

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person

**Entry ID:** AWE1021

## Preston-Stanley, Millicent Fanny

(1883 - 1955)

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**Born** 9 September, 1883, Sydney New South Wales Australia

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**Died** 23 June, 1955, Sydney New South Wales Australia

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**Occupation** Politician, Women's rights activist

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### Summary

Millicent Preston-Stanley was a politician and first female member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, 1925-1927. She was involved in a wide array of women's groups and issues and was President of the Feminist Club from 1919-1934 and 1952-1955. She was also Australian delegate for the British-American Co-operation Movement, 1936-1938. She married Crawford Vaughan in Sydney in 1934.

## Details

### Parliamentary and Local Government Career

Candidate Eastern Suburbs, 1922  
Elected, Eastern Suburbs, 1925  
Unsuccessful candidate, Bondi, 1927  
Party: Nationalist

Millicent Preston-Stanley was a politician and feminist. She was born on 9 September 1883 in Sydney and lived there until her death in 1955. Throughout her life she was involved in a number of women's organisations, such as the Feminist Club of which she was President from 1919-34 and 1952-55.

In 1925 Preston-Stanley became the first female member of the NSW Legislative Assembly, representing the Eastern Suburbs. During this time she campaigned on maternal mortality, reform in child welfare, amendments to the Health Act and better housing. She held her seat until 1927.

She was the Australian delegate to America for the British-American Co-operation Movement in 1936 and undertook a lecture tour of America in 1937-38. In 1947 she was involved in the organisation, United Women Citizens' Movement against Socialisation formed to oppose the Chifley government's attempt to nationalise Australian banking.

Millicent Stanley became Millicent Preston-Stanley after her father, Augustus Stanley, deserted the family and her mother (nee Preston) was granted a divorce, thereafter calling herself Preston-Stanley. A fine public speaker, she ran events for the Women's Liberal League, and was critical of the Liberals' neglect of women. After organising for political, feminist and other groups, she narrowly missed election for the multi-member seat of Eastern Suburbs in 1922. She was the first woman elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1925.

She dealt mercilessly with hecklers and interjections inside and outside the Legislative Assembly, continuing her campaigns on women's and children's health, welfare, housing and the care of the 'mentally defective'.

"I do not expect to be exalted into the Ministry, but I will say this, that any woman who gets into Parliament and does not make up her mind to control the Department of Health so far as it concerns the women and children of the State does not properly conceive her responsibilities, powers or duties" (Parliamentary scrapbook 1922).

After leaving the Legislative Assembly she campaigned for women's rights in child custody, writing a play about the notorious Polini case which was produced in 1932.

She married Crawford Vaughan, former premier of South Australia, in 1934. She continued organising against socialism and communism, and warning against the threat from Japan. In 1937-8 she toured the USA, lecturing on behalf of the Pan Pacific Women's Conference. During 1940-41 she was director of the Women's Australian National Service, mobilising volunteers and training women for the services.

Her portrait, by Jerrold Nathan, hangs in NSW Parliament House, and another by Mary Edwards is in the Dixson Library, Sydney. Photos appear in the Parliamentary scrapbooks for 1922, 1927.

### Published resources

#### Resource

Papers of Millicent Preston-Stanley (1883-1955),  
<http://www.nla.gov.au/ms/findaids/9062.html>

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

#### Edited Book

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

Australian Feminism: A Companion, Caine, Barbara, Gatens, Moira et al., 1998

#### Site Exhibition

Putting Skirts on the Sacred Benches: Women Candidates for the New South Wales Parliament, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2006,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/pssb/home.html>

#### Book

No ordinary lives: pioneering women in Australian politics, Jenkins, Cathy, 2008

Liberal women : Federation to 1949, Fitzherbert, Margaret, 2004

## Archival resources

### **National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection**

[Papers of M. Preston-Stanley, 1925-1950 \[manuscript\]](#)

### **Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection**

[Feminist Club of New South Wales records, 1928-1973](#)

## Author Details

Jane Carey

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