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OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**



Hon Dr Judyth Watson MLA

Member for Canning

8 February 1986–4 February 1989

Member for Kenwick

4 February 1989–14 December 1996

Vale

Biographical Information: Hon Dr Judyth Watson

Parliamentary Service

Party	Joined Australian Labor Party 1976 Member, Australian Labor Party 1986-1996
Date Elected	8 February 1986
Electorates	MLA Canning 8 February 1986–4 February 1989 (electorate abolished in redistribution); Kenwick 4 February 1989–14 December 1996 (electorate abolished in redistribution) Contested Southern River 14 December 1996
Office	Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, and Assisting the Minister for Women’s Interests 5 February 1991–27 February 1991 Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, Seniors and Women’s Interests (assisted the Minister until 7 September 1992) 27 February 1991–16 February 1993 Shadow Minister for Disability Services, Consumer Affairs (until 7 February 1994), Women’s Interests, and Housing (from 7 February 1994) 17 February 1993–18 October 1994; for Women’s Interests, Disability Services, Children’s Policy, and Seniors 18 October 1994–15 January 1997
Committees	Member, Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee from June 1986 to 18 May 1988 Member, Joint House Committee from March 1989 to 19 March 1991 Chair, Select Committee on Reproductive Technology Working Party’s Report from 15 November 1987 to 15 December 1988; and on National HIV/AIDS Strategy White Paper from 28 September 1989 to 28 June 1990 Member, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association delegation to Zimbabwe from February to March 1990
Year Resigned	1996

Personal Information

Birth date	8 March 1940
Place of birth	Burton-on-Trent, England, United Kingdom
Arrived in WA	WA 17 January 1949
Parents	Daughter of Cecil Watson, railway train controller and clerk, and Hylde Rowland, shop assistant
Education	Educated State Schools, Perth Modern School, 1953–1955 Trained for nursing, Royal Perth Hospital, 1957–1960

King George VI Hospital, 1961–1962 (for mid-wife registration)
College of Nursing, Australia (for hospital nursing and ward administration)
University of Edinburgh 1971–1973—Certificate in Nursing Education
University of Western Australia—BSc (major in Anthropology) 1976, Hons (first class), 1977, PhD 1982
Won faculty prize for Anthropology, 1976
Received Commonwealth Post-Graduate Research Award, 1978–1981

Occupation Nurse, university tutor and ministerial adviser

Employment Nursing assistant, St Anne’s Hospital until old enough to commence training

Held various clinical nursing positions in WA and UK

On return from Scotland, nurse teacher at Royal Perth Hospital School of Nursing, 1973–1974, Community Health Services and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital to 1977

Convenor, Health Care Consumers Association 1977

PhD student and part-time tutor, Department of Anthropology, University of Western Australia, 1978–1981

Health and safety research officer, Hospital Service and Miscellaneous Workers’ Union, 1982–1983

Adviser to Minister for Industrial Relations on Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Legislation, 1983–1985

After leaving Parliament, three contracts with Hepatitis Council

Retired from paid work, April 2008

Honours Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) awarded in the Queen's Birthday 2019 Honours List, 10 June 2019, for service to the community of Western Australia, and to social justice

Background Co-founder, Member Review Committee Legal Aid Commission, 1982–1983

Represented WA on Interim National Health and Safety Commission 1983 and non-statutory committee, 1984–1985

Member, Research Standing Committee on National Occupational and Health Safety Commission from 1985

Member, advisory committees in Occupational Health and Safety and Health Sciences at Curtin University

Justice of the Peace

Head, Council of Official Visitors under Mental Health Act until April 2008

Presented papers at conferences and contributed numerous articles in union, company and health professional publications with occasional lectures at all tertiary institutions in WA

Member, family planning and agencies dealing with violence against women, active in numerous organisations to assist refugees

Volunteer with refugees as board member of various organisations

Co-founder and former board member, The Humanitarian Group (formerly CASE for Refugees), 2002

Board member, Refugee Council of Australia, 2009–2013

Board member, Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees

Member, People's Panel, Western Australian Museum

Chair, Department of Health Human Research Ethics Committee

Volunteer, literacy and numeracy at local primary school

References

Black, D and Bolton, G eds, Biographical Register of Members of the Parliament of Western Australia: volume two 1930-2010, Western Australian Parliamentary History Project, Perth, WA, 2011, p. 272.

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Making a Difference, p. 144–149.



**MAKING A DIFFERENCE—A FRONTIER
OF FIRSTS**

**WOMEN IN THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
PARLIAMENT 1921–2012**

David Black
and
Harry Phillips

**Parliamentary History Project
Parliament of Western Australia
2012**

JUDYTH WATSON



MLA Canning 8 February 1986–4 February 1989; Kenwick 4 February 1989–14 December 1996 (ALP). Minister of State 5 February 1991–16 February 1993. Shadow Minister 1993–1996. Member Joint House Committee 1989–1991; Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee 1986–1988. Chairperson Select Committee on the Reproductive Technology Working Party's Report 1988; Select Committee on the National HIV/AIDS Strategy White Paper 1989–1990.

