

WOMEN IN CENTRAL QUEENSLAND

A STUDY OF THREE COASTAL CENTRES

1940-1965

Grace Johansen

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Grace Johansen'.

A thesis in fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Humanities - Faculty of *Arts* and Health
Sciences
Central Queensland University
Rockhampton

January 2002

ABSTRACT

While in agreement with the perceived wisdom that events during World War Two were responsible for many social changes for women in Australia, the thesis disagrees with the implication in existent Queensland women's historiography that these changes affected women equally in all parts of the State. Research undertaken in Central Queensland provides evidence that, although some similarities existed, the conservative forces in this region restricted the liberating effect of such changes. It also addresses the subject of Queensland difference, and argues that the rural patriarchal economy sustained the notion of rigid gender and class differences in Central Queensland. It maintains that this affected women in regional Queensland to a far greater extent than those in the Brisbane metropolitan area because of the lack of secondary wartime industry and the masculine nature of rural industry. Additionally, in opposition to the widely held belief there was universal post-war financial security the thesis argues that poverty did exist. In particular it addresses the subjects of rising inflation and what has been termed the *Social Security Poverty Group*, basing conclusions on statistical evidence, oral evidence, and secondary and documentary sources.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract		i
Table of Contents		ii
Frontispiece		iii
Map of Queensland		iv
List of Tables		v
List of Illustrations		vi
Abbreviations		vii
Acknowledgments		
Declaration		
Introduction		1
Chapter One	War to Reconstruction	28
Chapter Two	Women under Pressure in the 1940s	71
Chapter Three	Women and the Family Economy	120
Chapter Four	“Suitable Work for Women”: Women’s Traditional Work	165
Chapter Five	Women in Overalls: Women’s Work in Industry	217
Chapter Six	Women in the Professions and Business World	259
Chapter Seven	The Home and the Housewife	307
Chapter Eight	Leisure Time Activities	346
Conclusion		399
Bibliography		410
Appendices		
1. List of Interviewees		
2. Basic Questionnaire Formats		
3. Consent Form		
4. Minutes of Inaugural Meeting of the Women’s National Emergency League - Rockhampton Branch		
5. Weekly domestic Duties for One Person - Isis Hospitals Board		
6. Rockhampton Nurses’ Charter		
7. Journal article Bundaberg <i>News Mail</i> giving details of European and “black:” women employed in the sugar mills.		



Dr. Adah Stuart
Medicine - Rockhampton
Courtesy of P. Hasker

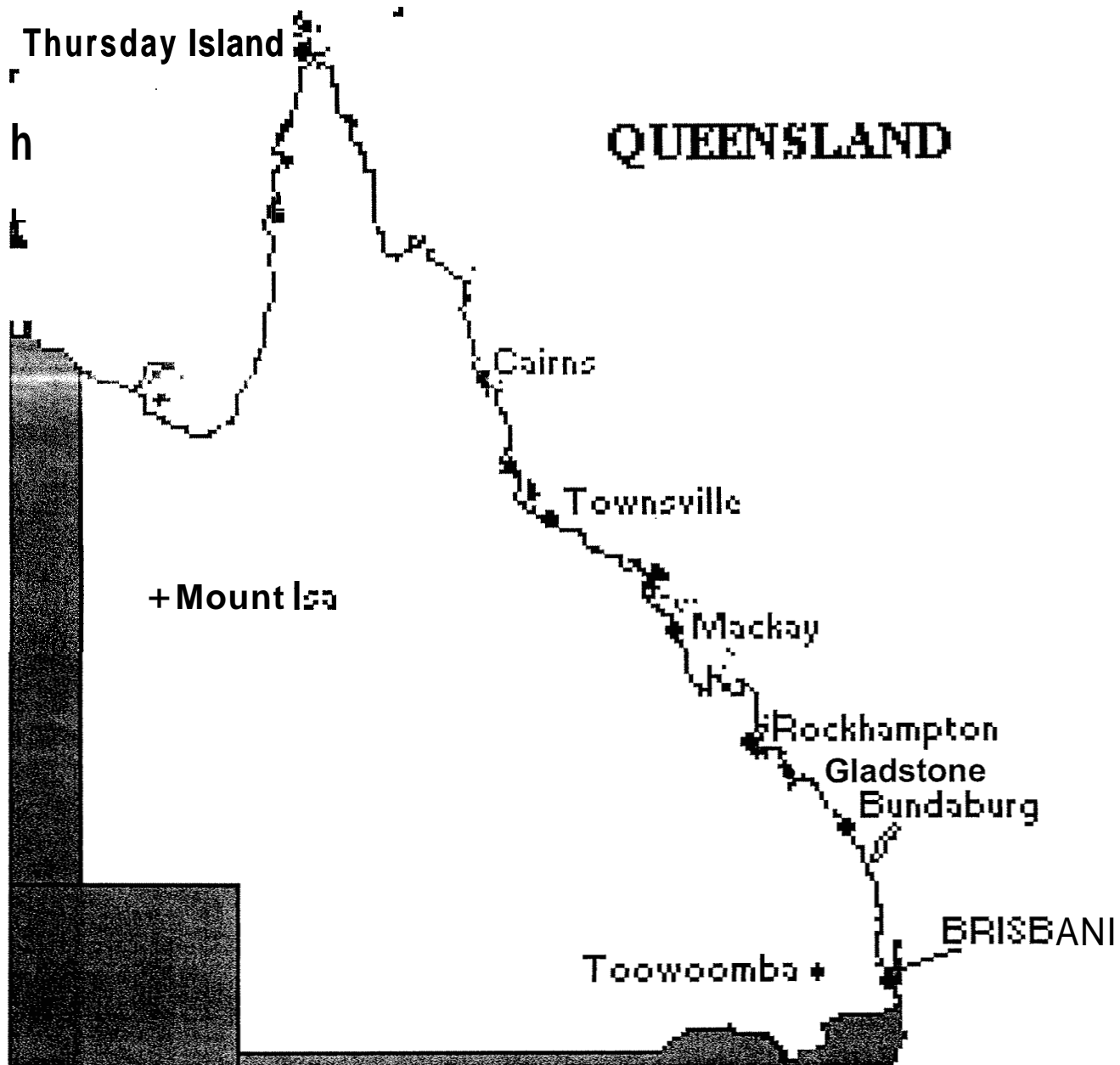
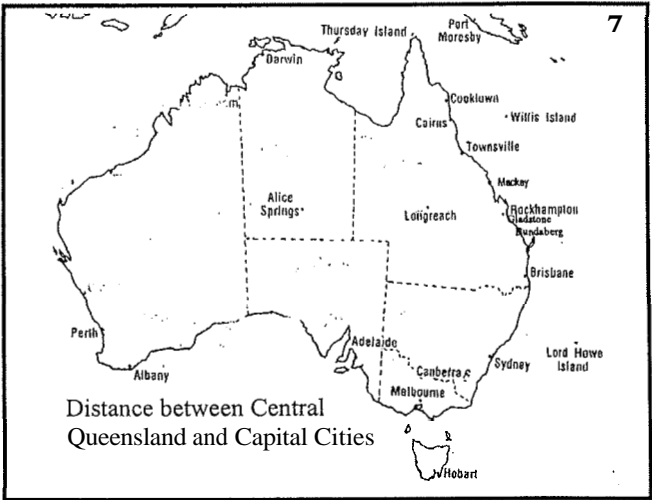
Central Queensland Women 1940 - 1965



