanning her life, including personal archival sources related to her musical studies, involvement in the Liberal Party, and her philanthropic work with the National Council of Women and the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria. The collection also contains records, including annual reports, transcripts of broadcasts and speeches and meeting minutes, of the numerous philanthropic organisations in which she was involved.⁵

Audio recordings of extensive interviews between Vera Deakin and her grandson, Tom Harley, conducted between 1970 and 1977, were an important resource for my research.⁶ This collection, which is comprised of approximately fourteen hours of recordings, also contains an interview with the women who worked under Vera at the Victorian Red Cross Bureau of Wounded, Missing and Prisoners of War during World War II and a recording of her funeral service. This collection is valuable in giving access to Vera's thoughts and recollections of events in her own voice. While this is an important resource, consideration must be given to the significant time gap between the events discussed in the recordings and the interviews, and hence the nature and limitations of memory.⁷ Records of some of the key organisations that the Deakin sisters were involved in, including the Australian Red Cross, National Council of Women, Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria, the Liberal Party, Women of the University Patriotic Fund and Women of the University Fund, will be used to gain insights into their philanthropic work. I also drew upon a vast collection of newspaper articles as I completed this thesis. These reveal public perceptions of the Deakin sisters' activities and insights into their later lives, especially where personal archival material is not available.

In this thesis, I use the methodologies of biography and micro-history to examine the lives of the Deakin sisters in order to provide understandings of the impact of the 'new woman' over the course of their lives.⁸ Scholars have argued that biography is an important tool in examining the experiences of women and that it is only via the close examination of women's lives that we can fully comprehend the impact of gendered ideologies.⁹ However, the

³ Papers of Catherine Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS4913.

⁴ Letters from Stella, Pattie and Catherine Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS9056.

⁵ Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924.

⁶ "Vera Deakin White interviewed by Tom Harley," National Library of Australia, accessed 11 April, 2016, <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/1230854>.

⁷ Joanna Bornat and Hanna Diamond, "Women's History and Oral History: Developments and Debates," *Women's History Review* 16, no. 1 (2007): 19, 30.

⁸ Leigh Boucher, "Old Questions and 'New Biography': Labour Activism, William Murphy and Racialisation in 1880s Victoria," *Australian Historical Studies* 43, no. 1 (2012): 90; Rachel Goldlust, "Real Men Do Real Farming, While the New Woman Goes Home: Australian Suffragists Go Back to the Land 1894-1917," *Journal of Australian Studies* 45, no. 3 (2021): 334-51; Tanya Evans and Robert Reynolds, "Introduction to this Special Issue on Biography and Life-Writing," *Australian Historical Studies* 43, no. 1 (2012): 8; Nick Salvatore, "Biography and Social History: An Intimate Relationship," *Labour History* 87, no. 87 (2004): 187-92.

⁹ Tanya Evans, "'Biography and Life-Writing Can Re-Make the Nation': A Review of Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 19, 1991-1995 (A-Z)," *Australian Historical Studies* (2022): 2, 4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1031461X.2022.2065963>; Evans and Reynolds, "Introduction," 2-3; Jill Roe, "Biography Today: A Commentary," *Australian Historical Studies* 43, no. 1 (2012): 111. Other recent PhD theses that have conducted biographical examinations include Louise Blake, "Women and Community on the Upper Goulburn Goldfields" (Doctor of Philosophy Monash University, 2019); Erica Cervini, "Reading the Silence of My Great-Grandmother: The Role of Life-Writing in Locating the Hidden Life of a Jewish Woman" (Doctor of Philosophy Victoria University, 2019).

historian must strive to prevent their own ideological agenda from influencing their examination of the subject, ensure that they place the subject within its specific historical context, and undertake a critical rather than commemorative analysis.¹⁰ The use of a concurrent biographical and micro-historical approach offers significant benefits in overcoming the limitations associated with biography.¹¹ A micro-historical approach is a valuable tool in revealing broader insights into the wider world of the subject, and offers an opportunity to highlight the experiences of formerly marginalised historical subjects.¹² A combined biographical and micro-historical approach allows us to construct a history of the women themselves, while also enabling us to understand the impact they might have had on the world around them. The simultaneous use of these approaches to examine the lives of the Deakin sisters enables me to bring to light women who have previously been rendered benign in the Australian historical landscape due to their conservative political beliefs and the negative perceptions of maternal feminism held by later generations of feminists. It contributes to understandings of how privileged women negotiated the changing and varied conceptions of womanhood that existed between the women's suffrage movement and the women's liberation movement. The use of these approaches also allows for wider understandings of middle-class family life, women's voluntary philanthropic work, social reform, education, and their encounters with mobility, including overseas travel.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter I examine the family environment in which Ivy, Stella and Vera were raised by surveying the lives of the three significant adult figures in their childhoods – Alfred, Pattie, and Catherine Deakin. I then provide a brief overview of the adult lives of each of the Deakin sisters, and explain the framing of the thesis around the literary and gender paradigms of the 'angel in the house' and the 'new woman'. Following the explanation of these conceptions of womanhood, I detail the changing opportunities for Australian women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in regard to first-wave feminism, paid and philanthropic work, and their experiences of mobility, including overseas travel. Finally, I present chapter outlines for the remainder of the thesis.

The Deakin Family

A substantial body of scholarship examines the Deakin family; for the most part, these have focused on its patriarch, Alfred Deakin (1856–1919).¹³ These works have covered his political life and career, religious faith

¹⁰ Binne de Haan and Hans Renders, "Introduction: The Challenges of Biography Studies," in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory and Life Writing*, ed. Hans Renders and Binne de Haan (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 2; Teresa Iles, ed., *All Sides of the Subject: Women and Biography* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992).

¹¹ Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 111-13.

¹² Kit Candlin and Cassandra Pybus, *Enterprising Women: Gender, Race, and Power in the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 12-13; John-Paul A. Ghobrial, "Introduction: Seeing the World like a Microhistorian," *Past & Present* 242, no. Supplement 14 (2019): 13; Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 1 (2001): 133; Sabina Loriga, "The Role of the Individual in History: Biographical and Historical Writing in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century," in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory and Life Writing*, ed. Hans Renders and Binne de Haan (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 89.

¹³ Walter Murdoch, *Alfred Deakin: A Sketch* (London: Constable, 1923); J. A. LaNauze, *Alfred Deakin: Two Lectures* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1960); J. A. La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin: A Biography* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1965); Alfred J. Gabay, *The Mystic Life of Alfred Deakin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Alfred Deakin and Stuart Macintyre, *'And be one people': Alfred Deakin's Federal Story* (Carlton South, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1995); John Rickard, *A Family Romance: The Deakins at Home* (Carlton South, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1996); Judith Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); Laksiri Jayasuriya, "The Australian-Asian Connection: From Alfred Deakin to John

and, to a lesser extent, his family. Alfred was born on 3 August 1856, in Melbourne to British immigrants, William and Sarah Deakin.¹⁴ John Rickard characterises the Deakin family as being middle-class. William was a goldminer, a businessman, who co-owned a coaching line called Bill and Deakin's People's Line of Coaches. He was subsequently an employee of the coaching businesses Bevan, James and Co., and Cobb and Co.¹⁵ Sarah was a devoted wife to William, and according to Rickard was "a capable housewife."¹⁶ During their childhoods, Alfred and his older sister Catherine received a high-quality education, in stark contrast to most Australian children, who at the time were either not enrolled or not attending school regularly.¹⁷ William and Sarah's commitment to education ensured that once they reached adulthood, Alfred and Catherine were among the best educated people in the colony.¹⁸

After matriculating from Melbourne Church of England Grammar School in 1871, Alfred chose to enrol as a 'student at law' at the University of Melbourne, which would not grant him a Bachelor of Laws, but would qualify him for a certificate of admission to the Victorian Bar.¹⁹ In 1877, he completed his studies and began practising law.²⁰ After only a year, Alfred concluded that he was not enjoying law and wished to commence other work. On 23 May 1878, Alfred met David Syme (1827–1908), the owner of Melbourne's *Age* newspaper, which proved to be a significant turning point in his life. Syme convinced Alfred to work for him as a journalist, a position he accepted and excelled at for the next five years.²¹ In addition to providing Alfred with employment, Syme aided and enabled Alfred in the beginning of his political career. In 1879, at the age of twenty-two, Alfred, on Syme's advice, ran as the Liberal candidate for West Bourke, which was located north of Melbourne, and was elected. He spent the following thirty years in public life and office, during a period of great change and evolution for Australian politics and society in general.²² Alfred came to be regarded as a political prodigy and "the coming man of Victorian politics."²³ He was appointed as a government minister at the age of twenty-six. In 1886, he became Chief Secretary and leader of the Liberal wing of the coalition government.²⁴ The collapse of the

Howard, "AQ: *Australian Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2006): 12-40; Marilyn Lake, "The brightness of eyes and quiet assurance which seem to say American': Alfred Deakin's Identification with Republican Manhood," *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007): 32-51; Mark Hearn, "A Transnational Imagination: Alfred Deakin's Reading Lists," in *Transnational Ties: Australian Lives in the World*, ed. Desley; Russell Deacon, Penny; Woollacott, Angela Woollacott (Canberra: ANU Press, 2008), 197-211; Carole Woods, "My native place': Alfred Deakin in Fitzroy.," *Victorian Historical Journal* 82, no. 2 (2011): 158-74; Judith Brett, "Alfred Deakin's Childhood: Books, a Boy and his Mother," *Australian Historical Studies* 43, no. 1 (2012): 61-77; Benjamin Rankin, "Alfred Deakin and Water Resources Politics in Australia," *History Australia* 10, no. 2 (2013): 114-35; Judith Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin* (Melbourne, Victoria: The Text Publishing Company, 2017); Deirdre Coleman and Sashi Nair, "Alfred Deakin's 'Austral-Asia' and the Making of 'History for the Future'," *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture* 64, no. 2 (2017): 136-46; Fred Cahir and Dan Tout, "'All that appears possible now is to mitigate as much as possible the trials of their closing years': Alfred Deakin's Attitudes to Aboriginal Affairs," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 64, no. 2 (2018): 177-93.

¹⁴ Stuart Macintyre, "Deakin and the Sovereignty of the People," *Voices: The Quarterly Journal of the National Library of Australia* 4, no. 2 (1994): 9; "Deakin, Alfred (1856-1919)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 20 January, 2017, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/deakin-alfred-5927>.

¹⁵ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 16-17; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 5-6.

¹⁶ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 5.

¹⁷ Brett, "Alfred Deakin's Childhood," 68.

¹⁸ Brett, "Alfred Deakin's Childhood," 68.

¹⁹ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 28, 33.

²⁰ Norris, "Deakin, Alfred.," Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 30.

²¹ Macintyre, "Deakin and the Sovereignty of the People," 10; Norris, "Deakin, Alfred.," Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 44; "Syme, David (1827-1908)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 27 June, 2019, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/syme-david-4679>.

²² Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 61-62; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 2, 44-45.

²³ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 2.

²⁴ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 2.

government in 1890 marked the conclusion of the first phase of Alfred's political career. After being relegated to the backbench, Alfred chose to devote himself to the goal of achieving a federated Australian state.²⁵

Alfred Deakin holds a significant place in Australian history as one of the leaders of the federation movement during the 1890s. He played a prominent role in federation conferences and conventions, contributing to the shaping of Australia's parliament and constitution. Alfred's work toward securing federation was rewarded through his appointment as Attorney-General and Leader of the House in Australia's first parliament in 1901. In 1903, he succeeded Edmund Barton (1849–1920) as Prime Minister, an office he would hold for three terms (1903–1904, 1905–1908 and 1909–1910).²⁶ After his death, Alfred was praised as "one of Australia's greatest statesmen," a leading figure in the federation movement, and for making important contributions to shaping the Australian political landscape and institutions.²⁷

Alfred was also committed to living a life of religious duty, goodness, and devotion to God.²⁸ Al Gabay stated that, "Deakin was throughout his life possessed of a profound and sincere religious sensibility."²⁹ After rejecting conventional religion at the age of sixteen, Alfred became involved in Spiritualism when he was eighteen years old and studying law at the University of Melbourne. He quickly became deeply involved in the movement, which was premised on the belief that departed souls could interact with the living.³⁰ Spiritualism originated in the United States of America (USA) in 1848, after reports of the Fox sisters in New York receiving messages from a spirit quickly spread across the country. As the story gained public attention and notoriety, reports of people receiving communications from spirits greatly increased. Subsequently, numerous seance circles were formed, in which primarily female mediums received communications from the spirit world.³¹ The growing understanding of science within society at this time resulted in challenges to religious beliefs; Spiritualism's rejection of orthodoxy offered an alternative belief system. It presented access to a mystical experience, while being committed to the Victorian values of respectability, health and domestic order. By the 1860s, Spiritualism had become culturally fashionable and popular, but most people did not devote themselves to the movement, and only participated at the level of entertainment and party games.³²

Spiritualism appealed to Alfred for several reasons. It catered to his desire for a religious experience that was not satisfied by the Church of England. It also enabled him to "justify the scientific investigation of spiritualist phenomena as a contribution to the human enlightenment to which he was dedicated."³³ Alfred quickly rose to

²⁵ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 2-3.

²⁶ Macintyre, "Deakin and the Sovereignty of the People," 14-16; Norris, "Deakin, Alfred.," Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 2-3; "Barton, Sir Edmund (Toby) (1849–1920)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 9 July, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/barton-sir-edmund-toby-71>; "Alfred Deakin-Timeline," Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library, accessed 20 January, 2017, <https://www.deakin.edu.au/library/special-collections/alfred/timeline>; "Alfred Deakin," Deakin University Library, accessed 3 May, 2021, <https://www.deakin.edu.au/library/special-collections/alfred>.

²⁷ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 2-3.

²⁸ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 104, 57-58.

²⁹ Alfred J. Gabay, "Alfred Deakin and the Sources of Inspiration," *Voices: The Quarterly Journal of the National Library of Australia* 4, no. 2 (1994): 20. See also Frank Bongiorno, "In this world and the next: Political modernity and unorthodox religion in Australia, 1880-1930," *ACH: The Journal of the History of Culture in Australia*, no. 25 (2006): 179-207.

³⁰ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 32; Rickard, *A Family Romance*.

³¹ Molly McGarry, *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 1-3; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 33.

³² Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 33.

³³ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 32; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 34.

prominence in the movement and was regarded as one of its rising stars. In 1874, the same year he joined the movement, he was invited to join the Spiritualist circle, run by Dr Motherwell, a prominent physician, and participated in regular seances.³⁴ He was then employed by the Victorian Association of Progressive Spiritualists to teach, and later became conductor of their Sunday school – the Progressive Lyceum – where he would meet his future wife, Pattie Browne. Alfred’s rapid rise within the Spiritualist movement culminated with his election as president of the association in 1878.³⁵

By 1884, when his eldest daughter, Ivy, was born, Alfred, while still believing in the principles of Spiritualism, had distanced himself from the movement and moved toward conventional religious practices. In 1896, he joined the congregation of the Australian Church, and was an active member for the remainder of the decade. The Church offered Alfred a more orthodox religious experience than Spiritualism, and provided stronger links to his public-facing political life.³⁶ It was founded by Reverend Charles Strong (1844–1942), and strived to create a kingdom of God on Earth “in a society based on freedom, justice, compassion, charity, and reconciliation. Social, economic, and political reform, Strong preached, was thus proper work for Christians.”³⁷ It offered an attractive alternative to conventional religion for religious liberals because it was:

Non-dogmatic, committed to the worship of God, the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the religious life of Faith, Hope and Love, but free from creeds and legislated ecclesiastical forms. There was no trinity, no virgin birth, no predestination, no salvation of the elect, no hell and eternal punishment, no original sin, no atonement and redemption, no seven-day Creation, none of the obstacles to faith which stood between many progressive nineteenth-century people and the God they longed for.³⁸

Like Spiritualism, the Australian Church held progressive beliefs in regard to women’s roles within society and attracted middle and upper-class Australians who were attracted to social reform movements. As larger numbers of women joined non-conformist Protestant churches, including the Australian Church, they became ‘feminised’, and their theological emphasis shifted from “punishment to care.”³⁹ The shift in focus to care resulted in an increased mobilisation of religious women in philanthropic endeavours that can also be linked to the social reform ambitions of Australian maternal feminists.⁴⁰ As I demonstrate in this thesis, the Australian Church’s progressive ideas on women’s role in society, its emphasis on the congregation’s duty to improve Australian society, as well as eugenic ideals, featured prominently in Alfred’s parenting and shaped the adult lives of the Deakin sisters.

³⁴ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 33-35, 44.

³⁵ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 33-35, 44.

³⁶ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 208-09. See also C. R. Badger, *The Reverend Charles Strong and the Australian Church* (Melbourne: Abacada Press, 1971); "Strong, Charles (1844–1942)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 1 July, 2021, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/strong-charles-4658>; Malcolm Saunders, "An Australian Pacifist: The Reverend Dr. Charles Strong, 1844—1942," *Biography* 18, no. 3 (1995): 241-53.

³⁷ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 210.

³⁸ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 209.

³⁹ Judith Smart, "Modernity and Mother-Heartedness: Spirituality and religious meaning in Australian women’s suffrage and citizenship movements, 1890s-1920s," in *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation and Race*, ed. Ian Christopher Fletcher, Philippa Levine, and Laura E. Nym Mayhall (Oxon: Routledge, 2000), 52.

⁴⁰ Smart, "Modernity and Mother-Heartedness," 52.

While Alfred's life has been the subject of much historical research, a smaller body of scholarship focuses on his family. These examinations have concentrated on the complicated relationship between Alfred, his wife Pattie, and older sister Catherine.⁴¹ Elizabeth Martha Anne 'Pattie' Deakin, née Browne (1863–1934), was born to British immigrant parents, Hugh Junor and Elizabeth Browne.⁴² John Rickard characterises the Browne family, unlike the Deakin family, as a "colonial success story." After working on the goldfields and as a brickmaker and storekeeper, Hugh opened a successful distillery in Melbourne from which the family built their wealth and social standing.⁴³

Religion, specifically Spiritualism, was a major aspect of Pattie's childhood. In 1874, Hugh and the Browne family chose to convert from strict Presbyterianism to Spiritualism. The Brownes quickly became prominent members of Melbourne's Spiritualist movement. In the same year, Pattie, aged eleven, had her first experience as a medium, and the family subsequently held regular seances.⁴⁴ Pattie met her future husband, Alfred Deakin, at the Spiritualist Sunday School, the Progressive Lyceum, where he was her teacher.⁴⁵ Alfred quickly became a member of the Brownes' social circle and regularly attended seances, dinners and musical events at their home, Park House.⁴⁶ On 7 July 1881, after knowing the Browne family for many years, Alfred formally requested permission to marry Pattie, who was now eighteen years old. While Pattie accepted the proposal, Hugh considered Alfred to be an inappropriate match, due to his lack of social standing and financial means.⁴⁷ Despite her family's objection, Pattie was determined to marry Alfred, a decision which led to considerable conflict with her family. Ultimately, Pattie defied her family's wishes and married Alfred on 3 April 1882.⁴⁸

After her marriage to Alfred, Pattie gave birth to three daughters – Ivy, in 1883, Stella, in 1886, and Vera in 1891.⁴⁹ During her daughters' childhoods, which coincided with the peak of Alfred's political career, Pattie conformed to the traditional ideal of the 'angel in the house'. She existed primarily in the domestic sphere, where she created a comfortable home for her family, enjoyed caring for her children and taught them domestic skills associated with middle and upper-class womanhood, including housekeeping and sewing.⁵⁰ Her biographer, Diane Langmore, characterised Pattie as

⁴¹ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*; Diane Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife': The marriage of Alfred and Pattie Deakin," *Voices: The Quarterly Journal of the National Library of Australia* 4, no. 2 (1994): 69-90; John Rickard, "Deakin's ideal of the family," *Voices: The Quarterly Journal of the National Library of Australia* 4, no. 2 (1994): 58-68; Rickard, *A Family Romance*.

⁴² Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 70; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 59-60.

⁴³ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 59-60.

⁴⁴ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 62.

⁴⁵ Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 70; Rickard, "Deakin's ideal of the family," 61; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 66.

⁴⁶ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 69.

⁴⁷ Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 71; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 69-70.

⁴⁸ Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 71-72; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 71-72.

⁴⁹ Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 71-72; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 71-72; "Alfred Deakin's Family," Deakin University Library, accessed 25 January, 2017, <https://www.deakin.edu.au/library/special-collections/alfred/family>.

⁵⁰ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 168, 73; Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 72, 74-75; Rickard, "Deakin's ideal of the family," 66-67.

a devoted and loving mother to her three children. Although Alfred was the titular head of the family, it was Pattie, through her close attention to her daughters, her supervision of the household routine and staff, and her gracious hospitality, who were at the centre of life at [their home] Llanarth.⁵¹

While Pattie was a devoted mother and homemaker, her ill-health restricted her level of involvement in her daughter's lives during their childhoods. She suffered continual illness, caused by a gynaecological condition that was believed to have been caused by inappropriate treatment during childbirth and worsened post-pregnancy.⁵²

While Pattie's life aligned with angelic ideals of womanhood during her daughter's childhoods, she did begin to engage with qualities associated with the 'new woman' as Alfred came to the end of his political career. In early 1907, while accompanying Alfred to the Imperial Conference in London, Pattie reluctantly accepted an invitation from Lady Jersey, the wife of former New South Wales Governor, to speak at a luncheon hosted by the women's group, the Victoria League, for the wives and daughters of the attendees of the Imperial Conference. Her successful address at this event marked a turning point in her life.⁵³ After the success of this event, Pattie, enabled by the social standing associated with the Deakin family name, and improvement in her health, took on leadership roles in several philanthropic organisations with a focus on women and children. After their return from London, for example, Pattie assisted in the planning of the 1907 Australian Exhibition of Women's Work, which Judith Brett described as a significant achievement of first-wave feminists in highlighting the important role that women's work could play outside the domestic sphere.⁵⁴ She subsequently became president of the Kindergarten Union and an active member of the Association of Creches, the Victorian Neglected Children's Society, and the Bush Nursing Association. In 1912, she became the inaugural president of Melbourne's Lyceum Club – a club for women who had distinguished themselves in fields including philanthropy, community work, the arts, education and science.⁵⁵ Following Alfred's death in 1919, Pattie occupied positions of authority in philanthropic organisations concerned with women's and children's welfare for the remainder of her life.⁵⁶

Alfred's older sister, Catherine Deakin (1850–1937), played a significant role in the lives of Alfred, Pattie, Ivy, Stella and Vera. After Alfred's birth in 1856, Catherine was thoroughly devoted to him, and John Rickard believes that, instead of competing for their parents' affection, she looked on him as if he was her own child.⁵⁷ Catherine received the most thorough and comprehensive education available during her childhood. She attended a boarding school in Kyneton between 1858-1862, and one in South Yarra, run by the Misses Thompson, from 1863 to 1865,

⁵¹ Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 76.

⁵² "Alfred Deakin's Family.": Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 168-69; Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 72, 75; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 80.

⁵³ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 352-53; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 113-14.

⁵⁴ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 353.

⁵⁵ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 353; Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 78; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 143; "Lyceum Club," eMelbourne: The city past & present, School of Historical & Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, 2008, accessed 13 June, 2022, <https://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00870b.htm>. See also Jeanette Bomford, *Circles of Friendship: The Centenary History of The Lyceum Club, Melbourne* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2012); Joan Gillison, *A History of the Lyceum Club Melbourne* (Malvern: McKellar Press, 1975); Anne Longmire, *The Catalysts: Change and Continuity 1910-2010* (Burwood, Vic: Anne Longmire and The Catalysts, 2011).

⁵⁶ Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 78-79.

⁵⁷ Rickard, "Deakin's ideal of the family," 61; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 6.

topping her class at graduation.⁵⁸ In 1875, Catherine enrolled as a mature-age student at the newly established Presbyterian Ladies' College, the first major secondary school for women in Victoria.⁵⁹ Catherine was a highly successful student, matriculating with honours and first in her class. In 1876, she accepted an offer to join the school's faculty as a music teacher, but chose to resign in December 1877 in order to pursue her own musical education.⁶⁰ Catherine then studied at the Melbourne School of Music for three years, graduating with a certificate of excellence in piano, harmony and teaching.⁶¹ After graduation, Catherine supported herself financially by teaching musical theory and practice from her home, The Elms.⁶² This was highly unusual for a woman of her class in this period. She never engaged in a serious romantic relationship, and, in 1880, at the age of thirty, appeared to accept that she would not.⁶³ Catherine instead devoted herself to supporting her brother and his family. Alfred entrusted her to give his daughters their primary-level education, a position that allowed her to exert great influence over them.⁶⁴

Alfred, Pattie and Catherine formed a close family unit, and were devoted to Ivy, Stella and Vera, with Alfred taking on an uncharacteristically active role (for the time) in his daughter's childhoods. Relations between the three adults were, however, occasionally tense due to Alfred and Catherine's close relationship, his decision to entrust his daughter's early education to her, and Pattie feeling that she was being excluded from important decisions about her children's upbringing.⁶⁵ Historians including Judith Brett, John Rickard and Diane Langmore conclude that the root causes of Pattie's frustrations were the confinement of her influence to the domestic sphere and her inability to make decisions in her own home, which ultimately brought her into conflict with Alfred and Catherine.⁶⁶ Judith Brett believes that:

Pattie was increasingly resentful of the role Catherine was assuming in the girls' education and her own relegation to the domestic sphere. Catherine saw herself as helping out, but to Pattie she was assuming too much control. She felt sidelined as a mother, expected to only feed, clothe and nurse the children.⁶⁷

⁵⁸ "Deakin, Catherine, Sarah (Kate) (1850-1937)," The Australian Women's Register, 2002, accessed 10 March, 2017, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0385b.htm>; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 7-8; Marjorie R. Theobald, *Knowing Women: Origins of Women's Education in Nineteenth-Century Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 30.

⁵⁹ Brett, "Alfred Deakin's Childhood," 68; Marjorie R. Theobald, "The PLC Mystique: Reflections on the Reform of Female Education in Nineteenth-Century Australia," *Australian Historical Studies* 23, no. 92 (1989): 242.

⁶⁰ Harley, "Deakin, Catherine, Sarah.,"; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 15; Rohan Rivett, "Deakin's Confidante," *Overland*, no. 69 (1978): 45; Theobald, "The PLC Mystique," 251-52.

⁶¹ Harley, "Deakin, Catherine, Sarah.,"; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 16.

⁶² Harley, "Deakin, Catherine, Sarah.,"; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 46.

⁶³ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 17; Theobald, *Knowing Women*, 30. For an examination of single women in the early twentieth century see Katie Holmes, "Spinster Indispensable: Feminists, single women and the critique of marriage, 1890-1920," *Australian Historical Studies* 29, no. 110 (1998): 68-90; Kay Whitehead, "The Spinster Teacher in Australia from the 1870s to the 1960s," *History of Education Review* 36, no. 1 (2007): 1-17.

⁶⁴ Rickard, "Deakin's ideal of the family," 61-62.

⁶⁵ For a detailed examination of the tensions and relationships between Alfred, Pattie and Catherine Deakin see Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 173; Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 74-75; Rickard, "Deakin's ideal of the family," 66; Rickard, *A Family Romance*; Rivett, "Deakin's Confidante," 46.

⁶⁶ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 168, 73; Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 72, 74-75; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 66-67.

⁶⁷ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 173.

As the Deakin sisters grew older, these tensions were exacerbated by the large amount of time Catherine continued to spend with the girls, and her influence over them.⁶⁸

The Deakin Sisters

Ivy, Stella, and Vera Deakin became accomplished women in their own right and lived during a significant period of Australian history that included Federation, World War I, the Great Depression and World War II. The oldest of the Deakin sisters, Ivy (1883–1970), was an accomplished musician in her youth, who subverted expectations of women by studying music outside the home and performing professionally for many years.⁶⁹ She then devoted her adult life to philanthropic work. After her marriage in 1905 to Herbert Brookes (1867–1963), a businessman and close confidant of her father, Ivy became a prominent public figure, to an extent which was not typical of married women.⁷⁰ For the remainder of her life, Ivy accepted numerous positions of leadership in a multitude of organisations concerned with music, politics and women's and children's welfare.⁷¹ Such roles were open to her because of her social standing and wealth, and indeed she was sought after for these positions. Ivy's important contributions to the National Council of Women are acknowledged in examinations of the organisation by historians Marian Quartly and Judith Smart.⁷² Ivy also became a mother to three children, Wilfred Deakin Brookes (1906–1977), Jessie Deakin Brookes (1914–2014) and Alfred Deakin Brookes (1920–2005), who variously achieved highly in business, social work, philanthropy, and the Australian Security Intelligence Service.⁷³

⁶⁸ Harley, "Deakin, Catherine, Sarah."; Diane Langmore, *Prime Ministers' Wives: The Public and Private Lives of Ten Australian Women* (Ringwood, Vic.: McPhee Gribble, 1992), 31, 39; Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 74-75.

⁶⁹ Peter Cochrane, "'Australian Citizens': Herbert and Ivy Brookes. [Peter Cochrane contextualises one of the National Library's larger manuscript collections]," *National Library of Australia News* 9, no. 6 (1999): 19; "Alfred Deakin's Family."

⁷⁰ Cochrane, "'Australian Citizens'," 19; "Brookes, Herbert Robinson (1867–1963)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 9 July, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brookes-herbert-robinson-5372>; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 97-98. For further information regarding Herbert Brookes see Peter Cochrane, "'How are the Egyptians behaving?': Herbert Brookes, British-Australian," *Australian Historical Studies* 29, no. 113 (1999): 303-18; "Brookes, Herbert Robinson (1867–1963)," *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, Oxford University Press, 2001, accessed 18 May, 2022, <https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.uow.edu.au/view/10.1093/acref/9780195515039.001.0001/acref-9780195515039-e-234>; Rohan Deakin Rivett, *Australian Citizen: Herbert Brookes, 1867-1963* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965).

⁷¹ Cochrane, "'Australian Citizens'," 19. Ivy was involved in a multitude of philanthropic organisations throughout her life. These include the Liberal Party (1909-1914), the University of Melbourne (1938-1970), Victorian orchestral music (1908-1968), Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria (1913-1967), League of Nations Union (1921-1944), Australian Association of the United Nations (1945-1962), Empire Trade Defence Council (1919), Housewives Association of Victoria (1913-1916), National Council of Women (1912-1969), Women's Hospital (1921-1970), Hospital Benefits Association (1936-1938), Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria (1936-1966), International Club of Victoria (1932-1958), Australian Comforts Fund (1939-1945), Australian Group for Reconstruction (1943), Women's Justices' Association (1953-1954). For a comprehensive list of the organisations that Herbert and Ivy Brookes were involved in see "Guide to the Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes," National Library of Australia, 2016, accessed 18 May, 2017, <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-229738937/findingaid#nla-obj-355069253>.

⁷² Marian Quartly and Judith Smart, "The Australian National Council of Women: Its Relations with Government to 1975," *Australian Feminist Studies* 29, no. 82 (2014): 352-65; Marian Quartly and Judith Smart, *Respectable Radicals: A History of the National Council of Women Australia, 1896-2006* (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University Publishing, 2015); Judith Smart and Marian Quartly, "Moderate and mainstream: Leadership in the National Council of Women of Australia, 1930s–1970s," in *Diversity in Leadership: Australian Women, Past and Present*, ed. Joy Damousi, Kim Rubenstein, and Mary Tomsic (Canberra: ANU Press, 2014), 129-48.

⁷³ "Brookes, Sir Wilfred Deakin (1906–1997)," *People Australia*, accessed 18 May, 2022, <https://peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/biography/brookes-sir-wilfred-deakin-30902/text38265>; "Clarke, Jessie Deakin (1914–2014)," *The Australian Women's Register*, 2003, accessed 18 May, 2022, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0623b.htm>; "Mr Alfred Deakin Brookes OM 1936," Melbourne Grammar School, 2008, accessed 18 May, 2022, <https://mgs.vic.edu.au/about/our-people/meet-our-alumni/mr-alfred-deakin-brookes>.

Stella (1886–1976) was the second oldest of the Deakin sisters. She was one of the first women to study science at the University of Melbourne, graduating with a Bachelor of Science (BSc), majoring in chemistry, in 1908. She subsequently capitalised upon increased possibilities for women to pursue higher education and conducted postgraduate studies in Berlin and London.⁷⁴ In 1911, Stella married fellow Australian scientist David Rivett (1885–1961).⁷⁵ After marriage, Stella largely retreated into the domestic sphere, refocusing her efforts on supporting David and later taking on a leadership position in the Women of the University Patriotic Fund and the Women of the University Fund. David became a significant figure in Australian science. After his marriage to Stella, he worked as a lecturer in chemistry at the University of Melbourne. Following World War I, he held positions including associate professor and chair of chemistry at the University of Melbourne. In 1927, David left the university to work as a full-time executive member and chief executive officer of the newly established Council for Scientific Research, where he remained until his retirement in 1949.⁷⁶ Stella and David had two children, Rohan Deakin Rivett (1917–1977), who was an accomplished journalist, newspaper editor and author, and Kenneth Deakin Rivett (1923–2004), an associate professor of economics at the University of New South Wales.⁷⁷

The youngest of the sisters, Vera (1891–1978), was a talented musician in her youth, studying and performing music in Australia, Budapest, and Berlin.⁷⁸ The outbreak of World War I marked a significant point in Vera's life. Not content with the stereotypical wartime work conducted by most Australian women, which involved fundraising and the production of comforts, Vera undertook full-time voluntary work as head of the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Inquiry Bureau (WMIB) in Cairo and London during the war.⁷⁹ This significant period of Vera's life has been subject to numerous examinations that have exposed her significant contributions to the war effort and the important service the WMIB provided to distressed relatives on the home front.⁸⁰ Vera continued to work for the Australian Red Cross in a voluntary capacity throughout her life. She served on numerous managerial committees, ran the Victorian Red Cross Bureau for Wounded and Missing and Prisoners

⁷⁴ Jane Carey, "Departing from their sphere: Australian women and science, 1880-1960" (Doctor of Philosophy University of Melbourne, 2003), 118, 38-39.

⁷⁵ "Rivett, Sir Albert Cherbury David (1885–1961)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 28 April, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rivett-sir-albert-cherbury-david-8512>.

⁷⁶ Schedvin, "Rivett, Sir Albert Cherbury David." For further information on David Rivett see Rohan Rivett, *David Rivett: Fighter for Australian Science* (North Blackburn: The Dominion Press, 1972); C. B. Schedvin, *Shaping Science and Industry: A History of Australia's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research 1926-49* (Victoria: CSIRO Publishing, 1988); H. R. Marston, "Albert Cherbury David Rivett. 1885-1961," *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society* 12 (1966): 437-55.

⁷⁷ "Rivett, Kenneth Deakin," Australian National University Archives, 2012, accessed 18 May, 2022, <https://archivescollection.anu.edu.au/index.php/rivett-kenneth-deakin>; John Lodewijks, "Ken Rivett: A Review in Tribute," *Economic and Labour Relations Review* 15, no. 2 (2005): 309-19; "Rivett, Rohan Deakin (1917–1977)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 18 May, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rivett-rohan-deakin-11533>.

⁷⁸ "White, Vera Deakin (1891-1978)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 24 May, 2019, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/white-vera-deakin-12014>.

⁷⁹ Rickard, "White, Vera Deakin."

⁸⁰ Melanie Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay: Australian Civilian Volunteers in War* (Walcha, N.S.W: Ohio Productions, 2002), 54-56; Melanie Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity: 100 Years of Australian Red Cross 1914-2014* (Sydney South, NSW: HarperCollins Australia, 2014), 44, 47; Melanie Oppenheimer and Margrette Kleinig, "'There is no trace of him': The Australian Red Cross, its Wounded and Missing Bureaux and the 1915 Gallipoli Campaign," *First World War Studies* 6, no. 3 (2015): 277-92; Louise Scott-Deane, "Women, the Red Cross and World War I" (Bachelor of Arts (Honours) University of Wollongong, 2015), 37-49; Louise Scott-Deane, "'Tracing the Missing': Vera Deakin and the Australian Red Cross Wounded and Missing Inquiry Bureau," *Melbourne Historical Journal* 45, no. 1 (2017): 68-87; Elicia Victoria Taylor, "An 'Army of Superfluous Women': Australian single women and the First World War" (Doctor of Philosophy University of Newcastle, 2020), 110-26; Carole Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross* (Melbourne: Royal Historical Society of Victoria, 2020).

of War during World War II, became a life member of the organisation in 1945, and was junior-vice chairman of the Australian Red Cross Society between 1949 and 1951.⁸¹ Vera also took on leadership roles in other philanthropic organisations, including the Royal Children's Hospital and the Victorian Society for Crippled Children and Adults.⁸² Vera married Thomas White (1888–1957), a soldier and politician, in 1920, and they had four daughters, Lilian White (Bennett) (1921–2002), Patricia White (Sharp) (1923–2010), Shirley White (Wadman) (1925–2014) and Judith White (Harley) (1929–).⁸³

Framing the Thesis: Shifting Ideals of Womanhood

The following examination of the lives of Ivy, Stella and Vera Deakin reveals how (elite) Australian women experienced the emancipatory freedoms associated with the 'new woman', while negotiating the continued societal and familial pressures to conform to the enduring domestic and angelic ideals. The 'angel in the house' was a popular ideal of white middle-class womanhood in the Victorian era.⁸⁴ The phrase was derived from the title of a poem written by Coventry Patmore in England in 1854, in which he commends his wife for being a perfect woman and holds her up as a model for all women.⁸⁵ Patmore presented a valorised image of the qualities of the ideal woman. In essence, a woman's virtue was defined and measured by her "dedication to domestic life, self-sacrifice, and servitude to her family."⁸⁶ Women were to be devoted daughters, wives, and mothers; keep comfortable, well-run homes for their husbands; and be charming, gentle, self-sacrificing, passive, and pure.⁸⁷ They were to exhibit almost childlike qualities, be subordinate and dependent on men, and happily exist in the home, where they took on the role of maternal guardian of their husband and children.⁸⁸ Women were taught that

⁸¹ Rickard, "White, Vera Deakin."; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 190.

⁸² Rickard, "White, Vera Deakin."

⁸³ "White, Vera Deakin (1891 - 1978)," *The Australian Women's Register*, 2002, accessed 18 May, 2022, <https://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/IMP0139b.htm>; J. P. Pearn, "Pioneer Aviation and a Medical Legacy: The T.W. White Society Prize for Thoracic Research. A tribute to Group Captain Sir Thomas Walter White (1888 - 1957) - Australian's Pioneer Military Aviator," *Journal of Military and Veterans' Health* 20, no. 2 (2012): 40-42; "White, Sir Thomas Walter (1888-1957)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 27 May, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/white-sir-thomas-walter-12013>; "Patricia Sharp," *My Heritage*, accessed 29 November, 2022, https://www.myheritage.com/research/record-10738-5725334/patricia-sharp-in-australia-death-notices?tr_id=m_0i4grpt781_4hdlmxs387; "Shirley Wadman," *The Age*, 2014, accessed 29 November, 2022, <https://tributes.theage.com.au/obituaries/116817/shirley-wadman/>.

⁸⁴ Aihong Ren, "A Fantasy Subverting the Woman's Image as 'The Angel in the House'," *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 4, no. 10 (2014): 2061.

⁸⁵ Christine E. Crouse-Dick, "Reframing the Domestic Angel: Real Simple Magazine's Repackaging of the Victorian-Era 'Angel in the House' Narrative," *Communication Studies* 63, no. 4 (2012): 441-42; Joan M. Hoffman, "'She Loves with Love That Cannot Tire': The Image of the Angel in the House across Cultures and across Time," *Pacific Coast Philology* 42, no. 2 (2007): 264; Ren, "A Fantasy Subverting the Woman's Image as 'The Angel in the House'," 2061; Shaghayegh Moghari, "Representation of Angel-in-the-House in Bleak house by Charles Dickens," *Journal of Humanistic and Social Studies* 11, no. 2 (2020): 50.

⁸⁶ Nancy LaGreca, *Rewriting womanhood: Feminism, subjectivity, and the angel of the house in the Latin American novel, 1887-1903* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 3.

⁸⁷ Patricia Branca, "Image and Reality: The Myth of the Idle Victorian Woman," in *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women*, ed. Lois W. Banner and Mary S. Hartman (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 179; Crouse-Dick, "Reframing the Domestic Angel," 441-42; Jiang Hong, "Angel in the House, Angel in the Scientific Empire: Women and Colonial Botany During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 75, no. 3 (2021): 415; LaGreca, *Rewriting womanhood*, 3; Laura Moody, "Roald Dahl's Gothic Fiction: Unmasking 'The Angel in the House'" (Master of Arts in English Literature William Paterson University, 2018), 7; Moghari, "Representation of Angel-in-the-House in Bleak house by Charles Dickens," 50; Ren, "A Fantasy Subverting the Woman's Image as 'The Angel in the House'," 2061.

⁸⁸ Hoffman, "'She Loves with Love That Cannot Tire'," 264-65; LaGreca, *Rewriting womanhood*, 5; Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990), 1; Moghari, "Representation of Angel-in-the-House in Bleak house by Charles Dickens," 50; Shaghayegh

these were desirable qualities to exhibit within their own families, and these teachings were reinforced in popular media, including literature, domestic advice manuals and women's magazines.⁸⁹ Ultimately, within this ideal of womanhood, women were constructed to be entirely dependent on, and submissive to, the men in their lives.⁹⁰

Patmore's poem gained in popularity in the later decades of the nineteenth century as the wealth and breadth of the middle-classes increased. These groups had capitalised on the vast opportunities offered by the Industrial Revolution, which had begun decades before, and the corresponding growth of consumerism, and were now able to establish lives that resembled Patmore's gendered ideals.⁹¹ In this transformational period, the pervasive idea of separate spheres developed: women's nature was regarded as the opposite of men's, and the belief that they should thus exist in separate, gendered spheres – namely, men in the public world of business and women in the sheltered world of the home – grew in prominence. These conditions made it possible for middle-class women to stay home, thereby demonstrating their family's wealth and social standing.⁹²

The concept of the 'angel in the house' was not applied to working-class women in the same manner as upper and middle-class women. While acknowledging that these women did not share the same material conditions as those of the upper classes and needed to work to support their families, they were, however, expected to exhibit the emotional qualities associated with angelic models of womanhood.⁹³ As the unruly and disruptive militant suffragists were to demonstrate, by the early years of the twentieth century, those middle-class women who took to the streets and defied this ideal of femininity drew vocal, sometimes vitriolic criticism.⁹⁴ If women transgressed the boundaries of angelic ideals, and were not obedient and submissive to men, they were labelled and shamed as no longer being 'ladies'.⁹⁵ They were rejected by society and were categorised as being mad, abnormal, evil, disobedient, 'wild women', 'social insurgents' and 'manly women'.⁹⁶

Despite emerging models of womanhood that allowed for more diverse experiences, the ideal of the 'angel in the house' persisted. In 1931, acclaimed novelist Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) famously critiqued the concept in an address to the National Society of Women's Service.⁹⁷ Woolf stated that she had fought against this fictionalised ideal of perfect womanhood, and society's expectation that women should strive to live up to its impossible

Moghari, "Portrait of Women in Victorian Novels," *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies* 2, no. 4 (2020): 167; Ren, "A Fantasy Subverting the Woman's Image as 'The Angel in the House'," 2061.

⁸⁹ Crouse-Dick, "Reframing the Domestic Angel," 444; M. Jeanne Peterson, "No Angels in the House: The Victorian Myth and the Paget Women," *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 3 (1984): 678.

⁹⁰ Ren, "A Fantasy Subverting the Woman's Image as 'The Angel in the House'," 2061.

⁹¹ Crouse-Dick, "Reframing the Domestic Angel," 442.

⁹² Crouse-Dick, "Reframing the Domestic Angel," 441-42; Hoffman, "'She Loves with Love That Cannot Tire'," 265; Ren, "A Fantasy Subverting the Woman's Image as 'The Angel in the House'," 2061.

⁹³ Crouse-Dick, "Reframing the Domestic Angel," 443-44; Peterson, "No Angels in the House," 678.

⁹⁴ Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash: Britain, Ireland and Australia, 1890–1920* (London: Routledge, 2018), 2, 10.

⁹⁵ Moghari, "Representation of Angel-in-the-House in Bleak house by Charles Dickens," 53; Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers*, 2.

⁹⁶ Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers*, 2; Moghari, "Representation of Angel-in-the-House in Bleak house by Charles Dickens," 55-56.

⁹⁷ Crouse-Dick, "Reframing the Domestic Angel," 444; "Virginia Woolf," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1998, accessed 9 July, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Virginia-Woolf>; Elaine Showalter, "Killing the Angel in the House: The Autonomy of Women Writers," *The Antioch Review* 50, no. 1/2 (1992).

standards, her whole life.⁹⁸ She believed that it was the duty of the woman writer to kill the ‘phantom angel’, thus enabling women to move beyond what she said was the male-conceived ideal of perfect womanhood and the domestic sphere.⁹⁹ This would therefore allow ‘real’ women to move beyond attempting to embody the fictional and unattainable ideal within the home and enter into wider areas of society.

While originating in England to reflect gender ideals there, the concept of the ‘angel’ was also relevant to Australia. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Australian society was strongly influenced by British culture, including traditional or angelic models of femininity.¹⁰⁰ Australians were encouraged to emulate British customs and derive their understandings of class, manners, and civilisation from European ideas.¹⁰¹ As Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario explains, Australian print culture often promoted angelic models of femininity. Australian authors and illustrators drew upon British images and stereotypes of womanhood when creating characters during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁰² These characters encouraged young, white, middle and upper-class women to strive to embody angelic ideals, and exhibit qualities of “well-ordered, modest domesticity,” thereby revealing its cultural power and influence across continents.¹⁰³ Thus, according to Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, Australian “women were imaginatively consigned to the domestic hearth, to British middle-class notions of domestic ideology.”¹⁰⁴ Angelic ideals were pervasive, and “until the last decades of the [nineteenth] century in Victoria and New South Wales, almost all women married and many married young.”¹⁰⁵ After marriage, women of all social classes were viewed as having an important moral and spiritual role within the family structure, where they were regarded as “an expert on children and the home.”¹⁰⁶ The home was women’s domain, where their role was to craft a private sanctuary for their husband to retreat from work in the public sphere. They were to be supportive partners and helpmeets for their husbands, as well as being the guiding moral influence within the family.¹⁰⁷ Motherhood was also an important aspect of women’s domestic duties. Sabine Willis highlights that “womanhood was equated with motherhood and motherhood with the holy of

⁹⁸ Crouse-Dick, "Reframing the Domestic Angel," 444, 46; Moody, "Roald Dahl's Gothic Fiction," 7-8; Showalter, "Killing the Angel in the House."

⁹⁹ Crouse-Dick, "Reframing the Domestic Angel," 444; Hoffman, "'She Loves with Love That Cannot Tire'," 264.

¹⁰⁰ Margaret Anderson, "Good Strong Girls. Colonial Women and Work," in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed. Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 229; Patricia Grimshaw, "'Man's Own Country': Women in Colonial Australian History," in *Australian Women: New Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Ailsa Burns and Norma Grieve (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), 185; Penelope Ann Russell, *A Wish of Distinction: Colonial Gentility and Femininity* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1994), 92-126.

¹⁰¹ Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, "Identifying with the Frontier: Federation New Woman, Nation and Empire," in *Changing the Victorian Subject*, ed. Maggie Tonkin et al. (Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2014), 51, 53.

¹⁰² Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario, "Fairies in a Strange Land: Colonization, Migration, and the Invention of the Australian Fairy Tale," in *The Fairy Tale World*, ed. Andrew Teverson (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 368.

¹⁰³ Do Rozario, "Fairies in a Strange Land," 370-71.

¹⁰⁴ Crozier-De Rosa, "Identifying with the Frontier," 37.

¹⁰⁵ Anderson, "Good Strong Girls," 229.

¹⁰⁶ Jan Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood: A History* (St Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 1997), 92-94; Kerreen M. Reiger, "Women's Labour Redefined: Child-bearing and rearing advice in Australia 1880-1930s," in *Worth her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*, ed. Carmel Shute, Margaret James, and Margaret Bevege (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), 72.

¹⁰⁷ Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly, "The Politics of Purity: The Private Sphere Fights Back," in *Double Time: Women in Victoria, 150 Years*, ed. Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books, 1985), 105; Raymond Evans and Kay Saunders, "No Place Like Home: The Evolution of the Australian Housewife," in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed. Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 178; Kerreen M. Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernising the Australian Family 1880-1940* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), 38; Sabine Willis, "Homes are Divine Workshops," in *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia, 1788-1978*, ed. Elizabeth Windschuttle (Sydney: Fontana/Collins, 1980), 175; Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash*; Penny Russell, "'Unhomely moments': Civilising domestic worlds in colonial Australia," *The History of the Family* 14, no. 4 (2009); Theobald, *Knowing Women*.

holies.”¹⁰⁸ By becoming mothers, white women were also viewed as fulfilling their eugenic duty to further the ‘race’ by producing fit and healthy children who were raised in the supportive environment of the home.¹⁰⁹

As explained above, throughout this thesis, I use the concept of the ‘angel in the house’ to demonstrate how it clashed with the emerging ideal of the ‘new woman’ in the early twentieth century. The term ‘new woman’ was coined in 1894 by Sarah Grand, a feminist, writer, and proponent of what would come to be labelled ‘new woman fiction’.¹¹⁰ While this term originated in Britain, the debates about gender and industrialisation, urbanisation and the growth of the middle class that incited its creation were also occurring across the British Empire, including Australia, and in the USA.¹¹¹ This changing social climate affected middle-class women greatly, as they campaigned for and were granted greater social freedoms, political rights and access to education and employment, thus challenging the previous social norm of angelic models of womanhood.¹¹² These newly emerged progressive notions of womanhood presented a radical challenge to prior assumptions about women’s roles and place within society.¹¹³ Charlotte Rich observes that “the ‘new woman’ replaced the purity, piety, domesticity, and obedience [of the dominating ‘angel in the house’ figure] with a mode of womanhood committed to women’s social, political and sexual equality.”¹¹⁴ The stereotypical ‘new woman’ had received a university-level education, believed that women should be permitted to work in occupations that were previously only open to men, and often chose to be employed in welfare-related fields that would improve society.¹¹⁵ She was not, however, a singular and unified figure, instead representing a range of diverse and sometimes contradictory ideals. In literature and the media, the ‘new woman’ was variously educated, physically active, assertive, voted, worked outside the home, dressed practically, and desired a marriage of mutual respect and shared responsibility, if she desired marriage at all.¹¹⁶ These diverse representations did, however, have a unifying aspiration – more freedoms for women than were currently permitted in society.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁸ Willis, "Homes are Divine Workshops," 183.

¹⁰⁹ Jill Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: The Historical Construction of Femininity in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 87; Alison Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom: Professional Women and the Reshaping of Personal Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21; Reiger, "Women's Labour Redefined," 81; Willis, "Homes are Divine Workshops," 183.

¹¹⁰ Lyn Pykett, *The "Improper" Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), 137-38; Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, *Framed: The New Woman Criminal in British Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 8-11; Charlotte J. Rich, *Transcending the New Woman: Multiethnic Narratives in the Progressive Era* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 7.

¹¹¹ Rich, *Transcending the New Woman*, 7-8.

¹¹² Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Fiction: Women Writing First-Wave Feminism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 4; Chris Willis and Angelique Richardson, "Introduction," in *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-De-Siècle Feminisms*, ed. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), 1; Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, "Marie Corelli's British New Woman: A threat to empire?," *The History of the Family* 14, no. 4 (2009): 416.

¹¹³ Crozier-De Rosa, "Marie Corelli's British New Woman," 419; Martha H. Patterson, "Introduction," in *The American New Woman Revisited: A Reader, 1894-1930*, ed. Martha H. Patterson (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 1; Rich, *Transcending the New Woman*, 1.

¹¹⁴ Rich, *Transcending the New Woman*, 2.

¹¹⁵ Rich, *Transcending the New Woman*, 1.

¹¹⁶ Margaret Beetham and Ann Heilmann, "Introduction," in *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism, and International Consumer Culture, 1880-1930*, ed. Margaret Beetham and Ann Heilmann (Florence: Routledge, 2004), 1; Ann Heilmann, "The New Woman in the New Millennium: Recent Trends in Criticism of New Woman Fiction," *Literature Compass* 3, no. 1 (2006): 32; Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers*, 1-2; Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 54; Crozier-De Rosa, "Marie Corelli's British New Woman," 419-20; Patterson, "Introduction," 1-2; Rich, *Transcending the New Woman*, 1; Barbara Caine, *Victorian Feminists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 249.

¹¹⁷ Caine, *Victorian Feminists*, 249; Crozier-De Rosa, "Marie Corelli's British New Woman," 419-20; Patterson, "Introduction," 1-2.

While it was initially a literary construct, the term 'new woman' came to be applied to actual women who advocated for varying degrees of feminist reform, ultimately becoming an imagined symbol of the newly emerging freedoms and opportunities that became available to middle and upper-class women at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹¹⁸ The term came to be applied to women who were viewed (negatively) as socially and sexually transgressive, anti-social, anti-domestic and socialist.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, the 'new woman' was also a figure associated with the maternal feminist movement. These women, who included the Deakin sisters, aimed "to achieve social and political power by reinventing rather than rejecting their domestic role," and participated in campaigns for social and moral reform that would improve the nation.¹²⁰

The rebellious and transgressive 'new woman' figure received copious criticism in the media. Opponents believed that she represented a threat to the existing social and natural order and should, therefore, be strongly discouraged.¹²¹ Women who embraced greater social and economic freedoms, especially in regard to intellectual opportunities, political engagement, physical activity and movement into previously male-dominated areas, were condemned for their disruption and their challenges to the pervading discourse on marriage, motherhood and family.¹²² In critical media portrayals they were represented as possessing masculine traits and habits, including wearing neckties and glasses, owning guns, smoking cigarettes, reading academic books, and wearing academic robes and judges' gowns. They were also portrayed as preferring to exist in public, masculine spaces rather than marrying and running a household, and as travelling abroad, participating in male-dominated drawing rooms and hunting for game.¹²³ Critics across the British Empire believed that by devoting themselves to anything other than family, women were abandoning their duty to further the future of the Empire. They also argued that, if they produced children, they would be weak both physically and mentally.¹²⁴ This idea was also prevalent in the context of White Australia, where concerns regarding racial degradation featured prominently in national discourses.¹²⁵ Given their perceived rejection of middle-class, 'civilised' feminine ideals, and representing the threat of

¹¹⁸ Miller, *Framed*, 7-8; Willis and Richardson, "Introduction," 12, 28.

¹¹⁹ Sally Ledger, *The New Woman. Fiction and feminism at the fin de siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 6; Lyn Pykett, "Foreword," in *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin-De-Siècle Feminisms*, ed. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), xii; Willis and Richardson, "Introduction," 12.

¹²⁰ Willis and Richardson, "Introduction," 9, 11.

¹²¹ Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 14; Tina O'Toole, *The Irish New Woman* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), 3; Pykett, *The "Improper" Feminine*, 140.

¹²² Beetham and Heilmann, "Introduction," 2-3; Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers*, 2.

¹²³ Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers*, 1-2; Miller, *Framed*, 8-11.

¹²⁴ Crozier-De Rosa, "Marie Corelli's British New Woman," 420; Cecily Devereux, "New Woman, New World: Maternal Feminism and the New Imperialism in the White Settler Colonies," *Women's Studies International Forum* 22, no. 2 (1999): 175; Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 40-41.

¹²⁵ Jane Carey, "'Not Only a White Race, but a Race of the Best Whites': The Women's Movement, White Australia and Eugenics between the Wars," in *Historicising Whiteness: Transnational Perspectives on the Construction of an Identity*, ed. Leigh Boucher, Jane Carey, and Katherine Ellinghaus (Melbourne, Vic: RMIT Publishing in association with the School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne, 2007), 162; Jane Carey, "'Women's Objective – A Perfect Race': Whiteness, Eugenics, and the Articulation of Race," in *Re-Orienting Whiteness*, ed. Leigh Boucher, Katherine Ellinghaus, and Jane Carey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 183-84; Henry Reynolds and Marilyn Lake, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008), 142-43; Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Carlton North, Vic: Scribe, 2005), 8-9.

‘modernity’, some commentators even argued that the new woman was “a danger to ‘civilisation’ and therefore to British imperialism.”¹²⁶

Debates about the ‘new woman’ in Australia manifested themselves a little differently than in Britain.¹²⁷ They produced the literary trope of the ‘Australian girl’ who, Michelle J. Smith believes, can be regarded as a counterpart to the British ‘new woman’ figure in popular literature and the periodical press.¹²⁸ Notable examples of the ‘Australian girl’ appeared in literature written by women, including Catherine Martin’s *An Australian Girl* (1890) and Miles Franklin’s *My Brilliant Career* (1901).¹²⁹ In a similar manner to the ‘new woman’, in reality it was impossible to embody all of the numerous, sometimes contradictory characteristics that made up the ‘Australian girl’. These included intelligence, common sense, independence, self-determination, and sexual autonomy, both inside and outside marriage. She also represented the potential for a new gender order in which women could move outside the domestic sphere. She was commonly portrayed as riding bicycles, smoking cigarettes, dressing practically (including wearing trousers), and being physically active and health conscious.¹³⁰

The ‘Australian girl’ was a counterpart of the British ‘new woman’, but she was not simply a regional manifestation of her. Tanya Dalziell has stated that taking “such a position would risk overlooking the ways in which ‘Australian girl’ romances were much preoccupied with specific settler anxieties over race, class, sexuality and colonialism that are played out through the trope of the ‘Australian girl’.”¹³¹ As the country approached Federation, the ‘Australian girl’ came to represent an idealised and desired model of womanhood, whose characteristics were linked with eugenic principles and upholding the aim of the White Australia movement to create a strong population of white citizens who were able to defend the nation.¹³² The White Australia policy was introduced immediately following Federation and was comprised of a legislative and administrative measures that worked in collaboration to restrict non-European immigration to Australia and create a “sovereign, modern, white

¹²⁶ Crozier-De Rosa, "Marie Corelli's British New Woman," 416; Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers*, 2; Miller, *Framed*, 8-11.