Judyth Watson entered the Legislative Assembly following the 1986 election as member for Canning. During her three terms as an MP and two years as a minister, Judyth won a reputation for serving and furthering the needs of the less privileged in the community. An active parliamentarian who spoke on many issues, her speeches were invariably the product of exemplary research involving a scrutiny of relevant reports and all known literature on each topic, and with the statistical soundness of assertions being carefully evaluated. The range of her ministries provides a brief summary of many of the areas to which she was devoted, including Aboriginal Affairs, Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, Women's Interests and Seniors. A further depiction of the causes for which she strived was illustrated in her shadow portfolios, which, in addition to Women's Interests, encompassed Disability Services, Children's Policy and Consumer Affairs. Almost immediately upon election to Parliament, she was elected to the important Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee and in the five years until her elevation to the ministry in the Lawrence Government she chaired two select committees. In the process, she made history by becoming the first woman to chair a select committee in the Western Australian Parliament when she was appointed to that role for the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Reproductive Technology Working Party's Report (her other committee inquired into the National HIV/AIDS Strategy White Paper).

She was born on 8 March 1940 at Burton-on-Trent in the United Kingdom, daughter of Cecil Watson, a railway train controller and clerk, and his wife, Hylda. The family arrived in Western Australia on 17 January 1949 and, after attending state primary schools, Judyth went to Perth Modern School, entry to which was by scholarship in that era. After training as a nurse at

Royal Perth Hospital, she obtained further nursing certificates in midwifery, hospital administration and education qualifications outside the state before working from the mid 1970s as a teacher of nurses and with Community Health Services. In 1977, she completed a Bachelor of Science with first class honours in Anthropology at the University of Western Australia, winning the faculty prize along the way. Subsequently, she received a Commonwealth postgraduate research award enabling her to complete a PhD at the same university in 1982 writing her doctoral thesis on workers' compensation in Western Australia. In fact, Judyth shares with Carmen Lawrence (q.v.) the distinction of being the first woman with a doctorate to be elected to the Western Australian Parliament.

Judyth's research with injured workers led to her appointment as the first full-time occupational health and safety officer at the Federated Miscellaneous Workers Union before she became an advisor to the Minister for Labour when the Burke Labor Party won government in 1983. At that time, the federal Labor government, with Bob Hawke as the Prime Minister, also appointed her as one of two representatives of the states to the tripartite steering committee to develop a national occupational health and safety policy. Judyth then became a member of the Interim National Occupational Health and Safety Commission, and Acts to establish such commissions were soon passed at both the state and federal tiers of government. It was a clear case of her research and commitment having an impact on Labor's legislation and over the years she has presented papers at numerous conferences and contributed articles to various union, company and professional publications.

In 1976, Judyth first joined the Australian Labor Party following the 'sacking' of the Whitlam Labor Government. The following year she became a delegate to the Curtin Electorate division, first from the University of Western Australia and then from the Cottesloe branch. Although she was at various times a delegate to all party forums with either branch or union status, Judyth's ALP credentials were principally with policy development. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Judyth was an active member of ALP policy committees to write the industrial relations and health platforms preparing Labor for government. Subsequent policy work was for social and community development as well as the status of women. After representing Canning for three years in the Legislative Assembly, she transferred to the new seat of Kenwick in 1989 but when this was abolished in a further redistribution prior to the 1996 election, she failed narrowly to win the new seat of Southern River. Subsequently, she remained in the Southern River branch before transferring before the turn of the century to Fremantle.

Near the completion of her days as a parliamentarian, Judyth expressed disappointment that insufficient awareness and attention was being given to domestic violence, stalking and the safety of women in public places, and she expressed a sense of exasperation with the approach to these issues by the Court-Cowan Coalition governments. Here again, she was able to demonstrate her concerns with evidence from research in Australia and beyond.¹ She always took a keen interest in women's affairs with a special focus on equal opportunity and anti-discrimination and was particularly inspired by an investigation of the record of May Holman (q.v.) who was the Australian delegate at the conference of the League of Nations in 1930.² In similar fashion, Judyth

¹ *WAPD(LA)*, 30 March 1995, p. 453

² For bibliographical details of the book Judyth edited including May Holman's letters and articles from her travels in Europe see Footnote 2 in the article on May Holman.

herself became a keen advocate of the work of the United Nations particularly its concern with human rights, including many women's and children's issues, and peace.

In 1995, she attended the United Nations conference on women in Beijing. On returning from the conference, she asked a series of questions on notice about the number of women serving on the various government boards and committees and the number of recent appointments of women in various government departments in Western Australia. Several years earlier, with Labor in government in May 1988, Judyth had devoted one of her Address-in-Reply debate speeches to an attempt to recognise the valuable and usually unrecognised contribution of women fulfilling duties in their households. As she stated:

One way of approaching the issue of housework in order to understand it is to see it as any other kind of work except, of course, it is not paid. If we analyse housework as work, we can say that work has five properties. It requires the expenditure of energy; it permits the contribution to the production of goods or services; it defines patterns of social interaction; it provides social status for the worker; and in all cases except this one, it brings in money. But the dominant value system of our kind of society gives some kind of prestige to masculine rather than to feminine roles and occupations.³

On the theme of discrimination, in recognition of the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Judyth spoke in Parliament in 1995 of the need to consider amending the Australian Flags Act to recognise the Aboriginal flag as 'a most appropriate symbol of the acceptance of Aboriginal people'.⁴ Arising from reports that Aboriginal people increasingly were referring to Australia Day on 26 January as 'Invasion Day', Judyth told the House she considered it 'most insensitive' to celebrate Australia Day on 26 January, while she was also prepared 'as a supporter of affirmative action for women' to support the idea of 'dedicated seats in the Federal Parliament for Aboriginal people'.⁵ On another occasion, she proposed an alteration to Parliament's opening prayers to be more inclusive of other religious beliefs and in the latter stages of her parliamentary career she became closely identified with the Right to Die Bill originally introduced into the Legislative Assembly by former Labor and opposition leader, Ian Taylor (who had then resigned from State Parliament early in 1996 to contest the federal seat of Kalgoorlie). Judyth assumed the leadership role of the 'conscience Bill', which had the support of those who favoured more comprehensive voluntary euthanasia legislation but was not given a third reading and did not proceed to the Legislative Council. Several years previous in an Address-in-Reply debate, Judyth had optimistically predicted that if there was sufficient debate and education, a form of euthanasia Bill would receive bipartisan support.⁶

