

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE2179

Gauci, Glenda Hiroko

(1958 - 2006)

Born	1 January, 1958, Footscray, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Died	23 August, 2006, Canberra Australian Capital Territory Australia
Occupation	Ambassador

Summary

Glenda Hiroko Gauci was the first Asian Australian woman appointed as an ambassador in the Australian diplomatic service.

Details

Glenda Gauci (pronounced Gaw-see) and her brother Michael were born in Footscray, Melbourne. Their parents, John and Hiroko, met in Japan when John was posted there with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force after WWII. They married and settled in Australia in 1957.

Glenda attended Templestowe High School before graduating in arts and law from the University of Melbourne. Drawn by adventure and the opportunity to use her education, she had dreamt of being a foreign correspondent before deciding, at fifteen, that she would be a diplomat. She won prizes in politics, international relations and public administration and was the University's inaugural exchange student with Tokyo's Keio University. Later, she completed a Masters degree in international law at the Australian National University before joining the Department of Foreign Affairs in 1984.

Gauci's first posting was to Tokyo, where she moved with her husband, David Love. It was here that she gave birth to her two children, Dominic and Imogen.

In 1994, she was seconded to the Canberra office of the then foreign minister, Senator Gareth Evans, as an adviser on northern Asia, before becoming trade counsellor in Tokyo in 1995. She worked with Alexander Downer when he attended a World Trade Organisation ministerial meeting, and the following year she was involved with the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. In 1998 she returned to Australia as an assistant secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, heading the South-East and, later, North-East Asia branches.

In mid-2000 Gauci was named ambassador to Cambodia, one of only 12 women to have achieved that level of seniority in Australia's diplomatic service at the time.

A year later, she accepted the ambassadorial-level role of political counsellor at the Washington embassy. Following the events of September 11, she went to Guantanamo Bay, accompanied Prime Minister John Howard, and to George Bush's ranch in Texas.

In 2004, Glenda Gauci was diagnosed with lung cancer, though she had never been a smoker. Later that year a surgical biopsy confirmed she had mesothelioma, for which there is no cure. The cancer is caused by asbestos fibres, and develops between 20 and 50 years after exposure. Gauci's father was a waterside worker who regularly handled asbestos material without being warned of its dangers, and could easily have carried the fibres home on his clothing. She is likely to have inhaled the fibres as a child.

Glenda Gauci retired in 2006 and passed away the same year, aged just 47 years.

Published resources

Conference Paper

Australia's Role for Peace and Security in Northeast Asia: North Korea's Missiles, Nukes and WMD, Gauci, Glenda, 2003, <http://www.icasinc.org/2003/2003s/2003sghg.html>

Report

Diplomatic Appointment: Ambassador to Cambodia, Downer, Alexander, 2000, http://www.dfat.gov.au/media/releases/foreign/2000/fa026_2000.html

Resource

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>

Author Details

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Created 28 September 2006

Last modified 14 May 2019