¹²⁷ Crozier-De Rosa, "Identifying with the Frontier," 45; Susan Magarey, "History, Cultural Studies, and Another Look at First-Wave Feminism in Australia," *Australian Historical Studies* 27, no. 106 (1996): 104; Gillian E. Skyes, "The New Woman in the New World: Fin-de-Siècle Writing and Feminism in Australia" (Doctor of Philosophy University of Sydney, 2002), 119, The University of Sydney.

¹²⁸ Tanya Dalziell, *Settler romances and the Australian girl* (Fremantle, W.A: UWA Press, 2004), 2-3; Janet Lee, *Fallen Among Reformers: Miles Franklin, Modernity and the New Woman* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2020), 4; Michelle J. Smith, "The ‘Australian Girl’ and the Domestic Ideal in Colonial Women’s Fiction," in *Domestic Fiction in Colonial Australia and New Zealand*, ed. Tamara S. Wagner (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 76-77.

¹²⁹ Crozier-De Rosa, "Identifying with the Frontier," 38; Tanya Dalziell, "As Unconscious and Gay as a Trout in a Stream?: Turning the Trope of the Australian Girl," *Feminist Review*, no. 74 (2003): 20; Lee, *Fallen Among Reformers*, 1, 4; Magarey, "History, Cultural Studies, and Another Look at First-Wave Feminism in Australia," 105; Susan Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001), 44-45.

¹³⁰ Crozier-De Rosa, "Identifying with the Frontier," 45; Magarey, "History, Cultural Studies, and Another Look at First-Wave Feminism in Australia," 104, 08; Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists*, 42; Penny Russell, "Recycling Femininity: Old Ladies and New Women," *Australian Cultural History*, no. 13 (1994): 31; Sharyn Pearce, "The best career is matrimony": First wave Journalism and the ‘Australian Girl’," *Hecate* 18, no. 2 (1992): 65-66; Skyes, "The New Woman in the New World," 28, 121-22, 24; Smith, "The ‘Australian Girl’ and the Domestic Ideal in Colonial Women’s Fiction," 75-76.

¹³¹ Dalziell, "As Unconscious and Gay as a Trout in a Stream?," 20-21. See also Christopher Lee, "The Australian Girl Catches the First Feminist Wave," *Hecate* 19, no. 1 (1993): 125.

¹³² James Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The story of Australian immigration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 8, 10; Skyes, "The New Woman in the New World," 120-21; Smith, "The ‘Australian Girl’ and the Domestic Ideal in Colonial Women’s Fiction," 76-77; Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 157.

British nation-state."¹³³ This policy received wide acceptance within Australian society and was supported by all sides of Australian politics, including by Alfred Deakin, who, in his role as Attorney-General in the 1901 parliament, voiced his belief in the importance of the policy.¹³⁴

The 'Australian girl' was linked with ensuring white Australia's racial supremacy and became an ideal 'mother of the race' figure. These figures represented the possibilities and potential of an improved Australian race that a commitment to whiteness and the superior Australian environment provided. They also held the responsibility for raising the next generation of Australian citizens.¹³⁵ It has been argued that the ideal of the 'mother of the race' relegated women to the domestic sphere and to remaining the 'angel in the house'.¹³⁶ Jane Carey, however, shows how the women's movement used racial discourses associated with the White Australia policy and the task of combating racial degradation to further their reforming ambitions in the public sphere.¹³⁷ These pervasive racial discourses represented a significant opportunity for women to extend their presence and influence beyond the home, and the Australian women's movement capitalised on this.¹³⁸ While encouraging women to take advantage of the emerging freedoms for women associated with progressive notions of womanhood, the Australian women's movement framed them in a way that was not radical or transgressive. Instead, they presented the expansion of women's spheres of interest in a manner that was rooted in domestic and female concerns and was being undertaken for the good of the nation and 'race'. This reshaping of the 'new woman' into the less controversial and radical 'mother of the race' thereby created an acceptable movement and sphere of public influence in which conservative women, including the Deakin sisters, could participate.

The Deakin sisters came of age in a period when the enduring ideal of the 'angel in the house' increasingly came into conflict with the emerging 'new woman'. In this thesis, I demonstrate how a close focus on individual women provides important new insights into the impact of these conflicting ideals, especially how women negotiated the expectations associated with angelic ideals of womanhood, and the freedoms associated with socially progressive notions of womanhood. In chapter one I demonstrate how these conflicting ideals influenced Alfred's parenting and his 'testament' for his daughters, thus providing insights into Australian middle-class family life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the remainder of the thesis, I expose how Ivy, Stella and Vera negotiated these conflicting expectations of women in their adult lives, both before and after marriage.

Women in Early Twentieth-Century Australia

A significant body of scholarship examining early twentieth-century Australian women's history already exists. Many of these works reveal the ways that women in this period were constrained by traditional ideals of

¹³³ Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia*, 7.

¹³⁴ Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera*, 11; Reynolds and Lake, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, 130-31, 37.

¹³⁵ Pearce, "'The best career is matrimony,'" 4; Skyes, "The New Woman in the New World," 123; Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia*, 13.

¹³⁶ Carey, "'Not Only a White Race, but a Race of the Best Whites,'" 162.

¹³⁷ Carey, "'Not Only a White Race, but a Race of the Best Whites,'" 162-63; Carey, "'Women's Objective – A Perfect Race,'" 183-84; Jane Carey, "'Wanted! A real white Australia': The women's movement, whiteness and the settler colonial project, 1900-1940," in *Studies in Settler Colonialism: Politics, Identity and Culture* ed. Fiona Bateman and Lionel Pilkington (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 122.

¹³⁸ Carey, "'Women's Objective – A Perfect Race,'" 193.

womanhood, and how they engaged with socially progressive notions of womanhood. These works examine women's activities in areas including paid and unpaid work, both inside and outside the domestic sphere, philanthropic work, and their increased mobility, including overseas travel. They also shed further light on women's previously overlooked contributions to these fields.

My research extends our understanding of how Australian women negotiated patriarchal systems and norms to create a space for themselves in a male dominated public realm. In the nineteenth century, Australian women were deprived of political, civil and economic rights, both before and after marriage.¹³⁹ In response to this, the so-called first-wave feminist movement, also known as the 'woman movement' and which was ideologically linked to the 'new woman', emerged in the 1880s.¹⁴⁰ The women's movement became a major political force across the Australian colonies and was primarily concerned with improving the status of married women, who were unable to own property, did not possess custody of their own children or have bodily autonomy, but also to improve the working conditions and pay of working women.¹⁴¹ In order to rectify these issues, first-wave feminists argued that white women's status needed to be elevated, especially in regard to their position and abilities as mothers.¹⁴² They then turned their focus to campaigning for women's suffrage in the various Australian colonies and the approaching federated nation.¹⁴³ In Victoria, where the Deakin sisters lived, the women's movement was initially concerned with the high levels of sexual violence, especially in Melbourne. It was believed that this had resulted from the failure of state authorities to implement measures to protect women adequately.¹⁴⁴ Victoria was also the site of a significant canvassing event in 1891, by feminist figures including Vida Goldstein (1869–1949), in which a petition containing 30,000 signatures in support of women's suffrage was presented to the Legislative Chamber, but this ambition would not be achieved in the state until 1908.¹⁴⁵

The Australian women's movement was influenced by the nation's settler-colonial origins and the subsequent White Australia policy. By placing white women's responsibility as the 'mother of the race' at the forefront of their claims to suffrage, Marilyn Lake argues that "the Woman Movement placed itself self-consciously in the vanguard of the mission to establish white civilisation in Australia. Feminists' identity as British, civilised and white provided the crucial underpinnings for their assumed rights as reformers."¹⁴⁶ The women involved in the Australian suffrage movement advocated for the vote, independence and freedom, arguing that "until [white] women had a share in making the laws they obeyed, and in imposing the taxes they paid, there would be little possibility of ameliorating their subordinate position."¹⁴⁷ Leaders also argued that women's unique skillset and

¹³⁹ Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 1999), 3.

¹⁴⁰ Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists*, 4; Audrey Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia: A gift or struggle?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 15; Smart, "Modernity and Mother-Heartedness," 51; Katie Spearritt, "New Dawns: First Wave Feminism 1880-1914," in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed. Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 325.

¹⁴¹ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 19; Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia*, 18-19.

¹⁴² Lake, *Getting Equal*, 3-5.

¹⁴³ Patricia Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation: 1788-1990* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1996), 185.

¹⁴⁴ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 23.

¹⁴⁵ "Goldstein, Vida Jane (1869–1949)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 11 July, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/goldstein-vida-jane-6418>; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 24.

¹⁴⁶ Lake, *Getting Equal*.

¹⁴⁷ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 22; Spearritt, "New Dawns," 332.

perspective made them worthy of a political voice and representation, and that without their contributions, Australian society would be held back.¹⁴⁸

The Australian suffrage movement was highly influenced by the women's suffrage movements in Britain and the USA, but it achieved its aims in a more rapid and less militant fashion than their British and American counterparts.¹⁴⁹ Both the British and American movements originated in the 1840s, and were concerned with improving the status of women within marriage and the workforce through gaining political influence and the vote.¹⁵⁰ The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, which would go on to play an influential role in the Australian suffrage and maternal feminism movements from the 1880s, also originated in the USA, and played a prominent role in the campaign for suffrage.¹⁵¹

White women's suffrage was achieved in Australia over a decade or so, and was not a homogenous movement, with women's suffrage groups present in every colony.¹⁵² Women in South Australia were permitted to vote from 1894, in Western Australia from 1899, New South Wales from 1902, Tasmania from 1903, Queensland from 1904, and Victoria from 1908. White women were permitted to vote in federal elections from 1902. Australia, therefore, became the second country to grant women the vote, after New Zealand in 1893.¹⁵³ While white women were granted the federal vote in 1902, it was specifically denied to 'alien' women and Indigenous women in Western Australia and Queensland, where they had not been previously granted suffrage. This decision ensured that most Indigenous Australians were denied the right to vote.¹⁵⁴

While the Australian women's movement was generally united in its efforts to attain women's suffrage, after it was achieved, the movement quickly diversified in its interests, opinions, and political viewpoints.¹⁵⁵ The efforts of these groups in the post-suffrage era can, however, largely be grouped under the term 'maternal feminism'. According to Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, maternal feminism combined "a Victorian sense of duty and a feminine sense of domestic and philanthropic purpose."¹⁵⁶ The maternal feminist movement was rooted in the concept of 'separate but equal'. Women were encouraged to extend their domestic duties beyond the home and into the public sphere, where they could use their unique role and skillset as literal and spiritual mothers to improve society, with

¹⁴⁸ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 22, 28.

¹⁴⁹ Patricia Grimshaw, "Reading the Silences: Suffrage Activists and Race in Nineteenth-Century Settler Societies," in *Women's Rights and Human Rights: International Historical Perspectives*, ed. Patricia Grimshaw, Katie Holmes, and Marilyn Lake (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 33; Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia*, 4, 15, 18. The British women's suffrage campaign lasted over sixty years and the American women were granted the vote over seventy years after the advent of their women's movement.

¹⁵⁰ Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia*, 8, 11.

¹⁵¹ Grimshaw, "Reading the Silences," 34-36; Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia*, 8, 15. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union campaigned for the prohibition of alcohol and for individual self-restraint from drinking in order to improve society. See "The National Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Australia (1891 -)," The Australian Women's Register, 2004, accessed 24 August, 2022, <https://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0993b.htm>.

¹⁵² Patricia Grimshaw, "A White Woman's Suffrage," in *A Woman's Constitution?: Gender & History in the Australian Commonwealth*, ed. Helen Irving (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1996), 80.

¹⁵³ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 27; Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia*, 15.

¹⁵⁴ Grimshaw, "A White Woman's Suffrage," 78; Grimshaw, "Reading the Silences," 31-32, 43-44; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 28. The Commonwealth Franchise Act of 1902 specifically prohibited Aboriginal Australians, Asians, Africans, and Pacific Islanders, excluding those from New Zealand, from having their name placed on the electoral roll. See Grimshaw, "A White Woman's Suffrage," 78.

¹⁵⁵ Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, 196.

¹⁵⁶ Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, "Citizen of Australia ... citizen of the world: An Australian new woman's feminist and nationalist vision," *Lilith* no. 17/18 (2012): 28.

a particular focus on assisting women and children.¹⁵⁷ The motivations of maternal feminism were strongly aligned with the ambitions of the 'new woman'. While the 'new woman' was seen by its critics as a sign of racial decline due to women's departure from the domestic sphere, the maternal feminist reshaping of it into the 'mother of the race' removed the 'new woman's radical anti-maternal ideas and maintained pre-existing gender roles.¹⁵⁸ Cecily Devereux notes that the 'mother of the race' "demanded education, the vote, and a hand in the running of the nation and empire, not for the New Woman's putatively self-serving ends, but for the good of 'the race'."¹⁵⁹

This shift allowed for middle and upper-class married women, including those who were conservatively minded, to move beyond the narrow domestic destinies that were previously prescribed for them by taking advantage of their newly gained "social and political power by reinventing rather than rejecting their domestic role" for the betterment of the nation.¹⁶⁰ They were able to take advantage of their exalted status as 'mothers of the race' to conduct extensive public philanthropic work that focused on social and moral reform.¹⁶¹ The maternal feminist movement was also successful "in justifying a separatist culture, which gave women the support system to remain single and devote their time and energy to reform causes or to professional careers rather than to families."¹⁶² Maternal feminism, therefore, allowed women to expand their participation in public and political life and take on a position of greater responsibility as moral guides in the creation of the newly emerging Australian nation.¹⁶³

Australian activists became concerned with achieving reforms that strongly aligned with maternal feminism. These reforms aimed to emphasise women's unique position as mothers, equate their work both inside and outside the home as being equal to men's, and acknowledge their unique ability to improve society.¹⁶⁴ Maternal feminists believed that all women, regardless of social class and national culture, shared common interests.¹⁶⁵ Marilyn Lake asserts that the major achievement of Australian post-suffrage feminists was the creation of a maternalist welfare state.¹⁶⁶ She argues that:

Post-suffrage feminists promoted a distinctive political agenda – the provision of state 'protection' for the most vulnerable and oppressed members of society, especially women and children. As maternalists, they formulated the idea of the welfare state and were, perhaps, the first political voices to do so.¹⁶⁷

¹⁵⁷ Crozier-De Rosa, "Citizen of Australia ... citizen of the world," 28; Heather Green, "The Rise of Motherhood: Maternal Feminism and Health in the Rural Prairie Provinces, 1900-1930," *Past Imperfect* 20 (2017): 49; Michael Wielink, "Nationalism, Suffrage & Maternal Feminism: Race, Gender & Religion," *The General* 2 (2017): 99-100.

¹⁵⁸ Devereux, "New Woman, New World," 175, 77; Green, "The Rise of Motherhood," 59.

¹⁵⁹ Devereux, "New Woman, New World," 178.

¹⁶⁰ Willis and Richardson, "Introduction," 9.

¹⁶¹ Green, "The Rise of Motherhood," 49.

¹⁶² Marlene LeGates, *In their time: A history of feminism in Western society* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 249.

¹⁶³ Devereux, "New Woman, New World," 177-78; Green, "The Rise of Motherhood," 48-49.

¹⁶⁴ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 53; Shurlee Swain, Patricia Grimshaw, and Ellen Warne, "Whiteness, maternal feminism and the working mother, 1900-1960," in *Creating White Australia*, ed. Jane Carey and Claire McLisky (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2009), 214.

¹⁶⁵ Marilyn Lake, "Feminism and the gendered politics of antiracism, Australia 1927-1957: From maternal protectionism to leftist assimilationism," *Australian Historical Studies* 29, no. 110 (1998): 94.

¹⁶⁶ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 49.

¹⁶⁷ Lake, "Feminism and the gendered politics of antiracism," 94.

Activists sought to achieve social and moral reforms, including granting married women and children increased protections, access to higher education, and temperance.¹⁶⁸ These reforming efforts included the introduction of maternal and infant welfare services, the establishment of children's courts, the creation of campaigns for child and motherhood endowment, raising the age of consent, and increasing the number of women employed in nurturing and welfare-focused fields, including medicine, the police force, and as factory inspectors. Feminists believed that women needed to secure a greater presence in public life and state bureaucracy, which would both reverse their subordinate status and help achieve their objectives. They also believed that their unique skillset was required in broader social reform measures, especially those concerning women and children.¹⁶⁹ This view stemmed from the belief that "only women understand the special interests of women and children, both in the community and the home."¹⁷⁰ The ultimate aim of these measures was to craft a prosperous new nation, built "upon all that is righteous."¹⁷¹

The women's movement was complicit in upholding the racial structure of White Australia and were prominent supporters of the policy.¹⁷² Ensuring the health and future of the white Australian race was a primary concern of the women's movement in the post-suffrage era. They appropriated the valorised image of the 'mother of the race' to task women with the duty of caring for and improving the white race as a whole.¹⁷³ The Australian women's movement therefore took on the duty of combating the perceived degeneracy of the white race that stemmed from the working classes, thereby enabling women to take on a greater public presence for themselves.¹⁷⁴ In order to combat the threat posed by the working classes, numerous social reform campaigns were enacted that primarily aimed to reform working-class children. These measures were linked to the belief that these children's bodies were vulnerable and that it was of the utmost importance that they be reformed to ensure the health, fitness and survival of the white race.¹⁷⁵ These beliefs enabled women to take on positions of authority in the public sphere by conducting both philanthropic and professional work, including the establishment of kindergartens, supervised playgrounds, medical services, and domestic science and hygiene campaigns, all of which were seen to play an important role in improving Australia's racial health.¹⁷⁶ The women's movement certainly subscribed to the ideas about white racial degeneracy that were pervasive in Australian society in the post-suffrage period.

¹⁶⁸ Miriam Dixon, "Gender, Class, and the Women's Movements in Australia, 1890, 1980," in *Australian Women: New Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Ailsa Burns and Norma Grieve (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), 17; Richard J. Evans, *The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America, and Australasia, 1840-1920* (London: Routledge, 2013), 62; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 4-5; Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists*, 3; Spearritt, "New Dawns," 339-40, 47.

¹⁶⁹ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 58-59.

¹⁷⁰ Rose Scott quoted in Smart, "Modernity and Mother-Heartedness," 56.

¹⁷¹ Rose Scott quoted in Smart, "Modernity and Mother-Heartedness," 56; Angela Woollacott, "Australian Women's Metropolitan Activism: From Suffrage, to Imperial Vanguard, to Commonwealth Feminism," in *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation and Race*, ed. Ian Christopher Fletcher, Philippa Levine, and Laura E. Nym Mayhall (Oxon: Routledge, 2000), 207.

¹⁷² Carey, "'Not Only a White Race, but a Race of the Best Whites'," 167.

¹⁷³ Devereux, "New Woman, New World," 178; Green, "The Rise of Motherhood," 48-49, 53.

¹⁷⁴ Carey, "'Not Only a White Race, but a Race of the Best Whites'," 162-63; Carey, "'Women's Objective – A Perfect Race'," 183-84, 93-94; Carey, "'Wanted! A real white Australia'," 124, 35.

¹⁷⁵ Carey, "'Not Only a White Race, but a Race of the Best Whites'," 163; Carey, "'Women's Objective – A Perfect Race'," 184, 93-94; Carey, "'Wanted! A real white Australia'," 131; Shurlee Swain and Margot Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire: Child rescue discourse, England, Canada and Australia, 1850-1915* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 4-5.

¹⁷⁶ Carey, "'Not Only a White Race, but a Race of the Best Whites'," 163; Carey, "'Women's Objective – A Perfect Race'," 184, 93-94; Carey, "'Wanted! A real white Australia'," 131.

The movement took advantage of these anxieties in order to create an enhanced public role for women comprised of both paid and voluntary social reform work.¹⁷⁷

In the post-suffrage period, especially during the 1930s, some feminists (who did not include the Deakin sisters) campaigned for Indigenous women to be granted increased rights and protections.¹⁷⁸ These included the reversal of the patriarchal system of 'Protection' by appointing women to advisory bodies and to roles including social workers and protectors to combat the violence, mistreatment and sexual abuse perpetuated against Indigenous women by white males and stopping the removal of children from their mothers.¹⁷⁹ Indigenous women were included in this maternalist vision of an ideal nation that recognised the nurturing and protective role that women played as 'mothers of the race'.¹⁸⁰ Some feminists believed, that like white women, they should receive "the protection of the law of the land ... and 'the rights common to other women, including the right to custody of their own children'."¹⁸¹ Despite the efforts of some feminists, the Australian women's movement overall showed little interest in the 'Aboriginal problem'. Rather, its primary concerns were linked to their specific responsibilities as 'mothers of the race' which were related to improving the health of White Australia and ensuring its future supremacy.¹⁸²

The aims of the women's movement to use social reform measures and women's status as 'mothers of the race' to improve Australian society was also associated with the emerging 'science' of eugenics. The term 'eugenics' was devised by British natural scientist, and Charles Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton in 1883.¹⁸³ Galton was influenced by Darwin's theory of natural selection, and applied it to craft a theory relevant to humans that he believed would give "the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable."¹⁸⁴ Eugenics grew in popularity from the 1880s, reaching peak interest in the 1920s, before coming under criticism from the scientific community in the 1930s.¹⁸⁵ The emergence and popularity of eugenics in countries such as Great Britain and the USA was associated with concerns about industrialisation and the urban

¹⁷⁷ Carey, "'Not Only a White Race, but a Race of the Best Whites'," 168; Carey, "'Women's Objective – A Perfect Race'," 193-94; Carey, "'Wanted! A real white Australia'," 135.

¹⁷⁸ Lake, "Feminism and the gendered politics of antiracism," 94-95; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 110-12; Fiona Paisley, *Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights 1919-1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2016), 1. See also Victoria K. Haskins, *One Bright Spot* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Alison Holland, *Just Relations: The story of Mary Bennett's crusade for Aboriginal rights* (Crawley: UWA Publishing, 2015); Anna Cole, Victoria K. Haskins, and Fiona Paisley, eds., *Uncommon Ground White Women in Aboriginal History* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005).

¹⁷⁹ Alison Holland, "The Campaign for Women Protectors: Gender, Race and Frontier Between the Wars," *Australian Feminist Studies* 16, no. 34 (2001): 27, 30, 34-35; Fiona Paisley, "No Back Streets in the Bush: 1920s and 1930s Pro-Aboriginal White Women's Activism and the Trans-Australia Railway," *Australian Feminist Studies* 12, no. 25 (1997): 121-22, 29; Paisley, *Loving Protection?*, 6-7. Patriarchal systems of 'Protection' included the removal of Aboriginal children and segregation and institutionalisation of Aboriginal people. See Paisley, *Loving Protection?*, 6.

¹⁸⁰ Holland, "The Campaign for Women Protectors," 32; Paisley, "No Back Streets in the Bush," 121-22, 32.

¹⁸¹ Lake, "Feminism and the gendered politics of antiracism," 95.

¹⁸² Carey, "'Not Only a White Race, but a Race of the Best Whites'," 166-67; Carey, "'Women's Objective – A Perfect Race'," 190; Carey, "'Wanted! A real white Australia'," 134.

¹⁸³ "Eugenics," *Britannica Academic*, 1998, accessed 7 March, 2022, <https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.uow.edu.au/levels/collegiate/article/eugenics/33201>. For more information regarding Frances Galton see: Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, ed. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4-6; Wendy Kline, *Building a better race: Gender, sexuality, and eugenics from the turn of the century to the baby boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 13; Stefan Kuhl, *For the Betterment of the Race: The Rise and Fall of the International Movement for Eugenics and Racial Hygiene* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2013), 11-12.

¹⁸⁴ Francis Galton quoted in Wilson, "Eugenics."

¹⁸⁵ Bashford and Levine, "Introduction," 4, 11.

poor, and fears of ‘race suicide’ associated with the declining birth rates of the middle class compared with those of immigrants and the working class.¹⁸⁶ Eugenacists offered biological explanations and scientifically based solutions to these issues, employing two key methodologies. Positive eugenics aimed to encourage increased reproduction among those characterised as ‘fit’; negative eugenics aimed to stop marriages and reproduction among those deemed to be of ‘defective stock’.¹⁸⁷ Eugenacists advocated for the removal of factors that were working against positive selection and the implementation of “a state-managed reproduction policy based on rational criteria.”¹⁸⁸ They ultimately aimed to populate society with stable, well-ordered, healthy and intelligent citizens, who were “able to contribute to the growth and development of the economy and to the defence of the nation – or Empire.”¹⁸⁹ Eugenacists believed this goal would be achieved through exerting influence and imposing regulation upon women and children throughout their childhood and adolescence.¹⁹⁰ Marriages needed to be made between men and women who were regarded as ‘good stock’, namely those who were white and from the middle and upper classes. These marriages would then produce children who would contribute to the future of the ‘race’. Those deemed ‘unfit’ would be restricted from having children.¹⁹¹ This required a shift in perspective from marriage being based on individual aspirations to being a racial duty, in order to produce children who were physically fit and possessed strong minds and could use both to ensure the strength of the nation.¹⁹²

In the Australian context, prior to World War I, eugenics was an influential idea amongst a small, educated, socially elite group, including Alfred Deakin, concerned with reforming Australian society.¹⁹³ This group aimed to protect White Australia from the perceived dangers of ‘racial decay’, which it was widely believed would result from increased breeding of the ‘unfit’ and ‘Asian invasion’, both of which threatened white supremacy and the creation of a utopian society populated by physically perfect citizens.¹⁹⁴ Stephen Garton writes that

eugenics was an influential discourse in colonial cultures saturated in anxieties about national fitness, racial decline, the threat of invasion, miscegenation, the fate of whiteness in the tropics, and the precariousness of European cultures perched so far from the metropolitan centre.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁶ Bashford and Levine, "Introduction," 6-7, 11; Kline, *Building a better race*, 2.

¹⁸⁷ Wilson, "Eugenics."

¹⁸⁸ Kuhl, *For the Betterment of the Race*, 13.

¹⁸⁹ Rob Watts, "Beyond Nature and Nurture: Eugenics in Twentieth Century Australian History," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 40, no. 3 (1994): 323.

¹⁹⁰ Carey, "'Not Only a White Race, but a Race of the Best Whites'," 163; Carey, "'Women's Objective – A Perfect Race'," 184; Carey, "'Wanted! A real white Australia'," 124; Watts, "Beyond Nature and Nurture," 326.

¹⁹¹ Kline, *Building a better race*, 2; Wilson, "Eugenics."

¹⁹² Kline, *Building a better race*, 2.

¹⁹³ Stephen Garton, "Sound minds and healthy bodies: Re-considering eugenics in Australia, 1914-1940," *Australian Historical Studies* 26, no. 103 (1994): 164, 80; Stephen Garton, "Eugenics in Australia and New Zealand: Laboratories of Racial Science," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, ed. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 243; Jennifer S. Kain, *Insanity and Immigration Control in New Zealand and Australia, 1860–1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 131; Watts, "Beyond Nature and Nurture," 330; Diana Hardwick Wyndham, "Striving for National Fitness: Eugenics in Australia 1910s to 1930s" (Doctor of Philosophy University of Sydney, 1996), 42.

¹⁹⁴ Carey, "'Women's Objective – A Perfect Race'," 183; Carey, "'Wanted! A real white Australia'," 135; Grant Rodwell, "'There are Other Evils to be Put Down': Temperance, Eugenics and Education in Australia, 1900-1930," *Paedagogica Historica* 34, no. 2 (1998): 187; Wyndham, "Striving for National Fitness," ii.

¹⁹⁵ Garton, "Eugenics in Australia and New Zealand," 243.

Eugenics offered a respectable and scientifically based solution to the racial anxieties that were present in Australian society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It presented solutions for the issues attributed to Australia's isolation, and offered ways for society to prosper and avoid the problems being faced by industrialised nations including Britain and the USA.¹⁹⁶

In this thesis, I will demonstrate that the White Australia policy and eugenics were significant factors in the lives of Ivy, Stella, and Vera. They were raised by a father who played a prominent role in the creation and promotion of the White Australia policy, and they were adults during the early decades of the twentieth century, when interest in eugenics was at its peak. While none of the Deakin sisters can be classified as being a eugenicist, eugenics was an influential factor in their lives, and they engaged with many commonly held eugenic viewpoints. Chapter one highlights its influence in Alfred's testament and his practical parenting. Chapters two and six demonstrate the influence of eugenics in Ivy's philanthropic work, especially for the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria – which focused on reforming 'degenerate' working-class children.

As mentioned above, all three sisters assumed significant public roles, and while none undertook paid work, voluntary philanthropic, charitable, and social reforming work formed significant components of their lives. Given that examinations of their various philanthropic activities form a major component of this study, this thesis expands what we know about the history of Australian women's philanthropic work. Chapters two and six reveal how Ivy used her executive-level voluntary positions to contribute to social reform efforts and simultaneously to give women greater influence and presence in public life. Even though the Deakin sisters did not undertake paid employment after marriage, the history of the development of philanthropic work into paid employment for women are relevant to their lives and voluntary work and inform the thesis's findings. In chapter three I examine Stella's (unfulfilled) ambitions to pursue a paid career in domestic science after marriage, despite the existence of 'marriage bars' that prevented married women from continuing to work, and strong social prescriptions against middle-class women engaging in paid employment.

Historians have made concerted efforts to expose that, despite societal expectations that women should exist solely in the domestic sphere and not participate in paid work, they have in fact been present in the public sphere and the paid workforce, albeit in a narrow range of occupations, since the nineteenth century.¹⁹⁷ It has been estimated that, in Melbourne, where the Deakin sisters lived, "by 1900 forty per cent of all women and nearly seventy per

¹⁹⁶ Carol Bacchi, "Evolution, Eugenics and Women: The Impact of Scientific Theories on Attitudes Towards Women, 1870-1920," in *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia, 1788-1978*, ed. Elizabeth Windschuttle (Sydney: Fontana/Collins, 1980), 136; Wyndham, "Striving for National Fitness," 19.

¹⁹⁷ Anderson, "Good Strong Girls," 228; Catherine Bishop, *Minding Her Own Business: Colonial Businesswomen in Sydney* (Sydney, N.S.W: NewSouth Publishing, 2015), 2-4; Catherine Bishop and Angela Woollacott, "Business and Politics as Women's Work: The Australian Colonies and the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Women's Movement," *Journal of Women's History* 28, no. 1 (2016): 92-93; Lake and Kelly, "Womanliness and Work: Change and Continuity in Female Labour," 257; Shurlee Swain, "The Historical Invisibility of the Working Mother: Australia 1880-1920," in *Double Shift: Working Mothers and Social Change in Australia*, ed. Patricia Grimshaw, John Murphy, and Belinda Probert (Beaconsfield, Vic: Circa, 2005), 88. Specific studies of Australian women's work in the early twentieth century include Georgine Clarsen, *Eat my Dust: Early Women Motorists* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Hannah Forsyth, "Reconsidering Women's Role in the Professionalisation of the Economy: Evidence from the Australian Census 1881-1947," *Australian Economic History Review* 59, no. 1 (2019): 55-79; Kathryn Hunter, *Father's Right-Hand Man: Women on Australia's Family Farms in the Age of Federation, 1880s-1920s* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2004); Justine Lloyd, "Women's Pages in Australian Print Media from the 1850s," *Media International Australia*, no. 150 (2014): 61-65; Clare Wright, *Beyond the Ladies Lounge: Australia's Female Publicans* (Carlton., Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2003).

cent of single women were in the (official) paid work force.¹⁹⁸ While women did complete paid work out of economic necessity, societal discourses related to the ideal of the ‘angel in the house’ were pervasive and led to the belief that women, especially those of the middle and upper classes, should devote themselves to marriage and motherhood.¹⁹⁹ As primary and secondary education improved, and women were admitted to universities in the late nineteenth century, middle-class women began to participate in the paid workforce in greater numbers, but only before marriage, because “the good married woman did not work.”²⁰⁰ Hannah Forsyth estimates that in 1911, “90 per cent of women in the labour force were unmarried.”²⁰¹ For middle-class women in this period, “paid work was [regarded as] an interlude before permanent domestic work where women would be ‘kept’ by their husbands for whom public work was a life-long activity.”²⁰² This view was reinforced by the 1907 Harvester judgement, which was presumed that men were breadwinners whose wage needed to be able to support a wife and children, and that women who worked had no financial dependents, and should therefore receive lower rates of pay.²⁰³ The rising numbers of women entering the workforce provoked expressions of social anxiety, especially regarding those, like Catherine Deakin, who chose not to marry. These expressions reflected anxiety that women were abandoning their essential roles within the home, as well as wider concern about the health of the ‘race’. It was argued that participation in the workforce led women away from their natural duties and would affect their ability to produce healthy children. Men also feared that employers would hire women over men due to their willingness to accept lower wages.²⁰⁴

While women engaging in paid employment raised concerns, performing philanthropy did not.²⁰⁵ Voluntary philanthropic work, such as that performed by Ivy and Vera in particular, was viewed as acceptably feminine, and appropriate for middle-class and elite women who had the time and resources to devote to it, contributing as it did to the improvement of society. There is a long history of middle and upper-class Australian women volunteering their time, energy, and money to contribute to, and work for, charitable, philanthropic and social reform organisations. Women’s involvement in these organisations enabled them to exercise power outside the domestic sphere and create careers for themselves, albeit comprised of full-time voluntary work.²⁰⁶

¹⁹⁸ Anderson, "Good Strong Girls," 236.

¹⁹⁹ Anderson, "Good Strong Girls," 236; Swain, "The Historical Invisibility of the Working Mother," 87.

²⁰⁰ Anderson, "Good Strong Girls," 242; Raelene Frances, "Shifting Barriers: Twentieth Century Women’s Labour Patterns," in *Gender Relations in Australia Domination and Negotiation*, ed. Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 246; Patricia Grimshaw, "Introduction," in *The Half-Open Door: Sixteen Modern Australian Women Look at Professional Life and Achievement*, ed. Sandra Simon, Lynne Strahan, and Patricia Grimshaw (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), 1; Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, 58; Lake and Kelly, "Womanliness and Work," 260; Theobald, *Knowing Women*, 10; Kay Whitehead, "Vocation, Career and Character in Early Twentieth-Century Women Teachers' Work in City Schools," *History of Education* 34, no. 6 (2005): 579.

²⁰¹ Forsyth, "Reconsidering Women's Role in the Professionalisation of the Economy," 63.

²⁰² Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, 60.

²⁰³ Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, 200-01; Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, 60.

²⁰⁴ Anderson, "Good Strong Girls," 236; Grimshaw, "Introduction," 5-6; Holmes, "'Spinsters Indispensable'," 78; Julius Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, 58; Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*, 7.

²⁰⁵ Throughout this thesis the term ‘philanthropic’ will be used to describe the wide range of voluntary work conducted for women’s political, charitable, philanthropic, and social reform organisations by the Deakin sisters throughout their lives. See Anne O’Brien, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), 1-9; Shurlee Swain, "From Philanthropy to Social Entrepreneurship," in *Diversity in Leadership: Australian Women, Past and Present*, ed. Joy Damousi, Kim Rubenstein, and Mary Tomsic (Canberra: ANU Press, 2014), 189-206.

²⁰⁶ Kathleen McCarthy, "Preface," in *Lady Bountiful Revisited. Women, Philanthropy, and Power*, ed. Kathleen McCarthy (New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), ix; McCarthy, "Parallel Power Structures: Women and the Voluntary Sphere," 1; Swain, "From Philanthropy to Social Entrepreneurship," 192.

The Deakin sisters participated in a long tradition of philanthropic work that, in Australia, commenced with the onset of settler-colonialism.²⁰⁷ Australian middle and upper-class women were involved in these endeavours from the earliest colonial period. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, philanthropic work in Australia was led by upper-class men and women who had emigrated from Britain and sought to adapt British models of charity to the Australian context.²⁰⁸ British institutions including “children’s hospitals, evangelical armies, city and medical missions, children’s clubs, women’s employment schemes and kindergartens were all transported from the ‘old’ to the ‘new’ world.”²⁰⁹ The women who sought to accomplish this included governors’ wives Eliza Darling (1798–1868) and Elizabeth Macquarie (1778–1835). Later, Caroline Chisholm (1808–1877) transplanted the Victorian values of “work, respectability, self-help and the voluntary principle,” and applied them to philanthropic work.²¹⁰ Philanthropy was seen to be a rational extension of women’s work and function within the home to be nurturing and motherly figures, and was consequently practised in this fashion in the public sphere.²¹¹ According to Judith Gooden, women were able to participate in philanthropy in four distinct ways. They could be inactive financial donors, independent workers, members of female auxiliaries of male-dominated philanthropic organisations, and members of philanthropic organisations established and run by women.²¹²

By the late nineteenth century, in conjunction with the emergence of the ‘new woman’, philanthropic work had become an important occupation for middle and upper-class Australian women. B. J. Gleeson reveals that women in nineteenth-century Melbourne who participated in philanthropic endeavours were able to challenge the notion of separate spheres and craft a presence in the public sphere that was shaped around the female-dominated realm of philanthropy.²¹³ Undertaking philanthropic work allowed women to occupy public spaces in a distinctly female manner and hold positions of power and authority. It also enabled them to challenge enduring societal beliefs that women, especially after marriage, should only exist in the domestic sphere.²¹⁴ In early twentieth-century Australia, the rise of socially progressive notions of womanhood, in association with achieving the federal vote in 1902 and political rights in each state by 1908, women’s philanthropic work was accorded a greater public profile and new women’s organisations and social groups proliferated. Women’s ability to participate in philanthropic work expanded and was given greater significance and recognition as the feminist aim of a maternalist welfare state came to fruition. This was also associated with the emerging belief that women’s unique skillset as mothers

²⁰⁷ O'Brien, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism*, 3.

²⁰⁸ Jenny Coleman, "Benevolent ladies and irrepressible busybodies: Contesting the bounds of 'genuine' philanthropy," *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 21, no. 9 (2014): 1078. See also Shurlee Swain, "Negotiating Poverty: Women and Charity in Nineteenth-Century Melbourne," *Women's History Review* 16, no. 1 (2007): 99-112.

²⁰⁹ Judith Godden, "British models and colonial experience: Women's philanthropy in late nineteenth century Sydney," *Journal of Australian Studies* 10, no. 19 (1986): 41.

²¹⁰ "Macquarie, Elizabeth Henrietta (1778–1835)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 9 July, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/macquarie-elizabeth-henrietta-2418>; Godden, "British models and colonial experience," 41; "Chisholm, Caroline (1808–1877)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 9 July, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/chisholm-caroline-1894>; Anne O'Brien, "Charity and Philanthropy," *Sydney Journal* 1, no. 3 (2008): 21; Melanie Oppenheimer, *Volunteering: Why We Can't Survive Without It* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008), 17-18; "Darling, Lady Eliza (1798–1868)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed 9 July, 2022, <https://peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/biography/darling-lady-eliza-19490>.

²¹¹ Godden, "British models and colonial experience," 40-41.

²¹² Godden, "British models and colonial experience," 40.

²¹³ B. J. Gleeson, "A Public Space for Women: The Case of Charity in Colonial Melbourne," *Area* 27, no. 3 (1995): 194.

²¹⁴ Gleeson, "A Public Space for Women," 194; Godden, "British models and colonial experience," 40, 45, 49-50; Barbara Lemon, "In Her Gift. Activism and Altruism in Australian Women's Philanthropy 1880-2005" (Doctor of Philosophy University of Melbourne, 2008), i; O'Brien, "Charity and Philanthropy," 21.

qualified them over men to run philanthropic organisations and institutions that assisted women and children.²¹⁵ In this period, benevolent and church-based organisations attracted participation from thousands of women and became the primary source of assistance for women and children until World War II.²¹⁶

Despite limitations, including marriage bars, women began to move into 'white collar' professions associated with the aims of the women's movement, including the fields of education, health, and social welfare, in the early twentieth century.²¹⁷ Resulting from societal freedoms associated with the 'new woman' and maternal feminism, especially greater access to higher education, women were increasingly able to participate in professional employment in areas that were previously dominated by female philanthropists.²¹⁸ This resulted in the philanthropic sphere now being comprised of women, like the Deakin sisters, who operated within older models, in which their work was characterised as being a component of the duty of the upper classes to assist those less fortunate, and a new generation of female university graduates, who used their qualifications in fields including social work as the basis of their claims to participation and leadership.²¹⁹ The women's movement embraced the professionalisation of philanthropy through the introduction of qualified social workers.²²⁰ Women's organisations advocated for the important contributions that professional women could make to the maternal welfare state in areas including health, education, social welfare and social reform, arguing that their expertise in the emerging field of social science would bring increased authority to the movement's racial improvement efforts.²²¹ Anne O'Brien writes that:

The well-to-do leaders of the National Council of Women welcomed the 'special contribution' that professional women could make to medicine, public health, education and the new profession of social work. They became advocates, using deputations, written submissions and reports to modernise and reform home and society according to rational and scientific principles.²²²

This thesis provides insights into how the Deakin sisters took advantage of the increased societal freedoms associated with the 'new woman' and the power and authority in the public sphere that stemmed from first-wave feminism, particularly maternal feminism. My exploration of the Deakin sister's work with organisations variously concerned with women's social advancement, philanthropy, and social reform, including the National Council of Women, the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria, the Australian Red Cross, the Women of the University Patriotic Fund, and the Women of the University Fund extends our knowledge about philanthropy and gender in Australian history.

²¹⁵ Godden, "British models and colonial experience," 47.

²¹⁶ Lemon, "In Her Gift," i.

²¹⁷ Anderson, "Good Strong Girls," 242; Helen Jones, *In Her Own Name: Women in South Australian History* (Cowandilla: Wakefield Press, 1986), 162-83. For specific examinations of female teachers in the twentieth century see Whitehead, "Vocation, Career and Character in Early Twentieth-Century Women Teachers' Work in City Schools," 579-97; Whitehead, "The Spinster Teacher in Australia from the 1870s to the 1960s," 1-17; Kay Whitehead and Stephen Thorpe, "The Function of Age and the History of Women's Work: The Career of an Australian Teacher, 1907-1947," *Gender & History* 16, no. 1 (2004): 172-97.

²¹⁸ Swain, "From Philanthropy to Social Entrepreneurship," 191.

²¹⁹ Swain, "From Philanthropy to Social Entrepreneurship," 191-92; Jane Carey, "A Transnational Project? Women and Gender in the Social Sciences in Australia, 1890-1945," *Women's History Review* 18, no. 1 (2009): 45-46.

²²⁰ Swain, "From Philanthropy to Social Entrepreneurship," 196.

²²¹ Carey, "A Transnational Project?," 51-53; O'Brien, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism*, 100.

²²² O'Brien, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism*, 100.

A Word about Mobility

Due to technological advances the opening of new social freedoms, privileged women in early twentieth-century Australia had greater opportunities for mobility – a factor that certainly coloured the lives of the Deakin sisters, as each travelled within Australia and to Europe and the USA numerous times during their lives. Angela Woollacott writes that, between 1890 and 1940, tens of thousands of middle and upper-class Australian women travelled to, and resided in London.²²³ Women travelling to London during this period were not perceived as transgressing the boundaries of femininity, and during the twentieth century more Australian women travelled to London than men. This can be attributed to the recognition within Australian society that travelling to London was an accepted cultural ritual for women (and, to an extent, men) that included a component of ‘finishing’ their social and cultural education.²²⁴ By 1911 there were “23,000 Australian-born residents of England and Wales, of whom 13,000 were women.”²²⁵ During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, England continued to be regarded by many in Australia as ‘home’. Therefore, travel to London in in this period was infused with a quality of pilgrimage and cultural acceptance.²²⁶

London represented numerous possibilities to women, many of which were unavailable to them in Australia. It allowed them to pursue their aspirations and opportunities in fields including art, music, publishing, law, science, medicine, social reform, education, politics and theatre, without being viewed as overly ambitious or transgressive. In fact, it was widely accepted that if a man or woman displayed talent, they should travel to the London metropole to take advantage of opportunities that were not available to them in Australia.²²⁷ In addition to pursuing professional and educational advancement, Australian women travelled to London for many other reasons. These included to participate in the social season, shopping, tourism, both within the city and as a base for wider exploration of Great Britain and Europe, to visit relatives, to accompany and support their husbands while they participated in work and study, and to make pilgrimages to sites of significant inherited cultural memory, ancestry and historical significance.²²⁸ The Deakin sisters engaged with the freedoms associated with

²²³ Angela Woollacott, "'All This Is the Empire, I Told Myself': Australian Women's Voyages 'Home' and the Articulation of Colonial Whiteness," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 4 (1997): 1004; Angela Woollacott, "The Colonial Flaneuse: Australian Women Negotiating Turn-of-the-Century London," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 25, no. 3 (2000): 768; Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 3-5.

²²⁴ Ros Pesman, *Duty Free: Australian Women Abroad* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7; Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 6; Angela Woollacott, "Australian Women in London: Surveying the Twentieth Century," in *Australians in Britain: The Twentieth-Century Experience*, ed. Carl Bridge, Robert Crawford, and David Dunstan (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2009), 3.1-3.3.

²²⁵ Woollacott, "Australian Women in London," 3.3.

²²⁶ Carl Bridge, Robert Crawford, and David Dunstan, "More than just Barry, Clive and Germaine: An overview of Australians in Britain," in *Australians in Britain: The Twentieth-Century Experience*, ed. Carl Bridge, Robert Crawford, and David Dunstan (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2009), 1.3; Pesman, *Duty Free*, 5; Woollacott, "'All This Is the Empire, I Told Myself'," 1003; Woollacott, "The Colonial Flaneuse," 761; Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 4-5.

²²⁷ Woollacott, "Australian Women in London," 3.2-3.3.

²²⁸ Stephen Alomes, *When London Calls: The Expatriation of Australian Creative Artists to Britain* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, and Woollacott Woollacott, "Introduction," in *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700-Present*, ed. Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, and Angela Woollacott (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 9; Pesman, *Duty Free*, 9; Meg Tasker, "'The sweet uses of London': The careers 'abroad' of Louise Mack (1870-1935) and Arthur Maquarie (1874-1955)," *Portal* 10, no. 1 (2013): 2; Woollacott, "'All This Is the Empire, I Told Myself'," 1003; Woollacott, "The Colonial Flaneuse," 768; Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 4-5; Woollacott, "Australian Women in London," 3.2. While not imbued with the same cultural connection as Great Britain, Australian women in this period also travelled to the United States of America to pursue educational opportunities not available to them in Australia. See Anne Rees, "'Bursting with new ideas': Australian women

mobility during their lives. They travelled for numerous reasons, including pursuing educational opportunities unavailable in Australia, to conduct philanthropic work and to act as a supportive presence for their husbands. In documenting their movements, this thesis contributes to further understandings of individual women's motivations to, and experiences of, travel during the twentieth century.

Chapter Outlines

This thesis on the lives of the Deakin sisters represents a collective examination of their upbringing and public lives. I begin with an analysis of the influence of the sisters' father, Alfred Deakin, during their upbringing, through his 1890 testament and his hands-on parenting. In the subsequent three chapters I examine the Deakin sisters' lives and activities in the early decades of the twentieth century. Together, these chapters demonstrate the differing ways that they took advantage of newly emerged freedoms associated with the 'new woman' and how they were constrained by limitations associated with their social class and traditional expectations of womanhood. In the final two chapters I examine the Deakin sisters' philanthropic work during World War II and the post-war reconstruction period. They reveal how, through their voluntary work, each advocated for a developing understanding of womanhood, encouraging women to contribute to post-suffrage social reform efforts associated with maternal feminism. These efforts would ultimately result in women gaining an increased presence and influence within society, which would lead to a more prosperous and peaceful Australia.

In chapter one I examine how the tensions between the characteristics and expectations of the 'new woman' and 'angel in the house' that shaped lives of the Deakin sisters began in their childhoods, and largely stemmed from the powerful influence of their father. An examination of the extraordinary 'testament' for his daughters written by Alfred in 1890 and his practical parenting will reveal his attitudes to the 'new woman', angelic ideals and eugenics as he attempted to determine which conception of ideal womanhood he wished them to embody. Ultimately, the chapter demonstrates how he crafted his own conception of ideal womanhood that blended qualities associated with all three of these ideals.

Chapter two details Ivy's engagement with socially progressive notions of womanhood between 1901 and 1937. In her early life Ivy was a classically trained violinist and had a successful orchestral career. After her marriage to Herbert Brookes in 1905, Ivy did not conform to societal expectations and retreat into the home. Instead, she continued her musical career and subsequently committed herself to extensive philanthropic work, taking on powerful leadership positions. The chapter presents three case studies of her work with the Liberal Party, the National Council of Women of Victoria and the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria. In each I explore how Ivy used freedoms associated with the 'new woman' and her privileged social standing to advocate for social reforms connected with the post-suffrage 'woman movement', and how in doing so she rejected the domestic destiny that her father and wider society had expected her to occupy. Finally, the chapter demonstrates how, despite Ivy's active public life, she encountered limitations associated with her gender and social class.

professionals and American study tours, 1930-1960," *History Australia* 13, no. 3 (2016): 382-98; Anne Rees, "Travelling to Tomorrow: Australian Women in the United States, 1910-1960" (Doctor of Philosophy Australian National University, 2016).

In chapter three I examine Stella's life between 1904 and 1911. Stella was a representative figure of the unmarried 'new woman' in her early life, becoming one of the first women to study chemistry at the University of Melbourne. Stella also defied her parent's wishes and travelled to Europe to complete postgraduate studies. Prior to her marriage to David Rivett in 1911, Stella intended on continuing her scientific research or establishing a career in domestic science during marriage. After marriage, despite her rebellious youth, due to circumstances beyond her control – including the expectations of her father and husband – and ill health, she was prevented from pursuing her ambitions. Stella instead became a representative figure of her social class – a devoted wife, mother, and social hostess, and no longer engaged in scientific work or study.

In chapter four I investigate Vera as an Australian 'new woman' figure between 1904 and 1919. Before the outbreak of World War I, Vera conducted advanced musical education in Australia and Europe. A pivotal period for Vera and her legacy occurred during World War I, when she defied her father's wishes and travelled to Cairo to commence voluntary work for the Australian Red Cross as head of the WMIB. I detail how she crafted her own conception of womanhood that blended the feminine quality of empathy with freedoms associated with progressive ideals, including leadership positions. I also demonstrate how Vera used the prestige and social connections associated with the Deakin family name successfully in her work. Ultimately, in this chapter I establish how each of these factors enabled Vera to work in a position that was inaccessible to most Australian women and run an important organisation that brought comfort and closure to thousands of families.

Chapter five moves forward to the Deakin sisters' lives and activities in another transformational period of Australian history – World War II. I examine how each of the Deakin sisters occupied positions of leadership in philanthropic organisations, including the National Council of Women of Victoria, the Australian Comforts Fund, the Women of the University Patriotic Fund, and the Victorian branch of the Australian Red Cross Society, in which they encouraged and facilitated women's contributions to the war effort. I also demonstrate how, while content to perform their wartime work in an unpaid capacity for organisations that initially encouraged women to participate in traditional forms of wartime work, as the war progressed, they championed a developing understanding of womanhood and appropriate work for women in wartime. Ivy and Stella, especially, promoted women's increased roles and responsibilities, especially in terms of undertaking paid work in previously male-dominated industries, receiving equal pay and access to childcare facilities.

Chapter six reveals how in the post-war period the Deakin sisters, as politically conservative older women, continued to champion ideals associated with maternal feminism that they had developed decades earlier. Through examinations of Ivy's continued leadership within the National Council of Women and the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria, Stella's support of women in science and her continued work with the Women of the University Patriotic Fund, and Vera's work for the Red Cross, this chapter provides insights into how they continued to use their influence to advocate for social reforms associated with the power of women as mothers to improve society and reform children. The chapter thus exposes their continued engagement with ideals associated with first-wave feminist ambitions. It reveals that these efforts were far more successful and radical than previous historiography has recognised, thereby bringing to light the work of women in the twentieth century who have previously been rendered benign.

Ultimately, this thesis presents a collective biography of the Deakin sisters that highlights the impact of the 'new woman' era over the course of their lives. It is one of the few studies to examine the longer-term impact of the 'new woman' over the course of women's whole lives. The application of the gender paradigms of the 'angel in the house' and the 'new woman' provide significant insights into how individual elite women experienced the new opportunities associated with the 'new woman' and first-wave feminism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and how they negotiated their identities as females between the eras of women's suffrage and Women's Liberation. My examination of the lives of the Deakin sisters exposes the diverse ways that women, both before and after marriage, negotiated and embraced evolving conceptions of womanhood between these two prominent 'waves' of feminism and how they enabled them to move beyond the domestic lives that were prescribed to the generations that preceded them.²²⁹ Importantly, this thesis will expose the longstanding influence of maternal feminist ideas in the Australian women's movement into the 1950s. Ultimately, this thesis highlights the lives and work of these three women previously rendered benign by the historical tendency to focus on the 'radical' feminists of the 1970s Women's Liberation era.

In the following chapter I examine the Deakin sisters' childhoods, demonstrating how the tensions between the 'angel in the house' and 'new woman' that shaped their lives began in their childhoods and largely stemmed from the influence of their father, Alfred.

²²⁹ Recent literature has begun to complicate the feminist 'wave' metaphor that is now seen to obscure the continuity of feminist activism during the twentieth century. See for example Astrid Henry, *Not My Mother's Sister : Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 4; Lake, *Getting Equal*; Kathleen A. Laughlin et al., "Is It Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Waves Metaphor," *Feminist Formations* 22, no. 1 (2010): 76-135; Linda Martin Alcoff and Alison Stone, "Series Foreword," in *Reading, Feminism, and Spirituality*, ed. Dawn Llewellyn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), ix; Jo Reger, "Finding a Place in History: The Discursive Legacy of the Wave Metaphor and Contemporary Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 43, no. 1 (2017): 193-221.

Chapter One: Crafting a New Conception of Womanhood

There will be many to whom you can give light, hope, and comfort, but it will only be when you have fitted yourself for such work by setting your standard high; by spurning the cheap and gaudy and facile display of worldly life and by living from day to day in the faith of good works done and to be done without thought of anything but the good of those around you that you will elevate yourselves, rejoice your mother, your loving father, and your God. – Alfred Deakin, 1890 Testament¹

In July 1890, Australian politician and future Prime Minister Alfred Deakin entered a period of profound reflection and contemplation, during which he attempted to determine how his daughters, then aged seven and four, should best live their lives. This time of consideration resulted in the production of a highly detailed ten-page document in which Alfred provided his guidance and opinions on matters including careers, marriage, motherhood, health, fitness, and religion. Alfred's testament reveals unique and deeply personal insights into his conflicted beliefs as to the role of women in Australian society. They show that he struggled to come to a decision as to whether his daughters should embody the traditional ideal of the 'angel in the house' or the emerging 'new woman', as well as being influenced by both his strong religious beliefs and engagement with the new 'science' of eugenics. Ultimately, Alfred's testament applied elements associated with each of these concepts to craft his own conception of perfect womanhood. It was this blended 'ideal' that shaped how his daughters were raised. He allowed and supported his daughters to experience the freedoms of the 'new woman' regarding education and paid work prior to marriage, but after marriage he expected them to live devoted, home-centred lives and attract no public recognition. This was an instruction, as the following chapters demonstrate, the Deakin sisters largely ignored.

Ivy, Stella and Vera Deakin were raised by their father Alfred, mother Pattie and aunt Catherine at a time when ideals of womanhood were undergoing transformation. In the nineteenth century, Australian middle-class girlhood was framed around numerous expectations concerning how girls should conduct themselves, in both their childhoods and in preparation for their adult lives. From a young age, girls were expected to exhibit instinctive maternal desires, and it was generally assumed that marriage and motherhood would form the natural course of their lives.² During childhood, parents emphasised that their daughters should exhibit good moral conduct and live healthy, unselfish, sensible and well-ordered lives.³ At the same time, the model of the 'new woman', who possessed greater social and political awareness, and caused anxieties within society about the expansion of women's roles, was emerging.⁴ The childhoods of the Deakin sisters reflect the contested nature of this

¹ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

² Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*, 156-57; Linda Young, *Middle-Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century: America, Australia and Britain* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 26. For further information regarding late nineteenth century girlhood see Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (Oxon: Taylor and Francis, 2012); Ginger S. Frost, *Victorian Childhoods* (Westport: Praeger, 2009); Bernice McPherson, "A Colonial Feminine Ideal: Femininity and Representation," *Journal of Australian Studies* 18, no. 42 (1994): 5-17; Kristine Moruzi, *Constructing Girlhood Through the Periodical Press, 1850-1915* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2012), 12, 16; Kristine Moruzi and Michelle J. Smith, *Colonial Girlhood in Literature, Culture and History, 1840-1950* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

³ Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home*, 159.

