



LADIES IN THE HOUSE  
PODCAST SERIES

**MOAD**

Museum of Australian Democracy  
at Old Parliament House



# LADIES IN THE HOUSE EPISODE 9: JOAN CHILD

## Lesson Plan

### Learning Intention:

Understand the experience of the first female member of the Australian Labor Party and the first female Speaker in the House of Representatives.

### Success Criteria:

Create an itinerary for a visiting dignitary to your local area.

## Before Listening:

### Activity

#### One:

Pre-Listening  
Vocabulary

Write up or project the following words on the board:

- budgeting
- humble
- pension
- exploitation
- electorate



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## Activity

### One:

#### Pre-Listening Vocabulary

In groups ask the students if they can put the words into one of the 4 categories.

- Don't know it at all
- Have seen or heard, but don't know the meaning
- I think I know the meaning
- I know the meaning and can explain it

If any of the students are in the 3rd or 4th category, see if they can explain it to the people in your group or to the class.

Share the following definitions for the vocabulary.

#### Definitions:

- **Budgeting** - financial planning.
- **Humble** - person who is not proud and does not believe that they are better than other people.
- **Pensioner** - someone who receives a regular sum of money from the government because they have retired or because they are widowed or have a disability.
- **Exploitation** - to use someone for profit.
- **Electorate** - the electorate of a country or area is all the people in it who have the right to vote in an election.



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## Activity Two:

Before listening  
discussion  
questions

1. Can you name any of the specific jobs that politicians have within the House of Representatives?

2. Have you ever heard of a Speaker? This is a job that is held by one of the politicians. What do you think the responsibilities of a speaker might be?

(Brainstorm with the class and keep the list to refer back to after listening to the podcast.)

## After Listening:

## Activity Three:

After listening  
reflection  
questions

1. What are the important roles of the Speaker in the House of Representatives? How does this compare to the list you made before listening?

2. Where does the Speaker sit?

3. Which parliament house did Joan Child prefer and why?

4. What was one of the jobs that Joan Child did after her husband died and what did she do to help the workers?



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## Activity Three:

After listening  
reflection  
questions

5. What kind of community work did she do?
6. What beliefs helped her to shape her policies?

## Activity 4:

Plan out a  
speech to  
present in  
parliament  
that includes 5  
issues in society  
that you think  
need to be  
improved.

**Activity:** Plan out your own speech

Imagine you have been elected to the House of Representatives. You need to make a first speech to parliament.

Decide on 5 issues that you think are important that you would like to advocate for and should be discussed in parliament.

The issues can range from health, the environment, immigration, defence, social security, mental health, domestic violence, education, youth issues, public health, disability rights, communications, advertising, sport, entertainment, the economy, agriculture, mining, First Nations perspectives etc.

Be specific. What are concrete changes that you think should be made in society to make it a better place to live.

**Extension:**

Take your 5 points and make them into a speech. Decide on what persuasive devices you will use to make your speech more effective.



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## Episode Transcript:

Hi, this is Kelly Chase and you are listening to Season 3 of a Museum of Australian Democracy and History Detective Collaboration: Ladies in the House. In this 4-part series we are going to celebrate the lives of four incredible women and how they contributed to Australian democracy.

Today I would like to introduce you a remarkable woman—the first woman to ever be elected into the House of Representatives—Dame Enid Lyons. In 1943 she was sworn in on the very same day that Dame Dorothy Tangney was sworn in as the first woman in the Senate. You can hear Dorothy Tangney’s story in the previous episode.

Now, if you think the name Lyons is familiar, it is because her husband was a prominent politician Joseph Lyons, so prominent in fact that he was the Premier of Tasmania and then he moved to federal politics and became the 10th Prime Minister of Australia. Joseph Lyons was Prime Minister from 1932 until he died from a heart attack while in office in 1939.

Joseph and Enid’s courtship was a little unconventional for the time, and even by our standards today. You see when they first met, Enid was only 15 years old, and Joe was 18 years older than her. Needless to say, Enid’s mother was not happy about this relationship and forbid them from marrying until Enid was 17 years old. But they waited it out, and were married when she was 17 and he was 35. They were happily married for the rest of his life during which time Enid had 12 children.

One of the interests that first drew Enid and Joe together was their love of politics. Enid was a passionate and talented speech writer; in fact, she wrote many speeches for her husband during his political career. However, Enid had politics in her blood and her husband was supportive of her political ambitions and encouraged her to write speeches herself and even run for an election. So, in 1925 she stood as a candidate in the Tasmanian elections. Interestingly, her own mother also ran in the same election, but in a different seat. Unfortunately, Enid lost the election by 60 votes.



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## Episode Transcript:

When her husband died in 1939, she was only 41 years old and had 11 children to support. This was a time when superannuation funds for politicians didn't exist and there was very little by way of widow's pensions. The government made a suggestion that she be given some money to support her 11 children. This resulted in an uproar in both the parliament and media, to the point that Enid was sent hate mail and death threats.

This did not deter her, four years later- with encouragement from her daughter- she decided to run for a seat in the House of Representatives and she campaigned extremely hard. However, it was not an immediate victory; the voting count was very close and she won the seat on preferential votes. The preferential voting system is where, on the ballot paper voters can write who their second, third, fourth and fifth choices are, and if their first preference is not elected, their vote will go to their second choice and so on. In August of 1943, while she was ironing and listening to the radio, it was announced that she had become the first ever woman to be elected into the House of Representatives.

In her first speech to parliament, she addressed many of the issues that she wanted to focus on as a politician. Some of those issues were, the declining birth rate, social security, inadequate housing, and the importance of implementing post-war policies. Throughout her political career she continued to address issues that directly impacted women and families such as discrimination against married women in the workforce, widow's pensions, maternity allowances and child support amongst many other concerns.

After her career in politics, Enid published 4 books, was a newspaper columnist, and she remained active in public life, promoting family and women's issues and she became the commissioner for the ABC. In 1980 she was granted an Order of Australia. The Order of Australia is an award that recognises Australians who have demonstrated outstanding service or exceptional achievement. She passed away one year later, leaving behind not only a trailblazing legacy of political and social achievements; from her 11 children, she also left behind more than 100 descendants. What I would like you to think about today is, what are the issues happening in society that you feel strongly about? And what platforms do we have in the modern age to spread a message of change?

This is Kelly Chase, on the case.  
See you next time!