

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1187

Baylor, Hilda Gracia

(1929 -)

Born 8 October, 1929, Brisbane Queensland Australia

Occupation Feminist, Parliamentarian, Teacher, Women's rights activist, Women's rights organiser

Summary

In 1979, Gracia Baylor became the first woman member of the Liberal Party to be elected to the Victorian Legislative Council when she was elected the member for Boronia. That year, she was one of the first two women to be elected to the Upper House, the other being Joan Coxledge of the Australian Labor Party. Baylor held her seat until 1985 when she resigned to contest (unsuccessfully) the Legislative Assembly seat of Warrandyte.

Details

Gracia Baylor, daughter of Herbert David Parry-Okeden, a grazier and businessman and Hilary May Webster, was born in Brisbane, and educated in Victoria and Tasmania as well as Brisbane as a result of her father serving in the Royal Australian Air Force during World War Two.

At the National Gallery Art School in Melbourne she completed a Diploma of Fine Arts and subsequently trained as a secondary school teacher. In 1950 she married John du Frocq Freeman. She worked at Mercer House, a training college for teachers in independent schools, from 1951-57 and at Hamilton College from 1957-59. She married again in 1959, to Richard Patrick Baylor, a Solicitor, with whom she had four children, three boys and a girl. She became a law clerk in her husband's firm in Healesville

Her interest in politics was sparked when she recognised the need for a kindergarten in the town of Healesville. She served as a Healesville Shire Councillor from 1966-78 and ultimately became the first woman president of the Shire of Healesville from 1977-78. This also made her the first female Shire president in the state of Victoria. During her time in parliament she assisted in the establishment of the Queen Victoria Women's Centre.

Over the course of her career, Gracia Baylor initiated the council approved baby capsule program which all new parents use to safely carry their infants in cars for the first few months. 'Before this program, babies were just placed in the back of the car in a bassinet and if there was an accident, they didn't have a hope,' she says. Baylor was also instrumental in getting mammograms approved for the Medicare register and she saved the only remaining tower of the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital for women which is now a centre for Women's Health.

Baylor has been an active member of the National Council of Women at the national and state level, serving as president of the National Council of Women of Victoria from 1990-93 and of the National Council of Women Australia from 1997-2000.

Events

1999 - 2002

Commonwealth Advisory Board for Equal Employment Opportunity for Women

1999 - 2002

Ministerial Advisory Committee to Minister for Women's Affairs (Victoria)

2000 - 2001

'Women Shaping the Nation' Centenary of Federation Committee

1990 - 2008

Dr Vera Scantlebury Brown Memorial trust

2003 - 2003

Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

1991 - 1999

Victoria Women's Council

1999 - 1999

In recognition for her work in Parliament and women's affairs.

Published resources

Book

Biographical register of the Victorian Parliament, Browne, Geoff, 1985

Resource Section

Gracia Baylor, AM, 2003,

[http://www.women.vic.gov.au/web12/rwpgslib.nsf/Graphic+Files/2003_Honour_Roll/\\$file/2003_Honour_Roll.pdf](http://www.women.vic.gov.au/web12/rwpgslib.nsf/Graphic+Files/2003_Honour_Roll/$file/2003_Honour_Roll.pdf)

The Liberal Party of Australia Federal Women's Committee: History and Achievements 1945-2003, 2003,

http://www.liberal.org.au/documents/fwc_history.pdf

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>

Stirrers with Style! Presidents of the National Council of Women of Australia and its predecessors, National Council of Women of Australia, 2013,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ncwa>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[Records of the National Council of Women of Australia, 1924-1990 \[manuscript\]](#)

[NCWA Papers 1984 - 2006](#)

Private Hands (These regards may not be readily available)

[Interview with Gracia Baylor AM](#)

State Library of Victoria

[National Council of Women of Victoria](#)

Author Details

Rosemary Francis

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Digital resources



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