

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE0766

Carnell, Anne Katherine (Kate)

(1955 -)

Born 30 May, 1955, Brisbane Queensland Australia

Occupation Chief Executive Officer, Parliamentarian, Pharmacist

Summary

Trained as a pharmacist in Brisbane, Kate Carnell came to Canberra in 1977, becoming one of the first woman pharmacy owners there in 1981. From 1982 she held positions in a number of professional organisations, including inaugural and first female president of the Australian Capital Territory Branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia 1988–94. Elected to the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory in 1992 she became Liberal Leader in 1993 and Chief Minister from 1995 to 2000. Her subsequent positions include director of the NRMA and chief executive officer of the Australian Divisions of General Practice, the Australian Food and Grocery Council, Beyond Blue and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. She was the inaugural Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman from 2016 to 2021.

Details

Kate Carnell was born in Brisbane on 30 May 1955, the eldest child of Dorothy née Grenning, and Donald Knowlman, an accountant and owner of a building company. Educated at Sherwood State School and St Aidan's Church of England Girls School, between the ages of 14 and 17 she struggled with anorexia. Her experience with other disturbed adolescents in the psychiatric ward of a Sydney hospital gave her a life-long interest in mental health issues. She initially enrolled in medicine at the University of Queensland then transferred to pharmacy, graduating as BPharm in 1976.

Following her marriage to Ian Carnell in July 1977 she moved to Canberra where she worked first as a pharmacist at Woden Plaza before becoming one of the first women in Canberra to own a pharmacy in 1981 when she bought the Red Hill Pharmacy. In 1984 she acquired a second pharmacy at Gowrie. Her children were born in 1984 and 1986. She held positions in a number of professional organisations becoming chair of the Southern District Pharmacists Company 1982–92, vice president of the Retail Industry and Training Council of the ACT 1987–91, the first female and inaugural president of the ACT Branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia 1988–94, member of the ACT Pharmacy Registration Board 1985–91, counsellor at the Australian Institute of Pharmacy Management 1990–91, member of the ACT Board of Health 1990–91, member of the Pharmacy Restructuring Authority 1990–91, national vice president of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the first woman on its executive 1990–94, and board member of the Canberra Chamber of Commerce 1991–92.

Carnell joined the Liberal Party in 1991 and the following year stood successfully as a Liberal candidate for the ACT Legislative Assembly. Elected Liberal leader in 1993, she became Chief Minister of the ACT following the 1995 election. During the period 1995–2000 she held the portfolios of Treasurer, Business and Employment 1997–98, the Status of Women, Aboriginal Affairs, Health and Community Affairs 1995–98, Arts and Multicultural and International Affairs 1995–2000. She pursued liberal social policies legalising abortion, prostitution, non-commercial surrogacy and decriminalising marijuana. She unsuccessfully attempted to introduce a heroin injecting room in the ACT. She aggressively promoted business investment and tourism to Canberra and the settlement of skilled migrants and refugees, particularly those from Kosovo in 1999. Her government was severely criticised for its management of the implosion of the Royal Canberra Hospital in July 1997 that resulted in the death of twelve-year-old Katy Bender. In 2000 she briefly served as Minister for Business Tourism and the Arts before resigning as Chief Minister of the ACT on 17 October that year, following a no-confidence vote over the funding of the Bruce Stadium development.

After leaving politics Carnell became Chief Executive of Development at the Canberra-based telecommunications company TransACT before being elected a director of the National Roads and Motorists' Association (NRMA) in August 2001. She resigned from this position in 2002. In 2001 she was appointed chairperson of General Practice Education and Training Ltd by the health minister Michael Wooldridge and reappointed by his successor Tony Abbott in 2004. From 2001 to 2004 she was executive director of the National Association of Forest Industries. Between 2006 and 2008 she was chief executive officer of the Australian Divisions of General Practice and a board member of the Australian Red Cross 2006–11. She served as CEO of the Australian Food and Grocery Council 2008–12. Between 2008 and 2014 she was board director of Beyond Blue, a non-profit organisation supporting mental health and wellbeing and its CEO 2012–14. She was CEO of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2014–16 and in March 2016 she was appointed the inaugural Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman, serving until March 2021.

Kate's marriage to Ian Carnell was dissolved in 1997 and in 2007 she married Ray Kiley.

She was a recipient of the 2001 Centenary Medal and in 2006 was appointed Officer in the Order of Australia for her services to the ACT. In April 2013 she received an honorary doctorate from the University of Canberra and in 2019 she was named one of the Australian Financial Review's 100 women of the influence in the Public Policy Category.

Published resources

Edited Book

Who's Who in Australia 2004, 2004

Resource Section

Carnell, Anne Katherine (Kate) (1955 -), Biographical Entry, 2003,
<http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/bsparcs/biogs/P004193b.htm>

Book

Contemporary Australians 1995/96, 1995

Resource

Where are the Women in Australian science?, Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre, 2003,
<http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/wisa/wisa.html>

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition

From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg>

The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders>

Shades of blue: Lunch with Kate Carnell, Maley, Jacqueline, 14 April 2012

Oral history interview with Kate Carnell 2006

Consultation, commonsense and commitment: A vision for the government in the ACT, 30 November 1993

Author Details

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Digital resources



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