

NATIONAL WINNER
WOMEN'S HISTORY



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VIDA GOLDSTEIN

National History Challenge 2019: People and Power

How Vida Goldstein Changed a Nation

Although seen by some as only a visionary idealist, Vida Goldstein can be considered one of the most powerful individuals in 20th century Australia. Her political and social influence on the people of Australia was revolutionary, taking a decade's long struggle for equality and making it a reality, thereby encouraging other world leaders to do the same. One of the most powerful and respected activists of her time, she was an international symbol for change and social reform that spanned far beyond the Suffragette movement. When Goldstein was born in 1869, the idea of women voting was unheard of, but by the time of her death, over 100 countries will have granted women the right to vote ¹. She contested the context of her era, challenged the nature of her society and her power in drawing people together and empathetic nature towards people and their living conditions allowed her to campaign for her passions persistently throughout her life. Australia's worldwide influence on women's rights was a direct result of Vida Goldstein, who used her power to revolutionise her society and whose work would transform the lives of women globally.

Vida Goldstein's childhood was a major influence in her decision to become an activist and campaigner later in life, taught from a young age about the social and political injustices faced by women. Born to opinionated and hardworking parents, the Goldstein daughters were taught to be economically and intellectually independent, something many women at the time were not taught to do². Her father, Jacob Goldstein was a well-known sociologist and advocate for the poor with ties to the Polish Independence Movement, but opposed women's suffrage, an issue that would later cause division within the family. Goldstein's mother, Isabella Hawkins however, was a prominent figure in the Victorian Suffragette movement, who campaigned constantly for issues surrounding women, children and the poor, and passed these ideals onto her eldest daughter, Vida. Isabella was arguably the most influential figure in Vida's childhood, encouraging her to take an interest, and more importantly, action on issues she cared about. Goldstein would often accompany her mother to the slums of Collingwood, and the scenes of abuse and violence towards women and young children stayed with Vida throughout her life, beginning her lifelong mission to improve the lives of women and children ³. Vida's involvement in the Suffragette movement began in 1891, where she collected signatures for a Women's Suffrage petition, becoming close friends with the movement's leader, Annette Bear-Crawford at the same time. Crawford would become a mentor to Goldstein, urging her to take action on other issues of the day and guiding her in her pursuit of women's equality⁴. Her upbringing in charity and social reform allowed her to understand how people unite together for a common cause and how to connect with those less privileged than her, lessons that would be essential in her later endeavours. Without the support of her family and friends, it is unlikely Vida Goldstein would have become the passionate suffragist she did, and, subsequently, women may not have the rights they have today.

In her early career as an activist, Vida Goldstein was involved in many projects with the help of her mentor Annette Bear-Crawford, including a school run by herself and her sister, and raising funds for the Queen Victoria Hospital for Women and Children in 1897 ⁵. She also joined the Prahan Women's Franchise League and became an official member for the women's suffrage movement that was moving throughout Victoria. Throughout the early 20th century, Vida would campaign tirelessly and developing her political education, sitting in Victorian Parliament when issues surrounding women and children were discussed ⁶. When

¹ Wright, C (2016). "Making Waves, Making History". [online]. 25 November, Melbourne Town Hall, Melbourne. Available from: <https://www.vwt.org.au/clare-wright-waves-history/> [Accessed 17 August 2019].

² Bomford, J. (1993). That dangerous and persuasive woman - Vida Goldstein. Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne Univ. Press, pp 2-3.

³ Wright, C (2018). You Daughters of Freedom: The Australians Who Won the Vote and Inspired the World. Melbourne, Vic : Text Publishing, pg. 31

⁴ Magarey, S (2001). Passions of the First Wave Feminists, Sydney, New South Wales: University of New South Wales Press. pp 62 - 63

⁵ Woman's Political Association. (1913) The Life and Work of Miss Vida Goldstein. Melbourne, Australasian Author's Agency, pg. 5

⁶ Henderson, L. (1973). Vida Goldstein. In: H. Radi, 200 Australian Women: A Redress anthology. Broadway: Women's Redress Press Inc., p.85.

