

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE5868

## McNiff, Francine Valerie

(1948 - 2015)

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**Born** 24 March, 1948

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**Died** 2 April, 2015

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**Occupation** Academic, Barrister, Lawyer, Magistrate, Solicitor

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### Summary

Francine McNiff was a major benefactor of the University of Melbourne, funding Chairs in Human Rights (Law School) and in Criminology (Arts) and a Scholarship Fund for doctoral researchers in medical jurisprudence.

McNiff also bequeathed a large sum to her alma mater, Monash University. It was the largest bequest the university had ever received from an alumnus. The donation established a Francine McNiff Chair in Criminal Jurisprudence and funded two PhD students from disadvantaged backgrounds annually, to study criminology.

### Details

Francine McNiff was educated at Star of the Sea College. She graduated B Juris, LLB from Monash University; then did graduate work at the University of Edinburgh (Diploma in Criminology).

She returned to teach in the Law School at Monash, from which she then graduated LLM by major thesis. She taught at Monash for some 10 years and was Sub-Dean Graduate Studies.

Francine was admitted to practice in 1980 and was a Consultant with Martin Bartfeld & Associates, Solicitors, while still teaching at Monash. She was then a Principal Legal Officer and sometime Acting Director of the Policy & Research Division of the Victorian Law Department. On 30 August 1983 she was appointed a Children's Court Magistrate – the first woman Judicial Officer in Victoria.

Francine came to the Bar in November 1987 and read with Joseph Gullaci. She practised for some 23 years, and was a member of the Bar Council in Susan Crennan's year as Chairman.

For the last many years illness prevented active practice. In 2010 she allowed her practising certificate to lapse, and in 2014 she transferred to the List of Retired Counsel. She passed away in 2015.

### Published resources

#### Site Exhibition

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

#### Author Details

Larissa Halonkin

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