

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE4002

## Maxwell, Katie

(1950 - )

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**Born** 19500201, Blato Kor?ula Croatia

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**Occupation** Businesswoman, Volunteer

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### Summary

Katie Maxwell arrived in Broken Hill, New South Wales, in 1961. She is the owner of a small business, Irene's South Drapery, and was named Broken Hill Businesswoman of the Year in 2003. Katie is an active member of the Australian Red Cross and the Broken Hill Migrant Heritage Committee.

### Details

In May 1961, at the age of eleven, Katie Zaknich travelled from Croatia to Melbourne on the Orsova with her mother and sister to be reunited with her father, Tony, after six years apart. The family settled in Broken Hill, New South Wales, where Tony was working and living with his parents. They moved into their own home six months later. Raised on fish and home grown vegetables in Croatia, Katie and her sister Maria were struck by the sheer variety of food available in Australia. Equally they were struck by the vast differences between the lush greenery and the vineyards of Blato, and the stark desert landscape of Broken Hill. The girls spoke virtually no English but were greatly encouraged by Mavis Allen at Broken Hill's Alma School. Other Slav girls attending the school were instructed not to translate for Katie and Maria so as they could learn more quickly. The sisters went on to Broken Hill High School. Aged twelve and thirteen, they welcomed the arrival of twin baby brothers Anthony and Frankie, and supplemented the family income by working at Schinella's Fruit Shop, earning ?3 over a weekend. Both left high school at the age of sixteen to find full time work.

Katie worked at the Majestic Milk Bar in Broken Hill and attended TAFE courses at night in typing, bookkeeping and home economics. She later found work at a jewellery store. At a Bachelors and Spinsters Ball in 1968 she met Australian-born Kevin Maxwell, and married him after her 21st birthday in May 1971. They had two children, Kassandra and Craig.

In 1987, Katie and a friend purchased a haberdashery store in Broken Hill from Irene Marshall. They kept the name *Irene's* because of its established identity in the community. Two years later, with the aid of her husband Kevin, Katie bought out her partner's share of the business and expanded it to stock ladieswear. A tall woman herself, she had experienced the frustrations of finding well-fitting clothing and began to specialise in stocking larger sizes. Today her fashion stocks range from size 8 to 28, and she offers a 'shop at home' service for senior ladies.

In 2003, her sixteenth year of business, Katie Maxwell won the Broken Hill Businesswoman of the Year award. By then, she had been a member of the Quota Club for ten years and a member of the Red Cross for eighteen years. For well over a decade, Katie had organised fashion parades and garden parties for the Red Cross, and adjudicated at Bride of the Year and Debutante of the Year events. Katie serves on the Migrant Heritage Committee in Broken Hill, and the Parish Care Ministry.

## Published resources

### Book

Sharing the Lode: The Broken Hill Migrant Story, Adams, Christine, 2004

### Site Exhibition

Unbroken Spirit: Women in Broken Hill, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2009,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/bh/bh-home.html>

### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

## Archival resources

### Private hands (These records may not be readily available)

[Interview with Katie Maxwell](#)

### Author Details

Barbara Lemon

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## Digital resources



**Title:** The Zaknich Sisters: Katie Maxwell and Maria Petkovich  
**Type:** Image  
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