

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE0897

## Nicholls, Elizabeth Webb

(1850 - 1943)

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**Born** 21 February, 1850, Adelaide South Australia Australia

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**Died** 3 August, 1943, North Adelaide South Australia Australia

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**Occupation** Activist, Suffragist

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### Summary

Elizabeth Webb Nicholls was born in Adelaide to Mary and Samuel Bakewell in 1850. She joined the Christian Woman's Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1886, and was elected provisional president in 1888. In 1889 she became Colonial president, a position she held until 1897. From 1894-1903 she was the Union's Australian President, and post-Federation, she served as State President from 1906 to 1927. She joined the South Australian Women's Suffrage League and subsequently became a League Councillor. In 1894 Elizabeth Nicholls assumed the role of Colonial Superintendent of the WCTU's Suffrage Department. She was appointed to the Board of the Adelaide Hospital from 1895-1922 and was a justice of the peace – one of the four first women – from 1915. She died in 1943

### Details

Elizabeth Webb Nicholls was born in Adelaide to Mary and Samuel Bakewell in 1850. She married Alfred Nicholls in 1870, and had five children as well as bringing up two orphaned relatives. She joined the Christian Woman's Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1886, and was elected provisional president in 1888. In 1889 she became Colonial president, a position she held until 1897. From 1894-1903 she was the Union's Australian President, and post-Federation, she served as State President from 1906 to 1927. She probably joined the South Australian Women's Suffrage League in early 1889 and later became a League Councillor. It was under her leadership that the WCTU gained 8,000 of the 11,600 signatures for the League's 1894 petition to Parliament. Following the submission of the petition, Elizabeth Nicholls took on the role of Colonial Superintendent of the WCTU's Suffrage Department. The legislation granting suffrage to women was passed in December 1894, and she then travelled around Adelaide and country South Australia giving talks about how to enrol and vote. Her 'Platform and Principles' is an example of her straightforward approach. From 1895-1922 she served on the Board of the Adelaide Hospital and was a justice of the peace – one of the four first women – from 1915. In addition she was actively involved with the Women's Non-Party Political Association and assisted Bessie Rischbieth to form the Australian Federation of Women's Societies (later known as the Australian Federation of Women Voters) in 1922. She died in 1943

## Published resources

### **Edited Book**

Torch-bearers : the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of South Australia, 1886-1948, McCorkindale, Isabel, 1949

### **Resource Section**

Nicholls, Elizabeth Webb (1851-1943), Mune, Marie, 2006,  
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110023b.htm>

### **Book Section**

Elizabeth Webb Nicholls (nee Bakewell), 2001

Bessie Rischbieth, Ogilvie, June, 1988

### **Book**

In her own name : women in South Australian history, Jones, Helen, 1926-, 1986

Fresh evidence, new witnesses : finding women's history, Allen, Margaret (Margaret Ellen), 1947- ; Hutchison, Mary and Mackinnon, Alison, 1942-, 1989

### **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>

## Archival resources

### **State Library of South Australia**

[Young Women's Christian Association of Adelaide : SUMMARY RECORD](#)

[Woman's Christian Temperance Union of South Australia : SUMMARY RECORD](#)

### **Author Details**

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