

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE4845

Corbett, Joan Lorna

(1952 -)

Born 3 August, 1952, Montreal Canada

Occupation Academic, Public servant, Teacher, Trade union official

Summary

Joan Corbett began her career in Canberra as a mathematics teacher then worked as a union official with the ACT Teachers Federation. She was appointed the first Women's Officer of the Australian Teachers' Federation in 1986, then joined the Commonwealth Public Service specialising in policy development initially in the Department of Employment, Education and Training on youth support and women's employment including child care issues. Moving to the Department of Health and Ageing in 2003 she worked in the areas of Indigenous health and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. She left the Australian Public Service in 2011 and is currently an Associate Professor in Public Health at the University of Canberra.

Details

Joan Corbett was born in Montreal, Canada in 1952 and was educated at Turner Primary School and Canberra High School in the Australian Capital Territory and Marion High School in South Australia. She graduated with a Bachelor of Economics from the Australian National University in 1974 and was awarded a Graduate Diploma in Education from the Canberra College of Advanced Education (now the University of Canberra) in 1975.

From 1976 to 1981 Corbett worked as a mathematics teacher at Woden Valley High School and then Hawker College where she was also the teachers' representative on the College Board 1977-79 and coordinated a Women's Studies course. She was employed as the Schools Liaison Officer for the ACT Teachers Federation (1981-83) and then elected as General Secretary, ACT Teachers Federation (1983-86). In this position she advocated for better wages and working conditions for teachers and chaired the Sexism Committee which, among other things, sought to remove gender-specific references from the union rules. She was also involved in the ACT Trades and Labour Council campaign for recognition as a 'State' body and representation on the Australian Council of Trade Unions Executive.

Corbett was appointed the first Women's Officer to the Australian Teachers Federation in 1986 when 65% of the union's members were women. She worked on equal opportunity, campaigns for maternity and parental leave, provision of child care and protection from sexual harassment, and developed training for teachers to improve their awareness of gender issues in girls' education.

She joined the Commonwealth Public Service in 1989 initially in the Department of Employment, Education and Training in the Youth Bureau. In 1990 she returned to part-time study at the Australian National University and completed a Master of Public Policy in 1993. Her study was greatly assisted by a postgraduate scholarship offered by the Department for the year 1992. Her research project related to child care provision and participation by women in the labour market. It was published in the Public Policy series in 1994. She was a representative on the Board of Studies for the Graduate Program in Public Policy while undertaking her postgraduate degree.

Her only child, a son Will Stomps, was born in 1990. From 1992 she was a member of the Management Committee of the Black Mountain Community Pre School and Child Care Centre, holding the position of President in 1993-94.

In 1993 she was employed as an adviser to the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, the Hon. Kim Beazley, and then in September 1993 returned to the Department as Director of the Women's Policy section of the Economic Policy Analysis Division. This section was within the branch known as The Women's Bureau and along with other policy work it contributed to the analysis of women's employment in the Working Nation policy statement by the Labour government.

In 1994 she moved to the then Department of Social Security, which became Family and Community Services, focusing on sole parent pension, family assistance measures, child care services, and disability employment services. She moved to the Department of Health and Ageing in 2003 where she led the branch with responsibility for the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme until 2007. From 2008 she worked in the area of aged care briefly and then in the area of Indigenous health with responsibilities for planning of new services and capital works, child and maternal health programs, sexual health, and drug and alcohol programs. This included leading the roll out of Opal fuel to combat petrol sniffing.

She is currently an Associate Professor and Course Convenor in Public Health at the University of Canberra. She is also a Board Member of the Canberra-based Post and Ante Natal Depression Support and Information Inc. (PANDSI).

Published resources

Resource Section

Joan Corbett,
<http://theconversation.edu.au/profiles/joan-corbett-8519>

Site Exhibition

From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University

[Joan Corbett papers](#)

Author Details

Maggie Shapley

Created 7 December 2012

Last modified 25 February 2013