As indicated in her 'Reflections', Judyth after leaving Parliament remained firmly committed to encouraging more women to be elected to Parliament. In June 1995, paralleling a similar motion moved by Cheryl Davenport (q.v.) in the Legislative Council, she unsuccessfully moved for the establishment of a joint committee to inquire into the extent of and the reasons for the impediments to women standing for Parliaments and potential strategies, including modifying parliamentary procedures, which could be utilised to redress the balance.⁷ The suggested

³ *WAPD(LA)*, 24 May 1988, p. 315.

⁴ *WAPD(LA)*, 28 March 1995, p. 155.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *WAPD(LA)*, 3 May 1990, p. 169.

⁷ *WAPD(LA)*, 21 June 1995, pp. 5600ff.

presentation of the final report by 12 March 1996 was to coincide with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the election of Edith Cowan (q.v.). In Judyth's view, a report of this nature would have been an invaluable contribution to the literature on women in Parliament and, importantly, it would have provided research that was applicable to the Western Australian setting.

Earlier in 1990 she had organised a cross-party women's network for Amnesty International. 'Urgent Action' notices were sent to her from Amnesty about the plight of women killed, tortured, imprisoned and disappeared because of their political beliefs or actions. She distributed the information to every female member with the aim of sending letters from women parliamentarians to heads of government and others in repressive regimes. It was judged as a very gratifying way to work cooperatively with women in other political parties. Indeed, this action was part of Judyth's legacy making a significant contribution as a role model for women in Parliament. It was a role characterised by a thoroughness of scholarship and an outlook concerned with the community good and those less privileged in society.

Reflections by the Member on Her Parliamentary Career

(These Reflections were written in 1999.)

As this book is to be part of the suffrage celebrations, and as I am a feminist I have chosen to focus on some of the work I did with and on behalf of women.

I need to start by admitting that sitting in the Parliament was the one aspect of this otherwise fantastic job with which I was never at ease. I thought a lot about this paradox during the time and since. I usually found speaking there daunting. And I always dreaded that call to improvise a speech on things of which I knew nothing. I felt I could only do justice to an issue if I were properly prepared.

Parliaments are not representative of the community, the most glaring deficiency being gender imbalance. My view that the working environment of Parliament is most woman-unfriendly is shared by many men as well as women. Sitting times and hours, as well as traditions, preclude participation in intelligent and rational debate. Styles of adversarial behaviour and confrontation have been developed as an art form. On most days angry outbursts, petty points of order and discourtesies not seen or tolerated elsewhere, are displayed. Dismissive scorn, patronising comment and sexism have been endured by most women members. The structure, traditions and ethos of the WA Parliament remain masculine and resistant to change, or even to review.

There are no issues that cannot be addressed by a woman. As a woman member one does not, and could not, deal exclusively with women's issues. But, in my view, women have a duty to bring our perspective, style and experience to our work; to policy development, to decision making and to working with individuals and communities. This will serve men as well as women and children better. There is no point in allowing ourselves to be seduced by what is an essentially male agenda, nor in adopting masculinised behaviours. The 'feminisation' of politics as described by Rod Cameron in the late 80s found a resonance with many of us. It means much more than increasing the number of women in Parliaments, but more broadly characterises a different approach to politics. Australians, he found, were/are disillusioned and cynical about political process and politicians. They want a different style of leadership, an embrace of, and adherence to, new values

and new styles. According to Cameron, strong leaders, whether men or women, will demonstrate the quiet strength of their convictions and be intelligent, honest and sensible. Masculine aggression and confrontation as leadership styles will have to make way for feminised politics.

In June 1995, I moved in the Assembly that a select committee of both Houses be appointed to identify impediments to women standing for Parliament and to assess how Parliament itself might be a hindrance to women. The intention of the motion was to inquire into Parliament as a working environment for all women who work there. Had the motion been fully debated and the committee established, we would have explored the motivations of women who aspire to a parliamentary career.

My own parliamentary life started by chance with a series of opportunities which unfolded in ways I could capture. During the course of my doctoral research with injured workers, I began advocating within the Labor Party for reforms to occupational health and safety laws. It was one of the causes about which I was passionate. To cut a long story short, I became adviser in this field to the Labor state government in 1983 and had the remarkable experience of translating party platform into government policy, and in turn preparing that policy for legislation. It was suggested that I seek endorsement for the State Parliament. After much thought I sought pre-selection for Canning, a safe Labor seat, won in 1986. The wonderful thing was that I was then able to participate in the debates which delivered the Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Amendment Act 1987. It was a privilege to be able to make these contributions to the working lives of WA men and women.

Much of my work with and on behalf of women was about dealing with the consequences of current or past violence. The experiences of women who had been battered and/or raped were told to me time and again. Participation at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 brought me into direct contact with women who had survived horrendous violence in war or as refugees. For these reasons and more, I have been committed to using information from stories of violence told in the first person to develop appropriate policy and law. I remain disbelieving when told that the playing of violent video games has no effect on shaping behaviour. As a result of my work against violence, I also heard from men who as children or as prisoners had been subjected to institutionalised rape and humiliations in orphanages and gaols.

