

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE2815

McKew, Maxine

(1953 -)

Born 19530722, Brisbane Queensland Australia

Occupation Journalist, Parliamentarian, Print journalist, Radio Journalist, Television Journalist

Summary

Prior to her election to the House of Representatives as the member for Bennelong in 2007, Maxine McKew was an award-winning journalist with thirty years experience. She hosted a number of programmes on Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) television and radio, including *Lateline* and *The 7.30 Report*. In 2000 Maxine took up a position with the *Bulletin Magazine* as a regular contributor of feature interviews with prominent political business and arts/entertainment figures. She is the winner of both a Walkley and a Logie award and is the recipient of a Centenary Medal for services to broadcasting. She remained in the federal Parliament for only one term, as she was defeated at the 2010 election.

Details

Maxine McKew was only five years old when her mother died. Her father had a drinking problem and was ill-equipped to take care of her so, after her mother's death, she lived with her grandparents, who ran a corner shop in the Brisbane beachside suburb of Scarborough. Her grandmother – who McKew regards as the main influence on her life – did most of the work, rising at five to take deliveries, doing the washing in a big old copper, cooking for the family and spending her evenings keeping the books. After three years with her grandparents, McKew's father remarried. Maxine moved back with her father and had to adjust to living with a stepmother and an increasingly 'unwell' father. It was not a happy time. Her stepmother, now a good friend, kept the household together. 'She ran a very tight ship. As I get older, I am more and more like her,' says Maxine.

Maxine was educated by the Sisters of Mercy at All Hallows' School, where she was known to be a very good student. She began a degree at the University of Queensland but dropped out. Says McKew, I was bursting to get out there and make enough money to fly away from Brisbane, and I did.' She travelled to London and worked as a typist with the BBC. From there, her career in journalism developed. She returned to Australia and started with the ABC in Brisbane in 1976 as a cadet reporter for the original *This Day Tonight* programme. She worked in Adelaide and in Canberra on *Nationwide* in the 1980s and was also news anchor and reporter on the *Carleton/Walsh Report*. She was then appointed to the Washington Bureau in 1986. The early nineties saw McKew take up a position as chief political correspondent in Canberra for ABC Radio on the *AM* and *PM* programmes.

McKew moved to Sydney in 1993 and worked on the business programme *The Bottom Line*. When the host, Kerry O'Brien, moved into the anchor spot for the 7.30 Report, McKew in turn became *Lateline* presenter. In that capacity, she interviewed a host of national and international figures, including Tony Blair, Shimon Peres, Chris Patten, Fidel Ramos, B.J. Habibe and Aung Sang Suu Kyi. In the late 1990s, McKew branched out into print journalism and combined her successful 'Lunch with Maxine McKew' column for *The Bulletin* magazine with stand-in anchor duties on both the 7.30 Report and *Lateline*. McKew was also part of the ABC's federal election commentary team, along with Kerry O'Brien and Antony Green.

In 2006, McKew resigned from the ABC in order to seek out 'new challenges'. Chief amongst them was winning ALP pre-selection and then election for the Sydney seat of Bennelong in the Federal House of Representatives in November 2007. This she did, and on 29 November, 2007, newly elected Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced that McKew would be his Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Child Care. Maxine McKew delivered her first speech in the House of Representatives on 14 February 2008.

She was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2023 for significant service to journalism, to higher education, and to the Parliament of Australia.

Events

1998 - 1998

Broadcast Presenting – Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Published resources

Newspaper Article

Agent of Influence, Simons, Margaret, 2003,
<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/11/07/1068013376610.html>

Book

The Battle for Bennelong: The adventures of Maxine McKew, aged 50something, Saville, Margaret, 2007

Resource

Hansard, Parliament of Australia, 2008,
<http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/rep/dailys/dr140208.pdf>

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Book Section

Beyond the Disconnect: Practical Ethics (Interview with Maxine McKew), Lumby, Catharine and Probyn, Elsbeth, 2003

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>

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