

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1271

Brown, Freda Yetta

(1919 - 2009)

Born 9 June, 1919, Sydney New South Wales Australia

Died 31 December, 2009

Occupation Activist, Journalist, Political candidate

Summary

A lifelong campaigner and activist, Freda Brown is a highly respected figure in the history of Australian women's organizations. She was a Communist Party of Australia candidate for Newtown in 1947 and a Senate candidate in 1949 and 1961.

Details

Daughter of Florence Mary (Munroe) and Benjamin Lewis, Freda was educated at Newtown Public School and Sydney Girls' High School.

She joined the Communist Party of Australia in 1936, aged 17, and later worked in her father's signwriting business. She married Wilton John Brown (later editor of *The Modern Unionist*) in 1943. Their daughter (Lee Rhiannon, MLC Greens) was born in 1951.

The Browns lived in Melbourne during World War Two, where Freda trained as a journalist on the *Radio Times* and afterwards worked on trade union papers.

After the war, Freda joined the New Housewives Association, ultimately becoming president of what became the Union of Australian Women. She was instrumental in successfully proposing to the United Nations that it hold International Women's Year in 1975 and she attended the Indian International Women's Year Committee meeting in February 1976 at the invitation of Indira Gandhi.

She worked with the Women's International Democratic Federation, and was elected President at its Congress in Berlin in 1975, a position she held to 1989.

Freda Brown was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia from 1968-72, after which she resigned from the party, having decided that the party was no longer advancing the interests of the working class.

She has travelled widely, visiting many countries, including Vietnam, Cambodia and Algeria. Freda has continued her activism into her eighties, and was reported to be lobbying the United Nations to establish an International Day of the Elderly.

Published resources

Edited Book

Who's Who of Australian Women, Lofthouse, Andrea, 1982

Australian Feminism: A Companion, Caine, Barbara, Gatens, Moira et al., 1998

Site Exhibition

Putting Skirts on the Sacred Benches: Women Candidates for the New South Wales Parliament, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2006,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/pssb/home.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Article

Rebel With Plenty of Causes, Stephens, Tony, 2009,

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/obituaries/rebel-with-plenty-of-causes-20090526-bm0i.html>

Book

Swimming Against the Tide: A Biography of Freda Brown, Milner, Lisa, 2017

Author Details

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Created 25 August 2005

Last modified 20 November 2018