Apart from formal announcements of decisions or commitments, or challenging the Coalition, there were opportunities to engage the community about the issues. For instance, spurred on by a spate of murders in 1994, I planned and organised a phone-in to gauge police responses to calls. Working with a team of volunteers we took over 200 calls in one day. The report I wrote saw the government respond with improved policy directions. Then the families and friends of a number of women and children who had been murdered contributed patches to a quilt to remember and honour them. An electorate crafts group sewed the quilt together and it still travels to appropriate meetings, churches and community functions. In the same vein, I organised a very gratifying collection of specified goods and toiletries for women in Bosnia. The response was overwhelming, not only because of the huge amount collected, but also because the donors who were Jewish, Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, blind, unemployed, Muslim, Catholic, Latter Day Saints, old, of primary school age and so on crossed boundaries of difference in the most generously open-hearted way. These were all tremendous ways in which to make a contribution to and with the community.

There are many memories associated with women which constitute high points, including two amazing celebrations. One was at the end of the struggle for the ordination of women priests in the Anglican Church and joining the service of ordination in 1992; and in the same year an invitation to an Aboriginal women's desert meeting where over 700 women transacted secret and sacred business. Each of them was historic for all involved and the importance will stay with me always. The lowest point without doubt was the demise of the Women's Information and Referral Exchange. The circumstances caused a great deal of heartache to many of us.

One of the differences I tried to make over five years or so was to enlarge opportunities for girls in my electorate by encouraging them to study science and math subjects in upper school. I set up a mini scholarship scheme providing money towards books for girls in year 11. There were sadly only about eight girls between the two schools each year. Each year, the girls and their teachers were invited to three or so morning teas at Parliament House for a talk and discussion led by young women in science-related fields. It was wonderful to hear the information and questions fielded between them and such role models as an optometrist, veterinary surgeon, Antarctic researcher, general practitioner, marine biologist and others. It was even better to meet up with a few of them as young women and to learn that these sessions had enhanced education and career opportunities for some of them.

Many of us have had ongoing commitments to causes and think that our experiences should be able to bring a different dimension to debate and decision making. Mary Robinson is often quoted: 'the hand that rocks the cradle can rock the system'. Increasingly, girls and young women see politics as a legitimate career option and are structuring their education and work decisions accordingly. Despite my reservations and my perceptions of the Parliament and its processes, I think women who are prepared to work on issues important to the community are well able to make a difference. Wanting to make a difference is, I believe, the major motivating factor in the decision to go into politics.

I remain committed to encouraging women to be elected and I believe that once the 'critical mass' of 35 per cent is achieved, a parliamentary career will be much easier for individual women. As an active member of Emily's List, a political and financial support network for Labor women candidates who are committed to enhance the status of women and advocate for choice, child care and all matters of equity and participation, I will continue to work towards gender and minority balance in representative politics. In the end, it will benefit the institutions as well as the community.

(These Reflections were written in 2012.)

As I write this addendum it is 15 years since I left the Parliament and I remain madly interested in the politics of the day and the future. Some gives me joy and some makes me despair.

In the 2000 volume, I paid much attention to the status of women especially, and if I were in the House now, domestic violence, the prevalence of which remains a dreadful indictment, would still occupy me. It was heartening to read that the new Victoria Police Chief Commissioner called it a crime that will be a priority for his leadership.

There are thankfully more women and women leaders in Australian Parliaments; however, this has not prevented the widening of the gender pay gap: and while women are abundantly represented on the boards of not-for-profit agencies, there remains ambivalence, if not hostility, to our representation on boards in the business sector—for which members are paid. In this state the number of women public sector chiefs has diminished. Avenues for the promotion of women in the public and private sector are limited by not only choice but also the prohibitive costs of child care. It seems that adversary behaviour has continued and from across Australia the same ‘dismissive scorn, patronising comment and sexism’ towards women that I noted in 2000 continues in Parliaments and would not be tolerated in any other workplace. In my view, it is a good thing too that women in WA now have access to safe and legal abortion. But much remains to do to improve the status of women.

One of the best recent developments that I like to think I had a hand in promoting is the appointment of a children’s commissioner: how refreshing to have children’s rights explained, developed and promoted. In particular, I am quite taken with the appointment of a Thinker in Residence by the commissioner. Imagine how Parliament and the people of WA would profit from the legislature appointing a thinker in residence; for example, a musician, ethicist, scientist, artist or anthropologist, for, say, a three to four-month period each year, and this is an idea that I would promote.

My personal and political motivation has always been to try to advance human rights and social and legal justice through advocacy and that has continued to occupy me. I spoke several times on mental health and illness, so welcomed a five-year term to work in this area heading up the Council of Official Visitors, which has a statutory brief to protect the rights of involuntary patients. Services, resources and conditions for this most vulnerable population leave much to be desired and any advance that can promote the social and legal rights of those with mental illness must be welcomed.

For two years I was Minister for Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs and met many individuals and communities of refugees: there were several refugee families in my electorate and I was always impressed by their stories and their fortitude. I wrote of the generous collections we organised from my electorate office for the women refugees of Bosnia, their stories horrifying everyone who listened.

