Intermediate A, Round 2

"That the mainstream news media are responsible for the lack of female political leaders in Australia"

1. Type of Topic

This is an empirical debate. This means that neither team can propose a model, or any kind of policy change within the world; instead, you are arguing about whether or not a statement is correct. In this case, the affirmative team needs to argue that the mainstream news media are responsible for the lack of female political leaders in Australia, and the negative team needs to argue the opposite.

This will require teams to decide upon a test, that is, a set of criteria they use to determine whether the mainstream news media are responsible for the lack of female political leaders in Australia. It is the role of the affirmative team to propose the test, and the negative team can either accept the affirmative team's test, or disagree with it and propose their own test. A good test has around three criteria, and each argument raised in the debate should be related back to the test. In the affirmative team's case, each argument should demonstrate how one or more criteria of the test are met, and in the negative team's case, each argument should demonstrate how one or more criteria of the test are not met.

In this debate, the negative team may find it useful to argue that instead of the mainstream news media, another stakeholder is responsible for the lack of female political leaders in Australia. However, this is not necessary for them to prove their side.

2. Background / Context

Women are underrepresented in Australian politics. Despite comprising approximately 50% of the population, they comprise far less of our Federal parliament. Furthermore, women are less likely to hold leadership roles in parties, with Julia Gillard being Australia's only female Prime Minister.

The situation is slightly different in state politics, where more women have been premiers or chief ministers. However, out of all the current leaders of states and territories, only two are women. This gender imbalance is reflected also across deputy leadership and cabinet positions at both he State and Federal level.
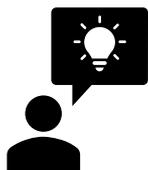
Whether this relative lack of female political leaders compared to men is good or bad is not relevant to the debate. Rather, this topic asks you to consider who is responsible for the lack of female political leaders. This will require you to examine what it means for someone to be

responsible for something and devise an appropriate test for this. It will also require you to examine what factors and processes contribute to the gender composition of parliament, and how these different factors may be influenced by various stakeholders including the mainstream news media. To engage in this process, teams would benefit from considering the questions below.

3. Specific Questions for consideration

- How are members of parliament chosen?
    - What is preselection?
    - What role does preselection have in determining the gender composition of the parliament?
- How are leaders of political parties chosen?
    - What is a leadership spill?
- Is there any difference between the gender make up of members of different parties?
    - What relevance does this have to the topic?
- What is the mainstream news media?
- What role does the mainstream news media play in politics and elections?
    - Does it influence the decisions of the major parties in any way? If so, can you find examples of this?
- How does news coverage of potential female leaders compare to that of potential male leaders?
    - It may be useful to examine the coverage of Julia Gillard's leadership spill and the coverage of Julie Bishop during the most recent Coalition leadership spill that led to Scott Morrison becoming leader of the Liberal party
- What barriers do women face in politics?
    - How do these differ to those faced by men?
- What other groups, organisations, stakeholders etc. could be responsible for the lack of female political leaders in Australian politics?
    - Are they more or less responsible than the mainstream news media?
    - It may be useful to consider voters, "rank and file" party members, members of parliament and the interactions between all these groups
- What makes someone responsible for something?

Tips from the adjudicators

Points of information were generally were dealt with in the first round. However, adjudicators did notice a few places in which students could improve:

- When responding to a POI, address your response to the audience as opposed to the opposition member who offered the POI
- Each individual speaker should try to offer 3 POIs during each opposition member's speech
- Each speaker should aim to accept two POIs. Anymore than this uses up too much of your time, and any less doesn't allow you to engage enough with the opposition

Adjudicators also noticed that some teams hadn't understood the type of topic in round one, and had not properly engaged with counterfactuals. Teams who struggled with this concept are advised to read the "Type of Topic" section of the topic resource guide, but also to see the "Guide to Counterfactual Topics" which can be found on the SADA website under "Education Resources."

https://www.sada.org.au/resources-for-debaters-and-coaches