



TASA The Australian
Sociological Association

TITLE: Feminism in the Australian Mediasphere

Author/s: Dr Juliet Watson, Dr Sarah Casey

Affiliation/s: RMIT University, Griffith University

There has been an increase in the number of commentators in the mediasphere in Australia who have been appointed and anointed as feminists by the media and audiences. This amplification of feminist discourse is occurring because of the possibilities generated by online and social media, gendered news and lifestyle commentaries. While this opens up space for greater diversity and representation in feminist voices, paradoxically, much of the feminist discourse in the public domain problematically reinforces the dominant paradigm rather than challenges it. Mainstream media feminists are seemingly unvarying in their homogeneity; their presence is non-threatening, privileged and 'palatable', and often connected with a 'feminism-as-a-business model'. This research locates the Australian feminist mediasphere within the contemporary landscape of neoliberalism and postfeminism. Both neoliberalism and postfeminism share an ethos of individualism at the expense of socio-political understandings of power. This represents a change from collective understandings of gendered power to an emphasis on choice that is strongly signified in women's positioning as free-choosing subjects who shun gender-based victimhood. Through this examination of feminist media spaces, challenges and opportunities for substantive political change and destabilisation of the status quo are explored.