Since 2000, I have volunteered with refugee communities, especially with those who arrived by boat and who are damned by politicians and the media and condemned by part of the community who think border protection more important than the human rights of asylum seekers. It has been hard but we have seen the best as well as the worst in people. The worst behaviours are born in prejudice, racism and Islamophobia: disappointingly these views have not been challenged by political leaders or by facts. The best comes from the commitment and passion of other volunteers and supporters, but most of all from the refugee men, women and children.

I co-founded two local agencies; CARAD (Coalition for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees) and, two years later, CASE for Refugees, a community legal service. At the moment, I again sit on the board of CARAD and also on the board of the Refugee Council of Australia.

The client groups of CARAD and CASE are mainly, but not only, individuals and families who arrived here as, in the latest jargon, ‘irregular maritime arrivals’ or ‘IMAs’ and while in

immigration detention centres are referred to by number. Of course, I could say a lot about the journey from leaving their home and family to settlement, but I want here to pay tribute to the resilience of refugees, concern for family and a safe future and making the best of their situation in the midst of unimaginable grief and loss and sometimes the consequences of torture. When I have asked Afghan refugees what the ‘best thing’ is about Australia, the men say that they are ‘safe’, whereas the women tell me ‘the tap’. Later the ‘best thing’ is the joy of becoming citizens and being able to vote, usually for the first time in their life. All politicians, state and federal, should respect this serious commitment to citizenship and do what they can to inform their constituencies about the reasons we should offer protection.

I am sure that some would like to know that I—remember I am a feminist—have accepted as a compliment from some of the men I have met that ‘you are as good as a man’.



PARLIAMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

INAUGURAL SPEECH



Dr Judyth Watson, MLA

(Member for Canning)

Legislative Assembly

Address-in-Reply: Fourth Day

Tuesday, 17 June 1986

Reprinted from Hansard

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 17 June 1986

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY: FOURTH DAY

Motion

DR WATSON (Canning) [3.48 p.m.]: It is my pleasure and also my privilege to represent the people of Canning in this House and to join the Government at the beginning of what promises to be a very long term in office which will see many more fine achievements.

In Canning few people are employers, self-employed or professionals, and few have a tertiary education. Most post-school qualifications are associated with trades. The electors are, on the whole, working people who may or may not be employed. Those men and women who do have work are predominantly in trades, services and labouring occupations. Whether in employment or not, incomes are low.

There is increasing evidence of the multicultural nature of Australian life, and while a large proportion of the constituents of Canning originated in Britain, migrants from Indian Ocean islands, South-East Asian and South American countries, for instance, now are settling in the suburbs of Canning.

As with other communities an increasingly larger proportion is becoming older. However, spread throughout the electorate is a higher-than-average population of families with four or more children under the age of 16 years. In 1981, 31 per cent of our population was less than 15 years of age.

Canning has the two largest Homeswest housing areas, many of the occupiers being families headed by women. Children are often a significant economic burden, and those families in which the head is unemployed, especially where that head is a woman, are likely to be abjectly poor.

Changes in the economic and industrial sectors have produced large and rapid changes in social and family relations throughout Australia. Different Government departments are charged with trying to do the kinds of things that families used to do, and people who live in the electorate of Canning and who are without family support and other resources are often reliant on numerous, rather impersonal agencies.

I now want to set this picture in the context of wider Australia. Australian social structure is one in which enduring inequalities are related to social class origins, gender, ethnic background, and disability. Whole categories of people are overrepresented among the poor and the unemployed, and in health and welfare organisations and services, and underrepresented in higher education and decision-making.

In 1978 it was calculated that five per cent of Australians owned more wealth than the other 95 per cent put together. In 1981–82, 10 per cent of males earned 24.5 per cent of the country's income, and 40 per cent earned 14.6 per cent of that income.

However, ideologies associated with a classless Australia persist. A recent Western Australian Council of Social Services report reveals that almost half the people who are poor here are children. This is because 40 per cent of married couples with more than four children are poor, and 82 per cent of single parents with three or more children are poor. I have already said that we have a high average population of children in the Canning electorate.

Professor Henderson noted: "Poverty is not only a condition of economic insufficiency, it is also social and political exclusion"; that is, absence of wealth and low income are reinforced by unequal health standards, by employment conditions and prospects, and by inadequate access to key pieces of information.

Such inequality is also reflected in inequalities of power between classes and sexes, and between providers and users of services, and between employees. These relationships are a pervasive aspect of our society, in which things are done for, and to, and at those who are in the more subordinate position, and not with them.

Inequalities are sustained and transmitted in complex ways across generations, so if we are to build an optimistic future for our children and for their children, some attention must be paid to certain aspects of this structure.

The Australian Labor Party is committed to a more just society through reforming the institutions and values that shape it. Indeed, the Australian Labor Party, as with other social democratic parties, distinguishes itself from conservative parties by its ideological and policy commitment to redressing inequalities. Such commitments are underlined by a philosophy of fairness and equity inherent in those policies.

Committed Labor voters have very high expectations of what a Labor Government will and should do. The party has a history of and a commitment to participatory decision-making in its own structure. The practical importance of these processes has been learned.

Reprinted from Hansard

Two of the policy areas which I contend make a difference between Labor and Liberal Administrations are the ways that industrial relations and community services are approached. These matters are significant ones for people resident in the Canning electorate. Working class people, employed or unemployed, hold hopes that their experience of inequality will be redressed.

But a Labor Government cannot be a force for justice if paternalism or authoritarianism towards many diverse groups such as low income people, non-English speakers, women and disabled people, for instance, is its motivation, for these are imposing measures that they have come to expect.

