

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE5525

Payne, Vivien Claire

(1927 - 2020)

Born 13 July, 1927, London Great Britain

Died 18 November, 2020, Perth Western Australia Australia

Occupation Lawyer, Solicitor

Summary

Vivien Payne was born and educated in London, graduating with a Bachelor of Laws from the University of London in 1948. She completed her articles with her father and was admitted as a solicitor in 1951. She practised in London until 1963, when she and her husband migrated to Perth, Australia. She became one of only a handful of women practising law in Perth at the time, and only the second to enter private practice. In 1982 she became founding President of the Women Lawyers of Western Australia Inc.

Perth based women barristers forging their careers in the 1970s and 80s, such as Val French and Antoinette Kennedy, have noted her support for them, especially through the provision of briefs.

Go to 'Details' below to read a reflective essay written about Vivien Payne for the Trailblazing Women and the Law Project.

Details

The following additional information was provided by Vivien Payne and is reproduced with permission in its entirety.

Vivien Claire Payne was born in London on 13 July 1927.

She graduated with a Bachelor of Laws from the University of London in 1948 and completed her articles over three years with her father.

She was admitted as a solicitor in London in 1951 and continued to practice in London until she left for Australia.

In 1963, with her husband Douglas, and their four children they moved to Perth, Western Australia, where Douglas had been invited to take up the position of visiting Professor of Law at the University of Western Australia's Law School. Vivien spent her first two years in Australia working at a well known Perth law firm, and in 1965 she opened her own practice, Vivien C Payne, practicing mainly in family and common law. She managed to balance the busy life of a wife and mother of four, with working full time as a practicing lawyer. During these years, in Perth there were only four or five female lawyers practicing of whom Vivien was the second one in private practice.

In her career, she did not experience discrimination on the basis of her sex although there were requirements, such as when appearing before the Summary Relief Court (now the Magistrates Court), to be granted a right of appearance, she was required to wear a hat, while the same was not required of male lawyers.

During the late 1970's as the number of women practicing law increased, Vivien and a number of fellow women lawyers began meeting and decided that a women lawyers association should be established, to promote the interests of women in law and women generally, as there were parallel bodies in the Eastern States. In 1982, the Women Lawyers of Western Australia Inc. was founded, and she was its first president. The State Government at once began sending bills of all kinds to the association for comment.

Vivien maintained an influential position on a number of Committees and Boards during her career. In June 1980 she was the first female commissioner to join the Legal Aid Commission and was a longstanding member of the Legal Aid Review Committee. She was on the Perth Zoo Board from 1988 to 1991 and was there during the opening of several new areas. She was a member of the Dental Board of Western Australia (now the Dental Board of Australia) for a year but resigned because of pressure of work.

Two of her children pursue careers in law, as do two of her grandchildren.

Vivien retired from full time practice in 1989.

Published resources

Journal Article

Why the women lawyers, Payne, Vivien, 1984

Site Exhibition

Australian Women Lawyers as Active Citizens, Trailblazing Women Lawyers Project Team, 2016,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/lawyers>

Author Details

Vivien Payne (with Nikki Henningham)

Created 27 January 2016

Last modified 4 August 2021