

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE3701

Holman, Mary (May) Alice

(1893 - 1939)

Born 18 July, 1893, Broken Hill New South Wales Australia

Died 20 March, 1939, Western Australia Australia

Occupation Parliamentarian

Summary

May Holman was the first Labor Party woman parliamentarian in Australia. Representing the Legislative Assembly seat of Forrest, she was also the first Labor woman MP to serve more than ten years in parliament.

Details

May Holman was the eldest of nine children of John Barkell Holman, miner, and Katherine Mary Holman (nee Rowe). The family lived at Broken Hill, New South Wales, before moving to Cue in Western Australia. May was educated at the Sacred Heart Convent in Perth. On leaving school, she found employment at the Perth Trades Hall and the *Westralian Worker*. In 1914 she married Peter Joseph Gardiner, a Labor Party member for the State parliament, but the marriage could not withstand their varied professional commitments and ended in divorce in 1920.

Holman's mother was an active member of Labor women's organisations in Perth. Her father was a Labor politician and member of the Timber Workers' Union. After his death in 1925, May Holman became secretary of the Union and won preselection for her father's seat, Forrest, where timber was the dominant industry. She was instrumental in formulating the Timber Industries Regulation Act in 1926. Holman retained her seat through four elections. She was president of the Labor Women's Central Executive from 1927; secretary of the Parliamentary Labor Party from 1933; and member of the royal commission into sanitation and slum clearance in Perth in 1938.

May Holman was involved in a car accident on 17 May 1939, the eve of the 1939 election. She died three days later on 20 May 1939. She was buried in Karrakatta cemetery.

Published resources

Newspaper Article

Miss Holman's Death, 1939,
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/46375817>

Edited Book

200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology, Radi, Heather, 1988

Book

Some Outstanding Women of Broken Hill and District, Camilleri, Jenny, 2002

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition

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

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[Papers on various Australian women \[19--\] \[manuscript\]](#)

State Library of Western Australia

[Holman family papers, 1893-1965 \[manuscript\]](#)

[\[Interview with Sheila Moiler \(nee Holman\)\] \[sound recording\] / \[interviewed by Jennie Carter\]](#)

Author Details

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