Crawford died in 1899, Goldstein became the undisputed leader of the movement, making her first public speech a year later. She was a gifted speaker, her lectures on the women's movement drawing crowds and media attention as she contradicted stereotypes and social norms about women at the time; *"Admittedly young and charming, Miss Goldstein disproves the idea that has become common that advocates of women's rights are necessarily old, bony and unattractive."*⁷ Through these lectures, she was able to unify people and convince others to join her cause, soon becoming known for her powerful and persuasive speeches. After she became the leader of the movement, Vida campaigned tirelessly, travelling across Victoria to speak about the cause, becoming a national symbol for women and their rights; *"...the most famous woman in the Commonwealth, and she has earned this distinction by her championship of woman's rights throughout Australia"*⁸.

The Franchise Act of 1902 was a momentous day for Australian women, as it was announced that women were eligible to vote in Federal elections in Australia, becoming the second major country in the world to do so and making Australian women the most enfranchised in the world⁹. As one 1903 journalist wrote; *"The purest type of democracy the human race has ever known flourishes to-day beneath Australian skies"*¹⁰. The Act also allowed women to stand for national parliament, and Vida Goldstein was one of four women nominated to run for candidacy, a historic moment described as; *"the greatest day that ever dawned for women in Australia"*¹¹. Over the coming year, despite ridicule about her candidacy, Vida would continue her campaign efforts and founded the Women's Federal Political Association in 1903 to educate female voters about democracy and their rights¹². She spoke of a new era, where women could exercise their political ideologies and opinions free of their husbands and of the changing belief that women should be confined to the four walls of their homes. Being one of the first woman in the British Empire to stand for Senate, Vida knew her chances of being elected were slim, but her candidacy was less about winning the vote, but showing the world what women were capable of; *"My object in standing is simply to wake up the women, and if I don't get in—well, it will make victory easier for the next woman candidate"*¹³. When the time came, she earned over 50,000 votes, far more than what she had expected¹⁴. She made four more attempts to run for senate, in 1910, 1913, 1914 and 1917, but ironically, it would be another 60 years until a woman was elected to state senate in Victoria, being the last state in Australia to do so¹⁵. By running for senate, Vida Goldstein was making a powerful statement to Australia and the world, one that would shift perspectives about the role of women and one that would spark debate about women's suffrage worldwide.

While it is undeniable Vida Goldstein had a considerable impact on Women's Suffrage in Australia and greatly contributed to women getting the vote, her influence and power also reached international audiences, with the same effect. Of all the influential figures in early Australian feminism, Vida was the only one to gain a truly international reputation, travelling to the United States of America and England to speak about women's suffrage and the rights of women and children¹⁶. In 1902, she travelled to the United States

⁷ Petersburg Times (1903). Vida Goldstein. 29 September. [online] p.2. Available at: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/109478131?> [Accessed 7 August. 2019].

⁸ The Daily News (1906). AUSTRALIA'S STATESWOMAN VISITS WESTERN AUSTRALIA. 26 February. [online] p.10. Available at: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/82681107?> [Accessed 8 August 2019].

⁹ Garner, G. (2016). Australia and the Fight for Women's Rights. South Yarra, Victoria : Macmillan Publishers Australia, p. 14

¹⁰ Wright, C (2018). You Daughters of Freedom: The Australians Who Won the Vote and Inspired the World. Melbourne, Vic : Text Publishing, p. 5

¹¹ Lawson, L. (1904). THE GREATEST DAY THAT EVER DAWNED. *The Dawn*, p.5.

¹² MOAD. (2019). Exploring Democracy · Vida Goldstein · Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House. [online] Available at: <https://explore.moadoph.gov.au/people/vida-goldstein> [Accessed 15 August 2019].

¹³ Goldstein, V. (1903). 'Miss Vida Goldstein: Arrival in Adelaide: An Interesting Interview'. Interviewer unknown. *The Advertiser*, 23 September, p. 7, [Accessed 12 August 2019]

¹⁴ Henderson, L. (1973). Vida Goldstein. In: H. Radi, 200 Australian Women: A Redress anthology. Broadway: Women's Redress Press Inc., p.86.

