

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE6142

## McArthur, Norma Ruth

(1921 - 1984)

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**Born** 19210101

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**Died** 19840127

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**Occupation** Academic, Demographer, Historian

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### Details

Norma McArthur studied mathematics at the University of Melbourne and graduated in 1941. She undertook statistical work in wartime administration and industry and then entered the Department of Experimental Medicine at Melbourne in 1945.

Norma was a graduate student in 1947 of the Department of Eugenics, Biometry and Genetics at University College, London and then in 1949 she took up a position as Assistant Lecturer in demography.

McArthur came to the Australian National University in 1952 as a member of the Department of Demography, Research School of Social Sciences, and she remained in the department until 1970.

During her time at ANU, Norma was responsible for the round of censuses taken simultaneously and more or less uniformly in 1956 in Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and the Cook Islands and later became consultant to other island territories following this lead: the Solomons in 1959, the Gilbert and Ellice in 1963 and the New Hebrides in 1967. Her book *Introducing Population Statistics* (1961) was at the same time the fruit of such work and a practical contribution to it.

Her major work, *Island Populations of the Pacific* (1967), was a landmark in Pacific historical studies.

Just prior to turning 50, Norma enrolled as a doctoral student in the Department of Prehistory, RSPacS, and prepared herself for archaeological fieldwork on the island of Aneityum in southern Vanuatu (then the New Hebrides).

During her academic life, Norma was Research Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow and Professorial Fellow in Prehistory, Research School of Pacific Studies (RSPacS) 1970-1974; PhD Student in Pacific and Southeast Asian History, RSPacS 1975-1980; and appointed Senior Research Fellow. At the time of her death she was Visiting Fellow in the Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History.

### Published resources

#### Book Section

Women Research Leaders in the Australian Learned Academies, 1954 to 1976, Grimshaw, Patricia and Francis, Rosemary, 2012,  
[http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/sti/pdfs/16\\_GrimshawFrancis.pdf](http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/sti/pdfs/16_GrimshawFrancis.pdf)

### Archival resources

#### Australian National University Archives

[Papers relating to population in the Pacific Islands](#)

### Author Details

Alannah Croom

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