⁴ Penny Russell, "A woman of the future? Feminism and conservatism in colonial New South Wales," *Women's History Review* 13, no. 1 (2004): 71-72, 79; Young, *Middle-Class Culture in the Nineteenth Century*, 72; Alys Eve Weinbaum et al., *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2008).

environment. The three major adult figures in their lives strongly shaped and influenced their upbringing. Contrary to longstanding beliefs as to the inactive role that fathers played in the domestic sphere during this period, and despite his significant workload and importance in Australian politics and the federation movement, Alfred played an extremely active role in their childhoods. Their mother, Pattie, while experiencing continual ill health, was responsible for her children's moral upbringing and training in the domestic arts. Their aunt Catherine, an independent woman who had chosen not to marry and supported herself financially, and who Alfred made responsible for their primary-level education, also influenced them strongly. Each of these childhood relationships were instrumental factors in the sisters' later lives.

This chapter contributes to literature on Australian fatherhood in the late nineteenth century and expands our understanding of the changing ways that middle-class girls were raised in the era of the 'new woman'. I first examine Alfred's efforts to remain a constant presence in his children's lives, despite his busy public life and political career. I then undertake an in-depth examination of Alfred's 1890 testament, in which he dictated his views about how his daughters should be raised and live their lives, revealing how he grappled with the often-opposing expectations of women associated with traditional angelic ideals and progressive beliefs. The chapter demonstrates how Alfred selected components associated with both of these notions, in order to craft his own perfect, idealised conception of womanhood that he expected his daughters to embody throughout their lives. As well as examining how Alfred negotiated these conflicting ideals, I show how his beliefs were reflected in his practical parenting of his daughters.

Fatherhood in Nineteenth-Century Australia

Historical examinations of fatherhood and men's roles within the family have not featured prominently in Australian or international historiography. There are, however, some notable exceptions. Historians including Johnny Bell, Michael Roper, John Tosh, Megan Dolittle, Claudia Nelson, Laura McCall, Donald Yacovone and E. Anthony Rotundo have contributed to scholarship in this area and provide enhanced understandings of the roles and activities of men in the domestic environment in the so-called West and as fathers in the nineteenth century.⁵ The neglect of fatherhood in historical scholarship has been attributed to the concept of 'separate spheres', in which it was assumed that men did not play an active role within the home, with women taking on the key responsibilities in the domestic sphere, especially those concerned with child rearing.⁶ As Claudia Nelson has put it, there has been, "a tendency to assume that the Victorian male only existed in his 'proper' place, the public sphere – that he had no meaningful role, and certainly no problematic role, to play at home."⁷ However,

⁵ E. Anthony Rotundo, "Patriarchs and Participants: A historical perspective on fatherhood in the United States," in *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by men on pleasure, power, and change*, ed. Michael Kaufman (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 64-80; Michael Roper and John Tosh, "Introduction. Historians and the Politics of Masculinity," in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, ed. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), 1-24; Claudia Nelson, *Invisible Men. Fatherhood in Victorian Periodicals, 1850-1910* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995); Laura McCall and Donald Yacovone, "Introduction," in *A Shared Experience: Men, Women and the History of Gender*, ed. Laura McCall and Donald Yacovone (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 1-18; Megan Doolittle, "Close Relations? Bringing Together Gender and Family in English History," *Gender and History* 11, no. 3 (1999): 542-54; Johnny Bell, "A Cultural History of Fatherhood in Australia, 1920-1980" (Doctor of Philosophy Monash University, 2017).

⁶ Anthony Rotundo, "Patriarchs and Participants," 68-69; Natalie McKnight, "Introduction: Undermining the Victorian Father," in *Fathers in Victorian Fiction*, ed. Natalie McKnight (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 1-2.

⁷ Nelson, *Invisible Men*, 2.

scholarship has demonstrated that by the late nineteenth century, acceptable embodiments and understandings of fatherhood were extremely diverse and the definition of the role of the father was actually complex and ambiguous.⁸ These works “have demonstrated that (mainly) middle-class men were more anxious and more caring – and even more involved in day-to-day childcare – than was compatible with a conception of the father’s role as that of a properly strict provider and nothing else.”⁹

In contrast to assumptions of their inactive and formal roles within the home, fathers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not conform to the rigid roles of provider for the family and inactive figure within the home. Within the home, they were able to be informal, intimate, affectionate, tender, and caring, while also being strict and stressing duty and deference to their children.¹⁰ In the Australian context, Johnny Bell has identified that while men’s roles in the domestic sphere have been examined only rarely, efforts to combat this have begun with works by Melissa Bellanta and Stephen Garton. These works examine Australian men, who, while maintaining active public lives and careers, also had an active domestic presence.¹¹ According to Bell,

while the literature in Australia has been more successful in identifying the meanings of domestic life within Australian masculinity, it is less developed in the task of embedding these meanings within a broader family dynamic, in working out how the roles of mothers and fathers have been negotiated, and in analysing what this has meant for the core business of family life: children.¹²

The following examination of Alfred Deakin’s committed approach to fatherhood thus has a wider significance in advancing understandings of middle-class fatherhood in late nineteenth-century Australia.

Reflections from Vera, in her oral history recorded in the 1970s, provide key insights into Alfred’s parenting style, revealing that he was not a rigid, inactive figure in the domestic environment, and rather, was an active presence in their lives.¹³ Alfred made great efforts to employ the notion of separate spheres to his advantage. He strived to keep his home life separate from his political work, thus, allowing him time to focus solely on his children and family while at home.¹⁴ Vera’s reflections of her childhood reveal that Alfred’s parenting did not align with previous assumptions of the inactivity of fathers within the home environment. She instead revealed that Alfred shared a close and affectionate, yet authoritarian, relationship with each of his daughters. She characterised him as being “a very strict disciplinarian, yet tremendously just” and as being “tremendously affectionate in an

⁸ Eleanor Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, "Domestic Fathers and the Victorian Parental Role," *Women's History Review* 15, no. 4 (2006): 551, 54.

⁹ Gordon and Nair, "Domestic Fathers and the Victorian Parental Role," 554.

¹⁰ Anthony Rotundo, "Patriarchs and Participants," 71; Gordon and Nair, "Domestic Fathers and the Victorian Parental Role," 551-59.

¹¹ Stephen Garton, "The Scales of Suffering: Love, Death and Victorian Masculinity," *Social History* 27, no. 1 (2002): 40-58; Melissa Bellanta, "A man of civic sentiment: The case of William Guthrie Spence," *Journal of Australian Studies* 32, no. 1 (2008): 63-76; Bell, "A Cultural History of Fatherhood in Australia," 6.

¹² Bell, "A Cultural History of Fatherhood in Australia," 12-13.

¹³ Vera Deakin White interviewed by Tom Harley, *Vera Deakin White interviewed by Tom Harley [sound recording] – Session 1 of 19, 1970-77*, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-217479701/listen?searchTerm=vera%20deakin> [accessed 11 April 2016]; Berenice Craig, "Lady Rivett’s Proud Memories," *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, 6th April 1966, 14-15; Anthony Rotundo, "Patriarchs and Participants," 71; Gordon and Nair, "Domestic Fathers and the Victorian Parental Role," 551-59.

¹⁴ Deakin & Harley, *Session 1 of 19*.

undemonstrative way.”¹⁵ Vera’s reflections demonstrate how Alfred responded to the developments in fatherhood in the late nineteenth century, acting as an authoritative, yet affectionate figure during his daughters’ childhoods.

Despite his busy political career, Alfred shared close bonds with each of his children. Vera stated that one of her earliest memories of her father was of a person who would come home late at night from parliament, and “if you were sick or sleeping, he would come into your bedroom to see if all was well and if it was not, he would sit and comfort you no matter the hour.”¹⁶ Stella and Vera also reflected that Alfred had made time to teach them sports including cricket and football, and that he would play hockey with them each morning, with Alfred and Vera playing against Ivy and Stella.¹⁷ Alfred would also read aloud to his daughters after every meal while on family holidays and every weekend while he was home. However, the girls would become annoyed at him because when he chose humorous books, he would read ahead and laugh at the jokes they had not heard yet.¹⁸ Another memorable aspect of the Deakin sisters’ childhoods was the plays they would perform for their family and household staff, especially when Pattie was ill. The plays were often written by Stella, but Alfred would have to approve the script before they were permitted to perform.¹⁹

Alfred’s commitment to fatherhood is demonstrated in the letters he wrote to his daughters during their childhood. These expressive and candid letters present a rare opportunity to access intimate and tender moments that Alfred shared with his children. Such intimacy is often difficult to access historically. They also offer unique insights into an overlooked area of Australian history, namely, the relationship between a father and his daughters. When he was required to travel for work, Alfred would make a concerted effort to remain in contact with them. When his daughters were too young to read, Alfred would send letters containing drawings of himself and them in a lively cartoon style, similar to those of British artist and illustrator Quentin Blake (1932-) (see Figure 1).²⁰ The earliest example that I have located of a letter written by Alfred is dated 14 July 1884, and was sent to his eldest daughter Ivy on her second birthday. Within this affectionate letter, he describes her as a “beautiful bud of life” and directs her to “smile at me, thus that I may see thee thus in my thoughts all day.”²¹ Alfred wrote many other letters to Ivy while she was a child, in which he professed his love for her and his regret that he was unable to spend more time with her.²²

¹⁵ Deakin & Harley, *Session 1 of 19*.

¹⁶ Deakin & Harley, *Session 1 of 19*.

¹⁷ Deakin & Harley, *Session 1 of 19*; Craig, “Lady Rivett’s Proud Memories,” 14.

¹⁸ Deakin & Harley, *Session 1 of 19*.

¹⁹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 1 of 19*; Deakin & Harley, *Session 4 of 19*.

²⁰ Letter from Alfred Deakin to Stella Deakin, undated, Papers of Catherine Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS4913, Box 3, Folder 16; Letter from Alfred Deakin to Stella Deakin, undated, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/89; “Blake, Quentin,” *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Children’s Literature*, 2006, accessed 8 January, 2021, <https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.uow.edu.au/view/10.1093/acref/9780195146561.001.0001/acref-9780195146561-e-0327?rskey=QYWegv&result=321>.

²¹ Letter from Alfred Deakin to Ivy Deakin, 14 July 1884, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/5.

²² Letter from Alfred Deakin to Ivy Deakin, 14 July 1886, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/11; Letter from Alfred Deakin to Ivy Deakin, 4 February 1887, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/33; Letter from Alfred Deakin to Ivy Deakin, 20 February 1887, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/34; Letter from Alfred Deakin to Ivy Deakin, 15 April 1887, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/46.

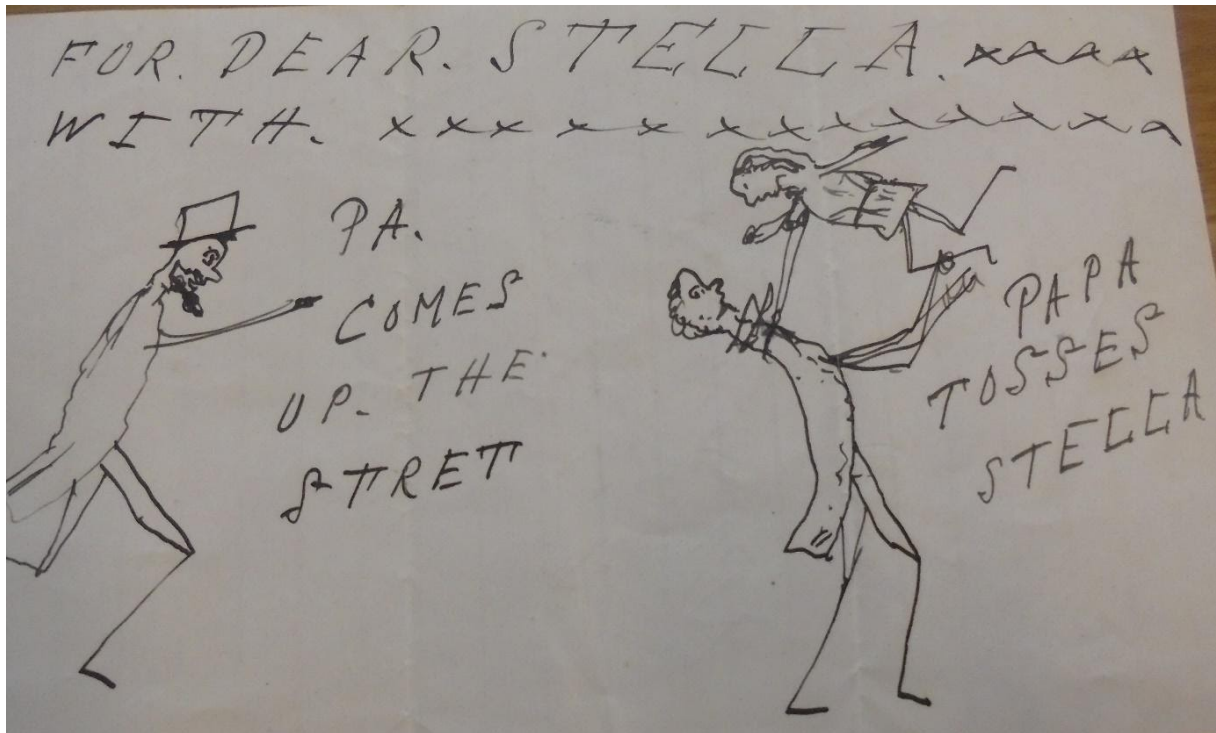


Figure 1. Letter from Alfred Deakin to Stella Deakin (undated).²³

Alfred continued to maintain contact with his children when he was required to travel overseas. These letters also demonstrate the nature of the division of labour between Pattie and Catherine. In 1887, he wrote to Ivy that:

she must tell him all she has learnt in school and hopes that Mama will be able to say that she has been a very good girl and that Aunt Katie will be able to say that she is getting to be a clever girl.²⁴

This reveals Alfred's delegation of important components of his children's upbringing to the two significant women in his life – his wife Pattie and sister Catherine. He made Pattie responsible for his children's domestic training and moral upbringing, and designated that Catherine, with her educational background, would be in charge of their academic education. Alfred also expressed high expectations of Ivy's educational progress. In 1888, when Ivy was less than five years old, he wrote to her that, "I received your letter in your own hand and was glad to read it."²⁵ In addition to academic performance, Alfred also had high expectations of Ivy's musical ability. He wrote to her stating his expectations for her to be practising regularly and to have improved in both her playing and ability to read music on his return.²⁶

²³ Letter from Alfred Deakin to Stella Deakin, undated, Papers of Catherine Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS4813, Box 3, Folder 16.

²⁴ Letter from Alfred Deakin to Ivy Deakin, 7 April 1887, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/44.

²⁵ Letter from Alfred Deakin to Ivy Deakin, 8 June 1888, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/59.

²⁶ Letter from Alfred Deakin to Ivy Deakin, 12 December 1889, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/62.

In addition to voicing his academic expectations of his children while away from home, Alfred used his letters to demonstrate his love for them and recount his activities. In 1886, when Ivy was four years old, Alfred travelled to California to investigate irrigation schemes. He wrote:

My darling Ivy, a little letter for a darling little daughter from her loving Papa who thinks of her and loves her when he is away, as well as when he is at home with her and playing with her.²⁷

In 1887, Alfred travelled to London to act as Victoria's representative at the Colonial Conference.²⁸ Alfred's letters to Stella and Ivy during this period recount his activities, especially on the voyage to London; he wrote to Ivy that "Papa is still on the big ship and is very tired of it."²⁹ During his absences, Alfred would continually reinforce his love for his daughters. In February 1887, he wrote to Ivy to reassure her that he could not "forget his dear Ivy though he often wishes she was here and that he might play with her and love her." He also wrote that "Papa does love her so much and wishes her to be a good and happy girl that it makes him so sad to think he cannot see her and have her on his knee."³⁰ In April 1887, while still overseas, Alfred wrote to Ivy, "this letter tells you that no one loves you more than your loving Papa."³¹ Alfred's letters written while away from his daughters expose insights into his conception of fatherhood. They demonstrate that he engaged with the widening of acceptable roles of fathers and that he was far from an inactive presence in the domestic sphere; indeed, he was an affectionate and involved figure in his children's lives, making sure to remain in contact even while travelling overseas.

Alfred's Testament for his Daughters

While researching the Alfred Deakin papers at the National Library of Australia, I came across an extraordinary document, namely a testament containing directives that Alfred wrote in 1890, mapping out his preferred life pathway for each of his daughters and providing comprehensive and specific advice in areas including religion, personality, conduct, education, work, marriage, and motherhood.³² Alfred began work on his testament in July 1890, when Ivy was seven and Stella was four, recording in his diary that he "had a long talk with P [his wife Pattie] about future preparations," and later prayed that he would be capable of "the discharge of my duties to my darling little ones and may make them earnest and sincere in their lives and in their knowledge and love of thee."³³ Over the course of three months, despite his busy political career, Alfred took the time to reflect deeply and write

²⁷ Letter from Alfred Deakin to Ivy Deakin, 14 July 1886, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/11; Norris, "Deakin, Alfred."

²⁸ Norris, "Deakin, Alfred."

²⁹ Letter from Alfred Deakin to Stella Deakin, undated, Papers of Catherine Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS4913, Box 3, Folder 16; Letter from Alfred Deakin to Ivy Deakin, 20 February 1887, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/34; Norris, "Deakin, Alfred."

³⁰ Letter from Alfred Deakin to Ivy Deakin, 20 February 1887, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/34.

³¹ Letter from Alfred Deakin to Ivy Deakin, 15 April 1887, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/46.

³² Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

³³ Alfred Deakin quoted in Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 170-71.

a ‘testament’ intended to guide his daughters from childhood to adulthood.³⁴ In September 1890, he printed a lengthy and comprehensive ten-page document that detailed his expectations and instructions for his daughters in numerous facets of life (see Figure 2).³⁵ Alfred’s testament provides further and invaluable insights into his devotion to fatherhood and to his daughters and his desire to record his opinions on their life course should he be unable to do so in person.

The production of such a detailed document was not a common activity for fathers during this period. Alfred’s testament drew upon the practice established in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by aristocratic fathers, including James VI and Sir Walter Raleigh, who produced conduct books with the aim of guiding the lives of their sons.³⁶ The only similar document to Alfred’s testament, where a father provides advice to his daughters, that I have come across was produced by Scottish physician, Dr John Gregory (1724-1773), whose book *A Father’s Legacy to His Daughters*, “takes the form of a sequence of letters of advice to his daughters, given his declining health, covering religion, conduct and behaviour, amusements and relationships with men including friendship, love and marriage.”³⁷ By the nineteenth century, when the Deakin sisters were experiencing their childhoods, this practice had ceased and had been replaced by conduct books written by middle-class women, including Isabella Beaton’s *Household Management*, with the intention of introducing young girls into the “cult of womanhood” where women were responsible for the majority of household duties, including parenting, and men were to exist in the public world of work and hold little influence within the domestic sphere, thereby further reinforcing the extraordinary nature of Alfred’s testament.³⁸ Alfred’s testament defied the prevailing ideology of separate spheres and the inactive role that fathers were viewed as playing within the home and both its production and preservation can be attributed to the Deakin family’s privileged status. The formal nature of the Alfred’s testament in both its appearance and tone lead to the conclusion that it was most likely included as an addendum to his will. However, I have been unable to locate a copy of the will to confirm this belief. There is also no evidence to confirm or deny that any of the Deakin sisters were aware of the content of Alfred’s testament, either after his death or during his life, however the instructions revealed in his letters to his children demonstrate that these views translated to his practical parenting.

³⁴ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

³⁵ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

³⁶ McKnight, "Introduction: Undermining the Victorian Father," 2.

³⁷ Melissa Terras and Elizabeth Crawford, eds., *Millicent Garrett Fawcett: Selected Writings* (London: UCL Press, 2022), 146.

³⁸ McKnight, "Introduction: Undermining the Victorian Father," 2.

In the event of my death I desire and earnestly request—

1. That my children be brought up religiously, but as far as possible apart from sectarianism—the knowledge and love of God, as the fountain of all life and love and power—“closer to us than breathing and nearer than hands and feet,” by Whom our prayers are always heard, and by Whom they may be answered materially and are always answered spiritually, and to Whom in all sincerity, humility, and devotion they should be taught to address themselves in daily supplication. They must conceive Him as best they can as a Person that is as a unity of Mind and Will; as possessing sympathies like but transcending our own; and as being governed absolutely by justice and by moral principles akin to ours. They may be enabled to learn much more than I have done of and from Him. Three things are certain—

1. God is Love—infinite, all-embracing, eternal.

2. God is a Spirit, though manifest in all nature and humanity, and specially in all life and mind.

3. God is our Father and our Mother, including all that in us is various or contradictory, or imperfect, complete and perfect to His perfection.

It is by no means certain that He is infinite in powers, though relatively to our weakness He may well appear to be so. There seems to be conditions of His being under which the existence of unnecessary and unprofitable pain and of malevolent qualities is determined contrary to His Divine Will. Of the ultimate triumph of His supreme power there can be no doubt; of the absolute purity and mercifulness of His Divine Will there can be no question, but of the present appearance in the world of a foreign and antagonistic element there is the clearest evidence. We find it within us and without us, and the great task of our lives and the deepest purpose of being is to reduce and subdue it. We require to take sides in life. We serve God, and for His sake sacrifice ourselves, our ambitions, our joys, our lives if requisite in that service, because it is His will and desire, because we love His Divine Nature, and because in so serving Him we minister to the pure and permanent happiness of our kind and of all living things to achieve which is the profoundest impulse in and from the Divine Nature. Love of God or love of our brothers and sisters, whose pitiable state is ever before us, both lead us to seek to live according to the Divine order and give us motives and aspirations far beyond those for mere personal gratification. To love God is to love Goodness as a power, a principle, and a person, and therefore to love our kind who exhibit that power and encourage us to observe that principle. To love man is to love the ideal, the perfect Man, Who, Divine beyond our comprehension and mighty beyond our conception, loves and inspires us with a love that seeks and can receive no personal reward—this is God. In God we live an infinite life and share in boundless powers, capacities, and felicities, all harmonious and harmonising, inspired and inspiring; loving and being loved. Apart from God life is selfish mainly and sensual mainly—narrow, hard, harsh, and discordant—although we are forced by the laws of life into a certain social order wherein contending forces are balanced and a surface co-operation secured. Sheer selfishness is hostility to all other life; it is isolation, exhaustion, and possible annihilation. Unselfishness without God is at best partial and spasmodic or despairing and ineffective. Without God there could scarcely be a Divine order conceived or a future life trusted in. Without something beyond us answering to the better impulse within, and without some confidence in the final success of the unselfish principle which we wish to obey, there is practically nothing to be hoped for or striven for. Without God and without immortality there can be no true or efficient morality from generation to generation, no task for the race, and no goal for it to attain. The spirit of

Figure 2. The first page of Alfred's testament (1890).³⁹

³⁹ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

The 'New Woman'

Alfred was clearly strongly influenced by new ideas of womanhood that were emerging at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While he did not wish for his daughters to become controversial 'new women' figures, Alfred did instruct that they should engage with some of the emerging opportunities for women outside the domestic sphere, specifically higher education and paid work, though only prior to marriage.⁴⁰ Alfred placed strong emphasis on his daughters receiving a high-quality education, stating: "I desire that the education of my children be of the best attainable and governed only by their means and abilities," with the ultimate goal of being able to attain a university degree. He also voiced his belief that they should "be qualified for some professional work by which they may be enabled to earn a livelihood."⁴¹

While Alfred instructed that his children should be educated at home until they were qualified to attend university (a directive examined later in this chapter), they were in fact sent to Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School (MCEGGS) for their secondary education.⁴² This decision was probably based on the ability of the school to prepare the Deakin sisters to successfully complete the university entrance exams. Completing secondary education at a private school was a privilege reserved for wealthy middle and upper-class families who could afford the cost of private tuition. The Victorian *Education Act of 1872* legislated that all children aged between six and fifteen were required to attend school and could access a free and secular education if their families could not afford private tuition at schools run by the Christian churches.⁴³ Attending MCEGGS offered the Deakin sisters greater opportunities to fulfil the educational expectations their father had enshrined in his testament. The school was founded in 1893 and was known as Merton Hall; it was purchased by the Church of England in 1902 and renamed MCEGGS.⁴⁴ During the twentieth century, churches made pioneering developments in the establishment of secondary schools for girls.⁴⁵ The Church of England's acquisition of Merton Hall signalled its evolution into a rigorous and academically focused girls' school. It aimed to encourage its pupils to strive for academic excellence and to take advantage of newly won freedoms such as access to university degrees, suffrage, and paid work in order to create social good.⁴⁶

The MCEGGS curriculum allowed the Deakin sisters to fulfil the wishes that Alfred had expressed in his testament that they "learn as much of science, art and philosophy as they have a taste for."⁴⁷ The 1907 Prospectus, published

⁴⁰ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁴¹ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁴² Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 56-57.

⁴³ B. Bessant, "Free, Compulsory and Secular Education: The 1872 Education Act, Victoria, Australia," *Paedagogica Historica* 24, no. 1 (1984): 5; Craig Campbell and Helen Proctor, *A History of Australian Schooling* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2014), 76.

⁴⁴ Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School, *Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School: History of the School, 1893-1928* (Melbourne: Ramsay Publishing, 1929), 5.

⁴⁵ Alan Barcan, *A History of Australian Education* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1980), 175.

⁴⁶ Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School, *The Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School Prospectus 1907* (Melbourne: Edgerton & Moore, 1906), 10; MCEGGS, *Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School*, 5; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 126; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 57.

⁴⁷ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

after Ivy and Stella had graduated from the school, specifies that students undertook compulsory studies in Scripture, Prayer Book, Church History, English Grammar and Literature, Elocution, History, Geography, French, German, Latin, Greek, Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Botany, Physiology, Elementary Drawing, Physical Training and Needlework.⁴⁸ Students were also able to complete special courses in subjects including Science, Singing, Violin, Plain Dressmaking and Cookery.⁴⁹ During the Deakin sisters' time at MCEGGS, they were immersed in a rigorous academic environment providing exposure to a wide variety of subjects, allowed to discover their intellectual passions, and prepared to undertake university studies.

A significant component of Alfred's testament was his instruction for his children to attend university. Women were admitted to study at Australian universities (the University of Sydney, University of Melbourne and University of Adelaide) from 1880, only a decade prior to Alfred creating his testament.⁵⁰ Australian women did not experience the same struggle to gain admission to university as women in Britain, because, as Alison Mackinnon notes, "the state-funded, secular institutions were less influenced by the conservative clergy and more responsive to arguments for increasing numbers."⁵¹ Women were praised in the media for participating in university studies and were identified as aspirational figures.⁵² Nonetheless, the participation of women in Australian university courses was limited to middle and upper-class women whose fathers often were members of the clergy, teachers or university professors, among other middle-class professions, and could afford tuition at private secondary schools, such as MCEGGS, that would prepare them to pass the qualifying matriculation exams.⁵³ Private girls schools were also an important component in the emerging trend among middle and upper-class families to send their children to secondary school to 'finish' them and equip them with the intellectual skills, language, style and confidence to be well-functioning members of their social class.⁵⁴

The Deakin sisters' secondary education at MCEGGS played an important role in preparing them to fulfil their father's wish for them to attend university. MCEGGS pupils were encouraged to strive for academic excellence and to pursue university studies when they completed their secondary education.⁵⁵ The 1907 Prospectus states that the school's curriculum was designed so that its students were "prepared for the Senior and Junior public examinations of the University of Melbourne, and the Sixth form is so conducted that its students pass from it

⁴⁸ MCEGGS, *The Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School Prospectus 1907* 10.

⁴⁹ MCEGGS, *The Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School Prospectus 1907* 4.

⁵⁰ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356; "Early Graduates," *The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2014, accessed 2 March, 2022, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0432b.htm>; Alison Mackinnon, "'The keystone of the arch': University education and the leadership of early women graduates," in *Seizing the Initiative: Australian Women Leaders in Politics, Workplaces and Communities*, ed. Rosemary Francis, Patricia Grimshaw, and Ann Standish (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 2012), 214; Katie Pickles, "Colonial Counterparts: The First Academic Women in Anglo-Canada, New Zealand and Australia," *Women's History Review* 10, no. 2 (2001): 274.

⁵¹ Mackinnon, "'The keystone of the arch'," 214; Megan McCarthy, "'We were at the beginning of everything.' The first women students and graduates of the University of Queensland," *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics* 5, no. 2 (2011): 37.

⁵² Mackinnon, "Early Graduates."; Mackinnon, "'The keystone of the arch'," 214.

⁵³ Carey, "Departing from their sphere," 93-94; Farley Kelly, "Learning and teaching science: Women making careers 1890-1920," in *On the Edge of Discovery. Australian Women in Science*, ed. Farley Kelly (East Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 1993), 40-43; Mackinnon, "Early Graduates."; Mackinnon, "'The keystone of the arch'," 214.

⁵⁴ Janet McCalman, *Journeyings: The Biography of a Middle-Class Generation 1920-1990* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1995), 113, 15.

⁵⁵ MCEGGS, *The Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School Prospectus 1907* 10; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 126.

fully prepared to enter a university course.”⁵⁶ Alfred’s desire for his daughters to attend university was progressive, especially because women were admitted to universities only a decade before the production of his testament. A university education was also the basis of the freedoms associated with middle-class employment and financial independence that Alfred wished for his daughters, especially prior to marriage.

Another important element of Alfred’s testament was his instruction for his daughters to pursue careers and be able to be financially independent, should they remain unmarried like Catherine. Alfred stated, “I desire, further, that they be qualified for some professional work by which they may be able to earn a livelihood.”⁵⁷ While Alfred dictated that his children should take on professional work, he did wish for them to follow their intellectual talents. He stated, “individual liking and individual potencies alone should exactly determine what paid work they should undertake,” and that “one intellectual passion should be embraced and mastered so as to secure a certain income, or else some business, such as that of a milliner, should be acquired.”⁵⁸ He did, however, express his views regarding teaching and medicine, specifying that “teaching is severe in its demands and poorly paid by reason of excessive competition.” Alfred’s rejection of teaching as an acceptable profession for his children may have stemmed from Catherine’s experiences of working professionally as a teacher. He did, however, express favourable views toward his children pursuing medicine. He stated, “If either of them have a taste for medicine they may know that I hold it to be one of the noblest occupations if practiced unselfishly and with an earnest mind.”⁵⁹ Alfred’s encouragement for his daughters to pursue medicine was a progressive belief in this period – it was not a common profession for women to pursue. This can be attributed to the wealth and social standing required to pursue university studies, and ingrained societal notions that were biased against women’s ability to be physicians.⁶⁰

Alfred’s instructions on employment ultimately stemmed from his belief that “financial independence is of greater importance to a woman than a man, and a free choice of life and of conditions of life is only certain when it is secured.”⁶¹ In other words, he did not want them to be forced to marry to ensure their financial security. In her later life, Stella reflected that Alfred would tell them his views as to the importance of financial independence for women, recalling that he would say, “my job is to provide for your mother, and you may have to fend for yourselves.”⁶² Alfred’s exposure to Catherine’s ability to be independent and financially support herself through teaching may have also influenced Alfred’s instruction for his children to participate in paid employment.⁶³ This wish was reinforced by his belief that it was “a thousand times preferable [...] not to marry at all than to marry in

⁵⁶ MCEGGS, *The Melbourne Church of England Girls’ Grammar School Prospectus 1907* 10.

⁵⁷ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁵⁸ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁵⁹ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁶⁰ “Medicine,” *The Encyclopedia of Women & Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Australian Women’s Archives Project, 2014, accessed 29 June, 2022, <https://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0133b.htm>. For further information regarding hostilities toward women in medicine see Farley Kelly, *Degrees of Liberation: A short history of women in the University of Melbourne* (Parkville: Women Graduates Centenary Committee, University of Melbourne, 1985).

⁶¹ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁶² Craig, “Lady Rivett’s Proud Memories,” 14.

⁶³ Harley, “Deakin, Catherine, Sarah.”; Rivett, “Deakin’s Confidante,” 46.

haste, in doubt, or for interest. Far better it is to die than to marry with the gross, the selfish, or the silly and weak.”⁶⁴

The ‘Angel in the House’, Domestic Life and Devotion to God

The Deakin sisters were forced to negotiate the fictional, and impossible to attain, ideal of the ‘angel in the house’ throughout their lives, beginning with Alfred’s 1890 testament. A significant portion of Alfred’s testament were devoted to advising his daughters on how religious belief would assist them in developing the spiritual qualities associated with angelic models of womanhood. Religion was of lifelong importance to Alfred, and the first seven of the ten pages of his testament were devoted to providing his daughters with religious advice. Alfred’s ideas of gender roles were influenced by the progressive leadership positions that women were able to take on within both the Spiritualist movement and the Australian Church.⁶⁵ As outlined in the Introduction, prior to the birth of his daughters, Alfred was deeply involved in the Spiritualist movement. However, by the time of Ivy’s birth in 1884, he had distanced himself from the movement and moved toward more conventional religious practices, while continuing to live a life of religious duty and devotion to God.⁶⁶ In 1886, the Deakin family joined the congregation of the Australian Church, led by Reverend Charles Strong, who aimed to lead a church that existed “in harmony with, and expressive of, the free, democratic and progressive spirit of Australia.”⁶⁷ Alfred expressed the belief that a relationship with God should be of the utmost importance in his children’s lives, stating, “the knowledge and love of God are the first essentials, therefore, which I desire for my children as the Being of their religion and the basis of their life and character.”⁶⁸ Alfred also expressed the belief that a religious life would imbue them with qualities including purity, being unselfish, thoughtful of others, self-sacrificing, compassionate, prudent and ultimately, “whenever possible making those around them happy and giving the best proofs of unselfish devotion.”⁶⁹ In his testament, Alfred emphasised his belief that his daughters should ultimately live home-centred lives, devoted to embodying the roles of daughter, sister, wife and mother that should come above all others.⁷⁰ These instructions were linked to the expectations of women within angelic models, which held that women were to possess a strong sense of religious morality and be their family’s moral guide.⁷¹

Alfred’s seemingly expansive vision for his daughters in terms of education and professional employment did not extend to their married lives, in which he wished for them to focus their time and attention on home and family.

⁶⁴ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁶⁵ Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 247; Saunders, "An Australian Pacifist."

⁶⁶ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 104, 57-58. For further information regarding Alfred’s involvement in Spiritualism see Bongiorno, "In this world and the next," 179-207; Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*; Gabay, *The Mystic Life of Alfred Deakin*; Gabay, "Alfred Deakin and the Sources of Inspiration," 19-32; Rickard, *A Family Romance*.

⁶⁷ Saunders, "An Australian Pacifist," 209-10.

⁶⁸ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁶⁹ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁷⁰ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁷¹ Christine Sutphin, "Ghosts and Angels in the House: Cecilia de Noel and the search for faith in the late nineteenth century," *Nineteenth-Century Gender studies* 12, no. 1 (2016); Anne Hogan and Andrew Bradstock, "Introduction," in *Women of Faith in Victorian Culture: Reassessing the Angel in the House*, ed. Anne Hogan and Andrew Bradstock (1998), 1, 4.

He also voiced his expectation that even if they did not marry, his children would lead home-centred lives, an instruction that lies in stark contrast to his encouragement for them to work professionally. He stated that he wished that his children, whether they married or not, would lead domestic-centred lives of:

no marked eminence, no public renown, but lives of secluded study, domestic duty, quiet cheerfulness, intellectual in cast and unselfish in end, such as shall ensure happiness to you and to all connected with you if undertaken with religious zeal, humility and constancy.⁷²

He further stipulated that “I desire the home to be the centre of their thoughts [and] enjoyments” and that “the home and self-developing, self-chastening and self-controlling spirit in it are sanctuary within sanctuary for the real life of religion, usefulness and unselfishness.”⁷³ The inconsistencies within Alfred’s testament further demonstrate his struggle to determine what conception of ideal womanhood he believed his children should strive to embody. They also highlight the enduring power of angelic models of womanhood, and the belief that women needed to focus all of their time and energy to ensuring that they created an ideal home for their husband and children.

While Alfred emphasised that his daughters should live domestically focused lives, he did, however, specify that he wished for them to participate in religiously motivated philanthropic work. Although this instruction signals that Alfred was willing for his daughters to extend their life experiences beyond the confines of the home and family, it did come with specific conditions. Alfred stipulated that before they could begin conducting philanthropic work, they must first ensure that all family duties had been fulfilled and that they display philanthropic virtues in the home. Once these duties had been satisfied, Alfred also specified who he deemed worthy of receiving charity.⁷⁴ He stated that:

The young, the sick, and the old are proper subjects for public charity. The reforms necessary to make this provision for the destitute and to secure the means of intellectual and moral nourishment for all are among the works of religious duty which my children may be able to assist.⁷⁵

Alfred’s religious advice to his daughters was primarily pertinent to their lives after marriage. While Alfred’s instructions signal his desire for them to lead traditionally home-centred lives in the domestic sphere, his encouragement for them to participate in philanthropic work does demonstrate that he was willing to expand the ideal outside the bounds of the home under very specific circumstances.

⁷² Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁷³ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁷⁴ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁷⁵ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

Alfred's desire that his daughters should ultimately live home-centred lives is also expressed in his instructions regarding their education and training. He wished for them to receive a high-quality education, but stipulated that they be taught at home until they were old enough to attend university, stating in his testament, "I desire that they attend no boarding school."⁷⁶ He also stated that he wished for them to be taught "all household duties and economies by their mother, Pattie, as thoroughly as she can teach them," including middle-class "woman's work [including] the making of their own dresses, garments and hats," and that it was only after they had learned these skills that they "may learn as much of science, art and philosophy as they have a taste for."⁷⁷

During her daughter's childhoods, Pattie's life seemingly accorded with the ideals associated with angelic models of womanhood. She was a supportive wife to Alfred, and mother to her three daughters, who she taught domestic skills including housekeeping and sewing.⁷⁸ As noted in the Introduction, Alfred later entrusted his children's primary-level education to his older sister Catherine, a decision which caused significant tension and conflict between Pattie and Catherine. Historians, including John Rickard, Judith Brett and Carole Woods, believe that this stemmed from Pattie's belief that Alfred had given Catherine undue influence and control over her daughters and that she was being sidelined as a mother.⁷⁹ Catherine had received a comprehensive education and had supported herself financially by teaching musical theory and practice from the early 1880s.⁸⁰ She taught each of the Deakin sisters a musically focused primary-level education that largely prepared them to embody the stereotypical image of the middle and upper-class woman performing music within the home.⁸¹ The Deakin sisters would travel to Catherine's home each morning, where they received an education with a focus on subjects including music and literature.⁸² In her oral history, Vera reflected on the education she and her sisters had received from Catherine. She recollected that Catherine would teach them every morning, and that she and her sisters regarded her as a very knowledgeable and natural teacher.⁸³ Carole Woods speculates that Catherine would have also taught the Deakin sisters "mathematics, French and geography," in order to follow Alfred's instructions to provide his children with a well-rounded, high-quality education that would ultimately prepare them to become well-educated companions for future husbands or self-sufficient single women, in a similar manner to their aunt Catherine.⁸⁴

Alfred's approach to his daughters' upbringing, education and religion reveal how he constructed a conception of womanhood that was a mixture of traditional and more modern ideas. He dictated that his daughters should receive

⁷⁶ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁷⁷ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁷⁸ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 168, 73; Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 72, 74-75; Rickard, "Deakin's ideal of the family," 66-67.

⁷⁹ For a detailed examination of the tensions between Pattie and Catherine and the relationships between Alfred, Pattie and Catherine during the Deakin sister's childhoods see Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 173; Langmore, "'My Cherished and Almost Perfect Wife'," 74-75; Rickard, "Deakin's ideal of the family," 66; Rickard, *A Family Romance*; Rivett, "Deakin's Confidante," 46; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 21, 54-55.

⁸⁰ Harley, "Deakin, Catherine, Sarah.,"; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 15-16; Rivett, "Deakin's Confidante," 45-46; Theobald, "The PLC Mystique," 251-52.

⁸¹ Anne Doggett, "Beyond Gentility: Women and Music in Early Ballarat," *History Australia* 6, no. 2 (2009): 1; Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*, 87.

⁸² Deakin & Harley, *Session 1 of 19*; Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 237; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 56.

⁸³ Deakin & Harley, *Session 1 of 19*.

⁸⁴ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 56.

a home-based education in typically female subjects, including music, literature and domestic tasks deemed acceptable for middle-class women. However, he was pragmatic and also wanted them to receive a university education to prepare them to live independently as self-sufficient professionals should they not marry. This extended so far as his 'radical' recommendation of medicine as a profession. Alfred's progressive views did not, however, encompass his daughters' lives after marriage; instead, he believed they should focus their attention on leading domestically centred lives that strongly resembled angelic models of womanhood.

Eugenics

The influence of eugenics is also evident in Alfred's testament, particularly in his instructions in reference to his daughters' physical fitness, choice of husband and religion, which he viewed as being compatible with science. The eugenic ideals of physical health and fitness feature prominently in Alfred's testament. Eugenicists, including Alfred, believed that physically fit and healthy citizens would improve the quality of the race and assist in preventing 'race suicide'.⁸⁵ Alfred directed that his children should be fit and athletic, but not excessively so, and that they should pay close attention to their health and diet, specifying that they were permitted to engage in physical activities including walking, tennis, horse riding and dancing, though not to an excessive degree.⁸⁶ Alfred stated that, "I desire my children to study their health increasingly, and encourage it by spare diet, regular and even exercise, simple habits, and perfect self-control."⁸⁷ He went on to specify that "vegetarianism scientifically varied serves many women best."⁸⁸ Alfred's emphasis on his daughters being fit and healthy is evident in Stella and Vera's reflections of their childhoods. Vera recalled that a healthy diet and exercise were always important to Alfred, and that they would run, skip, and play hockey and tennis.⁸⁹ Stella also recollected that, "he taught us cricket, hockey and even football. When we were at our house in Point Lonsdale, he took us climbing cliffs because he believed this developed our resource and character."⁹⁰

Alfred's instructions on marriage were also clearly influenced by eugenics. He believed that his children's choice of marriage partner was of supreme importance, stating, "marriage is a relation of such profound moment and of such enormous influence on life and mind that it should not be entered upon under the guidance of even the most exalted and impassioned feeling."⁹¹ Alfred outlined specific conditions that both his daughters and their prospective husbands had to satisfy before a union could be made. He dictated that they should be over the age of twenty-one and that they be engaged for at least a year before marriage. He also emphasised that during their engagement they should undertake "careful and prolonged self-examination" of the suitability of the match. He also directed that in choosing a husband "the character and morals of the husband be placed above all other

⁸⁵ Garton, "Eugenics in Australia and New Zealand," 243; Stephen Garton, "'Liberty of the Nation': Eugenics in Australia and New Zealand and the Limits of Illiberalism," in *Eugenics at the Edges of Empire. New Zealand, Australia, Canada and South Africa*, ed. Diane B. Paul, John Stenhouse, and Hamish G. Spencer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 21.

⁸⁶ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁸⁷ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁸⁸ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁸⁹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 1 of 19*; Deakin & Harley, *Session 3 of 19*.

⁹⁰ Craig, "Lady Rivett's Proud Memories," 14.

⁹¹ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

considerations, ability next, and position or wealth last.”⁹² The health of both parties proposing to be married was also of premier importance to Alfred. He stated that, “his health is a paramount condition, as is that of either of my daughters, for without it there should be no alliance.”⁹³ In order to secure the future of the race, eugenicists believed that suitable matches needed to be made in order to produce strong and healthy children.⁹⁴ Alfred’s instructions that his children should recognise the importance of marriage and seriously consider the health and character of their husbands reflect this influence.

Eugenics also influenced Alfred’s instructions concerning his daughters’ conduct after marriage and during motherhood. Despite Alfred’s belief that his children should be educated in case they did not marry and needed to support themselves financially, he ultimately desired that even then “the home to be the centre of their thoughts [and] enjoyments.”⁹⁵ As noted already, a fundamental tenet of eugenics was that women should populate the nation with ‘fit’ individuals who would ensure the future of the race.⁹⁶ In order to accomplish this, Alfred and other eugenicists believed that women needed to focus on their perceived domestic and reproductive duties and be ‘mothers of the race’. They believed that women needed to have fewer children than in preceding generations, which would allow them to focus on raising healthy and productive citizens who were able to contribute to the nation’s future.⁹⁷ He stated in his testament that:

the noblest function of woman is to bear [morally and physically] healthy children who are trained in justice and righteousness to elevate the world. It is a function to be carefully guarded from all abuse and to be exercised only to a limited extent in the interests of both children and parents.⁹⁸

If his daughters chose to marry, Alfred placed strong emphasis on them becoming mothers who would raise ‘fit’ children who would contribute to the future of the nation. This ambition would be accomplished by them receiving a rigorous high-quality education, choosing an appropriate husband, and subsequently devoting themselves to training and educating their children. Alfred’s testament also demonstrates his belief that religious duty was intertwined with eugenic principles that would lead to the betterment of the race. He believed that “without God and without immortality there can be no true or efficient morality from generation to generation, no task for the race, and no goal for it to attain.”⁹⁹

⁹² Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁹³ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁹⁴ Watts, "Beyond Nature and Nurture," 323.

⁹⁵ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁹⁶ Watts, "Beyond Nature and Nurture," 326.

⁹⁷ Carey, "'Not Only a White Race, but a Race of the Best Whites'," 162-63; Carey, "'Women’s Objective – A Perfect Race'," 184; Carey, "'Wanted! A real white Australia,'" 123-24.

⁹⁸ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁹⁹ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

The (New) ‘Angel in the House’

Alfred’s testament reveals his intense commitment to fatherhood. They outline his views and specific instructions for his children in facets of life including education, paid work, religion, marriage, motherhood and religious belief. They expose the intense process of negotiation that he underwent in selecting the ingredients of his ideal model of womanhood, which was based on both traditional and modernising ideals and possibilities, thereby reflecting Alfred’s own blend of old and new ideas in his own construction of fatherhood. On the one hand, Alfred can be regarded as a ‘modern’ man who embraced progressive ideals of fatherhood in his domestic life and wished for his daughters to pursue emerging opportunities for women outside the home. On the other hand, he was an economic and political conservative, who wished for his children to adhere to longstanding middle-class values of female domesticity, especially after marriage. Alfred’s testament reflects the wider tensions and concerns within society, especially among the middle classes, concerning ongoing female domesticity, and the new possibilities and opportunities outside the home that were emerging for women. They expose that he grappled with the ideas of the ‘angel in the house’ and the ‘new woman’ and was influenced by eugenics and his deep religious convictions, ultimately determining that his daughters should personify a conception of womanhood of his own creation that combined attributes associated with all of these movements. While it is unknown whether any members of the Deakin family ever viewed this document, evidence from Alfred’s letters to his children and his daughter’s own reflections’ on their childhoods reveal that many of the attitudes and instructions he expressed in his testament translated to his practical parenting. In the following chapters I examine how the Deakin sisters negotiated this complex and at times contradictory constellation of ideal femininity in their adult lives. The chapters reveal how the foundation laid during their childhoods – a high-quality education, familial encouragement to participate in activities outside the home prior to marriage, and the legacy of public service associated with the Deakin family name – allowed Ivy, Stella and Vera, to varying degrees, to move beyond the narrow domestic destinies prescribed by angelic models of womanhood, especially after marriage and motherhood.

Chapter Two: Ivy Brookes, Musician and Philanthropic Worker, 1901–1937

*While she might have been living a life of leisure and enjoyment of all that life has to offer to the woman of intellectual and artistic taste, [she] never finds her days too full to lend an ear to yet another appeal on behalf of others less fortunate than herself. – ‘Our Public Women. Mrs Herbert Brookes’, *The Australasian*, 12 May 1928, 19¹*

In May 1928, an article entitled ‘Our Public Women. Mrs Herbert Brookes’ was published in *The Australasian* newspaper. It praises Ivy Deakin’s (by this time, Ivy Brookes) commitment to public service, and identifies the influence of her parents, Alfred and Pattie, in providing her with an example of how to best live this type of life.² It states, “there are few women in the Commonwealth with so splendid a heritage of citizenship as Mrs Herbert Brookes.”³ The article praises Ivy’s exemplary record of public service, and characterises her work as being a duty of someone of her class and social standing.

It would have been a strange thing indeed not to find the child of such a man, and one whose mother was in every way, a happy compliment of her husband, fulfilling in her public as well as in her private life those ideals of service, that acceptance of the responsibilities of the individual to the community, which had inspired the lives of both her parents.⁴

While Ivy’s voluntary philanthropic work during the early decades of the twentieth century can be viewed as fulfilling the expectations of women of her social class, she also capitalised upon the ambitions of the post-suffrage maternal feminist movement and the newly emerged social freedoms associated with the ‘new woman’ in order to move beyond the domestic life her father envisioned for his children after marriage. She reshaped her philanthropic work into an almost full-time career (albeit unpaid), holding executive-level positions in numerous organisations that sought to better the lives of women and children. Ivy was involved in a multitude of organisations in this period, including the influential Housewives Association and the Melbourne Royal Women’s Hospital.⁵ This chapter will present three case studies that examine her engagement with the ambitions of the post-suffrage maternal feminist movement. The following examinations of Ivy’s involvement in the Liberal Party, National Council of Women of Victoria and the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria in this chapter will reveal insights into the various ways that she was present in the public sphere advocating for improvements to the lives of women and children. Ivy then went on to have a lifelong involvement with both the National Council

¹ “Our Public Women. Mrs Herbert Brookes,” *The Australasian*, 12 May 1928, 19.

² “Our Public Women. Mrs Herbert Brookes,” 19.

³ “Our Public Women. Mrs Herbert Brookes,” 19.

⁴ “Our Public Women. Mrs Herbert Brookes,” 19.

⁵ For further information on the Housewives Association and the Melbourne Royal Women’s Hospital see Janet McCalman, *Sex and Suffering: Women’s Health and a Women’s Hospital* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998); Judith Smart, “A Mission to the Home: The Housewives Association, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and Protestant Christianity, 1920-1940,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 13, no. 28 (1998): 215-34; Judith Smart, “The Politics of Consumption: The Housewives’ Associations in Southeastern Australia Before 1950,” *Journal of Women’s History* 18, no. 3 (2006): 13-39; Judith Smart, “The Housewives’ Associations 1915-1950: Australia’s First Consumer Organisations,” in *Consumer Australia: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Robert Crawford, Judith Smart, and Kim Humphery (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 75-96.

of Women and the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria and her prolonged work with both these organisations will be examined throughout this thesis, thereby providing valuable insights into the various concerns of the women's movement, the methods used to achieve their aims and the prolonged influence of eugenic principles, especially regarding the reform of working-class children.

I begin this chapter with an exploration of Ivy's musical studies and career. I explain how she moved beyond the stereotypical nineteenth-century image of the passive female figure at the drawing room piano to conduct a public orchestral career both before and after marriage. I then draw upon Ivy's extensive personal archival collection to explore how, as a married woman, she engaged with socially progressive notions of womanhood connected to maternal feminism while occupying powerful positions in the Women's Committee of the Liberal Party, the National Council of Women of Victoria, and the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria. Finally, I demonstrate how Ivy, despite constructing a full-time career comprised of voluntary philanthropic work, encountered constraints linked to the expectations of the wife of a prominent male figure.

The post-suffrage social reform movement was an influential factor in Ivy's life and philanthropic work. In the post-Federation period, men and women from across the political spectrum became interested in combating the social issues Australia was experiencing in order to create a more prosperous nation. According to Anthea Hyslop, these groups "turned their attention from the palliation of immediate ills to the prevention of future evils ... to secure for the infant nation a population at once numerous, vigorous and racially pure."⁶ In this period, white middle and upper-class women, including Ivy, took on a far more prominent role in social reform efforts, many of which were focused on children. After they gained the vote, these women drew upon their social authority and duty as mothers in order to advocate for reforms, especially in regard to child welfare and the domestic sphere.⁷ The concerns of the social reform movement were also highly relevant to the newly emerging 'science' of eugenics. Middle and upper-class philanthropists attempted to reshape working-class society in line with their values in order to "secure for the infant nation a population at once numerous, vigorous and racially pure."⁸ Ivy's voluntary work was strongly associated with ambitions of post-suffrage maternal feminists. This chapter reveals how she used newly emerged social freedoms and women's increased authority in the public sphere to establish a decades-long career dedicated to achieving these goals.

Early Musical Career

In 1901, following her father's testament, Ivy began her higher education. She studied music under George William Louis Marshall-Hall (1862–1915) at the University of Melbourne's Conservatorium of Music, then began playing in his orchestra. Up to the 1880s, women's musical performances were largely confined to the home, where the playing of the piano and singing by women were status symbols of the middle and upper classes.⁹ Between 1890 and 1930, Australian women, including Ivy, embraced newly emerged progressive notions of

⁶ Anthea Hyslop, "Agents and Objects: Women and Social Reform in Melbourne 1900 to 1914," in *Worth her Salt: Women at Work in Australia*, ed. Carmel Shute, Margaret James, and Margaret Bevege (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), 230.

⁷ Hyslop, "Agents and Objects," 230-31; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 53.

⁸ Hyslop, "Agents and Objects," 230.

⁹ Doggett, "Beyond Gentility," 1; Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*, 87.

womanhood and began participating in music in more diverse and public ways.¹⁰ These increased opportunities for women resulted in the emergence of a prospering musical society in Melbourne, which, historian Louise Jenkins observes, was strongly linked to women's increased participation in music in the public sphere.¹¹ These developments enabled women to move beyond the stereotypical nineteenth-century domestic images of middle and upper-class female musicians to become accomplished musicians who studied and performed music in public spaces.¹²

Ivy majored in violin, with secondary studies in both singing and piano, and achieved pass marks in all theoretical and practical subjects.¹³ In 1904 she was awarded the Ormond Scholarship to undertake further musical studies.¹⁴ Ivy performed in Marshall-Hall's orchestra from 1903 to 1913, playing first or second chair violin, and was often a featured performer (it is unknown if she was paid for these performances). When she began her orchestral career, she became a member of a small group of Australian women, including Mona McBurney (1862–1932), Ruby Davy (1883–1949) and Ruth Flockart (1891–1985), who became professional musicians in the early twentieth century.¹⁵ Ivy's performance career attracted substantial media attention, which can, in part, be attributed to her status as the daughter of Alfred Deakin, but while some articles did emphasise her social standing, her musical talents were the primary focus.¹⁶ In articles on her orchestral performances, she is praised for performing with "fine and artistic insight," being "warmly applauded and honoured with numerous floral gifts," "playing with feeling and expression," and as being "an instrumentalist deserving of high praise."¹⁷ Her gender was not often commented upon.

¹⁰ Louise Jenkins, "The Significance of Familial Home Support for Australian Female Musicians and Music Educators from 1890 to 1950: Three Case Studies," *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 36, no. 1 (2014): 48.

¹¹ Jenkins, "The Significance of Familial Home Support for Australian Female Musicians and Music Educators from 1890 to 1950," 48.

¹² Theobald, *Knowing Women*, 9.

¹³ The Conservatorium of Music, Melbourne. Second Year Diploma Examination, 1902, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/218; The Conservatorium of Music, Melbourne. Report for the Year 1902, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/258; Results of Diploma Examination. First Year 1901, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/264; The Conservatorium of Music, Melbourne. Report for the Year 1901, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/266; The Conservatorium of Music, Melbourne. Report for the Year 1900, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/268; Ivy Brookes nee Deakin, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/73; Mrs Ivy Brookes, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, undated, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/75; Qualifications of Mrs Herbert Brookes, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/76; September 1904 Senior Student Examination in Violin, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/255; "Marshall-Hall, George William Louis (1862–1915)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 21 September, 2018, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/marshallhall-george-william-louis-7499>. For more information on Marshall-Hall see Peter Campbell, "Crusade for a Lost Reputation: G.W.L. Marshall-Hall and the Restitution of Alexander Leeper," *Musicology Australia* 37, no. 2 (2015): 280-88; Suzanne Cole, "A tale of two Wagnerites: G.W.L. Marshall-Hall and John F. Runciman," *Context* 39, no. 39 (2014): 57-67; Therese Radic, "A Man Out of Season: G.W.L. Marshall-Hall," *Meanjin* 39, no. 2 (1980): 195-211; Thérèse Radic and Suzanne Robinson (eds.), *Marshall-Hall's Melbourne: Music, Art and Controversy 1891-1915* (North Melbourne, Vic: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2012); Suzanne Robinson, "Music and Modernity in the Colonial City: A Biography of Melbourne's Marshall-Hall Orchestra (1892–1912)," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* (2022): 1-30, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479409822000027>.

¹⁴ Ivy Brookes nee Deakin, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/73; Mrs Ivy Brookes, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/75.

¹⁵ Jenkins, "The Significance of Familial Home Support for Australian Female Musicians and Music Educators from 1890 to 1950," 47. See also "Davy, Ruby Claudia (1883–1949)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 17 September, 2021, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/davy-ruby-claudia-5918>; "McBurney, Mona Margaret (1862-1932)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 17 September, 2021, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcburney-mona-margaret-7297>.

¹⁶ "Two Talented Young Australians," *Weekly Times*, 21 December 1901, 15; "Fact and Rumour," *Punch*, 26 September 1901, 18.

