

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE5546

Donkin, Beryl Killeen

(1920 - 1991)

Nationality	Australian
Born	1 January, 1920, Brisbane Queensland Australia
Died	31 December, 1991, Australia
Occupation	Lawyer, Legal secretary

Summary

Although she was not a lawyer, Beryl Donkin was a prominent administrator and facilitator. She was born in 1920 in Brisbane but grew up in Melbourne. After working in the Queensland public service, she was appointed on 24 April 1941 to the position of the Queensland Law Society's assistant secretary. This position was particularly demanding as the Society was experiencing financial difficulty and many key members had left to attend military service during World War Two.

She was the Queensland Law Society's first full-time employee and continued to serve the Society for 13 years before assuming the statutory position of Secretary in 1954, a position she held until 1981 when she retired. Her commitment and service to Queensland lawyers – including by being the first female secretary of any Law Society in the Commonwealth – was honoured in 1975 when she received an OBE at Buckingham Palace.

As secretary, Beryl's responsibilities included coordination of complaints; the organisation of practising certificates; administration of sub-committees; and financial duties. Beryl Donkin was awarded Order of the British Empire in 1975 for 'her devoted and untiring service to the Queensland Law Society'. Beryl Donkin was a key mentor and source of support to trailblazer Joan Bennett. Beryl died in 1991, and several legal prizes have been named in her honour.

Published resources

Edited Book

A Woman's Place: 100 Years of Queensland Women Lawyers, Purdon, Susan and Rahemtula, Aladin, 2005

Site Exhibition

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

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