Myra Cullen
Music - Bundaberg
Courtesy of M. Cullen



Margaret McFarlan
Journalism - Gladstone
Courtesy of Gladstone Observer



Geographical situation of Central Queensland in relation to Brisbane

LIST OF TABLES and GRAPHS

1.1 Growth of Recorded Production in South, Central and North Queensland	32
1.2 Female Factory Employment in Queensland 1937-1945	37
1.3 Classification and Percentage of Reasons for Lag in Enrolment in WAAAF given by Representative Cross Section of 200 in NSW	47
1.4 Allocation of Funds for Advertising Campaign	56
2.1 Allocation of Migrants in Australia for Year Ended 1959	112
2.2 Summary of Queensland Adult Education Attendances 1949	116
3.1 Estimates of the Size of Social Security Poverty Groups, i.e. Households whose main source of Income was Social Security Benefits 1965/66	129
3.2 Queensland Housing Commission Homes Completed 1944/1945 to 1952	137
3.3 Females Employed in Textile and Clothing Industries	138
3.4 Numbers of Single Females in Central Queensland in Proportion to Total Female Population	139
3.5 Women in the Workforce - Queensland	141
4.1 Numbers and Percentages of women employed in Manufacturing Industries 1933-1966 in Brisbane and Environs, Rockhampton, Gladstone and Bundaberg	168
6.1 Medical Women Practising in Queensland 1891/1941	279
7.1 Average age of First Marriage in Australia	318
Graphs.	
4.1 Graph Showing Percentage of Female Teachers in the Teaching Service 1902-1940	209
4.2 Graph Showing Percentage of Female Teachers in the Teaching Service 1940-1980	210

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1.1 “How’ll They Keep Them Down on the Farm”	45
1.2 AWAS Learn to Bath Babies	53
1.3 “Come in and Talk it Over”	55
1.4 The Lakes Creek Revue Show	66
2.1 Modernisation of the Cookery Section of the 1941 RNA Exhibition to Reflect Austerity Demands for Patriotically Austere Food	81
2.2 Demonstration of Liquid Hosiery 1941	84
2.3 Gladstone Women Sybil Fohman and Sister Mavis. Members of Women’s National Emergency League	91
2.4 Women making Camouflage Nets for the Allied War Effort at the Trocadero Ballroom, South Brisbane	99
2.5 Digging for Victory	104
3.1 Goondoon Street Gladstone c. 1943	157
4.1 Perched on High Stilts: The Gladstone Hospital 1940/50	178
4.2 Sister E. Johnson Oversees a Finger Dressing for a Serviceman during World War Two	185
4.3 Rockhampton Girls at the Haberdashery Counter at Stewarts	194
4.4 Port Curtis Dairy Cooperative Building Gladstone	204
4.5 Rockhampton Central Girls and Infants School	208
5.1 Gladstone Telephone Exchange 1923	221
5.2 Queensland Rail Flying Gang Camp 1940s - 1950s	224
5.3 Queensland Rail Dining Car 1940s - 1950s	227
5.4 Gladstone Meatworks c. 1950	232
5.5 Women at Work in the Lakes Creek Packing Department	237
5.6 Fishing Boat Owned by Lionel and Ilma Wickham	246
5.7 Bundaberg Sugar Ready for Marketing	253
6.1 Dental Chair in use During Mid 20 th Century	289
6.2 Pedal Dental Drill	290
6.3 Rockhampton Municipal Councillor B. Gray Seated next to Mayor Rex Pilbeam	295
6.4 Mt. Larcom Hotel Owned and Operated by Roseanne Coughlan 1947 -	298

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS (Cont'd)

7.1 Children Helped with the Household Chores	310
7.2 Home for Two Adults and Four children at Laurel Bank	323
7.3 Condemned House in Brisbane 1943 Housed a Woman and her Family of Six	324
7.4 Typical of the Type of Dwelling Used by Aborigines during the 1940-1965 Period	325
7.5 New Workers' Dwellings, 1949.	334
8.1 A Gladstone Woman Listens to her Mother's Pre-war Breville Valve Radio During the War Years	368
8.2 Sister E. Savage - Sole Surviving Nurse from the Torpedoed Hospital Ship <i>Centaur</i> Sunk off the Coast Near Bundaberg	370
8.3 Popular Rockhampton Performers	374
8.4 "Rocky Coastline: Elliott Heads" - Oil on Canvas by Madge Beard	380
8.5 Debutante Ball - Austral Hall Bundaberg	388
8.6 Designing Sand Gardens was a Popular Competition at Picnics	394
8.7 On Parade -Tennis Fashions Through the Years	395

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Australian Archives
AAES	Australian Army Education Service
AANS	Australian Army Nursing Service
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACF	Australian Comforts Fund
ARC	Australian Red Cross
AWLA	Australian Women's Land Army
ATNA	Australian Trained Nurses Association
AWM	Australian War Memorial
AWW	Australian Women's Weekly
AWAS	Australian Women's Army Service
CRTS	Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme
CUSA	Catholic United Services Auxiliary
QCWA	Queensland Country Women's Association
SNA	Student Nurses Association
VAD	Voluntary Aid Detachment
VDC	Voluntary Defence Corps
WANS	Women's Australian National Service
WEB	Women's Employment Board
WNEL	Women's National Emergency League
WVNR	Women's Voluntary National Register
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to sincerely thank Associate Professor Denis Cryle who as Supervisor of this Thesis has given me his unfailing support and guidance. This was doubly appreciated as I was aware that very often he was working under pressure for very long hours, but still made time to see me for consultations on a regular basis. Thank you Denis.

A very special expression of thanks must go to all the interviewees who freely gave me their time to tell me about women's activities during the period of the thesis. Without their help this thesis would never have been written.

