

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE24072160

Lawder, Nicole Ann

(1962 -)

Born 31 July, 1962, Penang Malaya

Occupation Chief Executive Officer, Community advocate, Politician, Public servant

Summary

Nicole Lawder first entered the ACT Legislative Assembly in 2013, representing Canberra Liberals in the electorate of Brindabella in the Tuggeranong region. She was re-elected in 2016 and in 2020 and will retire from the Assembly at the 2024 election. Prior to her parliamentary service Lawder worked in the public service and as chief executive of the community organisations, Deafness Forum of Australia and Homelessness Australia.

Details

Born in 1962, in Penang in Malaya, the youngest of Joan McDonough and Oxley Gordon-Brown's three children, Nicole Lawder had both an elder brother, Lee Nigel Gordon-Brown, and an elder sister, Alison Kim Gordon-Brown. Her mother was a secretary, her father a member of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). The family returned to Queensland in 1963 after the posting to Malaya which was followed by many further postings around Australia. Lawder's primary schooling was completed in 1974 in New South Wales and her high schooling in 1979 in Victoria.

She gained her undergraduate degree at the Australian National University (Bachelor of Arts in Psychology) followed by a Masters in Business from Swinburne University of Technology. She married, in January 1982, Timothy John Lawder who also served in the Royal Australian Air Force. They had two children, Catherine Louise Lawder and Alexander James Lawder. Service in the RAAF took the family around Australia and to the United States returning to Canberra late in 1988. Nicole and Timothy Lawder divorced in 1993. In 1998 she married Peter Badowski, the child of European refugees.

Lawder began her career in 1989 at the Tidbinbilla Deep Space Communication complex as executive assistant to the director. She then managed the centre's public affairs and its visitors' centre. Various public affairs roles in the Australian Public Service followed as did a period with Deloitte Consulting.

She cites the 2002 shootings at Monash University which left two people dead and five injured – including her brother, Lee Gordon-Brown – as the catalyst for the decisive change in the direction of her career. In a 2016 interview with Ginger Gorman of the website HerCanberra, Lawder said it made her re-assess her purpose in life and prompted her 'to work in the community sector'. This, in turn, led to her interest in politics and her support for gun control. Lawder served as Chief Executive of the Deafness Forum of Australia (2006–2010) which supports Australians who are deaf or hard of hearing to live well in the community. She then took up the appointment as Chief Executive of Homelessness Australia (2011–2013), a national peak body providing advocacy for the homelessness sector and a unified voice seeking to prevent and respond to homelessness. She served as a Member of the National People with Disability and Carer Council (2008–2013) and on several government and other boards and committees. Her involvement as a volunteer in the Canberra community has included serving on the board of Tuggeranong Football Club, volunteering for Ronald McDonald House (which supports families with seriously ill or injured children), her local Community Fire Unit and the Red Cross.

Lawder entered the ACT Legislative Assembly in June 2013, filling the casual vacancy resulting from the resignation of Zed Seselja in February of that year. She served as Deputy Leader of the Opposition (October 2016–October 2020) and as Opposition Whip (February 2022–October 2024). Lawder has held multiple shadow ministries, for example, Arts, City Services, Environment, Heritage, Water, Family and Community Services, Housing, Planning and Infrastructure, Seniors, Urban Services, Veterans' Affairs and Women. Her commitment to accessibility and inclusion is reflected in her membership of several standing and select committees of the Legislative Assembly including Cost of Living Pressures, Economy, Education and Community Inclusion, Estimates, Justice and Community Services and Public Accounts.

Lawder's wide range of interests has included being a keen squash player, vegetable gardener and cook, cheese making and basket weaving; being a Game of Thrones devotee and having a predilection for colourful jackets and statement brooches. On leaving the Assembly she aims to continue to serve the Canberra community and will embark on her doctoral research at the Australian National University, in the School of Politics and International Relations.

Published resources

Lawder, Nicole: Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory website, <https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/members/tenth-assembly-members/brindabella/lawder-nicole>

Nicole Lawder, Wikipedia entry, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicole_Lawder

Looking out for the vulnerable, Jean, Peter, 6 July 2013

The moment: Nicole Lawder, Gorman, Ginger, 19 May 2016, <https://hercanberra.com.au/life/people/moment-nicole-lawder>

'Jeered, grabbed', MLA's abortion story, Bladen, Lucy, 5 August 2022

Brindabella Liberals MLA Nicole Lawder won't contest 2024 election, Fenwicke, Claire, 20 October 2023

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