

# TRACING HER STEPS

WOMEN IN BOROONDARA LOCAL GOVERNMENT





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*Tracing Her Steps: Women in Boroondara Local Government* celebrates the women leaders who have served as Mayors in the City of Boroondara and former Cities of Camberwell, Hawthorn and Kew between 1954 and 2020.

To acknowledge 100 years since the first woman was elected to local government in Victoria, and to recognise International Women's Day on 8 March, *Tracing Her Steps: Women in Boroondara Local Government* details the contribution of women in our local government area, by highlighting the 17 women who served in the highest position of governance within our municipality.

The first female candidate, Mrs E B Blagdon, stood for Council in the Power Ward for the City of Hawthorn in 1930 but was not elected. In 1948, Marie Dalley became the first female elected to Council in the City of Kew. Marie made history once again in 1954 when she also became the first female Mayor of the Kew municipality.

In the years since these pioneering women ran their electoral campaigns, 53 women have served as Councillors and 17 have served as Mayors in the City of Boroondara and the former Cities of Camberwell, Hawthorn and Kew.

*Tracing Her Steps* commemorates the trailblazing women whose passion, determination and perseverance helped shape our community. Featuring Mayoral portraits, historic objects and ephemera from the Town Hall Gallery Collection and Boroondara Library Service, this exhibition is on display at Hawthorn Arts Centre from 3 March to 02 August 2020.



**COUNCILLOR 1948–63  
CITY OF KEW  
MAYOR 1954–55**

Making history twice, Marie Dalley was the first woman to be elected to the City of Kew in 1948 and later was the municipality's first female Mayor in 1954.

Marie, born in Kewell, Victoria and the daughter of German immigrants, was widowed in 1905. She became a successful businesswoman after working as a tea packer and furniture repairer. Her successful scrap metal business was located in North Melbourne, and later she bought the Shepparton Freezing Works. During World War II, Marie supervised the Red Cross Waste Products Depot.

As Councillor for Studley Park Ward, Marie was a member of the Public Works and Health Committee and in 1951 was a founding member of the Australian Local Government Women's Association.

Marie was also a magistrate of the North Melbourne Children's Court – a role for which she was awarded an Order of the British Empire in 1949. In 1972, Marie Dalley Drive in Kew was named in her honour.

**COUNCILLOR 1969–84  
CITY OF CAMBERWELL  
MAYOR 1973–74**

Dorothy Laver was elected to the City of Camberwell Council in 1969, becoming the City's first female Councillor and later Mayor in 1973.

Moving to Glen Iris from Queensland, Dorothy volunteered for many local schools. In 1960 she wrote a handbook, *School committees: their scope and activities*.

Dorothy defeated a Councillor who had held South Ward for 31 years. In that era, voting at Council elections was not mandatory and the majority of voters were men.

During her term Dorothy sat on a range of committees including the Building Reserves and Social Services Committee, Finance and Legislative Committee, Officers and Servants Committee and By-Laws Committee.

In 1983 Dorothy was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for her voluntary services to education.

The Dorothy Laver Reserve in Glen Iris was named in her honour in 1975.





**COUNCILLOR 1971–94  
CITY OF KEW  
MAYOR 1985–86**

Phyllis Catherine Hore was a City of Kew Councillor from 1971–94 and Mayor in 1985–86. Her 23-year term is the longest of any female Councillor in the Boroondara area.

She represented the College Ward and, later, Sackville Ward, serving Council until her death in 1994.

As a secondary teacher, one of the reasons Phyllis ran for Council was to open committee meetings to the public, believing the Council should be accountable to its citizens. Phyllis championed ratepayers' involvement in decision-making. Open committee meetings were introduced in 1982 and were one of Phyllis's highlights in Council.

Phyllis was a delegate for Kew Elder Citizens Association, Family and Community Services Local Consultative Committee and Kew Music Centre Board of Management.

The Phyllis Hore meeting room at Kew Library was named in her memory in 1994.

**COUNCILLOR 1972–81  
CITY OF HAWTHORN  
MAYOR 1976–77**

Betty May Marginson was elected to City of Hawthorn Council in 1972 and became its first female Mayor in 1976.

Betty attended Melbourne Teachers College and the University of Melbourne in the 1940s. Only one percent of Australian women were enrolled in university during that time.