Special thanks are also extended to Peter Hasker, who after consultation with his brothers and sister provided me with biographical details about their aunt, the late Dr. Adah Stuart.

The valuable assistance of the Central Queensland University Library Staff at both Rockhampton and Gladstone is also gratefully acknowledged, as too is the assistance of the Staff of the Brisbane Branch of the Australian Archives, the John Oxley Library, the Fryer Library, the Queensland State Archives, and Rockhampton, Gladstone and Bundaberg Municipal Libraries.

Additionally I wish to thank Rex Metcalfe, Head of Campus, and the staff, both academic and administrative of the Gladstone Campus of Central Queensland University, for their help and support.

DECLARATION

I declare that all material used in this thesis has not previously been submitted for any other degree and that the main text of the thesis is an original work. *Also*, I declare that to the best of my knowledge, all sources used have been acknowledged.

W. E. Johnson

January, 2002

Introduction

The period over which women's history has found a place in Australian historiography is a mere thirty years, so it is not surprising that women's history that is specific to the Central Queensland region in the 1940-1965 period is nearly non-existent.¹ The aim of this study is to go at least some way towards filling that gap. The existing historiography posits the belief that changes to women's roles in society were wrought by the need for woman power during World War Two, and implies that all women in the State were affected equally. Research has provided evidence that this was not so, and it is asserted that the liberating effect of social change brought about by the Second World War was not so evident in Central Queensland as in Brisbane and south-eastern Queensland. While similarities do exist, the historiography has not taken into consideration the differences between the ways events during this period affected women in what was, in some respects, a more conservative set of social mores in Central Queensland. Nor has it looked at the ways in which the strength of the rural economy at that time had more impact on the lives of women in this region.

The time frame for the study was chosen because of the perceived wisdom that war time exigencies between 1939-1945 promoted women into the public arena from their previously perceived role of housewife and mother. On a national and state level the events which then followed during the reconstruction years,

¹ M. Lake, *Getting Equal*, St. Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1999, p.6.

especially after Robert Menzies took over the reins of government in 1949, were also years of social change for women. The time frame thus concludes with the change of leadership in the Liberal Party in 1965, and the beginning of the second wave of feminism.

The year 1965 was also important regionally. It was then that port trade in the coastal towns of Rockhampton and Bundaberg was stabilised, and Queensland Alumina Ltd. started operations in Gladstone, which resulted in its progress from a small fishing village to an industrial city. In 1963 a cold storage plant was constructed at Port Alma, Rockhampton's deep water port, for meat exports, and although with existing facilities for the handling of meat, minerals, oil and salt trade there was no marked growth by 1965, Rockhampton was guaranteed trade stability.² In 1956 construction had begun on Bundaberg's new deep water port. By 1965 an oil terminal, and two sugar facilities had increased storage space to 100,00 tons each, and soon afterwards Australian Molasses Pool installed a 10,000 tons tank. The new deep water port thus provided good trade facilities for the sugar industry in Bundaberg.³ This development at Bundaberg brought port facilities in that town to approximately the same standard as those existing in Mackay after it failed in its bid to handle the Goonyella coal contract in 1967.⁴

To address the gap in Queensland women's historiography it was decided to take a thematic approach in order to take into account continuities, which demonstrate

² G. Lewis, *A History of the Ports of Queensland*, St. Lucia, UQ Press, 1973, p.256.

³ Ibid, p.262.

⁴ Ibid, p.262.

that some facets of women's social roles in the Central Queensland region began during the pre-war period, were maintained during wartime, and in some cases carried over into the post-war period and beyond. Based on the available evidence, it is argued that social change in Central Queensland was restricted by the rural patriarchal economy, which sustained the notion of rigid gender and class differences. Thus for women in Central Queensland the Second World War did not have a universal liberating effect. The question of Queensland difference in which the matter of the rural economy is of great importance has been the subject of debate by several historians, but until now no-one has attempted to define this concept specifically in relation to women's history in this region. Thus the thesis also argues that "Queensland Difference" perpetuated the notion of patriarchy. Additionally it was generally accepted in the 1980s and 1990s that poverty did not exist in the 1940-1965 period in Queensland. It is argued that this was not the case, especially for working class women who for one reason or another were the breadwinners for the family. Ways in which these differences are apparent in the realm of women's paid work, their role as housewives and mothers, and in their leisure activities are analysed through the use of statistics, economic history, and oral history which supplement other secondary and primary sources.

The geographical area which is the focus for the thesis has been selected for various reasons. Firstly the towns chosen are all coastal towns with port facilities, so defined by Glen Lewis, and all have rural hinterlands. With regard to Rockhampton, Lewis has stated World War Two took trade away from Port

Alma, Rockhampton's deep water port. However, even when a large amount of money was spent to improve the facilities in the mid 1950s, the town wharves at Rockhampton operated until 1963 and maintenance was not discontinued until 1964.⁵ While there are differences in industry and background in these sites it is considered they are also representative of other sites within Central Queensland, and because they are all of a different size they can also be compared with other places of varying magnitude in the central region of the State of Queensland.

Bundaberg, a somewhat smaller town than Rockhampton, was chosen in preference to Mackay as both have a similar economy based on the sugar industry. Bulk handling of sugar occurred at approximately the same time, (Mackay in 1957 and Bundaberg in 1958) and from the perspective of the sugar industry each place was representative of the other. Furthermore, in both towns agrarian policies restricted secondary industry and port development.⁶ Although the current administrative definition of Central Queensland usually includes Mackay, Bundaberg is closer to the writer's home town of Gladstone, and therefore better known with established contacts through which possible interviewees for the oral history component could be readily located.

Gladstone during the 1940-1965 period was a smaller town again. Its economy was reliant on the meat industry, and to a lesser degree on a somewhat loosely organised fishing industry. Unverifiable sources point to the existence of a Gladstone Fisheries and Cold Storage facility, where fish were processed, which is

⁵ Ibid, pp.255-256.

⁶ Ibid, p.260.

believed to have been established in 1926. Most of the catch was sold locally but any surplus was sent to Brisbane.⁷ Because employment at the Meatworks was seasonal except for the war period, many men left home to seek work elsewhere in the off season. Fishing was therefore very important in keeping families together at these times, and women frequently assisted their husbands in this industry. These men and wharf labourers, whose work was reliant on shipping, owned their own boats and fished independently. This is confirmed by the oral history component of the thesis and discussed in Chapter Five. It was not until 1960 that the Queensland Fish Board took control of all fish caught in Queensland waters. No records of previous fish marketing on an organised level have been located at Gladstone, Rockhampton or Bundaberg. The only small piece of documentary evidence of organised marketing is a very minute segment on a Cinesound Movietone Production film which includes, *Prawning Big Industry for Home and Export: Gladstone*, in the title.⁸ It is considered that Gladstone was representative of this industry not only in Rockhampton and Bundaberg, but also in other coastal centres within the area known as Central Queensland.

