

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE1274

Fowler, Lilian Maud

(1886 - 1954)

Born 18860607, Cooma New South Wales Australia

Died 19540511, Sydney New South Wales Australia

Occupation Alderman, Lawyer, Local government councillor, Politician

Summary

The first woman alderman, mayor and among the first women JPs and MPs in New South Wales, Lilian Fowler was a blunt and tenacious politician, who worked on behalf of women and the underprivileged.

Labor candidate for Newtown in 1941 (unsuccessful), 1944 (elected) and 1947 (elected). Lang Labor candidate for Newtown-Annandale in 1950. Alderman Newtown Municipal Council 1928, first woman alderman in NSW, re-elected 1935-37, 1938-40, 1941-44, 1948. Mayor 1938-39.

Details

Lilian was educated at Cooma public school, and married Albert Edward Fowler, bootmaker, on 19 April 1909.

She became Secretary of the Newtown-Erskineville Political Labor League. For 20 years from 1917, she was electorate manager for F.M. Burke, anti-conscriptionist Labor candidate for Newtown. Her Labor activism included being a Central Executive member of ALP 1920-21, 1923-25, and President of Labor Women's Central Organising Committee, 1926-27. She was instrumental in pressuring premier Jack Lang to institute widows' pensions and child endowment. Mrs Fowler was active in Newtown Municipal Council from 1928 – she established playgrounds and instituted a 40-hour week for council employees. From 1941 she stood against her former employer Burke, as a Lang Labor candidate. She remained critical of Labor's centralist tendencies and of bureaucratic consolidation in labour and municipal politics.

The Federal electorate of Fowler is named after her, as is Lilian Fowler Place, Marrickville, NSW, and Fowler Reserve in Newtown, NSW.

Events

2001 - 2001

Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

Published resources

Book

Women in Australian Parliaments and Local Governments, Past and Present : A Survey, Smith, A. Viola, 1975

Book Section

HERstory: Australian Labor Women in Federal, State and Territory Parliaments 1925-1994, 1994

Resource Section

Fowler, Elizabeth Lilian Maud (1886 - 1954), Radi, Heather, 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A080578b.htm>

List of Electoral Divisions Named After Women, Australian Electoral Commission,
<https://www.aec.gov.au/redistributions/division-names/women.html>

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>

Australian Women Lawyers as Active Citizens, Trailblazing Women Lawyers Project Team, 2016,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/lawyers>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

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Created 25 August 2005

Last modified 17 May 2026