¹⁷ "Social," *Punch*, 5 December 1901, 20; "Students Concert," *Prahran Chronicle*, 21 November 1903, 3; Rowena,

Ivy's musical education and performance career represented her first venture into public life; she dispelled assumptions about married women's proper place as being within the home by continuing her orchestral performances for eight years after her 1905 marriage to businessman and philanthropist, Herbert Brookes. Nonetheless, when Ivy chose to conclude her musical career, she stated on multiple occasions that the reason was her marriage to Herbert.¹⁸ This decision demonstrates the continued gendered conventions in regard to women and professional work, in which married women were expected to cease their professional work and move into the domestic sphere.¹⁹ As demonstrated in chapter one, while Alfred encouraged his children to embrace new opportunities and to pursue their passions and participate in paid work prior to marriage, after marriage he expected them to retreat to the domestic sphere.²⁰

While adherence to such gendered conventions eventually signalled the end of her musical career, it did not do the same for Ivy's organisational and philanthropic work. After their marriage, Ivy, with Herbert's support, turned her attention to philanthropic work, with a focus on women and children, which evolved into an almost full-time 'career'. Ivy's ability to combine marriage and public work can be attributed to the societal support for middle and upper-class women's involvement in philanthropic work, her association with the social reforming aims of the women's movement, and her and Herbert's engagement with the concept of 'separate but equal'. This resulted in their marriage being characterised as "a long partnership of joint and separate interests mutually recognised as significant."²¹ The following three sections describe Ivy's work in Liberal-leaning women's organisations (the Liberal Party, National Council of Women of Victoria and the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria), in which she occupied leadership roles, travelled and became highly active in the public sphere and was a vocal and high profile advocate for social reform.

The Liberal Party

Ivy's first foray into public voluntary work was (unsurprisingly) connected to her father's political career. While Alfred encouraged the Deakin daughters to be interested and participate in Liberal politics, it was not until after her marriage that Ivy took on an active role in the party. Ivy became involved in political work after Alfred was elected for his third and final term as Prime Minister in 1909, joining her mother and husband in volunteering for the party. Ivy's involvement in the party can also, in part, be attributed to Herbert. Herbert had a very close relationship with Alfred and was on the Liberal Party executive. He also strongly believed that both he and Ivy

"Melbourne Lady's Letter," *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 30 November 1904, 40; "Miscellanea," *Jewish Herald*, 2 December 1904, 10; "Music," *Australasian*, 1 July 1905, 22; Orfeo, "Music. Marshall-Hall Conservatorium," *Punch*, 13 July 1905, 28; "Amusements. The Drama," *Leader*, 26 November 1904, 22; The Conservatorium of Music. 56th Students' Concert. 18 November 1903, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/257.

¹⁸ "Our Public Women. Mrs Herbert Brookes," 19; "National Council of Women. Victorian Personalities for Brisbane Conference. Interesting Welfare Workers," *The Telegraph*, 19 August 1935, 16.

¹⁹ Linda Colley, "For Better or for Worse: Fifty Years Since the Removal of the Marriage Bar in the Australian Public Service," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 64, no. 2 (2018): 230; Donna Dwyer, "Justice at Last?: The Temporary Teachers Club and the Teaching Service (Married Women) Act 1956," *Labour History* 91, no. 91 (2006): 152.

²⁰ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters', Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

²¹ Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash*, 44, 64; Cochrane, "'Australian Citizens'," 19; Holmes, "'Spinsters Indispensable'," 73.

“had a duty to be stewards to their community, their culture and to the less fortunate.”²² Herbert’s support was a significant enabling factor for Ivy to conduct the extensive philanthropic work that would characterise the remainder of her life.

Ivy proved to be an important political asset for Alfred. She quickly gained an esteemed and trusted position within the party, especially in regard to organising and rallying women. Margaret Fitzherbert notes that Ivy was regarded as Alfred’s “secret weapon” in organising women.²³ In October 1909, Ivy was appointed honorary secretary and her mother Pattie was appointed chairwoman of the newly established Women’s Central Committee (WCC) of the Commonwealth Liberal Party (CLP).²⁴ Alfred established the WCC because he believed that the women’s vote was an important issue and that “some concerted action to reach the women who have been granted the suffrage and had failed to exercise their right” was needed.²⁵ As demonstrated in Alfred’s testament, he was strongly supportive of some of the new opportunities that were emerging for women in the early twentieth century. After women gained suffrage in 1902, he encouraged women in general to become involved in the male-dominated field of politics. While Alfred recognised the importance of the CLP engaging with women, he believed that they should be left to determine the appropriate means of, and strategies for, politically motivating and organising other women. He thereby demonstrated his confidence in the capabilities of women to organise themselves politically.²⁶

Ivy and the women of the WCC were very active in their work and took advantage of their relatively new political power and ability to participate in public organisations. They embraced and reflected women’s increased presence and sense of authority in the public sphere and participation in political processes. Women performed numerous tasks for the CLP. These included assisting in the running of electoral and referendum campaigns, purifying electoral rolls, enrolling voters, organising transport for voters to polling booths, door-to-door canvassing, and organising meetings and rallies to convince women of all social classes to join the liberal cause.²⁷ Such work required activities like travel and public speaking that would previously have been deemed inappropriate for respectable middle and upper-class married women. An important component of Ivy’s work with the WCC was the recruitment of new female members. Ivy took advantage of her social capital as the daughter of Alfred Deakin and became an active public speaker and political campaigner. She travelled throughout metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria to form new women’s branches of the CLP and address existing branches.²⁸ Ivy thus made substantial contributions to achieving her father’s goal of encouraging more women to become active in politics.

²² “Our Public Women. Mrs Herbert Brookes,” 19; Cochrane, ““Australian Citizens”,” 20; Margaret Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women: Federation to 1949* (Annandale, N.S.W: Federation Press, 2004), 126. For further information on Herbert and Alfred’s relationship see Rivett, *Australian Citizen*.

²³ Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, 20.

²⁴ “Our Public Women. Mrs Herbert Brookes,” 19; Central Women’s Council Minute Book, 26 October 1909 & 8 November 1909, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/18/1284; Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, 126.

²⁵ Central Women’s Council Minute Book, 26 October 1909, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/18/1284.

²⁶ Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, 9.

²⁷ Central Women’s Council Minute Book, 8 November 1909, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/18/1284; Central Women’s Council Minute Book, 1 November 1909, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/18/1284; Central Women’s Council Minute Book, 29 May 1912, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/18/1284; Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, 19.

²⁸ Central Women’s Council Minute Book, 9 February 1910, 23 March 1910, 31 March 1910, 6 April 1910, 6 July 1910, 24 August 1910, 31 August 1910, 27 October 1910, 9 November 1910, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of

Alfred, while a political conservative, did strongly support women's equal participation in the party. One of his primary goals was to create a unified Liberal organisation in which men and women would be represented equally on a central council. In order to achieve this ambitious aim, Alfred tasked Herbert and Ivy to negotiate terms of amalgamation with other men's and women's Liberal organisations.²⁹ This, however, brought Ivy into tense negotiations with the conservative and anti-suffrage Australian Women's National League (AWNL). The AWNL was a Liberal women's organisation that was founded in Victoria in 1904 in response to women being granted the federal vote (Victorian women did not achieve suffrage until 1908).³⁰ While it was initially opposed to women's suffrage, by 1906, the AWNL had voiced its support for women exercising their right to vote and committed itself to educating women in politics, specifically encouraging them to "learn to use their vote consciously and intelligently."³¹ The organisation was founded on the basis of four principal ideas: to support loyalty to the throne, to combat state socialism, to educate women in politics and to preserve the purity of home life.³² Marian Quartly characterises the founders of the AWNL as "conservative, elite women whose politics were anti-democratic and laissez faire and opposed to the public exercise of women's citizenship."³³ The AWNL became a highly influential women's political body that "provided a conservative forum for women who wanted to preserve the status quo: in the home, in relations between men and women and in the world at large."³⁴ The AWNL claimed to be the largest political organisation in the world at the time, with a membership of 54,000 across 420 branches during World War I.³⁵ Due to its size, the AWNL wielded significant political power and it refused to merge with other Liberal women's organisations, who held more progressive views on women's roles within society, which led to tense relations between the AWNL and the women of the CLP.³⁶

Between 1910 and 1911, relations between the AWNL and CLP were especially difficult. At a WCC meeting held in February 1910, Ivy reported that during a recruitment meeting in Ballarat she had faced strong opposition to her presence from members of the AWNL. She also reported that she had engaged in talks with the AWNL executive about the importance of her recruitment work, again encountering strong resistance.³⁷ Despite Alfred's strong belief that the two organisations should merge, Ivy and the WCC resolved in February 1910 that, "it should be clearly understood that under no circumstances could the women's branch of the Commonwealth Liberal Party

Australia, MS1924/18/1284. Central Women's Council Minute Book, 16 November 1910, 30 November 1910, 22 March 1911, 5 April 1911, 17 May 1911, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/18/1285.

²⁹ Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, 53-54, 129.

³⁰ Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash*, 29; Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, 41; Marian Quartly, "Defending 'The Purity of Home Life' Against Socialism: The Founding Years of the Australian Womens National League," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 50, no. 2 (2004): 178-93; Marian Quartly, "The Australian Women's National League and Democracy, 1904-1921," *Women's History Review* 15, no. 1 (2006): 35-50; Judith Smart, "'Principles Do Not Alter, but the Means by Which We Attain Them Change': The Australian Women's National League and Political Citizenship, 1921-1945," *Women's History Review* 15, no. 1 (2006): 51-68.

³¹ Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash*, 29; Joy Damousi, "Marching to Different Drums: Women's Mobilisations 1914-1939," in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed. Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 354; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 143.

³² Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, 46; Quartly, "Defending 'The Purity of Home Life' Against Socialism," 183; Quartly, "The Australian Women's National League and Democracy," 37.

³³ Quartly, "The Australian Women's National League and Democracy," 35.

³⁴ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 143.

³⁵ Crozier-De Rosa, *Shame and the Anti-Feminist Backlash*, 29; Quartly, "Defending 'The Purity of Home Life' Against Socialism," 178.

³⁶ Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, 11.

³⁷ Central Women's Council Minute Book, 9 February 1910, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1284.

ever join the Australian Women's National League."³⁸ While the WCC had resolved that an amalgamation with the AWNL was impossible, the men's executive urged it to continue merger negotiations. They were, however, only able to come to an agreement to work together during electoral campaigns.³⁹ In her role as honorary secretary, Ivy was at the centre of the negotiations between the two organisations. She was a member of multiple delegations that met with the AWNL executive, and even attended their conference as a CLP delegate in June 1910.⁴⁰ While the amalgamation negotiations were conducted over multiple years, they were consistently short-lived due to the unwillingness of both the AWNL and CLP to make concessions.

In July 1911, after talks between the AWNL and CLP had again broken down, an article was published in *The Age* that claimed to provide an account of the private negotiations.⁴¹ The WCC, however, believed that the article was untrue, inaccurate, heavily biased toward the AWNL, and designed to harm the reputation of the CLP.⁴² The WCC reacted to the publication of the article by calling an emergency meeting at which Ivy led its response. At the meeting, she presented a draft of an article she had written entitled "Commonwealth Liberal Party. Amalgamation with Women's League. National Leagues Statements Repudiated." The article drew attention to how much she believed the account published in *The Age* varied from actual events, while emphasising that the negotiations were supposed to be kept confidential.⁴³ Ivy's article was approved by the WCC and was published, with only slight alterations, in *The Age* on 21 July 1911.⁴⁴ Despite Ivy's prolonged efforts to fulfil her father's desires for a united singular women's Liberal organisation, she was ultimately unsuccessful and negotiations were abandoned soon after this publication.⁴⁵ While the CLP was working toward Alfred's goal of creating a unified Liberal Party, women were entrusted to take on leadership roles in the negotiations with the AWNL and experienced little intrusion from the male executive. These activities were greatly aided by Alfred's trust in Ivy and his previously mentioned dedication to the belief that newly enfranchised Australian women should participate in politics and take on responsibility for women's issues.

In addition to recruiting women to join the CLP and managing relations with the AWNL, Ivy and the WCC proposed policies to the male executive. These policies were related to the social reform ambitions of maternal feminism, and aimed to provide increased protections for vulnerable women and children and greater opportunities for women to take part in higher education and public work. In June 1911, a special combined meeting of the CLP was held to discuss and adopt federal and state platforms and policies. At this meeting, Ivy and the WCC proposed "an additional plank for women" that was strongly associated with the ambitions of the

³⁸ Central Women's Council Minute Book, 9 February 1910, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1284.

³⁹ Central Women's Council Minute Book, 30 November 1910, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1285; Central Women's Council Minute Book, 19 July 1911, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/19/1285.

⁴⁰ Central Women's Council Minute Book, 4 May 1910, 1 June 1910, 6 July 1910, 20 July 1910, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1284; Central Women's Council Minute Book, 5 July 1911, 19 July 1911, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/19/1285.

⁴¹ "Women's National League. Political Amalgamation Scheme," *The Age*, 20 July 1911, 9.

⁴² "Women's National League. Political Amalgamation Scheme," 9; Central Women's Council Minute Book, 20 July 1911, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1285.

⁴³ Central Women's Council Minute Book, 20 July 1911, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1285; "Commonwealth Liberal Party. Amalgamation with Women's League. National Leagues Statements Repudiated," *The Age*, 21 July 1911, 8.

⁴⁴ "Commonwealth Liberal Party," 8.

⁴⁵ Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, 55-56.

maternalist welfare state. It aimed “to protect motherhood and minimise infant mortality, providing also for the care of children and of the feeble minded, domestic training and the representation of women in public bodies which affect their interests or those of children.”⁴⁶ These goals were to be achieved through the provision of children’s courts, creches and kindergartens, district nursing programs, pre-maternity programs, midwifery services, increased care for ‘feeble-minded’ children and action on deserting fathers and husbands. This proposal was passed unanimously.⁴⁷

As a result of her esteemed position within the CLP, Ivy was invited to deliver a keynote address at the 1915 Liberal Party Women’s Division Conference. Ivy’s address was entitled “Protectionism and its Justification,” and for much of her speech she praised her father and his commitment to the policy of Protectionism, which was designed to protect domestic industries against foreign competition, and promoted its benefits for the nation.⁴⁸ Ivy used the remainder of her speech to promote her belief that the party needed to do more in regard to social reform to protect the rights of women and children. She also advocated for increased freedoms for women, including more visible public roles and access to higher education and male-dominated boards, especially those making decisions on behalf of women and children.⁴⁹

Mrs Brookes said the essential duty was to guard the needs of women and children ... She also said that women should be represented on all boards where women and children are affected ... Mrs Brookes said that the status of servants should be improved by their occupying the same position as trained nurses and advocated for the establishment of Domestic Economy Colleges.⁵⁰

Ivy’s advocacy for women and children within the CLP marked the beginning of her lifelong dedication to achieving social reforms related to maternal feminism.

Ivy served as honorary secretary of the WCC until her father’s death in 1919.⁵¹ The previously mentioned *Australasian* newspaper article of 1928, ‘Our Public Women. Mrs Herbert Brookes’, attributed her departure from conducting formal work with the party to her belief that the newly formed unified national federation did not give fair representation to women. “Considering that the new organisation did not give fair representation to the women of the Liberal Party, Mrs Brookes dropped out altogether.”⁵² The developments within the Liberal Party as to the lack of female representation on its governing body following Alfred’s death fell in stark opposition to his belief

⁴⁶ Central Women’s Council Minute Book, 21 June 1911, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/18/1285. The term ‘feeble-minded’ is an explicitly eugenic concept.

⁴⁷ Central Women’s Council Minute Book, 21 June 1911, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/18/1285.

⁴⁸ People’s Liberal Party (Vic.), Mrs Herbert Brookes, and Mrs L. E. Goodisson, *Resume of the Second Conference, Women’s Division, held at Ballarat, 28th and 29th April, 1915: Including Protection, by Mrs Herbert Brookes, Social Questions by Mrs L. E. Goodisson* (Melbourne: People’s Liberal Party, 1915), 1-3. For further information on Deakin’s policy of protection see A. W. Martin, "Free Trade and Protectionist Parties in New South Wales," *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand* 6, no. 23 (1954): 315-23; Norris, "Deakin, Alfred."; Charles Richardson, "Fusion, the party system we had to have?," *Policy* 25, no. 1 (2009): 15.

⁴⁹ People’s Liberal Party (Vic.), Mrs Herbert Brookes, and Mrs L. E. Goodisson, *Resume of the Second Conference, Women’s Division*, 9-10.

⁵⁰ People’s Liberal Party (Vic.), Mrs Herbert Brookes, and Mrs L. E. Goodisson, *Resume of the Second Conference, Women’s Division*, 9-10.

⁵¹ Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, 132.

⁵² “Our Public Women. Mrs Herbert Brookes,” 19.

in a unified party executive in which men and women were represented equally on the common central council, which she and her family had worked toward for several years.⁵³

In the early decades of the twentieth century, then, Ivy participated successfully in the male-dominated, public world of politics; she used her newly gained political rights, travelled, and conducted public speaking engagements to (primarily) advocate for social reforms associated with post-suffrage maternal feminism. Within the CLP, Ivy focused her work on three primary goals: to assist her father in achieving his political ambitions, to encourage and facilitate other women to use their newly gained political opportunities, and to advocate for and protect vulnerable women and children. While Ivy ceased her work with the CLP due to a combination of her father's death and women's decreased representation in the party, it did not mark the conclusion of her public work. She continued to engage with the ambitions of post-suffrage maternal feminism, and turned her attention to working with philanthropic organisations focused on bettering the lives of women and children.

The National Council of Women

In 1912, while still participating in voluntary work for the CLP, Ivy began her lifelong association with the National Council of Women of Victoria (NCWV) and its federal branch, the National Council of Women of Australia (NCWA). The NCWV provided Ivy with an opportunity to focus her voluntary work on achieving post-suffrage social reforms, primarily aimed at encouraging women to take advantage of their relatively new political powers and advocating for their ability to participate in public organisations designed to protect and assist vulnerable women and children. The concept of a national council of women originated in the USA. The first National Council of Women (NCW) was founded in 1888 by suffragists Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) and May Wright Sewall (1844–1920).⁵⁴ Its original intention was to create the first international women's movement that moved beyond political boundaries and reflected the interests of all women engaging in public work.⁵⁵ According to Anthony, "membership of the NCW was open to all women of light and learning, to all associations of women in trades, professions and reforms, as well as those advocating political rights."⁵⁶ The first act of the NCW was to host a conference that was attended by women from across the USA and the United Kingdom. It was decided at this conference to establish an international organisation, known as the International Council of Women (ICW). The ICW enabled women from around the world to establish NCW branches and to conduct voluntary work on matters that affected women and children in their own countries.⁵⁷

⁵³ Fitzherbert, *Liberal Women*, 54.

⁵⁴ "Susan B. Anthony," Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998, accessed 8 July, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Susan-B-Anthony>; "May Eliza Wright Sewall," Encyclopedia Britannica, 1999, accessed 8 July, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/May-Eliza-Wright-Sewall>; "A Brief History of the National Council of Women Australia," *Stirrers With Style! Presidents of the National Council of Women of Australia and its Predecessors*, 2013, accessed 6 September, 2018, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ncwa/history.html>; Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 1-2.

⁵⁵ Quartly and Smart, "A Brief History of the National Council of Women Australia."; Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 1-2.

⁵⁶ Susan B. Anthony quoted in Quartly and Smart, "A Brief History of the National Council of Women Australia."

⁵⁷ Helen E. Gillan, *A Brief History of the National Council of Women, 1902-1945* (Melbourne: Spectator Publishing, 1945), 7-8; James Keating, *Distant Sisters: Australasian Women and the International Struggle for the Vote, 1880-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 68.

Margaret Windeyer (1866–1939) established the first Australian state NCW branch in New South Wales between late 1895 and early 1896.⁵⁸ Branches were subsequently formed in each Australian state and territory between 1886 and 1911.⁵⁹ Lady Janet Clarke (1851-1909) founded the NCWV on 19 March 1902, at a meeting of representatives of thirty-five prominent Victorian women's organisations.⁶⁰ The founding objectives of the NCWV were:

1. To establish a bond of union between the various affiliated societies.
2. To advance the interests of women and children and of humanity in general.
3. To confer on questions relating to the welfare of the family, the state and the Commonwealth.⁶¹

The early aims of the NCWV correlated strongly with those of feminist post-suffrage social reform. Marian Quartly and Judith Smart write that the establishment of state NCWs signalled the beginning of the mainstream feminist movement in Australia, but not all women associated with them would have characterised themselves as feminists.⁶² During their early decades, the methods used by state NCWs were similar to established nineteenth-century women's philanthropic practices.⁶³ Joy Damousi notes that the NCWA's "politics centred around the belief that women could make a special contribution to public life, but it did not challenge the existing power structures which circumscribed that position."⁶⁴ Due to the NCWA's conservative approach to social reform, in which it worked within already established systems and advocated for issues concerning the feminine domains of the home and family, it was an organisation that attracted a broad range of women who included "philanthropists, reformers, suffragists, [and] political conservatives."⁶⁵ Each of these factors contributed to the creation of a large organisation that appealed to a broad range of Australian women due to its ability to communicate its moderate maternal feminist ideas in a manner that was socially acceptable and non-controversial.⁶⁶ As previously discussed, the conservative methods of organisations like the NCWA during the first-wave feminist movement resulted in their contributions being ignored or rendered benign in some later feminist scholarship. This, however, clouds the important contributions and reforms made to Australian society in this period by the women of the NCWA.

In 1912, aged twenty-nine, Ivy was elected as a member of the NCWV's executive committee. The concerns and focuses of the NCWV in its early years were associated strongly with the ambitions of post-suffrage maternal

⁵⁸ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 6-7; Judith Smart and Marian Quartly, "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*, ed. Irma Sulkunen, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, and Pirja Markkola (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 339-40; "Windeyer, Margaret (Margy) (1866–1939)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 8 July, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/windeyer-margaret-margy-1058>.

⁵⁹ Gillan, *A Brief History of the National Council of Women*, 8-9; Quartly and Smart, "A Brief History of the National Council of Women Australia."; Smart and Quartly, "Making the National Councils of Women National," 339-40.

⁶⁰ Address to mark the conclusion of sixty years of service of the National Council of Women of Victoria – March 22 1963, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2685; Gillan, *A Brief History of the National Council of Women*, 8-9; "Clarke, Lady Janet Marion (1851–1909)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 6 November, 2019, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clarke-lady-janet-marion-3224>.

⁶¹ Gillan, *A Brief History of the National Council of Women*, 8-9.

⁶² Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 19.

⁶³ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 19.

⁶⁴ Damousi, "Marching to Different Drums," 354.

⁶⁵ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 20, 53.

⁶⁶ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 20; Smart and Quartly, "Making the National Councils of Women National," 341.

feminism. They included the employment of police matrons, lock-up reforms, child welfare, campaigning for the establishment of children's courts, playgrounds, the Infant Life Protection Act, increased district nursing, the employment of fully trained female inspectors to visit boarded out children, the institution of Domestic Economy university courses, improved lighting in parks and gardens, and meeting with the Premier to discuss salary inequalities between male and female teachers.⁶⁷ The founding objectives and early work of the NCWV were strongly aligned with many concerns that Ivy addressed during her work for the CLP. Like Ivy, the NCWV had a strong focus on achieving the social reform ambitions of maternal feminists. These included improving the lives of vulnerable women and children, providing opportunities for more women to engage in higher education, and increasing the presence of women in the public sphere.

As a member of the NCWV executive, Ivy used her position of authority to work towards improving the lives of women. In October 1912, the NCWV hosted an event to discuss the question, 'should women become municipal councillors?' Ivy was a featured speaker at this meeting, and advocated strongly that woman should enter Victorian municipal government. She stated, "women should certainly be eligible to seats on municipal councils, and, failing that, they should be appointed guardians to advise the councils on matters which came under their sphere."⁶⁸ Ivy believed that there was a great need for women to have a public voice and that they should be regarded as figures of authority in connection to matters that pertained to them.

Ivy also advocated for increasing opportunities for women's professional employment and the status of women's professions through more thorough training. In August 1933, Ivy travelled to Brisbane, where she addressed the executive committee of the National Council of Women of Queensland on the Nurses' College movement, which she had initiated. Ivy established the movement in 1928 after travelling to New York with her husband, Herbert. While in New York, Ivy studied the workings of the American nursing education system and observed that they were able to enrol in special university degrees and specialised postgraduate courses. Upon her return to Australia, Ivy began working to establish a specialised nursing college, where qualified nurses could complete postgraduate studies in specialised areas of nursing. These studies would qualify nurses for positions including hospital matrons, and to work in specialised areas including tutor nursing and industrial and public health nursing. In the years following, Ivy used her status as a member of the NCWV executive to advocate for the establishment of colleges across the nation.⁶⁹

While Ivy capitalised on the expanding opportunities for women, including travel and enhanced visibility in the public sphere, gendered limitations, including responsibility for, and care of, her family, affected her work. For example, in April 1937, after being elected as NCWV vice-president in November 1936, Ivy was successfully nominated by the NCWV, the League of Nations Union and the Housewives' Association to act as the female member of the Australian League of Nations delegation to the September assembly, where the "question of the legal and civil status of women" was to be discussed.⁷⁰ In response to her nomination, Ivy stated that she was

⁶⁷ Gillan, *A Brief History of the National Council of Women*, 11-17; Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, 217.

⁶⁸ "The Modern Woman. Her Sphere of Usefulness. Should She Enter Municipal Life?," *The Leader*, 26 October 1912, 47.

⁶⁹ "A College for Nurses. Mrs Herbert Brookes' View," *The Brisbane Courier*, 15 August 1933, 17.

⁷⁰ "League Assembly. Personnel of Australia's Delegation. Mrs. H. Brookes Included," *The Mercury*, 23 April 1937, 8.

“happy and proud to have been selected as a member of the delegation.”⁷¹ Despite accepting the nomination to attend the conference, Ivy was forced to withdraw from the Australian delegation. In June 1937, newspapers reported that, due to an illness in her family, she was unable to travel to Geneva.⁷² At a gathering of the Melbourne Women’s Hospital committee, Ivy expressed her regret at being unable to attend.⁷³ Ivy’s inability to attend the League of Nations conference exposes that, despite being regarded as a prominent woman who “occupie[d] a high place in the philanthropic, cultural and social life of the State,” who took advantage of freedoms and privileges that were inaccessible to many women, her gender continued to limit her activities.⁷⁴ These limitations required Ivy to forego this unique opportunity to attend a leading international event where the status of women was to be discussed as the highest priority, and instead remain in Melbourne to care for her family.

Throughout her work for the NCWV, up until 1937, Ivy was able to focus on the work she had begun with the CLP to aid women and children and apply it to a wider sphere of influence. She used her growing public standing as an influential figure in Melbourne society and within the realm of philanthropic work to advocate for more women to gain access to greater opportunities. These included accessing higher education and positions on public bodies, such as municipal councils, in which they could influence and advocate for women’s concerns. While Ivy’s work with the NCWV demonstrates how she used expanding opportunities for women, it also reveals the impact of ongoing gendered responsibilities. She was required to place her familial obligations before her own work and desires, even those associated with high-level international political representation. In the following section I examine Ivy’s voluntary work with the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria, demonstrating how, in conjunction with using her social standing and privileges to advocate for women, she conducted voluntary work to benefit and ‘reform’ working-class children.

The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria

Ivy’s work with the Liberal Party sparked her lifetime association with the Guild of Play (renamed the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria (PRAV) in the 1920s), which began in 1912. The organisation aimed to establish supervised playgrounds for children in working-class areas of Melbourne.⁷⁵ These playgrounds were created to provide these children with greater access to safe outdoor play areas and exposure to new ideas and equipment advocated by leading reformers of children’s play. The first supervised playground movement was founded in the USA in 1906 by figures including President Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919).⁷⁶ The supervised playground movement emerged from American middle and upper-class women’s concerns about the welfare of

⁷¹ “Geneva Selection Pleases Mrs Brookes,” *The Herald*, 22 April 1937, 10

⁷² “Auxiliary Reception. In Honor of Mrs H. Brookes,” *The Age*, 22 June 1937, 7; “League Delegate Can’t Attend,” *The Labor Daily*, 10 June 1937, 8.

⁷³ “Hospital President Honoured,” *The Argus*, 22 June 1937, 4.

⁷⁴ “Geneva Selection Pleases Mrs Herbert Brookes,” 10.

⁷⁵ Brief History of the Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/165.

⁷⁶ Barbara Chancellor, “A century defending the child’s right to play’: Beginnings of the playground movement in Melbourne, Australia,” *Journal of Playwork Practice* 3, no. 2 (2016): 14; Julia Gatley, “Giant strides: The formation of supervised playgrounds in Adelaide and Brisbane,” *Journal of the Historical Society of South Australia*, no. 29 (2001): 36; “Theodore Roosevelt,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1999, accessed 8 July, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Theodore-Roosevelt>; Kenneth E. Mobily, “Eugenics and the Playground Movement,” *Annals of Leisure Research* 21, no. 2 (2018): 147-48; Kenneth E. Mobily, “Immigration Restriction, ‘Americanization’ and the Playground Movement,” *Annals of Leisure Research* 24, no. 2 (2021): 228-29.

working-class children, which stemmed from the belief that they needed to be saved from “the perceived disorder, immorality, criminality, drunkenness and promiscuity of the neighbourhoods in which they lived.”⁷⁷ Supervised playgrounds were, thus, designed to provide working-class children with moral guidance, mould their sense of citizenship, exercise their bodies and train them to become more obedient and useful. Ideally, the qualities instilled in working-class children by engaging with supervised playgrounds would prepare them to be successful in the adult world.⁷⁸

As demonstrated previously, eugenics was an influential factor in Ivy, Stella and Vera’s upbringing and within the post-suffrage women’s movement. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ‘child saving’ became a prominent reform initiative in the Western world, including Australia. In Australia, the movement stemmed from societal concerns related to national efficiency and ‘race suicide’, which was attributed to declining birth and marriage rates and the perceived physical deterioration of the population.⁷⁹ Grant Rodwell observes that middle-class and professional women led a highly effective campaign to raise public consciousness about these issues.⁸⁰ Their concerns resulted in the implementation of numerous welfare strategies associated with the maternal welfare state that aimed at reforming the working class, especially children. Children who were perceived as neglected were removed from their life of poverty and placed into care, where they would then be reformed.⁸¹ Working-class families were also drawn into institutions including crèches, day nurseries and kindergartens. Reform initiatives including labour legislation, compulsory schooling, and medical inspections in schools, were also introduced.⁸² Supervised playgrounds were established as a means of extending the influence of these institutions and reform initiatives into the lives of working-class families. They ultimately aimed to ensure that when they became adults, these children would be able to make greater contributions to ‘national efficiency’. The supervised playground movement also attempted to revitalise industrial areas of cities and counter the belief that living in an urban environment inhibited children’s natural ability to play.⁸³ The provision of supervised playgrounds, thus, became an important facet of Australian efforts to reform the lives of working-class children in line with middle and upper-class values.

Miss Madeline Murray, who worked for the Neglected Children’s Department, founded the Guild of Play in late 1912. Prior to founding the Guild, Murray travelled to the USA to study the innovative supervised playground movement, with the aim of establishing a similar movement in Melbourne.⁸⁴ Murray was a member of a pioneering cohort of professional Australian women, which included nurses, teachers and social workers. These

⁷⁷ Jodi Frawley, “‘Haunts of the Street Bully’: Social Reform and the Queensland Children’s Playground Movement,” *History of Education Review* 29, no. 1 (2000): 32; Gatley, “Giant strides,” 35.

⁷⁸ Chancellor, “‘A century defending the child’s right to play’,” 12-13; Gatley, “Giant strides,” 36-37; Carla Pascoe, “Be Home By Dark: Childhood Freedoms and Adult Fears in 1950s Victoria,” *Australian Historical Studies* 40, no. 2 (2009): 216.

⁷⁹ Gatley, “Giant strides,” 41; Grant Rodwell, “‘Only by persistent effort in the face of discouragement’: Eugenics and Australian civic and school playgrounds, 1900-1920,” *Melbourne Studies in Education* 47, no. 1-2 (2006): 310-11.

⁸⁰ Rodwell, “‘Only by persistent effort in the face of discouragement’,” 313.

⁸¹ Swain and Hillel, *Child, nation, race and empire*, 4.

⁸² Gatley, “Giant strides,” 34-35. For further information regarding the kindergarten movement in Australia see Larry Prochner, *A History of Early Childhood Education in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009).

⁸³ Chancellor, “‘A century defending the child’s right to play’,” 12; O’Brien, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism*, 99; Rodwell, “‘Only by persistent effort in the face of discouragement’,” 314, 19-20.

⁸⁴ The Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/206; People’s Liberal Party (Women’s Division). The Guild of Play, 1914, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/274.

women travelled to the USA and Britain in the early twentieth century to participate in transnational professional networks. They visited relevant institutions, met, and learned from colleagues, and in many instances, completed university degrees.⁸⁵ Like Ivy, Murray is an example of a young Australian woman who took advantage of the opportunities associated with emerging new progressive conceptions of womanhood and maternal feminism. She undertook paid work in social services, travelled overseas to conduct research in her professional field, and upon her return established a pioneering movement aimed at reforming the lives of working-class children.

When Murray returned to Melbourne, she approached the Liberal Party executive with a proposal to establish supervised playgrounds in Melbourne's working-class suburbs. The executive supported her proposal, stating that, "it was an excellent and necessary thing for the children in the crowded areas" [i.e., slums], and an executive committee was formed.⁸⁶ The Guild was committed to combating concerns about 'race suicide' and national efficiency by moulding working-class children into fit and healthy adults. Its founding executive included many members of the Deakin family. Ivy's father Alfred held the role of vice-president, Ivy was secretary and Herbert was a member of the executive committee.⁸⁷ The founding objectives of the Guild of Play were:

1. To encourage the formation of playgrounds in crowded areas of the city and suburbs, and to assist in the equipment of the same.
2. To promote the welfare and happiness of children by helping and encouraging them to play organised games with the view of making them better citizens.
3. To arrange for the employment and instruction of play leaders, and to provide voluntary helpers in children's welfare to supervise the play and give instruction in folk dances and story-telling.⁸⁸

The original and lasting aims of the Guild were focused on reforming and shaping the lives of working-class children according to middle and upper-class values. These were:

To organise free play for children when out of school, and it is most necessary for the proper development of child life, and to keep the children off the streets. The play of children should be absolutely free, and yet it should be towards efficiency for work and self-helpfulness. Free play and the serious conditions of labour should be trained towards each other as natural and wholesome reactions.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Rees, "'Bursting with new ideas'," 382-83. See also Carey, "A Transnational Project?," 45-69; Desley Deacon, Penelope Ann Russell, and Angela Woollacott, *Transnational lives: Biographies of global modernity, 1700-present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); James Keating, "Piecing together suffrage internationalism: Place, space, and connected histories of Australasian women's activism," *History Compass* 16, no. 8 (2018): 1-15; James Keating, "'An Utter Absence of National Feeling': Australian Women and the International Suffrage Movement, 1900-14," *Australian Historical Studies* 47, no. 3 (2016): 462-81; Rees, "Travelling to Tomorrow.," Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*.

⁸⁶ People's Liberal Party (Women's Division). The Guild of Play, 1914, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/274; Chancellor, "'A century defending the child's right to play'," 15.

⁸⁷ The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/206; People's Liberal Party (Women's Division). The Guild of Play, 1914, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/274.

⁸⁸ The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/206.

⁸⁹ People's Liberal Party (Women's Division). The Guild of Play, 1914, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/274.

The inclusion of terms including “efficiency for work” and “serious conditions of labour” in the Guild’s aims demonstrates its commitment to reforming working-class children, especially combating emerging concerns as to the future of the nation.⁹⁰ By providing opportunities for supervised play, the Guild aimed to mould working-class children into fit and healthy adults who were self-reliant and were able to contribute to Australian society.

Ivy’s work with the PRAV was enabled and enhanced by both her wealth and increasing freedoms for early twentieth-century women, including greater mobility. For example, in 1922, following her written request, Ivy was granted permission to visit the newly established Playground Association of Western Australia to observe its operations. This visit allowed her to view, first-hand, the operations of a different playground association in order to garner information that could improve the operations of the PRAV. In 1923, while preparing to travel to the USA, Ivy formally requested permission to visit multiple supervised playgrounds. These visits enabled her to observe and learn about the pioneering American supervised playground movement and to use her newly gained knowledge to improve the PRAV.⁹¹

During the 1930s, especially after her election as vice-president of the PRAV in 1933, Ivy was regarded as an expert on the supervised playground movement. She used her substantial experience as a public persona to represent the PRAV in many meetings with government representatives. She also delivered numerous addresses in which she expounded on the values of supervised play. In November 1937, Ivy was selected as a member of a two-person deputation to meet with the Victorian Premier, Sir Albert Arthur Dunstan (1882–1950).⁹² The purpose of this meeting was to request that the Premier allocate more space for parks and playing areas.⁹³ In April 1938, Ivy again met with Premier Dunstan to advocate for the creation of more recreation areas, especially in Melbourne’s outer suburbs.⁹⁴ Ivy also used her social standing and expertise in the supervised playground movement to educate members of Melbourne’s middle and upper-class society about the work of the PRAV. In January 1939, she conducted tours of PRAV-run supervised playgrounds for figures including the Lord and Lady Mayoress and Lady Huntingfield, to highlight the organisation’s work and garner support.⁹⁵ In 1939, assisted by her daughter Jessie, Ivy delivered lectures on ‘Playgrounds Here and Abroad’ to the Tree Planters’ Association and members of PRAV at its annual general meeting.⁹⁶ Ivy’s lectures described the work of the supervised

⁹⁰ The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/206; People’s Liberal Party (Women’s Division). The Guild of Play, 1914, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/274.

⁹¹ Letter from James W. Barrett to V.K. Brown, 13 March 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/39.

⁹² “Playgrounds. “Stonnington” – Suggested Centre for Malvern”, *The Age*, 26 November 1937, 4; “Dunstan, Sir Albert Arthur (1882–1950),” Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 14 January, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/dunstan-sir-albert-arthur-6055>.

⁹³ “Playgrounds,” 4.

⁹⁴ “Baths for Suburbs. Premier Promises to Consider,” *The Herald*, 5 April 1938, 14.

⁹⁵ “Lord Mayor Visits City Playground,” *The Age*, 7 January 1939, 18; “The Life of Melbourne. Playground Praised,” *The Argus*, 11 January 1939, 7.

⁹⁶ Letter from C. A. Hoadley to Miss S. D. Kelsall, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/74; The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria. Annual Report for 1939-1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1283.

Jessie followed in her mother’s footsteps and devoted her life to charitable work. She took advantage of women’s increased freedoms and her mother’s pioneering work and graduated with a degree in Arts/Social Work from the University of Melbourne in the early 1930s. For further information on Jessie see Heywood, “Clarke, Jessie Deakin.”; Majorie Tipping, “Jessie Clarke: Founder of Nappie Wash,” in *Double Time: Women in Victoria, 150 Years*, ed. Marilyn Lake and Farley Kelly (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin Books, 1985), 408-19.

playground movement in both Victoria and overseas, and was followed by a screening of a colour film of the PRAV's demonstration playground. These presentations were described as being "most successful and great interest [in the movement] was aroused."⁹⁷

Beginning in 1936, a major focus of Ivy's work with the PRAV was her campaign for the establishment of community centres across Melbourne. Ivy and the PRAV believed that children would greatly benefit from community centres comprised of:

A piece of land in a congested area, large enough to accommodate games for children of all ages, and on it a simple club house with store rooms, cloak rooms and office, which could be used for Kindergarten in the morning, for playground activities, such as library and craft work in the afternoons, and for Scouts, Guides, Y.W.C.A. and Y.M.C.A. Clubs at night.⁹⁸

Through the creation of the community centres, the PRAV aimed to extend its reforming influence on working-class children, especially in continuing to educate them in the values of good citizenship, healthy recreation, and self-organisation.⁹⁹ In an attempt to achieve this goal, Ivy sought out and secured support from other organisations associated with the reform of working-class children. These included the Kindergarten Union, Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), Children's Courts and the Board of Social Studies. Each of these organisations supported the establishment of community centres and agreed to contribute their services.

On 21 October 1936, Ivy led a deputation of representatives from the interested organisations in a meeting with a sub-committee of the South Melbourne Council. At this meeting, the deputation requested the council provide a three-acre block of land and assist with the provision of buildings and equipment in order to establish a community centre. Ultimately, the deputation's requests were denied due to a lack of funds.¹⁰⁰ The rejection of the deputation's proposal did not signal the end of Ivy's efforts to establish community centres. In October 1937, at a meeting of the PRAV, she advocated for the establishment of community centres and her belief that they were essential for youth development.¹⁰¹ In 1938, the PRAV convened a meeting of organisations including the Headmasters' Association, Kindergarten Union, Baby Health Centres, YWCA, YMCA, and Boy Scouts to work collaboratively to establish community centres. However, the outbreak of World War II in 1939 intervened in the process and they were ultimately not established.¹⁰² Ivy's prolonged campaign for the establishment of community

⁹⁷ Letter from C. A. Hoadley to Miss S. D. Kelsall, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/74; The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria. Annual Report for 1939-1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1283.

⁹⁸ The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria. Annual Report for 1936, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1273.

⁹⁹ The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria. Annual Report for 1936, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1273.

¹⁰⁰ The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria. Annual Report for 1936, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1273.

¹⁰¹ "Provision for Play. Councils to be Approached," *The Argus*, 29 October 1937, 4.

¹⁰² Brief History of the Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/169; The Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria. Annual Report and Report on Demonstration Playground held in Exhibition Gardens 1938-1939, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1278.

centres demonstrates how she used her political experiences to bring together multiple philanthropic organisations in order to enhance the reforming work of the PRAV, even if the advent of the war interrupted that endeavour.

Ivy's decades of executive-level voluntary work for the Liberal Party, the NCWV and the PRAV demonstrate that she did not follow her father's testament to live a quiet home-centred life focused on religious duty and raising children. She instead, with Herbert's support, strongly engaged with maternal feminism's social reform ambitions and the important role that women needed to play in achieving them, undertaking decades of voluntary philanthropic work – in an almost full-time capacity – that was dedicated to bettering the lives of women and children.

Europe, 1923

Ivy's experiences demonstrate that while she benefited from many of the expanding opportunities for women at the time, she was constrained by societal expectations of women and of wives of the upper classes. As previously revealed by Ivy's inability to attend the 1937 League of Nations conference due to family circumstances, she did experience situations where she was required to cease her own work in order to support her husband and family. This was particularly evident during the Brookes family's time in Europe during 1923. In this period, Ivy's experiences resembled less those of the emancipated 'new woman' and more of those of the mid-Victorian model of domestic femininity. She was required to cease her philanthropic and political work and travel overseas in order to fulfil the social expectations of the wife of a public figure, which were primarily comprised of acting as a supportive presence and attending social events associated with her spouse's work. On 17 March 1923, Ivy, Herbert and their three children, Wilfred, Jessie and Alfred, accompanied by a governess, left Melbourne and travelled to Europe aboard the Orient Liner *Ormonde*.¹⁰³ Rohan Rivett writes that the Brookes family travelled to Europe for two main reasons. The first was for Herbert to represent the Commonwealth at a League of Nations conference in Geneva, where he was the first Australian to be nominated to join one of its committees. The second was for him to attend the World Economic Conference in London in order to act as an economic advisor to Australian Prime Minister Stanley Bruce (1883–1967).¹⁰⁴

Prior to travelling to Geneva to attend the League of Nations conference, the Brookes family first spent time in London. During this time, both Herbert and Ivy participated in numerous social engagements that were characteristic for their class and social standing. These included a reception at Australia House, the turning of the sod at the Australian Pavilion site on the British Empire Exhibition Grounds, visiting a Girl's Village Home run by Dr Barnardo, a gathering of the Victoria League, and the laying of the Foundation Stone of the Australian Pavilion at the British Empire Exhibition Grounds.¹⁰⁵ Herbert and Ivy also had numerous encounters with the

¹⁰³ Orient Line: List of Passengers, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/341; "Social Events. Departure of the Ormonde," *The Argus*, 19 March 1923, 10; "Personal," *Geelong Advertiser*, 17 March 1923, 5; "Farewell and Au Revoir," *The Australasian*, 24 March 1923, 38.

¹⁰⁴ "Bruce, Stanley Melbourne (1883–1967)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 30 August, 2021, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bruce-stanley-melbourne-5400>; Rivett, *Australian Citizen*, 103.

¹⁰⁵ Invitation to a Reception at Australia House, Thursday 17 May 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/350; Invitation to the turning of the sod at the Australian Pavilion site, Friday 18 May 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/351; Invitation to visit Dr Barnardo's Girls' Village Home, Thursday 31 May 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia,

British Royal Family during their time in London. They were members of a small elite group of Australians including Sir Joseph and Lady Cook, Sir George Murray, Madame Melba, Sir George and Lady Fuller and Sir T. and Lady Coughlan, who were invited to attend the wedding of His Royal Highness The Duke of York and Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, the future King and Queen.¹⁰⁶ Ivy also attended the first court of the season at Buckingham Palace alongside Lady Hughes, Mrs Ernest Bynes and Mrs F.D. McMaster.¹⁰⁷ They were also invited to attend two afternoon tea parties in the grounds of Buckingham Palace in July and October.¹⁰⁸

As noted earlier, after attending the League of Nations conference in Geneva, Herbert and Ivy returned to London so that Herbert could act as an economic advisor to Australian Prime Minister, Stanley Bruce, at the World Economic Conference. During the conference, Ivy performed the role of dutiful companion, as both her and Herbert attended numerous social events for conference delegates and their spouses. These included a presentation of the Freedom of the City to the Prime Ministers of Australia, Canada and Great Britain; luncheons with the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of London and the Prime Ministers of Canada, Australia and Great Britain; receptions for conference delegates hosted by the Victoria League and the Ladies' Empire Club; a reception for Dominion Prime Ministers and Empire representatives hosted by Lady Ludlow; a reception for the Prime Minister of New Zealand; a meeting with representatives of the Dominions and India hosted by the British Women's Patriotic League; and a reception hosted by the British Prime Minister for the Dominion representatives.¹⁰⁹ While Herbert was supportive of Ivy's philanthropic and political careers, it was clear from this experience that his paid political and business work was prioritised over hers.

MS1924/24/352; Invitation to reception hosted by the Royal Colonial Institute, Wednesday 27 June 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/354; Invitation to Victoria League gathering, Friday 29 June 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/356; Invitation to the laying of the Foundation Stone of the Australian Pavilion, Tuesday 31 July 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/360.

¹⁰⁶ Admittance ticket for the wedding of His Royal Highness The Duke of York and Lady Elizabeth Bowes Lyon, Thursday 26 April 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/333; Invitation to the wedding of His Royal Highness The Duke of York and Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, Thursday 26 April 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/335; The Marriage of His Royal Highness The Duke of York with the Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon, Thursday 26 April 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/336; "Royal Frocks. Wedding Fashions. Queen-Mother's Dress," *The Sun*, 26 April 1923, 7; "The Royal Wedding. After the Ceremony. At the Palace," *The Maitland Daily Mercury*, 28 April 1923, 5.

¹⁰⁷ "Brilliant Scenes at Court. Dresses of Australians," *The Herald*, 1 June 1923, 9.

¹⁰⁸ Invitation to Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, 26 July 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/357; Invitation to Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, 30 October 1923, MS1924/24/397.

¹⁰⁹ Invitation to the Presentation of the Freedom of the City to the Prime Ministers of Canada, Great Britain and Australia, Friday 12 October 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/372; Invitation to the Presentation of the Freedom of the City to the Prime Ministers of Canada, Great Britain and Australia, Friday 12 October 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/373; Invitation to a luncheon with the Prime Ministers of Great Britain, Canada and Australia hosted by the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of London, Friday 12 October 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/375; Invitation to a reception hosted by the Victoria League and Ladies' Empire Club to meet delegates to the Imperial Conference, Monday 29 October 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/395; Invitation to a reception hosted by Lady Ludlow for delegates of the Imperial and Economic Conferences, Monday 12 November 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/401; Invitation to a reception to meet the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Tuesday 13 November 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/404; Invitation from British Women's Patriotic League to meet representatives of the Dominions and India to the Imperial Conference, Thursday 15 November 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/406; Invitation to a reception hosted by the Prime Minister of Great Britain to meet representatives of the Dominions and India to the Imperial Conference, Monday 8 October 1923, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/24/368.

When Herbert had concluded his official duties, Ivy was no longer constrained by the societal expectations of the wife of a public representative. Ivy chose to use her remaining time in London to conduct research for her philanthropic causes, specifically women's hospitals and the supervised playground movement.¹¹⁰ Ivy's first-hand research on the operations of English women's hospitals and supervised playgrounds in London was reported in an article published in the Australian newspaper *The Herald* in September 1923, entitled 'Women's World. Helping Australia in London. Mrs Herbert Brookes Visits Many Hospitals'.¹¹¹ Ivy was characterised as a successful Australian woman throughout the article. She was recognised for her ability to combine the demands and expectations of a woman of her social standing, while occupying leadership roles in numerous philanthropic organisations. The article reported that resulting from her inspections of multiple women's hospitals, on her return, Ivy intended on making recommendations to improve many aspects of the Melbourne Royal Women's Hospital. These included updating the hospital's operating theatres, wards and laundry facilities.¹¹² It also highlighted Ivy's commitment to the supervised playground movement, emphasising that she had been involved in the PRAV since its inception in 1912. It did note that, she was, however, unable to locate any supervised playgrounds in London that were like those the PRAV was establishing in Melbourne.¹¹³

Conclusion

Ivy's activities between 1901 and 1937 reveal the differing ways in which she, as a married woman, took advantage of many of the emancipating opportunities associated with newly emerged socially progressive notions of womanhood. She first followed her ambition of becoming a professional musician and completed a decade-long public orchestral career. Ivy's subsequent voluntary work with the Liberal Party, NCWV and PRAV closely aligned with the ambitions of the post-suffrage maternal feminist movement to empower women to take on greater roles in the public sphere, especially in ways that could benefit the lives of women and children. During her work with the Liberal Party, Ivy capitalised upon the opportunity her father presented to lead the women's division of the party. She used this powerful position to encourage women to use their newly gained political rights, attempted to merge the CLP with the AWNL to achieve her father's aim of a unified party, and successfully presented policies associated with the emerging maternal welfare state to the male party executive. Ivy's subsequent work with the NCWV represented her first affiliation with an organisation, founded and run by women, that aimed to better the lives of women and children. She used her public platform and powerful position within the organisation to advocate for social reforms associated with maternal feminism as well as issues of women's rights and status. Finally, Ivy's long involvement with the PRAV reveals how, in addition to strongly engaging with social reform ideals, she drew upon eugenic principles in her attempts to reform working-class children.

While Ivy's powerful presence in the public sphere after marriage can be seen as remarkable, it was greatly aided by her and Herbert's engagement with the ideal of 'separate but equal' and their belief in the duty of their social

¹¹⁰ Ivy sat on the board of the Melbourne Royal Women's Hospital for over fifty years. For further information see "Brookes, Ivy (1883–1970)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 20 November, 2019, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brookes-ivy-5640>; "Brookes, Ivy (1883-1970)," *The Australian Women's Register*, 2003, accessed 4 October, 2021, womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0514b.htm.

¹¹¹ "Women's World. Helping Australia in London. Mrs Herbert Brookes Visits Many Hospitals," *The Herald*, 1 September 1923, 13.

¹¹² "Women's World. Helping Australia in London," 13.

¹¹³ "Women's World. Helping Australia in London," 13.

class to contribute to improving society. Despite Herbert and Ivy's commitment to progressive notions of womanhood, Ivy was confronted with limitations associated with her duties as a mother and being the wife of a public figure, revealing how his work in the public worlds of business and politics was prioritised over hers, which was unpaid and rooted in domestic and feminine concerns. This examination of Ivy's philanthropic work expands understandings of how maternal feminism resulted in an expansion of acceptable spheres of influence for women, including those who were married and held politically conservative beliefs. The involvement and influence of these women in public life has been overlooked in historical scholarship, especially due to their subscription to the ideal of 'separate but equal'. In the following chapter, I examine how Stella, while being a representative figure of the Australian 'new woman' in her early life, became a figure more akin to the 'angel in the house' after marriage.

Chapter Three: Stella Deakin and Science, 1904–1911

I feel it would be a great privilege to be able to offer one tiny particle of knowledge to the gigantic whole.

– Stella Deakin, *The Weekly Times*, 8 July 1911, 10¹

In July 1911, when Stella was close to concluding her scientific career, an article entitled ‘Miss Stella Deakin. Studying Acids in the Laboratory’ was published in the *Weekly Times*. This article praised Stella’s scientific achievements and presented her as a figure who was different and certainly more advanced than the average Australian woman. While the article celebrated her achievements, it portrayed her experimental work and handling of elements including mercury, as anomalous, stating it was “hardly the kind of thing one would expect a refined young lady, devoted to mental studies, to be handling.”² In her early life, between 1904 and 1911, Stella, while being from a politically and economically conservative family, resembled a radical ‘new woman’ figure in regard to her educational interests. She completed a BSc, majoring in chemistry, at the University of Melbourne, travelled to Europe to conduct postgraduate studies against her mother’s wishes, and despite the existence of marriage bars, was determined to work professionally after marriage. While Stella engaged with socially progressive notions of womanhood prior to marriage, after marriage, she largely followed her father’s instructions to devote herself to her home and family. Therefore, she transitioned from being a progressive female figure to one that was more in keeping with more traditional angelic ideals, thus revealing the continued societal pressures for women to retreat into the domestic sphere after marriage.

This chapter expands scholarship on the participation of Australian women in science in the early twentieth century. It also offers insights into how elite Australian women negotiated the liberatory freedoms associated with socially progressive notions of womanhood prior to marriage, while experiencing pressures to become ‘angels in the house’ after marriage. I begin by demonstrating how Stella’s secondary education was an enabling factor in her later scientific pursuits. I then survey her studies at the University of Melbourne, and her act of rebellion in defying her mother’s wishes and travelling to Europe to commence postgraduate studies. Finally, I examine the factors that influenced Stella’s eventual embodiment of qualities associated with angelic ideals after marriage, including the expectations of her father and husband, and her ill health.

Throughout this chapter I use the personal archive of Stella Deakin, specifically the letters and diary entries she sent to her sister, Vera, to gain understandings of her feelings and experiences. Little archival documentation pertains to Stella’s life; and these letters are the only known avenue of access to her personal material and voice. They provide personal and valuable understandings of her activities, feelings, and intentions in this period. The archival collection of Catherine Deakin provides important insights into Stella’s scientific studies and their shared experiences while overseas. These records allow us to trace the extent of Stella’s early ambitions, although they are less useful in terms of understanding how she seemingly relinquished these so completely.

¹ Stella Deakin quoted in “Miss Stella Deakin. Studying Acids in the Laboratory”, *The Weekly Times*, 8 July 1911, 10.

² “Miss Stella Deakin,” 10.

Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School

As discussed in chapter one, the Deakin sisters received a musically focused, home-based primary education and subsequently attended the academically focused MCEGGS for their secondary education. Stella's sojourn at MCEGGS was a significant enabling factor in her later scientific studies. When reflecting on her primary education, Stella later stated that, "the music was wasted on me – I didn't have the hands for it, anyway, I wanted to do other things."³ John Rickard characterises Stella as being the most ambitious of the Deakin sisters, and she possessed a reputation within the family as the most difficult. She rebelled against the confines of her home-based education and was determined to expand her world. According to Rickard,

Alfred indicated to Herbert, she could charm strangers, but within the home she [Stella] seemed a disturbing presence. One member of the family recalled her as being "a fair terror at being unpunctual, uncooperative, going her own way." Alfred himself, writing to Katie, saw Stella's good qualities as being undermined by temper and self-satisfaction.⁴

Stella did, however, thrive in the academically focused environment of MCEGGS. At MCEGGS, she was exposed to subjects, including science, that she had not been taught at home and to an environment in which girls were encouraged to pursue academic excellence and university studies.⁵ Stella certainly took advantage of the academic opportunities presented by studying at MCEGGS. She was one of the first four women who attended the school to graduate from university, and the first to obtain a BSc.⁶ Stella's time at MCEGGS influenced the course of her life. It exposed her to new ideas and enabled her to follow Alfred's instructions to pursue a university-level education and paid employment before marriage.⁷

Studying Science: The University of Melbourne

After graduating from MCEGGS in 1903, Stella was awarded a non-resident scholarship to the University of Melbourne's Trinity College and in 1904, began studying a BSc, majoring in chemistry.⁸ Women had been permitted to study for science degrees at Australian universities (University of Sydney, University of Adelaide and University of Melbourne) since the commencement of the courses in the 1880s.⁹ However, participation was restricted to women, such as Stella, from privileged families who could fund their children's secondary education and university tuition.¹⁰ Like many other Australian women who studied science in the early twentieth century,

³ Stella Deakin quoted in Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 126.

⁴ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 126.

⁵ MCEGGS, *The Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School Prospectus 1907* 4.

⁶ MCEGGS, *Melbourne Church of England Girls' Grammar School*, 75.

⁷ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters', Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

⁸ Craig, "Lady Rivett's Proud Memories," 14.