Like other towns in the Central Queensland region such as Biloela, Mount Morgan situated some thirty kilometres from Rockhampton is not included., This town is the subject of existing theses written by Central Queensland University

⁷ This information was the consensus of opinion of local people whose families had been involved in various ways in the fishing industry. A comprehensive inquiry failed to locate any documentary evidence.

⁸ *Prawning Big Industry for Home and Export: Gladstone*, 63632 Cinesound Review, No. 1643 Release date 25 April, 1963, 00:05:52:20 - 00:00:08:15, National Screen and Sound Archives.

historians for which extensive research has been undertaken.⁹ Moreover women were not employed by Mount Morgan Mines Limited, except for a few who worked in the Company's office, and as recorded in interviews conducted by Betty Cosgrove and Lorna McDonald, Mount Morgan women were disinclined to interfere in union affairs." A further reason for non inclusion was the fact that Mount Morgan was a "company town", almost entirely dependent on Mount Morgan Mines Limited for its existence. Evidence shows that although women supported their husbands in a series of rolling strikes in 1957 over non-payment of the copper bonus, they were never actively militant. The power of the mine management was demonstrated when the company's terms were accepted by the union after an open letter was circulated to "The People of Mount Morgan" from Eric Boyd, the Mine Manager, which stated that the mine would close if the stoppages continued." For these reasons Mount Morgan was less significant to the thesis.

A specific section of the thesis which deals with the women in the rural hinterland of the towns, which are at the centre of this study, has not been developed.

⁹ R. Boyle, MA Thesis, "A Study of the Management and Growth Patterns of Mount Morgan Mines Ltd., 1929-1950, CQU, Rockhampton, 1994. B. Cosgrove, "Mount Morgan: Images and Realities, Dynamics and Decline of a Mining Town", Ph. D. Thesis, CQU Rockhampton, (currently in the hands of examiners).

¹⁰ Interviews conducted by B. Cosgrove, and Lorna McDonald. These interviews made no mention of involvement by women in the dispute. E. Boyd, "An open letter to the People of Mount Morgan", 29 July, 1957, "Confidential Report on the Use of Public Relations in the Mount Morgan Copper Bonus Dispute, May 1957". These documents did not infer that there was any militancy on the part of women. Furthermore B. Webster's Ph. D. thesis points to a very strong conservative stance to unionism by the people of Rockhampton and district during the 1940-1965 period and beyond.

¹¹ Mount Morgan confidential industrial correspondence, 30 June, 1956 to 14 April, 1958. Held at CQU, Rockhampton.

However, events in their history have been included where appropriate. The Land Alienation Act of 1868 which halved the size of the large runs originally taken up by early graziers and land speculators, was the first of many which followed with the purpose of providing small farms for new settlers to Central Queensland. Under the economic policy of Colin Clark, Minister for Industry in the Queensland Government, land reform plans were still being put forward in the 1930s. As stated by Marilyn Lake the “concept of the yeoman farmer” was central to these projects. **As** Lake goes on to point out, these schemes were practised within capitalist agriculture and settlers needed capital and labour. It was the women and children who supplied the labour.¹² In the Fitzroy Shire in Central Queensland many of these settlers either sought other employment, or set themselves up as timber getters or carpenters while their wives and children struggled on as best they could on what was, as one interviewee put it, “poverty farm”.¹³ **As** Lake comments the goal of those early settlers to achieve independence was only reached through an exploitative male role in gender relationships. However, as had been the case in earlier years and was continued throughout the period of the thesis, reliance on women and the family was agreed to by both partners in the marriage, and accepted as being an economic necessary.

The thesis supports the finding of Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton that “the relations of power between men and women during the Second World War were

¹² M. Lake, “Women, Gender and History” *Australian Feminist Studies*, Vol.7-8, 1988.

¹³ Interview with V. Boderio at Rockhampton, 15 September, 2000. His statement was endorsed by other interviewees for the author’s current project on the history of the Fitzroy Shire.

broached but never transformed”.¹⁴ Thus male dominance was not destroyed by the movement of women into wider spheres of employment in the work place during the period covered by the thesis, and men retained their position on the scale of command, in what was still essentially a patriarchal society. Decisions about the types of employment considered suitable for men and women respectively remained gendered to give males greater power in the work place, and discrimination against women was carried over into the division of work within the home.

As Claire Williams points out, patriarchy is a strong hierarchical form which had been in existence over a very long time.¹⁵ She defines the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism along the lines of Eisenstein’s theory, the principle of which is that capitalism and patriarchy are mutually dependent.¹⁶ Additionally, she states that patriarchal hierarchy inhibits class consciousness in men who remain at a pre-socialist stage, while they themselves oppress another group. This is endorsed by the definition put forward by Juliet Mitchell which states that patriarchy is “the law of the father”,¹⁷ and Michelle Barrett’s interpretation which defines it as ‘an overarching category of male dominance’.¹⁸ This was particularly

¹⁴ K. Saunders and G. Bolton, “Girdled for war: Women’s Mobilisations in World War Two” Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (Eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia*, Marrickville, Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1992, p.395.

¹⁵ C. Williams, *Opencut: The Working Class in an Australian Mining Town*, North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1981, p.26. Eisenstein states that exploitation of labour under a capitalist system affects both men and women from the relationship of the wages and profits perspective, which at the same time oppresses marginalised groups including women.

¹⁶ Z. Eisenstein as cited in C. Williams, *Opencut: The Working Class in an Australian Mining Town*, Ibid.

¹⁷ J. Mitchell, cited in J.J. Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1984, p. 14.

¹⁸ M. Barrett, cited in J.J. Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1994, p.14.

marked in regional Queensland where primary industry was mainly orientated towards masculine employment. Thus male dominance under which women were relegated to the lowest level of employment in the work place, or to “their place” in the home, was maintained as the quintessential social norm.¹⁹

At the cessation of hostilities it was the official view that women who had been employed in work other than women’s traditional occupations for the duration of World War Two should resume their role in society as housewives and mothers. This view was supported by the trade unions,²⁰ and women’s magazines such as the *Australian Women’s Weekly*.²¹ However an article in *The Australian Quarterly*, June 1943 questioned whether women employed in industry, or enlisted in the armed forces during World War Two, would want to return to the domestic scene in the post-war period.²² Figures supplied by Lyn Beaton concerning women’s employment in the post-war period indicate that many women did stay in the work force.²³ To some degree this movement was duplicated in regional Queensland. Interviewees for the oral history component of the thesis testified that women continued to be employed, at both the

¹⁹ There were however two events which were the result of women moving into the field of men’s work during World War Two that had an important impact on women’s roles in the workplace later in the century. Firstly women became contributors to the family economy and secondly middle class women entered the work force. Nevertheless there was also a continuity in women’s employment in traditional women’s work.

