

Entry type: Person  
Entry ID: AWE2027

# Townend, Christine Elizabeth

(1944 - 2025)

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| Born       | 19440720, Melbourne Victoria Australia    |
| Died       | 20250815, Leura New South Wales Australia |
| Occupation | Activist, Writer                          |

## Summary

Christine Townend was a passionate woman whose life and talents were devoted to the cause of animal care and liberation. As an Australian Democrats member she contested the following elections: New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Willoughby 1978, 1984; House of Representatives, Grayndler, 1977; Senate, NSW, 1983. In 1988 Christine stood on behalf of the Environment Group in the New South Wales Legislative Council elections.

## Details

Christine Townend grew up in the lower North Shore area of Sydney and became a writer early in her life. She had poetry, short stories and four novels published by the time of her first campaign. From early in her career she was concerned to protect the environment and stop cruelty to animals, and was a prolific writer of letters to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* on these subjects. She founded Animal Liberation in 1976, after being strongly influenced by Peter Singer's book of the same name. She and Singer together founded Animals Australia (then ANZFAS) in 1980.

She joined the Australian Democrats and ran for election on their ticket four times, always emphasising care for the environment and animals. In time she became discouraged by the lack of results of her campaigns in Australia.

When she joined Milo Dunphy and Alice Oppen to run for the Legislative Council in 1988, under the banner of the Environment Group, she was Secretary of the Australian and New Zealand Federation of Animal Societies, a member of the NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council and the CSIRO Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Animals in Research.

In 1990 she became managing trustee of 'Help in Suffering', an animal shelter and registered Indian charitable trust, based in Jaipur. In 1992 she and her husband went to live in India, working as volunteers until 2007 at the animal shelter and conducting a program to control the spread of rabies in Jaipur. During this time she also founded two new animal shelters in Darjeeling and Kalimpong. A biography of her life, *Christine's Ark*, by journalist John Little, was published by Macmillan in 2007.

Christine was a writer of both fiction and non-fiction. Her first book *The Beginning of Everything and the End of Everything Else*, published in 1974, has been described as being ahead of its time in 'challenging literary and social conventions' in its themes of feminism and 'sexuality, race class and religion'. After her first two novels, Christine wrote a series of non-fiction books about animal welfare, of which *Pulling the Wool, A New Look at the Australian Wool Industry* (Hale & Iremonger, 1986) was the most influential. Two of her books, *The Hidden Master* (2002), and *The Teaching of Vimala Thakar* (2010) (Motilal Banarsidass) examine the Indian spiritual tradition. Christine was also an artist, having held solo exhibitions and illustrated book covers.

## Published resources

### 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>

The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders>

### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

### Author Details

Annette Alafaci

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