⁹ Ann Moyal, "Invisible Participants. Women in Science in Australia, 1830-1950," *Prometheus* 11, no. 2 (1993): 180; Sara Maroske, "'This whole great continent as a present'. Nineteenth-century Australian women workers in science," in *On the Edge of Discovery. Australian Women in Science* ed. Farley Kelly (East Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 1993), 20; Jane Carey, "Engendering Scientific Pursuits: Australian Women and Science, 1880-1960," *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies* 7 (2001): 12; Carey, "Departing from their sphere," 33, 76, 81; Claire Hooker, *Irresistible Forces: Australian Women in Science* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 32.

¹⁰ Kelly, "Learning and teaching science," 40-43; Carey, "Departing from their sphere," 93-94.

Stella received support from her family, including her father, Alfred. As previously discussed, in his 1890 testament, Alfred voiced his belief that his daughters should participate in higher education and that they should pursue their own interests and aptitudes in doing this. He also specified that he would be supportive if they wished to study science.¹¹ When Stella was considering what university degree she should pursue, Alfred reinforced his support and offered his opinion on what courses she should undertake and encouraged her to apply for scholarships.

Dear Stella,

I enclose the last [University of Melbourne] calendar from which you can contrast the courses. The science set of studies looks very well and offers a good choice. The next calendar out next week will not alter there. You can also see as to the scholarship. This will enable you to think your selections over before our return on Thursday.

Your affectionate father.¹²

Alfred's support was powerful encouragement for Stella to pursue her scientific ambitions. In both his 1890 testament and his letter written before she had begun her university studies, he expressed his support for her conducting higher education in areas not typically deemed as 'feminine'.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, few students chose to study science at Australian universities. Despite the perception that science has long been a male-dominated field, between 1883 and 1920, women made up just under thirty per cent of science graduates from the University of Melbourne, the highest proportion of any degree offered.¹³ By the end of World War II, women made up between thirty and forty per cent of science students in most universities.¹⁴ When Stella began studying at the University of Melbourne in 1904, she became one of just five students attending first-year BSc lectures.¹⁵ Although Stella completed her BSc, her academic record was not outstanding. She received pass marks in all subjects, except for Biology 1 (with laboratory work), in which she achieved first place and was awarded the Exhibition (see Figure 3).¹⁶ Stella completed her BSc in November 1907 and was awarded the Dixson Research Scholarship in order to carry out her honours project in the School of Chemistry. Then, during 1907 and 1908, she went on to become one of the first students to complete the newly created Diploma of Education, which would enable her to teach professionally after she had completed her scientific education.¹⁷ In March 1908 she was awarded an honours degree in chemistry; however, due to problems

¹¹ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

¹² Letter from Alfred Deakin to Stella Deakin, date unknown, MS4913, Papers of Catherine Deakin, National Library of Australia, Box 3, Folder 16.

¹³ Kelly, "Learning and teaching science," 44.

Women have been present in the Australian scientific landscape since colonisation. For an examination of Australian women's involvement in science the nineteenth century see, Ann Moyal, *A Bright & Savage Land* (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1993), 90; Maroske, "'This whole great continent as a present'," 15; Carey, "Engendering Scientific Pursuits," 10-11; Carey, "Departing from their sphere," 1-2; Hooker, *Irresistible Forces*, 10.

¹⁴ Carey, "Departing from their sphere," 73-74.

¹⁵ University of Melbourne, *Report of the Proceedings of the University from 31st July, 1904, to 31st July, 1905*, University of Melbourne (Melbourne, 1905), 458.

¹⁶ "Stella Deakin University of Melbourne Student Record," (Melbourne, University of Melbourne, 1908).

¹⁷ It is unknown what the topic of Stella's honours project was. "Stella Deakin University of Melbourne Student Record"; University of Melbourne, *Report of the Proceedings of the University from 31st July, 1908, to 31st July, 1909*, University of Melbourne (Melbourne, 1909), 668.

she encountered during her research, she was awarded a third-class degree.¹⁸ When Stella graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1908, she became one of sixty-two women who were awarded science degrees between 1893 and 1920, and one of thirteen who majored in chemistry.¹⁹

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE		STUDENT RECORD		Enrolment No.		Matriculation Roll	
Name DEAKIN Stella				040035		4894	
						15.2.04	
				Date of Birth			
Enrolment		Degrees		B.Sc. 54		Dip.Ed. 27	
		Conferred		6.4.07		23/12/1908	
Pure Mathematics 1		Nov. 1904		P		Remarks 4th Term 1902	
Natural Philosophy 1 (with Lab.work)				P			
Chemistry 1 (with Lab.work)				P		Became Lady Rivett	
Biology 1 (with Lab.work)				H1 & 1st Pl.			
Passed First Year B.Sc.							
Awarded the Exhibition in Biology 1 (with Lab.work)							
Group E		Nov. 1905					
Inductive Logic				P		DECEASED	
Physiology				P			
Chemistry 2 (with Lab.work)				P			
Passed Second Year B.Sc.							
Group B		Nov. 1906					
Chemistry 3 (with Lab.work)				P			
Technical Chemistry				P			
Passed Third Year B.Sc.							
Education		Nov. 1907		P			
Final Honour Examination		Mar. 1908		H3			
School of Chemistry							
AWARDED DIXON RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP							
Education B (S/S)		Nov. 1908		P			

Figure 3. Stella Deakin's University of Melbourne Student Record, 1908.²⁰

Stella, like many other Australian scientific women in the early twentieth century, received positive media attention.²¹ Claire Hooker observes:

World War I, the 'woman scientist' was someone discussed in women's magazines and on the women's pages of newspapers. Not one of these stories was critical of women doing science, or suggested that women's science was somehow of poor quality. Instead they argued that women brought special feminine qualities of self-sacrifice and patience to their work.²²

While female scientists were praised within the Australian media, they were presented as being different from

¹⁸ "Stella Deakin University of Melbourne Student Record"; University of Melbourne, *Report of the Proceedings of the University from 31st July, 1906, to 31st July, 1907*, University of Melbourne (Melbourne, 1907), 579; University of Melbourne, *Report of the Proceedings of the University from 31st July, 1907, to 31st July, 1908*, University of Melbourne (Melbourne, 1908), 585, 89; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 126.

¹⁹ Kelly, "Learning and teaching science," 39, 44-45.

²⁰ "Stella Deakin University of Melbourne Student Record".

²¹ Hooker, *Irresistible Forces*, 33; Carey, "Departing from their sphere," 73-74, 83.

²² Hooker, *Irresistible Forces*, 33.

‘normal’ women and as undertaking something exceptional that was not of interest to most women.²³ Stella’s university studies were reported upon favourably in the women’s pages of newspapers. In these articles she was not presented as transgressing the norms of femininity; she was, instead, regarded as a talented young woman, who was succeeding in her chosen field. In an article published in *The Critic* in April 1907, Stella was presented as having attained an elevated level of womanhood – intelligent, attractive, and undistracted by feminine trivialities.

Prime Minister Alfred Deakin’s daughter though still in her teens, has secured a new article of attire – the purple hood of Bachelor of Science ... she certainly is an attractive young maiden, free from the empty vanities which so largely possesses Australian girls.²⁴

Stella’s difference from the ‘average’ woman is emphasised in an article published in the ladies’ page of *Punch* in December 1908, after she had completed her studies at the University of Melbourne. Throughout this article, Stella is celebrated for her success in the world of science.

Alfred Deakin owns a very clever daughter. Miss Stella Deakin. I told you some time ago that she was something more than a tyro in the scientific world. She has been studying at the University of Melbourne, and has proved herself a regular whale for the absorption of scientific knowledge, both in the lecture room and in the laboratory ... Stella, in fact, has gone as far into the world of science as it is possible to go in Australia.²⁵

While articles praised Stella’s intelligence and participation in science, some were also keen to emphasise that she still exhibited stereotypically feminine traits. An article in *The Australian* in May 1907 stated that:

Stella Deakin, daughter of the Prime Minister, has won her degree as Bachelor of Science. She is said to possess a great deal of the personal charm of her father and mother, despite the fact that she is a deep student.²⁶

The media coverage of Stella’s university studies can be used to demonstrate how women in science were portrayed in the Australian press. While journalists highlighted and celebrated women pursuing higher education and creating spaces for themselves in male-dominated areas of society, they continued to reinforce that while these women exhibited feminine traits, they were not ‘normal’ women. The media coverage that Stella received was doubtlessly due to her social status as Alfred Deakin’s daughter; it also shaped her into a representative figure of socially progressive ideals of womanhood. Her high visibility, which was aided by her social standing, allowed her to become a public and aspirational figure, who showcased the emerging opportunities that were becoming available to women.

²³ Kelly, "Learning and teaching science," 38; Carey, "Departing from their sphere," 118.

²⁴ "The Gay Metropolis", *The Critic*, 17 April 1907, 18.

²⁵ "Ladies Letter", *Punch*, 3 December 1908, 22.

²⁶ "People and Things", *The Australian*, 22 May 1907, 5.

Ambitions of a 'New Woman'

After completing her studies at the University of Melbourne in December 1908, Stella immediately began making arrangements to sail to Europe in order to undertake postgraduate studies in Berlin, Paris and London.²⁷ Stella was one of thousands of Australian women who travelled overseas in the early twentieth century, particularly to Britain.²⁸ As discussed previously, between 1870 and 1940, thousands of Australian women travelled to, and resided in, London to pursue educational opportunities that were not available to them in Australia.²⁹ This allowed women to advance their skills and knowledge, engage with the latest research and techniques, and to study under experts in various fields of scholarship.³⁰ Stella took full advantage of this opportunity to gain greater education and independence.³¹

Stella's mother, Pattie, initially opposed her plan to travel to Europe to pursue postgraduate studies. However, Stella was determined to travel overseas and prepared to rebel against her mother's wishes and carry out her plan without her support. She was also prepared to use the money she was awarded after winning the Dixson Research Scholarship to financially support herself while overseas should her parents be unwilling to fund her travels. Despite Pattie's opposition, Alfred was supportive of Stella taking advantage of educational opportunities and insisted on supporting her financially while she was overseas.³² Once the matter of how Stella's travel would be funded was finalised, it was decided that Catherine would travel with her and act as a chaperone.³³

While Alfred supported Stella's decision to travel to Europe, the issue did cause conflict and tension within the Deakin family, and it seems possible that Pattie was not as supportive of Stella's ambitions. While the root cause of the conflict remains unknown, both John Rickard and Judith Brett believe that it resulted from ongoing tensions between Pattie and aunt Catherine, and Pattie's exclusion from discussions and decision-making about Stella's plans.³⁴ Judith Brett believes that Pattie only learned of Stella's plans through one of Stella's school friends, who had presumed that she already knew.³⁵ Though we do not know exactly how Pattie reacted to the news of Stella's determination to go overseas, evidence points to a schism between mother and daughter. For example, Stella left the family home and spent extensive time at Catherine's home, The Elms, including a Christmas day that Catherine characterised as being "wretched, painful [and full] of silence and sorrow."³⁶ John Rickard also insinuates that Pattie did not participate in the cultural ritual of the dockside farewell when Catherine and Stella departed in February 1909.³⁷

²⁷ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 126; Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 374.

²⁸ Pesman, *Duty Free*, 5, 23; Woollacott, "'All This Is the Empire, I Told Myself'," 1004; Woollacott, "The Colonial Flaneuse," 761; Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 3.

²⁹ Woollacott, "'All This Is the Empire, I Told Myself'," 1004; Woollacott, "The Colonial Flaneuse," 768; Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 4-5; Tasker, "'The sweet uses of London'," 2.

³⁰ Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 6.

³¹ Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 4-5.

³² "Stella Deakin University of Melbourne Student Record"; Craig, "Lady Rivett's Proud Memories," 14.

³³ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 126.

³⁴ For further information on Pattie and Catherine's strained relationship see Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 169, 73, 374-76; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 126-27, 30.

³⁵ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 374-75.

³⁶ Catherine Deakin quoted in Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 127.

³⁷ Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 130.

In response to the ongoing tension with Pattie, Catherine recorded in her diary that she was facing bleak feelings when she left for Europe with Stella.

Hence my farewell to my darling brother was rendered a thousandfold more painful to both of us. I believe he understands me altho' naturally he must try also in a measure understand P's [Pattie's] attitude and I will never try to vindicate myself at her expense more than is absolutely necessary. So I left my old home under the most painful circumstances which haunted the whole of my absence ...³⁸

Pattie's negative reaction to Stella's decision to travel to Europe juxtaposes with Alfred's strong support of her taking advantage of this opportunity. However, despite her mother's disapproval, Stella, aided by Alfred and Catherine's support, was determined.

Stella's decision to travel overseas to undergo postgraduate studies was praised in the Australian press. She was presented as a young woman taking full advantage of the new emancipatory opportunities open to her, especially regarding education and mobility. An article published in the weekly magazine *Table Talk* on 11 February 1909, shortly after her departure, details Stella's travel plans and academic intentions.³⁹ It is highly complimentary about Stella's academic achievements, and affirms that she had "a brilliant career in store for her" and that "golden opportunities to perfect herself in that study [science] await[ed] her" in Europe.⁴⁰ The piece highlights her intention to study in Berlin, which was regarded as a "great centre of scientific research" and at the Paris Faculty of Sciences under Marie Curie (although she did not actually carry out any studies in Paris).⁴¹

On 4 February 1909, Stella and Catherine departed for London aboard the *SS Pericles*. Their voyage lasted nearly two months and exposed them to more of the British empire's colonies and territories than most British subjects ever saw, especially while navigating around Africa.⁴² During her voyage and time in Europe, Stella participated in the cultural ritual of recording her experiences through near daily diary letters addressed to her younger sister, Vera.⁴³ As these diary entries reveal, Stella took up the liberatory opportunities associated with shipboard travel with enthusiasm. These included playing competitive sport with male and female passengers, taking on active leadership roles on multiple passenger committees, and developing a presence and gaining acceptance in male-dominated areas of the ship, including crew areas and the bridge. Stella was also an active participant in quaits, novelty games such as egg and spoon races, and deck golf tournaments involving both male and female

³⁸ Catherine Deakin quoted in Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 130.

³⁹ "Personal", *Table Talk*, 11 February 1909, 7; "Newspapers and Periodicals," eMelbourne: The city past & present, School of Historical & Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, 2008, accessed 30 June, 2022, <https://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM01060b.htm>.

⁴⁰ "Personal", 7.

⁴¹ "Personal", 7. Stella was ultimately unable to study in Paris and instead undertook postgraduate studies in Berlin and London.

⁴² Woollacott, "'All This Is the Empire, I Told Myself'," 1005; Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London*, 20.

⁴³ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 7 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 13 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 20 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Pesman, *Duty Free*, 12.

passengers.⁴⁴ In preparation for her time in Berlin, she began taking German lessons from a fellow passenger and consulted university lecture calendars.⁴⁵ Stella was also involved in numerous passenger committees. She was a member of the ship's general committee, secretary of the ladies' committee and general manager of "four to five ladies committees and sub-committees."⁴⁶ These duties took up a significant amount of Stella's time on the *Pericles*. When writing to Vera, Stella remarked that a major component of her work was "hustl[ing] and manag[ing] everyone" and that "it would take too long to go into any details of the various petty difficulties that a secretary is everlastingly encountering."⁴⁷

Stella's leadership roles allowed her to develop professional working relationships with high-ranking members of the ship's crew, including the captain. As part of her duties as a committee member, she conducted an inspection of the ship's galley and third-class areas with the captain and purser. Her scientific prowess also enabled her to develop a collegial relationship with the captain. She was invited to the bridge to discuss a technique he was using to study ocean currents, namely, jettisoning bottles containing slips with instructions on how to report where the bottle had been found. She reported to Vera that the "captain is very pleased to have anyone to explain these things to – especially to someone – as he says – who knows something about these matters."⁴⁸ Stella's relationship with the captain allowed her to speak with him at will, and, at the end of the voyage, she felt that she was able to put in a good word with him on behalf of her favourite officer.⁴⁹

After disembarking from the *Pericles* on Sunday 21 March 1909, Stella and Catherine had a brief sojourn in London. During this time, they continued to make arrangements for Stella to study in Berlin and fulfilled social obligations.⁵⁰ Stella was reunited with her romantic interest David Rivett, who was studying at Oxford University, on the wharf. Stella and David had met while studying at the University of Melbourne. He was six months older than her and one year ahead in the same degree. They first worked alongside each other in the laboratory during Stella's second year. At first, she was too respectful of his senior status to do more than admire him from afar. However, they soon grew close and remained in touch after David graduated with a Rhodes Scholarship and travelled to Oxford University to pursue postgraduate studies.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 7 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 13 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1. The ship contained an eighteen-hole deck golf course on the top deck. It was modelled on the game played on land except mallets were used instead of clubs and wooden discs instead of balls.

⁴⁵ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 7 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁴⁶ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 7 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁴⁷ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 7 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁴⁸ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 7 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁴⁹ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 7 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁵⁰ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 1 April 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁵¹ Craig, "Lady Rivett's Proud Memories," 15.

After their arrival in London, Stella and Catherine immediately secured suitable accommodation for women of their social standing. In a letter to Vera, Stella characterised their lodgings as being large, comfortable, quiet, nicely furnished and staffed by waitresses and maids. She also specified that they were served lunch and five to six-course dinners each night.⁵² Like many Australian women who travelled to London in the early twentieth century, Stella reflected that she regarded London as feeling “familiar and homelike after our other ports of call.”⁵³ They quickly sent out letters of introduction and spent time hosting social events and paying calls to various associates. They also attended many of London’s cultural institutions, including the Wallace Collection and the Victoria and Albert Museum, and saw several plays, including a performance of Hamlet at the Lyceum.⁵⁴

Berlin

After London, Stella and Catherine broke out of the well-travelled imperial networks they had been following and made their way to Berlin. Upon their arrival in late March 1909, nine weeks after they had left Melbourne, they reunited with Miss Berry (first name unknown), whom they had met aboard the *Pericles*. Like Stella, Berry was an example of an Australian woman who engaged with emancipatory opportunities; she had travelled independently to Berlin, where she also intended to participate in university studies.⁵⁵ Stella, Catherine and Berry quickly secured accommodation at Pension Grau, run by the “impoverished daughters of a very aristocratic Prussian family.”⁵⁶ The group quickly developed a close relationship and Berry proved to be an important factor in helping Stella and Catherine during their early days in Berlin, especially in assisting Stella enrol at the Physikalisch Chemisches Institut, where she was to study for a semester.⁵⁷ Soon after her arrival, Stella, with Berry acting as an interpreter, visited the university where she intended to study to enquire about semester dates and the course fees.⁵⁸ Stella later reported to Vera that she had “gladly stood in the background while she [Berry] interviewed endless officials and made notes as to dates, prices etc.”⁵⁹ The group also engaged the services of a German teacher named Herr Gerlich, who had tutored Berry in German prior to Stella and Catherine’s arrival. In a letter to Vera, Stella described him as being “a beaming plump, good natured German teacher in one of the big schools – well up in all the latest methods and most particular over one’s pronunciation.”⁶⁰ While both women

⁵² Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 20 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁵³ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 20 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁵⁴ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 20 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 15 May 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁵⁵ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 20 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 15 May 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, undated, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁵⁶ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 15 May 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁵⁷ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 20 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 15 May 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁵⁸ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 20 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁵⁹ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 15 May 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁶⁰ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 15 May 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

were waiting for their respective university courses to begin, Stella, Catherine and Berry explored Berlin. They attended the orchestra and a performance of *Twelfth Night*, took walks, and visited the Zoological Gardens, and Stella continued to study chemistry in preparation for her course.⁶¹

Stella began her short term of postgraduate study under Nerst and Van't Hoff in late April 1909.⁶² In Germany – in contrast to Australia – it was highly unusual for women of Stella's social class to enrol in university courses, especially in science, prior to World War I. Women were considered outsiders in the German university environment, and many male professors opposed their efforts to become fully fledged students.⁶³ Nonetheless, by the early twentieth century, many legal barriers that prevented German women's participation in university studies had been removed.⁶⁴ But, as Caroline Bland notes, it continued to be uncommon for German women to complete university studies, especially in science, due to assumptions about women's lack of natural aptitude and rationality, and the insufficient education in science and mathematics that many girls' schools provided.⁶⁵ Bland also reports that "a university degree was generally required to be able to enter the professions, and this entailed a widening of intellectual and social vistas hitherto deemed unthinkable for single middle-class women, whose reputation depended upon ignorant innocence."⁶⁶ During her time in Germany, Stella remained conscious of her uncommon circumstances. In a letter to Vera, she observed, "of course, in Europe no proper young lady went to university, and I had to be on my guard every moment to preserve propriety."⁶⁷

While Stella began studying at the Institut in April, she struggled with the university's bureaucratic processes and did not undertake the formal matriculation procedure until June.⁶⁸ In a diary entry addressed to Vera, Stella explained how she was required to gather all of the necessary documents and be prepared to pay her course fees on the day. She was then required to wait alongside sixty other students until called to meet the Rektor. Once her name was called, she was required to partake in a discussion with a round table of university officials about her religion, her father's position, and her previous educational experiences. In her recount of events, she reflected that "however at last I got round the table and survived the personal questions which were hurled at me."⁶⁹ The matriculation process was extremely difficult and draining for Stella. She indicated that she had returned home:

⁶¹ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 1 April 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 15 May 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁶² Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 2 June 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Marston, "Albert Cherbury David Rivett. 1885-1961," 442-43.

⁶³ Caroline Bland, "Through Science to Selfhood? The Early Generations of University Women in Fiction," *Oxford German Studies* 45, no. 1 (2016): 45, 48.

⁶⁴ Marilyn Bailey Ogilvie, *Women in Science: Antiquity through the Nineteenth Century: A Biographical Dictionary With Annotated Bibliography* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986), 20.

⁶⁵ Bland, "Through Science to Selfhood?," 46-47. While female university students were rare, they were valorised in German literature as epitomising the social and intellectual freedoms associated with the 'new woman' and first wave feminism. According to Bland, these women represented the emancipatory possibilities associated with higher education, participation in the sciences and the possibility of a paid career. See Bland, "Through Science to Selfhood?," 45-47, 58.

⁶⁶ Bland, "Through Science to Selfhood?," 45.

⁶⁷ Craig, "Lady Rivett's Proud Memories," 15.

⁶⁸ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 20 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 2 June 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 29 July 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1. In this context, the term matriculation refers to formal admission to a university course.

⁶⁹ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 29 July 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

... after two and gave up any hope of lab work that afternoon. Feeling as if I had been put thro' a mill to say the least. It is no joke facing officials, en masse, in a foreign land – only one of whom spoke a little English.⁷⁰

Stella did receive her certificate of matriculation that day. She was, however, horrified to learn that the university would be keeping her official university papers until she wished to leave the university and had paid for her leaving certificate.⁷¹

Between April and July 1909, Stella's university studies occupied most of her time and energy. A typical day for Stella in this period included attending chemistry lectures in the morning and conducting laboratory work in the afternoon. This was often followed by another lecture and discussions with fellow students and academics, with her days often concluding between six and eight o'clock.⁷² Stella studied in an overwhelmingly male environment, and her status as the solitary female student attracted a lot of positive attention from her fellow students. In a diary entry addressed to Vera, dated Thursday 8 July, she recorded that, "Another Herr – Doktor in the lab joined the would be circle of my Deutsch acquaintances. Hung around until he could help me on with my coat and opened a conversation. Most amusing V."⁷³ Stella was also an object of fascination in the lab because she was Australian – something of which she soon grew tired. She wrote to Vera that, "none of them could be nicer, in fact I often wish they'd be less interested in the Australian – while as for starrng I'm getting quite hardened nowadays."⁷⁴ While a popular student for these reasons, Stella also received attention from her professors for her academic abilities. Despite Stella's intention of only studying at the Institut for a short period over the summer semester, her professors encouraged her to enrol for another semester in order to study mathematics. However, she chose to decline the offer and travelled to London, where she was to conduct the next phase of her postgraduate studies.⁷⁵ Stella remained a unique figure during her studies in Germany, undoubtedly playing a role in disproving local assumptions about women's lack of aptitude in mathematics and science.

London

After departing Berlin on 3 August 1909, Stella and Catherine travelled to Dresden for a holiday. They then proceeded to London, where Stella was to continue her scientific studies at University College, which had

⁷⁰ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 29 July 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁷¹ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 29 July 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁷² Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, undated, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 2 June 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 29 July 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁷³ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, undated, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁷⁴ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, undated, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

⁷⁵ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, undated, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Marston, "Albert Cherbury David Rivett. 1885-1961," 443.

permitted women to study arts, science and law since 1878.⁷⁶ Privileged middle and upper-class women had been allowed to attend university in England since approximately 1869.⁷⁷ According to Claire Jones, while the number of women participating in science courses at English universities was small, by the 1900s, they were not regarded as strangers in the laboratory environment, or as transgressing the bounds of femininity.⁷⁸ Women, including Stella, were also able to create formal working relationships with their male peers and conduct collaborative scientific research.⁷⁹

During her stay at University College, Stella studied under Sir William Ramsay (1852–1916), a professor of general chemistry who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1904 for his discovery of the noble gases.⁸⁰ Ramsay was known for his inventiveness and the scrupulousness of his scientific techniques.⁸¹ He was also strongly supportive of women, especially in regard to engaging in higher education and entering into male-dominated fields, such as science. Ramsay took practical steps to support women, including Stella, to study science. He encouraged the integration of female students, and was strongly supportive of his students conducting original scientific investigations.⁸²

In a similar fashion to her time in Berlin, Stella conducted near-daily research in the laboratory while studying under Ramsay. She confided to her sister Vera on multiple occasions that her progress was ultimately slow and frustrating: “It has been even at times more disappointing and disheartening here as far as the actual progress in research goes. Always such an uphill fight.”⁸³ Despite these difficulties, Stella was extremely dedicated to her research. In letters to Vera, she recorded that, between October 1909 and April 1910, she worked tirelessly on her project, often to the point of exhaustion, and that she was the only student who continued working in the laboratory during the Christmas holidays.⁸⁴ The results of Stella’s research under Professor Ramsay were published in the 1910 volume of *Transactions of Chemical Society*, in an article titled ‘Some Reactions of Ketene. Combination with Hydrocyanic Acid’, co-authored with Norman Thomas Mortimer Wilsmore (1868–1940). Wilsmore was a fellow graduate of the University of Melbourne who worked as Ramsay’s research assistant and later as an assistant professor, who also conducted postgraduate studies and work in Germany. He was also married to the

⁷⁶ Diary of Stella Deakin, 30 November 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 25 February 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2; Claire G. Jones, “All your dreadful scientific things!: women, science and education in the years around 1900,” *History of Education* 46, no. 2 (2017): 164.

⁷⁷ Jones, “All your dreadful scientific things!,” 163.

⁷⁸ Jones, “All your dreadful scientific things!,” 162, 64.

⁷⁹ Jones, “All your dreadful scientific things!,” 174-75; Claire G. Jones, “Women, Science and Professional Identity, c. 1860-1914,” in *Prekarious Professionals: Gender, Identities and Social Change in Modern Britain*, ed. Heidi Egginton and Zoë Thomas (London: University of London Press, 2021), 67.

⁸⁰ Carey, “Departing from their sphere,” 138; “Sir William Ramsay,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1998, accessed 8 March, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Ramsay>.

⁸¹ “William Ramsay,” Science History Institute, accessed 20 April, 2018, <https://www.sciencehistory.org/historical-profile/william-ramsay>.

⁸² “William Ramsay,” *The Victorian Web*, 2015, accessed 2018, 20 April, <https://victorianweb.org/science/ramsay.html>.

⁸³ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 1 April 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, undated, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2.

⁸⁴ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 25 February 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 1 April 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2.

University of Melbourne's first female science graduate, Jessie Little.⁸⁵ Their article detailed the results of their research into the combination of keten with liquid hydrogen chloride under pressure at a normal temperature; this caused a reaction which produced a new compound in a pure state that could be isolated. However, they were unable to ascertain the compound's exact constitution before the conclusion of their partnership.⁸⁶

Shifting Ambitions

Stella and David Rivett's romantic relationship developed further after she returned to London. The pair became engaged in late 1909, when Stella was twenty-three years old.⁸⁷ Stella's engagement to David signalled the beginning of her transforming ambitions. This evolution occurred over the course of approximately two years while Stella continued to conduct her scientific research, and can be attributed to several intersecting factors, including her father's influence, her ongoing ill health, and the reality of the expectations that she would conform to the role of homemaker and socialite after marriage in the face of her desire to pursue a career.

After her engagement, Stella continued her research with Professor Ramsay. She also began planning what type of paid work she would carry out on her return to Australia, ultimately determining that she wished to use her Diploma of Education and become a teacher in the emerging field of domestic science. On 6 May 1910, Stella recorded, in a diary letter addressed to Vera, that Dr Nunn had approached her after a lecture and had asked what specific areas of science teaching she wished to study. Nunn also offered to accompany her on a visit to observe the operations of a demonstration school, which Stella regarded as an invaluable opportunity.⁸⁸ Stella also attempted to gain entry into the King's College domestic science course, however, for unknown reasons, she ultimately did not realise this goal.⁸⁹ In June 1910, Stella wrote to Vera that she was spending her spare time researching "the latest advances in science teaching in girls' schools and especially the adaptation to meet the new demand for training in domestic subjects" so that she could "come back almost as much of an authority on the subject as it is possible."⁹⁰ She also stated that she had:

⁸⁵ Stella Deakin and Norman Thomas Mortimer Wilsmore, "Some reactions of keten. Combination with hydrocyanic acid," *Transactions of the Chemical Society* 97 (1910): 1968-78; Carey, "Departing from their sphere," 138; "Wilsmore, Norman Thomas Mortimer (1868-1940)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 20 April 2018, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wilsmore-norman-mortimer-9130>; "Wilsmore, Norman Thomas Mortimer (1868-1940)," Bright Sparcs, 1997, accessed 2 December, 2021, <https://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/bsparcs/biogs/P002764b.htm>. Wilsmore was later an assistant professor, who also conducted postgraduate studies and work in Germany.

⁸⁶ Deakin and Wilsmore, "Some reactions of keten," 1968-78.

⁸⁷ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 4 March 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 142.

⁸⁸ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 5 May 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2.

⁸⁹ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, undated, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2. The King's College domestic science course was established in 1895 and intended to prepare women to be keepers of the home separate from men. The course was subsequently transformed by Hilda Oakley (1867-1950) between 1907 and 1915. She created the first degree course in domestic science that prepared women to work in fields including teaching, social work, nursing and business. The course also pioneered special lectures that gave an intellectual and scientific foundation to household and social sciences. For further information on the King's College domestic science course see "Domestic Science," King's College London, accessed 12 January, 2018, <http://www.kingscollections.org/exhibitions/archives/studentdays/chelsea-college/academic-development/domestic-science>; Ruth Watts, *Women in Science: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), 147.

⁹⁰ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 17 June 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2.

... made a study of this ... with a view to teaching on my return ... There is such a new field opening up in this move[ment] of adapted sc[ience] teaching for girls that I'd like to have a finger in the pie in its [introduction] in Australia.⁹¹

Stella thus planned on rebelling against social conventions and marriage bars, which restricted married women's participation in paid work, and becoming a teacher on her return to Australia.⁹² Teaching was a popular choice of occupation among female science graduates. Farley Kelly has identified that at least thirty-seven of the sixty-two women who were members of Stella's cohort worked as teachers after graduating from the University of Melbourne.⁹³

After her engagement to David, Stella began to participate more frequently in domestic duties and social engagements. The couple would attend social events with Deakin family friends, including former governor-general Lord Northcote and his wife, Lady Northcote. They also visited cultural institutions, including the National Gallery, where they would view their favourite artworks together.⁹⁴ During her final months in London, Stella was also required to assist in the running of the household she shared with Catherine, because they were no longer employing a housekeeper. Therefore, Stella devoted time and energy to maintaining the house, completing domestic tasks including cleaning, washing and sewing, packing for their return to Australia, and preparing their flat for its return to its owner.⁹⁵ At the same time she took on a more wifely role; she described to Vera that she was willingly taking on more domestic roles within David's home, including cleaning his flat and preparing his lunch each day.⁹⁶

Despite Stella's intentions of working professionally as a domestic science teacher, her marriage to David marked the end of her scientific career. This was especially surprising given that the article published in *The Weekly Times* in July 1911, just four months before her wedding, gave the impression that she intended on continuing her scientific work.⁹⁷ Her father's expectations of how his daughters should conduct themselves after marriage, and her ill health, are possible reasons for Stella's abandonment of science.

As discussed previously, Alfred held a strong belief that his daughters should take advantage of the freedoms associated with progressive ideals of womanhood, especially regarding higher education, prior to marriage. However, after marriage, he expected them to become informed home-based companions for their husband. In

⁹¹ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 17 June 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2.

⁹² Dwyer, "Justice at Last?," 152; Colley, "For Better or for Worse," 230.

⁹³ Kelly, "Learning and teaching science," 51.

⁹⁴ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 4 January 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 1 July 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2; "Northcote, Henry Stafford (1846-1911)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 25 October, 2021, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/northcote-henry-stafford-7861>.

⁹⁵ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 5 May 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 1 July 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2.

⁹⁶ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 1 July 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2.

⁹⁷ "Miss Stella Deakin," 10.

November 1909, when Stella was completing the most rigorous portion of her research under Professor Ramsay, Alfred wrote to Stella expressing his belief that her outlook and life would change dramatically after her marriage.

You appear not to realise how entirely your outlook and aim ... has been affected by your engagement ... You were originally to make this trip the finale of your studies and a holiday for a few months ... returning home to settle down to some kind of employment of an educational character – now your ideas have altered fundamentally.⁹⁸

In a letter dated 1 January 1910, Alfred again reiterated his belief that Stella would cease her own scientific work and become a supportive presence for David after marriage. He wrote to her that:

Your own qualifications will be useful in the meantime but not essential. Though of course it would be fortunate if you are able to help him afterwards in his actual work while not neglecting his house to do so. Of course I mean real help and not pretexts for being together.⁹⁹

Alfred's views and advice on how Stella's life would change after marriage were not uncommon, and it would have been extraordinary if Stella had continued her scientific career after marriage. Only one of her cohort of Melbourne women science graduates did so. The prevailing societal expectation remained that women needed to choose between marriage and a career due to the predominant belief that motherhood and paid employment were incompatible.¹⁰⁰ One assumes that Stella factored her father's wishes into her decision-making, given the nature of their relationship and that he had communicated his considered views on the subject of her life post-marriage. Despite her rebellious moments, prior to her marriage, all of Stella's actions were carried out with her father's support. It can be assumed that she would not have received the same level of support and approval from Alfred if she had continued her career after her marriage.

Stella's ill health was probably also a factor in her adoption of a domestic outlook after marriage. Her health problems are apparent in the letters she wrote to Vera while aboard the *Pericles*. In many of her letters, she would report that she was not feeling well and that "her head is never clear enough to read anything very solid."¹⁰¹ Stella continued to document her ill health in her diary entries throughout her university studies in Berlin and London. In numerous diary entries, she characterised herself as feeling sick or "off."¹⁰² In August 1909, she characterised herself as being "thinner and more of a weary willie than I've ever been while we were in Berlin."¹⁰³ During

⁹⁸ Letter from Alfred Deakin to Stella Deakin, 28 November 1909, Papers of Catherine Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS4913, Box 3, Folder 16.

⁹⁹ Letter from Alfred Deakin to Stella Deakin, 4 January 1910, Papers of Catherine Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS4913, Box 3, Folder 17.

¹⁰⁰ Carolyn Rasmussen, "'Science was so much more exciting': Six women in the physical sciences," in *On the Edge of Discovery. Australian Women in Science*, ed. Farley Kelly (East Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 1993), 109.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 7 March 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

¹⁰² Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 15 May 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 16 July 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

¹⁰³ Dairy of Stella Deakin, 19 August 1909, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 1.

Stella's time in London, her illness continued to have adverse effects on her life and work. She reported to Vera that it made it extremely difficult for her to function normally and conduct her research, which led to her suffering feelings of depression.¹⁰⁴ Stella was able to complete her studies, but her ill health would have certainly impeded her ability to complete her work to the best of her ability. The root cause of Stella's health issues may have been a gynaecological condition that her mother, Pattie, also suffered. John Rickard and Judith Brett note that Pattie believed that her condition was due to poor treatment during Ivy's birth and a hereditary gynaecological condition that caused her to have fragile capillaries. This condition caused her to bleed excessively during menstruation and after childbirth. Pattie's condition ultimately proved to be incurable and greatly affected her quality of life, because she was frequently unwell and confined to bed.¹⁰⁵ In February 1910, Stella wrote to Vera that it was "too bad if it means I have to lay up now every fourth week or so," which implies her condition was connected to menstruation. It is thus possible that Stella inherited Pattie's condition.¹⁰⁶ If such a disability had such a disrupting effect on her studies, it would doubtless have been the same had she pursued a career.

Despite Stella's intentions of continuing her scientific studies and becoming a domestic science teacher, ultimately she did not pursue this ambition. She instead aligned herself with her father's instructions and societal expectations of how women of her social class should conduct themselves after marriage. After her marriage on 11 November 1911, Stella became a mother of two sons, Rohan, and Kenneth, in 1917 and 1923 respectively, and a supportive wife of a significant Australian male figure.¹⁰⁷ In contrast to her sisters, Ivy and Vera, Stella did not carry out any major philanthropic work; she instead lived a largely home-centred life. Newspaper articles written about Stella before and after her marriage reveal this shift. In an article entitled 'Miss Stella Deakin. Studying Acids in the Laboratory', published in *The Weekly Times* in July 1911, four months before her wedding, Stella is characterised as a progressive and modern figure:

Miss Stella Deakin, daughter of Mr Alfred Deakin, is a clever student with a soul above ordinary feminine trivialities. Her interest is concentrated on "the rapidity of the formation of acids." To the average woman the scientific term will convey little meaning, but it is not with the average woman that Miss Deakin is concerned.¹⁰⁸

The article also conveys Stella's intentions to continue to participate in the scientific field, describing the laboratory in Melbourne where she was conducting her work. Stella's postgraduate studies in Berlin and London

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 25 February 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2; Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 1 April 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2.

¹⁰⁵ Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 99, 169; Rickard, *A Family Romance*, 80.

Possible causes of Pattie and Stella's illnesses include fibroids, adenomyosis and polyps. For more information see "Structural Causes of Too-Heavy Periods," Web MD, 2010, accessed 16 January, 2018, <https://blogs.webmd.com/womens-health/2010/11/structural-causes-of-too-heavy-periods.html>.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Stella Deakin to Vera Deakin, 25 February 1910, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 2.

¹⁰⁷ Rivett, *David Rivett*, 58, 70. David went on to make a significant and lasting contribution to the Australian scientific landscape. He became the Chair of Chemistry at the University of Melbourne in 1924 and in 1927 became the Chief Executive Officer of the newly formed Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, where he worked until his retirement in 1949. For more information on David Rivett's career and scientific achievements see: Marston, "Albert Cherbury David Rivett. 1885-1961," 437-55; Rivett, *David Rivett*; Schedvin, "Rivett, Sir Albert Cherbury David."

¹⁰⁸ "Miss Stella Deakin," 10.

were also explained.¹⁰⁹ After her marriage, instead of portraying her as an accomplished female scientist, newspapers reported her attending and hosting philanthropic and fundraising events, social events associated with the University of Melbourne, where David worked, as well as musical performances.¹¹⁰ Stella's initial intention to pursue a career in science after marriage was ambitious and she, like many other scientific women in the early twentieth century, ultimately accepted the inevitability of the transformation of their lives after marriage.¹¹¹ Caroline Rasmussen observes that female scientists in the early twentieth century represented "their career in terms of 'one thing led to another'. They lived in a world where 'the natural state of affairs' was that women married and had children. Men had careers."¹¹²

The limitations Stella encountered are demonstrated starkly when the course of her life is compared to that of Norman Wilsmore, with whom she collaborated while in London. Prior to Stella's marriage, she and Wilsmore had similar lives. They were both awarded a BSc from the University of Melbourne and travelled to Europe to conduct scientific work and research; however, women were not eligible to receive Rhodes Scholarships. Both studied and worked in Germany, and in London under Professor Ramsay, and returned to Australia between 1910 and 1913.¹¹³ Wilsmore was married after he graduated from the University of Melbourne and prior to his departure for Europe, an action that did not impede his work and career. After his return to Australia, Wilsmore held positions including the foundation chair of chemistry at the University of Western Australia, vice-chancellor of the University of Western Australia, fellow of the Australian National Research Council, vice-president of the Australian National Research Council and president of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute.¹¹⁴ In contrast, marriage marked the conclusion of Stella's scientific career.

Conclusion

Prior to her marriage to David Rivett, Stella took advantage of many of the opportunities that were opening up for women of her social class, including university studies and overseas travel. After rebelling against her mother's wishes, Stella used her family's wealth and the increasing freedoms given to early twentieth-century Australian women to travel overseas to pursue further scientific studies. These factors allowed her to become a representative figure of the educational opportunities associated with the 'new woman' in countries including Australia, Germany and Great Britain. After her engagement to David Rivett, Stella had planned on combining a career in domestic science teaching with domesticity, thereby challenging societal expectations that directed her to abandon her desire to take up employment and become a home-based figure. Stella was, however, unable to achieve this ambition. Her experiences underscore the limitations women continued to encounter, especially after marriage,

¹⁰⁹ "Miss Stella Deakin," 10.

¹¹⁰ "To Honour Service," *The Australasian*, 23 February 1924, 42; "Melbourne Repertory Play Society," *The Australasian*, 1 March 1924, 48; "Recitals at Linden," *The Australasian*, 2 August 1924, 49; "University Ceremony," *The Australasian*, 22 March 1924, 48; "To Say Au Revoir," *The Australasian*, 25 October 1924, 48; "At Home at Lyceum Club," *The Australasian*, 9 February 1924, 42; "Parties of the week," *The Australasian*, 19 September 1925, 60; "A Distinguished Visitor," *The Australasian*, 12 September 1925, 64; "Commencement Week," *The Australasian*, 17 April 1926, 51; "Lyceum Club Party," *The Australasian*, 26 June 1926, 53; "Women's Hospital. Appeal for £100,000," *The Argus*, 23 April 1929, 6.

¹¹¹ Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*, 122; Rasmussen, "'Science was so much more exciting'," 109.

¹¹² Rasmussen, "'Science was so much more exciting'," 109.

¹¹³ Alafaci, "Wilsmore, Norman Thomas Mortimer.," De Garis, "Wilsmore, Norman Thomas Mortimer."

¹¹⁴ Alafaci, "Wilsmore, Norman Thomas Mortimer.," De Garis, "Wilsmore, Norman Thomas Mortimer."

even those who had the greatest advantages and access to these new opportunities. Before marriage, Stella was regarded as an accomplished woman in her chosen field and an aspirational figure, whereas after marriage she was regarded not as an accomplished figure in her own right but rather simply as the wife of a high-profile scientist. Stella's experiences therefore demonstrate that while she benefited from many of the expanding opportunities for women at the time, she was also constrained by societal expectations of women and wives of the upper classes. In the following chapter, I examine how Vera, the youngest of the Deakin sisters, was also a representative figure of the 'new woman' in her early life, and how, during World War I, she undertook extraordinary voluntary work.

Chapter Four: Vera Deakin, Red Cross Worker, 1904–1919

Anxious relatives, who seek the aid of the Red Cross Bureau to discover something more than the bare official 'wounded' or 'missing' about loved ones in the casualty lists, are indebted to Miss Deakin for much of the information they receive. – The Chronicle, 24 August 1918, 23¹

In 1915, aged twenty-four, Vera Deakin, motivated by an intense desire to aid the war effort, travelled to Cairo to volunteer for the Australian Red Cross. She was accompanied only by her close friend Winifred Johnson. On their arrival, they were informed by the Red Cross Commissioners that the following morning they would be opening and running the Australian branch of the WMIB. The WMIB provided an important service to thousands of families during the war, gathering detailed information about soldiers' fates to supplement the official notifications that families would receive when a relative was reported as wounded, missing or killed in action, thereby easing their distress. As head of the WMIB, Vera took on an extraordinary role – particularly for someone of her age and gender. She led an organisation that required immense amounts of bureaucratic work, continual liaison with military authorities, and was laden with intense emotional labour. Emerging opportunities for women and the social sway and connections associated with the Deakin family greatly aided and enabled Vera's work.

In this chapter, I reveal how Vera, enabled by the privileges associated with the Deakin family name, resembled the unmarried 'new woman' figure in her life between 1904 and 1919. I first survey her musical education in both Australia and Europe, and her performance career in which, like her sister Ivy, she was not regarded as transgressing the bounds of femininity. Subsequently, I examine how she defied her father's wishes and travelled overseas to carry out voluntary work as head of the WMIB. This chapter demonstrates how Vera created her own conception of womanhood that blended the stereotypically feminine quality of empathy with freedoms associated with the progressive ideals of womanhood such as leadership positions in male-dominated areas. I also examine how, during her work with the WMIB, Vera used the social privileges and connections associated with the Deakin family name. Each of these factors enabled Vera to take advantage of an opportunity not available to most Australian women and to successfully run a large and extraordinary wartime organisation.

This chapter draws heavily upon an extensive collection of interviews with Vera Deakin and her grandson Tom Harley, conducted between 1970 and 1977, and other related recordings, which provide valuable insights into her life.² These recordings enabled me to ascertain her thoughts, opinions, and recollections of her early life in her own voice. This chapter also makes use of detailed examinations of Vera's life and voluntary service during World War I conducted recently by myself, Elicia Taylor and Carole Woods. I previously studied Vera's life prior to World War I and her wartime service, with a focus on the influence of class and the identification of the factors that contributed to her success running the WMIB.³ In her PhD thesis on Australian single women and World War I, Elicia Taylor examines Vera's wartime service, highlighting how she disproved prevailing assumptions of the

¹ "Australian War Workers in London. Miss Vera Deakin," *The Chronicle*, 24 August 1918, 23.

² National Library of Australia, "Vera Deakin White interviewed by Tom Harley." The recordings are comprised of nineteen sessions that last a total of nearly fourteen hours.

³ Scott-Deane, "Women, the Red Cross and World War I," 37-48; Scott-Deane, "'Tracing the Missing'," 68-87; Taylor, "An 'Army of Superfluous Women'," 112.

ability of women of her social class to carry out wartime work, that while undertaken in an unpaid capacity, resembled professional employment.⁴ Carole Woods recently published a biographical account of Vera's life, with a focus on her lifetime of service with the Australian Red Cross.⁵ In this chapter I necessarily draw on this scholarship, but ask new questions about Vera's life, the most prominent of these being: how did she blend traditionally feminine qualities with progressive ideals to construct her own unique model of early twentieth-century womanhood?

Early Musical Education

Like her two older sisters, Vera followed her father's testament to pursue higher education and a public career before marriage. As outlined in chapter one, Vera received a musically focused primary education at home, followed by an academically focused education at MCEGGS. Like her sister Ivy, Vera was musically talented and chose to pursue a musically focused education during her secondary and tertiary studies. In her oral history, Vera reflected that she felt that she had benefited more from Catherine's teaching than her older sisters, because she practised more than them, playing duets, four-handed pieces and great classical pieces with her aunt.⁶ While still undertaking her secondary education, Vera would accompany Ivy when she rehearsed violin concertos by composers including Beethoven, Bruch and Mendelssohn.⁷

In 1904, at the age of thirteen, Vera began studying cello under Louis Hattenbach – her first private musical tuition outside of the home. Hattenbach also encouraged Vera to study singing, and she subsequently began taking lessons from Mrs Arthur Patten. This signalled the beginning of her departure from the stereotypical image of the middle-class girl playing piano in the drawing room.⁸ As a result of Hattenbach's teachings, Vera began to perform publicly, which drew attention from the media, both for her musical talents and her status as a daughter of Alfred Deakin. While still a student at MCEGGS, Vera made her public performance debut at a concert (described as being "of a high order of merit") on 24 October 1907, organised by Madame Elise Weidemann, where she performed two solos.⁹ On 28 April 1913, Vera was one of six cellists Hattenbach chose to perform at a concert presented by the Royal Victorian Liedertafel at the Melbourne Town Hall.¹⁰

After graduating from MCEGGS in 1909, Vera participated in English Literature courses at the University of Melbourne but did not complete a full degree.¹¹ In 1913, on the advice of her brother-in-law Herbert Brookes, Vera decided to follow in the footsteps of her older sister Stella and travel to Europe to complete further education in both singing and cello. Soon after Stella and Catherine's return, Vera requested that her aunt now chaperone

⁴ Taylor, "An 'Army of Superfluous Women'," 27.

⁵ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*.

⁶ Deakin & Harley, *Session 1 of 19*.

⁷ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*; Carole Woods, "'Du Holde Kunst.' The Musical Life of Vera Deakin," in *Marshall-Hall's Melbourne: Music, Art and Controversy 1891-1915*, ed. Thérèse Radic and Suzanne Robinson (North Melbourne, Vic: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2012), 39; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 55.

⁸ Doggett, "Beyond Gentility," 1; Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*, 87; Woods, "'Du Holde Kunst.'," 38; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 55-56.

⁹ "Exhibition of Women's Work. Yesterday's Proceedings. Large Attendance," *The Age*, 25 October 1907, 5; Woods, "'Du Holde Kunst.'," 39.

¹⁰ Woods, "'Du Holde Kunst.'," 39; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 56.

¹¹ Rickard, "White, Vera Deakin.," Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 55.

her abroad in order for her to undertake higher education in music. Vera recalled that Catherine was “free and willing” to accompany her, but it took much persuasion for Alfred and Pattie to allow her to travel, because they both doubted the value of the trip.¹² This was due to their assumption that she would soon marry and divide her time between domestic duties and philanthropic work and, thus, would not require further education.¹³ In any event, Vera was able to persuade her parents, and on 8 May 1913, Vera, Catherine and Miss Ida Woodward departed for London aboard the Aberdeen Line via Cape York. Ida was an old friend of Vera and daughter of artist Arthur Woodward, who was travelling to conduct further education in art.¹⁴ Vera’s travel was enabled by Catherine’s willingness to act as a chaperone and the financial resources of both the Deakin and Brookes families.

Vera, Catherine and Ida arrived in London in June 1913, where they stayed until the end of July. During this time, they conducted activities typical of women of their social standing. These included visiting art galleries, museums, churches, theatres and paying social calls to friends and relatives.¹⁵ Vera and Catherine were also reunited with Stella, who had accompanied her husband David to London, and the group attended the laying of the foundation stone ceremony for Australia House together.¹⁶ The group’s original intention was to remain in Britain for six months, but a letter from Alexander Heinemann, the singing teacher whom Vera had made arrangements to study under in Berlin, informing her that he had accepted a position as a Professor at the Graeff School of Vocal Culture in Budapest, forced them to change their plans. They abandoned much of their British plans, including a visit to Scotland to visit Pattie’s relatives the Massons, and decided to bring their journey to Berlin forward so that Vera could study with him before he departed for Budapest.¹⁷ Vera later recounted that the news of Heinemann’s relocation to Budapest had upset “her delicate aunt” and prevented Ida from studying at the Berlin School of Art.¹⁸ In a letter Catherine wrote to her friend Eva at home in Melbourne in November, 1913, she stated:

You can imagine what a dilemma this was and such a disappointment, because we had so many pleasant engagements in England and my other niece, Mrs Rivett, had come to London a few days before and we wanted to do numbers of things together. However, we had come for study!¹⁹

The group arrived in Berlin in late July 1913, and Vera immediately began lessons with Heinemann at the Berlin Conservatorium. At the same time, as the only member of the group who could speak German, Vera was burdened with finding suitable living quarters for the group.²⁰ After taking lessons with Heinemann throughout August, Vera, Catherine and Ida seriously considered whether they should relocate to Budapest. A major consideration was that none of them could speak Hungarian. Catherine communicated her anxieties about moving to Budapest

¹² Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*.

¹³ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 61.

¹⁴ Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 to 19*; Woods, "'Du Holde Kunst.'," 39.

¹⁵ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 66.

¹⁶ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 67.

¹⁷ Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*; Letter from Catherine Deakin to Eva, 25 November 1913, MS9056, Folder 3, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin, 1909-1914, National Library of Australia; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 67.

¹⁸ Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 to 19*; Woods, "'Du Holde Kunst.'," 41.

¹⁹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*; Letter from Catherine Deakin to Eva, 25 November 1913, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin, 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 3.

²⁰ Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*; Letter from Catherine Deakin to Eva, 25 November 1913, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin, 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 3; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 67.

in a letter to her friend, Eva. She stated, “We have many nice friends in Berlin, with whom we have spent a delightful time. V and I can speak enough German to get along but in Hungary it is different, we do not know a word of Hungarian.”²¹ Despite the group’s anxieties, based on the short time that Vera had been taught by Heinemann, she found him to be an excellent teacher and an amiable man, and so they ultimately decided to follow him to Budapest.²² The group arrived in Budapest in September following a tour through Germany. During her time in Budapest, Vera dedicated herself to her studies, taking singing lessons with Heinemann three times a week, and, upon his recommendation, studied cello under Herr Adolf Shiffer twice a week. She also observed cello and chamber lessons at the Royal Academy of Music. Vera quickly became a popular and highly regarded pupil at the conservatorium. Like her sister Stella, Vera’s talents were recognised by her teachers, and she was invited to extend her studies at the conservatorium. She later reflected that, “Heinemann used to say to me, I can assure you, you would get a position in any opera company if you will stay another term.”²³ Heinemann and Schiffer were so convinced of Vera’s talents that they offered to write to Alfred to persuade him to allow her to remain in Budapest.²⁴ During Vera’s studies in Budapest, she was encouraged to engage with progressive notions of womanhood, and particularly urged to consider a professional opera career seriously. However, despite the encouragement of her teachers, she declined their offer and began planning for the group’s return to Australia.²⁵

World War I

In July 1914, anticipating the outbreak of war, Vera, Catherine, and Ida travelled to London. Following the declaration of war on 4 August, Alfred cabled a request for them to return to Australia as soon as possible. Catherine attempted to book passage on an earlier voyage, but was unsuccessful, and the group was forced to wait for four weeks in London for the passage home that they had booked originally.²⁶ It was during this time that Vera began to display the unique combination of qualities that would later enable her to run the WMIB so successfully.

When Vera learned they would be staying in London, she was immediately concerned with what she and other Australians could do to aid the war effort, especially after observing that many were “at a loose end in London.”²⁷ She began to organise an Australian sewing and knitting circle to produce clothing for naval men.²⁸ Vera also used the Deakin family name to bombard the Australian High Commissioner, Sir George Reid (1845–1918), with requests for information about what action was being taken to entertain, employ and make use of the hundreds of Australians who were waiting in London for their passages home. She also attempted to persuade him that the energies of these Australians should be used for aiding the war effort and that, in her opinion, the best way to accomplish this was to imitate the British public by offering first aid and home nursing training and establishing

²¹ Letter from Catherine Deakin to Eva, 25 November 1913, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin, 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 3.

²² Letter from Catherine Deakin to Eva, 25 November 1913, Letters from Stella, Catherine and Pattie Deakin, 1909-1914, National Library of Australia, MS9056, Folder 3.

²³ Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*.

²⁴ Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*.

²⁵ Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*.

²⁶ Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*.

²⁷ Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*.

²⁸ Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*.

sewing and knitting circles to produce comforts for soldiers on the front.²⁹ Vera received no reply to her letters, but the group was later invited to a meeting at Australia House organised by Sir George Reid and his wife, Lady Florence, which Vera and Catherine both attended. The meeting aimed to determine what actions Australians in London should be taking in order to aid the war effort.³⁰ Vera later recounted that she asked, “many annoying questions” and that, during the meeting, they resolved to form a committee and that Lady Reid would run sewing and knitting circles. About a fortnight after the meeting at Australia House, Vera, Catherine and Ida departed London aboard the *Themistocles*. In her oral history, Vera explained that, while she disappointed that she was unable to stay in London and conduct war work, she was relieved that action was finally being taken. She also recounted that she believed that she had assisted in the creation of an initiative that would aid many soldiers and greatly benefit those volunteering.³¹

Vera was happy to be reunited with her family in Australia in October 1914, but she was anxious to return to London and continue the voluntary work she had begun while waiting for her passage home. However, a few weeks after her return, her parents wished for her to accompany them to the USA, in order to assist Alfred in his duties as Australian High Commissioner and British representative to the Commonwealth Panama Pan Pacific International Exposition.³² During the Exposition, Vera assisted her parents in the running of the Australian pavilion. She ran tours of the pavilion, sung at evening receptions hosted by her parents and, alongside her mother, took control of all duties connected with the publicity schemes for the pavilion.³³

Women’s Voluntary Work in World War I

Until the publication of pioneering works by historians, including Michael McKernan and Jan Bassett in the 1980s, Australian women were portrayed as ‘waiting and weeping’ for men to return from the front during World War I.³⁴ However, the recent resurgence of scholarship on Australia and World War I includes numerous significant histories of Australian women and the home front.³⁵ These works demonstrate how Australian middle and upper-class women actively participated in the war effort through voluntary organisations, including the Red Cross. Henry Jean Dunant, a Swiss businessman and humanitarian, devised the concept of the Red Cross in 1859,

²⁹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 3 of 19*. For further information on Sir George Houston Reid see "Reid, Sir George Houston (1845-1918)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 14 January, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/reid-sir-george-houstoun-8173>.

³⁰ Deakin & Harley, *Session 3 of 19*; Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*; Deakin & Harley, *Session 14 of 19*.

³¹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 3 of 19*; Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*.

³² Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19*; Deakin & Harley, *Session. 8 of 19*; “Personal,” *Barrier Miner*, 22 January 1915, 2; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 86. For more information regarding the Deakin family’s experiences at the Exposition, see Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 416-19; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 84-91.

