

According to Prime Minister Tony Abbott, women have cracked just about every glass ceiling there is and have it "pretty good" in Australia. Especially if you live in Sydney.

That's to a large extent true. Some women have slipped their way through the breaks in the proverbial glass ceilings of our senior leadership positions, but others remain trapped on the floor.

And seeing one woman break through – or even a number of women rising to the top – doesn't guarantee that women will stay up there, or even dismantle the ceiling enough to remove the barriers for others.

Speaking at an event in Canberra on Tuesday to mark the upcoming International Women's Day, Abbott declared that while we still have some work to do Australia is a nation which has just about "smashed every glass ceiling".

"If you look at our country and the deal that it gives to women; it is obviously pretty good," he said. "It wasn't so long ago as a Sydneysider that there was a female lord mayor, a female premier, a female prime minister, a female head of state in our governor general, a female monarch, obviously, and indeed the richest person in our country was female."

All very true. It wasn't so long ago that we did have an incredible number of female leaders in power. A record number of women in Cabinet. A record number of female heads of state. A record number of women in board positions across corporate Australia.

We even had a minister for women who was, actually, a woman.

Things were ticking along smoothly and we were inching our way towards equal representation. Only problem was that the number of women in power is only as good as the pipeline of women coming up to join them.

And when there are so few women in power in the first place, seeing just one retire, step down or lose an election can significantly shift female representation. See one female CEO retire from a major company and the representation of women in such positions across the ASX drops from 3% to 2.5%. See the leadership of one woman in a significant position come to an end and, unless there are plenty of women coming up the ranks behind her, it could be decades before we see female representation in such a position again.

Meanwhile, a change of government can swiftly see any significant progress come undone. It wasn't even a year ago that women made up more than 30% of government parliamentary positions under the Labor government, that figure had dropped dramatically since the 2013 Federal election .

It wasn't so long ago that there were eleven women in an Australian government ministry, when a reshuffle under the Rudd Government saw an additional two women join the full ministry following the 2013 Labor leadership spill.

Under the current government, there is just one.

It wasn't so long ago that talented women didn't need to "knock on the door" of Cabinet, as Abbott once described they were doing, as women were already in the room.

So Tony Abbott's right. We have just about cracked every glass ceiling of leadership there is when it comes to some of our most significant positions of power.

But cracking the glass ceiling isn't enough. It needs to be smashed to smithereens to the point that it can never ever be put between women and power again.

As I've written before, there is no resting when it comes to progressing the proportion of women in power. Blink and you may very well miss the point where we make a significant u-turn and find ourselves right back where we started.