

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE2761

## Blackburn, Estelle

(1950 - )

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<b>Born</b>	1 March, 1950, Perth Western Australia Australia
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<b>Occupation</b>	Journalist, Print journalist
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### Summary

Winner in 2001 of the Walkley Award for Most Outstanding Contribution to Journalism, Estelle Blackburn spent six years researching and investigating the cases of two men convicted of killing women in Perth in the 1960s. As a result of the fresh evidence she gained and her book on the case *Broken Lives* the State Attorney-General agreed to reopen the two separate cases of the convicted killers.

### Details

Estelle Blackburn spent six years (and the proceeds of the sale of her house) researching and investigating the cases of Darryl Beamish and John Button, convicted killers who always maintained their innocence, and who exhausted every avenue available to them in their quest to prove it. A chance meeting with John Button's brother in 1992 determined Blackburn's course for the next ten years. Her research and investigation uncovered serious police blunders which led to the reopening of their cases and, eventually, in 2005, the quashing of their convictions.

Initially an unsuccessful applicant for a cadetship with *West Australian Newspapers* Blackburn was offered a position with the company as a clerk in the newspaper library . She worked there for three months in 1968 before enrolling at the University of Western Australia as a full-time student with the help of a scholarship. She succeeded in entering the journalism cadetship program in 1969 and, while working for the paper, completed a Bachelor of Arts Degree part time, with a double major in Psychology and Anthropology. She continued working with *West Australian Newspapers*, progressing from general news and minor features to coverage of the proceedings of the Western Australian State Parliament. In 1974 she travelled to Europe and did a little freelance work although she mainly supported herself by teaching English and secretarial work.

In 1980 she returned to Perth and joined the ABC as a radio and television reporter. In 1985 she was invited to apply for a position in the Media Office of the Western Australian Government. She began work as the media advisor to the Minister for Police and Local Government, and worked for other ministries along the way. In 1990 she became Junior Media Advisor in the office of the Premier of Western Australia, Carmen Lawrence. After the defeat of the Lawrence government in 1993, Blackburn received continuing casual employment in government media relations, but at this point, her mind was focused on the case that would eventually become her book *Broken Lives*.

## Events

### **2002 - 2002**

For service to the community through investigative journalism in Western Australia

### **1999 - 1999**

Sustained excellence in journalism

### **1999 - 1999**

Greatest contribution to journalism

### **1999 - 1999**

Winner of the Historical & Critical Studies for *Broken Lives*

### **2001 - 2001**

Wiiner for *Broken Lives*

### **2007 - 2007**

Researching research Innocence Projects and other organisations helping the wrongfully convicted in USA/Canada and the UK.

### **2001 - 2001**

Most outstanding contribution

### **1970 -**

## Published resources

### **Book**

Broken Lives, Blackburn, Estelle, 2001

The End of Innocence, Blackburn, Estelle, 2007

### **Resource**

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

### **Site Exhibition**

The Women's Pages: Australian Women and Journalism since 1850, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2008,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/cal/cal-home.html>

## Author Details

Nikki Henningham

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