

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE4872

Randall, Nora

(1916 - 1999)

Born 23 May, 1916

Died 2 October, 1999

Occupation Volunteer

Summary

From her arrival in Canberra in 1947 till close to her death in 1999 Lady Nora Randall was an indefatigable worker for services and organisations which sought to make life easier for people, with a special focus on women, young families, and newcomers to Canberra. She was awarded an MBE in 1982 in recognition of her many and remarkably varied contributions to the development of the Canberra community.

Details

Lady Nora Randall (née Clyne) was born in Goulburn in 1916 into a family steeped in community involvement. Both her parents received awards for their work – her father an MBE for education, her mother a St George medal for her work in the CWA and Red Cross – and Randall maintained that tradition throughout her own life. Following schooling in several NSW cities, she moved to Sydney where she held several jobs including as a photographer at Taronga Park Zoo.

In 1945 Nora married Richard (later Sir Richard) Randall (1902-1982). He had joined the Commonwealth Treasury before the war but the lack of housing in Canberra meant that they could not move to the city till 1947 when a house became available. He went on to become Deputy Secretary of Treasury (1957-1966) and Secretary of Treasury (1966-1971).

When Nora Randall arrived in Canberra in 1947 it was a city-in-the-making, lacking many basic services. She threw herself into volunteer work and over the next five decades worked tirelessly to help develop the burgeoning community across an enormous range of issues.

Steeped in a family background of community involvement, Randall helped start one of the Territory's first pre-schools even before having any children of her own, saying 'I was looking ahead' (Stephenson, 1985, p.43). This led to her representing the school at the Nursery Kindergarten Society and she became the latter's delegate to the National Council of Women (ACT) in 1951. Later on she became the founding general administrator for a new Catholic high school, St Clare's College.

Thus began Randall's long involvement in the NCW (ACT), culminating in terms as Vice President (1955-1957) and President (1957-1960). Through those decades she led and was involved in a remarkable range of NCW projects and advocacy for services. For example, she worked on efforts to develop long term housing for the aged; creation of child guidance clinics; improvements in shopping hours; advocacy for social welfare including the establishment of the ACT Council of Social Services; and a survey of flat dwellers' views about design, noise and amenities which led to the Council being recognised in the ACT as an advisory body for housing. She viewed the Council's pioneering work on providing Canberra women with information on pap smears and early detection of cancer as a highlight of her presidency.

In the 1950s Nora Randall was also an active contributor to the Mothercraft Society of the ACT and the Emergency Housekeeper Service. She led the early National Heart Campaign and in doing so, launched a distinctive Canberra fundraising event – the Embassy Open Day – which not only raised funds but also firmed linkages between the embassy community and the capital. She was a foundation member and president of the Lantern Club which raised funds for blind people and, through the Red Cross, was active in their blood banks and Meals on Wheels programs. In 1969 Randall was one of eight Australian women community leaders selected to make a fact-finding tour of community services in Germany.

One organisation particularly close to Randall's heart was Marymead Children's Home (now Marymead Child and Family Centre), originally founded to provide residential accommodation for children and families in crisis. From organising an initial working bee in the kitchen to prepare meals for the children she moved swiftly to create a fundraising Marymead Auxiliary in 1965. After six very active years as its President she was appointed Patron for life. Under her leadership the Auxiliary introduced the first walkathon to Canberra; it became a major fundraising tool and has become part of the folklore of several generations of Canberrans.

For many years Randall was also a committed member of the Women's International Club (a social organisation for embassy wives and local women) and served as its president in the early 1970s. At the same time she was actively involved in the Pan Pacific and Southeast Asian Women's Association, serving on its executive in the 1970s including three years as president; and was later awarded life membership in recognition of her work.

Nora Randall was awarded an MBE in 1982 in recognition of her many and varied contributions to the community. She died in 1999.

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Newspaper Article

Lady Randall to be made a Lantern Club Life Member, 1969

Lady Randall: special focus on people, 1999

Wool trade led to the Treasury, 1982

Book

Capital Women: a History of the Work of the National Council of Women (ACT) in Canberra 1939-1979, Stephenson, Freda, 1985

Capital women : a history of the work of the National Council of Women (A.C.T.) in Canberra, 1939-1979, Stephenson, Freda, 1992

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>

Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html>

Author Details

Louise Moran

Created 14 January 2013

Last modified 16 April 2013

Digital resources



Title: Lady Nora Randall

Type: Image

Date: 3 May, 2023