In a truly democratic organisation, whether it be a political party, a workplace, or Government agency, consultative decision-making will embrace not only policy formulation, but consideration of options and timetables for implementation. Participants should be included in the setting of objectives for the plan of implementation, and should assist in its monitoring and evaluation. At all stages, access to information is crucial for all parties.

I turn now to two participatory programmes in those key areas of industrial relations and community services; one to do with involving workers and their employers in making their working environment safe; the other to do with inducing well-being and autonomy within neighbourhoods as a preventive welfare measure.

Participation by workers is a prerequisite for careful decision-making procedures about workplace health and safety. Most hazards do not require high levels of expenditure for their reduction, but rather an evaluation of workplace organisation. This entails encouraging workers to identify hazards and consulting them, especially about change. It entails setting up mechanisms for their involvement in decision-making. An informed and participatory work force may be the best safeguard against injury and disease.

The promotion of health and safety at work and the prevention of injury and disease are appropriate and concrete issues in which workers should participate, for they bear the risks of unsafe working environments.

The tradition of workers' participation in Scandinavia and the benefits accruing to all parties is widely acknowledged. The principle is upheld in Swedish and Norwegian working environment legislation where workers' representatives have been granted extensive rights to information, to investigate, to participate in planning, and to be trained.

Almost all EEC countries, including Britain, have legislated for workers' participation at plant level, though a variety of mechanisms for this exist, as well as a variety of powers and rights.

In all Australian States except Queensland, the Northern Territory, and Western Australia, there is some form of statutory provision for the involvement of workers in the creation and maintenance of safe working environments.

During its last term the Government circulated its policy on occupational health and safety, inviting submissions in response. We are now in the fortunate position of being able to elaborate on the advantages of experiences of other countries and other Australian States, and of being able to avoid various problems. We also now know through the submissions and through continuing consultations what may and may not be appropriate for Western Australian workplaces.

Our local experience with progressive employers also confirms the findings of British and Canadian researchers that the single most effective factor in reducing workplace hazards and consequent injuries and harmful exposure is the participation of workers with managements in making environments safe. Joint management-worker health and safety committees complemented by workplace health and safety representatives will play a major role in achieving the key objective—that of prevention of injuries and compensation claims, rather than a *post facto* response to them.

Secondly, we can look to two measurable dimensions of the quality of life that we experience. One is to do with income and its security, and the material things that flow from it; the other is to do with self-esteem which is often linked to these material standards. On page 17 of the recent *Community Services Review* the author argues that “those conditions in our community which promote a sense of self esteem or self regard promote health and well-being. In contrast, those conditions which reduce a person's self regard hazard their health, not only in a mental, but also in a physical sense.”

The theme through the submissions, evidence, and hearings in the welfare review was that welfare policies and practices need to enhance well-being rather than to solve problems. No-one wants to be defined as a welfare recipient. People say they want to define their own needs, make their own decisions, and have locally-based services. They want these services to be preventive, accessible, non-coercive, and locally based, rather than reactive and centralised with limited access.

There are severe limits on what a State Government can do to reduce poverty, given the constraints of centralised taxation and social security systems. Welfare services themselves have not in any case reversed poverty; jobs and housing can.

In its first term of office the Burke Government achieved tremendous gains in jobs and housing programmes. More than 72 000 jobs were created, and over 6 000 units of public housing were established, and innovative schemes established to free-up the private housing market to low income earners. These are only two of the many measures taken to extend the distribution of basic material needs and to build a more just Western Australia. Some aspects of the powerlessness that accompanies the consequences of having a low income can be alleviated.

Reprinted from Hansard

I want to briefly describe a joint Commonwealth–State funded venture in Langford—the community house. It is a marvellous example of a locally based preventive service in which its users define their needs and make their own decisions about meeting those needs and those of their neighbourhood. One-half of the house is a child-care centre, the other functions as a meeting place with child-care facilities and a resource centre. A steering committee was formed to get some background work done before the house was built and occupied and a management committee of local people has now been elected.

Local people have interviewed and appointed the staff they want. They do and will decide who can use the house. So far a women’s learning centre and English classes are held regularly, nutrition and budget discussions take place, a public meeting to try to attract pharmacists to the area was held, and gardening busy bees have been held regularly. Increasingly, individuals call in to see what they and the house can offer each other. The house is still not yet officially open, such is the recognised need of locals and such is the recognition that their well-being can be and has been enhanced by participating in a wide range of matters that affect them. Contact with Government agencies is on their terms. The community house activities are a testament to community needs for individuals to develop and maintain personal responsibility, self-reliance and independence. Such early success augurs well for extending services locally in an accessible, informal and participatory setting.

The key is participation but I must emphasise that I am not proposing these processes are any substitute for material security and assistance. What they do do is restore and enhance dignity that has so often receded.

I hope that I have done some justice to the notion of participatory processes for people who, in my examples, are the bearers of risks of injury or users of sometimes coercive and sometimes judgmental services. Such decision-making emphasises equity.

The goal of a preventative welfare policy is to improve the well-being of categories of people who, for many reasons, are actual or potential users of Government health, welfare and social service agencies. The goal of a preventive safety policy is to create and maintain a safe working environment so as to minimise injuries. Both such goals are underlined by a commitment to social justice. The processes of achieving such justice are to do with equity.

Equity is closely related to notions of fairness and justice. If all interested parties make the rules and determine how they will be administered they will be seen as fair and acceptable to all parties. Fair rules will produce the benefits of reducing injuries and improving well-being. They benefit the community.

