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Spotlight Hour: Wally Lewis

120 years since women got the vote

120 years since women got the vote

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By: [Laura McQuillan](#), | [Latest Political News](#) | Thursday November 28 2013 5:25

UPDATED 8:28am: It's 120 years to the day since women first voted in a general election.

And that was – of course – in New Zealand.

Prime Minister Richard Seddon was returned to office in that 1893 vote – even though he was a staunch opponent of women's suffrage.

Women's Affairs Minister Jo Goodhew will mark the milestone by meeting with teenage girls, who will get to cast their first votes next year.

"Back then they fought so hard for their first vote that we want to remind young women that it's worth having and it's worth getting on and doing, and participating in democracy."

Ms Goodhew says: "Lots of people thought at the time that women wouldn't bother going out and voting even though they were allowed to, that they might cause all sorts of untidiness at the polling booths or they might be scared to go.

"But 81 per cent of those that were enrolled went out. It was amazing."

It's 120 years on – but not all is yet equal.

Back in 1893, opponents held doubts about women's intelligence.

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Ms Goodhew says it's remarkable how views have changed, but there's still work to be done.

"As an MP now 120 years later I have to say I look back and I think, well have we done 120 years of hard yards since then and achieved everything we might hope we would have over that time?

"And I'm going to have to say no. There are still areas of society where women are not equally represented."

Photo: Getty Images

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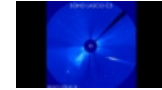


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