²⁰ M. Lake, “The War over Women’s Work”, V.Burgman, and J. Lee, (Eds.), *A Most Valuable Acquisition: A People’s History of Australia since 1788*, Ringwood, Penguin, 1988, p.206.

²¹ *A WW* 5 February, 1944, p. 10, 8 July, 1944, p.2, 2 September, 1944, p.2. 16 February, 1946, p. 10, Held at John Oxley Library, Microfilm/S0161.

²² E.C. McGrath, “The Future of Women in Industry”, *The Australian Quarterly*, June, 1943. pp.39-45.

²³ L. Beaton, “The Importance of Women’s Paid Labour: Women at Work in World War II”, M.Bevege, et.al., *Worth Her Salt*, Sydney, Hale & Iremonger, 1982, p.97. Beaton’s sources for these figures: Commonwealth Year Books 1939-1950, Hansard, 5 August, 1958, pp. 66-7, and Labour Report, No.38. No statistics have been located which demonstrate what percentage of the figures cited in Beaton’s analysis of the work force during the periods mentioned came from regional Queensland.

Rockhampton and Gladstone meatworks, after the defeat of the Japanese forces brought an end to the war.²⁴ Nevertheless it is maintained that during the period covered by the thesis females were perceived to have a lower social status than males. This notion stemmed from a patriarchal culture which promoted male characteristics and earning capacity as dominant social factors.

The most sensational and lasting impact of the enlistment of woman power during the war was the change in the type of work they performed, especially in the move away from domestic service.²⁵ As demonstrated by Joy Damousi, with the onset of total war in 1942 women's labour became a "valuable commodity", even if it was on a lower rung of new employment opportunities.²⁶ As the thesis demonstrates it took time for women to climb upwards from this position, but it was an important first step. The thesis concurs with Richard White's summary of social change as being a way of life altered by the impact of war which will "never return to the old pattern" and can never be the same again.²⁷ Changing social attitudes towards women's perceptions of themselves as being sexually desirable occurred during the war years, and post-war was further endorsed by the upsurge in advertising and marketing of fashion in all forms of the media.²⁸ Then in the 1950s the advent of the nuclear family with better housing. more employment

²⁴ Interviews conducted by G. Johansen with A. R. at Rockhampton, 9 April 1998, and B.J. at Gladstone, 4 May, 1998. Other past meat works employees also confirmed this statement.

²⁵ R. White, "War and Australian Society", M. McKernan and M. Browne, (Eds.), *Australia Two Centuries of War & Peace*, Canberra, AWM, 1988, p.412. White states that it dropped from 19.3% in 1939 to 5.2% in 1943, and although it rose again to 6% in 1945, by 1954 it had dropped to 3.6%.

²⁶ J. Damousi, "The Drums of War", K. Saunders and R. Evans (Eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia*, Sydney, Harcourt Brace, 1992, p. 373.

²⁷ R. White, "Post mortems: the Impact of War on Australian Society", Australian War Memorial History Paper, 11-15 February, 1985, p.7. Cited with the consent of the author.

²⁸ M. Lake, "Female Desires: The Meaning of World War 11", *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol.24, No.95, October, 1990, pp.267-284.

opportunities, and technology brought further change. It is clear that the events of the period, and the differences in gender relationship which they brought, set the stage for changes to women's lives in the ensuing years.

The thesis asserts that events of the 1940-1965 period affected women at different levels of society in a variety of ways, despite a fairly wide acceptance of the idea of a classless Australian society in the Menzies years. The concept of classlessness, which began with the call on women to participate in the work place and in public life during World War Two, was given impetus during the 1950s and 1960s, by an unprecedented boom in urbanisation. There was an acute housing shortage during the 1940s.²⁹ This was a flow-on from the depression in the interwar years when houses had fallen into disrepair, followed by the years of the Second World War when there was a shortage of labour and building supplies. Families were frequently forced into sharing houses with others. However, as the 1950s progressed the housing situation improved, and the ideal of the nuclear family became entrenched as families spread out from inner city suburbs. As stated by Robert Connell and T.H. Irving, suburbanisation encroached on perceptions of class distinctiveness and helped in the process of the fragmentation of class consciousness.³⁰ In these new housing developments suburban populations were not rigidly stratified, but were made up of people from various income groups.³¹ The resultant uniformity of the suburbs is described in some

²⁹ W. Prest, "Housing, income and saving in war-time", Typescript, Dept of Economics, University of Melbourne, 1952, p.20.

³⁰ R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History*, Melbourne Longman Cheshire 1992, pp.201-2.

³¹ J. Craik, "Verandahs and Frangipani: Women in the Queensland house", G. Reekie, (Ed.), *On the Edge*, St. Lucia, QUP, 1994, p.149.

detail by Donald Horne.³² Together with the availability of technology in the home, and the liberal philosophy of the Menzies government, it gave rise to the notion that there was no class distinction in these new urban areas.

Connell and Irving, also assert that capitalist dominance under the Menzies government entered a new phase after the defeat of Labor, caused by the clash between the right and left factions in the late 1940s.³³ Known as an industrial welfare capitalism, two features in particular contributed to the notion of classlessness. They were the provision of the means by which the working class could have better material standards, and the notion of “cementing” the classes with an ideology of anti-communism thus, as Gramsci has demonstrated, displacing the concept of institutional location of power with an ideological concept to achieve bourgeois hegemony.³⁴

Despite the assumption that the inclusion of women in wartime activities during the war years levelled out pre-war class differences, evidence points to the fact that such a generalisation is not valid. As pointed out by Williams the attachment of the working class to bourgeois hegemony in the work place filtered through to the division of labour in the home.³⁵ The notion of classlessness, emerging as it did after a period of economic depression and war, to became widely accepted in

³² D. Horne, *The Lucky Country*, Ringwood, Penguin, 1964, pp.26-27.

³³ R. Connell and T.H. Irving, *op.cit.*, 1992, p.194.