³³ “Miss Vera Deakin. War Decoration Gained,” *Darling Downs Gazette*, 28 October 1918, 3; “Under the Red Cross,” *Punch*, 9 March 1916, 30; Marjorie Quinn, “Australia Day at Panama Exposition. Mr Deakin Oration. Commonwealth Pavilion Dedicated,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 April 1915, 8; Deakin & Harley, *Session 8 of 19*.

³⁴ Jan Bassett, *The Home Front, 1914-1918* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983); Michael McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War* (West Melbourne: Nelson, 1980), 66.

³⁵ Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2014), xv; Joan Beaumont, "Australians and the Great War: Battles, the Home Front and Memory," *Teaching History* 49, no. 1 (2015): 46-54; Robert Bollard, *In the shadow of Gallipoli: The Hidden History of Australia in World War I* (Sydney, N.S.W: NewSouth Pub., 2013); Patricia Clarke, "Canberra Women in World War I: On the home front and nursing overseas," *Canberra Historical Journal*, no. 75 (2015): 24-32; Nicole Davis, Nicholas Coyne, and Andrew J. May, "World War I on the Home Front," *Provenance*, no. 15 (2016): 16-43; Michael McKernan, *Victoria at War 1914-1918* (Sydney, Australia: New South, 2014); Joanne Bach and Jono Lineen, *The Home Front: Australia During the First World War* (Canberra, ACT: National Museum of Australia Press, 2015).

after witnessing the aftermath of the Battle of Solferino.³⁶ In 1861, he proposed an organisation, established in peacetime, that would assist when war broke out.³⁷ Dunant's idea spread quickly; indeed, according to Caroline Moorehead, "no philanthropic idea has ever caught on with the speed with which the Red Cross proposals spread across Europe."³⁸

A permanent Red Cross committee was not established in Britain until early 1899, prior to the outbreak of the Boer War. In July 1905, at a meeting held at Buckingham Palace led by Queen Alexandra, the British Red Cross Society was established. At this meeting, Queen Alexandra proposed that the organisation be made up of members "recruited from all classes throughout the Empire" and that "the society shall be entirely voluntary."³⁹ She also made an

... appeal to all the women of the Empire to assist me in carrying out this great Scheme, which is essentially a woman's work and which is the one and only way in which we can assist our brave and gallant Army and Navy to perform their arduous duties in time of war.⁴⁰

Queen Alexandra's leadership of the British Red Cross underscored the fact that it was very much a women's organisation. After receiving royal assent, branches of the British Red Cross Society slowly began to spread across Britain and its colonies and dominions, including Australia.⁴¹

The Australian branch of the British Red Cross Society was officially founded on 13 August 1914, following the outbreak of World War I, by Lady Helen Munro Ferguson (1865–1941), wife of Australian Governor-General Ronald Craufurd Munro Ferguson (1860–1934).⁴² Before her arrival in Australia from Scotland in May 1914, Lady Helen had already had a long association with the Red Cross. She was one of the original council members of the Scottish Red Cross from 1909, and, in an interview prior to her departure for Australia she stated that "if Australian 'ladies' wanted to form an Australian Red Cross Society, that she would be glad to take on an active part in the work, and 'give the society the benefit of her experience in Great Britain'."⁴³ The characterisation of the Red Cross as a women's organisation continued in Australia, as it had in Britain, but there were differences,

³⁶ François Bugnion, "Birth of an idea: The founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement: From Solferino to the original Geneva Convention (1859–1864)," *International Review of the Red Cross* 94, no. 88 (2012): 1300-01; Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross* (London: Harper Collins, 1998), 2-3; Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 6-7.

³⁷ Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream*, 8.

³⁸ Bugnion, "Birth of an idea," 1314-15; Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream*, 20-21, 51; Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 8.

³⁹ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 9.

⁴⁰ Queen Alexandra quoted in, Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 9.

⁴¹ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 9.

⁴² "Munro Ferguson, Helen Hermione (1865 - 1941)," *The Australian Women's Register*, 2004, accessed 1 July, 2021, <https://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0742b.htm>; McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 67; Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 43-44; Melanie Oppenheimer, "'The best P.M. for the empire in war?': Lady Helen Munro Ferguson and the Australian Red Cross Society, 1914-1920," *Australian Historical Studies* 33, no. 119 (2002): 108; Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 14-15; Melanie Oppenheimer, "Shaping the Legend: The Role of the Australian Red Cross and Anzac," *Labour History* 106, no. 106 (2014): 127-28; "Munro Ferguson, Sir Ronald Craufurd (1860-1934)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 2 April, 2019, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/munro-ferguson-sir-ronald-craufurd-7688>.

⁴³ Lady Helen Munro Ferguson quoted in Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 14.

especially in the gendered make-up of the executive, with men playing a more prominent role in the executive committees of the Australian organisation.⁴⁴

When war was declared on 4 August 1914, Lady Helen immediately cabled the Colonial Office in London requesting authorisation to form an Australian branch of the British Red Cross, which was granted quickly. The Australian branch was officially formed on 14 August at a meeting of “distinguished individuals” at Government House; Lady Helen was appointed president and the central council was formed.⁴⁵ The primary aims of the organisation were also established, namely, fundraising, the making and collecting of goods to be sent to the front, supporting medical facilities, and establishing and running convalescent homes for wounded soldiers across Australia.⁴⁶ The Red Cross relied heavily upon the involvement of Australia’s social elite, especially women, to aid in the growth and success of the organisation and to ensure its respectability and high social standing in the community. Lady Helen strongly agreed with Queen Alexandra’s belief that the Red Cross should be predominately a women’s organisation and that they should be present in the executive.⁴⁷ She appointed the wives of each of the state governors to act as presidents of their respective state branches and represent their states on the central Australian council.⁴⁸ Lady Helen's progressive belief that women should occupy leadership roles within the Australian Red Cross was a significant enabling factor in Vera’s later work as head of the WMIB.

The popularity of the Australian Red Cross grew quickly, and within weeks of the outbreak of war, the organisation was a household name and had thousands of members.⁴⁹ By the end of the war the organisation was comprised of thousands of local branches and boasted a membership of 82,000 women and girls and 20,000 men and boys.⁵⁰ Many women who conducted work for the newly formed Red Cross did so through membership of their local branches. During the war, these branches raised money and produced and procured comforts to be sent to soldiers on the front and in hospitals; these included socks, vests, mittens, mufflers, pyjamas, shirts, linen, cigarettes, chocolates and mosquito nets. The work of the Red Cross was not limited to fundraising and the production of comforts. Women were able to engage in organisational leadership and become members of groups including Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs), which were groups of women who served in both Australia and overseas, and among other duties staffed facilities including convalescent homes.⁵¹ Although these activities can be seen as extensions of women’s domestic and philanthropic work, they also expanded this work into new and more public areas of Australian and international society. The wartime work of Vera Deakin with the Red Cross, however, went well beyond this extension of women’s activities. The following examination of Vera’s work as

⁴⁴ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 24-25.

⁴⁵ Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 43-44; Oppenheimer, “The best P.M. for the empire in war?,” 116; Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 15; Oppenheimer, “Shaping the Legend,” 127-28.

⁴⁶ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 20.

⁴⁷ McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 68; Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 15; Oppenheimer, “Shaping the Legend,” 127-28; Melanie Oppenheimer, “Opportunities to Engage: The Red Cross and Australian Women’s Global War Work,” in *Australians and the First World War Local-Global Connections and Contexts*, ed. Kate Ariotti and James E. Bennett (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 88.

⁴⁸ Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 44; Oppenheimer, “The best P.M. for the empire in war?,” 116; Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 15.

⁴⁹ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 19.

⁵⁰ Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 44.

⁵¹ “Of Interest to Women,” *The Sydney Mail*, 15 September 1915, 33; McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, 68-69; Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 44; Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 19-20; Bruce Scates, “The Unknown Sock Knitter: Voluntary Work, Emotional Labour, Bereavement and the Great War,” *Labour History*, no. 81 (2001): 36-37.

head of the WMIB contributes to ongoing efforts to reveal that Australian women did far more than ‘wait and weep’ during World War I.

Vera and the Red Cross

After returning to Melbourne from the Exposition in San Francisco, Vera was immediately motivated to volunteer her time and energy to aid the war effort by conducting work for the Australian Red Cross. She was, however, restless and not content to carry out this work in Australia, and wished to return to Europe – a plan that provoked firm opposition from her father. Vera later reflected:

I had painted and walked around the subject at breakfast several times and had even hinted at it on the ship, but I was rebuffed each time, and I was told, “your mother’s doing good work down at the Base Hospital and there’s need of young people to help. Your school mates are helping her. Why can’t you be content and stay here and look after our own men?”⁵²

Despite her father’s strong wishes for her to remain in Melbourne and assist her mother, Vera was determined to serve overseas in order to be closer to the battlefield.⁵³ She immediately visited the Red Cross headquarters in Melbourne to enquire about available VAD positions.⁵⁴ VADs were a prominent and emblematic symbol of the Red Cross across the world. In Australia, VADs were formed with the objective of:

Giving to those members of the civil population who from motives of patriotism and sympathy for the sick and wounded are desirous of offering their services for the performance of these various duties, an opportunity of allowing themselves and their efforts to be organised and coordinated efficiently, so that the sick and wounded may derive the fullest possible benefits.⁵⁵

The primary work of VADs included accompanying sick and wounded soldiers during transit, staffing rest stations and preparing and running convalescent homes.⁵⁶ When Vera visited headquarters, she was, however, told that “the VADs that they’d been training wouldn’t be going for some months, if not over a year, and they weren’t sure where they’d be going.”⁵⁷ After receiving this news, Vera immediately began ensuring that she met as many as possible of the essential qualifications to become a member of a VAD. She had already completed the required training in home nursing and begun her first aid training. This would have ensured that if she was able to join a VAD, she would only have had to complete the required one month of hospital-based training.⁵⁸

⁵² Deakin & Harley, *Session 7 of 19, Session 10 of 19*.

⁵³ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 92.

⁵⁴ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*.

⁵⁵ New South Wales Red Cross Society, “Voluntary Aid Detachments,” *New South Wales Red Cross Record* 1, no. 8 (August 1915): 18.

⁵⁶ “Of Interest to Women,” 33.

⁵⁷ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*.

⁵⁸ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*; New South Wales Red Cross Society, “Our VADs,” *New South Wales Red Cross Record* 2, no. 2 (February 1916): 22.

However, Vera was not content just to wait to become a member of a VAD. Instead, she began looking for other opportunities to travel overseas to aid the war effort. Vera revealed her plans to her friend Winifred Johnson, a niece of David Syme, the publisher and editor of Melbourne's *Age* newspaper and long-time friend and mentor to Alfred.⁵⁹ Winifred responded to Vera's plans enthusiastically, stating "oh I'd give my hat to come with you!"⁶⁰ Vera responded, "why don't you come, it would be marvellous, I could sell the idea to my family much more easily if you were coming."⁶¹ After Winifred agreed to join her, Vera, without informing their friends or family, or even securing any work, provisionally booked tickets for them aboard the P&O liner *The Arabia*.⁶² Once she had booked passage, Vera cabled Herbert Brookes' brother, Norman Brookes (1877–1968), who was acting as an Australian Red Cross High Commissioner in Cairo, enquiring if there was any voluntary work suitable for them.⁶³ She received a reply from him, stating "come at once and bring as many like you as you can find."⁶⁴ Promptly after receiving Norman's message, Vera replied informing him that she and Winifred Johnson would be coming aboard *The Arabia* to volunteer.⁶⁵ It was then time for Vera to inform her family, especially her father, that she would be defying his wishes and travelling overseas to assist with the war effort. This decision can be characterised as the most radical action undertaken by any of the Deakin sisters. Vera was proposing that during wartime, at the age of twenty-four, she travel overseas, without a chaperone to conduct voluntary work of unknown type.

Vera informed her family that she would be departing Melbourne for Cairo to volunteer for the Australian Red Cross, though she did not know the exact nature of the work she would be conducting. She later recalled that her father's reaction was one of hurt and disappointment; he wished for her to remain in Melbourne and take part in socially accepted, typical forms of women's voluntary work. Vera, however, remained determined to use the new freedoms available to her, and her families' social connections, to travel overseas, where she believed she could better aid the war effort. She later had no qualms about painting a picture of the strength of her convictions, stating, "I was very selfish and very headstrong."⁶⁶ Despite her father's opposition, Vera did receive support from other family members. Vera reflected that her brother-in-law Herbert Brookes, "was good enough to say that if I got into financial trouble... he would send an occasional cheque to me."⁶⁷ In contrast to the opposition Stella had faced when she decided to travel overseas, Vera received strong support from her mother Pattie, who was stalwartly committed to aiding the war effort. Pattie was able to convince Alfred to allow Vera to travel and offered to fund her living expenses, based on the current costs of her living at home combined with her hat and dress allowance.⁶⁸

Vera and Winifred departed Melbourne aboard the *Arabia* on 21 September 1915. Over the course of the voyage, the pair occupied themselves by knitting items for soldiers, reading, writing letters, entertaining their fellow

⁵⁹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*; Sayers, "Syme, David."

⁶⁰ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*.

⁶¹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*.

⁶² Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*.

⁶³ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*; "Brookes, Sir Norman Everard (1877-1968)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 19 January, 2022, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brookes-sir-norman-everard-5373>.

⁶⁴ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*.

⁶⁵ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*.

⁶⁶ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*.

⁶⁷ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*.

⁶⁸ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*.

passengers, and becoming friends with both male and female passengers who were also travelling to aid the war effort.⁶⁹ While it was common for middle and upper-class Australian women to participate in wartime voluntary work domestically, it was extremely rare for women (other than a very small number of nurses) to travel overseas to conduct voluntary war work.⁷⁰ Melanie Oppenheimer states that “over 120 women travelled from Australia and served with the Australian Red Cross in France, Egypt and England from 5 August 1914 to 11 November 1918.”⁷¹ These women, including Vera, were motivated by an intense desire to aid the war effort, and exceeded expectations of what women were capable of during World War I.⁷²

Vera and Winifred arrived in Cairo on 20 December 1915. That night, they were informed by the two Australian Red Cross Commissioners – Norman Brookes and Adrian Knox (1863–1932) – of the work they would be undertaking; namely, that they were expected to open the Australian branch of the WMIB at 9.30am the next morning. The Australian WMIB was created to relieve the workload of the British WMIB, which had been dealing with inquiries about Australian soldiers in Egypt, Gallipoli and Lemnos, and was becoming overwhelmed.⁷³ The WMIB was originally established in autumn 1914 by a small group of British Red Cross volunteers who were stationed in Paris. The service was first established to inform relatives of wounded British officers of the latter’s progress and location. Knowledge of the existence of the WMIB quickly spread through British soldiers’ families by word of mouth, and the Paris office was soon overwhelmed with inquiries for soldiers of all military ranks, because relatives found the information military authorities provided to be inadequate.⁷⁴ In order to cope with the influx of inquiries, new WMIB offices were established on nearly all British fronts. In April 1915, a central WMIB was opened in London, and in July 1915, the WMIB became the only officially sanctioned search organisation in the United Kingdom.⁷⁵

The Australian WMIB was established in Cairo, and in May 1916, in response to the changing nature of the war and the large number of Australian troops fighting on the Western Front, it relocated to London, where it remained until the end of the war.⁷⁶ The primary aim of the Australian WMIB was to support and supplement the official information provided to families by the Defence Department and the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and ultimately, determine “from a jigsaw puzzle composed of separate pieces of official and unofficial information”

⁶⁹ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 93.

⁷⁰ For further information regarding Australian nurses during World War I see: Kirsty Harris, *More than bombs and bandages: Australian Army nurses at work in World War I* (Newport, N.S.W: Big Sky Publishing, 2011); Melanie Oppenheimer, *Oceans of Love: Narrelle - An Australian Nurse in World War I* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2006); Ruth Rae, *Veiled Lives: Threading Australian Nursing History Into the Fabric of the First World War* (Burwood: College of Nursing, 2009).

⁷¹ Oppenheimer, "Opportunities to Engage," 98.

⁷² Oppenheimer, "Opportunities to Engage," 98.

⁷³ Deakin & Harley, *Session 5 of 19*; Frederick, "Brookes, Sir Norman Everard."; "Knox, Sir Adrian (1863-1932)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 19 January, 2022, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/knox-sir-adrian-6989>.

⁷⁴ Oppenheimer and Kleinig, ""There is no trace of him"," 278; Eric F. Schneider, "The British Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau: A Case of Truth-Telling in the Great War," *War in History* 4, no. 3 (1997): 296; J. M. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 42.

⁷⁵ Schneider, "The British Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau," 296.

⁷⁶ Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19*; Australian Red Cross Society, *Second Annual Report and Balance Sheet 1914-1915*, Australian Red Cross Society (Melbourne 1915), 16.

what had happened to soldiers on behalf of their families.⁷⁷ Information provided to families by the military when a soldier was wounded, missing, or killed, was basic, devoid of context, euphemistic and was limited to a letter containing phrases including ‘missing’, ‘killed in action’, or ‘died of wounds’.⁷⁸ The WMIB provided families on the home front, who were unsatisfied with the information the military supplied, with a means to gain more context and specific information of the circumstances of their loved ones. As the *New South Wales Red Cross Record* explained, this aim was accomplished by obtaining “reports as to how sick and wounded men are progressing, information as to the fate of men reported as ‘missing’ and details concerning men who had given their lives for us all.”⁷⁹

Vera was an active leader and participant in the work of the WMIB from December 1915 to April 1919. As head of the WMIB, she was required to recruit and manage voluntary staff to conduct clerical work and compile reports on soldiers whose circumstances had been enquired about.⁸⁰ She also managed the team of volunteers who would travel to battle fronts, hospitals, base depots, convalescent homes and prisoner of war (POW) camps to interview soldiers and medical staff about the fates of soldiers.⁸¹ In addition to her managerial duties, Vera was required to send monthly reports to Australian Red Cross headquarters. She later reflected that:

Each month I had to send a report to Australia and so on because they seemed to have so little communication between the state bureaus and naturally headquarters wanted to know, Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, our council wanted to know how many inquiries there were, where was this place we seemed to spend so much money on postage and cabling and so on? What were we doing?⁸²

Despite her managerial and bureaucratic duties, Vera regarded her primary role during the war as being “to alleviate the distressed” on the Australian home front.⁸³ In her oral history, Vera stated,

I never let any information besides death and burial (which weren’t to me as urgent), lie in the office when I went home at night. I stayed until everything had gone out by cable to Australia to relieve the parents or wives or nearest and dearest.⁸⁴

Vera would actively correspond with soldiers’ families and devote significant time and emotional energy to her work, often staying late to ensure that information reached Australia as quickly as possible.

⁷⁷ New South Wales Red Cross Society, “Red Cross Information Bureau,” *New South Wales Red Cross Record* 1, no. 8 (1915): 9; Oppenheimer and Kleinig, ““There is no trace of him”,” 278.

⁷⁸ Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 54.

⁷⁹ New South Wales Red Cross Society, “Red Cross Information Bureau,” *New South Wales Red Cross Record* 3, no. 6 (June 1917): 23.

⁸⁰ Deakin & Harley, *Session 5 of 19, Session 6 of 19, Session 10 of 19, Session 12 of 19*.

⁸¹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 5 of 19*; New South Wales Red Cross Society, “Red Cross Information Bureau. For obtaining news about sick, wounded and missing men,” *New South Wales Red Cross Record*, 1, no. 12 (December 1915): 13; Oppenheimer and Kleinig, ““There is no trace of him”,” 281; Schneider, “The British Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau,” 299.

⁸² Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19*.

⁸³ Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19*.

⁸⁴ Deakin & Harley, *Session 6 of 19*.

Qualities of Success

Lady Barker, the head of the British WMIB from 1914, emphasised the importance of empathy in the WMIB's work to Vera and Winifred on their first day running the Australian branch. Vera later reflected that Lady Barker had been glad to see them, and especially so because they were women. It can be assumed that this was due to the belief in women's greater capacity to conduct this emotionally laden work. The primary purpose of the WMIB was to provide comfort to anxious and bereaved relatives on the Australian home front through the provision of specific information about soldiers' circumstances and fates. When families received an official notification that their relative had been reported as 'missing', 'wounded' or 'killed in action', they had great difficulty dealing with their grief and uncertainty. These difficulties were due to numerous factors, including the Australian military's decision not to repatriate soldiers' bodies back to Australia, and the lack of specific information provided to families by official Australian military channels.⁸⁵ These factors resulted in families turning to the WMIB to ascertain specific information in an attempt to ease their struggles with loss and trauma and gain comfort and closure.⁸⁶

Vera's primary focus was ensuring that she served those who had lodged enquiries with the WMIB to the best of her ability, later stating that, while she regarded it as a terribly interesting and rewarding job, she did find it very agonising at times.⁸⁷ Vera placed the compiling of reports and communication with soldiers' families above her managerial and bureaucratic duties, because her administrative duties made her feel removed from what she regarded as her primary role – "to alleviate the distressed."⁸⁸ She was dedicated to using her unique position and combination of skills to create reports and correspond with soldiers' families, and always strived to be better at her job.⁸⁹ The emotional labour associated with Vera's work was far more harrowing and laden with responsibility than the voluntary work of fundraising and the production of comforts in which most Australian women participated during the war. She was required to compose reports detailing soldiers' fates, determining what details to censor and which would bring comfort, without causing undue distress. This was an extraordinary responsibility for someone who was twenty-four years old when she began her work.

The thorough process that Vera, and the WMIB staff, followed before a report was sent to a family demonstrates their dedication and the lengths they went to in order to provide accurate information that would also bring comfort and relieve anxiety. The specific case of Private Lonsdale reveals the emotional labour that Vera and the WMIB staff engaged in over the course of the war. His mother's enquiry demonstrates the desperate need for information that relatives on the home front faced:

⁸⁵ Bart Ziino, *A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War* (Crawley, W.A: UWA Press, 2007), 1-2, 8.

⁸⁶ Ziino, *A Distant Grief*, 30; Joy Damousi, *The Labour of Loss: Mourning, Memory and Wartime Bereavement in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1. Families of deceased soldiers attempted to express their losses and both maintain a continuity and detachment from the soldier, see Jen Hawksley, "In the Shadow of War: Australian parents and the legacy of loss, 1915-1935," *Journal of Australian Studies* 33, no. 2 (2009): 181. Some soldiers' parents and returned soldiers had extreme difficulties in coping with their losses and experienced extreme psychological trauma. More recently, the psychological trauma experienced by returned Australian soldiers during and post-World War I have been examined. See, Jen Roberts, "The Front Comes Home: Returned Soldiers and Psychological Trauma in Australia during and after the First World War," *Health and History* 17, no. 2 (2015): 17-36.

⁸⁷ Deakin & Harley, *Session 6 of 19, Session 12 of 19*.

⁸⁸ Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19*.

⁸⁹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19*.

I would like to know how long he lived after the wound. I would like to know the nature of the wound, what complications set in to cause his death? And did he suffer much, was he conscious, did he ask for his parents in any way and did he send any message? I would like to know where he is buried and I wonder if you would know how long he was in the firing line before he was wounded? This is a dreadful war ... making so many sad homes and taking so many of our good brave boys. If I am not asking too much I would like to hear from you personally please?⁹⁰

In accordance with WMIB searching policy, searchers obtained reports from three separate soldiers from Lonsdale's battalion concerning the circumstances of his death before Vera and her associates compiled a report. The three soldiers' responses included information such as how Lonsdale had died, and descriptions of his grave and the surrounding area.⁹¹ One report stated that,

He was killed at Fromelles on July 20, and is buried in the cemetery just outside Sailly. I was there soon after the action with Pte. R. Turner, KI PI, C.Co. who knew him. Turner pointed out the grave as that of Norman Lonsdale and gave me the details as to his death.⁹²

Private J.C. Hall presented a graphic and unedited account of Lonsdale's death. He recounted how it had been caused by "being hit in the head by a shell and being badly smashed up" and that Lonsdale had died half an hour after receiving the injury.⁹³ Censorship was an important component of the emotional labour Vera carried out; while the WMIB sought to provide families with detailed information, they also strived to shield those on the home front from the horrors of war, and the graphic details provided by Private Hall were not included in the letter sent to Private Lonsdale's family.

The WMIB's reports on soldiers' deaths and injuries were intended to bring comfort and perhaps a sense of closure to their families. Hence, WMIB workers used 'sanitised' language that often included familiar or comforting phrases; for example, soldiers had 'died instantly', had 'not suffered for a long time', or had 'died in the arms of their fellow soldiers'.⁹⁴ These edited accounts expose the empathy inherent in their work and their desire to provide information that would bring comfort and closure while shielding relatives from the realities of war, all without offering false hope.⁹⁵ When Vera felt it necessary, she would correspond with soldiers who had already provided reports to searchers, asking that they provide a personal tribute to the soldier that could be passed onto the family. Private Turner responded to such a request with a letter praising Lonsdale's character and bravery while in battle. He wrote:

⁹⁰ Scates, "The Unknown Sock Knitter," 41-42.

⁹¹ 3074, Private Norman Lonsdale, 56th Battalion, Australian Red Cross Society, Wounded and Missing Inquiry Bureau files, 1914-1918 War, IDRL/0428, Australian War Memorial.

⁹² 3074, Private Norman Lonsdale.

⁹³ 3074, Private Norman Lonsdale.

⁹⁴ Scates, "The Unknown Sock Knitter," 41-42.

⁹⁵ Scates, "The Unknown Sock Knitter," 42-43.

Norman was one of my best friends, a thoroughly good fellow – possessing all of the qualities of a man and a hero. I often had seen him under fire previous to the 20th July, and he always displayed the calm demeanour he always showed.⁹⁶

While the primary purpose of the WMIB was to serve relatives on the home front who had lodged enquiries, Vera and the voluntary workers also developed ‘adoptive kin’ relationships with soldiers who would visit the WMIB while on leave. Vera reflected that during their time in Cairo, men who were on leave from the Suez Canal or were convalescing after being wounded at Gallipoli would gravitate to Gresham House, where the WMIB was located. She also recalled that the WMIB staff would willingly put down their work to hear stories of Gallipoli from soldiers who were extremely happy to be in the presence of Australian women again.⁹⁷ Similarly, soldiers who were on leave or convalescing would visit the London office frequently (after the WMIB relocated in May 1916). They would seek out the companionship of other Australians, offer assistance by examining casualty and wounded lists, provide information when able, and lodge enquiries about friends and family members.⁹⁸ Vera recollected that:

there was a constant stream of inquiries; [it] was surprising how many Australian troops who had British relatives [who] were concerned for them. [There] was a constant stream of Australian soldiers who would come in and ask about their brothers and friends when they’d lost touch of them; fathers would come in and ask about sons who didn’t write.⁹⁹

The major strength and differentiating element of the WMIB was its ability to obtain information that could console and comfort soldiers’ relatives. This was a service that the military was neither equipped nor mandated to provide. Consequently, and as a result of the WMIB’s success, Vera had difficulties dealing with some facets of the military.¹⁰⁰ The WMIB was “often met with suspicion, and eventually jealousy [by the military], as [they] had made [themselves] felt as a Court of Appeal for relatives who were unsuccessful in obtaining satisfaction from the military.”¹⁰¹ In her dealings with the military, Vera had to be a strong and assertive leader.

One example of this was in her dealings with both the military and the Red Cross in mid-1918. In an attempt to improve the service the WMIB provided, Vera campaigned Australian military authorities for months before acquiring permission to travel from London to France in order to instruct British searchers on how to better prepare reports on Australian soldiers, and to “bring it home to them how cut off parents and loved ones felt from their men abroad.”¹⁰² After months of “plugging for, arguing about and trying to bamboozle” the colonel in charge, Vera received permission to travel to France with only two days’ notice, departing just before the August push of 1918.¹⁰³ When she arrived in France, Vera was confronted with a further obstacle. She was informed by Red Cross

⁹⁶ 3074, Private Norman Lonsdale.

⁹⁷ Deakin & Harley, *Session 5 of 19*.

⁹⁸ Deakin & Harley, *Session 5 of 19, Session 12 of 19*.

⁹⁹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19*.

¹⁰⁰ Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19*.

¹⁰¹ Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 54.

¹⁰² Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19*.

¹⁰³ Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19, Session 13 of 19*.

Commissioner Anthony Horden (1889–1970) that her trip had been cancelled because his assistant was unable to accompany her.¹⁰⁴ He stated that, “I’d never face your father again if I let you go off with just a driver.”¹⁰⁵ Vera was resistant to this order and was fiercely determined to continue her trip, accompanied only by a driver. She stated that she would not be going back to London without travelling to the places she intended to visit. Horden eventually conceded and allowed her to continue with her trip.¹⁰⁶ During her time in France, Vera visited hospitals and convalescent camps in order to emphasise to the British searchers her conviction that Australian families needed to be provided with more information than British families (due to Australia’s remoteness from the battlefield), and to thank those who had been doing a good job gathering information about Australian soldiers. Like Britain, Australia did not repatriate the bodies of deceased servicemen. However, unlike many of their British counterparts, Australians were unable to travel to convalescent homes and hospitals to visit their loved ones who had been wounded. They therefore relied solely on the WMIB to provide updates on their relative’s condition.¹⁰⁷ Due to her commitment to providing the best service possible to families on the home front, Vera defied orders from high-ranking male personnel and fought to be able to continue to educate British searchers.

The social standing of the Deakin family name assisted Vera greatly in her work and ambitions. As a result of her elite status and upbringing, Vera possessed social connections that helped her to deal with older, powerful men in a professional capacity. This helped Vera to overcome numerous obstacles and gain respect as a woman working in a male-dominated field. For example, while the WMIB was in Cairo, Vera used her connections to Lady Barker and her father’s name to access the British war office telegraph codes. These proved to be extremely valuable, allowing the WMIB to operate more cheaply and communicate more effectively, because the new codes included shortened phrases such as ‘progressing favourably’ and ‘re-joining unit soon’.¹⁰⁸ After obtaining the British telegraph codes, Vera petitioned the AIF headquarters in London, stating that she had acquired the British codes and that she now wished the AIF to supply the telegraph codes for the Australian units, which it eventually did.¹⁰⁹ The acquisition of these two sets of codes saved the WMIB thousands of pounds a year and improved its communication with servicemen’s families in Australia.

The Deakin name's reputation and status also assisted Vera and the WMIB in their relations with the Australian military. Vera developed a close and cooperative relationship with the Australian Army Records Department in Cairo, run by Major-General Sellheim (1866–1928), whom she had known in Melbourne prior to the war. As a result of this relationship, the WMIB was granted access to all Australian casualty and POW lists as soon as the records office received them.¹¹⁰ Vera reflected that she had told General Sellheim, “I want all the casualty lists as soon as you can get them off the roller. Send me a copy so that I can start making inquiries as soon as possible.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19*; "Hordern, Anthony (Tony) (1889–1970)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 1 July, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hordern-anthony-tony-7071>.

¹⁰⁵ Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19*.

¹⁰⁶ Deakin & Harley, *Session 13 of 19*.

¹⁰⁷ Deakin & Harley, *Session 13 of 19*; K. S. Inglis, "The Unknown Australian Soldier," *Journal of Australian Studies* 23, no. 60 (1999): 9.

¹⁰⁸ Deakin & Harley, *Session 6 of 19*.

¹⁰⁹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 6 of 19*.

¹¹⁰ Deakin & Harley, *Session 6 of 19*; "Sellheim, Victor Conradsdorf Morisset (1866-1928)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 27 January, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sellheim-victor-conradsdorf-morisset-8385>.

¹¹¹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 6 of 19*.

When the WMIB relocated to London from Cairo in May 1916, Vera also used her prior relationship with AIF commander Sir John Monash (1865–1931) to benefit the WMIB.¹¹² Vera reminisced that:

We had the greatest cooperation from the Records Office. Sir John Monash, being a great friend of the family, recognised in all his great work and his many responsibilities that the Red Cross was worthwhile helping and he gave us every facility that was possible, our searchers in France got further up the line than any other dominion or any searchers got with their armies and the records were sent to us daily, the admissions to hospitals were instructed to be sent to us daily and any questions that we asked were answered on the whole extremely promptly.¹¹³

Vera's relationships with both General Sellheim and Sir John Monash allowed her to strongly advocate for the needs of the WMIB, which allowed it to run more effectively than if they had adhered to official Red Cross and AIF policy.

Vera also used the status associated with the Deakin family name to campaign within the Australian Red Cross about the treatment of Australian POWs. While the Australian WMIB was in its early stages of existence, Vera began to question Commissioner James Murdoch (1867–1939) as to what the organisation was doing to aid POWs.¹¹⁴ After being informed that Sir George Reid, an Australian Red Cross High Commissioner in London, was dealing with the matter, she turned to lobbying his office. Vera reflected that she initially received highly unsatisfactory and curt responses to her inquiries from the Secretary, Muirhead Collins (1852–1927), another associate of the Deakin family.¹¹⁵ She continued her campaign and, following the WMIB's relocation to London, made many telephone calls and wrote letters making her case that something needed to be done urgently for Australian POWs in Turkey and Germany.¹¹⁶ Vera's campaign was ultimately successful and, when the Australian Red Cross decided to establish a POW department, Vera, in conjunction with her duties as head of the WMIB, was asked to be its head. However, she declined the offer because she wished to dedicate herself to the WMIB.¹¹⁷ Vera recollected that she had replied:

No, I'm not doing well enough what I'm doing. I cannot take on another department. I'll work hand and glove with them. I'll give them all the information to do the parcels and so on, but I cannot take the responsibility. It would be too much; I'd have to give this up and it's a thing that very few people want to do. It's too detailed and you've got to do it when it comes in.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19*; "Monash, Sir John (1865-1931)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 27 January, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/monash-sir-john-7618>.

¹¹³ Deakin & Harley, *Session 12 of 19*.

¹¹⁴ Deakin & Harley, *Session 6 of 19*; "Murdoch, Sir James Anderson (1867–1939)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 1 July, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/murdoch-sir-james-anderson-7691>.

¹¹⁵ Deakin & Harley, *Session 6 of 19*; "Collins, Sir Robert Henry Muirhead (1852-1927)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 27 January, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/collins-sir-robert-henry-muirhead-5741>; McMinn, "Reid, Sir George Houstoun."

¹¹⁶ Deakin & Harley, *Session 6 of 19*.

¹¹⁷ Deakin & Harley, *Session 6 of 19*.

¹¹⁸ Deakin & Harley, *Session 6 of 19*. The Australian Red Cross POW Department was ultimately run by Miss Elizabeth Chomley. For further information see Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 48; Taylor, "An 'Army of Superfluous Women'," 117-19, 26-32.

Vera's successful use of the social connections and prestige associated with the Deakin family name during the war certainly contributed to the success of the WMIB. In Vera's unusual position of female wartime leadership, the Deakin family name allowed her to work successfully with these powerful men, gaining information and establishing services that accomplished her ambitions of assisting soldiers and relieving distress on the home front.

Recognition of Service

Vera's voluntary work overseas was covered in Australian newspapers.¹¹⁹ Throughout the coverage, Vera was presented as a remarkable figure, who was not transgressing the bounds of femininity, but was also not a 'normal' woman. These reports highlight the scale of Vera's personal success, as well as the significant scale of the WMIB's work. Statistics concerning how many inquiries the WMIB was receiving from Australian families are also provided in order to highlight the extent of their work, with one article stating that "some 5,000 to 6,000 reports and 4,000 cable inquiries are dealt with monthly, and a great deal of anxiety regarding loved ones is thus allayed."¹²⁰ The empathy and emotional labour that formed such an important component of Vera's work are also noted in articles.¹²¹ The WMIB is described as having "long justified itself as a necessary part of Red Cross work" and that:

The great work, still directed by Miss Vera Deakin, is now of wide range and incalculable value ... The work is one that is concerned almost wholly with the sorrow of war, and its relief of anxiety is chiefly that of easing long drawn-out grief by the definite news of bereavement.¹²²

In 1918, Vera's remarkable wartime service was acknowledged through the award of an Order of the British Empire (OBE). This significant achievement was widely reported upon in the Australian press, thus affording her great praise and recognition, and reinforcing her distinction from the 'average' woman.¹²³ The articles celebrate her unique and exceptional service and commend her for her leadership skills and empathetic qualities that contributed so significantly to the success of the WMIB during the war.

¹¹⁹ "Miss Vera Deakin," 3; "Under the Red Cross," 30; "Red Cross Information Bureau," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 March 1916, 6; "About People," *The Age*, 7 June 1919, 13; "Personal," *The Prahran Telegraph*, 14 June 1919, 5; "Personal News," *The Express and Telegraph*, 27 May 1919, 1; "Engagements," *The Prahran Telegraph*, 5 April 1919, 3; "Miss Vera Deakin," *The Sun*, 31 March 1918, 22; "A Friend of the Digger," *The Herald*, 22 May 1919, 1; "Mr Deakin's Daughter Traces Missing Soldiers. War Decoration Gained for Efficient Service," *The Herald*, 22 October 1918, 4; "Australian War Workers in London," 23; "Traces the Missing. Miss Deakin's Great Work. Statesman's Daughter Honoured," *The Sun*, 27 October 1918, 15; "Alfred Deakin's Daughter. Order of the British Empire," *Glenelg Guardian*, 21 November 1918, 2.

¹²⁰ "Australian War Workers in London," 23.

¹²¹ "Our Day. Information Bureau. How the British Red Cross Helps," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 November 1917, 6; "Mr Deakin's Daughter Traces Missing Soldiers," 4; "Australian War Workers in London," 23; "Traces the Missing," 15; "Alfred Deakin's Daughter," 2; "War Inquiry Bureau," *Daily Examiner*, 1 January 1918, 4.

¹²² "War Inquiry Bureau," 4.

¹²³ "Miss Vera Deakin," 3; "Australians Abroad. London, April 29," *The Australasian*, 12 July 1919, 40; "Personal," 5; "Mr Deakin's Daughter Traces Missing Soldiers," 4; "Traces the Missing," 15; "Alfred Deakin's Daughter," 2; "Victorian Women Honoured. Order of the British Empire," *Kyneton Guardian*, 19 March 1918, 2; "Order of the Empire. Australians Honoured," *The Mail*, 16 March 1918, 3; "New Honours for Australians," *Geelong Advertiser*, 18 March 1918, 4; "Order of the British Empire," *The Examiner*, 18 March 1918, 6; "Order of the British Empire. New Appointments," *Western Mail*, 22 March 1918, 35; "Order of the Empire. Australian Recipients," *The Observer*, 23 March 1918, 18; "Order of the British Empire. Honours List. Australian War Workers," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 March 1918, 13; "Victorian Recipients," *The Journal*, 18 March 1918, 2; "Order of the British Empire. New Appointments," 8.

The declaration of the armistice on 11 November 1918 did not signal the end of the WMIB's task of determining what had happened to soldiers who had been reported as wounded, missing or killed in action. The end of the war was a difficult time for Vera and the WMIB. They were receiving an enormous amount of information from former POWs in Turkey and Germany, but the voluntary workforce was shrinking.¹²⁴ As well as dealing with an increased workload, Vera was required to train an Australian officer, Captain Mills, in preparation for his task of travelling to Germany and searching for any records pertaining to Australian men. Mills was the first Australian representative to enter Germany after World War I, and later sent back valuable information to the WMIB, discovering that some men who had been assumed to be dead were in fact alive, the military having only lost their pay books or personal letters.¹²⁵ These discoveries reinforced Vera's belief that the WMIB needed to be extremely careful in verifying information so as to not misinform soldiers' relatives.¹²⁶

As the war concluded, Vera, due to her social standing and leadership position, was required to represent the WMIB in public. The office received a stream of high-profile visitors, including Queen Alexandra and Mrs Andrew Fisher, the wife of the Australian High Commissioner, neither of whom had visited prior to the end of the war.¹²⁷ Following this, the Australian Red Cross received an order from British Red Cross headquarters that an Australian representative of the VADs and war workers in London was required to report to the Buckingham Palace lawn. Both Vera and Lilian Whybrow attended at the request of the Australian Red Cross High Commissioners, and were joined by approximately 100 other high-ranking VADs.¹²⁸ Vera also was appointed as the Australian representative to meet the trains delivering sick and wounded soldiers from Switzerland and Germany.¹²⁹ Vera also received a request from Sir John Latham (1877–1964) to be one of the secretaries at the Versailles Conference. She recollected that she was greatly honoured by the offer, but turned it down because she believed that she would not be able to do the role well enough, and that she had travelled for the purpose of volunteering for the Red Cross and that she should continue this work until her return to Australia.¹³⁰

Unfortunately, Vera was unable to complete her work with the WMIB. In April 1919, she was strongly urged to return home due to her father's ill health. Vera reflected that she found it extremely difficult to leave London and the WMIB (now in Lilian's charge).¹³¹ A newspaper article published in *The Australasian* voiced the regret of the Red Cross that she was unable to complete the work that she had begun in 1915. It states:

Miss Vera Deakin, O.B.E., sailed for Melbourne a few days ago, much to the regret of her friends in the Missing and Wounded Inquiry Bureau of the Australian Red Cross. They would have liked her to see the completion of the work which she and Miss Winifred Johnson, O.B.E., initiated in Egypt, and to which they have given so much enthusiasm and hard work.¹³²

¹²⁴ Deakin & Harley, *Session 11 of 19*.

¹²⁵ Deakin & Harley, *Session 11 of 19*.

¹²⁶ Deakin & Harley, *Session 11 of 19*.

¹²⁷ Deakin & Harley, *Session 13 of 19*; "For Women. In the Throng," *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 June 1918, 3.

¹²⁸ Deakin & Harley, *Session 11 of 19*.

¹²⁹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 11 of 19*.

¹³⁰ Deakin & Harley, *Session 11 of 19*; "Latham, Sir John Greig (1877–1964)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 8 July, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/latham-sir-john-greig-7104>.

¹³¹ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*; Deakin & Harley, *Session 13 of 19*.

¹³² "Australians Abroad. London, April 29," 40.

While Vera was disappointed to be unable to finish her work with the WMIB, as soon as she arrived in Melbourne, she realised that she had made the right decision because her father was nearing death, later reflecting that “my place was [now] at home.”¹³³

Conclusion

The outbreak of World War I in August 1914 marked the beginning of a pivotal period of Vera’s life. Her activities during this period reveal the substantial capabilities of women when they were permitted to move beyond the stereotypical expectations of them. Vera was able to harness the freedoms associated with progressive notions of womanhood, traditional womanly qualities and the power and connections stemming from her family name to conduct extraordinary wartime work. During her tenure as head of the WMIB, Vera successfully blended traditionally feminine qualities with professionalism and authority to construct her own unique model of early twentieth-century womanhood. This allowed her to run a large and complex multinational organisation during wartime with great success. She drew upon the traditionally feminine traits of empathy and emotional labour to provide a personalised service to families on the home front, but she also became a forceful presence in the male-dominated military sphere within which she worked and advocated consistently for measures that would improve the WMIB’s operations.

The contribution of the Deakin family’s name and resources to Vera’s success cannot be underestimated. Her privileged upbringing equipped her with the skills and social capital to deal with powerful men in a professional capacity. It was this unique combination of factors that allowed Vera to successfully run such an important and beneficial service during World War I. The lives of Deakin sisters in the early decades of the twentieth century reveal the diverse ways that married and unmarried women negotiated the emancipating ideals associated with socially progressive notions of womanhood and used them to create distinct life pathways. The following chapter reveals how, as older women during World War II, the Deakin sisters used their social standing and influence to undertake executive-level voluntary work, championing a developing understanding of women’s roles and responsibilities.

¹³³ Deakin & Harley, *Session 10 of 19*, Session 13 of 19.

Chapter Five: World War II, 1939–1945

So it's war again! How many women, as they heard these words last night, thought of that other day, 25 years ago; and of the four weary years following it, which brought suffering and misery to many homes. But now, as then, we are prepared to work, and wait, and do, to the best of our ability, the thing nearest to help the Empire in her hour of need. – The Herald, 4 September 1939, 11¹

On 4 September 1939, an article titled ‘Inspiring Messages to the Women of Victoria’ was published in *The Herald*, which informed women – both those who had supported the previous war effort and those who were experiencing war for the first time – that they “must do [their] part.”²

Of that gallant work of women in the last war no praise is too high. Words fail in admiration of the average woman, who, through that time, ran a home, kept children well and happy through hours of great anxiety, managed to spend days cutting out and sewing garments for the local Red Cross Society, and still seemed to have time to knit socks and make comforts to send to men who were abroad fighting. Her courage, resourcefulness and ability were worthy of the highest traditions of womanhood.³

The article went on to praise the new generation of ‘modern girls’ who would be facing a world war for the first time and expressed the certainty that they too would rise to the challenges ahead.

Those of us who come in contact with the modern girl cannot fail to admire her ... It is difficult to say at this stage what sacrifices the women of Australia will be called upon to make, but those in authority need to have no doubt that whatever tasks women are called upon to perform, they will do them with courage and high purpose.⁴

At the outbreak of war, prominent older Victorian women, including Mrs Dunstan, wife of Premier Dunstan, Mrs Head, wife of the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne, and Dame Enid Lyons voiced their expectations that women would, once again, work to aid the war effort “as worthily as they did in the World War,” potentially, to an even greater extent than they had previously done.⁵

The Deakin sisters were members of that group of women who had worked to support the war effort in 1914–18 and were then called on to do so again in 1939. By the outbreak of World War II, Ivy, Stella and Vera could no longer be regarded as young, modern women; they were instead representative figures of older women’s activities and activism. The lives of the Deakin sisters in this period offers valuable insights into the legacy of the ‘new woman’ era and its continued ability to reshape and expand the lives of women, including those who married and had children. The following two chapters reinforce and build upon the work of Marian Quartly and Judith Smart

¹ “Inspiring Messages to the Women of Victoria,” *The Herald*, 4 September 1939, 11.

² “Inspiring Messages to the Women of Victoria,” 11.

³ “Inspiring Messages to the Women of Victoria,” 11.

⁴ “Inspiring Messages to the Women of Victoria,” 11.

⁵ “Inspiring Messages to the Women of Victoria,” 11.

in shedding light on the longstanding social and political influence of maternal feminism in the Australian women's movement during the 1940s and 1950s.⁶

Given their privileged status, the activities of the Deakin sisters during World War II offer valuable insights into how middle and upper-class women used their social privilege and influence to conduct wartime work. In this chapter, I examine the wartime work and activities of Ivy, Stella and Vera. I first investigate Ivy's positions of leadership in the Australian Comforts Fund (ACF) and the NCWV. I then survey Stella's voluntary work with the University of Melbourne's Women of the University Patriotic Fund (WUPF). Finally, I turn to Vera's re-assumption of her dedicated voluntary work as co-director of the Victorian Red Cross Bureau for Wounded, Missing and Prisoners of War (BWMPW). The public lives of the Deakin sisters in this period reveal the continued influence of maternal feminism during the 1940s and the now-established ability of its conception of the 'new woman' to reshape the lives of married women, allowing them to hold positions of authority in the public sphere. The Deakin sisters' continued engagement with maternal feminist ideas did not, however, preclude them from supporting the aspirations of younger generations to a greater extent than would perhaps be expected of them. This chapter reveals that, while the Deakin sisters undertook their work in a traditional, voluntary capacity and were supportive of women doing so in a similar manner, they also facilitated women expanding their fields of wartime work. They championed a developing understanding of women's roles and responsibilities, especially through their support for equal pay and the provision of childcare facilities.

This wartime era presents an opportunity to revisit the sisters as they performed public work after significant periods in the private realm. Stella retreated into the domestic sphere after her marriage in 1911 signified the conclusion of her scientific career. During the 1920s, while her four children were young and her husband, Thomas White, was establishing his political career, Vera also largely retreated from public life.⁷ As a result of both Stella and Vera's reduced public presence, there exists little archival material enabling examination of their lives during the 1920s and 1930s. Accordingly, a significant time gap exists between the individual examinations of each of the Deakin sisters presented in the previous three chapters and the following inspection of their public work during World War II. In addition to being a period when archival material is available for all three of the sisters, their activities during World War II coincided with another transformational period in Australian society in which to examine the work and activities of women, the Deakin sisters included.

In the interwar period, feminist organisations continued to campaign for improvements in the status of women. According to Marilyn Lake,

Australian feminists entered into a prolonged debate in the post-suffrage decades about the meaning and possibilities of citizenship for women. They took their citizenship seriously, and formed numerous feminist organisations specifically to pursue a "real" equality of status, reward and opportunity.⁸

⁶ See Quartly and Smart, "The Australian National Council of Women," 352-65; Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 129-244; Smart and Quartly, "Moderate and mainstream," 129-48.

⁷ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 166, 201.

⁸ Marilyn Lake, "The Inviolable Woman: Feminist Conceptions of Citizenship in Australia, 1900-1945," *Gender & History* 8, no. 2 (1996): 197.

A major focus of Australian feminists' efforts was to secure recognition and remuneration for the important work that women performed in the home, especially as mothers, in order to increase their political, economic and social power.⁹ An important achievement of the women's movement in the interwar period was the continued creation of a maternalist welfare state that aimed to end the subjugation of women.¹⁰ They were successful in the development of a society in which women and children were afforded greater protections. These included the expansion of women's fields of paid work, especially in social welfare positions, the establishment of children's courts, women's hospitals, and infant welfare clinics, raising the age of sexual consent, censorship of films and restrictions on alcohol.¹¹ While feminists in this period were successful in securing increased protections for women and children, their campaign for the acknowledgement of the rights of all women as independent citizens proved to be more difficult, especially in regard to equal pay. These difficulties can largely be attributed to the enduring power of 'separate spheres', where men's status as the breadwinner was glorified.¹² Feminist organisations continued to mount campaigns to increase their presence in the public sphere and receive appropriate remuneration for their work over the course of World War II.

Just as it had in World War I, during World War II, Australian society became a site of shifting ideals of womanhood.¹³ The roles of men and women were clearly "defined by existing and evolving perceptions of men's and women's appropriate social behaviour, ideas partially based on upon First World War precedents."¹⁴ Men were urged, once again, to take their place in the exclusively male environment of armed combat.¹⁵ At the outbreak of war, especially between 1939 and 1941, before the outbreak of war in the Pacific, the view that women should contribute to the war effort in a similar fashion to World War I pervaded; they were expected to devote themselves to voluntary work and "keeping the home fires burning."¹⁶ Michael McKernan notes that popular publications, including the *Australian Women's Weekly*, called on women to resume the work they had begun during the previous war. McKernan quotes sober advice offered by the magazine:

Men must fight and women must work so peace may come again. Mouths must be fed, beds made, socks darned ... The majority serve best in keeping the family cheerful and happy, in keeping the doors of the home bolted against the uncertainty, panic or nerves.¹⁷

With the onset of World War II, Australian middle and upper-class women, including the Deakin sisters, quickly formed, reformed and refocused the work of voluntary organisations, including the Red Cross, WUPF and ACF.

⁹ James Keating, "'Woman as Wife, Mother, and Home-Maker': Equal Rights International and Australian Feminists' Interwar Advocacy for Mothers' Economic Rights," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 47, no. 4 (2022): 959, 62-63; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 53, 56, 72-73; Lake, "The Inviolable Woman," 200-01.

¹⁰ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 58-59; Lake, "The Inviolable Woman," 199, 204.

¹¹ Lake, "The Inviolable Woman," 206.

¹² Keating, "'Woman as Wife, Mother, and Home-Maker'," 961-63; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 71.

¹³ Kate Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," in *Australia's War 1939-45*, ed. Joan Beaumont (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 61; Margaret Randolph Higgonnet et al., "Introduction," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Randolph Higgonnet et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 4; Marilyn Lake, "Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II," *Australian Historical Studies* 24, no. 95 (1990): 275; Anthony McWatters, *Australian Women and War* (Australian Defence Force Journal, 2005), 34-35.

¹⁴ Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 61.

¹⁵ Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 61.

¹⁶ Damousi, "Marching to Different Drums," 351, 53; Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 54, 61.

¹⁷ Michael McKernan, *Australians at Home: World War II* (Scoresby, Victoria: The Five Mile Press, 2014), 6.

These organisations aimed to assist the war effort in traditional ways that reinforced the belief that women should remain focused on domestic duties and pose no challenge to pervading societal expectations of how they would express their patriotic spirit.¹⁸ The work conducted by most women who volunteered their time and energy to these organisations were members of the leisured middle and upper-classes who had the time to devote to activities such as producing comforts, volunteering in canteens, and fundraising.¹⁹ Working-class women were largely excluded from these organisations due to the significant commitment of time and money that they required, but were encouraged by their employers to knit and sew comforts for the soldiers during their lunchbreaks.²⁰

While some Australian women were content to perform voluntary work during World War II in a similar manner to World War I, large numbers sought to expand their contributions to the war effort, particularly in regard to military service. These women, while not demanding to participate in armed combat like their menfolk, campaigned for an expansion of the definition of military service by championing a female-oriented understanding of service, in which they were able to assist in a supportive, auxiliary capacity.²¹ In response to the desire to widen their contributions, women formed many unofficial paramilitary organisations through which they could expand their wartime contributions beyond fundraising and the production of comforts, including working as drivers, cooks, ward maids and hospital orderlies.²² Women's initial attempts to expand their wartime work into the military sphere was met with derision from military authorities and members of the general public, who continued to subscribe to traditional gendered expectations during wartime.²³ After originally being discouraged from participating in auxiliary military service, the changing nature of war prompted the Australian Government's creation of official women's auxiliary military services. The Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) was established in March 1941, followed by the Australian Women's Army Service, the Women's Royal Australian Navy Service, and finally, in 1942, the Australian Women's Land Army.²⁴ Ultimately, 60,000 Australian women participated in the armed forces in auxiliary capacities during World War II and performed highly skilled work in areas previously viewed as being within men's domain.²⁵

¹⁸ Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 61; Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime: 1939-1945* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2009), 55; Margaret Anderson, "Australian Women Worked for Victory in World War II," *Agora* 56, no. 1 (2021): 19.

¹⁹ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 55; McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 54-55.

²⁰ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 55.

²¹ Anderson, "Australian Women Worked for Victory in World War II," 19-23; Damousi, "Marching to Different Drums," 351; Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 61-63; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 55-56, 67; Carol Fort, "State vs Federal Government in the "Barmaids" Case: Regulating Australia's Second World War Home Front," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 62, no. 1 (2016): 16-29; Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, 255; Rachel Harris, "'Armed with Glamour and Collection Tins': Femininity and Voluntary Work in Wartime South Australia, 1939-45," *Labour History* 117, no. 1 (2019): 109-33; Rachel Harris and Paul Sendziuk, "Cogs in the Machine: The Experiences of Female Munitions Workers and Members of the Australian Women's Land Army in South Australia, 1940-45," *War & Society* 37, no. 3 (2018): 187-205; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 184-85, 87; McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 7, 78, 209; Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 110-11, 206; Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton, "Girdled for War: Women's Mobilisations in World War Two," in *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, ed. Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 380.

²² Damousi, "Marching to Different Drums," 356; Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, 256; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 187.

²³ Damousi, "Marching to Different Drums," 356; Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 62; McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 53; Saunders and Bolton, "Girdled for War," 381.

²⁴ Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, 256-57; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 187; Saunders and Bolton, "Girdled for War," 382.

²⁵ Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 62; Stuart Macintyre, "Women's Leadership in War and Reconstruction," *Labour History*, no. 104 (2013): 65.

In 1942, following the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the growing threat of war in the Pacific, Australian women were presented with further opportunities to further expand their wartime work. Marilyn Lake has observed that:

wartime opened up new employment opportunities for women. They were drawn into industry, human and transport services and the auxiliaries to the defence force in large numbers. Between 1939 and 1943, the number of women in the paid workforce increased by nearly 50 per cent, from 437,000 in July 1939 to a high of 646,000 in December 1943.²⁶

Due to the shortage of male labour and the nation's increased defence and industrial needs, the conscription of women was introduced. The Manpower Directorate required women to engage in paid employment in once-stereotypical male industries, including munitions production, transport and commerce.²⁷ Women's conscription into these industries was framed as fulfilling their patriotic duty, but it was stressed that their employment was a temporary condition.²⁸ The women who were conscripted into paid wartime work received support and encouragement from other women's voluntary organisations, including the NCWV and the WUPF, as examined further later in this chapter.

Ivy Brookes, Australian Comforts Fund and National Council of Women of Victoria

Ivy continued to demonstrate her remarkable commitment to public service during World War II in a manner similar to her earlier, extensive voluntary work. In 1942, when she was fifty-nine years old, Ivy was characterised as "one of Melbourne's busiest women, [who] is unsparing in her efforts to assist community and war work."²⁹ In this section, I examine how Ivy continued to engage with maternal feminist beliefs about women's ability to improve society through her continued philanthropic work with the NCWV and ACF. I reveal how she used the social sway associated with the Brookes name to champion a developing understanding of women's roles and responsibilities in wartime, particularly in terms of work. These included women receiving appropriate financial remuneration for their work, receiving public recognition for their service, and the need for women to be involved in post-war reconstruction efforts. I also highlight the challenges and limitations she confronted, particularly in relation to her views on women's paid employment.

²⁶ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 188.

