

The Whitlam Era and the 'Urban'

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Overview – The Whitlam Legacy: Three strands of Whitlamism

The Whitlam Legacy – revisiting contemporary views of Whitlam – to understand the transformative nature of the legacy on selected urban issues.

- (a) The role of the state – empowering local and regional government.
- (b) Citizenship and the construction of ‘community’.
- (c) Gendering the citizen

The role of government

- Key ideas here are the importance of achieving ‘national planning’ and
- The impediments of a constitutional and political kind – see eg special lecture to the University of Melbourne 1968
- The limitations of a pure market approach – market failure derived from business’ failure to provide infrastructure, e.g transport, parks and so forth

Local government as...

- Creator of jobs
- Partner with state and federal departments to create theme or problem-based new programs
- Funded by the Commonwealth through the Grants Commission.
- Basic programs – notably sewerage, roads and recreation

Citizenship and the community

- Whitlam's approach was expressed in his 1972 policy Speech – 'We can double and treble social benefits, but we can never make up through cash payments for what we take away in mental and physical well-being and social cohesion through the breakdown of community life and community identity.'
- This citizen was male with a family and children, and a need for 'education and self-improvement'.

Gendering the citizen 1

Three strands:

(1)The view from Edna Ryan's letters and manuscripts – 1972 'neither Cameron nor Mr Whitlam have made one public statement about women being kept at home'.

(Cf Chifley's golden age of male heroes).

Reference to a letter to Margaret: 'I urge her to influence Gough on making some statement about appointing a permanent women's lobby in Canberra'.

Gendering the citizen 2

(2) New gendered institutions – e.g Whitlam’s speech to the Women and Politics conference (IWY), quoting the ‘personal is political’ – attributed to Elizabeth Reid. For a critique of the special adviser model see Connors (1984).

IWY infrastructure – Reid appointed in 1973

Funded support for women’s services in inner city and suburbs

Single mother’s pension – replaced widow’s pension

No fault divorce

(3) New gendered infrastructure – role of WEL (making submissions), radical feminism (also making submissions) and a new model of Federal-State co-operation women’s health centres, rape crisis and domestic violence.

Gendering the citizen 3

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