

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE0599

## Heagney, Muriel Agnes

(1885 - 1974)

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**Born** 31 December, 1885, Brisbane Queensland Australia

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**Died** 14 May, 1974, St Kilda Victoria Australia

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**Occupation** Political candidate, Trade unionist, Writer

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### Summary

Muriel Heagney worked tirelessly for the labour movement in various capacities during her long life. Her major commitment, however, was to achieve equal pay for women workers. Born into a labour family, she joined the Richmond branch of the Political Labour Council (later the Australian Labor Party – ALP) in 1906, and was a delegate to the Women's Central Organising Committee in 1909. Other positions she held included: membership of the Victorian central executive of the Australian Labor Party from 1926-1927; secretary of the Women's Central Organising Committee; and ex officio member of the party's central executive in 1955. She was a founding member of the Council of Action for Equal Pay which was established in Sydney in 1937 under the auspices of the New South Wales branch of the Federated Clerks' Union and was secretary for most of its existence. It disbanded in 1948. She returned to Victoria in 1950 and continued to maintain her union and political interests into the 1960s. Her publications include *Are women taking men's jobs?*, (1935), *Equal pay for the sexes*, (1948), *Arbitration at the crossroads*, (1954). She died in poverty in St Kilda in May 1974.

### Details

Heagney made two attempts to enter an Australian parliament. She made her first attempt in 1933 when she stood as an ALP candidate in the by-election for the state Legislative Assembly seat of Boroondara, which was held on 29 April. This was and remains a conservative seat. She was placed second in a field of seven on the primary vote, with 20.54 per cent of the vote, but on the two-party preferred count she was placed third, with 24.36 per cent of the vote, after the winner Trevor Oldham (United Australia Party) and James Nettleton, another United Australia Party candidate. This was a creditable performance as the ALP had not fielded a candidate for that seat in the 1932 state election. She made her second attempt in 1956 at the age of 70, when she stood unsuccessfully for ALP pre-selection to the Australian Senate.

### Events

#### 2001 - 2001

Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

## Published resources

### Book

Are women taking men's jobs?: a survey of women's work in Victoria, with special regard to equal status, equal pay, and equality of opportunity, Heagney, Muriel, 1935

Arbitration at the crossroads, Heagney, Muriel, 1954

### Resource Section

Heagney, Muriel Agnes (1885-1975), Smith, Bruce A., 2001,  
<http://www.atua.org.au/biogs/ALE0922b.htm>

Heagney, Muriel Agnes (1885 - 1974), Bremner, J., 2006,  
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A090251b.htm>

Heagney, Patrick Reginald (1858-1922), 2006,  
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A090698b.htm>

### Thesis

Muriel Heagney and the Council of Action for Equal Pay 1937-1948, Francis, Rosemary, 1989

### Book Section

In the cause of equality: Muriel Heagney and the position of women in the Depression, Bremner, Jennie, c1982

Brazen hussies and God's police fighting back in the depression years. [Revised version of article published in Hecate, v.8, no.1, 1982], Stone, Janey, 1998

Famine relief on the Volga : Muriel Heagney's winter sojourn., Francis, Rosemary, 2008

### Edited Book

200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology, Radi, Heather, 1988

### Journal Article

Exercising political citizenship : Muriel Heagney and the Australian Labor Party 1906-1914., Francis, Rosemary, 2008

### Site Exhibition

Carrying on the Fight: Women Candidates in Victorian Parliamentary Elections, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2008,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/cws/home.html>

The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders>

### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

## Archival resources

### State Library of Victoria

[Papers, 1936-1968 \[manuscript\]](#).

### Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection

[Jean Fleming Arnot - personal and professional papers, 1890-1995](#)

### Author Details

Rosemary Francis

**Created** 15 October 2003

**Last modified** 29 October 2018