¹⁵ Garner, G. (2016). Australia and the Fight for Women's Rights. South Yarra, Victoria : Macmillan Publishers Australia, pp. 21-22

¹⁶ Brownfoot, J. (1983). Goldstein, Vida Jane (1869–1949). 9th ed. [ebook] Melbourne: Melbourne University Press. Available at: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/goldstein-vida-jane-6418> [Accessed 12 August 2019].

of America to speak at the International Women Suffrage Conference, where she gave evidence to the US Congress in favour of women's suffrage and was elected the conferences' secretary, an achievement described by herself as "*the greatest memory of my life.*"¹⁷. As Australian women had been granted the vote that year, she spoke about her country, hoping to spread the same ideas and messages in America; "*We will never rest until we have obtained for the women of other lands the same privileges which we enjoy in Australia*"¹⁸. Goldstein's work in America would prove to be effective, with President Roosevelt, inspired by the actions of Australia and Vida, later speaking out in favour of the suffrage movement continually over the next decade.

In 1911, she was invited to Great Britain by suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst to speak at the Women's Social and Political Union. She called upon Australians in Britain at the time to contact her, to discuss how they, as women voters, could help their "less fortunate British sisters" in the struggle for the vote¹⁹. Her speeches drew huge crowds, as they did in Australia and campaigned alongside British suffragettes, described by journalist and feminist Alice Henry as; "*(Vida) was the biggest thing that has happened to the woman movement for some time in England*"²⁰. While in England, she wrote several articles about British Suffrage for her newspaper *Woman Voter* and contributed to the book *Women Suffrage in Australia* and also held a protest with over 40,000 attending to fight for women's suffrage in the streets of London. At this march, she gave a speech in which she urged the British parliament to follow Australia's example and give women the right to vote, assuring British women that; "*I know that you will soon be citizens of no mean country*"²¹. In 1919, she travelled throughout Europe and represented Australia and New Zealand at a Women's Peace Conference in Zurich, speaking and writing about "The Australian Experiment" and her experience in the women's suffrage movement²². She gained experience in public speaking, learnt how to connect and empathise with others internationally and continually fought for the rights of women and the underprivileged around the world. Vida Goldstein used these trips to represent Australia as a global leader in women's suffrage, inspiring other suffrage movements across the world, her power as an activist unparalleled to anyone at the time.

After her three year tour of Europe, Vida Goldstein decided to bow out of her public career, but still lobbied for many social reforms including free access to birth control, the Children's Court Act, the Old Age Pensions Act, Commonwealth and State Franchise Act and various bills for equality in marriage and divorce, and wrote questionnaires for politicians about causes she was still passionate about²³. She upheld her lifelong dedication of improving the lives of women and children, and occasionally gave public lectures about socialism, feminism and pacifism²⁴. While she was no longer a major international figure, her impact could still be felt, with Britain allowing women the right to vote in 1918, and America following in 1920, acts that were largely influenced by Vida. Her death due to cancer in 1949 went almost unnoticed by the public, but her close friends and those who knew her remembered her as "a gifted speaker, and a woman of balanced judgement"²⁵. To remember Vida and her legacy, an annual essay prize focused on women's suffrage and

¹⁷ Goldstein, V. 1902, *To America and Back*, in possession of The Women's Library London, London

¹⁸ Wright, C (2018). *You Daughters of Freedom: The Australians Who Won the Vote and Inspired the World*. Melbourne, Vic : Text Publishing, p. 109

¹⁹ Wright, C (2018). *You Daughters of Freedom: The Australians Who Won the Vote and Inspired the World*. Melbourne, Vic : Text Publishing, p. 373

²⁰ Mathew, R (1993). *Australia's First Fabians: Middle-class Radicals, Labour Activists, and the Early Labour Movement*. Melbourne : Cambridge University Press, p 224

²¹ Goldstein, V. (1911). "I know that you will soon be citizens of no mean country". July 17, Royal Albert Hall, London.

