

CHAPTER FOUR

"Suitable Work for Women" Women's Traditional Work

With the exception of the war years most Queensland women sought employment in traditional women's work in the 1940-1965 period. For the purpose of the thesis traditional women's work is regarded as work which was considered suitable for women prior to women's liberation during the 1970s and beyond. The thesis contends that the patriarchal culture which existed in the period under discussion was gendered to give males greater power both in the work place, and in the home. Thus decisions in regard to the types of employment considered suitable for women were made by men. Furthermore because rates of pay for women were low, and because the care of the home and children was seen as women's primary job, when women did engage in paid work after marriage it was often seen as just "helping out".

It is also 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. However, although in regional Queensland there was a continuity of belief in the mores of the existing culture there was a movement, particularly in the areas of nursing and teaching, which anticipated and explored notions of resistance and emancipation. Additionally, it is asserted that as demonstrated by the secondary sources and the oral history component of the

thesis, differences existed between women's traditional employment in Brisbane and regional Queensland. This chapter of the thesis focuses on five spheres of traditional women's work in which women were regularly employed; domestic work, retail shop work, clerical work, education and nursing.

As previously discussed primary production was the mainstay of Queensland regional towns and this industry was of a predominantly male nature. The thesis maintains that female employment was thus to a large degree restricted to traditional women's work, due to the lack of development of secondary industry which might have provided alternative work opportunities. Table 4.1 illustrates that while there was little work for women in the manufacturing industry in Brisbane there was even less in Central Queensland. As has been demonstrated in Chapter one, this occurred because of the economic policies of the Queensland government through the influence of Colin Clark who ruled that economic efficiency took precedence over industrial development.¹

¹ C. Bulbeck, "Colin Clark and the Greening of Queensland: The Influence of a Senior Public Servant on Queensland Economic Development 1938 to 1952," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.33, 1987, p.8.

Table 4.1: Numbers and Percentages of Women employed in Manufacturing Industries 1933-1966 in Brisbane and Environs, Rockhampton, Gladstone and Bundaberg.

1933	Adult Female Population	Females in Manufacturing Industry	Percentage
Brisbane and Environs	156 223	8 159	5.2
Bundaberg	10 889	122	2.07
Gladstone	1 473	12	0.8
Rockhampton	15 118	337	2.2
1947			
Brisbane and Environs	206 928	9 996	4.8
Bundaberg	8 193	157	1.9
Gladstone	2 558	55	2.2
Rockhampton	17 874	557	3.1
1954			
Brisbane and Environs	257 416	2 284	1.34
Bundaberg	10 258	137	1.34
Gladstone	3 339	122	3.65
Rockhampton	20 951	288	1.37
1961			
Brisbane and Environs	3 16 679	13 246	2.56
Bundaberg	11 757	145	1.23
Gladstone	5.495	122	1.86
Rockhampton	20.495	440	1.96
1966			
Brisbane and Environs	304 894	18 316	4.64
Bundaberg	12 949	205	1.58
Gladstone	5 157	74	1.49
Rockhampton	23 237	453	1.95

Source: Commonwealth Bureau of Statistics Censuses.'

Additionally a report in the *Queensland Teachers Journal* emanating from a knowledge of Clark's adherence to the beliefs of Catholicism maintains that

² As pointed out in Chapter Five, in 1947 the Fish Board was established at Gladstone and controlled the industry. No records have been located but it is probable that under the Board's management women were employed in the storage facility on the new wharf built in 1953. No evidence of any other new industrial activity at Gladstone at this time has been found.

because he observed the dictates of the Catholic church, he was the person about whom the following statement was made:

A distinguished Australian writer on social questions recently said that he could think of nothing more calculated to unfit a girl for motherhood than girls' high school and university education of the present day³

Women's lack of access to a strong economic base in regional Queensland strengthened men's position as head of the family, and further entrenched the division of labour into men's work, and work considered suitable for women. In Brisbane and other cities in Australia this did not occur to such a marked degree, but did account to some extent for the continuation of women's forced acceptance of a lower social status in the work place.

Among the cultural baggage brought from England by upper middle class immigrants in the early days of settlement, was the protocol of large household establishments in which there was a strict "pecking order" among the "downstairs" employees. This usually ranged from the butler or the housekeeper at the top, to the scullery maid and the ostler at the bottom. Those in the lower range were subject to disparagement not only by their employers, but also those considered "above them" in the "pecking order". This became apparent during interviews with Central Queensland women who were reluctant to admit they had been employed as domestics during the 1940-1965 period. As will be demonstrated by this chapter the "pecking order" was not restricted to domestic work. It was present in all types of women's traditional employment.

