

Meredith Burgmann

Former Member of the NSW State Legislative Council

The Honourable Dr Meredith Burgmann has been an early feminist and anti-racism activist, an academic and MP. She was President of the NSW Upper House and has written two books. In 2008, Dr Burgmann was appointed a councillor on the City of Sydney Council. She is a Consultant to the United Nations Development Program and an Ambassador for the Sydney Swans.

Dr Meredith Burgmann is a dynamic public speaker on vital contemporary issues including politics, feminism, international aid and development.

Dr Burgmann's passion for politics is long standing. She was active in the Vietnam and apartheid protest movements at Sydney University, and spent time in prison for running onto the Sydney Cricket Ground in 1971 during the Springboks tour. Having gained her PhD at Macquarie University, she taught industrial relations and politics there for 18 years.

Dr Meredith Burgmann entered State Parliament in 1991 and became President of the NSW Legislative Council in 1999, a position she held until retirement in 2007.

As an upper house member of parliament, she served as the chair on the Parliamentary Privileges and Ethics Committee. In that committee, she led an inquiry into certain paedophile conspiracy allegations made by former politician Franca Arena. It was generally acknowledged that the committee observed procedural fairness during that inquiry, and that her time as a politician has shown her to be an "independent and intellectual member" of the New South Wales Parliament.

On 8 April 1999, she was anointed as the President of the Council by the then Premier Bob Carr to replace retiring president Virginia Chadwick. She was elected as President of the Council on 11 May.

As President, she continued to reduce the size and scale of the traditional opening of State Parliament. For the 1999 opening, she axed the nineteen gun salute and she invited just three ambassadors, one from Thailand and the other two from Cuba and Vietnam. This was criticised for being left leaning, as all three nations had communist governments. Dr Burgmann further angered Monarchists when she ordered the removal of the Queen's portrait from the President's Office and replaced it instead with an Aboriginal dot painting.



Dr Meredith Burgmann retired as President on 27 March 2007 at the expiry of her term as a member of the Council. She is the longest serving female presiding officer in Australia.

In 1998 she co-authored with Verity Burgmann *Green Bans Red Union, Environmental Activism & the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation* published through University of New South Wales Press. In 2007 she published with Yvette Andrews *The Ernies Book: 1000 Terrible Things Australian Men Have Said About Women*. She has also published various articles on industrial, environmental and aboriginal rights issues. Dr Burgmann started the Ernies Award in New South Wales to highlight things that Australian men say about women.

In September 2008 New South Wales Council elections, she ran as a candidate for the position of Lord Mayor of Sydney in the City of Sydney Council. She was defeated by incumbent Lord Mayor Clover Moore but by virtue of coming second, became a councillor on the Council. Dr Burgmann is also a Consultant to the United Nations Development Program and an Ambassador for the Sydney Swans.

Dr Meredith Burgmann has published articles and chapters in books on Equal Pay, Environmentalism, Aboriginal Rights, Foreign Policy, and HV Evatt; *Green Bans Red Union, Environmental Activism & the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation*, University of New South Wales Press 1998. (Co-authored with Verity Burgmann.)

Dr Meredith Burgmann is actively involved in the local and global community. She is spokesperson, National Pay Equity Coalition; a Life Member, National Tertiary Education Union and a Patron, Friends of Public Football Grounds. Dr Burgmann is a Member of Amnesty International; Mandela Foundation; Australian Society for the Study of Labour History; Sydney Swans; Balmain Leagues; Womens International League for Peace and Freedom; Evatt Foundation; Greenpeace; Australian Conservation Foundation; Wilderness Society; Black Womens Action for Education; Zimbabwe Information Centre.

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