²² Wright, C. (2014). Goldstein, Vida Jane. [online] *The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership*. Available at: <http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0160b.htm> [Accessed 12 August 2019].

²³ Daniels, K and Murnane, M (1980). *Australia's Women: A Documentary History*. St Lucia, QLD : University of Queensland Press, pp. 309-310

²⁴ Daniels, K and Murnane, M (1980). *Australia's Women: A Documentary History*. St Lucia, QLD : University of Queensland Press, pp. 288

²⁵ *The Argus* (1949). *Tribute To A Pioneer*. 22 August. [online] p. 6. Available at: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22773189> [Accessed 7 August. 2019].

citizenship was established by the League of Women Voters, reminiscent of her writings on women's suffrage and political equality²⁶.

Though her death stirred little acknowledgment in the world she hoped so much to improve, it is clear Vida Goldstein had a powerful effect on Australian democracy and the way women are perceived in society. The growing role of women in society today is evidence that the many causes she fought for, protested, wrote about and championed impacted the lives of women globally. Today, women can run for and stand in parliament, have the right to vote in all elections, and are generally seen as equal to men, and while the fight for gender equality is far from over, it is apparent that without Vida Goldstein's dedication women may not have the rights they have today. Through her power to rally people together and to attract and hold their attention, she transformed Australian democracy, society and politics in a way that hadn't been seen before. She demonstrated that women were equal to men, and could be innovative, daring and most importantly, powerful. The consequences of her actions are still clear today, cementing her place as one of the most powerful people in Australian history.

Total Word Count: 1, 976

²⁶ The Argus (1950). Essay prize as memorial. 22 March. [online] p. 10. Available at: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22817579> [Accessed 7 August. 2019].

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Diaries:

Goldstein, V. (1902), *To America and Back*, in possession of The Women's Library London, London.

This diary entry, written by Vida Goldstein about her trip to America and speaking at the International Women's Suffrage Conference was invaluable in my research as it gave me an insight into her true nature and how she handled her international reputation. Her descriptions of the people she met and lessons she had learnt while abroad allowed me to better understand how she was making an impact internationally and her opinions on issues she spoke about at the time. A limitation of this source is that it does not provide an insight into what the legacy of her trip was or her later opinions on the American suffrage movement.

Books:

Daniels, K and Murnane, M (1980). *Australia's Women: A Documentary History*. St Lucia, QLD : University of Queensland Press, pp. 288, 310

This book is a collection of primary sources that focus on the work of several women throughout Australia's history. The two sources I used were a questionnaire and letter, both written by Vida Goldstein concerning bills that were being discussed in the senate. These two sources showed what she was concerned about beyond the women's movement and how she continued to be passionate about issues regarding women and children, even after she had left the public sphere. They were useful as they also showed issues that were debated after women were granted the right to vote.

Women's Political Association. (1913) *The Life and Work of Miss Vida Goldstein*. Melbourne, Australasian Author's Agency, pp. 5-15

This biography was written by members of the Women's Political Association that personally knew Vida Goldstein, so it was beneficial to me when researching. It chronicles the work Vida Goldstein undertook in the suffrage movement and also details some of the reforms she helped pass through the Senate. It gave me an understanding of how she was perceived by others and what personal messages and ideas she wanted to convey through her writings and speeches.

Interviews:

Goldstein, V. (1903). 'Miss Vida Goldstein: Arrival in Adelaide: An Interesting Interview'. Interviewer unknown. *The Advertiser*, 23 September, p. 7, [Accessed 12 August 2019]

This interview conducted by the Advertiser in Adelaide was beneficial in my research as it covers many topics about Vida Goldstein and her opinions of her work. The interview outlines her political intentions, campaign strategies and hopes for a female-led future. It provided a perspective of her often ignored by the media, the questions about her political and social opinions rather than 'feminine' topics, and gave me insight into her true nature and personalities.

