

House of Assembly (2018-07-26)
Classification: Grievance Debate
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JONES, DR H.

Ms BEDFORD (Florey) (16:12): It is with sadness that I note the passing on 6 July of Dr Helen Jones AM, scholar, historian and biographer, at the age of 92. I learnt of her death at a time when she has been much in my mind because of her important body of work and our shared interest in suffrage and history.

Helen was the beloved elder daughter of the late Arthur and Myrtle Cashmore and the loved sibling of her brother and four sisters, among them our former parliamentary colleague Jennifer Cashmore. Though I met with Helen only once, I have always been aware of the immense contribution she made in uncovering and expanding our knowledge of women in South Australian history. I would, therefore, like to take the time to briefly put on record some of her achievements.

Helen was born on 5 September 1926 in Adelaide to a large family. She attained her bachelor's degree, master's degree and PhD from the University of Adelaide. She pursued her keen interest in history, particularly South Australian history, at each point of her studies. At different times in her career, she lectured at both the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia on topics related to history and education. All the while she raised a family of her own after marrying Dr Geoffrey Jones in 1949.

Helen is remembered throughout historical circles for her important research on the hardworking women of South Australia. In 1975, Helen was the first woman to join the South Australian working party of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, run then as it is now out of the Australian National University in Canberra. The lives of those she documented would be familiar to many of us. Mary Colton, Mary Lee and Lilian de Lissa headline the 31 entries she authored over the years, mostly about prominent educationalists and political activists.

Helen's book-length publications also warrant mention and acknowledgement. Her 1985 book *Nothing Seemed Impossible: Women's Education and Social Change in South Australia 1875-1915* was, among other things, a timely contribution to the understanding of the history of education in South Australia. However, it was her second book published the following year, the seminal *In Her Own Name*, issued first in 1986 and subsequently updated in 1994, that was her most well-known work. Now out of print, I have purchased and given away as many copies as I can find to friends here in South Australia, throughout Australia and now overseas through my association with The Muriel Matters Society.

This wonderful book explored in great detail, with lots of marvellous illustrations and anecdotes, the early life of the colony and the role of women in the history of South Australia in the 19th and 20th centuries, with a particular focus on their role in politics. My copy is always with me, or in my bag. Not only did it become the standard reference work for women's history in the state, and it remains so, but it also gave a strong factual basis for the centenary of women's suffrage celebrated in South Australia in 1994, a year with so many important activities, among them the creation of the tapestries that hang here in this house and act as a constant reminder of the wonderful women—supported by some men—whose determination and work made all things possible for women in South Australia and continue to be a constant inspiration for us here in this place.

Helen's achievements in the history sector were recognised with an Order of Australia in 1995. As South Australia approaches the 125th anniversary of women's suffrage next year, the passing of Dr Helen Jones is a sad but pressing reminder of the importance of remembering in the appropriate manner the contribution of women to this great state. The world first achievement of dual suffrage—the right to vote and the right to stand for election—is something that we must remember proudly and promote as we struggle today to advance the concept of the value of the vote and the importance of democracy.

Women knew the vote was the most important way to influence their situation in life, the life of their families and society within the wider community. Helen's work will be used in 2019, as it was in 1994, to underline the proud fact that

South Australia was the first jurisdiction in the world to allow women dual suffrage rights—something they were encouraged to pursue after New Zealand women gained the right to vote in 1893.

As Helen knew, the history of suffrage in this state is worth celebrating so that women both old and young can look to our past as something that might inspire them to political action in the future. Helen's contribution to researching and writing about South Australian history, particularly the role that women performed in the educational and political life of this state, remains unchallenged. It is one of my dearest wishes that next year we will see her work celebrated and perhaps enhanced by way of an addendum of additional information.

I am told Helen's son, Philip, advised friends that she retained her gentle spirit and optimism about life right until the end. Her funeral was on 19 July, and our sincere condolences go to her family, her friends and many colleagues, admirers and acquaintances. Helen Jones and her work will always be remembered.