

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4014

Edes, Nydia Ivy

(1901 - 1992)

Nationality Australian

Born 4 October, 1901, Kadina South Australia Australia

Died 26 June, 1992, Broken Hill New South Wales Australia

Occupation Councillor, Feminist

Summary

Nydia Edes was the first female Alderman on the Broken Hill City Council and a recipient of the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal who worked tirelessly throughout her life for the improvement of women's conditions.

Details

Nydia, the youngest of 8 children, was born in the mining town of Kadina in South Australia in 1901. Her father, Walter George Thomson, was a mining engineer. After his death in 1907, Nydia's mother Mary Louisa was left to raise her large family on her own.

At the age of 16, Nydia became secretary of the Moonta ALP Ladies' Committee, signalling the beginning of her long connection to the Australian Labor Party (ALP). She was also the secretary of the campaign committee for her cousin John Pedler, who became the local member of the South Australian State parliament. As mining in the Copper Triangle district in South Australia began to slow in the 1920s, Nydia's older siblings married and sought work in other towns. With her mother and older sister Sarah, Nydia moved to Broken Hill in 1926, joining other family members who had moved there looking for work.

Nydia was employed at Goodhart's department store and joined the Shop Assistants Union and the local branch of the Labor Party. She eventually became Mr Goodhart's assistant and was one of the principal buyers for the store. In 1931 she married Cecil Edes, a timberman who worked for the Zinc Corporation, and in 1933 gave birth to their daughter Margot.

The challenge of bringing up a child and maintaining a household did not prevent Nydia's continued involvement in politics. In May 1939, she helped form the Women's Auxiliary of the ALP in Broken Hill and remained a member for fifty years, serving intermittently as president, secretary and treasurer. Throughout her life, Nydia campaigned for women's rights, specifically equal pay for equal work, equal opportunity and legal equality. She was a regular contributor of letters and articles to the local press on the subject of issues concerning women. She strongly believed that women could and should contribute to local government, and wrote to the local paper that "it is only a simple matter of commonsense to have a woman actively participating in civic affairs". Accordingly, in 1962, Nydia ran for the council election as an ALP candidate and became the first female Alderman on the Broken Hill City Council. In 1968, following her disagreement with a caucus decision, Nydia tendered her resignation from the Labor party and ran successfully as a Labor Independent in the next election. She held her office as Alderman until 1974.

In addition to her political activity, Nydia was a tireless volunteer for numerous and diverse community organisations. In the depression years, Nydia worked for local charities providing food, clothing and healthcare to struggling families, and during World War Two she served for six years with the Broken Hill and District Hospital Red Cross Voluntary Service Division. In 1935, Nydia was made a Justice of the Peace. She was a founder of the first rural branch of the Women Justices' Association in Broken Hill and became its first president. Nydia was a member of the Housing Advisory Commission from 1950 until 1970 and was secretary of the Far West Children's Health Scheme. She was a member of the Board of Directors of the Broken Hill and District Hospital for 30 years, and was awarded Life membership in 1971. In recognition of her services to the community, she was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977.

In spite of her time consuming political and voluntary work, Nydia never let her commitments encroach upon family life. A traditional Christmas dinner was the only sacrifice that her daughter Margot White recalls, as Nydia's position on the Hospital Board involved visiting every patient in the hospital on Christmas morning.

Nydia died in Broken Hill on June 26, 1992.

This entry was prepared and written by Georgia Moodie.

Published resources

Book

Some Outstanding Women of Broken Hill and District, Camilleri, Jenny, 2002

People and Politics in Regional New South Wales, Hagan, J, 2006

Newspaper Article

Room for us, says woman councillor, 1971

Edited Book

Who's Who of Australian Women, Lofthouse, Andrea, 1982

Site Exhibition

Unbroken Spirit: Women in Broken Hill, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2009,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/bh/bh-home.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia

[\[Biographical cuttings on Nydia Edes, politician, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals\]](#)

Outback Archives, Broken Hill City Library

[Edes, Nydia](#)

Private Hands (These regards may not be readily available)

[Interview with Margot White](#)

[Papers of Nydia Edes](#)

Author Details

Georgia Moodie

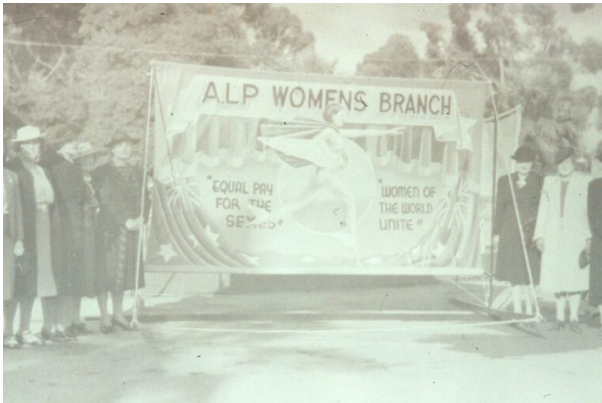
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Digital resources



Title: Maria Petkovich
Type: Image
Date: 3 May, 2023



Title: 12-ALP-Womens-Branch.jpg
Type: Image
Date: 3 May, 2023