²⁷ Lynn Beaton, "The importance of women's paid labour. Women at work in World War II," in *Worth her salt : women at work in Australia*, ed. Carmel Shute, Margaret James, and Margaret Bevege (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), 85; Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 63; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 56-57; Jacqueline Dinan, "Australia at War: The challenges and opportunities for women during World War II," *Agora* 51, no. 3 (2016): 38; Fort, "State vs Federal Government in the "Barmaids" Case," 16; Harris and Sendziuk, "Cogs in the Machine," 187-205; Robin Kramar, "Female Employment During the Second World War," in *Third Women and Labour Conference Papers*, ed. The Convenors (Salisbury East The Convenors, Third Women and Labour Conference, 1982), 451, 54; McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 78-80; Richard White, "War and Australian Society," in *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace*, ed. Michael McKernan and Margaret Browne (Canberra, ACT: Australian War Memorial in association with Allen & Unwin Australia, 1988), 412.

²⁸ Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 64; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 57; Anderson, "Australian Women Worked for Victory in World War II," 22-23.

²⁹ "Woman's World. Women's war effort depends on rank and file says Mrs Herbert Brookes," *The Herald*, 24 February 1942, 7.

The Victorian branch of the ACF was re-established following the outbreak of World War II, and by 1940 had a membership of 22,000.³⁰ The organisation aimed to give women a way to assist Australian soldiers stationed at home and overseas that would not challenge traditional wartime gender stereotypes, namely by facilitating the knitting and sewing of comforts and fundraising efforts to provide comforts for soldiers.³¹ The ACF supplied numerous items to soldiers that were both made and purchased using funds raised by members, including socks, pullovers, balaclavas, caps, mittens, gloves, cigarettes, sporting equipment and toiletries.³² Like the Red Cross, the ACF relied on Melbourne's social elite for leadership. The Lady Mayoress, Mrs A. W. Coles, was president, Lady Dugan was patron and Ivy was Deputy Chairwoman, Convenor of Branches and a member of the Advisory and Finance Committees.³³ In addition, the organisation relied upon the voluntary labour of metropolitan and country Victorian women, who joined the 300 ACF branches located across the state.³⁴ In a radio broadcast, Ivy reported that 99.5 per cent of ACF voluntary workers were women.³⁵ The ACF ultimately became the second-largest Australian patriotic fund in terms of money raised, number of active members and community support.³⁶

As Convenor of Branches, Ivy facilitated women undertaking typically feminine wartime voluntary work. She was responsible for communicating updates, directing the voluntary workforce as to what items were in highest demand, and offering encouragement to members. This was achieved through her monthly circulars, newspaper reports, the Branches Committee section of the ACF annual report, and regular radio broadcasts. Through her letters to branches, Ivy provided insight into the wide scope of the ACF's work, gave direction as to what knitted items soldiers needed most, and appealed to women to continue performing their patriotic duty.³⁷

Ivy presented regular radio broadcasts throughout the war, encouraging women to participate in the war effort. These broadcasts expose that she, as a woman who had experienced the First World War, took on a leadership

³⁰ Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 61.

³¹ Australian Comforts Fund (Victorian Division) Report for the period ended 31 December 1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/837.

³² The Hon. Receiving Commissioner, Mrs Olivia Gardener's list of goods donated during the month of October 1945, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/883; Goods and Services to 31 December 1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/889; Goods received for month of November 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/891.

³³ Outline of Proposed Plan or Organisation for Each State, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/832; Australian Comforts Fund (Victorian Division) Report for the period ended 31 December 1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/837.

³⁴ Australian Comforts Fund (Victorian Division) Report for the period ended 31 December 1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/837.

³⁵ Australian Comforts Fund. Victorian Division, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1080.

³⁶ Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 148. See also Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 55; McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 236-37.

³⁷ Australian Comforts Fund (Victorian Division) Circular, 30 August 1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1037; Australian Comforts Fund (Victorian Division) Circular, 22 January 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1049; Australian Comforts Fund (Victorian Division) Circular, 27 May 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1053; Australian Comforts Fund (Victorian Division) Circular, 30 August 1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1037; Australian Comforts Fund (Victorian Division) Circular, 22 January 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1049; Australian Comforts Fund (Victorian Division) Circular, 27 May 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1053; Australian Comforts Fund (Victorian Division) Circular, 28 November 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1059.

role among women in the current war, benefiting from technological advancement to do so.³⁸ In December 1940, she called on other women of her generation to lead younger women and show them how to work to aid the war effort.³⁹ She stated that:

The older women too can have an influence upon the younger women and give them a lead. The reality of war and its valid and most urgent call upon us all as loyal citizens is possibly not realised by the younger generation quite as much as it is by us older women who were helping in the last war. We must be "all in" in this struggle. We must all contribute.⁴⁰

Ivy consistently used her broadcasts to acknowledge that, while women were unable to fight in the war, they needed to make every effort possible to contribute to the war effort in ways that were open to them. In an undated broadcast, Ivy made a direct appeal to female listeners to urge them to contribute their available time, energy and money to aid the war effort:

I say to women listeners: unfortunately being women we cannot take our place among our fighting forces but we can work for them and give our money to enable them to put up the best fight for us and protect their own lives.⁴¹

She used her platform to encourage all Australian men and women on the home front to practise thrift and contribute to war loan programs as their patriotic duty.⁴² She made an emotive appeal to the women on the Australian home front, stating:

For those of us who cannot fight the opportunity is given to join the Savings Army of Australia. The lending of money is a very small sacrifice compared to the sacrifices made by our fighting forces and in addition of the whole civilian population in Great Britain, who are bearing the brunt of the attack day and night.⁴³

³⁸ By 1937, two out of three Australian households owned a radio set. For further information regarding women's use of radio broadcasting between the 1930s and 1950s see Jeannine Baker, "Woman to Woman: Australian Feminists' Embrace of Radio Broadcasting, 1930s-1950s," *Australian Feminist Studies* 32, no. 93 (2017): 292-308; Catherine Fisher, "Voicing the War Effort: Australian Women's Broadcasts During the Second World War," in *Expressions of War in Australia and the Pacific: Language, Trauma, Memory, and Official Discourse*, ed. Amanda Laugesen and Catherine Fisher (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 105-25.

³⁹ Freedom War Loan – Broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, 5 December 1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1061-1062.

⁴⁰ Freedom War Loan – Broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, 5 December 1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1062.

⁴¹ War Loan Appeal – Broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1109.

⁴² Freedom War Loan – Broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, 5 December 1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1060-1061; The Value of War Savings Certificates – Broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1087.

⁴³ Freedom War Loan – Broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, 5 December 1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1062.

Ivy also called on and encouraged women to “win victory by voluntary service” with organisations including the ACF.⁴⁴ In a 1940 broadcast, she stated, “Why not join a branch of the Australian Comforts Fund in your district and become one of the large band of women working to help our men win the war for freedom?”⁴⁵ Ivy’s radio broadcasts demonstrate how she drew on her social standing and considerable organisational skills and experience to attempt to motivate as many women as possible to contribute their time and energy to aiding the war effort in a traditional fashion.

At the outbreak of World War II, Ivy was the newly elected president of the NCWV. During the interwar period and the Second World War, the state and national branches of the NCW continued to be the peak representative body of women.⁴⁶ During the interwar period, the major concerns of the National Councils included their continued campaign for equal rights for women, particularly in regard to uniform nationality rights for married men and women, equal pay and employment opportunities for women, representation of women on public boards, and attempting to secure uniform marriage and divorce laws.⁴⁷ The outbreak of war caused many of the activities of NCW branches to be redirected in order to contribute to the war effort. State councils established branches of the Red Cross and ACF, and attempted to ensure the welfare of soldiers’ families.⁴⁸ From as early as 1941, the National Councils were also focused on planning for post-war reconstruction and ensuring that women would be permitted to play an active role in its processes.⁴⁹ Ivy used her prominent status within the organisation to encourage and facilitate women’s voluntary, and later paid, contributions to the Australian war effort, and advocate for women to play a role in post-war reconstruction. From the outbreak of war, Ivy voiced her belief that women would play an important role in the war effort. In her 1939 presidential address, she stated “we women are ready to do our share, as far as we are able and to meet the worst that may befall, bravely, if we are called upon to do so.”⁵⁰ In the same address, she voiced her belief that women’s contributions would be essential to securing victory. “We must do all in our power to help [servicemen] in every possible way even though it may mean great personal sacrifice.”⁵¹

As with the ACF and her radio broadcasts, Ivy continued to support women conducting wartime work that conformed to stereotypical notions, such as the production of comforts. In her 1941 NCWV presidential address, Ivy praised the efforts of women in “responding splendidly to their country’s call” and “tak[ing] the places of men so setting manpower free for the national emergency that exists today and is likely to increase in urgency as time goes on.”⁵² She also highlighted that the extension of women’s work and training was their patriotic duty and would benefit Australian society in the post-war period.

⁴⁴ Liberty Loan Program – Broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1120.

⁴⁵ The Comforts Fund Branches and their work – Broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, 1940, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1105-1106.

⁴⁶ Smart and Quartly, "Moderate and mainstream," 129.

⁴⁷ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 193-94; Smart and Quartly, "Moderate and mainstream," 132.

⁴⁸ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 141-42.

⁴⁹ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 142, 44.

⁵⁰ Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1939, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2614.

⁵¹ Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1939, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2614.

⁵² Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2650.

The voluntary training services are all doing fine constructive work and fitting girls for positions not only to help in the war effort but afterwards when their training and good citizenship will stand our country in good stead ... It is a great testing time today and it will be tomorrow also, for women as well as for men. So all those who are fitting themselves today not only for the present but for the future are making the most patriotic and splendid effort, one which will prove of the greatest value to the community, to Australia and thereby to the British Empire and the world.⁵³

In September 1942, in an interview for the 'Busy Women Series' in *The Herald*, Ivy highlighted Australian women's voluntary work for organisations including the ACF and Red Cross, characterising it as the backbone of women's war efforts. She stated that "without the co-operation of the unseen, unnamed workers, the whole fabric of women's war efforts would crumble."⁵⁴ However, as the war progressed, Ivy also championed a developing understanding of womanhood, in which the widening scope of women's work was valued. She voiced her support of women working in ways that subverted typical expectations of their work, including those participating in military auxiliaries and munitions production.⁵⁵ Ivy's support of women's contributions to the war effort reveal how she championed a developing understanding of womanhood. While she chose to carry out her work in a traditional fashion, Ivy did engage with and support the aims of the feminist movement at the time, especially the widening of acceptable fields of women's work and their expanded involvement in post-war society.

Ivy and the NCWV also supported the radical notion that women in the auxiliary armed forces receive equal pay with men. In 1942, Ivy turned her attention to advocating for the women of the WAAAF. The WAAAF was founded in 1941, after the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) was confronted with a shortage of trained telegraph operators. The women who joined the WAAAF to fill this need were, however, paid only two-thirds the salary received by men who were conducting the same work.⁵⁶ She expressed the NCWV's dissatisfaction that women in the WAAAF were not receiving the same pay as men in the RAAF.⁵⁷ She argued that:

Unless WAAAF's [sic] were given equal pay with the RAAF, both the health and the standard of the WAAAF would be affected ... It had always been the aim of the National Council of Women to help women, and as these women were doing the same job as men, and setting them free to fight, in justice to them, they should get equal pay.⁵⁸

⁵³ Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2651.

⁵⁴ "Woman's World," 7.

⁵⁵ Women in the Services – Broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1066; Australian Comforts Fund – Broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, 17 January 1945, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/44/1067; Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2654.

⁵⁶ Beaton, "The importance of women's paid labour," 87.

⁵⁷ "Pay for W.A.A.A.F.'s," *The Age*, 12 June 1942, 3; Gillan, *A Brief History of the National Council of Women*, 56;

"Drakeford, Arthur Samuel (1878–1957)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 8 July, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/drakeford-arthur-samuel-10048>.

⁵⁸ Ivy Brookes quoted in "Equal Pay for W.A.A.A.F. Urged," *The Argus*, 12 June 1942, 6.

In addition to Ivy publicly voicing her support for women receiving equal pay, she and the NCWV sent a deputation to meet with Minister Arthur Drakeford (1878–1957) to advocate in person. It was later reported that she was particularly displeased with the negative response they received from the Minister to the NCWV's request for increased financial remuneration for members of the WAAAF.⁵⁹ However, despite the negative meeting, WAAAF members were granted an increased (although not equal) rate of pay, which the NCWV regarded as a satisfactory result.⁶⁰

From 1943, Ivy and the NCWV's advocacy for women to receive appropriate financial remuneration for their wartime work extended beyond the women of the WAAAF to all women who were conscripted into industrial work. At the first meeting of the year, the NCWV passed a resolution stating that:

Since the Government's call-up of women for service is to be exactly on the same conditions as for men, which in this regard is an acknowledgment of the equality of the sexes, the National Council of Women of Victoria asks may it accept this as the policy of the Government, i.e., equal pay for equal work?⁶¹

While Ivy and the NCWV did support women receiving appropriate pay for their work, especially in circumstances when they had replaced men, it was on the proviso that they relinquished their positions to men on their return from the war. In her 1941 NCWV presidential address, Ivy specified that one of the components of post-war reconstruction was that women would leave their positions when men returned from overseas.⁶²

There will be a tremendous dislocation in business caused by factories being converted from the manufacture of munitions to peace time necessities and by women leaving their positions in factories to make way for the returned men. These and many other gigantic problems of readjustment and reconstruction will need to be solved. It is really a great adventure into the future that we are about to embark upon. It is a challenge to each one of us citizens of a democracy.⁶³

Hence, while Ivy and the NCWV adopted a radical stance on women receiving equal pay for equal work during wartime, they aligned with more conventional mainstream and government opinion that men and women would return to their previous roles after the war.

Beginning in 1941, Ivy and the NCWV began to advocate for women to be involved in post-war reconstruction. For example, at the thirty-eighth NCWV annual meeting in November 1941, the theme of Ivy's presidential address was 'post-war reconstruction and the role women should play in it'.⁶⁴ During this address, she emphasised

⁵⁹ "Pay for W.A.A.F.'s," 3; Gillan, *A Brief History of the National Council of Women*, 56; Bongiorno, "Drakeford, Arthur Samuel."

⁶⁰ "Pay of WAAAF," *The West Wyalong Advocate*, 11 June 1942, 1; Gillan, *A Brief History of the National Council of Women*, 55.

⁶¹ Gillan, *A Brief History of the National Council of Women*, 56.

⁶² Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2654.

⁶³ Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2654.

⁶⁴ Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2648-2654.

the important role that women needed to play in this period to ensure a more prosperous society post-war. “Never before will we have more urgently needed, trained, educated balanced minds to assist in the readjustment and rehabilitation period after the war had ended.”⁶⁵ These views stemmed from the belief that it was women’s patriotic duty to use the increased skillset that they had acquired during the war over the course of the post-war reconstruction period and beyond.⁶⁶ In her 1943 presidential address, Ivy stated:

After the war is ended there will be no easy path to tread – there can be no slackening of effort – rather shall we be called upon to solve greater problems and accept many more changes, not always very pleasant, and to work as hard or harder if we are able to achieve a better world, one in which all can have justice and employment suitable to their capacity and desires with equality of opportunity.⁶⁷

The NCWV extended its advocacy for women to take on more responsibility in post-war society by petitioning its national body, the NCWA, to lobby the federal government to include female representatives on all bodies that would be involved in post-war reconstruction.⁶⁸ While Ivy’s and the NCWV’s beliefs aligned with the government’s in regard to women relinquishing their roles in industry, their beliefs about women’s roles and contributions to post-war Australian society stemmed from their subscription to maternal feminist beliefs. This, however, did not preclude them from supporting the younger generations’ increased calls for gender equality.

Stella Rivett, Women of the University Patriotic Fund

Like her sister Ivy, Stella, who was fifty-three years old at the outbreak of World War II, used the social capital associated with her family name to conduct executive-level voluntary work during the war. However, unlike Ivy, who worked with multiple organisations during the war, Stella chose to devote herself to one organisation – the WUPF. While the WUPF first resembled a traditional middle-class women’s organisation, focused on fundraising and the production of comforts, from 1942 it refocused its efforts to facilitating the entry of women into the paid workforce through the provision of childcare facilities. There is a lack of archival material about Stella in this period; therefore, this examination of her wartime work is informed by newspaper articles and general WUPF archival material.

The WUPF was established in the weeks following the outbreak of World War II and was later characterised as one of Melbourne’s “pioneer patriotic organisations.”⁶⁹ It was comprised of five women’s groups from the University of Melbourne: the Victorian Women Graduates’ Association, the Town and Gown Guild, the Committee of Melbourne University Women Students, the University Office Group and Staff and Distaff, and

⁶⁵ Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2651.

⁶⁶ Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1941, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2651; Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1943, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2662.

⁶⁷ Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1943, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2662.

⁶⁸ Gillan, *A Brief History of the National Council of Women*, 54-57. For more information on Australian women’s involvement in post-war reconstruction see Macintyre, “Women’s Leadership in War and Reconstruction,” 65-80.

⁶⁹ “Women’s Section. Children at Home and Abroad,” *The Age*, 12 May 1944, 3.

one women's group from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, of which Stella was president.⁷⁰ The initial intention of the WUPF was that it would engage with traditional notions of women's wartime voluntary work, focusing primarily on the production of comforts for soldiers and civilians affected by war.⁷¹ These objectives were:

1. To provide comforts for child victims of war.
2. To provide comforts for naval and military forces through organised patriotic organisations, or, in special cases for persons designated by constituent groups.
3. To provide relief for distress occasioned by war.
4. To distribute funds at the end of the war through charitable or educational organisations in consultation with the Victorian Patriotic Council.⁷²

Stella was appointed vice-president of the WUPF in 1940 and aided in the refocusing of its service objectives "to help child victims of the war in Europe, and to provide comforts for Defence Forces of the Commonwealth."⁷³ The WUPF worked to achieve these aims through the voluntary production of comforts to be sent to soldiers and children overseas affected by the war, as well as through members' fundraising efforts.⁷⁴ Stella played an active role in WUPF fundraising, which included fetes, knitting and sewing competitions, tennis tournaments, opera performances and lectures.⁷⁵ In 1940, while vice-president, Stella worked alongside other female WUPF members to organise a two-day fete to raise funds for the organisation. This event was a great success. One hundred members volunteered their time to run stalls, selling sweets, cakes, arts and crafts, flowers, toys, woollies, produce and books, which raised £500 for the organisation.⁷⁶ In 1941, the WUPF opened an opportunity shop that sold items including flowers, cakes, fruit, jam, and vegetables, and raised £4 a week. Up until 1941, Stella and the WUPF's work remained in the realm of typical women's wartime work, but that was to change.

The year 1942 was significant for the WUPF and wider Australian society. After previously focusing its efforts on the recruitment of unemployed men to participate in factory work, by 1942 the Australian government had placed the economy on a war footing.⁷⁷ This caused a reassessment of women's participation in the war effort.⁷⁸

⁷⁰ "Varsity Meeting," *The Herald*, 9 October 1939, 13; "Appeal by Varsity Women," *The Argus*, 14 October 1939, 15; Margaret Gilruth, "University Women Discuss War Work at Tea," *The Herald*, 13 October 1939, 11; Margaret Naylor, *Recollections of Members of the Women of the University Fund, 1939 - 2016* (Melbourne: Women of the University Fund Inc, 2016), 7. It is not known if the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research women's group was comprised of the wives of the workers, female workers or a combination of both.

⁷¹ Women of the University Patriotic Fund, *1942-1943 Annual Report* (Melbourne, 1943), 2.

⁷² Women of the University Patriotic Fund, *1942-1943 Annual Report*, 2.

⁷³ "Varsity Women's War Appeal," *The Herald*, 23 October 1940, 12; "Women of the University. War Work Report," *The Age*, 24 October 1940, 3.

⁷⁴ "Varsity Women's War Appeal," 12; "Women of the University. War Work Report," 4; "Splendid Work by Women of the University," *The Age*, 30 July 1941, 4; "Women Meet at University. Support for War Work," *The Age*, 24 April 1941, 3; "Clothes and Toys for Blitz Victims," *The Herald*, 26 March 1941, 15.

⁷⁵ "Results of Knitting Competition," *The Age*, 15 December 1939, 5; "Prize for Knitted Socks," *The Herald*, 14 November 1939, 14; "Grant-Cunningham," *The Herald*, 4 November 1939, 25; "For Various Causes," *The Age*, 15 May 1941, 3; "Vice-Regal," *The Argus*, 21 August 1941, 4; "Clothes for Bombed Children," *The Herald*, 19 November 1941, 11; "Fair Aids Patriotic Funds," *The Age*, 20 October 1941, 3; "Knitting and Sewing Aids War Appeal," *The Age*, 25 January 1941, 16; "Lecture on Colour at University," *The Herald*, 23 August 1941, 10.

⁷⁶ "Challenge to Patriotism. Dame Enid Lyons at University Fete," *The Age*, 30 November 1940, 16.

⁷⁷ Saunders and Bolton, "Girdled for War," 388.

⁷⁸ Lynne Davis, "Minding Children or Minding Machines... Women's Labour and Child Care during World War II," *Labour History*, no. 53 (1987): 87-88; Saunders and Bolton, "Girdled for War," 388.

It was concluded that the present situation required the participation of all citizens, including women.⁷⁹ Married women with children were not subject to conscription by the Manpower Directorate, they were instead actively recruited to perform their patriotic duty by participating in paid factory work.⁸⁰ Married women without children, or those with school-aged children, were regarded as being more suitable workers, however, many women with young children also took up the opportunity to conduct paid work during the war. The increased participation of mothers with young children in the workforce thus created a pressing need for childcare facilities to be established to allow these women to fulfil their patriotic duty.⁸¹ According to Kate Darian-Smith, “war bestowed a temporary legitimacy on the employment of wives and mothers outside the home by stressing it was not economic necessity, but patriotic duty, that pushed married women into the workforce.”⁸² The lack of childcare facilities was seen as an impediment to women performing their patriotic duty by entering the paid workforce.⁸³ Despite public guarantees, no factories or government departments established childcare facilities.⁸⁴ The issue of childcare was, therefore, constructed as a female problem. In response to this newly emerged need for mothers to enter public life, middle-class philanthropic organisations, which were dominated by women, including the WUPF, established their own childcare facilities.⁸⁵

The WUPF opened childcare facilities as a service to assist working-class families.⁸⁶ An article published in *The Argus* in July 1942 specifies that the organisation had established the nurseries “to help set women free from the care of their children.”⁸⁷ It was also stated that without the existence of the nurseries, “several of these women were unable to take a job for the reason that they had no means of having their little ones cared for during the day.”⁸⁸ The WUPF established day-care facilities that would ensure children were suitably supervised and their welfare safeguarded while their mothers worked, because they believed that “much depends on these small members of the community.”⁸⁹ The WUPF would go on to open five wartime day nurseries located in Kew, South Yarra, Elsternwick, Camberwell and Hawthorn, each with the capacity to care for thirty children a day.⁹⁰ Each nursery was staffed by volunteers, who included trained social workers, nurses and kindergarten teachers. The nurseries were open from 7.30am to 6pm and would serve the children breakfast, lunch and dinner at a cost of 10p per week.⁹¹ The expansion of Stella’s and the WUPF’s work into the provision of day nurseries demonstrates the development of Australian women’s voluntary organisations throughout the war and their responses to the

⁷⁹ Beaton, "The importance of women's paid labour," 85; Saunders and Bolton, "Girdled for War," 388.

⁸⁰ Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 66; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 123.

⁸¹ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 123.

⁸² Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 66. See also Beaton, "The importance of women's paid labour," 88; Lake, "Female Desires," 269.

⁸³ Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 66-67; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 123, 26-27; Davis, "Minding Children or Minding Machines..." 90-91; McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 215; Saunders and Bolton, "Girdled for War," 388.

⁸⁴ Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 66; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 123, 26-27; Davis, "Minding Children or Minding Machines..." 90-91; McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 215; Saunders and Bolton, "Girdled for War," 388.

⁸⁵ Saunders and Bolton, "Girdled for War," 388.

⁸⁶ Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 67.

⁸⁷ "Work for Children in Wartime," *The Argus*, 30 July 1942, 5.

⁸⁸ "Woman's World. Kew Day Nursery Helps Working Mothers," *The Herald*, 23 May 1942, 6.

⁸⁹ "University Women. Extension of Patriotic Fund's Work," *The Age*, 12 March 1942, 3; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 126.

⁹⁰ "Day Nursery at Hawthorn," *The Herald*, 18 November 1943, 8; "Work for Children in Wartime," *The Argus*, 28 July 1943, 6.

⁹¹ "Work for Children in Wartime," 5; "Woman's World. Key Day Nursery Helps Working Mothers," 6; "Day Nursery at South Yarra," *The Herald*, 2 July 1942, 12; Women of the University Patriotic Fund, *1942-1943 Annual Report*, 4.

changing nature of the war. At the beginning of the war, the WUPF had operated in a traditional fashion with a focus on fundraising and the provision of comforts. However, in response to the need for women's participation in fields not previously open to them, the WUPF's childcare facilities enabled women to contribute to the war effort more effectively.

Vera White, Victorian Red Cross Society

The onset of the war enabled Vera, who was now forty-eight years old, the opportunity to exercise the empathetic and organisational qualities that she displayed during the previous global conflict, as well as to use her social standing to occupy an influential voluntary role. After returning from London in April 1919, Vera married Thomas White, whom she had met while running the WMIB, on 22 March 1920.⁹² During the 1920s, Vera was largely not a public figure. She gave birth to four daughters, Lilian in 1921, Patricia in 1923, Shirley in 1925, and Judith in 1929.⁹³ In addition to raising her children, Vera was a supportive figure for Thomas, who, after his military service, worked between 1920 and 1932 as managing director of the manufacturing firm C.J. White & Sons Pty Ltd, founded by his father.⁹⁴ In addition to his manufacturing work, Thomas held political ambitions. He was elected to the federal House of Representatives seat of Balaclava in June 1929, a seat he would hold for the following twenty-two years.⁹⁵ Vera began to return to public life in the 1930s, devoting herself to conducting philanthropic work, alongside her domestic duties as a mother and supportive wife.⁹⁶ From 1931, she was a member of the management committee of the (Royal) Children's Hospital, continued her mother Pattie's philanthropic work in assisting returned servicemen, and was a committed member of her local Toorak-South Yarra Red Cross branch. Vera was also a member of the MCEGGS council and was actively involved in the Australian Council of Educational Research, the Free Library Movement and the Victorian Society for Crippled Children and Adults.⁹⁷

At the outbreak of World War II, Vera quickly refocused her voluntary work with the Victorian Red Cross Society to aid the war effort. The Red Cross was the largest patriotic fund in Australia during World War II in terms of the scale of its operations and the support it received, recording a membership of 400,000 in 1944.⁹⁸ As in World War I, the Red Cross continued to attract the support and patronage of society's elite, including vice-regal patronage from the wife of the governor-general and the wives of each of the state governors who took on the roles of state president. The Red Cross also received public support from the Federal Government and the AIF. Each of these factors assisted in maintaining the organisation's prestigious profile.⁹⁹ Despite the dominance of men in the national and divisional executives, the Red Cross portrayed itself as a women's organisation. As Oppenheimer notes:

⁹² Rickard, "White, Vera Deakin."; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 164.

⁹³ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 166.

⁹⁴ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 165.

⁹⁵ Rickard, "White, Vera Deakin."; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 166. For further information on Thomas White's activities following World War I see Rickard, "White, Sir Thomas Walter."; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 165-99.

⁹⁶ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 167.

⁹⁷ Rickard, "White, Vera Deakin."; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 166-70.

⁹⁸ McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 232; Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 171.

⁹⁹ McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 6; Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 177-78; Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 84.

The perception that Red Cross was a women's organisation was reinforced through the extensive and highly successful use of female images for political purposes. Australian Red Cross represented the motherly, caring, healing, nurturing qualities commonly seen as female, while soldiers or returned servicemen – the major recipients of Red Cross care and assistance – were frequently depicted as 'boys' or 'sons'.¹⁰⁰

In World War II, 95% of Red Cross's members were women, many of whom were members of the 'leisured' middle and upper classes who were able to devote themselves to philanthropic work.¹⁰¹

In this section of the chapter I examine Vera's leadership roles in the Red Cross, specifically her roles as Divisional Commandant in charge of Voluntary Personnel and as Co-Director of the Victorian Red Cross BWMPW. I demonstrate how, because her voluntary work during World War I was so far ahead of her time, in World War II she did not feel the need to seek out more challenging work. The extensive collection of recorded discussions between Vera Deakin and her grandson, Tom Harley, continues to be a valuable source of insights into her life. While only brief portions document personal reflections about her experience of running the BWMPW, the collection does contain a thirty-minute recording of an interview conducted by Tom Harley in which volunteers Alison McNeill, Barbara Nettleford and Joan Devine reflect on their experiences working under Vera and Lilian Scantlebury's leadership.¹⁰²

At the outbreak of World War II, Vera quickly reaffirmed her commitment to aiding the Australian war effort by accepting positions of leadership within the Red Cross that drew upon her previous wartime work, especially her organisational skills. She was appointed to the roles of Divisional Commandant in charge of voluntary personnel of the Victorian Red Cross and as Co-Director of the Victorian Red Cross BWMPW, alongside Lilian Scantlebury (1894–1964), with whom she had worked during World War I and who took on the roles of Deputy Divisional Commandant of Voluntary Personnel and Co-Director of the BWMPW.¹⁰³ Vera's decision to undertake her wartime voluntary work in Melbourne represents a major shift from her intense desire to serve overseas during World War I. Several factors would have influenced this decision, including her age, familial responsibilities, advances in communication technologies and the expansion of the theatres of war.

As Divisional Commandant in charge of voluntary personnel, Vera was required to manage the Red Cross's vast voluntary workforce, upon which it relied heavily, as in World War I. In 1940, of the 317 workers at Victorian Red Cross headquarters, only 30 received payment for their work.¹⁰⁴ In May 1940, an article published in *The Age* reported that Vera worked at Victorian Red Cross headquarters each day from 9.30am to 6pm.¹⁰⁵ Vera undertook

¹⁰⁰ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 84.

¹⁰¹ Darian-Smith, "War and Australian Society," 62; Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, 55; Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 171, 78-79; Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 83-84; Saunders and Bolton, "Girdled for War," 378-79.

¹⁰² Interview with Alison McNeill, Barbara Nettleford and Joan Devine, *Session 16 of 19*; Deakin & Harley, *Session 18 of 19*.

¹⁰³ "Red Cross Workers for Middle East," *The Age*, 8 January 1942, 3; "Woman's World. Busy Women's Series – No. 10. Red Cross activities claim time of Mrs T. W. White," *The Herald*, 31 January 1942, 8; "Scantlebury, Lilian Avis (1894-1964)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 19 August, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/scantlebury-lilian-avis-11622>; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 183.

¹⁰⁴ "30 Red Cross Workers Paid," *The Herald*, 2 July 1940, 7.

¹⁰⁵ "Red Cross at Work. Thousands of Helpers," *The Age*, 30 May 1940, 3.

duties including the recruitment and registration of voluntary labour, the provision of training for volunteers and the distribution of workers.¹⁰⁶ She also played an instrumental role in organising training courses for women. In September 1939, she stated that “the Red Cross has done everything it can to supplement the training of women for any emergency.”¹⁰⁷ This was accomplished through the education of female volunteers in skills including elementary cooking, mass cooking, catering, first aid and driving.¹⁰⁸

In her role as Divisional Commandant, Vera was directly involved in coordinating the wartime response of the Red Cross. She attended national conferences of Red Cross Divisional Commandants, where strategies concerning the mobilisation of the organisation’s voluntary workforce were devised.¹⁰⁹ She was also a member of the Victorian Red Cross Personnel Selection Committee, alongside other female Red Cross executive members, including President Lady Dugan, Deputy President Lady Mann, and Deputy Divisional Commandant Lilian Scantlebury. This committee coordinated the organisation’s voluntary workforce, both in Australia and overseas, and appointed primarily female volunteers to carry out various roles including hospital visitors, occupational therapists, letter writers and clerical workers, who were required to be skilled in typing and shorthand.¹¹⁰ As Head of Voluntary Personnel, Vera was involved closely in determining what voluntary work women were able to participate in. While the Red Cross enabled most women to aid the war effort in ways extended beyond fundraising and the production of comforts, it did not offer them paid employment or to extend themselves much beyond feminine and nurturing roles.

At the outbreak of World War II, in recognition of their exemplary service during World War I, Vera and Lilian were called upon to advise the national body on the establishment of a central enquiry and POW bureau. They were approached by Stanley Addison (1880–1972), Acting Secretary-General of the Red Cross, who had worked under Vera’s leadership as a searcher in Egypt and France during World War I, and asked their advice on the new bureau arrangements.¹¹¹ Vera and Lilian were members of the WMIB committee of the Australian Red Cross, and after the outbreak of war advised the committee of the need for overseas searchers, state bureaux, the AIF’s POW bureaux and Red Cross headquarters in Geneva to work closely together to best serve relatives on the home front.¹¹² Despite the widening of her duties within the organisation, at the outbreak of World War II, Vera was committed to using the unique skillset she had acquired running the WMIB during World War I to aid the war effort, albeit at the state level. She therefore devoted herself to leading the Victorian Red Cross BWMPW, as its joint head alongside Lilian Scantlebury, which McNeill, Nettleford and Devine later stated was completely under their control.¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ “no title,” *The Age*, 4 September 1939, 3; “Practical Work for National Emergency,” *The Age*, 5 September 1939, 3.

¹⁰⁷ “Plea by Lady Mayoress to women to pull together. Need for training,” *The Herald*, 2 September 1939, 22.

¹⁰⁸ “Red Cross Plans for Training in Mass Catering,” *The Argus*, 11 October 1939, 10.

¹⁰⁹ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 187.

¹¹⁰ “Red Cross Workers for Middle East,” 3; Australian Red Cross Society, *Twenty-Sixth Annual Report for the Australian Red Cross Society. For the Year Ended 30th June, 1940*, Australian Red Cross Society, (Melbourne, 1940), 74; Australian Red Cross Society, *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report for the Australian Red Cross Society. For the Year Ended 30th June, 1941*, Australian Red Cross Society (Melbourne: 1941), 29.

¹¹¹ Australian Red Cross Society, *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Australian Red Cross Society*, 10; “Addison, Stanley Simpson (1880-1972),” Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 5 April, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/addison-stanley-simpson-9312>; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 181.

¹¹² Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 181.

¹¹³ “Woman’s World. Busy Women’s Series – No. 10,” 8; Interview with McNeill, Nettleford and Devine, *Session 16 of 19*.

Vera operated the BWMPW in a very similar manner to how she had run the WMIB during World War I, with the exception of the addition of POWs. Unlike in World War I, where the WMIB and POW bureau were two separate departments, in January 1940, they were combined into one.¹¹⁴ In July 1940, the *Age* reported that:

In cooperation with the defence, postal and censorship authorities, a detailed scheme has already been worked out whereby at least one bureau will be established overseas, with divisional ones in all states at home, to handle all inquiries for sick, wounded or missing men, to forward letters and parcels to prisoners of war and messages from relatives in Australia to people in enemy occupied countries. Already the voluntary personnel to staff the local bureau is ready to begin their work as soon as the need arises.¹¹⁵

Resulting from Australia's status as a signatory of the 1929 Geneva Convention on prisoners of war, the government was required to provide certain services to POWs. These included a free postal service to enable families to send letters and parcels to their relatives.¹¹⁶ POWs became a major concern for the Red Cross during World War II due to the significant increase in their numbers compared to World War I. During the war, nearly 8,000 Australians were captured by the Germans and Italians, and over 21,000 were captured by the Japanese.¹¹⁷ The Red Cross was committed to supplying POWs in Europe and Asia with essential items and facilitating exchanges between captured soldiers and their relatives.¹¹⁸ The inclusion of POWs in the work of the BWMPW greatly increased the emotional and administrative workload of Vera and Lilian.

Vera was required to use the same skillset that she had used while running the WMIB during World War I. The work of the BWMPW required significant attention to detail and emotional labour from Vera, Lilian and their team of voluntary workers. Melanie Oppenheimer notes:

The [state] bureaux worked with military authorities as well as British Red Cross and International Committee of the Red Cross. Their work centred on dispatching parcels and mail, informing next-of-kin how to contact their POW, or internee relatives, and generally keeping everyone up to date.¹¹⁹

The Victorian BWMPW offered numerous services to assist families. In a similar manner to World War I, it engaged Red Cross searchers overseas to attempt to ascertain specific information on soldiers whom the AIF reported as wounded, missing or killed in action. In addition, it offered a drop-off point for families to send parcels to their POW relatives, and a service enabling families of civilian internees to send twenty-word messages (limited to family news) to their relatives, that would then be printed on a special form and signed by the sender in front

¹¹⁴ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 181.

¹¹⁵ "Mission of mercy in war-wracked world. Duties of the Red Cross," *The Age*, 27 July 1940, 7.

¹¹⁶ Australian Red Cross Society, *Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Australian Red Cross Society*, 22, 25-26; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 181.

¹¹⁷ McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 192; Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 190; Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 108.

¹¹⁸ McKernan, *Australians at Home*, 232-33; Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 190; Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 112.

¹¹⁹ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 108; See also: Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 192.

of either Vera or Lilian; it would then be scrambled and cabled overseas by the Red Cross.¹²⁰ The addition of the message service increased the workload of the BWMPW greatly; for example, in 1942–43 the Victorian BWMPW sent 10,500 of these messages to the central Red Cross bureau in Geneva to be forwarded onto their recipients.¹²¹

As the joint heads of the BWMPW, Vera and Lilian shared an office and would divide the work equally. In their oral testimony, McNeill, Nettleford and Devine reflected that they worked extremely well together and that, when the mail containing the inquiries came in, it would be divided in two, and Vera and Lilian would take half each. As in World War I, most inquiries related to soldiers who hadn't been heard from for a long time and those reported as being wounded, missing or killed in action.¹²² Once the mail had been sorted, new inquiries would be passed onto voluntary workers who would create a card with the soldier and inquirers' information and inform the relevant searchers in the field. When a response from a searcher was received, the information would be passed onto a member of the letter writing group. Vera and Lilian would often participate in the letter writing to families, and were always available when their staff needed advice on what they should say.¹²³ As in World War I, the BWMPW aimed to supplement the basic information the military provided to families by giving context and specific information about the circumstances of their loved ones.¹²⁴ They also reflected that while their voluntary work for the BWMPW was not meant to be a full-time occupation, they would often arrive early and on some nights would continue working until 7–7.30pm. McNeill, Nettleford and Devine stated that, "the workers were all voluntary, but would stay until the job was done, especially when a big casualty list would come in."¹²⁵

Just as she had done during World War I, Vera capitalised on her family name and social connections to ensure the BWMPW functioned effectively, and to see that anxious families received assistance from government, military, and philanthropic organisations. Vera used her personal connection to the prime minister, John Curtin (1885–1945), during the conflict, petitioning him to appoint a member of the Defence Department to transcribe radio broadcasts from the Vatican, which aired between 2am and 4am, listing the names of POWs taken by the Japanese.¹²⁶ She also requested that the Defence Department send letters to soldiers' next of kin, stating that their names had been mentioned in the broadcast, with the caveat that they were unable to verify the information.¹²⁷ This request was made out of empathy for the soldiers' families, ensuring that they would not have to stay up late at night in the hope that their loved one's name was mentioned. A few weeks after her initial request, Prime Minister Curtin implemented this policy.¹²⁸

¹²⁰ "Parcels for Prisoners," *The Herald*, 26 July 1940, 5; Interview with McNeill, Nettleford and Devine, *Session 16 of 19*; Australian Red Cross Society, *Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Australian Red Cross Society*, 26–27; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 183.

¹²¹ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 183.

¹²² Interview with McNeill, Nettleford and Devine, *Session 16 of 19*.

¹²³ Interview with McNeill, Nettleford and Devine, *Session 16 of 19*.

¹²⁴ Interview with McNeill, Nettleford and Devine, *Session 16 of 19*; Oppenheimer, *All Work, No Pay*, 54; Oppenheimer and Kleinig, "There is no trace of him," 278.

¹²⁵ Interview with McNeill, Nettleford and Devine, *Session 16 of 19*.

¹²⁶ Deakin & Harley, *Session 18 of 19*; "Curtin, John (1885-1945)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 4 September, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/curtin-john-9885>.

¹²⁷ Deakin & Harley, *Session 18 of 19*.

¹²⁸ Deakin & Harley, *Session 18 of 19*.

The emotional work Vera performed during the war is evidenced by the personal nature of her involvement in missing persons inquiries. In 1941, the president of the Deniliquin Red Cross branch lodged an inquiry with the BWMPW about Private H. Cations of the 2/7 Battalion A Company. In July, Vera wrote a personal letter to Mrs Cations informing her that her son had officially been reported as missing, that his name had been forwarded to the International Red Cross in Geneva, and that overseas searchers would continue to make inquiries about his disappearance.¹²⁹ Over the course of the letter, Vera employed phrases designed to shield the family from the horrors of war, while attempting to bring them comfort through the knowledge that the Red Cross would continue searching for him. These included,

it may comfort you to know that his name has been forwarded to the International Red Cross at Geneva ... our searchers will make all possible inquiries ... you may rest assured that we shall keep you advised of further news as we deeply sympathise with you in this period of anxious suspense.¹³⁰

In her letter, Vera used many of the procedures and guidelines she had introduced during World War I. She informed the family of their loved one's circumstances with empathy and understanding, without offering false hope. The work of the BWMPW on this particular case did not end with Vera's 1941 letter to Mrs Cations. On both 25 August 1941, and 10 September 1941, the BWMPW was informed that Private H. Cations had been located in the Middle East and was no longer 'missing'.¹³¹

Vera also communicated directly with other soldiers' families. For example, in March 1942, after receiving an official notification from the AIF that her son was missing, the mother of Driver W.C.Q. Cook wrote to the BWMPW, seeking further information about his disappearance.¹³² In May, after making inquiries with the searching department in Malaya, Vera wrote to Mrs Cook informing her that they had not been able to ascertain any information about his disappearance. Vera's response was again imbued with compassion and empathy. She stated:

We very much regret to say that, in spite of all our inquiries, we have yet heard nothing further of your son, Dvr. W.C.Q. Cook. If we get any news, you may be sure it will pass on to you immediately, for we know only too well how acute your anxiety is ... we cannot say how deeply we feel for you and many other mothers, who are enduring the pain and suspense of this bitter time and how anxiously we search for news that will relieve their distress.¹³³

The correspondence between Vera, Mrs Cations and Mrs Cook demonstrates how she continued to use the traditionally feminine qualities of empathy and emotional labour throughout her work with the BWMPW in an

¹²⁹ "Missing Soldier. Red Cross efforts to locate Pte. H. Cations," *The Independent*, 24 July 1941, 1.

¹³⁰ "Missing Soldier," 1.

¹³¹ Pte. H. Cations, Missing, Wounded and Prisoner of War Enquiry Cards, University of Melbourne, 2016.0049.08733; "A.I.F. Losses Army and Radio Lists," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 September 1941, 9; "Latest List of Victorian Casualties," *Weekly Times*, 13 September 1941, 9; "Interstate Casualties," *The Advertiser*, 8 September 1941, 8.

¹³² Dvr. W.C.Q. Cook, Missing, Wounded and Prisoner of War Enquiry Cards, University of Melbourne, 2016.0049.10841; "Red Cross searches keenly for news of prisoners. Assurance to Camperdown mother," *Camperdown Chronicle*, 26 May 1942, 3.

¹³³ "Red Cross searches keenly for news of prisoners," 3.

attempt to relieve the distress of those on the home front. Vera's resumption of her work as head of the BMWPW reveals how she took advantage of the unique skillset she had gained during World War I, her esteemed position within the Red Cross and her robust character to, once again, contribute to the Australian war effort in a significant fashion.

Conclusion

During World War II, the Deakin sisters were content to perform their wartime work in typically gendered voluntary capacities. They used their social privilege and influence to occupy powerful roles in philanthropic organisations, in which they encouraged and facilitated women's contributions to the war effort. Through her leadership of the ACF and NCWV, Ivy responded to the changing nature of war and championed a developing understanding of women's roles and responsibilities in wartime. She supported women undertaking typical wartime work, including fundraising and the production of comforts. As the war progressed, Ivy also supported the inclusion of women in post-war reconstruction efforts. Finally, she advocated for the extension of women's participation in the war effort into the typically male domain of industrial production and auxiliary military service, and campaigned for them to receive appropriate pay and recognition for their work. The outbreak of World War II signalled Stella's re-entry into the public sphere, although in a markedly different capacity than in her life prior to marriage. Stella used the social capital associated with her family name to take on a leadership role in the WUPF. In the early years of the war, the WUPF's focus on fundraising and providing comforts to soldiers and children affected by war strongly resembled the typical wartime work of middle and upper-class women. In response to the changing nature of the war, the WUPF refocused its work. In addition to its previous efforts, it included the provision of childcare facilities to allow women with children to participate in the industrial workforce. Vera used her previous experience as head of the Australian Red Cross WMIB during World War I to run the Victorian Red Cross BWMPW during World War II. Her work leading the organisation during this conflict reveals how she used the unique skillset she had gained during World War I, in conjunction with her robust character and the social influence associated with her family name, to continue to contribute to the war effort in a unique and rare capacity.

Though the Deakin sisters were no longer a part of the younger generation of 'modern' women during World War II, they were still strong and highly capable women whose devotion to unpaid philanthropic work should not obscure their ability to exert public influence and authority. The wartime work of the Deakin sisters, through which they championed a developing understanding of women's roles and responsibilities in wartime, especially in regard to equal pay and the provision of childcare facilities, demonstrates the continuity of maternal feminist ideas in the Australian women's movement, which were, in reality, quite consistent with some 'radical' positions that were more closely aligned with later feminisms than we may expect. This work aligned very closely with feminism's championing of women's expanded participation in the public sphere that was to grow as the twentieth century advanced and evolutions within the movement about what was viewed as 'equality for women'. Some contemporary feminists' rendering of women like the Deakin sisters as non-progressive and even anti-feminist clouds their important contribution in this period. It also obscures the long-term influence of maternal feminism and its ideal notion of womanhood, which continued to incorporate qualities drawn from the 'new woman', in creating spaces of public influence and authority for women in Australia into the 1940s.

Chapter Six: Post-War Reconstruction, 1945–1956

*In the post-war world women will take a more knowledgeable interest in the economic structure of Australia, and wield a greater social and political influence than in the past. They have come to see how closely bound up with its prosperity and welfare, is that all important part with which they are more directly concerned – food, clothing, housing and equipment. – Dr Mary Booth, ‘Women in the Post-War War’, *Yass Tribune-Courier*, 2 November 1944, 3¹*

In November 1944, Dr Mary Booth (1869–1956), a pioneering physician and philanthropic worker, published an article in which she advocated for women to play an increased role in post-war Australia, arguing that this would result in a more prosperous society.² Dr Booth was a ‘new woman’ predecessor of a slightly earlier generation than the Deakin sisters. She travelled overseas and completed her medical degree at the College of Medicine for Women, University of Edinburgh, in 1899, worked professionally, did decades of executive-level philanthropic work, and was a passionate advocate for women’s increased inclusion in Australian society after World War II.³ As the end of the war approached, discussions regarding women’s positions and contributions to post-war society were occurring across urban and rural Australia. Women began to voice their belief that Australian society would be strengthened if they could be more involved in post-war decision-making processes.⁴ Some women also held the view that the era of women existing solely in the domestic sphere was over, and that, for society to progress, women needed to play a greater role in the public sphere. As Mrs L. Austin stated in an address she delivered to the Manjimup Methodist Guild in June 1945:

I think you’ll agree with me that the “clinging vine” type of woman, went out with the Victorian and Edwardian days. Women, because of better education, now, wish to be real fifty-fifty partners with their menfolk, to stand shoulder to shoulder in peace, as in war years, to build together a better world.⁵

Women in this period were confronting the limitations that society was attempting to reimpose on them after World War II, and were advocating for the important contributions they believed they could make to society, especially those rooted within female concerns and areas of expertise.

In this chapter I reveal more about the prolonged influence of the ‘new woman’ era in expanding married Australian women’s lives beyond the domestic destiny previously ascribed to them. I also demonstrate the continued authority of maternal feminist ideals and practices in the Australian women’s movement in the late 1940s and early 1950s. I examine how the Deakin sisters, as politically conservative older women, championed a developing understanding of womanhood that continued to align strongly with the maternal feminist ideals they

¹ Dr. Mary Booth, “Women in the Post-War War,” *Yass Tribune-Courier*, 2 November 1944, 3.

² Booth, “Women in the Post-War War,” 3; “Booth, Mary (1869-1956),” *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2006, accessed 19 April, 2022, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/booth-mary-5291>; “Booth, Mary,” *The Encyclopedia of Women & Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Australian Women’s Archives Project, 2014, accessed 19 April, 2022, http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0113b.htm?fbclid=IwAR1hqy5-jBZ2utf79V7CMYx4fwuNzozWjJuIvww_2S8nHpbtSF6dnkTq4ms.

³ Roe, “Booth, Mary.”; Swain, “Booth, Mary.”

⁴ Country Reporter, “Women’s Place in Post-War Life,” *The Land*, 9 February 1945, 13.

⁵ Mrs L. Austin quoted in “Women and Post-War Politics,” *Manjimup and Warren Times*, 20 June 1945, 8.

had championed since the early 1900s. Each continued to subscribe to the gendered ideal of ‘separate but equal’, and advocated for the continued value of the ‘mother of the race’ figure in ensuring a prosperous future for the nation. I first investigate Ivy’s continued social reform efforts through her leadership of the NCWA and the PRAW, exposing how she encouraged women’s equality in the context of ‘equal but different’, and the reform of ‘degenerate’ working-class children. I then examine Stella’s support of women in science and her continued involvement in the WUPF, through which she advocated for the welfare of British children affected by the war. Vera’s support for the role that children could play in the creation of an improved post-war society through her continued work with the Red Cross is then examined. Finally, I explore Vera’s time in London while her husband, Thomas, was acting as Australian high commissioner, demonstrating how she exceeded the expectations of her position and implemented progressive measures to assist Australians in London. This chapter contributes to efforts to demonstrate the continued influence of maternal feminism in this period, and its ability to expand the public presence and influence of women. It reveals how, as older women, the Deakin sisters continued to engage with the social reform ambitions associated with maternal feminism. They continued to highlight women’s unique skillset and perspective stemming from their roles in the home and as mothers, and argued that giving women greater influence would result in improvements for the nation as a whole.

The Australian women’s movement was a site of evolution and diversity of opinion in the 1950s, as it shifted from its previous efforts focused on the protection of women to a focus on gender equality.⁶ Women’s organisations existed across the political spectrum, and included the Australian Federation of Women Voters, Business and Professional Women’s Clubs, the Women’s Service Guild, the Women’s Non-Party Association, the NCWA and its state branches, the Victorian Women’s Citizens’ Movement, the Australian Federation of University Women and the Union of Australian Women.⁷ According to Marilyn Lake, during the 1950s the achievement of equal pay and equal opportunity in both work and public life were primary concerns of the movement.⁸ Women wanted to legitimise their choice to devote themselves to marriage and motherhood, and their right to end an unhappy marriage, but also advocated greater social empowerment and their right to participate in paid work on an equal foundation with men and participate in mainstream politics.⁹ The movement did not adopt a uniform approach to these issues, due to varying beliefs as to how these measures could best be achieved.¹⁰

During this period, older women, like the Deakin sisters, continued to operate within longstanding maternal feminist models of activism, and favoured a slow and gentle approach to pressuring governments and other women’s organisations to support women’s issues.¹¹ This did not, however, preclude, major representative women’s groups such as the NCWA – whose members possessed disparate viewpoints due to their association with philanthropic, charitable and religious groups, as well as groups with a ‘feminist’ concern with women’s rights and advancement – from supporting ‘progressive’ reforms such as federal divorce legislation and equal

⁶ Smart and Quartly, "Moderate and mainstream," 132.

⁷ Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, 276; Lake, *Getting Equal*, 9-10; Elaine Martin, "Social Work, the Family and Women's Equality in Post-War Australia," *Women's History Review* 12, no. 3 (2003): 448.

⁸ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 202.

⁹ Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, 182, 85-86.

¹⁰ Quartly and Smart, "The Australian National Council of Women," 359-60; Smart and Quartly, "Moderate and mainstream," 135.

¹¹ Smart and Quartly, "Moderate and mainstream," 144-45.

pay.¹² Younger women, however, were becoming frustrated with the slow pace of change, the perceived conservatism of older models of maternal feminism, and the concept of 'separate but equal', and were becoming drawn to modes of activism associated with second-wave feminism in which women "attacked the family and male supremacy as obstacles to the liberation of their sex."¹³

Feminist agitation for increased opportunities for women in the public sphere resulted in national anxieties concerned with their movement away from their 'natural' role as mothers into the world of work.¹⁴ Women were faced with considerable pressures to conform to the ideals of middle-class domesticity.¹⁵ After the conclusion of World War II, they were expected to resume their pre-war home-based roles, focused on caring for their husbands and especially having children, who were viewed as the future of the nation and the race.¹⁶ This direction stemmed from concerns about the nation's declining population due to losses in the war and the lowered birth rate, and the threat of invasion if the population did not increase.¹⁷ Elaine Martin notes that "the ideal was the nuclear family of father employed in the workforce, and house-proud mother engaged in home duties, caring for her husband and two or more children in a 'modern' home."¹⁸ Women were pressured in public discourses to frame their identities within their marriage, and were promised that marriage would give them personal fulfilment and happiness.¹⁹ They were also encouraged to devote themselves to domestic duties due to the belief that the best environment to raise children was within a nuclear family.²⁰ These post-war discourses and pressures were largely successful. During the 1950s, marriage rates increased, the age at the time of marriage decreased for men and women, and the highest birth rates of the century – the 'baby boom' – occurred.²¹

The women's movement also advocated that women's unique skillset should be used in combating growing concerns over children. Nicholas Brown observes that

¹² Smart and Quartly, "Moderate and mainstream," 132.

¹³ Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, 278; Smart and Quartly, "Moderate and mainstream," 144-45.

¹⁴ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 202, 17.

¹⁵ Gisela T. Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest: The Australian Women's Movement 1950s-1990s* (St. Leonards, N.S.W: Allen & Unwin, 1996), 6-7; John Murphy and Belinda Probert, "Never Done: The Working Mothers of the 1950s," in *Double shift: Working mothers and Social Change in Australia*, ed. Patricia Grimshaw, John Murphy, and Belinda Probert (Beaconsfield, Vic: Circa, 2005), 135.

¹⁶ Martin, "Social Work, the Family and Women's Equality in Post-War Australia," 445-46; Ann Firth, "The Breadwinner, his Wife and their Welfare: Identity, Expertise and Economic Security in Australian Post-War Reconstruction," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 50, no. 4 (2004): 505; Justine Lloyd and Lesley Johnson, "Dream Stuff: The Postwar Home and the Australian Housewife, 1940-60," *Society & Space* 22, no. 2 (2004): 251; Philippa Mein Smith, "Blood, Birth, Babies, Bodies," *Australian Feminist Studies* 17, no. 39 (2002): 311; Alistair Thomson, "'Tied to the kitchen sink'? Women's Lives and Women's History in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain and Australia," *Women's History Review* 22, no. 1 (2013): 126-27.

¹⁷ Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, 271-72; Martin, "Social Work, the Family and Women's Equality in Post-War Australia," 446.

¹⁸ Martin, "Social Work, the Family and Women's Equality in Post-War Australia," 446; See also John Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2000), 42; Firth, "The Breadwinner, his Wife and their Welfare," 498, 503.

¹⁹ Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 43.

²⁰ Martin, "Social Work, the Family and Women's Equality in Post-War Australia," 446.

²¹ Kaplan, *The Meagre Harvest*, 7; Martin, "Social Work, the Family and Women's Equality in Post-War Australia," 446; Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 1.

progressive thinking in the 1930s had argued that we can train children to be citizens of a democracy by helping them to react co-operatively instead of individually. The war had provided greater scope to consider the possible extent of that co-operation.²²

In the post-war period, there was an increased focus on the need to shape children into patriotic citizens who would contribute to the nation's increased prosperity, and the role that women could play in these efforts. Thus, in these discourses motherhood was elevated by new 'scientific' ideas about child rearing into something akin to a professional occupation.²³ Social reformers believed that if "the familial and domestic genesis of delinquency" could be identified in children, women, as part of their civic duty, could work to combat this and mould them into good citizens.²⁴

While there were considerable pressures for women to conform to middle-class domestic ideals, there were also challenges to this and opportunities for women to live different lives. Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quartly note that

the most popular women's groups of these years [1950s] were those that appealed to women's familial identity: mothers' unions and clubs, new, old and progressive housewives' associations. Yet, many women still dreamed of shrugging off the limitations of their sex.²⁵

Moreover, after World War II, women were participating in higher education at increased rates and worked in female-dominated industries, including teaching, nursing and clerical work.²⁶ However, they continued to contend with marriage bars, which existed in the Australian public service from 1902 until the 1970s.²⁷

By the late 1950s, acceptance of married women participating in the workforce was increasing and women were resisting marriage bars.²⁸ The greater participation of married women in the workforce resulted from increasing demand for workers in the post-war economy, particularly in low-paying jobs that men did not want, which ultimately resulted in a transformation of women's place within Australian society.²⁹ By the end of the 1950s, the Australian "female citizen was sketched in terms of expectations of equality within marriage, of commitments to

²² Nicholas Brown, *Governing prosperity: Social Change and Social Analysis in Australia in the 1950s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 181.

²³ Brown, *Governing prosperity*, 182, 40.

²⁴ Brown, *Governing prosperity*, 162, 89; Martin, "Social Work, the Family and Women's Equality in Post-War Australia," 447.

