

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: PR00216

Thoms, Patience Rosemary

(1915 - 2006)

Born 13 September, 1915, Sydney New South Wales Australia

Died 2 March, 2006, Brisbane Queensland Australia

Occupation Businesswoman, Journalist

Summary

Patience Rosemary Thoms was elected as the eighth president of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women at the Eleventh International Congress (1968) in London, England and held that position until 1971. She was the first International President from Australia, and also the first from the Southern Hemisphere. She had previously served as Australian President from 1960-1964. She was the Women's News Editor of *The Courier Mail* for twenty years from 1956.

Details

As President of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW), Pat Thoms made it a goal to visit as many affiliates as possible to facilitate two-way communication. During her previous twenty-two years of membership, she had held many positions of leadership in both Brisbane Professional Women (BPW) Australia and the IFBPW and was well qualified for leading the organisation, founded in 1930, into its fortieth year.

Although she lived 13,000 miles from International Headquarters in London, Australia's geographical location meant that she had to pass over or through many countries in order to get to Headquarters. She therefore made it a point to visit as many affiliates as possible on her way to and from Executive Committee meetings. Logging over 200,000 miles during her term of office, President Thoms visited members in twenty-nine countries. The trip that was both the longest in distance and shortest in duration covered 29,000 miles in fifteen days! She wrote a history of the first 25 years of the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women's clubs, 1947-1972.

On her retirement as the Women's News Editor of the *Courier Mail* in 1976 aged 60, she applied for admission to the Bachelor of Arts program in the School of Modern Asian Studies at Griffith University. She graduated in 1980. She worked part-time for the University as a public relations consultant from 1982 to 1986 before being elected to the University Council as a member of Convocation and an appointee of the Governor-in-Council.

In 1981 she became first chair of the new Brisbane College of Advanced Education Council. In 1988, she was elected deputy Chancellor of Griffith University and held the position until 1990. She was admitted to the degree of Doctor of the University in 1990. Griffith University awards the Patience Thoms Indigenous Australian (Honours/Postgraduate) Scholarship annually. The scholarships are designed to assist Indigenous students moving onto Honours and Graduate studies at the University.

Patience Thoms regarded herself as a feminist, "but not a radical one". In an interview with a female journalist in 1995, she recalled: "the changes over the years since 1946 when I first became associated with the business and professional women's organization are really quite extraordinary". "Today's feminists don't think it's changed enough, and it hasn't. There are many things that still need to be done."

Associated organisations:

- Member of the Queensland Film Board of Review (1974-1985)
- Member of Ethics Committee of the Australian Journalists' Association
- Member of the National Drug Advisory Council
- Member of the Council of Queensland Women

Published resources

Resource

History: 1968 - 1971 Patience R. Thoms, BPW International,
<http://www.bpw-international.org/about-bpw/about-bpw-history-vol2-1968-1971.htm#>

Patience Thoms OBE DUniv, Griffith University,
<http://www.griffith.edu.au/office-vice-chancellor/pdf/thoms-plaque.pdf>

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

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