

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE0118

Edwards, Meredith Ann

(1941 - )

|                   |  |
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| <b>Born</b>       | 19410510, Sydney New South Wales Australia |
| <b>Occupation</b> | Lecturer, Public servant, Researcher       |

## Summary

Professor Meredith Edwards AM has enjoyed an extensive career as lecturer, researcher and policy analyst in economics. She is best known for developing policies around AUSTUDY, Child Support, HECS and long-term unemployment initiatives. She is currently Emeritus Professor, Australia and New Zealand School of Government ( ANZSOG) Institute for Governance at the University of Canberra.

## Details

Born in Sydney and the eldest of three sisters, Meredith Edwards was educated at Canberra High School where she was Vice-Captain. She went on to complete a Bachelor of Commerce (Degree with Honours) at the University of Melbourne (1963) and later, in 1983, a PhD in Public Finance at the Australian National University.

Edwards began her academic career from 1963 with a post at the University of Malaya, followed by the Australian National University and the Canberra College of Advanced Education. She also served on government-appointed consultative committees and was seconded to the Office for the Status of Women in 1983. She went on to work in the Commonwealth Public Service until 1997.

Edwards worked in many departments: as Special Advisor on Youth Allowances in both the (then) Department of Education and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (1983-1985), focussing on rationalisation of Australia's youth allowances and the introduction of AUSTUDY; in the Department of Social Security (1986-1990) assisting a Cabinet Sub-Committee on Child Support Policy and as Head of the Social Policy Division; in the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services (1990-1992) as Director of the National Housing Strategy; and in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (1993-1997) as Head of a Taskforce on long term unemployment issues and later as Deputy Secretary of that Department. She was a member of the Women's Electoral Lobby, with particular focus on childcare and economic matters, and often acted as WEL's economic spokesperson.

In addition, Edwards was a member of the Wran Committee on Higher Education Funding (1988-1989). She is a member of the Australian Statistics Advisory Council, a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management (FAIM), a Member of the Advisory Board of the Centre for International and Public Law at the Australian National University and was President of the Economic Society of Australia and New Zealand (ACT Branch) from 1994-1996.

She was appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra in August 1997 -2002 when she also became Professor. In 1999 she became Director of the National Institute for Governance at the University of Canberra, a position she held until 2004.

In 2008 she was made a Member of the Board of the Council for Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences and since 2009 she has been Chair, Board of Closing the Gap Clearing House as well as Member, Committee of Experts on Public Administration, United Nations.

Professor Edwards has published numerous articles and presented many papers in the area of policy development and analysis, particularly in the areas of economics and tax in the family, child support, housing, poverty, women in government, and governance. Her recent book *Social Policy, Public Policy: From Problem to Practice* is based on case studies taken from her time working with the Commonwealth Public Service.

Professor Edwards was awarded the Order of Australia (AM) in 1992.

## Published resources

### Book

Social policy, public policy : from problem to practice, Meredith Edwards with Cosmo Howard and Robin Miller, 2001

Inside agitators : Australian femocrats and the State, Hester Eisenstein, 1996

Sisters in Suits: Women and Public Policy in Australia, Sawer, Marian, 1990

### Newspaper Article

Face to face: the power of sisterhood, Jane Cadzow, 1987?

The Burton girls, Marion Frith, 1994

### Edited Book

Who's Who in Australia 2002, Herd, Margaret, 2002

### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

### Site Exhibition

From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg>

## Archival resources

### **National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection**

[Papers of Meredith Edwards, 1974-2002 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of Julia Ryan, 1947-1982 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Records of the Women's Electoral Lobby, 1952-2010 \[manuscript\]](#)

### **National Library of Australia**

[\[Biographical cuttings on Meredith Edwards, academic, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals\]](#)

### **National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection**

[Meredith Edwards interviewed by Nikki Henningham in the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia collection \[sound recording\]](#)

[Meredith Edwards interviewed by Sara Dowse in the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia collection \[sound recording\]](#)

### **Author Details**

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