

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6624

Morgan, Edith Joyce

(1919 - 2004)

Born	19190201, Essendon Victoria Australia
Died	20040510, Preston Victoria Australia
Occupation	Community worker, Social planner, Social worker

Summary

Edith Morgan was the first social worker appointed by the Collingwood Council (1972), and worked to improve services such as childcare, community health and housing. She received the Order of Australia medal for service to the community in 1989 and was later recognised for her service as an advocate for social justice, women and the disadvantaged.

Details

Edith Morgan was born in 1919 in Essendon to John Donald Coldicutt and Edith Gertrude Rowe, and grew up part of a large family. She left Melbourne ('ran away' in her own words) for Adelaide and married William George Morgan there when she was 22. Later in life, in conversation with Geraldine Robertson, she carried the memory of her childhood as one of disadvantage towards girls in relation to education ('I was always bitter about the fact that the girls in my family could not go on.') She and her husband moved to Sydney, where their four children were born. In Sydney she became involved with the Communist Party and was a member of the Union of Australian Women from its beginning.

The family returned to Melbourne in 1956 and Edith enrolled in a social work degree at the University of Melbourne. Of this she remarked, 'It was a conservative degree I did at Melbourne University, aimed at controlling the population, but aren't all those things aimed at controlling the population? Whether we call it community development or whatever it is, you are trying to turn a population a certain way. I disagreed with this. I wanted to work for change.'

Edith worked for change for the rest of her life. In 1972 she became the first social worker appointed by the Collingwood Council and worked to improve services such as childcare, community health and housing. In her view, 'if you give a service for 'poor' people, you'll give a poor service. You've got to be saying 'This service will be for all people, including the poor' (Robertson interview). She became an advocate for the rights of older people and helped found the Older Persons Action Centre and Housing for the Aged Action Group.

In 1989 she received the Order of Australia medal for service to the community. As Chairperson for the Victorian Consumer Forum for the Aged, Edith was awarded Victorian Senior Citizen of the Year in 1991, followed by a Centenary Medal in 2001, for service as an advocate for social justice, women and the disadvantaged. She was posthumously inducted onto the Victorian Honour Roll of Women in 2005, and left bequests in her will to the Older Person Action Centre and the Union of Australian Women.

Archival resources

City of Yarra Libraries

[Edith Morgan](#)

[Edith Morgan \[audio book CD\]: a service for the poor, or a poor service?](#)

Author Details

Helen Morgan and Geraldine Robertson

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