The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE24071260

Cains, Bev

(1938 -)

Born	19380225, Cairns Queensland Australia
Occupation	Parliamentarian, Teacher

Summary

Bev Cains was a member of the Australian Capital Territory House of Assembly representing the Family Team for the electorate of Fraser 1979–1986. After self-government, she was unsuccessful in the 1987 election for the Federal seat of Canberra. She also stood unsuccessfully for the ACT Legislative Assembly in 1989 and 1992. During her political career she was an ardent advocate and activist for conservative values.

Details

Bev Cains was elected to the ACT House of Assembly in 1979 as a member of the Family Team. She was the party's sole representative until the 1982 election when she was joined by Betty Hocking. The House of Assembly ceased to exist in 1986, in preparation for self-government. After unsuccessfully contesting the Federal seat of Canberra in the 1987 election, Cains headed the Family Team's ticket for the new ACT Legislative Assembly in 1989, but was defeated. Her final attempt at winning public office was at the 1992 ACT Legislative Assembly election. She was placed second on the list for the Better Management Team but only the lead member Harold Hird was elected.

During her political career Bev Cains was an ardent advocate and public activist for conservative values that had been part of her childhood and upbringing in the Catholic faith. Later in life she disagreed on some issues with the more liberal views of the Catholic hierarchy.

Beverley Mary Evelyn Rogers was born at Cairns on 25 February 1938 to a family with a long history in far north Queensland; her grandmother was born in Cooktown and her mother at Irvinebank near Herberton. Beverley was educated at St Joseph's school, Cairns and Mount St Bernard College, Herberton. She trained as a primary school teacher and taught at several Catholic schools in the Cairns diocese. In 1968, at the age of 30, Beverley Rogers married Kevin Cains at St Monica's Cathedral, Cairns and they had five children: Cathy, twin boys David and Paul, Stephen and Anne. After moving to Canberra Bev Cains became a well-known member of the ACT community, taking part in the Canberra Branch of the Society of Women Writers and the Women's Action Alliance.

She began her campaign for the House of Assembly as an independent to advocate for family values, motivated by 'a number of people on the southside asking her to contest'. She had formed the Family Team with Stewart Homan but she was the sole candidate elected. In her first term in the House of Assembly, she advocated against rape protestors taking part in ANZAC Day ceremonies and against what she termed 'antiChristian' sex education in public schools.

She campaigned under the Family Team again in 1982 with five other candidates, Cains being elected and joined by Betty Hocking. Throughout her next term she advocated in support of private school education, which was a consistent stance throughout her time in office, and against the presence of what she described as 'radical feminism' in government schools.

Cains drew significant media attention in May 1984 with a political demonstration designed to expose the weakness of controls on pornography. She had her 14-year-old daughter hire X- and R-rated videos from four stores in Canberra, despite it being illegal for people under 18 to rent such videos. Over the next two years, she was involved in controversy around the AIDS crisis and attitudes to homosexuality. She called for harsher penalties for blood donors carrying AIDS and was opposed to various AIDS awareness campaigns and sex education reforms.

In her unsuccessful campaign for the Federal seat of Canberra in 1987, Cains focused on providing support for the 'functioning family', as well as policies of 'no casino for Canberra and for self-government in the form of a municipal council, a ban on pornography, encouraging patriotism, and more choice and higher standards in the ACT education system'.

Following her political career Cains maintained a strong public profile demonstrating against abortion and the operation of clinics, including as President of the ACT Right to Life Association. She also expressed strong opposition to the Roman Catholic Church's advocacy for a Yes vote in the Voice referendum. In a 2023 letter to the President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference Archbishop Costelloe of Perth, Cains wrote:

'I am a Canberra mother, grandmother and great grandmother and throughout my life have been active in Church affairs and in movements of Christian inspiration in the broader community. At present, I am the President of the ACT Right to Life Association.

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference has released, two official documents bearing on the current debate over the Voice referendum. The first was a direct call for support for the Voice by the ACBC, issued on May 11. The second was this year's Social Justice Statement, 'Listen, Learn, Love', released on August 27.

I am afraid I must express my strong objections to both documents. I consider them to be abuses of episcopal power, and violations of the rights of ordinary Australian Catholics to have their bishops act in accordance with their proper sacred responsibilities and sacred priorities.'

Published resources

Article
Mother of five to contest Assembly seat, 30 April 1979

Anti-AIDS plan for Assembly: Tough penalties mooted, 18 November 1984

Sex education seen as AIDS boost, 30 July 1985

Cains criticises bus AIDS ads, 18 June 1986

Bringing the family into political focus, 24 June 1987

Praying mum from Cairns writes play for centenary of Fatima apparitions, 10 March 2020

What the votaress said to the Bishop, 11 September 2023

Letter to the Editor
Letter to the Editor: The meaning of Anzac Day, 8 May 1981

Letter to the Editor: The influence of 'pagan cults' in government schools, 12 August 1981

Letter to the Editor: Funding of education, 5 March 1983

Letter to the Editor: Radical feminism in the schools, 1 June 1983

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Created 12 July 2024
Last modified