

Audrey Horridge; 1930-2013.



*Audrey Horridge, 1974*

Audrey Horridge died peacefully on her sofa at home on January 30<sup>th</sup> 2013, leaving Canberrans a legacy. As a social planner, Audrey made sure that the footbridge from Civic over the Parkway to Commonwealth Gardens was funded so that families could cross safely to Commonwealth Park from Civic. You may also remember the short-lived “Audrey’s piss palace” at the bus station, and the original health centres of the Whitlam era.

Born 26 October 1930, Audrey Horridge was the 2nd daughter of Rev Harcourt Lightburne, vicar of St Mary’s Church, Upchurch, Kent, England, formerly Chaplain to the English

Church in Berne, Switzerland, and Nora (née Münch). She was educated at home; then, after a war-time evacuation to S. Wales, was a boarder at Cheltenham Ladies' College from 1944 onwards. In 1949, with a training in the classics, Audrey was admitted to Girton College, Cambridge, with one term at the University of Florence, Italy, where basic Italian was added to her modest kitchen German. In 1952 she graduated in English language and literature. She then took a post-graduate Diploma in Public and Social Administration at Barnett House, Oxford, and in 1954 married Adrian Horridge at Wytham, Oxford. In 1956 the couple moved to St Andrews, Scotland, where Audrey continued practical and post-graduate work at the Dept. of Social Work, University of Dundee, and was awarded diplomas in Medical Social Work and in Psychiatric Social Work. A year was spent in California, and there were many holidays in the West Highlands with a young growing family.

In 1969, on arrival in Australia with husband and four children, Audrey joined the ACT Dept. of Health, first as a social worker, with her office over the pub known as the 'Boot and Flogger', in Kingston, ACT. Within a year she was Chief Psychiatric Social Worker, ACT Dept. of Health, reporting to the Director, Dr Brian Hennessey, and psychologist Colin Mackenzie. While living in Menlo Park, California in 1959-60, Audrey had attended seminars at the internationally famous Health Centre there, on the leading developments in treating whole families with a problem child. Based on this experience, she introduced the method of treating the family as a whole. At the time, there was no mental hospital in the ACT. Instead, about 20 experienced nurses with cars provided pills and looked after frail and mentally challenged patients in their own homes. They were based in the old Jollimont building and later in the Melbourne building, in central Civic. The M ward at the hospital was used only as a last resort.

With the election of the Whitlam Govt, working with Dr Gwen Sax, Audrey wrote the briefs for the setting up of the Health Centres, with combined medical and paramedical treatment, as a free service for all. This released a pent-up wave of previously hidden chronic conditions, and led to a rise in the general level of health. When Hennessey had a serious stroke in 1974, a more traditional private practice was favoured. The health centres were founded to reduce hospital costs, to service the not-so-well-off, to introduce preventative medicine, and bring paramedics into group action. They succeeded magnificently until ruined by successive governments and the reduction in funding with the introduction of self- government. Audrey would say *that these matters are best left to the experts and kept out of politics.*

In 1973, while on leave, Audrey studied for a Diploma in Management of Social Services, at Tavistock House, London, and on her return to Australia, was seconded to the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) as a social planner. She wrote the briefs for the social development of the Tuggeranong suburbs, as places where families and children would live in a safe environment, and established the Community Centres at the old homesteads. The lessons learned from the rise and decline of the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC), which was founded to design and build Canberra, and succeeded magnificently, show *that these matters are best left to the experts and kept out of politics.*

1979-1992 Audrey was appointed to the Australian Development Agency, AIDAB, to manage the Service for Overseas Students. In each State, social workers were appointed by AIDAB to look after the welfare of students from overseas, many of them on scholarships, and to fulfil the responsibility of the Dept of Foreign Affairs for these visitors. Audrey used her intuitive skill with people to manage a huge range of problems, from unwanted

pregnancies to deaths by drowning, and especially how to rescue the investment already made in failing students. In an address to The International Student Advisers' Network of Australia (ISANA, of which Audrey was an honorary life member), Professor Bryan Burke, of the University of New South Wales says:

“The main driving force in further promoting the high standard and professionalism of this service was Audrey Horridge who was the National Director of the AIDAB Social Work Service for many years. She was certainly one of my early mentors and inspired a generation of workers in the field, leading to AIDAB being the main support for students from other cultures and principal repository of cross cultural counselling expertise.” “The people in these jobs were generally Student Counsellors who had a special interest in and developed expertise working with people from other cultures. “Then in the early 70s these workers burnt out through over commitment and lack of support, which provides a strong message for ISANA members. The positions subsequently disappeared and overseas students in the universities were 'main-streamed'- that is overseas students were expected to access standard counselling services and other student support services in the same way that domestic students did.”

Again, the rise and decline of the AIDAB services for Overseas Students, which succeeded magnificently until ruined by the commercialisation of education, suggests *that these matters are best left to the experts and kept out of politics.*

Audrey retired in 1992. Besides being a stimulating talker, with numerous friends, she ran a large busy and demanding household and hosted regular parties for students with her own cooking. She was not only an efficient professional with a generous spirit and well-stocked mind, who could write clear informative reports; she also had a great sense of humour and was our loving wife and mother, leaving four children, three grandchildren and one great grandchild who remember her with great affection.

Adrian Horridge, FAA, FRS.

[horridge@netspeed.com.au](mailto:horridge@netspeed.com.au)

(02) 6281 2762



Audrey with great-grand daughter, Freya