³⁴ B. Smart. *Foucault, Marxism, and Critique*, London, Routledge, 1983, p.40.

³⁵ C. Williams, *op. cit.*

the 1950s was, as indicated by Richard White³⁶ and Janet McCallam,³⁷ a feature of life in the suburbs of the capital cities. As White put it, a prominent symbol was the concept of “every man and his Holden.”³⁸

Class mobility which surfaced coincidentally with the notion of classlessness, and the introduction of technology in the home and the workplace, resulted in a broader stratification of society. However, it did not have the same impact in regional Queensland as in suburban Brisbane. It will be argued that this was mostly due to distance and isolation, and the conservative nature of primary industry employment in Queensland which was the mainstay of the Queensland economy.³⁹

The thesis also maintains that current assumptions which postulate that the period of reconstruction was one of uniform financial security are without foundation. It puts forward the argument that these notions do not take into account the shortages of consumer goods in the early post-war period, or rising inflation after the lifting of price controls. The Depression of the 1930s, closely followed by World War Two, had decreased women's access to many commodities. Additionally, the impact of increased consumerism arising from an increased commodity market after the cessation of rationing in the post-war period, created

³⁶ R. White, *Reinventing Australia*, St. Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1992, Chapter 10.

³¹ J. McCalman, “The Originality of Ordinary Lives”, W. Hudson and G. Norton, (Eds.), *Creating Australia: Changing Australian History*,

³⁸ R. White, op. cit., p.42.

³⁹ Bulbeck, C., “The Hegemony of Queensland's Difference”, *Journal of Australian Historical Studies*, Vol.21, November 1987, pp. 19-28

the need for the home economy to be carefully managed.⁴⁰ Nevertheless there was a change in social values which stressed the importance of individual success in the workplace and the belief that a pleasant lifestyle could be attained by the acquisition of items that provided personal gratification. These ideological meanings were dispersed not only by advertisements, but also in the text of popular songs, and by the cinemas, commercial radio stations and magazines, and later through television. As stated by John Fiske the sensualities of the signifiers, to be found in the words of the song, or the picture, are the feel of the gold chain on the wrist, or the feel of the gun, and thus they become powerful informers of the pleasure to be obtained through ownership.⁴¹

The existing historiography concerning women in Queensland, does not differentiate between the way changes during the 1940-1965 period impacted on the status of women in this state compared to those in other Australian states. There is also very little which considers differences in social conditions for women in the suburbs of Brisbane and those in regional Queensland during these years. A study of the few secondary sources available, media reports, and a comprehensive oral history survey conducted in three coastal towns of Central Queensland, namely Rockhampton, Gladstone and Bundaberg and their rural hinterlands, has revealed that although there were similarities there were also differences. The thesis seeks to analyse more fully than has been the case in the past the causes of that diversity.

⁴⁰ Evidence of this is to be found in newspapers, and women's magazines published in the late 1940s and the 1950s. It is further endorsed by oral history interviewees conducted by the author in Central Queensland.

⁴¹ J. Fiske, *Television Culture*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 261.

Chilla Bulbeck's dissertation on the role of Colin Clark in Queensland politics in the post-war period points out that by basing the economy on primary industry there were few opportunities for employment for women in regional Queensland.⁴² Additionally, Humphrey McQueen⁴³ and Peter Charlton⁴⁴ subscribe to the concept of Queensland difference. McQueen like Bulbeck argues that Queensland differences are anchored in the primary industry bias of the political economy. Charlton on the other hand puts forward the opinion that the explanation for difference in Queensland is regionalism, and correctly points to the rail system in this state as being a factor contributing to this development. However it is also necessary to look at the physical geography of Queensland and the purposes for which the land was developed.

Gail Reekie's *On the Edge*⁴⁵ supports the above views on Queensland difference but is more specific about how it affects women. She points to the male nature of Queensland primary industry, which not only excludes women from many types of employment, but also suggests that the role of women in unpaid work on the family farm substantially accounts for the lowered status of women in this State. The thesis concurs with this view because of the strength of patriarchal social mores in existence during the 1940-1965 period. Interviews conducted in Central Queensland, which form the oral history component of the thesis, reveal that this

⁴² C. Bulbeck, "Colin Clark and the Greening of Queensland: the Influence of a Senior Public Servant on Queensland Economic Development 1938 to 1953", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.33, 1987. pp.7-18.

⁴³ H. McQueen, "Queensland: A State of Mind", *Meanjin*, Vol.3, 1979, p.41.

⁴⁴ P Charlton, *State of mind: Why Queensland is Different*, North Ryde, Methuen-Hayes, 1983, pp.45-49.

⁴⁵ G. Reekie, "Women, Region and the Queensland Difference", G.Reekie (Ed.), *On the Edge*, St. Lucia, UQP, 1994, p.10.

argument holds true in regional areas of this state. It contends that this made a substantial distinction between the social roles of women in regional Queensland and those in the Brisbane suburbs.⁴⁶

Women in regional Queensland, were not involved to any large extent in war time secondary industrial production. As well as Clark's agrarianism the geography of Queensland was another deterrent to the establishment of secondary industries during World War Two. As demonstrated by Helen Taylor,⁴⁷ Queensland's proximity to the war zone placed the eastern seaboard within easy range of enemy bombing raids. War production was thus restricted to places south of Brisbane. Thus many changes, such as the employment of women in areas of work which had previously been the province of the male work force, did not affect regional women to the same degree as it affected women in suburban Brisbane. Additionally they did not gain the benefits wider work opportunities brought in the form of involvement in administrative work in the public sphere, such as the management of state-wide funds raised to help the war effort. This took place in Brisbane. Moreover, because in regional Queensland work for women was for the most part confined to low paid traditional women's work, they did not gain a stronger voice in the family economy.

Although in regional Queensland towns many were engaged in voluntary work for

⁴⁶ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with E.S. at Bundaberg on 11 May 1998. Edna talked about how farm women were expected to help with the outside work but never received any assistance with household chores. She also talked about how many had to account for all the money they spent on household expenses.

⁴⁷ H. Taylor (a), "'Total War is Women's War...all can Serve': War Mobilisation - a matter of Geography", *Queensland Geography Journal*, Vol.13, 4th Series, 1988, pp.71.88.

the war effort, this did not always include women living in surrounding rural areas due to distance and poor communication facilities. In rural areas women did engage in some voluntary work, but this was usually contained within the type of work that women did in the home, and in fund raising efforts for local community projects. The scope for voluntary work in Brisbane was much broader and nearly all women contributed in one form or another.⁴⁸

Class identity for both middle class and working class in regional Queensland was defined by a more visible financial divide. Housing for the working class tended to be situated closer to the work place, as for example at Lakes Creek in Rockhampton and South Gladstone in the Gladstone area. Meatworks which were major sources of employment were situated in both of these areas. In the 1950s and ensuing years, housing projects put in place by the Queensland Housing Commission for workers in regional Queensland also tended to be established close to industrial or down town areas. Private housing developments occurred in what were considered to be better areas situated away from industry and preferably with a scenic outlook. Gladstone is a good example of this type of town planning.