Newspapers:

Lawson, L. (1904). THE GREATEST DAY THAT EVER DAWNED. *The Dawn*, p.5.

This article by feminist writer Louisa Lawson was useful in understanding the societal context in which Vida Goldstein was running for senate. It gave insight into knowing the opinions of other prominent figures in Australia at the time and showed the significance of the first women candidates and what it meant for gender equality in Australia.

Petersburg Times (1903). Vida Goldstein. 29 September. [online] p.2. Available at: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/109478131?> [Accessed 7 August. 2019].

This article was written at the time Vida Goldstein was campaigning for senate and showed the male opinion on the progressiveness of women's rights in Australia. The usefulness of this source is that it gives the perspective that many men would have had at the time, as it describes how Goldstein defies the

stereotypical image of a women's rights campaigner and her then radical opinions on divorce and marriage laws.

The Argus (1949). Tribute To A Pioneer. 22 August. [online] p. 6. Available at: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22773189> [Accessed 7 August. 2019].

This tribute written for Vida Goldstein soon after her death was beneficial to me in understanding the impact of Vida's death had in Australia. It included is a statement from a friend of Goldstein's asking for greater awareness about her efforts and achievements, which was useful as it showed how her death went unnoticed by the majority of Australians.

The Argus (1950). Essay prize as memorial. 22 March. [online] p. 10. Available at: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/22817579> [Accessed 12 August. 2019].

This article was useful in my research about Vida Goldstein's death as it showed the efforts of women to keep the memory and legacy of Vida Goldstein alive. Many of the women she knew wanted to remember Goldstein in a way that reminded everyone of what she stood for and this is shown through this article.

The Daily News (1906). AUSTRALIA'S STATESWOMAN VISITS WESTERN AUSTRALIA. 26 February. [online] p.10. Available at: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/82681107?> [Accessed 8 August 2019].

This article shows the opinions of the people of Australia at the time when women in politics was a highly debated issue. It also included quotes from Vida Goldstein about her previous runs for senate and her future aims in the women's suffrage movement in Australia and globally. It also explained how the personality and appearance of Goldstein contradicted the images depicted in the media and contained remarks from bystanders who commented on this contrast, which helped me in understanding how Vida Goldstein was seen by the general public.

Speeches:

Goldstein, V. (1911). "I know that you will soon be citizens of no mean country". July 17, Royal Albert Hall, London.

This speech by Vida Goldstein outlines her goals of women's rights in Australia and England, showing her commitment and passion to this cause. The benefit of this source is that it shows how Goldstein wanted to create the same impact in England as she did in Australia and how she hoped for a future where all women were free of social and political barriers. The speech is useful as it shows the passion for her cause and her vision of a brighter future for all women.

SECONDARY SOURCES:

Books:

Bomford, J. (1993). That dangerous and persuasive woman - Vida Goldstein. Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne Univ. Press, pp 2-3.

This biography of Vida Goldstein was extremely useful as it extensively covered her life and achievements in the suffragette movement and other social work. It clearly explains her childhood, her international endeavours, runs for senate and her life once she left her public role and shows the effect she left on Australian and worldwide democracy. A benefit of this source is that it focuses on the impact of her mother in her life and decision to become an activist and how her early years in the Suffragette movement gave her the knowledge and confidence she needed to create change in the world.

Brownfoot, J. (1983). Goldstein, Vida Jane (1869–1949). 9th ed. [ebook] Melbourne: Melbourne University Press. Available at: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/goldstein-vida-jane-6418> [Accessed 12 August 2019].

This entry written as part of the Australian Dictionary of Biography chronicles the life of Vida Goldstein and was beneficial in my research as it pinpoints the dates and locations of when specific events occurred. I used this entry as a reference point to ensure my dates and locations of events and achievements were correct. It

also included an insightful paragraph on her personality and the legacy she left behind, which helped me in understanding how others viewed her.

