

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE4931

Macintosh, Laurel Jean

(1924 - 2022)

Born 29 April, 1924, Picton New South Wales Australia

Died 5 November, 2022, Brisbane Queensland Australia

Occupation Community activist, Ophthalmologist, Surgeon, Women's rights activist, Women's rights organiser

Summary

Dr Laurel Macintosh served for nearly 40 years as an ophthalmic surgeon in Brisbane hospitals, working all the while for women's rights and as a community activist. In her professional life, she chaired the Queensland Branch of the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists. Her community work took her to the presidency of both the National Council of Women of Queensland (1977-1979, 1994-1996) and the National Council of Women of Australia (1979-1982), and to membership of state, national and international committees with the capacity to influence government. An achievement of which she is proud is the winning of the case for late night shopping for Brisbane and Ipswich in Queensland's industrial court in December 1978.

Details

Laurel Macintosh was born on 29 April 1924 in country New South Wales, the daughter of C.H.V. Macintosh, a 5th-generation Australian. She was educated at Sydney Girls' High School and the University of Sydney, graduating in general medicine in 1946. She trained in ophthalmology at the Royal Brisbane Hospital 1947-1951, and then as a surgeon at the Royal Eye Hospital, London, 1951-1953. She entered private practice in Orange, NSW, 1954-1958, then moved to Brisbane where she became a visiting ophthalmologist with the Royal Children's Hospital and, later, with the Brisbane Repatriation Department, the Princess Alexandra Hospital, and the Narbethong School for the Visually Handicapped. She joined the Queensland Medical Women's Society and the Ophthalmology Society (later Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists) in 1958 and was made a Fellow of the College in 1995. She was also made an honorary life member of the Australian Medical Association in 1996, after 50 years in the profession, and of the Queensland Medical Women's Association in 2004.

Dr Macintosh joined the Quota Club, a service club for professional women, in Orange and then Brisbane. Her introduction to the National Council of Women came in 1960 when NCW Queensland asked Quota to find someone to take on the job of state convenor for women and employment, and Laurel was duly appointed (1960-1975). In 1964, she was recruited to serve as international secretary on Anne Hamilton's ANCW Board; she remembers those Board meetings as 'the most fun I [ever] had'. She took on the task of Australian convenor for women and employment from 1970 to 1973, and the ICW vice-convenorship from 1973 to 1979.

Dr Macintosh's work for NCW led her into broader leadership roles within the women's movement: president of the Status of Women Committee (Brisbane) 1973-1976; vice-president of the United Nations Association Australia (Queensland) 1975-1978; chairman of the Queensland International Women's Year Committee 1974-1976 and a member of the National UNAA IWY Committee, under the chairmanship of Ada Norris.

In 1977, Macintosh became president of NCW Queensland and, on completion of this term in 1979, president of NCWA. She was rare among NCWA presidents in also holding down a full-time job, and only survived the workload by taking months of long service leave to allow her to travel within and beyond Australia. She remembers as a significant achievement of her presidency the development of close relations with the National Councils of Women of Thailand and Fiji-both 'twinned' with NCWA.

The most memorable event of Macintosh's presidency was the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, held in Copenhagen in July 1980. She was one of 4 women from voluntary organisations who attended as official Australian government representatives-a role she found restrictive. Macintosh enjoyed good relations with politicians, state and federal, and with the federal Office of the Status of Women. When the Queensland government established an Advisory Council of Queensland Women 1975-1976, she was a founding member.

Dr Macintosh continued her involvement with Quota, holding the Queensland presidency from 1959 to 1961 and again from 1988 to 1989. She presided over the Queensland Branch of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists 1972-1973, acted as a federal councillor of the College 1972-1974, and, in 1995, became a Fellow of the College. She was twice elected president of the National Council of Women of Queensland-in 1977 for 2 years and again in 1994 for 4 years. As president of NCWQ, she was instrumental in obtaining late night shopping for Brisbane and Ipswich in December 1978, which involved appearing as an advocate in the industrial court where she encountered the opposition of unions and shop-owners alike. She also served on the Queensland Consumer Affairs Council.

From 1982 to 1991, Macintosh was ICW convenor for the Standing Committee for Women and Employment and she continued to serve as a consultant from 1991 to 1994. During her many years of the involvement with NCWA and the ICW, she attended triennial ICW conferences in Nairobi 1979, Seoul 1982, London 1984, Washington 1988, Bangkok 1991 and Paris 1994, as well as executive meetings in Brussels 1981 and Kiel 1983.

Dr Laurel Macintosh was awarded a Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977 and appointed to the Order of the British Empire in 1980 for her services to women. In 1984 she was made a life member of NCWQ and, in 1988, an honorary life vice-president of NCWA in recognition of her long and distinguished service to the organisation. In the same year (1988), she was appointed a dame in the Knights Hospitaller Order of St Lazarus, an international humanitarian organisation, and in 2001 was awarded an Australian Centenary Medal for service to the community as president of the National Council of Women in Queensland.

'All people should have the opportunity to develop what talents they have to choose the life they wish to lead while recognising the rights of others to choose differently. We need tolerance and understanding of each other.'

Events

1988 - 1989

Quota Club of Brisbane

1973 - 1976

UNAA Status of Women Committee (Brisbane)

1974 - 1976

Queensland UNAA International Women's Year Committee

1975 - 1976

Council of Queensland Women

1959 - 1961

Quota Club of Brisbane

1958 -

Queensland Medical Women's Society

1965 -

International Council of Women

1994 - 1998

Queensland Museum Advisory Committee on the Status of Women

Published resources

Site Exhibition

Stirrers with Style! Presidents of the National Council of Women of Australia and its predecessors, National Council of Women of Australia, 2013,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ncwa>

Book

The National Council of Women of Queensland: The Second Fifty years 1955 - 2005, Buckley, Daphne M., 2005

Edited Book

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

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[NCWA Papers 1984 - 2006](#)

John Oxley Library, Manuscripts and Business Records Collection

[7266 National Council of Women of Queensland Minute Books 1905-2004](#)

Private Hands (These regards may not be readily available)

[Interview with Laurel Macintosh](#)

Author Details

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Digital resources



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