³ "The Commentator", "Teacher Recruitment" in *Queensland Teachers Journal*, Vol.Liii, No.4, 20 May, 1948, p.21.

Research for the thesis was conducted for both secondary and primary sources which referred to women's domestic work in regional Queensland during the time frame for the thesis, but very little was located. What was found was of a general nature and was not specific to either Brisbane or regional Queensland. As a result it is necessary to rely more heavily on the oral history component of the thesis to fill the gap. Jill Matthews's work is useful in as much as it offers a comparison of how women were affected by events in capital cities, and the ways in which these same events affected women in regional Queensland, and highlights the different circumstances in which they occurred.⁴

Kingston' points to one very important phenomenon with regard to this aspect of women's work. While men generally retained their control over the employment of women, in the sphere of domestic work it was usually women who were in control of the employment. This was not always the case in regional Queensland where Aboriginal women were sent from the reserves to work for pastoralists, government personnel, or any other white person who requested their services. Nevertheless, as recorded by Jackie Huggins,⁶ they usually came under the control of white women. Huggins also stated that it was 1965/68 before Aborigines were included in pastoral awards.

Research for primary sources dealing with the work done by women in the retail trade only revealed lists of retail businesses in Queensland in the Firms Register.⁷

⁴ J. J. Matthews, *Good and Mad Women*, North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1984, p.87.

⁵ B. Kingston, cited in J.J. Matthews, op. cit., p.69.

⁶ J. Huggins, "Firing on in the Mind: Aboriginal Women Domestic Servants in the Inter-war Years" *Hecate*, Vol.13, No.2, 1987/8, pp. 5-23.

⁷ Firms Register, A/5044. QSA, Brisbane.

While some firms were registered in the names of both husband and wife it was not indicated if women received equal benefit from any profits made by the business. Despite statements by Matthews and Raelene Francis' that women were employed as shop assistants in the early 1900s little interest in this field of women's work has been aroused among historians. Gail Reekie⁹ looks at a number of issues concerning women and the retail trade and states that in the twentieth century middle class women continued to criticise retailers for their treatment of their female employees. Despite rigorous research only one publication dealing with women's work in specific retail businesses was located.

sp This was Dianne Kirby's¹⁰ work about the employment of barmaids. Therefore in the inquiry into this aspect of women's traditional work the thesis relies almost entirely on oral evidence gathered from interviews conducted in Central Queensland.

Matthews states that prior to 1870 poverty was the driving force which drove young single working class women to seek domestic employment which prior to the introduction of technology in the home was very labour intensive." She further states that in the late 1800s work in shops, offices and even industry, was becoming available. However it was not until during and after World War One that women were widely accepted as office workers. Nevertheless as she asserts:

⁸ R. Francis, "Shifting Barriers: Twentieth Century Women's Labour Patterns" K. Saunders and R. Evans, (Eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia*, Marrickville, Harcourt Brace, 1992, p.246.

⁹ G. Reekie, *Temptations: Sex, Selling and the Department Store*, St. Leonards, Allen and Unwin 1993, p.122.

¹⁰ D. Kirkby, *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs*, Melbourne, CUP, 1997.

¹¹ J.J. Matthews, op. cit., p.70.

The marketplace, with its less paternal relations as compared to those of households, with its opportunities for individual autonomy, an independent wage and things to buy with it, came to predominate in the working lives of working class women.¹²

Once again this emphasises historical preoccupation with capital city development as in regional Queensland most girls left school at age 14 and did not have the necessary skills to obtain employment in offices.

Like other areas of women's traditional work, women's employment in offices has received very little attention from historians. Again the thesis has had to rely on oral testimony gathered in Central Queensland to fill the gap. Even this was limited as there were few establishments which engaged a large staff. Additionally women were only employed in office work in specific categories which debarred them from reaching managerial positions in the period of the thesis with the result that there were only cosmetic differences in the types of work performed. Some training courses were available through secondary education in the larger towns but according to interviewees this was limited to typing, shorthand and some elementary forms of business principles and practice.¹³

While a number of secondary sources are available on the subject of nursing very little has been published concerning nursing in regional Queensland. In this state as elsewhere during the Second World War, the shortage of medical personnel in hospitals meant that nurses were called on to work longer hours, so it was not surprising that in the post-war years they began to organise to improve their

¹² Ibid, p.71.