A further contributory factor to the retention of class identity in regional Queensland was that technology was slower to appear in homes or businesses. This was partly due to the fact that there was still no electricity in the outlying

⁴⁸ M. Oppenheimer, "Volunteers in Action: Voluntary Work in Australia 1939-1945", Ph.D. thesis, Macquarie University, 1995.

areas of towns throughout the regions or their hinterlands.⁴⁹ Moreover, because there were fewer paid work opportunities for working class women they were unable to contribute to the family economy, so that the cost of labour saving devices was a deterrent to such purchases. Additionally, during the “Baby Boomer” period in the 1950s women in the suburbs of Brisbane, like those elsewhere in Australia, reared their children with advice from Dr. Spock. However in places like Gladstone, and even larger regional centres in Queensland, working class women tended to do as their mothers had done before them, and ignored Dr. Spock.

Additionally in regional Queensland the very nature of the rural economy was such that class difference was more noticeable. Wages for both male and female workers employed in primary industry and retail work were low, and employers were few in number and well known. *Also*, in Australian culture, large land holders had always been regarded as occupying the top rung of society. Social change was generally not regarded favourably, particularly in rural areas where the seasons came and went, and life remained very much the same as it always had. This perpetuated the idea of a class structure which upheld the concept of male domination in the public sphere and relegated women to the private sphere of the home,

It has been found necessary throughout the thesis to resort to the use of statistical information. This is particularly true in that part of the thesis that deals with the

⁴⁹ J. Craik, “Verandahs and Frangipani: Women in the Queensland House”, G. Reekie (Ed.), *“On the Edge”*, St. Lucia, UQP, 1994, p.158.

economy, especially in relation to numbers of women engaged in the paid work force in Queensland. As previously mentioned work opportunities for women in regional Queensland did not rate very highly and it was only through the use of information supplied in Commonwealth censuses that this could be succinctly demonstrated.⁵⁰

Other primary sources include state and national archives which have mostly contained generalised information such as the roles of women in the armed forces and war time industry. These sources also provided data on such things as the role of the Director General of Manpower. Archival material at a local level was researched at Central Queensland University, local historical societies, and hospital archives in Central Queensland. These sources provided a wide variety of documents, information on the role of local women in the arts, diaries, letters, typescripts, pamphlets and manuscripts.

As stated there is little historiography concerning women in regional Queensland during the 1940-1965 period. Additionally, time and distance constraints prevented the possibility of conducting oral research over the whole state. This was a factor in the decision to concentrate on the three coastal towns of Rockhampton, Gladstone, and Bundaberg in Central Queensland, which despite some local variations, qualified to act as a paradigm. This area comes under the same state control with its bias towards primary industry, and a similar patriarchal culture with other towns in this state. Sixty interviews have been conducted for

⁵⁰ Commonwealth of Australia Censuses, 1933, 1947, 1954 and 1961.

the oral history component of the thesis, and local newspapers published in the towns on which the thesis focuses provided information which confirmed much of the oral evidence.

Substantial research conducted into editions of the *Australian Women's Weekly* published during the war years revealed support by the editorial body of this magazine for roles put forward by the government of the day. After the entry of Japan into this conflict, when women were called on to combat the shortage of manpower, the *Weekly* enthusiastically supported government initiatives to persuade women that they had a patriotic duty to serve their country. Prior to this time it had endorsed the notion that women should “keep the home fires burning”. However it can be assumed that for readers of this magazine in regional Queensland this meant little, as changes in policy implemented by the government over the period did not impact on them due to Queensland’s proximity to the war zone. Some articles endorsed oral evidence regarding the difficulties posed for housewives during the war and post-war years in regard to rationing, and shortages of consumer goods.⁵¹ Other events such as voluntary work performed by women on a national level were reported in the *Women's Weekly*. This substantiated oral testimony in Central Queensland where the sheer volume of voluntary work performed by women was made very evident by interviewees.

Reports in the minutes of meetings of voluntary organisations such as the Women’s National Emergency League and the Queensland Country Women’s

⁵¹ A WW, 3 March, 1943.

Associations provided information not otherwise available.⁵² Additionally reports in local newspapers in regional Queensland not only highlighted voluntary work performed by women for the war effort, they also presented valuable evidence of the achievements of local women in the field of local government, and the arts. These reports also pointed to ways in which events affected regional women differently to women in Brisbane.⁵³ Press reports are invaluable sources of information about events as and when they occurred. They also publicise the ways in which women stepped out of the private world of the home into the public arena.

Despite intensive archival research and discussion with colleagues and interviewees no evidence was obtained of progressive women's organisations, or other organisations in which women's voices may have been heard, except in the field of the arts, the girl guide movement, and the Young Women's Christian Association, and branches of the Queensland Country Women's Association. These were, for the most part, all markedly conservative. In Rockhampton there was an English Society which operated during the period of the thesis in which women played a prominent role, but the single document located at the CQU Collection merely emphasised the circumspect nature of this organisation. Close examination of minutes of women's organisations also failed to give any indication of militant action by women in the Central Queensland region.

⁵² Minutes of the Women's National Emergency Legion, Held at CQ Collection, Rockhampton Interview conducted by G. Johansen with E.S. and J.B (president of the Bundaberg Branch of the Queensland Country Women's Association) at Bundaberg, 11 May, 1998.

⁵³ An instance of this is an article giving details of the policies of one woman's campaign for election to the Queensland state government. Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin*, 20 July, 1957, p.7.

The oral history interviews conducted for the thesis are an invaluable source of local information and sixty interviews have been conducted for the this component of the research for the thesis. Class issues became evident as in the case of the woman who as a young girl had been sent out to do domestic work and was taunted because she was “just an orphan girl”.⁵⁴ Evidence of poverty and the living conditions of Aboriginal women in Gladstone are not issues that made headline news in the local papers.⁵⁵ Additionally, no written sources provided information about the enthusiasm of regional women to undertake adult education courses through which they acquired personal enrichment and learned new work skills, during the post-war period.⁵⁶

Louise Douglas, Alan Roberts and Ruth Thomson in their seminal work on oral history acknowledge that in this form of information gathering there is a great potential for distortion.⁵⁷ The thesis argues that while this cannot be ignored, similar problems which can affect accuracy can be found in documentary evidence, and secondary sources can also be inaccurate. However, oral accounts of events, parts of which may be emphasised or played down, reflect their impact on people at a particular time in a given set of circumstances, and explain much about how they coped with such incidents. The use of oral evidence collected in interviews for the thesis is therefore discriminate, and every effort has been made

⁵⁴ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with G.B. at Rockhampton, on 22 February, 1998.