Equity is not an event but a process with the potential for far-reaching change, not the least of which is an increasing community commitment to that process.

Equity then is a means to an end; the end continually being redefined in terms of current definitions of social justice. The Utopian view of social justice is probably consequent on the redistribution of income and wealth which, in turn, should result in a classless and egalitarian society. This is just not possible within the framework of our economy. Some of the components of unequal distribution, however, can be reduced. Increasing opportunities by increasing access through a commitment to equity is one means. Its cost is to do with values. The monetary values will logically be reduced. The nettles to be grasped are the cultural costs, for it means that people formerly without a say in matters that affect them will have a voice in their health, safety and welfare. The attitudes that have prevented that must be changed. These kinds of reforms will demonstrate the collective benefits to the community, for instance, improved working conditions and the promotion of well-being in workplaces and neighbourhoods alike. The well-being of a society is contingent on the well-being of its people. The well-being of this generation will influence in positive—or negative—ways the well-being of the next generation.

The achievements of our long-term State Labor Government will not only be concrete and legislative ones, but also there will be changed expectations of Government as more and more people are consulted and are able to participate in decisions that affect them. Indeed, there will be a community commitment to those processes and expectations that will be hard to budge. There will be an expectation of equity.

Gough Whitlam said words to the effect that people should be participants and partners in Government and fair and equal sharers in the wealth and opportunities that this nation can offer.

In conclusion, I want to thank the women and men who worked to have me elected, not the least of whom was Tom Bateman, the former member: I owe much to the 18 years that Tom spent in representing Canning so well. I feel an onerous responsibility in being the representative now and I will continue to work to meet the needs, hopes, and expectations of the constituents and my colleagues.

[Applause.]



West Australian
Friday 21/7/2023
Page: 69
Section: General News
Region: Perth Circulation: 358,000
Type: Capital City Daily
Size: 629.00 sq.cms.
Frequency: MTWTF--

Brief: PARLWA-WES
Page 1 of 2



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OBITUARIES

The West Australian
Friday, July 21, 2023

MP's fearless help for the vulnerable

Dr Judyth Watson OAM
Parliamentarian
Born: England, 1940
Died: Perth, aged 83

A voice for the vulnerable, Judyth Watson never felt at ease speaking in State Parliament.

Dr Watson, who died on July 9, served in the Legislative Assembly for more than a decade as Labor member for the seats of Canning and then Kenwick.

Despite her extensive academic credentials, including a PhD on worker's compensation from the University of WA, Dr Watson told a parliamentary history project she found speaking in the chamber "daunting".

"Sitting in the Parliament was the one aspect of this otherwise fantastic job with which I was never at ease," she told authors David Black and Harry Phillips in 1999.

"I thought a lot about this paradox during the time and since. I usually found speaking there daunting. And I always dreaded that call to improvise a speech on things of which I knew nothing."

Her contributions to Parliament ranged across many areas, but rarely without a thoroughly researched speech with well-referenced statistics.

"I felt I could only do justice to an issue if I were properly prepared," she said.

Born in Burton-on-Trent in England to parents Hylda and Cecil, Dr Watson migrated to Australia with her family in 1949.

Following a scholarship to Perth Modern, she embarked on a career in nursing, training at Royal Perth Hospital, where she obtained first place in both senior surgery and gynaecology exams.

Dr Watson gained further nursing experience in Sydney and London before earning a diploma in nursing education at Edinburgh University.

It was the dismissal of Gough Whitlam which ultimately drove Dr Watson to join the Labor Party in 1976, where she focused on internal policy development in workplace safety, the status of women and community development.

Prior to Parliament, Dr Watson was appointed by the Hawke Labor government to committees developing occupational health safety laws after working with the Miscellaneous Workers Union in a similar role.

Elected in 1986, Dr Watson's parliamentary career was defined by her compassion in both policy

and for her constituents, taking up the fight for more public housing, childcare access, as well as battles against smoking and asbestos.

She became the first woman to head up a select committee, before she was appointed to the cabinet in a late 1991 reshuffle by premier Carmen Lawrence.

Dr Watson's role as minister for Aboriginal affairs, multicultural and ethnic affairs, and from 1992 also as the minister for women's interests, suited her passions for fighting for the disadvantaged.

Across her time both in and out of Parliament, Dr Watson focused on violence against women, at times criticising the-then Court Liberal government for referring to the issue as a "private matter".

Following a spate of murders in 1994 and claims police were not taking complaints about domestic violence seriously, Dr Watson organised a ring-in campaign to gauge police responses. Her team received more than 200 calls in one day.

The report Dr Watson wrote following the survey argued for a range of measures now regarded as critical in the fight against domestic violence —

including a system to record and report data which tracks the scourge of the issue.

In 1996, after the abolition of her seat of Kenwick, Dr Watson ran for the newly created electorate of Southern River, but fell short by fewer than 800 votes.

After her parliamentary career, she remained "madly interested in the politics of the day and the future".

"Some gives me joy and some makes me despair," she said.

"My personal and political motivation has always been to try to advance human rights and social and legal justice through advocacy."

That motivation saw Dr Watson work closely with the refugee community in Western Australia, playing a role in establishing the Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees — CARAD.

In the reflection on her career, Dr Watson paid tribute to the "resilience of refugees".

"Concern for family and a safe future and making the

best of their situation in the midst of unimaginable grief and loss and sometimes the consequences of torture," she said in 2012.

"When I have asked Afghan refugees what the 'best thing' is about



Australia, the men say that they are 'safe', whereas the women tell me 'the tap'.