¹³ Interviews conducted with C.W. at Gladstone, 20 November, 1997, J.B. at Bundaberg, 2 September, 1998, J.C. at Rockhampton, 22 September, 1998, and others.

conditions. Nurses at the Rockhampton Base Hospital in 1947 prepared a “Nurses Charter” which was presented to the Rockhampton Hospital Board.¹⁴ (For full details see Appendix VI). Additionally, entries in a Student Nurses Association Minute Book revealed that action had been taken at the Bundaberg Base Hospital in 1951, to bring about a break down of the hierarchical structure which subordinated nurses to a lower class social stratum. Other entries in the minute book demonstrated that steps had been proposed to encourage nurses at Gladstone and Maryborough to form branches of the Student Nurses Association.

Issues such as these were the subject of a contribution by Glenda Strachan in a journal article.” Strachan looks at the concept of what was supposed to be the character of a good nurse and ironically points to the fact that this made hospitals cheaper to run. She also points to women’s subordination to male medical officers in hospitals. Helen Gregory considers it was also an area of concern for nurses, when in the 1950s recruits to the profession left without completing the course, and registered nurses left the profession.¹⁶

Throughout the whole of the twentieth century women have been accepted into

¹⁴ “Nurses Charter”, Rockhampton Hospital. Presented to the Rockhampton Hospitals Board by trainee nurses, dated 1 October, 1947.

¹⁵ G. Strachan, “Sacred Office, Trade or Profession? The Dilemma of Nurses Involvement in industrial activities in Queensland 1900 to 1950”, R. Frances and B. Skates (Eds.), *Women, Work and the Labor Movement in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand*, as Issue 61, *Labor History*, November, 1991, p.148.

¹⁶ H. Gregory, *A Tradition of Care: A History of Nursing at the Royal Brisbane Hospital*, Brisbane, Boolarong, 1988, pp,101-102.

the teaching profession, albeit on the lowest level of the hierarchal order in the early years, and at a lower rate of pay. Female teachers were amongst the first women to struggle against this gender discrimination and obtain equal pay with their male colleagues. The year 1900 saw the first of concerted efforts in this campaign when a deputation of female teachers in Brisbane to the Minister of Education, James Drake, took place.¹⁷ It was closely followed by others in towns on the eastern seaboard of Queensland. The question of equal pay for teachers is an important issue for the thesis, as are discussions on the temporary employment status forced on married women teachers, and the difficulties placed on young single women posted to one teacher schools throughout the State.

As Eddie Clarke points out, gender differences in the workplace for teachers was apparent in unequal pay rates and in the duties to which they were assigned. Even in 1983 male teachers far outnumbered females as teachers of Maths/Science at secondary state schools. Of 1 654 teachers of these subjects **463** were female and 1 191 were male.¹⁸ It can be assumed that this ratio, thought at the time to be aligned to gender expertise, applied to both suburban and regional state schools.

Nursing

During the time frame for the thesis, so long as women had a sound basic education, the lack of other skills was not a deterrent to those seeking entry to the nursing profession: At the second biennial convention of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation based on the changing relationships between nurses and the

¹⁷ E. Clarke, *Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools*, Brisbane, Department of Education, 1985, pp.16-17.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp.39-47.

community in Britain, a paper was presented on *The Sociological History of Nursing*.¹⁹ This paper points to the fact that prior to the establishment of the nursing profession the care of the sick was seen as the responsibility of the housewife, although in the homes of the well-to-do a nurse would be added to the staff.²⁰ Hospitals had poor ventilation and were unsanitary, and often overcrowded. Women employed to care for the patients were untrained, drunkenness was common, in fact beer, and sometimes spirits, were part of the so-called nurses rations. Immorality was rife and as Florence Nightingale declared:

nursing was done by those who were “too old, too weak, too drunken, too dirty, too stolid or too bad to do anything else”²¹

Changes wrought by Nightingale began the transformation from the work of those early nurses into the profession as practised today in regional Queensland and elsewhere. By 1940, qualified nurses were relieved of some of the drudgery associated with some aspects of their work by the employment of ward orderlies.²² However working hours were still long and as one retired nurse put it:

...you were brought into line, we didn't do anything we shouldn't do, we weren't game to, because the sisters were too efficient and Dr. ..., who was the superintendent he saw to it that we didn't do anything wrong.²³

The bylaws of the Isis Hospitals Board of 1932 listed the duties of Matron, Sisters and Nurses as well as all other employees of the hospitals. “General Rules

¹⁹ A.A. Morrison, *The Sociological History of Nursing*, Paper presented at the second biennial convention of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation, 14 October, 1964.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 1.

