

Irene Longman (1877 - 1964)



Irene Longman, ca. 1930. John Oxley Collection, State Library of Queensland neg No 187888.

Irene Longman was the first woman elected to the Queensland Parliament in 1929. Irene was one of the first trained kindergarten teachers working in Queensland. She had a long career in early childhood education. At age fifty-two Irene was nominated to run for the state seat of Bulimba as a Country and Progressive National Party candidate.

Irene was an experienced organiser as a member of the Queensland Women's Electoral League and as president of the Queensland branch of the National Council of Women (1920 – 1924). Political activity was not new to Irene; she had two brothers who were also members of parliament.

Irene was a powerful speaker promising in her campaign to use her position in parliament to lobby for services to improve the lives of women. Irene campaigned hard in what was seen as a safe seat for her male opponent. She surprised many on election night with her victory gaining a huge 10% swing.

Irene delivered on her promise to improve the lives of women and children. She was instrumental in securing the first women police in Queensland and in creating a separate, private and safe venue for Children's Court hearings.

Even though she was an elected member, Irene was never allowed to use the dining room in Parliament House and had to eat her meals on the veranda. During her time in Parliament there were no female toilets in the building.

Irene served one term as the Member for Bulimba. The next woman member elected to the Queensland Parliament was Vi Jordan who served from 1966 to 1974. The federal electoral division of Longman created in 1996, is named after Irene.