⁵⁵ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with P.L. at Gladstone on 27 April, 1998.

⁵⁶ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with K.S. at Emu Park on 23 April, 1999. By this means women not only overcame “the tyranny of distance” they gained knowledge and self esteem which aided their movement from the private to the public sphere.

⁵⁷ L. Douglas, A. Roberts R. Thompson, *Oral History*, North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1988, pp.21-22. The authors list, reliability of the original observations, correct recall of observations, knowledge of the subject background, and the interviewers own biases, as being factors which could affect the accuracy of reports.

to seek other evidence that supports or endorses the accuracy of oral testimony that has been used.

The methodology used in the conduct of oral history interviews was that of structured questionnaires (See Appendix 2). While these were not rigidly adhered to, it was useful as a notation of the issues on which it was hoped the interviews would yield specific information. In most cases the interview began with a profile of the interviewee, partly to set the respondent at ease, and partly to place a particular event within the time frame by using the age of the interviewee as a guide.

Most interviews were held with women who had lived in Central Queensland during the 1940-1965 period. Nearly all of these were widows, but in cases where they still had partners the interviews were conducted with both. In a few instances the children of women who were no longer living were interviewed. This was done in cases where specific information was required and usually proved to be rewarding. In particular instances, as in the case of adult education, the interviewees were male. No interviewees requested anonymity. (See Appendix 3).

The first chapter of the thesis considers the strategic significance of the geographical situation of Queensland and its proximity to enemy held territory during World War Two, and maintains that this contributed to the difference in the liberating effect of this conflict for women in Central Queensland. Despite the national call for all members of society irrespective of gender to contribute to the war effort, it is demonstrated that this reduced the possibilities of paid work in

war industries for Central Queensland women. It also looks at the question of paid work opportunities for women in Central Queensland in the light of the agrarian economy which was advanced as a major concept in the “Queensland is different” debate. Additionally it points to the ways in which women were affected by Manpower Regulations and the equal pay for women issue.

Chapter Two gives an overview of the pressure to which Australian women were subjected in the drive for recruitment for enlistment in the armed forces and war industry during wartime. Additionally, it discusses other pressures such as the handling of the family finances, coping with identity cards, rationing, food and clothing shortages and blackout regulations. It also demonstrates that there were differences in the way these conditions affected women in regional Queensland. Evidence is presented showing the difference between women’s voluntary work in Central Queensland, and that undertaken by women in Brisbane and the metropolis.

Chapter Three looks at the problems created by the absence of the male head of the family in the management of the family finances for women who, prior to World War Two, had only been given a small allowance for the purchase of food. It looks at the difficulties faced by women who had to take over the family farm or family business, and points out that even under these circumstances, gender difference was still firmly entrenched in the idea that women should return to the home and take up their role as housewife and mother after the cessation of hostilities. This principle was countersigned in 1944 by the catchcry that Australians needed to “populate or perish”. Nevertheless wartime difficulties

followed by inflation and rising costs resulted in many married women continuing to seek paid employment to supplement the family budget in the post-war period. In Brisbane wartime industries were turned over to the production of items which had been in short supply during the war years, but in the Central towns of Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Gladstone there were still few work opportunities except in the sphere of women's traditional work. It is also shown that there were differences affecting consumerism, between life in regional Queensland and life in suburbia for the housewife.

Chapter Four provides a detailed examination of the types of work that were available in this field for women in Central Queensland and refers to differences and similarities in gender and class in regional towns and the Brisbane metropolitan area throughout the chapter. In both Brisbane and the central region women accepted boarders into their homes, took in sewing, washing and/or ironing. In Gladstone in particular it frequently meant a return to accepting paid domestic work for those who could afford it. It is maintained that nursing and teaching were deemed suitable work for women, and points out that before the war their conditions and pay were poor. Evidence is provided however to show that during the period of the thesis nurses began their endeavours to resist their enforced subservience at the foot of the medical profession, and to take steps towards their own emancipation. Additionally, through the leadership of women in the Queensland Teachers' Union teachers also sought better pay and conditions in their support of the Equal Pay campaign. This is followed by a discussion of the agrarian policies of the Bureau of Industry headed by Colin Clark which were a key element in the prevention of the establishment of secondary industries which

might have employed women in Queensland, and this was markedly the case in the central region.

There was some paid employment for women in primary industry during the Second World War, as for example the meat industry in Rockhampton and Gladstone, and this was continued in the post-war period. However, this was not available to women in Bundaberg where the economy was based on the sugar industry. Work for women in service industries in Central Queensland presented a somewhat brighter picture with Queensland Rail employing women in various capacities. A few women worked in the fishing industry alongside their husbands, but this was regarded as “helping out”. Nevertheless it was an important economic factor, particularly in Gladstone where, as previously mentioned, the meatworks closed down in the off seasons.

The role of professional and business women is the subject of Chapter Six, and it is maintained that the part they played in diverse undertakings in Central Queensland during the period of the thesis was a continuity of very early female medical and journalistic professionals, thus paving the way for a wider acceptance of women into professional fields. These early leaders of the career women of the 1980s and 1990s demonstrated that, in the parlance of the 1990s, “women can do anything”. More importantly, by stepping into what had been a male dominated workplace, they undermined the power of males to control professional values and standards. The difficulties of women state-wide wishing to enter the business world during this time, when banks and other lending institutions refused to entertain any thought of lending money to women, has also been demonstrated.

Chapter Seven relating to the home and the housewife considers the effects of war on the marriage rate in Queensland, and demonstrates the outcome of the housing crisis on women in regional towns in the post-war period, in comparison to those in Brisbane. Additionally it examines the result of the growth of suburbanisation in the metropolitan area which gave rise to the concept of classlessness. Evidence is provided to show that this was merely a social construct. The thesis concludes with the assertion that changes in women's leisure time activities, such as participation in all forms of the arts, provided them with self-enrichment, and were an important contribution to the establishment of women's liberation in the mid to late 1960s. It emphasises the importance of adult education in regional Queensland which provided them with the skills needed to boost their confidence to step out into the public sphere.