

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: PR00483

Buchanan, Pamela Ann

(1937 - 1992)

Born	6 February, 1937, Perth Western Australia Australia
Died	31 March, 1992, Perth Western Australia Australia
Occupation	Aboriginal rights activist, Community advocate, Educationist, Parliamentarian

Summary

Pamela Buchanan was a parliamentarian who represented the Australian Labor Party in the Pilbara region of Western Australia from 1983 until 1992.

Details

Pamela Anne Slocombe was born in Perth in 1937 to Walter Scott Slocombe, musician, and Doris May Brittain. She was educated at Scarborough Primary School, Perth Girls High School, and later at Perth Senior Technical College. In 1957 she married George Maitland Buchanan, and later had two daughters.

From 1967 to 1976, Buchanan worked as a pre-school administrator at Roebourne, Western Australia, and during this time ran two kindergartens for indigenous children. She was also in charge of the Aboriginal Adult Education centre. Later she worked as senior personnel secretary at Cliffs Robe River Iron Associates, and then as electorate assistant to Peter Dowding (Member of the Legislative Council) at the Karratha office. Buchanan had joined the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in 1976, and entered Parliament in 1983 when she was elected for the seat of Pilbara with a swing of 18%. She was the first woman to win Pilbara, which was considered a 'tough' seat in a largely pastoral and mining electorate.

During her parliamentary career Pamela Buchanan demonstrated a strong commitment to equal opportunity, and had a particular empathy for the unique problems faced by Australia's indigenous population. She had also personally experienced discrimination in the workplace (denied a promotion because she was a woman) and vigorously supported the Equal Opportunity Bill in 1984. She also fought to arrest the spiralling cost of goods in her isolated northern electorate, which was largely a problem of transport costs.

Buchanan was also government whip from 1986-1990. She resigned from the ALP in 1990 after losing her Cabinet position in a ministerial reshuffle, standing then as an Independent. Ill health forced Buchanan to retire from Parliament in early 1992, around a month before her death in March 1992.

Published resources

Book

We Hold Up Half the Sky: The Voices of Western Australian ALP Women in Parliament, Watson, Judyth [ed.], 1994

Pam Buchanan: Her Story, Weightman, Llyrus, 1995

Book Section

Making a Difference: Women in the West Australian Parliament 1921-1999, Black, David and Phillips, Harry, 2000

Edited Book

Biographical Register of Members of the Parliament of Western Australia, Vol. 2, 1930-1990, Black, David and Bolton, Geoffrey, 1990

Site Exhibition

The Women's Pages: Australian Women and Journalism since 1850, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2008,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/cal/cal-home.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

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