"Later the 'best thing' is the joy of becoming citizens and being able to vote, usually for the first time in their life. All politicians, State and Federal, should respect this serious commitment to citizenship."

In 2015, Dr Watson was recognised as a finalist for WA's Senior Australian of the Year, and in 2019, was awarded an OAM in the Queen's Birthday Honours for "service to the community of WA and for social justice".

In her tribute in a death notice in The West Australian, Dr Lawrence said she would remember Dr Watson's "deep compassion and practical help for those struggling to find a place in our land". On social media, Women's Interests Minister Simone McGurk described Dr Watson as a "fierce supporter of Labor (and all) women, an advocate for refugees, a trailblazer, and a frank, fearless leader."

"She was smart and very committed, but mostly kind."

Dylan Caporn



Judyth Watson in 2002 with Zubida Yezdery on the veranda of the girl's home while an Afghani friend watches through the window. Picture: Ken Maley



 I will always remember Judyth's deep compassion and practical help for those struggling to find a place in our land.

Carmen Lawrence

Deaths



WATSON (Judyth):
8.3.1940 – 9.7.2023
Judyth passed away peacefully at home, surrounded by wonderful friends who have loved and cared for her over this last difficult year. She did so much in her life to make a difference to others and she will be missed so very much by all who knew her. Her smile, right to the very end, will forever be in our hearts, as will be her last word, amazing.
David and Kate

WATSON (Dr Judyth) OAM:
Our deepest condolences on the passing of our esteemed colleague Judyth Watson who worked tirelessly for social justice issues including her enormous contribution to Australian refugees. A life well lived. May she rest in peace. Committee and Members of the WA Parliamentary Former Members Association

West Australian, 11 July 2023, page 43

WATSON (Judyth):
Dr Judyth Watson OAM is warmly remembered by Fremantle Labor for her unwavering commitment to workers' rights, social justice, and refugees over a long and rich lifetime of community service including as MLA for Canning, then Kenwick, and as a member of the WA state government Cabinet. All of us would hope to be as compassionate, engaged, and generous of spirit as Judyth was through her life to the very end. Condolences to her family and friends. Josh Wilson MP, Federal Member for Fremantle, Simone McGurk MLA, State Member for Fremantle, & Lisa O'Malley MLA, State Member for Bicton.



WATSON (Dr Judyth) OAM:
Much loved life long friend of Mike (dec) and Carole, Paul and family, Tim, Susie and family, Gregory and family. A life of giving and caring for those in need. We will miss you and remember you always.

WATSON (Judyth):
A wise, courageous campaigner and staunch friend to ACOSH, especially when she assisted the passage of WA tobacco control legislation. With respect and appreciation. Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH)

WATSON (Judyth):
To my treasured, irreplaceable and so much admired friend and colleague: what splendid times we had together.
Diana Warnock

West Australian, 12 July 2023, page 63

WATSON (Judyth):
Precious memories of our much loved Judyth. A woman of integrity, empathy and compassion. A fearless leader and staunch advocate for social justice. A full life well lived. What a treasure our friendship has been. Rest peacefully Dear Judyth. We will hold you in our hearts forever.
Pervan, Blitvich and McElroy families.

WATSON (Judyth):
CARAD's management committee and staff extend our condolences to Judyth's family and friends. We celebrate her life of justice and compassion knowing well all the lives her kindness has changed for the better. A life well lived.

WATSON (Dr Judyth) OAM:
My dearest friend, and colleague for over 50 years You have introduced a quality of life and hope to so many from all walks of life. Your name will never be forgotten. Rest in peace. Lorna White

WATSON (Judyth):
Our deepest sympathy to David and family. From all at CTI Logistics.

West Australian, 13 July 2023, page 55

Deaths

WATSON (Judyth):
A fellow alumnus of the UWA anthropology department and a contemporary in several theatres: union official and activist in the ALP; ministerial staffer; and, member of state parliament, including holding adjoining seats for a term. But most recently acting for refugees in an attempt to assuage the impact of Australia's disgraceful treatment of asylum seekers. Many happy and some poignant memories of good times and good causes.

Bill Thomas.

WATSON (Dr Judyth OAM):
Condolences to family on the passing of Judyth, a dear friend of 60 years to Marea (dec 07.07.22) and Helen Vidovich, A life well lived showing compassion and care for others. May you rest in peace dear Judyth.

West Australian, 14 July 2023, page 68

Deaths

WATSON (Dr Judyth):
WA Labors extends deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Dr Judyth Watson. Judyth was a feminist icon with a deep commitment to equity and justice. As a cross union Occupational Health and Safety Officer, she built on knowledge forged as a nurse and academic to steer the Occupational Health and Safety Legislation adopted in 1984. She was Member for Canning from 1986 to 1989, and Kenwick from 1989 to 1996. She held ministries including Aboriginal Affairs; Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs; Seniors, and Women's Interests. Judyth will be dearly missed by the Labor family.
Vale.



WATSON (Judyth):
Thank you for all your role modeling, mentoring, activism and compassion to so many. At peace.
Jann McFarlane.

West Australian, 18 July 2023, page 50

WATSON:
The Funeral Cortege for Dr Judyth Watson OAM of Palmyra will arrive at FREMANTLE Cemetery, Carrington Street, Palmyra at 2.00pm on TUESDAY (18.07.2023) for a Cremation Service. Please assemble at the Carrington Pavilion at 1:45pm.

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West Australian, 15 July 2023, page 153