Betty was key to commissioning the *Needs of the Ageing* report in the Hawthorn area and worked on a pilot program for recreation for older citizens. She was appointed chairperson of the Consultative Council on Senior Citizens, set up by the State Minister of Health. She also founded the Hawthorn chapter of the University of the Third Age.

In 1993 Betty was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia 'for service to the welfare of the aged, to education, and to local government'.

In 2001 Betty received a Centenary of Federation Medal and is one of 200 women commemorated on the Women Shaping the Nation, Victorian Honour Roll of Women at Victoria's Parliament House.





**COUNCILLOR 1973–76, 1978–85  
CITY OF KEW  
MAYOR 1979–80**

Kaye Cole was a Councillor for two terms between 1973–85 and Mayor of Kew in 1979–80. Kaye represented two wards: North Ward in 1973–76 and Prospect Ward from 1978–85.

Upon her election as Mayor, Kaye initiated 'coffee sessions' to improve dialogue between Council and Kew residents.

While on Council, Kaye sat on several committees including Finance and Legislative Committee, Finance, Legislative and Public Works Committee, Yarra Valley Advisory Committee and E6 Feeder Road Liaison Committee.

In addition to her work with Council, Kaye was a librarian and an education officer for the Epilepsy Social Welfare Foundation. In this capacity, she was a dedicated advocate for increasing public awareness of epilepsy. Kaye, a champion of social welfare, was involved with the Camberwell Health and Welfare Workers' Group.

Kaye's local involvement extended to the Australian Assistance Plan and membership of the Kew Preschool Association, Kew High School and the Victorian Council of Social Service.

**COUNCILLOR 1980–85  
CITY OF HAWTHORN  
MAYOR 1983–84**

Dr Rosalind McMillan was elected to City of Hawthorn Council in 1980 for Yarra Ward and was elected Mayor in 1983–84. While Mayor, Rosalind officiated at the centenary celebrations of the Victoria Street Bridge with Jill O'Brien (Mayor of Kew, 1983–84).

Before entering local government, Rosalind had established a prolific career in music education. She was a foundation member of the Australian Society for Music Education and a founding head of the Yamaha Music Foundation of Australia. Between 1974–87 Rosalind was director of music at Presbyterian Ladies' College, Melbourne. After retiring from municipal work in 1985 she was appointed deputy chair of the Advisory Board to the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

In 1996 Rosalind completed her doctoral thesis at the University of Melbourne, where in 2005 she became Head of Music Education. In 2019 she was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia 'for significant service to music education in Victoria'.





**COUNCILLOR 1980–87  
CITY OF KEW  
MAYOR 1983–84**

Sonia Jill O'Brien was elected to City of Kew Council in 1980 for Studley Park and in the same year was elected president of the Kew Historical Society. Jill was elected Mayor of Kew in 1983–84.

As a Councillor, Jill was most active in environmental and heritage conservation, including the restoration of Villa Alba. She was instrumental in the purchase of *The Four Seasons*, a striking stained glass window acquired in 1985 to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the municipality of Kew. Jill was an active member of the Yarra Bend Park Trust, the Studley Park Conservation Society and the Powerline Action Group, as well as City of Kew's representative on the Merri Yarra Municipal Protection Committee.

Jill, a qualified nurse, was a founding member of the Family Planning Association of Victoria during the 1960s. An advocate for reproductive rights and women's health, Jill later served as a member of the Department of Health's Ethics Committee in the 1990s.

**COUNCILLOR 1981–87  
CITY OF HAWTHORN  
MAYOR 1985–86**

Jill Short was a Councillor for Yarra Ward in the City of Hawthorn in 1981–87 and Mayor in 1985–86. During her term, Jill keenly supported family events such as Hawthorn's Family Fun Day.

Before entering Council, Jill worked for various planning bodies including the Shire of Sherbrooke, Westernport Regional Planning Authority, the Upper Valley and Dandenong Ranges Authority and the Victorian Ministry for Planning.

During her Mayoral term, Jill was also appointed secretary of the Goulburn Combined Group – a rural anti-amalgamation lobby group.

In the 1980s Jill founded two substantial businesses – Pass the Word Pty Ltd (a graphic design and desktop publishing organisation) and Surilana Alpacas, Strathbogie – one of Australia's largest Suri alpaca studs.