²⁵ Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, 276.

²⁶ Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 45; Glenda Strachan, "Still Working for the Man?: Women's Employment Experiences in Australia since 1950," *The Australian Journal of Social Issues* 45, no. 1 (2010): 119; Firth, "The Breadwinner, his Wife and their Welfare," 504.

²⁷ Colley, "For Better or for Worse," 230; "Public Service/Policy," *The Encyclopedia of Women & Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2014, accessed 21 April, 2022, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0446b.htm>.

²⁸ Annabel Crabb, "The forgotten milestone that shows how far Australian women have come," *The Sydney Morning Herald* 2016, <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/the-forgotten-milestone-that-shows-how-far-australian-women-have-come-20161125-gsxhnh.html>; Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 48; Alison Mackinnon and Penny Gregory, "A study corner in the kitchen': Australian graduate women negotiate family, nation and work in the 1950s and early 1960s," *Australian Historical Studies* 37, no. 127 (2006): 64.

²⁹ Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 48; Mackinnon and Gregory, "'A study corner in the kitchen'," 64.

the domestic sphere, of possible entitlements to more public roles, and of responsibilities to contribute to the community.”³⁰ This version of the female citizen began to realise the aspirations of post-suffrage maternal feminism that women, including Mary Booth and the Deakin sisters, had worked toward for the previous fifty years. The following examinations of the Deakin sisters’ activities in the post-war period reveals how, as older, politically conservative women, they still engaged with the ambitions of the feminist movement (both old and new) and strived to implement social reforms that they believed would lead to a more prosperous Australia.

Ivy Brookes, Gender Equality and Creating Good Citizens

After World War II, of the three Deakin sisters, Ivy continued to be the most involved in the philanthropic and political worlds. She continued her extensive and dedicated work for philanthropic organisations in which she had been actively involved from the early decades of the twentieth century. An article published in *The Age* as part of the ‘They Serve’ series in February 1949 reveals how Ivy, and her work, were viewed within Australian society in the post-war period. The article attributes her dedication to a life of service and advocacy for social reforms that would better the lives of women and children to the influence of the example of public service set by her parents Alfred and Pattie, and her husband Herbert’s belief in the ideal of ‘equal but different’.

The daughter of the late Alfred Deakin, former Prime Minister of Australia, Mrs Brookes grew up in an environment of culture which has provided a background to all her work. She married a man who believed women had a right to share in public interests with their menfolk and who encouraged her to develop and use her potential powers.³¹

Herbert’s strong influence in enabling Ivy’s dedicated philanthropic work is reinforced in a reflection she wrote in her later years:

My freedom to work on these and many other committees has only been possible because of my husband’s belief in the equality of the sexes, and his help and co-operation with me in my work throughout our fifty years of happy married life.³²

While the article commends Ivy’s philanthropic work, it highlights the fact that she never played an inactive role in any organisation with which she chose to be associated. It states, “though her interests are so numerous, Mrs Brookes has never been a ‘dabbler’. To belong to an organisation has always meant solid, hard work.”³³ It also emphasises how Ivy championed a developing understanding of womanhood that strongly aligned with maternal feminism, in which women’s opinions were valued in the public domain.

³⁰ Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, 53-54.

³¹ “They Serve – No. 2. She Makes the Best Use of Time,” *The Age*, 12 February 1949, 9.

³² Ivy Brookes, *A Typical Day in my Life*, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/219.

³³ “They Serve – No. 2,” 9.

Mrs Brookes believes there is a great need for more experienced, qualified women to enter into public life, as she is of the opinion that just as a home is not complete without the complement of wife to husband, so in public life the combined judgment of men and women is invaluable and essential.³⁴

While Ivy was presented as an extraordinary figure who had made significant contributions to public life, the journalist made sure to reinforce that she had completed her duties as a wife and mother.

In spite of the volume of her outside interests and the hard work she puts into them, Mrs Brookes remains the pivot round which revolves a full and happy family life, in which she and her husband share their interests and in which she has brought up two sons and a daughter and is now an indulgent grandmother to their seven children.³⁵

The following examination of Ivy's continued work with the NCWA and PRAV reveals how she championed a developing understanding of womanhood in the post-war period, advocating for women to hold influential positions in public life, gender equality and for women's ability to shape children into good future citizens.

In 1948, Ivy was elected to the prestigious position of president of the NCWA, a position she held until 1952.³⁶ Marian Quartly and Judith Smart observe that the 1950s were the golden era of the NCWA that saw the organisation experience its highest membership and numbers of affiliated organisations and branches.³⁷ The NCWA continued to be a highly influential moderate feminist body focused on improving Australian society. It was the peak representative body of women's groups at the local, state, national and international level, involved in areas including "politics, religion, morality, health, education, the media, philanthropy and also, peace, women's economic and political rights, child welfare and legal reform."³⁸ Ivy characterised her primary focus during her presidency as being "to improve the status of women."³⁹ Quartly and Smart characterise Ivy's approach to this issue as "straightforwardly feminist; the problem was the male monopoly on rights and power, perpetuated by male selfishness and ignorance."⁴⁰ But her vision of how society would be improved if women's status was improved was also strongly aligned with maternal feminist views about separate gendered roles for men and women.⁴¹ As I explore in the following discussion, this was evident through her advocacy for women's increased involvement in post-war society, gender equality and the inclusion of women on governmental conferences and committees, specifically the 1951 anti-inflation conference and the 1952 import licensing committee.

In her role as NCWA president, Ivy, as she had done during World War II, continued to advocate for lasting peace and the important role that women needed to play in this. In 1948, in her capacity as a Victorian delegate to the

³⁴ "They Serve – No. 2," 9.

³⁵ "They Serve – No. 2," 9.

³⁶ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 247.

³⁷ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 250.

³⁸ Smart and Quartly, "Moderate and mainstream," 129; Quartly and Smart, "The Australian National Council of Women," 352.

³⁹ Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1952, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2669.

⁴⁰ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 246.

⁴¹ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 246.

NCWA biennial conference, Ivy moved a motion that would come to characterise her focus as NCWA president. The resolution stated, “The Council deplors the apparent acceptance of the inevitability of war and urges that women across the world should recognise their individual responsibility by actively working for peace and supporting every organisation working to prevent world suicide.”⁴² Ivy and the NCWA saw women as having an important role in achieving this ambition, and that without their contributions, peace would not be secured. In one of her first addresses after being elected NCWA president, Ivy stated that one of the most important resolutions passed by the conference “urged women to do their utmost for world peace.”⁴³ During her presidency, Ivy built upon the mainstream association of women with pacifism, which although not being contested, was certainly strengthened by the women-led international peace movement that arose out of World War I and continued well beyond.⁴⁴ She advocated consistently for the importance of women’s role in creating a lasting peace and encouraged the population to work as hard for peace as they had done to secure victory during World War II.⁴⁵

The maternal feminist commitment to equality (even through the lens of ‘separate but equal’) led women, including Ivy, to support more radical feminist ambitions, including equal pay and equal opportunity rights for women. In 1950, when asked what the most urgent work facing Australian women’s organisations was, Ivy responded, “The continuous struggle for equal status of women with men.”⁴⁶ Achieving gender equality, especially in regard to issues such as federal divorce legislation and equal pay for equal work, was a significant issue for Ivy over the course of her NCWA presidency. Much of her final presidential address in 1952 was devoted to reflecting upon the status of women. While Ivy celebrated the gains that women had made, especially through the inclusion of equal rights for men and women in the United Nations Charter of Human Rights, she urged women to continue to exert pressure through organisations such as the NCWA to make further gains.⁴⁷ She stated, “Let us remember always that resolutions backed by organised pressure can change laws and alter society, which is one of the principal methods used by the N.C.W.’s all over the world.”⁴⁸ Finally, she urged all Australian women to continue to campaign for women to achieve equality in all fields of society, remarking “We in Australia must continue to press for equal opportunity being allowed in all fields.”⁴⁹

An important component of Ivy and the NCWA’s vision of a more prosperous Australian society was their campaign for equal pay. This campaign had begun long before Ivy was elected as NCWA president in 1948. In early 1914, NCWV representatives had approached the government in order to discuss their refusal to grant

⁴² “World Suicide is Women’s Job,” *The Telegraph*, 1 September 1948, 6.

⁴³ “Peace Aim of Women,” *The Herald*, 9 September 1948, 9.

⁴⁴ For further information on the twentieth century women’s peace movement see Francisca de Haan et al., *Women’s Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2013); Katie Liang, “World war and worldly women: The Great War and the formation of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in Australia,” *The LaTrobe Journal*, no. 96 (2015): 117-34; J. Ann Tickner and Jacqui True, “A Century of International Relations Feminism: From World War I Women’s Peace Pragmatism to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda,” *International Studies Quarterly*, no. 62 (2018): 221-33.

⁴⁵ “They Serve – No. 2,” 9.

⁴⁶ “Two big jobs face women,” *The Courier Mail*, 26 July 1950, 8.

⁴⁷ Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1952, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2673.

⁴⁸ Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1952, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2668.

⁴⁹ Ivy Brookes National Council of Women of Australia Presidential Address, 1952, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/39/2668.

women equal pay for equal work.⁵⁰ This campaign continued during the 1920s, when they launched campaigns for female public service workers to receive equal pay.⁵¹ The NCWA did not campaign for equal pay during the depression of the 1930s, but as demonstrated previously, it resumed doing so during World War II. It advocated for women serving in the military to receive equal pay, and supported legislation specifying that women, at a minimum, should receive seventy-five per cent of the male wage.⁵² During Ivy's presidency in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the NCWA began to campaign in support of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, arguing specifically "that women should have equal opportunity, status and reward with men."⁵³ It also voiced its support for the Equal Remuneration Convention of the International Labour Organisation, which called for women to receive equal pay for equal work.⁵⁴ It was also concerned about the continued existence of a marriage bar in the public service and the impediment this caused for married women.⁵⁵ The NCWA's prolonged campaign for equal pay and status for women was associated with maternal feminist ideas concerned with female empowerment and the freedom for them to make choices about their lives and activities.⁵⁶

The inclusion of women on governmental boards and committees was an important facet of Ivy's vision of a more prosperous post-war Australian society. This goal was associated strongly with Ivy's continued engagement with maternal feminism's belief that women's unique skillset and perspective made them worthy of political representation and influence that, in turn, would improve Australian society.⁵⁷ Ivy was elected president of the NCWA at the 1948 annual conference, and passed a resolution stating that the NCWA should strive to achieve "adequate representation for women on committees."⁵⁸ This resolution was in line with the foundational aims of the organisation – that it act as a representative body that aimed to "speak nationally and internationally for the women of Australia."⁵⁹ In 1951, Ivy expressed the view that women needed to hold increased positions in public life and decision-making bodies in order to improve the nation.

Mrs Brookes pointed out that it was therefore necessary that men should bring women into their deliberations and discussions more and together build for the majority of men and women alike. Women should be on all boards, commissions and overseas delegations. The few women members of Parliament and women councillors had justified their election, but a far greater number were needed to enable women's ideas and ideals to be realised.⁶⁰

During her tenure as NCWA president, Ivy drew upon her personal connections to Prime Minister Robert Menzies (1894–1978), and their shared alignment with conservative party politics, in order to advocate for women's

⁵⁰ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 139.

⁵¹ Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 139–40.

⁵² Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 141.

⁵³ Quartly and Smart, "The Australian National Council of Women," 357.

⁵⁴ Quartly and Smart, "The Australian National Council of Women," 357.

⁵⁵ Quartly and Smart, "The Australian National Council of Women," 357.

⁵⁶ Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, 182.

⁵⁷ Lake, *Getting Equal*, 12.

⁵⁸ "Peace Aim of Women," 9.

⁵⁹ Quartly and Smart, "The Australian National Council of Women," 354.

⁶⁰ "Conference for Women," *The West Australian*, 31 August 1951, 6.

increased presence on governmental boards, committees and conferences.⁶¹ In July 1951, significant progress was made toward Ivy and the NCWA's goal of increased representation of women on these influential bodies, when Prime Minister Menzies requested that the NCWA select two female representatives to represent the views of women at the upcoming anti-inflation conference. This was a significant achievement for the NCWA, because the conference was regarded as "the most important gathering of its kind since the depression."⁶² Prime Minister Menzies organised the conference in an attempt to engage representatives of community organisations, state and federal governments, the trade union movement, church leaders, employers and social welfare organisations, in "a frank discussion of present inflation and possible measures that might be taken to combat it."⁶³

The two female NCWA representatives who attended the conference were Ivy and Mrs Frances Kumm (1886–1966), NCWA Deputy President.⁶⁴ Ivy and Frances' contributions were extremely well-regarded and presented favourable evidence for the NCWA's continued campaign that women's increased representation would improve Australian society significantly. As the only female representatives at the conference, they were able to offer an important and differing perspective and made numerous suggestions on behalf of women. These included restrictions on the production of luxury goods, the need for women to voice their opinion on what constituted utility and luxury goods, the introduction of basic utility clothing, stronger policing of the black market, a reduction in the size of the public service, a longer working week and a lowering of tax on overtime.⁶⁵ These issues were complex and would have elicited varying opinions from women across the political spectrum, especially in regard to longer working hours and reducing the public service. However, their voices, as women, were certainly heard.

Ivy and Frances' participation in the conference was regarded within the NCWA as being a significant step toward their aim of increasing women's representation on influential governmental bodies. In an article published in the South Australian newspaper *The Pennant*, in September 1951, recounting an address made by Mrs Warner at the state NCW branch meeting, both women's contributions at the conference were celebrated.⁶⁶ The article states that:

Our National President, Mrs Herbert Brookes, and Vice-President, Mrs Karl Kumm made such large and forceful contributions at the recent anti-inflation conference in Sydney. So great was their reception and definite views expressed by them, that future conferences of national importance cannot conscientiously hesitate to ignore the ability of women and their pertinent concerns.⁶⁷

⁶¹ David Lowe, *Menzies and the "Great World Struggle": Australia's Cold War 1948-1954* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999); Quartly and Smart, "The Australian National Council of Women," 352-53; Quartly and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 258-59; "Menzies, Sir Robert Gordon (Bob) (1894-1978)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 22 April, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/menzies-sir-robert-gordon-bob-11111>.

⁶² "Conference for Women," 1; "Women have served us well... They have done much, there is more to do...," *The Herald*, 8 March 1954, 6.

⁶³ "24 invited to anti-inflation conference," *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 July 1951, 5.

⁶⁴ "Represent Women at Inflation Talks," *The Daily Examiner*, 25 July 1951, 1; "Kumm, Frances Gertrude (1886–1966)," Australian Dictionary of Biography, 2006, accessed 22 April, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kumm-frances-gertrude-10768>.

⁶⁵ "National Council of Women," *The Pennant*, 27 September 1951, 6; "Women ask for say in naming luxuries," *The Sun*, 31 July 1951, 2; "Women Favour Reduced Public Service," *The Canberra Times*, 12 October 1951, 4.

⁶⁶ "National Council of Women," 6.

⁶⁷ Mrs Warner quoted in "National Council of Women," 6.

Frances also regarded the inclusion of women in the anti-inflation conference as being of great value. She believed that the conference presented the opportunity for women's views to be communicated to the male-dominated fields of government and industry, and for her and Ivy to learn about the present inflationary problems from a diverse range of perspectives.⁶⁸ Ivy's successful solicitation of invitations to participate in the 1951 conference was a significant achievement in her presidency. She used her personal connection to Prime Minister Menzies and the prestige of the NCWA to secure female representation at the conference, where their contributions were viewed as important, and led to further NCWA involvement in national decision-making.⁶⁹

In early 1952, Prime Minister Menzies established a consultative committee on import policy that would meet regularly in order to review import licensing policy and discuss the effects of current import policy and restrictions on the economy.⁷⁰ The committee was comprised of representatives from government and industry groups including the Associated Chamber of Manufacturers, Associated Chambers of Commerce of Australia, Australian Council of Retailers, the Prime Minister's Department, Trade and Customs Department, the Commerce and Agriculture Department, the National Development Department, as well as the Commonwealth Prices Consultant and a former member of the Tariff Board. This committee had the right to submit recommendations and opinions to the Government Cabinet Committee on Import Policy.⁷¹ The NCWA was invited to appoint two female representatives to represent the interests of Australian women on this committee, and Ivy and Mrs Elise Byth (1890–1988), a former NCWA president, were chosen.⁷²

The inclusion of women on this committee was again seen as a significant achievement within the NCWA. Byth stated that "Women [are] the buying public, and [...] it is very satisfactory to find the Government [is] recognising the importance of their opinion on advisory committees."⁷³ Ivy and Elsie strived to represent the views of their members to the committee. Prior to the first meeting, Ivy issued an appeal to all NCWA members for information as to how the current import restrictions were personally affecting them. She stated that, "No two women alone can do this job. We need the help of all women to make our contribution a valuable one."⁷⁴ Ivy and Elsie were successful and respected members of the import licensing committee. They were able to communicate women's perspective on goods shortages and secure releases of much-needed items, including crockery and flannelette for baby clothing.⁷⁵

Another way that Ivy contributed to a more prosperous Australian society after World War II was through her continued leadership of the PRAV. The PRAV in this period continued to support mothers, especially those of

⁶⁸ Mrs Kumm quoted in "Anti-Inflation Talks. Church, Union Leaders Critical," *Illawarra Daily Mercury*, 2 August 1951, 1.

⁶⁹ "Women have served us well..." 6.

⁷⁰ "Import Cuts Studied. First Meeting of Committee," *The Age*, 10 April 1952, 5.

⁷¹ "Import Cuts Studied. First Meeting of Committee," 5; "Import Cuts Check Plan – Committee Set Up," *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, 31 March 1952, 1; "Federal Cabinet Decides 3 Committees for Import Cut Problems," *The Courier Mail*, 19 March 1952, 1; "Import Policy Talks," *Queensland Herald*, 10 April 1952, 1; "Woman on Imports Committee," *The Examiner*, 27 March 1952, 12.

⁷² "Import Cuts Studied. First Meeting of Committee," 5; "Import Cuts Check Plan – Committee Set Up," 1; "Watch on Effect of Cuts. 2 Women on Imports Panel," *The Courier-Mail*, 31 March 1952, 3; "Byth, Elsie Frances (1890 - 1988)," *The Australian Women's Register*, 2003, accessed 8 July, 2022, <https://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0598b.htm>; Quarty and Smart, *Respectable Radicals*, 146.

⁷³ "'Force Some Out.' Import Cut Fears," *The Courier-Mail*, 2 April 1952, 10.

⁷⁴ "Women to Report on Import Cuts," *The Queensland Times*, 1 April 1952, 5.

⁷⁵ "Woman Helps Solve Import Cut Problems," *The Sunday Herald*, 31 August 1952, 14.

the working classes, to mould their children into healthy and productive citizens. As discussed in chapter two, Ivy had been involved with the PRAV since its inception in 1912; she served as vice-president from 1936 and as president from 1944.⁷⁶ In the post-war period, together with the emphasis on the nuclear family, the PRAV was concerned with expanding and improving facilities designed to support family life, including community centres, kindergartens, playgrounds and infant welfare centres.⁷⁷ While the PRAV's work was highly relevant to the concerns of post-war Australian society, it continued to operate as it had during the early twentieth century, drawing upon eugenic 'child saving' principles and focusing on reforming working-class children according to middle and upper-class values.⁷⁸

In the post-war period, the PRAV continued to strive to create good citizens, especially in working-class areas of Melbourne.⁷⁹ It aimed to combat the negative effects of modernisation and return children to natural methods of playing outdoors.⁸⁰ The PRAV believed that the provision of playgrounds, led by qualified playleaders who would facilitate games and other activities, would shape children into healthy and fit citizens.⁸¹ This was accomplished through targeted programs in childhood. It strongly believed that "the kind of opportunities afforded to children in their leisure time has an appreciable effect in determining whether they become happy citizens or delinquents."⁸² Through the games and other activities that children engaged in while attending supervised playgrounds, it was believed they would develop qualities including tolerance, understanding, citizenship, and healthy minds and bodies.⁸³ These qualities would, ultimately, result in them becoming healthy and productive adults who were able to contribute positively to post-war society.

Ivy conducted her voluntary work for the PRAV before and after World War II in a similar manner. She continued to use her social influence to advocate for the benefits of supervised play to both high-level government figures and to the general public.⁸⁴ Ivy used her social connections and prominent position to engage with high-ranking officials within the Victorian government. In the mid-1950s, the Victorian government recognised the importance of supervised play for child welfare, and provided a grant to allow the PRAV to continue its efforts in working-class neighbourhoods. In a letter to government representative William Jungwirth (1897–1981), Ivy reported on how the grant was being used to improve child welfare and to combat the newly emerged post-war issue of

⁷⁶ The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria 1935 Annual Report, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1274; The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria 1944-45 Annual Report, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1290.

⁷⁷ Macintyre, "Women's Leadership in War and Reconstruction," 76.

⁷⁸ O'Brien, *Philanthropy and Settler Colonialism*, 99; Rodwell, "'Only by persistent effort in the face of discouragement,'" 314, 19-20; Watts, "Beyond Nature and Nurture," 321.

⁷⁹ The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria 1950-51 Annual Report, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1296.

⁸⁰ The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria, September 1954, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/212.

⁸¹ The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria 1944-45 Annual Report, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1290.

⁸² The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria 1950-51 Annual Report, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1296.

⁸³ The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria 1944-45 Annual Report, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1290; The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria Report, Balance Sheet and Financial Statement for period 1 July 1951, to 31 December 1951, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1295.

⁸⁴ The Playground and Recreation Association of Victoria 1944-45 Annual Report, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/1290.

juvenile delinquency through the provision of night-time activities for children.⁸⁵ Ivy also petitioned Jungwirth to increase the grant from £4,500 to £5,000 to enable the PRAV to establish more supervised playgrounds in working-class areas and improve existing grounds.

Ivy's advocacy efforts extended to educating the general public on the benefits of supervised play. In 1946, the PRAV decided to launch its first public fundraising campaign in its thirty-three year existence; the Christmas appeal attempted to raise £10,000 to assist the organisation in continuing its important work. On 1 December, in a passionate radio broadcast, Ivy informed the general public of the value and benefit of supervised play.⁸⁶ She characterised the work of the PRAV as being of vital importance to ensuring the welfare, health and happiness of working-class children.⁸⁷ Ivy asserted that the proper development of children was essential to post-war society and combating the ongoing negative legacies of the war. She concluded her broadcast with the passionate statement, "let us as a community pledge ourselves as a living war memorial to honour the dead of two world wars by bringing about in our social life the democratic dream they died protecting."⁸⁸

Ivy also advocated for the benefits of supervised play through letters to the editor of *The Age* newspaper. In a letter dated 10 March 1951, she attempted to draw attention to the link between the social and economic problems that currently existed in Australian society and how supervised play could combat them.⁸⁹ She highlighted that supervised playgrounds removed working-class children from 'bad associations', reduced child delinquency and vandalism, and provided them with opportunities to engage in positive and wholesome activities from infancy to young adulthood.⁹⁰ The letter concludes with a strongly worded passage in which Ivy advocated for the ability of supervised play to mould children into healthy and productive citizens that were kind, accepting and tolerant of others. She even asserted that instilling such qualities in Australia's youth would help them resist the spread of communism, thereby aligning her with widespread anti-communist sentiment promoted by Menzies and others in post-war Australia.⁹¹ Ivy's work with the NCWA and PRAV demonstrates how she continued to engage with maternal feminist aspirations for an improved Australian nation. Her work also reveals how closely aligned maternal feminist views, especially with regard to equal opportunity and equal pay, were with the aspirations of the younger generations of feminists, thereby showing that new and modern ideas of womanhood had an impact even within politically conservative circles.

⁸⁵ Letter from Ivy Brookes to Mr William Jungwirth, 18 June 1954, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/113-114; A Brief History of the Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/172; "Jungwirth, Sir William John (Jack) (1897-1981)," *The Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 2007, accessed 9 April, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/jungwirth-sir-william-john-jack-12712>.

⁸⁶ Radio broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, 1 December 1946, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/304-305.

⁸⁷ Radio broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, 1 December 1946, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/304-305; "£10,000 Appeal for Playgrounds," *The Age*, 3 December 1946, 5.

⁸⁸ Radio broadcast delivered by Ivy Brookes, 1 December 1946, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/29/304-305.

⁸⁹ Mrs Herbert Brookes, "Community Value of Playgrounds," *The Age*, 10 March 1951, 2.

⁹⁰ Brookes, "Community Value of Playgrounds," 2.

⁹¹ Brookes, "Community Value of Playgrounds," 2.

Stella Rivett, Women in Science and Child Welfare

In the post-war period, Stella continued to be a largely private figure. She did, however, use her the social sway associated with her family name to re-enter the world of science (in a limited way) and in her continued position of leadership in the WUPF (later renamed the Women of the University Fund) in Australia and England. The following section demonstrates how Stella continued to act in a patron-like role that was typical of privileged, older women earlier in the twentieth century.

As discussed in chapter three, Stella did not continue her scientific research after her marriage. She did, however, maintain an interest and presence in the Australian scientific world through her husband, Sir David Rivett. In the post-war period, David was chairman of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research from 1946 until his retirement in 1949.⁹² Throughout her marriage, Stella remained involved and interested in the Australian scientific world, although not in a research capacity. She attended scientific events as the supportive wife of an important male figure. Stella accompanied David to events including the 1951 Jubilee Conversazione, where they were the guests of honour, university visits to attend lectures and receptions, the 1952 Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science Conference, and the University of Melbourne centenary celebrations.⁹³ As well as with accompanying David to scientific events, Stella acted as a supportive figure for young women conducting university studies through her membership of the Victorian Women Graduates' Association. This association was formed in 1922, and aimed to connect and support women undertaking university studies and promote their research.⁹⁴ Given her status as one of the University of Melbourne's first female Bachelor of Science graduates, Stella attended multiple events hosted by the association that celebrated the achievements of recent female graduates.⁹⁵ She was a pioneering example for younger women who were engaging in higher education.

Stella also continued to carry out philanthropic work for the WUPF. As discussed previously, the WUPF was established soon after the outbreak of World War II and was focused on providing comforts to soldiers, assisting children in Europe directly affected by the war, and establishing childcare facilities to allow Australian women with children to expand their participation in the war effort via factory work.⁹⁶ The WUPF was shut down in 1946 following the conclusion of World War II, but Stella and the executive committee soon realised that children in Europe were still in need of assistance and resolved that a new organisation named the Women of the University Fund (WUF) be established.⁹⁷ The work of the WUF continued to be domestically focused, and was specifically concerned with children's welfare and nutrition. An article published in *The Argus* in May 1949 states

⁹² Schedvin, "Rivett, Sir Albert Cherbury David."

⁹³ "Sir David Rivett. Public Library Activities," *The Record*, 13 October 1945, 4; "Personal," *The West Australian*, 28 May 1949, 2; "Scientists' Jubilee Celebration," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 April 1951, 13; "News for Women. 300 Academic Guests at Government House Party," *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 August 1952, 17.

⁹⁴ "Graduate Women Victoria Inc. (1922-)," *The Australian Women's Register*, 2001, accessed 29 April, 2022, <https://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0213b.htm>.

⁹⁵ "Women's Section. People and Parties," *The Age*, 7 May 1948, 5; "Today Nans Diary," *The Herald*, 5 April 1951, 12.

⁹⁶ *Women of the University Patriotic Fund, 1942-1943 Annual Report*, 2; "Work for Children in Wartime," 5.

⁹⁷ "Patriotic Fund to Close," *The Herald*, 27 March 1946, 11; "Packing Clothes for Children," *The Weekly Times*, 1 May 1946, 23.

the fund uses a double edged sword to help slay the twin dragons of hunger and need in England – it packs parcels to individual orders for despatch to England, and uses the profits from this work to send food and clothing for cases in need.⁹⁸

The WUF conducted its work in collaboration with the Save the Children Fund. It enabled members to sponsor children who had lost a parent during the war, and sent parcels of food and clothing to Britain, where volunteers made the clothes with wool or pre-cut panels supplied from WUF headquarters.⁹⁹ The members of the founding committee of the WUF were Mrs J. Lowe, patroness; Mrs J.D.G. Medley, president; Stella, chairman; Mrs L. Bull, vice-chairman; Mrs A.A. Rosenblum, honorary secretary, and Mrs R.A. Schuchard, honorary treasurer.¹⁰⁰

After World War II, Stella took on an active role in the WUF, as exemplified during her 1949 trip to Europe. In May 1949, Stella accompanied David to England, where he was to deliver the presidential address at the Society of Chemical Industries annual general meeting and represent Australia at a meeting of the British Association of the Advancement of Science.¹⁰¹ In addition to supporting David and hosting events associated with the conferences, Stella undertook various duties on behalf of the WUF. This included investigating the types of food that were available, visiting Paul, the child she had ‘adopted’ through the organisation’s photocard adoption scheme (similar to schemes run by global children’s charities today), and visiting the London office of the Save the Children Fund.¹⁰² During her time in England, Stella was quoted in numerous newspaper reports about the conditions the British people were facing, with a focus on domestic concerns, including how women were responding to the post-war environment and the nation’s food shortages.¹⁰³ These press reports made it clear that Stella’s social standing and scientific knowledge lent authority to the opinions she expressed.¹⁰⁴ In a report published in *The Herald*, Stella highlighted the difficulties that English housewives were facing in attempting to secure food for their families and the disappointment they suffered when further ration cuts were implemented.¹⁰⁵ She urged the Australian people to continue supporting the work of the WUF and to continue to donate food items to be sent to England to help them recover in the post-war period given the physical devastation it suffered during the war. She stated, “they’ve been hurt badly and the only message I can give here is keep sending parcels and increase the number.”¹⁰⁶ Stella’s activities in the post-war period underline the ability of maternal feminism to reshape married women’s public lives. She used her privileged social position and experience as a pioneering female scientist to act as a guiding figure for young women currently studying and working in science. Stella was also able to draw upon the social authority associated with her scientific background and her family’s public standing to become an advocate for child welfare and social reform in Britain in feminine areas of concern including nutrition and domestic life.

⁹⁸ “A Matter of Pack,” *The Argus*, 18 May 1949, 10.

⁹⁹ “Packing Clothes for Children,” 23; “Women of the University Fund,” *The Weekly Times*, 1 May 1946, 8; “To Help Needy Children,” *The Herald*, 26 February 1947, 13; “Life Drudgery for English Women,” *The Herald*, 18 October 1949, 7.

¹⁰⁰ “Patriotic Fund to Close,” 11; “Women of the University Fund,” *The Argus*, 15 August 1946, 8.

¹⁰¹ “Sir David Rivett Home Today,” *The Argus*, 18 October 1949, 8; Elizabeth Auld, “More Food in U.K. But Quality Poor,” *The Herald*, 29 August 1949, 11.

¹⁰² Auld, “More Food in U.K. But Quality Poor,” 11; “Lady Rivett Tells of Photo Adoption,” *The Age*, 19 October 1949, 7.

¹⁰³ “Life Drudgery for English Women,” 7; Auld, “More Food in U.K. But Quality Poor,” 11; “Red Meat and Fats,” *The Herald*, 15 September 1949, 18.

¹⁰⁴ “Life Drudgery for English Women,” 7; Auld, “More Food in U.K. But Quality Poor,” 11.

¹⁰⁵ “Life Drudgery for English Women,” 7.

¹⁰⁶ “Life Drudgery for English Women,” 7.

Vera White, Creating Good Citizens, and Assisting Australians in London

An article published in *The Argus* in 1946 highlights Vera's decades-long commitment to the Australian Red Cross Society. Mr A.H. Barraclough, chairman of the Victorian division of the Australian Red Cross Society, stated that "Mrs White has given magnificent service to the Red Cross during the last war, the interwar period and during this war ... She has probably given more than any one individual."¹⁰⁷ In the post-war period, Vera took on the roles of vice-chairman of the Victorian division and junior vice-chairman of the Australian Red Cross Society. (This work was, however, disrupted by bouts of ill health.¹⁰⁸) She used her authoritative position within the organisation to engage with maternal feminist ideas about women's unique ability to shape children into productive citizens, through her belief in the ability of the Junior Red Cross (JRC) to foster a lasting peace after World War II. She also continued to provide significant career support for her husband, Thomas White, especially when he was acting as Australian High Commissioner in London; however, she went well beyond the role of supportive wife during this time to implement progressive social measures at the High Commission to assist Australians in London.

The end of World War II marked a point of change for the Red Cross as it shifted away from its wartime activities and refocused its work on repatriation and social welfare programs.¹⁰⁹ It was also faced with the problem of retaining its voluntary workers, and emphasised to them that "our work does not end when wars end, nor does it begin with war. It goes on always."¹¹⁰ The primary focus of the Red Cross after World War II was to assist returned servicemen and women and their families.¹¹¹ It also sought to build links of cooperation and friendship between nations in an attempt to create a lasting peace.¹¹² Between 1946 and 1949, after recovering from illness, Vera was elected vice-chairman of the Victorian division of the Red Cross and aided in the organisation's transition to peacetime activities. Vera then served as junior vice-chairman of the Australian Red Cross between 1949 and 1951.¹¹³ During this period, she travelled widely to speak at many functions and meetings about the continued importance of the Red Cross and the importance of home nursing schemes in rural Australia. According to Carole Woods, she played an important role in updating the society's branch structures and implementing social work as one of the organisation's main departments.¹¹⁴

A significant component of Vera's work as vice-chairman of the Australian Red Cross was her advocacy for the benefits of the JRC. The JRC was established during World War I to engage children in the war effort through the production of comforts and fundraising.¹¹⁵ The movement grew in popularity throughout the interwar period,

¹⁰⁷ "Presentation to Mrs T. W. White," *The Argus*, 28 February 1946, 8.

¹⁰⁸ "Presentation to Mrs T. W. White," 8; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 189-90.

¹⁰⁹ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 126-27.

¹¹⁰ Alice, Duchess of Gloucester quoted in Australian Red Cross Society, *Thirty-First Annual Report and Financial Statements, 1944-1945*, Australian Red Cross Society, (Melbourne, 1945), 3.

¹¹¹ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 133.

¹¹² "Red Cross Worker has Many Sided Job," *The Age*, 30 November 1949, 7.

¹¹³ Australian Red Cross Society, *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report and Financial Statements, 1949-1950*, Australian Red Cross Society, (Melbourne, 1950), 6; Australian Red Cross Society, *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report and Financial Statements, 1950-1951*, Australian Red Cross Society, (Melbourne, 1951), 6, 16; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 190.

¹¹⁴ Australian Red Cross Society, *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report and Financial Statements*, 18; Australian Red Cross Society, *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report and Financial Statements*, 26; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 190.

¹¹⁵ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 28-29.

and aimed to foster a sense of belonging, community-mindedness and citizenship in young Australians.¹¹⁶ The JRC again made important contributions to the Australian war effort through fundraising and the production of comforts during World War II.¹¹⁷ In the post-war period, it was determined that the JRC would work towards lasting international peace.¹¹⁸ The organisation encouraged children to make friendships and develop a global sense of community and understanding through its magazine *The Junior*, school-based programs, in which lessons promoting community service, health and international understanding were taught, and by encouraging children to participate in pen pal programs. It was believed that these initiatives would ultimately result in increased international understanding, peace, and co-operation.¹¹⁹ While travelling across Australia, Vera spoke about the JRC's importance in creating lasting international peace.¹²⁰ In an interview published in *The Age* in 1948, Vera stated, "The Red Cross has a great responsibility to educate its members and through them, the peoples of the countries in which it operated towards mutual understanding and friendship."¹²¹ In November 1950, an article in *The Courier-Mail* reported that "Mrs White pins her faith [for the future] chiefly to the Junior Red Cross."¹²² During her tenure as Red Cross vice-chairman, Vera advocated for the JRC as a force for international peace and friendship; she strongly believed that, by helping children develop qualities including charity, compassion and co-operation, a more peaceful and prosperous future would ensue.

In 1951, after completing decades of voluntary work for the Red Cross, and three years as junior vice-chairman, Vera resigned from the organisation in order to accompany her husband, Thomas White, to London after his appointment as Australian High Commissioner on 8 May 1951.¹²³ After this announcement, it was widely assumed that Vera would become a conventional Victorian wife, primarily a hostess and supportive wife.¹²⁴ While this trip represented a marked departure from Vera's previous philanthropic work, she was determined to subvert expectations of her being "Australia's London Hostess" and continued to use her social sway to implement measures that would assist young Australians in London.¹²⁵

Nevertheless, Vera did fulfil expectations of the Australian High Commissioner's wife while in London. An article published in *The Age* in 1952 identifies Vera as "having a gracious personality" and "a charming official hostess for Australians in Britain."¹²⁶ She accompanied Thomas to numerous events, including the launch of an 18,000-ton ship, visiting Australian war graves at Gallipoli, entertaining guests at Australia House, hosting garden parties for elite members of British society, including members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, senior Australian officials and other visiting Australian dignitaries, and hosting Australia Day parties that were attended

¹¹⁶ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 73.

¹¹⁷ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 115.

¹¹⁸ Australian Red Cross Society, *Thirty-Sixth Annual Report and Financial Statements*, 25; Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 116.

¹¹⁹ Oppenheimer, *The Power of Humanity*, 138, 43.

¹²⁰ "Red Cross Honours Westbury Workers," *The Examiner*, 4 October 1949, 7; "Children's Work Displayed," *The Age*, 27 September 1949, 5; Freda Irving, "Roundabout," *The Argus*, 27 September 1949, 9; "Red Cross Visitors Met in Cairo," *The Courier-Mail*, 20 November 1950, 6.

¹²¹ "Red Cross Worker Has Many Sided Job," 7.

¹²² "Red Cross Visitors Met in Cairo," 6.

¹²³ Australian Red Cross Society, *Thirty-Seventh Annual Report and Financial Statements*, 16; Rickard, "White, Sir Thomas Walter."; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 191.

¹²⁴ "Australia's New London Hostess," *The Age*, 6 June 1951, 5; Sybil Dobinson, "She's Packing Away a Museum Single-Handed!," *The Argus*, 15 June 1951, 8.

¹²⁵ "Australia's New London Hostess," 5.

¹²⁶ "Women Who Share in Honours," *The Age*, 1 January 1952, 5.

by over a thousand guests. Vera was also responsible for hosting dinners at Australia House for distinguished guests including Prime Minister Menzies; Miss Heather Menzies; the Australian Minister for Commerce, Mr McEwan; the Australian Minister for National Development, Senator Spooner; the British Foreign Secretary, Mr Anthony Eden; Lord High Chancellor and Lady Simonds; and the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr Anthony Nutting.¹²⁷

Vera was determined that others should not endure her experience, at the outbreak of World War I, of being a young Australian in London who did not receive support from the Australian High Commission. She thus took a strong interest in the welfare and support of Australians living and working in Britain. In the post-war period, thousands of young Australians set out for (primarily) London to pursue love, adventure and career opportunities, especially in the arts.¹²⁸ In an interview with journalist Freda Irving published in *The Argus* after her return to Australia in 1956, Vera is quoted as saying that “My husband and I always felt it was the great mass of young people coming over from Australia who mattered most.”¹²⁹ Between 1951 and 1956, Vera and Thomas implemented measures within the Australian High Commission to support Australians in London. Vera played an influential role within the High Commission and petitioned her husband to create musical, arts and author’s societies at Australia House to allow young Australians to meet, make connections and form support networks.¹³⁰ The Australian Musical Association was subsequently launched in February 1952, with a music library and performance space provided in Australia House for young artists. Vera was strongly supportive of the organisation and was a committee member until her departure for Australia in 1956.¹³¹

Vera was also instrumental in the appointment of a trained social worker at Australia House. Vera justified this decision in a 1956 address to the Mother’s Union, speaking of “one of the real disasters” she had encountered when a young Australian woman fell ill.¹³² She described how this woman had travelled independently to England, with little money and a one-way ticket, and shortly after her arrival was diagnosed with tuberculosis and instead of being able to travel home, was forced to remain in an unfamiliar country for treatment, with only one person for support.¹³³ After returning to Australia, Vera expressed to Irving that “She [the social worker] is doing a splendid job among Australians young and old who find themselves up against adversity, illness, or lack of funds, or in need of advice on personal matters.”¹³⁴ Vera’s activities while Thomas was Australian High Commissioner reveal how she used her social standing and influence during this period. As well as fulfilling the obligations associated with her role, including acting as a hostess to influential figures and representing Australia at numerous

¹²⁷ “Personal,” *The Advocate*, 30 April 1952, 4; “Mr Menzies in London,” *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 6 December 1952, 2; “Dinner for Aust. Ministers,” *The News*, 5 December 1952, 5; “Lady White’s Plans for a Garden Party,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 July 1953, 8; “Lady White Launches Tanker,” *The Examiner*, 14 October 1954, 7; “Australia Day in London,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 January 1954, 8; Freda Irving, “England’s Made Her Younger!,” *The Argus*, 20 June 1956, 9.

¹²⁸ Alomes, *When London Calls*, 1, 6; Simon Pierse, *Australian Art and Artists in London, 1950-1965: An Antipodean Summer* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2012), 17; Anne Rees, “Reading Australian modernity: Unsettled settlers and cultures of mobility,” *History Compass* 15, no. 11 (2017): 4.

¹²⁹ Vera White quoted in Irving, “England’s Made Her Younger!,” 9.

¹³⁰ Irving, “England’s Made Her Younger!,” 9.

¹³¹ Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 193.

¹³² Vera White quoted in “Girls-get a return!,” *The Argus*, 31 July 1956, 11; Irving, “England’s Made Her Younger!,” 9.

¹³³ “Girls-get a return!,” 11.

¹³⁴ Vera White quoted in Irving, “England’s Made Her Younger!,” 9.

functions, she used her powerful position to implement lasting measures that would help young Australians to develop social connections and networks and to support those in need of assistance.

Conclusion

This chapter exposes the continued ability of the ‘new woman’ era and conservative practices associated with maternal feminism to reshape married women’s public lives. While Ivy, Stella and Vera had differing philanthropic interests, and worked with different organisations, they were united in their focus on improving the lives of women and children by elevating women’s status. They believed this would result in the creation of a more prosperous and peaceful world. Ivy took advantage of her influential status within the NCWA and PRAW to champion a developing understanding of womanhood that was strongly influenced by maternal feminism’s conception of the ‘mother of the race’, in which women’s contributions and opinions were valued in public decision-making and their role in shaping children into healthy and productive citizens was valued. Stella used her background as a pioneering female scientist to advocate for the expansion of women’s work and study, acting as a supportive figure for young women participating in science. She also used her scientific authority and executive-level position within the WUF to pursue social reforms in Britain to assist women and children affected by the war, especially regarding nutrition. Finally, Vera, through her continued leadership in the Australian Red Cross, advocated for women’s ability to mould children into good citizens through the JRC. She also, in a marked departure from her prior work with the Red Cross, took advantage of her position as wife of the Australian High Commissioner to implement progressive measures at Australia House designed to support Australians in Britain.

The philanthropic work of the Deakin sisters in the post-war period reveals the ongoing influence of maternal feminist ideas in the Australian women’s movement. It also shows how the reshaping of the ‘new woman’ into the ‘mother of the race’ continued to enable conservatively minded women to participate in the public sphere into the 1950s. Though the focus of their work varied, each of the Deakin sisters viewed herself as contributing to the creation of a new social order, in which women would achieve equality with men, through the lens of ‘separate but equal’, and their opinions were valued. While these aspirations appear progressive, they were rooted in ideals that combined moderate feminist ideas with traditionally gendered values and their belief in the concept of ‘separate but equal’, in which women’s power stemmed from their difference from men. The public activities and lives of the Deakin sisters reveal the long-term success of the maternal feminist conception of the ‘new woman’ in allowing married women to move beyond the narrow domestic destiny that was prescribed to the generations that preceded them and create distinct life pathways. Their later lives also expose the prolonged success of maternal feminism in allowing women to participate in the nation’s decision-making processes and hold influential positions in the public sphere, in marked contrast to its supposed demise as a concept within the women’s movement. In the following and concluding chapter, I examine how the Deakin sisters were characterised at the end of their lives. I also reflect on how the ‘new woman’ and maternal feminism were influential enabling factors in their lives both before and after marriage, and on their lifelong engagement with philanthropic ideals associated with the duties of their social class.

Conclusion

When Alfred Deakin penned his testament for his children in 1890, he stated his desire that they would ultimately lead lives of

no marked eminence, no public renown, but lives of secluded study, domestic duty, quiet cheerfulness, intellectual in cast and unselfish in end, such as shall ensure happiness to you and all connected with you if undertaken with religious zeal, humility and constancy.¹

Had the sisters complied with this vision, we would not have the rich insight that we now have into how three women capitalised on their access to wealth, education, mobility, elite social and professional networks, as well as expanding opportunities for women, to carve for themselves distinctive lives in twentieth century Australia. In detailing and analysing the opportunities and the challenges facing Ivy, Stella and Vera, this thesis has cast light on three prominent sisters who have often been rendered benign in previous scholarship due to their political conservatism and commitment to the ideal of equal but different. Through doing so, it also offers a significant historiographical contribution, namely further dismantling the myth that women were inactive in the period between the so-called feminist ‘waves’ of the 1910s and the 1960-70s, by highlighting some of the post-suffrage era’s maternal feminism-led social reform efforts.

As explained in the Introduction, there has tended to be an assumption that feminists were largely inactive or at best conservatively active between the early twentieth century toil of the suffragists and the radicalism of the Women’s Liberation Movement. From emerging studies, as well as from this study of the lives of the Deakin sisters, we can see that this is wildly inaccurate. In the middle decades of that century, activists worked for and asserted women’s rights to and responsibilities for citizenship, while mainly stressing the desirability and benefits of natural differences between the sexes. The women’s movement from the 1960s onward used provocatively visible means to demand change and they transitioned from the realm of citizenship to what were perceived as the more radical agenda of economic and sexual autonomy. In the post-Women’s Liberation era, then, the methods, approaches and demands of previous generations of activists, who worked within existing power structures, have tended to be viewed as traditional and conservative. This, combined with the fact that many late twentieth century historians tended to focus on the more radical Women’s Liberation Movement, has acted to obscure the value of mid-century women’s contributions to women’s rights and the long-term success and influence of maternal feminism in this period.²

Through applying a combined biographical and micro-historical approach to the rich and largely unexplored archival records of Ivy, Stella and Vera, this thesis has worked to shed light on overlooked Australian women and their contribution to the development of women’s rights and opportunities. It has been guided by two key conceptual gender frameworks, the ‘angel in the house’ and the ‘new woman’, to understand how these three elite

¹ Testament prepared by Alfred Deakin in 1890 for the guidance of his daughters’, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS1540/19/356.

² Lake, *Getting Equal*, 12.

Australian women negotiated their identities as women in the decades in between the more spectacular feminisms of the suffrage era and that of Women's Liberation. These two models of womanhood – the angelic and the rebellious – each carry a discrete collection of values and goals that the three Deakin sisters at different times in their lives associated with and adopted to form their individual identities and experiences. This examination of their individual and collective lives, revealing the impact of both the emancipating ideas and opportunities of the 'new woman' era as well as the continuing expectations for women to remain in the domestic sphere and be 'angels in the house', enlightens us about the varied forms that womanhood could take in the years between more radical movements.

However pioneering their life pathways were, documents written about them in the latter years of their lives and after their deaths are often ambivalent about the uniqueness or radical dimensions of the Deakin sisters' experiences. They were often presented through their connections with prominent male personalities and their achievements, rather than accomplished women in their own right. In an article published in *The Age* after Ivy's death in 1970, she was characterised by Prime Minister Robert Menzies, who she was shared personal and collegial relationships with, as "a very distinguished woman from a distinguished family."³ Stella, in her later life, was portrayed as taking "an active interest in the future of the country which her and her husband's family had helped to pioneer."⁴ Vera's eulogy which was delivered by Sir John Nimmo, a justice of the Federal Court of Australia who had worked as a searcher under her leadership during World War II, made sure to emphasise her familial connection to Alfred Deakin and, unusually, his committed and involved approach to fatherhood was celebrated: "Notwithstanding the tremendous responsibilities and demands on him to get the Commonwealth of Australia away to a good start, at no time did he neglect his wife and his three daughters. He was a devoted husband and father."⁵

Some accounts, did however, shine a light on the Deakin sister's extraordinary achievements. In an article published in the *Australian Women's Weekly* in 1966, author Berenice Craig noted that "Each one of Alfred Deakin's three daughters is an accomplished woman, but the middle one – Stella – Lady Rivett – is the only one whose talent took her into the then almost exclusively male world of science."⁶ Upon her death in 1976, Stella's achievements were acknowledged in an article published in *The Canberra Times*:

Lady Rivett, the daughter of Australia's second Prime Minister and "Father of Federation", Alfred Deakin, and widow of one of the founders of the CSIRO, Sir David Rivett, died in a Melbourne Hospital, aged 90. She was a scientist in her own right, holding a Bachelor of Science degree and a Diploma of Education.⁷

However, these reminiscences were invariably accompanied by those stressing her relationship with powerful men.⁸ For example, an article printed in *The Canberra Times* in 1971, emphasised her connection to David and

³ Prime Minister Robert Menzies quoted in "Alfred Deakin's daughter dies, 87," *The Age*, 28 December 1970, 2.

⁴ "A Pioneer's daughter Canberra visit," *The Canberra Times*, 9 September 1971, 11.

⁵ Vera White Eulogy delivered by Sir John Nimmo, *Session 19 of 19*.

⁶ Craig, "Lady Rivett's Proud Memories," 14.

⁷ "Death of Lady Rivett," *The Canberra Times*, 12 March 1976, 7.

⁸ Craig, "Lady Rivett's Proud Memories," 14-15; "A Pioneer's daughter Canberra visit," 11; "Death of Lady Rivett," 7.

Alfred, describing her visit to Canberra where she visited the suburbs named after her husband and father and her attendance at the Rivett Memorial Lecture.⁹

Other accounts, while paying homage to their remarkable endeavours, framed them in a feminine light. For example, Vera's extraordinary wartime work for the Red Cross was presented as a philanthropic endeavour motivated by a womanly sense of love for humanity. In doing so, they failed to commend the exceptional level of organisational skills she deployed during her work. In delivering Vera's eulogy, Nimmo stated that:

She had a real concern for people. She cared about people and because she cared about people, she sought at every opportunity to care for people. People who enquired at the bureau were more than names and numbers to her. They were people and she suffered the anxiety that their next of kin were suffering for news of their loved ones. And she sought by every means within her power to alleviate that suffering... This work was very dear to Lady White. And there was no one upon this scene more dedicated to it and more capable of carrying it out with the utmost efficiency and success.¹⁰

The sisters also made sure to highlight their domestic achievements in interviews later in their lives, thereby contributing to depictions of themselves as more conservative, separate but equal maternal feminists, which was falling out of favour amid the radicalisation of the Women's Liberation Movement. In an account of her typical day written later in her life, Ivy herself made sure to emphasise that she played an active role in the domestic sphere and conducted tasks that included making tea for Herbert, doing household chores, and assisting in caring for her grandchildren.¹¹ She also stressed that the purpose of her lifelong commitment to philanthropic work was to serve the community and that she had already begun educating her grandchildren on the responsibility of service that was associated with their family name. She stated, "the interests and activities of the grandchildren call for our co-operation and guidance for their future service to the community."¹² Accounts of Stella published later in her life described her passion for preserving archival material related to her husband and the Deakin family and ensuring that the legacies of Alfred and David were preserved and celebrated.¹³ Finally, in Vera's eulogy, Nimmo, characterised her as being "a devoted wife and mother, [and] a warm-hearted friend" and that "her children and grandchildren were the joy of her life."¹⁴ Most of these accounts, written in or around the 1970s, when radical feminism was taking centre stage, doubtless contributed to the collective reputation of the Deakin sisters as less than radical and therefore less deserving of being remembered.

Whatever their posthumous reputations, each of the Deakin sisters navigated privilege, widening opportunities for women, the challenges faced by women and societal expectations of women of their social standing, to carve for themselves lives replete with unique, even radical, achievements. Ivy's life at first seems to have aligned with

⁹ "A Pioneer's daughter Canberra visit," 11.

¹⁰ Vera White Eulogy delivered by Sir John Nimmo, *Session 19 of 19*.

¹¹ Ivy Brookes, *A Typical Day in my Life*, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/219.

¹² Ivy Brookes, *A Typical Day in my Life*, undated, Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, National Library of Australia, MS1924/10/221.

¹³ Craig, "Lady Rivett's Proud Memories," 14-15; "A Pioneer's daughter Canberra visit," 11.

¹⁴ Vera White Eulogy delivered by Sir John Nimmo, *Session 19 of 19*; Woods, *Vera Deakin and the Red Cross*, 207.

Alfred's wishes as documented in his testament and had a successful orchestral career prior to her marriage to Herbert Brookes. But her life soon moved away from what her father appeared to have wanted, as she continued to perform publicly for eight years following her marriage. She then, enabled by a combination of the emancipating opportunities associated with socially progressive notions of womanhood, the ambitions of the maternal feminist movement, her father's approval of philanthropic endeavours, and her husband's belief in their shared duty to continue the Deakin family legacy of public service, devoted the remainder of her life to philanthropic work, where she held powerful leadership positions in a multitude of organisations. This work was strongly associated with the social reform ambitions of the post-suffrage maternal feminist movement, and she ultimately sought to empower women to take on a greater role in the public sphere and to introduce protections and reform measures for vulnerable women and children.

Stella was a representative figure of the educational opportunities associated with the 'new woman' in her youth. She followed the instructions contained in her father's testament and pursued a university level education which would enable her to pursue a career, becoming one of the first women to study science at the University of Melbourne. But she subsequently rebelled against her mother's wishes and travelled to Europe to pursue postgraduate studies. After her engagement to fellow scientist, David Rivett, Stella intended on combining marriage with a career in domestic science, thereby rebelling against societal conventions and her father's wishes that dictated that she become a home-based figure after marriage, however she was unsuccessful in doing so. While Stella did adhere to societal conventions and Alfred's belief that she should act as a domestic figure after her marriage to David, she did re-enter the public sphere following the outbreak of World War II, albeit in a markedly different fashion than her activities prior to marriage. She capitalised upon the social sway associated with her family name to take on executive-level roles within the WUPF during World War II, and following the conclusion of the war, the WUF. Throughout this work Stella acted in a patron-like role that was typical of privileged older women earlier in the twentieth century. She was, however, able to draw upon the authority associated with her scientific background to become a guiding figure for young women in science and to become an advocate for child welfare and social reform in post-war Britain.

Vera was also a rebellious figure in her youth. She first defied her parents' wishes and travelled to Europe to pursue further musical studies, where she was informed that she was talented enough to become a professional opera singer. A pivotal period of Vera's life occurred during World War I. Motivated by an intense desire to aid the war effort, she rebelled against her father's wishes and travelled to Cairo to become head of the Australian Red Cross WMIB. During this period, Vera took on an extraordinary responsibility for someone of her age and gender. She successfully ran an organisation that required immense amounts of bureaucratic work, a close working relationship with military authorities and intense emotional labour. After following her father's instructions to retreat from public life after her marriage, after the outbreak of World War II, Vera once again committed herself to aiding the war effort. Rather than travelling overseas, she instead took on leadership roles in the Victorian Red Cross including Divisional Commandant and head of the BMWPW. During this period, Vera, once again, took on a far greater public role than her father would have expected, displaying her exceptional organisational skills

and empathetic qualities in her attempts to relieve the distress being experienced by those on the home front. In the post-war period, she played an important role in the Red Cross's transition from wartime activities and its efforts to create a lasting peace. Vera was also instrumental in the implementation of progressive social measures to assist Australians in London during her husband's tenure as Australian High Commissioner in London.

While the Deakin sisters contributed mightily to the common good and their lives offer numerous important insights into Australian women's history and advancement, there are aspects of their lives which cannot be ignored that draw attention to the limitations of maternal feminism. The opportunities that enabled them to become remarkable 'new woman' figures were products of the class and racial structures present in Australian society. Through their philanthropic work, the Deakin sisters were complicit in upholding these structures, particularly through their engagement with eugenic ideals. Though none were dedicated eugenicists, the sisters certainly adopted commonly held beliefs, particularly regarding the degeneracy of the working classes. Therefore, the lives of Ivy, Stella and Vera reflect the oppressive structures present in Australian society that severely restricted the opportunities of most other women (and men).

This thesis represents the first in-depth collective biography of the Deakin sisters. It has revealed that due to factors including their prominent father, elite social status, wealth, and personal ambition, Ivy, Stella, and Vera Deakin were each able to create distinctive lives that allow for greater understandings of the shifting and diverse conceptions of womanhood that were present between the more radical feminist 'waves'. This thesis has extended understandings of how women crafted their identities as females and navigated patriarchal structures in order to establish a space for themselves in the public sphere. It has also widened knowledge of the impact of the 'new woman' era in Australia, demonstrating that it extended well beyond the heady days of the 1900s and shaped the maternal feminist agenda for decades in ways that have too often been lost from view. Due to their political conservatism and commitment to the ideal of 'equal but different', the experiences and contributions of women, such as the Deakin sisters, have consistently been rendered benign within previous scholarship. In comparison to the more 'radical' feminists of the 1960s-70s their impact on Australian society and the feminist movement have been lost from view. This thesis has countered this trend by recovering and highlighting the lives, contributions, and at times 'radicalism' of Ivy, Stella, and Vera Deakin.

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