Garner, G. (2016). Australia and the Fight for Women's Rights. South Yarra, Victoria : Macmillan Publishers Australia, pp. 22-28

This textbook was informative in explaining the history of women's suffrage in Australia and the role of Vida Goldstein in it. It timelines when milestones in the suffrage movement occurred and the opinions of women's suffrage and women's rights activists at the time. The most useful information in this textbook is that it addresses the irony of how Vida Goldstein was the most active women's suffrage campaigner of the time, but her home state Victoria was one of the least progressive states in this regard.

Henderson, L. (1973). Vida Goldstein. In: H. Radi, 200 Australian Women: A Redress anthology. Broadway: Women's Redress Press Inc., pp.85-86.

This biography was written by Vida Goldstein's niece, so it was useful as it provided a reliable primary source on the Goldstein family, and how Vida was influenced from a young age to become an activist. It included personal stories from Vida's sisters about what it was like personally knowing such an influential figure and gave me a new perspective on her personality and how her childhood shaped her as a person.

Magarey, S (2001). Passions of the First Wave Feminists, Sydney, New South Wales: University of New South Wales Press. pp 62 -63

This book analysed the different goals of feminists across Australia's history, and how women achieved them. It highlights Vida Goldstein as a founder of modern Australian democracy and how she achieved her goals. This book was most useful to me in examining the importance of Annette-Bear Crawford and Isabelle Hawkins as people who pushed Vida to follow her passions. It explained how Crawford mentored Vida so that when she passed, Vida would be able to take her role easily.

Mathew, R (1993). Australia's First Fabians: Middle-class Radicals, Labour Activists, and the Early Labour Movement. Melbourne : Cambridge University Press, p 224

This book describes how many Australian's who pushed for equality achieved their goals through campaigning and democracy rather than revolutions, and uses Vida Goldstein as an example. The most useful chapter of this book regarded Goldstein's trip to England, and how she rallied many British citizens behind the cause of women's suffrage through her passionate speeches, and how her time there impacted the suffragette movement.

Wright, C (2018). You Daughters of Freedom: The Australians Who Won the Vote and Inspired the World. Melbourne, Vic : Text Publishing, pp. 5, 37, 102, 322

Clare Wright's book on how Australia became the world leader for democracy and women's rights in the early 20th century due to the efforts of 5 Australian women, Goldstein included. She examines the events and milestones in the suffrage movement that showed the world what women were capable of, and how Vida Goldstein grew into the symbol of early Australian feminism. Her analysis on the legacy and impact of Australian women was beneficial to me as it showed the cause and effect relationship of Goldstein's campaigns and progress in gender equality.

Speeches

Wright, C (2016). "Making Waves, Making History". [online]. 25 November, Melbourne Town Hall, Melbourne. Available from: <https://www.vwt.org.au/clare-wright-waves-history/> [Accessed 17 August 2019].

This speech by women's historian Dr Clare Wright talks about how women's history is largely forgotten by history and gives examples of women who were ground-breaking at the time, but have been largely forgotten in Australia. She highlights how far women's rights in Australia came throughout Vida Goldstein's

lifetime and her involvement in this progress. This speech was valuable in my research as it explains how Vida Goldstein massively impacted Australian society but was not recognised for it until well after her death.

Websites

MOAD. (2019). Exploring Democracy · Vida Goldstein · Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House. [online] Available at: <https://explore.moadoph.gov.au/people/vida-goldstein> [Accessed 15 August 2019].

The Museum of Australian Democracy's entry on Vida Goldstein helped me to understand the impact that Vida Goldstein had on Australian Democracy, specifically her milestones in forming the first women's suffrage society and standing for the federal election. An advantage of this website is that I am also able to see how far ahead her achievements in democracy were compared to other nations, and how she set Australia upon a global stage.

Wright, C. (2014). Goldstein, Vida Jane. [online] The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership. Available at: <http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0160b.htm> [Accessed 12 August 2019].

This encyclopedia entry of Vida Goldstein was useful as it clearly shows how her life progressed from working with her mother to leading the fight for women's suffrage. Clare Wright uses a mix of primary and secondary sources to show what the opinions of people at the time were around Vida Goldstein and the Suffragette movement.