

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE0631

## Brennan, Anna Teresa

(1879 - 1962)

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**Born** 2 September, 1879, Emu Creek Victoria Australia

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**Died** 11 October, 1962, Parkville Victoria Australia

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**Occupation** Lawyer

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### Summary

Anna Brennan, member of a talented Victorian family, was a devout Catholic who actively pursued the cause of women's equality throughout her life. She was one of the earliest woman to graduate in law at the University of Melbourne in 1909 and practised as a solicitor in her brother's legal firm for fifty years. She was a foundation member of the Lyceum Club in 1912 and president from 1940-41.

The Victorian Legal Women's Association was established in 1931 with Brennan serving as president. A founding committee member of the Catholic Women's Social Guild in 1916, later the Catholic Women's League, she served as president from 1918-1920. She joined the Victorian branch of St Joan's International Alliance, holding the office of president from 1938-1945 and again in 1948 until her death in 1962.

### Details

Anna Brennan was the thirteenth child of Michael Brennan, farmer and his wife Mary nee Maher. She commenced medical studies at the University of Melbourne in 1904, but was not permitted to continue as she was 'too nervous to do the dissections'. She commenced the law course in 1906, graduating in 1909. At the university she became a member of the Princess Ida Club for women students, was an office bearer from 1907-1909 and remained a committee member until 1913. She represented the Princess Ida Club on the national Council of Women in 1912

She became a partner in her brother Frank's firm, specialising in the matrimonial field and campaigned for more equitable laws in relation to divorce. She was the second woman in Victoria to be admitted to practice.

Her commitment to her Catholic faith was evident in her involvement with the Catholic Women's Social Guild, lecturing and writing for its publications *Women's Social Work* and its successor *Horizon*.

Joan of Arc was an inspiration to her and she joined the forerunner of the St Joan's International Alliance, the Catholic Women's Suffrage Society in London. She was an inaugural member of the Victorian chapter of the St Joans' International Alliance when it was established in 1936 and was president from 1938-45 and 1948-62.

## Published resources

### Book

Horizon in retrospect, 1916-1986, 1985

The Lyceum Club, Melbourne 1912-1962., Gillison, Joan, 1962

### Resource Section

Brennan, Anna Teresa (1879-1962), Campbell, Ruth and Morgan, Margaret, 2006,  
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070404b.htm>

Law, Kerwin, Hollie and Rubenstein, Kim, 2014,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0624b.htm>

### Journal Article

Anna Brennan...the Valiant Woman, Blackall, Alice, 1963

Tributes to a Medical Missionary Pioneer: Dr Mary Glowrey (Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart) - First C.W.S.G. President, Brennan, Anna T, 1957

### Edited Book

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

### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

### Site Exhibition

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

Australian Women Lawyers as Active Citizens, Trailblazing Women Lawyers Project Team, 2016,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/lawyers>

## Archival resources

### State Library of Victoria

[History of the Lyceum Club, and papers, 1970-1975. \[manuscript\].](#)

### NULL

[Records of the St Joan's International Alliance](#)

### The University of Melbourne Archives

[Melbourne University. Princess Ida Club](#)

[Melbourne University. Princess Ida Club](#)

### Author Details

Rosemary Francis and Anne Heywood

**Created** 19 November 2003

**Last modified** 15 July 2020

## Digital resources



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**Type:** Image

**Date:** 3 May, 2023