

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0796

Williams, Joan

(1916 - 2008)

Born 1 January, 1916, Western Australia Australia

Died 21 June, 2008

Occupation Activist, Broadcaster, Journalist, Print journalist, Radio Journalist, Writer

Summary

Joan Williams was a prominent member of the Western Australian branch of the Communist Party of Australia. She was politically active from the 1920s, but began her career in journalism as a young woman already imbued with a strong political consciousness. The networks fostered through her membership in an elite group of Western Australian left-wing radicals were critical to the foundation of numerous Western Australian women's and peace organisations. Under the pen name Justina Williams she wrote short stories, historical works, poems, biography and her autobiography *Anger and Love*. She was awarded the Order of Australia Medal accepting it on behalf of her "unrecognized sisters who serve the community".

Details

As a young journalist Joan Williams learned about the organisational strategies operating within the European peace and women's movements and began a lifetime involvement with Perth's left-wing intelligentsia. Committed to initiating social change through public education Williams joined the Communist Party in 1939 drawn in by their concerns for social justice, women's equality and opposition to war and fascism. Joan Williams' activism spanned over fifty years. She was a foundation member of the Modern Women's Club, the Western Australian Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity and the International Women's Day Committee. In the 1950s Williams' focus shifted to the concern for nuclear disarmament and, joining forces with the members of the Union of Australian Women, she established a locally based Waterside Workers Federation Women's Committee to support strike action occurring at the time. In the early 1970s Williams became a foundation member of Women's Liberation and the Women's Electoral Lobby.

Events

1935 - 1960

Published resources

Journal Article

[Joan Williams - brief biography (mother of 3)], 1992

[Joan Williams - awarded Australian Medal; biography], 1996

[Joan Williams - biography of WEL member, peace activist and writer], 1992

[Joan Williams - interview with feminist], 1996

Wharfies smile but the fight is not over., Tucak, Layla., 1998

Writing labor history in Western Australia : my experience with 'the first furrow'. , Williams, Justina, 1988

Fighting to be Seen and Heard: A Tribute to Four Western Australian Peace Activists, Hopkins, L, 1999

Book

Anger & love, Williams, Justina, 1993

The first furrow, Williams, Justina, 1976

Book Section

[Justina Williams - brief biography of writer], 1988

[Justina Williams - profile of writer, with full page portrait], 1976

Edited Book

Carrying the banner : women, leadership and activism in Australia, Eveline, Joan, 1940- and Hayden, Lorraine, 1999

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition

The Women's Pages: Australian Women and Journalism since 1850, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2008,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/cal/cal-home.html>

Archival resources

State Library of Western Australia

[Joan Williams papers, 1934-2005](#)

[\[Interview with Joan Williams\] \[sound recording\] / \[interviewed by Leckie Hopkins\]](#)

[Records, 1938-1973 \[manuscript\]](#)

Author Details

Denise Tallis

Created 23 March 2004

Last modified 5 June 2018