Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE5890

Pincus, Gae Margaret

(1940 - 2016)

Born	19400229
Died	20160807
Occupation	Judge's associate, Lawyer, Politician, Public servant

Summary

Gae Pincus completed an LLB at the Australian National University. She went on to work in the Office of Women’s Affairs; as an Associate for High Court Justice Lionel Murphy in 1982. In 1983 she returned to the Public Service to work in a legislative capacity dealing with law reform within various government departments. She went on to establish and chair the National Food Authority before working for the international body Food and Agricultural Organization.

Details

The following additional information was provided by Cathie Humphries (formerly Gregor) and is reproduced with permission in its entirety.

Gae was the foundation Board Chair and CEO of the then National Food Authority which commenced operations on 19 August 1991 and which was the product of the micro-economic reform agenda in the early 1990s.

Gae had the difficult and time-consuming task of guiding, and at some times, pushing the fledgling standard-setting agency to meet the high and differing expectations of government and other stakeholders at that time. In addition, the agency was committed to undertake a major review of the policy underpinning Australian food standards a no small feat considering the tangle of competing priorities.

Gae is remembered by staff who worked with her as a woman of high intellect, who gave her all to achieve what she believed in. She demanded the same commitment from everyone else. This inevitably led to tension with the competing challenges the NFA faced. Despite on-going ill-health, but with the support of a very small Board of 4 part-time members, Gae set up systems to meet those challenges which held the agency in good stead in following years.

Gae resigned from the NFA on 18 March 1995, but her pioneering vision of a combined Australia NZ food authority with a joint Code was fulfilled on 1 July 1996 with the foundation of the then Australia New Zealand Food Authority and on 20 December 2000 with gazettal of the joint Code.

Unfortunately, Gae's passing in August 2016 meant she missed the 25th anniversary of the NFA's grandchild, Food Standards Australia New Zealand, which is still a central player in the food regulatory system in Australia and New Zealand, with an international reputation at the highest level.

I was Gae's executive assistant (EA) from January 1992 until I went on maternity leave in December 1993. Both Gae and I had worked as parliamentary staff – which came with different workplace expectations to those in the public service at that time. Because of that shared background, we got on well from the very beginning to the surprise of NFA staff, as we came from different sides of the political spectrum. She wasn't the easiest person to work for and was extremely demanding, but there was a high level of trust between us and I very much missed not working for her when I returned to work.

Gae always loved wearing dark blue and often wore matching patterned stockings. One thing she was particularly annoyed about was that she was born on 29 February – so that she only had a birthday every 4 years. She also told me the story once about how she changed her name at school to 'Gae', as she had never really liked her first name.

Gae always remembered to buy me something special when she went overseas for work – not necessary, but always appreciated by me.

Published resources

Newspaper Article
Gae Pincus, contributed to advancement of women's affairs and consumer law, Trainor, Gabrielle and Baker, Carole, 2016,
http://www.smh.com.au/comment/obituaries/gae-pincus-contributed-to-advancement-of-womens-affairs-and-consumer-law-2016

Resource Section
Law, Kerwin, Hollie and Rubenstein, Kim, 2014,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0624b.htm

Site Exhibition
Australian Women Lawyers as Active Citizens, Trailblazing Women Lawyers Project Team, 2016,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/lawyers

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection
Interview with Gae Margaret Pincus, lawyer [sound recording] / interviewer, Sara Dowse

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Digital resources



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