



Speech by

**Rachel Nolan**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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## **ANTIDISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION**

**Ms NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (10.27 a.m.): The Howard government last week announced plans to amend the federal antidiscrimination act to contend with what it says is a national crisis—a shortage of male teachers. The government, not noted for its support of affirmative action, made its announcement having made no previous efforts to encourage men to teach and having consulted with no-one. While for John Howard a shortage of male teachers is an issue of such national significance that a bedrock of human rights must be watered down, this government has done nothing in its eight years in office to alter the fundamental gender bias against women in a range of important fields.

In 2004 women make up just 14 per cent of board members of Australia's top 100 companies. Only two of those companies have female chairs. Of the 19 federal cabinet ministers only two are women. Despite the fact that 70 per cent of Australian teachers are women, 60 per cent of school principals are men.

Perhaps women have the time to teach because they are certainly not running the country. The Howard government's move to change the antidiscrimination act is just another step in its concerted campaign to appeal to the right wing men's movement. It follows the efforts to nobble the sex discrimination and human rights commissioners and the much publicised campaign against the Family Court.

This has nothing to do with establishing equality in teaching; it has everything to do with placating men's groups who feel that as women have inched forward they have missed out.