Since retiring from Council, Jill has been appointed to the boards of two startup companies, one in the field of genetics and the other in biotechnology.







**COUNCILLOR 1984–93  
CITY OF CAMBERWELL  
MAYOR 1991–92**

Laraine Beattie was elected to City of Camberwell in August 1984 for the North West Ward and served as Mayor in the 1991–92 term.

During her time as Mayor, Laraine oversaw the commencement of redevelopments for the Camberwell Southern Pool (now Ashburton Pool and Recreation Centre), the transformation of the Chambly Hall into a community centre and senior citizens' club, and the revitalisation of the Ashburton, Surrey Hills and Balwyn Shopping Centres.

Laraine served on several Council Standing Committees including Development Control and Engineering Services, and Camberwell Junction and Property Management.

Originally from Sale, Laraine was a qualified welfare officer and teacher. She was also a psychologist for the Counseling, Guidance and Clinical Services Branch of the Student Services Division of the Education Department.

**COUNCILLOR 1984–93  
CITY OF HAWTHORN  
MAYOR 1988–89, 1991–92**

Professor Barbara van Ernst was the Glenferrie member for City of Hawthorn Council from 1984–1993 and Mayor on two occasions: 1988–89 and 1991–92.

While on Council she chaired two major City of Hawthorn Standing Committees: Finance and Town Planning, and Community Services. Barbara was also an honorary probation officer with the Department of Community Services working with young adult offenders.

Barbara completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at Monash University, followed by a Bachelor of Education. In 1985 she completed a Master of Education and in 1992 earned a PhD in Education from La Trobe University.

Barbara was a member of the Swinburne Council from 1990 and deputy vice chancellor of Swinburne University of Technology from 1997–2007, and has consulted on higher education to universities and TAFE institutions.

Barbara was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia in 1994 for service to education.







**COUNCILLOR 1987–94  
CITY OF HAWTHORN  
MAYOR 1990–91**

Jane Laidley Nathan was elected to City of Hawthorn Council in 1987 and Mayor in 1990–91, remaining on Council until its dissolution in 1994.

Among many achievements, Jane was the first female committee member of the Melbourne Cricket Club and was a driving force in the foundation of Women of the MCC in 2005. Jane co-founded the Mullagh Wills Foundation, which seeks to raise awareness of the 1868 Aboriginal Cricket Team and build stronger communities through sport.

In 2001 Jane was awarded a Centenary Medal 'for distinctive services to local government' and in 2004 was named one of 'Boroondara's 150 Significant People.'

Jane is an active committee member of Hawthorn Community Chest and the Jane Nathan Community Award is named in her honour.

**COUNCILLOR 1996–2002  
CITY OF BOROONDARA  
MAYOR 1998–2000**

Loreto Davey was elected to the Maling Ward in 1996–2002, and was one of the first of three female Councillors of the newly formed City of Boroondara. Loreto was Mayor of Boroondara for two terms, 1998–99 and 1999–2000, being the first Mayor to receive a second and consecutive term in the City of Boroondara.

Before entering Council, Loreto had a career in nursing. Loreto became the director of nursing at Vimy House Private Hospital and in 1990 was appointed executive director of Nursing at Cliveden Hill Private Hospital in East Melbourne. Loreto was also employed as chief executive officer of the Alfred Hospital.

While on Council, Loreto's major interest was in public health issues and services for families. She was also involved in negotiations to redevelop the old Hawthorn tram depot which has since become the Melbourne Tram Museum.





**COUNCILLOR 1999–2008  
CITY OF BOROONDARA  
MAYOR 2001–03**

Meredith Butler was elected to the City of Boroondara Council representing Glenferrie Ward in 1999–2008, and Mayor of Boroondara for two consecutive terms in 2001–03.

A board member of the Municipal Association of Victoria, Meredith became a member of Rotary International and was awarded a Centenary Medal 'for service to the City of Boroondara as Councillor and Mayor' in 2001.

She attended Pymble Ladies' College in New South Wales from 1972–78. In the 1980s Meredith was employed as an officer manager at Paxus Australia, before working as a manager at GEO2, a Melbourne-based company.