²¹ Ibid, p.2.

²² Ibid, p.7.

²³ Interview conducted by W. Madsen with I.D., at Rockhampton on 4 October, 1996.

as to Nursing Staffs'' included items such as:

During their hours of duty the members of the nursing staff shall render cheerfully their whole time and attention to the work required of them, and shall not engage in any occupation of a private or personal nature. They shall be decorous and punctual, respectful and obedient.

They...shall be in the hospital each night not later than the hour prescribed by the Board, unless absent by permission of the Matron.

They shall, as part of their training, perform such needlework and housework as may be assigned to them.²⁴

In 1943 first year nurses pay per annum was 49 pounds (\$820) for working a 10.5 hour day but as stated by Val Donovan²⁵ at St. Martins Hospital this usually meant 12 hours per day and overtime was not paid. This compared with 60 pounds (\$120) per annum for female pupil probationary teachers, 83 pounds per annum for female shop assistants of 18 years of age, and 89 pounds per annum for female clerks. Employment in these fields was for a 44 hour week.²⁶

Nursing historiography supports the view that conditions altered very little until changes began to be made in the 1950s. Gregory points out that the nursing shortage, was caused by the difficulty of attracting recruits to the profession who stayed on to complete the four year course. Additionally, registered nurses left the profession because of poor working conditions.²⁷ She went on to point out that:

The difficulty in addressing the much more basic 'issue of whether trainees were to be regarded as students of a profession or as an inexpensive labour force was a far more serious problem.'²⁸

²⁴ Bylaws of the Isis Hospitals Board, held in the Bundaberg General Hospital Archives collection, pages un-numbered.

²⁵ V. Donovan, *St. Martins Hospital - A History*. Brisbane, Boolarong, 1995, p.65.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 66.

²⁷ H. Gregory, op. cit., p.101.

²⁸ Ibid.

Over-crowding, and economic pressures resulting from Queensland's free hospital system further exacerbated administration problems.

As demonstrated in the Rockhampton Hospital "Nurses' Charter" nurses themselves were making moves to improve their conditions.²⁹ It states that "other jobs multiply for girls, giving them greater freedom and better conditions generally", compared to the slow growth of improvements in the nursing profession. It refers to the shortage of nurses despite the growing need for nursing care. One suggestion in the "Charter" was that nurses living in quarters should be provided with rooms where they could entertain their friends without supervision. Dissatisfaction with conditions no doubt played a part in the shortage of nurses, which was Australia wide during and subsequent to World War Two.³⁰ A brief report in the *Central Queensland Herald*, stated that on 22 March, 1942 there were mass resignations at the Kempsey District Hospital.³¹

No documentary evidence of the Gladstone Hospital has been located prior to 1957.³² However, the Gladstone *Observer* published frequent reports from the Hospital Board, including reports from the then matron, Matron McCullagh, of difficulties experienced at the hospital due to the shortage of nurses. In the issue of the *Gladstone Observer* 2 September 1950 it was reported that the matron,

²⁹ "Nurses' Charter", Rockhampton Hospital. Presented to the Rockhampton Hospital Board by trainee nurses, dated 1 October, 1947, p. 1.

