

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE2785

## Fenston, Esmé

(1908 - 1972)

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| <b>Born</b>       | 19080729, Sydney New South Wales Australia       |
| <b>Died</b>       | 19720416, North Sydney New South Wales Australia |
| <b>Occupation</b> | Editor, Journalist, Print journalist             |

### Summary

Esmé Fenston served for 22 years as editor of the *Australian Women's Weekly*. She was appointed O.B.E. for services to journalism in 1967.

### Details

Esmé Fenston was educated at Sydney Girls' High School before taking a job as a reporter for *Triad* magazine at the age of 17. From there she began work on the women's pages of the *Daily Guardian* and *Daily Telegraph Pictorial*. In 1930, she was married to Jack Fenston, who became circulation manager of the *Land* newspaper. She was soon editing the women's pages of the *Land*, and in 1933 joined the staff of the *Sydney Mail*, becoming social editor.

In 1938, Fenston was seduced by a lucrative offer from the *Australian Women's Weekly*, switching from the Fairfax to the Packer media empire. She became sub-editor of the magazine, and in 1950, succeeded Alice Jackson as editor. The magazine was already enjoying a circulation of 750,000. Fenston had an excellent feel for its readership, and aimed to reflect public taste rather than lead it. In the 1960s, issues on controversial subjects such as the contraceptive pill and women's knowledge of sex attracted 800,000 readers. Fenston worked very closely with Frank Packer, who admired her judgement. In later years he bought a car and a large home for the Fenstons near the Lane Cove River, closer to the *Weekly* office, and funded a trip to England.

Esmé Fenston was appointed O.B.E. for services to journalism in 1967. She died in 1972 after 22 successful years as editor of the *Australian Women's Weekly*.

### Published resources

#### 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>

Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html>

#### Resource Section

Fenston, Esmé (Ezzie) (1908 - 1972), Lawson, Valerie, 2006, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A140159b.htm>

#### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

#### Author Details

Barbara Lemon

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