Since retiring from Council in 2008, Meredith has qualified with a Master of Business Administration from Swinburne University and as a physical fitness technician from the Australian Fitness Academy. She has dedicated her recent career towards improving health and fitness for aged communities.

**COUNCILLOR 1999–2004, 2012–16  
CITY OF BOROONDARA  
MAYOR 2003, 2004**

Judith Voce entered City of Boroondara Council in 1999 representing Studley Ward from 1999–2004 and Cotham Ward from 2012–16.

During her Mayoral term in 2003–04, Judith successfully advocated for a new sporting ground for the Boroondara Netball Association and also was involved in the redevelopment of Kew Cottages.

After the conclusion of her Mayoral term, Judith contested for a place in the Legislative Council of Victoria, standing as a candidate for the People Power Party in 2006. Between 2006 and 2009 she was an executive officer at Better Hearing Australia (Victoria) Inc.

From 2009–16 Judith served as a Victorian Local Government panellist with the Municipal Association of Victoria and served as chair of the Women's Participation in Local Government Coalition. With an ongoing passion for local history, Judith is the current president of Kew Historical Society and the current chair of the Cemeteries and Crematoria Association of Victoria. Judith is also current president of Harp Golf Club Inc.





**COUNCILLOR 2002–CURRENT  
CITY OF BOROONDARA  
MAYOR 2007–08, 2013–15**

Coral Ross was elected to the City of Boroondara Council in 2002 and is the only female Mayor to serve three terms: 2007–08, 2013–14, 2014–15.

Prior to entering the Council in 2002, Coral worked as a journalist. Within Council, Coral has served on a number of committees including Town Hall Gallery Collection Advisory Committee, Library Services Advisory Committee, and the Services Special Committee.

Coral has been recognised for her work to increase the participation of women in local government. In 2014 she was named by Westpac/Fairfax as one of 100 Women of Influence, awarded a Churchill Fellowship in 2018 and inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women in 2019.

In 2019 Coral was elected president of the Municipal Association of Victoria and has served two terms as national president of the Australian Local Government Women's Association. She also serves as deputy chair of the Australian Gender Equality Council and was a director of the National Rural Women's Coalition.

**COUNCILLOR 2012–CURRENT  
CITY OF BOROONDARA  
MAYOR 2018–19**

Jane Addis was elected to the City of Boroondara Council in 2012 representing the Maling Ward and was Mayor in 2018–19.

She values protecting the City from overdevelopment and preserving the amenity and heritage of the local neighbourhoods.

Jane works as a psychologist, and has an interest in health and wellbeing. Her professional qualifications include a Bachelor of Behavioural Science, Graduate Diploma in Educational Psychology, Graduate Diploma in Health Education, Master of Educational Psychology and a Doctor of Public Health.

Jane has served on several Council committees including Volunteer of the Year Advisory Group, Boroondara Public Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee, Canterbury Community Precinct Advisory Committee, Town Hall Gallery Collection Advisory Committee, Boroondara Arts Advisory Committee, Boroondara Customer First Steering Committee and the Add Life to Your Years Advisory Committee. Jane is also a member of Boroondara Cares.





**COUNCILLOR 2016–CURRENT**  
**CITY OF BOROONDARA**  
**MAYOR 2019–CURRENT**

Since 2016, Cynthia Watson has represented the Maranoa Ward for the City of Boroondara Council. Cynthia is Mayor for the current 2019–20 term making her the 14th Mayor of the City of Boroondara and the sixth woman to have been elected to this role.

Cynthia and her family have lived in Balwyn North since 1999. Cynthia has served her community as a committee member and president of Balwyn East Kindergarten, committee member and president of the Greythorn Park Tennis Club (life member), and was an active member of the school communities of Greythorn Primary and Balwyn High School which her four children attended.

Cynthia has served on several Council committees including the Volunteer of the Year Advisory Group, Boroondara-Swinburne University of Technology Collaborative Panel, Budget Process Review Committee, Town Hall Gallery Collection Advisory Committee, Boroondara Arts Advisory Committee, Boroondara Eisteddfod Advisory Committee, Boroondara Community Strengthening Grants Assessment Panel, Add Life to Your Years Advisory Committee, Boroondara Early Years Advisory Group, and the Library Services Advisory Committee.

Cynthia is also member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and is currently serving on the Board of the Victorian Local Governance Association.

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