

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE2407043

Grant, Mary Elizabeth (Liz)

(1930 - 2023)

Born 23 February, 1930, Mornington Victoria Australia

Died 7 February, 2023, Canberra Australian Capital Territory Australia

Occupation Parliamentarian, Pharmacist

Summary

Pharmacist Liz Grant was a foundation member of the ACT Division of the Australian Liberal Party and was elected a Liberal Party member for the electorate of Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) House of Assembly from 1979 to 1982. She maintained an active and prominent role in the Liberal Party for several decades thereafter, as well as close involvement in women's affairs, health policy and social affairs in the ACT and nationally. She was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1987, a Life Member of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia in 1991, and awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws from Monash University in 2005.

Details

Mary Elizabeth Grant – known affectionately to all as Liz – was born to Les and Mary Allen on 23 February 1930 in Mornington, then just outside Melbourne. She completed her schooling at the selective entry Mac.Robertson Girls' High School in Melbourne where she was a House Captain and a swimming champion. Liz followed in her father's footsteps as a pharmacist, training at the Victorian College of Pharmacy from 1947 to 1951. She was then apprenticed to her father in his Melbourne pharmacy.

Liz married Howard Grant in 1952. They had two children Allen and Sue and eventually four grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. She continued to work and in 1958 took a radical decision to open her own pharmacy in Greensborough, a Melbourne suburb, becoming one of the first female pharmacy owners in the State. This meant long hours getting the business up and running while also raising a young family, but Liz persisted and the business was very successful.

Pharmacy and the potential for the pharmacist to play an integral role in the development of communities became an underlying driver for many of the activities and roles Liz took on over the next 65 years. She always said she was a pharmacist first, and then a lot of things thereafter. She proudly maintained her registration and membership of both the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia until her death in 2023.

Liz sold her pharmacy when the family moved interstate in 1963. While she never owned another pharmacy, she continued her work as a pharmacist in hospital and community pharmacies in Mt Gambier, Melbourne and Canberra for many years.

In 1985, Liz and Howard established Commerce Management Services – a family company dedicated to providing secretariat services and administrative support to associations, industry groups and small businesses. She maintained an active involvement in the business almost until her death.

When she moved to Canberra, Liz became a foundation member of the ACT Division of the Liberal Party. From 1977 to 1984 she was Convenor of the ACT Division of the Liberal Women's Committee, and in 1979-1982 served as a Liberal Member elected to the seat of Canberra in the ACT House of Assembly. In 1977 she also became a member of the Federal Women's Committee of the Liberal Party, and chaired that Committee from 1980 to 1985. She stood for election (unsuccessfully) in the federal seat of Fraser in the ACT at the 1983 election.

During and after her term in parliament, Liz played a prominent role in many of the ACT's health-related boards and councils, notably as Chair of the ACT Health Services Council (1981-1985), member of the ACT Hospital Services Board (1986-1987) and its Chair in 1989, and Chair of the ACT Health Authority (1987).

Liz maintained her active involvement in women's affairs after she left politics, as President of the ACT Division of Business and Professional Women (1986-1989), and member of the ACT Women's Consultative Council (1989-1998). She remained a strong advocate for women in the Liberal Party and was much respected and loved for her kindness and supportive mentorship across the political aisle. She was greatly encouraged in this advocacy by attending the United Nations Women's Conference in Copenhagen in 1980 where she met women from all over the world with one common agenda – to promote women at all levels.

Liz was very active in other areas of ACT society as well. From 1981 to 1999 she chaired the ACT Australia Day Sports Carnival. She was a member of the ACT Parole Board during her term in the Assembly (1982-1985). She chaired the Canberra Festival Inc. in 1987, and in 1997 became a member of the ACT Centenary of Federation Committee. She was a Board member of the Council of the Ageing (ACT) from 2000 to 2016 and Chair from 2005 to 2011, and also a director of COTA Australia for several years. She chaired the Gorman House Community Arts Interim Management Committee for many years and maintained her interest in and support for Gorman House for over 40 years. Liz was a driving force for Care Financial Services in Canberra for 30 years, the majority as the Chair, as a Board Member and the organisation's Patron; she maintained an active interest and engagement until her death.

At national level, Liz was appointed to the National Health and Medical Council (NHMRC) from 1982 to 1985 – one of only two women on the Council. She developed a particular interest in the ethics of health care and animal-related research, becoming a member of the NHMRC Animal Experimental Ethics Committee in 1998 and Chair of its Animal Welfare Committee in 2000. In Canberra, she joined the ACT Department of Health and Community Care Ethics Committee in 1997 and she was a member of the ACT Health Human Research Ethics Committee from the late 1980s to 2009.

Liz Grant was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 1987 in recognition of her service to health administration and the community. In 1991 she was made a Life Member of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. She was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws by Monash University in May 2005. She died in Canberra on 7 February 2023 at the age of 92.

Published resources

Elizabeth Grant, Liberal politician and health advocate, remembered as dedicated Canberran, 29 March 2023, <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/8139859/elizabeth-grant-liberal-politician-and-health-advocate-remembered-as-dedicat>

Grant, Mary Elizabeth: Australian Encyclopaedia of Science and Innovation, <https://www.eoas.info/biogs/P004240b.htm>

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Created 14 April 2024

Last modified