

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6635

Marsh, Jan

Occupation Feminist, Labour movement activist, Trade unionist

Summary

Jan Marsh is a significant member of the trade union movement in Australia, arguing many of the Australian Council of Trade Union's submissions in national wage and industry cases. Throughout her career she has advocated not only for the improvement of women's opportunities in the labour movement, but also for more equal representation within Australia's trade unions themselves.

Details

Jan Marsh graduated from Monash University with a Bachelor of Economics in 1969 and the following year joined the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) as an Assistant Research Officer. As part of a larger research team, Marsh assisted in developing the 1983 Prices and Incomes Accord, a series of agreements between the Labor Party and the ACTU which moderated wages demands in return for improved 'social wages', such as employment, Medicare, superannuation. Additionally, she successfully argued the case for unpaid maternity leave before the Arbitration Commission in Melbourne, securing leave of up to 52 weeks for Australian women.

In 1978 the National Women's Advisory Council was established to provide advice to the Fraser government on women's issues, and Marsh was successfully selected as an initial member. With her extensive experience as a trade unionist, Marsh was able to contribute to the Council's two annual reports, *More Than A Token Gesture* and *An Equal Voice*.

In 1979 she was promoted to industrial advocate of the ACTU, a move which placed her in the, 'most important office ever held by a woman in the history of the trade union movement', (Veitch, 'Jan wins time off for mothers', *People*, 1979).

From 1989 until 2008, Marsh worked at the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC), serving in the positions of Deputy President and Senior Deputy President. She was also a member of the first all-female bench in 1989. At the time of her resignation Marsh was the most senior female member of the AIRC.

Archival resources

National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra

[National Women's Advisory Council - Jan Marsh \(member\)](#)

[Trade, business and trades unions - Jan Marsh at the office of the Australian Council of Trade Unions](#)

National Library of Australia

[Biographical cuttings on Jan Marsh, unionist, ACTU chief officer and advocate, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals](#)

Author Details

Dana Pjanic

Created 17 November 2020

Last modified 17 November 2020