

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE - EFFORTS TO GAIN THE VOTE FOR WOMEN IN
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

AL/1708

The following letter is copied from the Premier's Dept file
No 686/1898 with the permission of Miss M Lukis the Archivist

It is a reply to letters from Miss Throssell and another of Mrs J M
Ferguson dated 27 June 1898 and 18/7/1898

The copy reply

~~The copy~~ is typed and signed by Mr F. D. North the Premier's Secretary
(No 1/355 p 686/98)
The draft on the file is in Sir John Forrest's own handwriting with
several erasures.

Dear Madam,

In reply to your letter of the 11th instant with reference to the
subject of Women's Franchise I have by the direction of the Right
Honourable the Premier to inform you that the question will have
~~the~~ consideration at the hands of the government.

At the same time I am directed to add that as the question is one
of much importance it should not be decided until the general election,
and until the people of the colony have had an opportunity of pro-
nouncing their opinion upon it.

2. The Premier does not think the question is one of great urgency,
and as he feels that it may be far reaching in its influence the
greatest care should he thinks be taken before committing the Colony
to a movement the result of which it is difficult to foresee

3. The Premier desires me to say that he yields to no one in respect
for women, and it is alone his fear of doing anything that might act
in a manner not anticipated by the advocates of women's suffrage
which makes him inclined to advise delay, and on such an important
matter of social legislation he questions the desirability of acting
in advance of the legislation of the Mother Country.

I have the honour to be
Madam,
Your obedient Servant
F. D. N
Secretary to the Premier.

Note

(attached is an extract from Miss Throssell's letter)
D. C. Cowan)

COPIED FROM THE PREMIER'S FILE No 686/1898
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Miss Throssell's letter to the Premier Sir John Forrest contains the following two passages . . . In the margin of the letter are three exclamation marks placed against these two passages -
Miss Throssell writes

.....!.I am sure you have recognised that there are several reasons existing in this Colony that render the concession of the franchise to women of the utmost importance to stable government. I need only mention the fact of the great disparity between the sexes to show that the addition of women to the electoral roll would go far to minimise the extravagant demands likely to result from the large unsettled male population possessed of political powers.....

It seems passing strange that while a woman is thought fit to rule an empire she should be denied the vote in a democratic country.

The ready affirmative to women's request would I earnestly believe be a most tactful act at this particular juncture in our country history. '