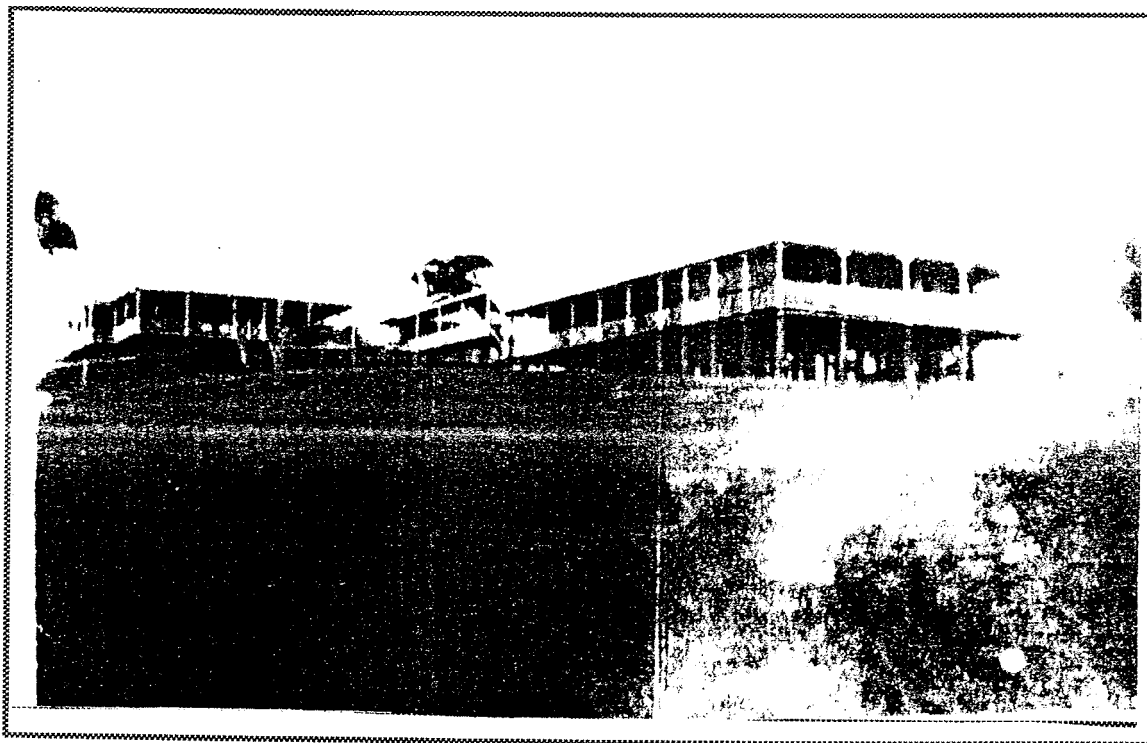
³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Central Queensland Herald*, 23 March, 1942, p.5. The article further stated that 21 out of 23 nursing staff, "including the matron and four senior sisters left yesterday because of dissatisfaction with conditions.

³² The few archives located referred only to the meetings of the Hospital Board and were concerned with buildings. There were also some nurses examination results. These items were not pertinent to the thesis.

Miss G. McCullagh, had told the hospital board that there was a shortage of 13 staff and that this included 2 sisters, 3 trainees, 5 assistants-in-nursing, 2 dressers, and one clerical staff member. She also reported that this shortage meant that nurses were compelled to work a considerable amount of overtime. These conditions for nurses were general at all Queensland hospitals at this time.

Illustration 4.1: Perched high on stilts the Gladstone Base Hospital c. 1940/1950 was regularly menaced by hordes of sandflies.



Source: Courtesy Gladstone City Council

An interviewee who had been a member of the Volunteer Aid Detachment, (VAD), during the second world war testified that she and several others worked as nurses' aides at the Gladstone Hospital during the war years. She said that the work she did was on a par with a first or second year nurse:

I did the same work as the nurses, giving needles, taking temperatures, and blood pressures, dressing wounds, taking stitches out and just general nursing but I never ever went into theatre.³³

³³ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with HW and FS at Gladstone, 16 April, 1998.

During the Second World War hospitals were regarded as being all-important to the national war effort. During 1942 when the threat of Japanese invasion was at its highest point, hospital staff were put under pressure. Due to the shortage of doctors, and to the dismay of members of the Rockhampton Hospital Board, it became necessary to appoint a woman, Dr. R. Beveridge, as Resident Medical Officer. As will be pointed out in Chapter Six not many qualified female doctors practiced in Queensland. There was a shortage of nursing staff, yet according to D. Carment and Frances Killion,³⁴ two nursing sisters were threatened with dismissal if they did not produce coupons for the tea they drank.

Rationing, in respect of extra coupons for uniforms requested by Matron Costello at Rockhampton, was the subject of correspondence with the Minister for Health and Home Affairs.³⁵ Matron had asked for the provision of extra coupons so that additional uniforms could be purchased, because of the climatic conditions experienced in Queensland. The request was refused. Generally conditions in General Hospitals would have been similar in most regional Queensland towns, but differences would have occurred due to the fact that each hospital was controlled by its own Hospitals Board. **An** example of such differences is to be found in correspondence between the Rockhampton Hospitals Board and the Department of Health and Home Affairs.

³⁴ D. Carment & F. Killion, L. Killion (Ed.), "The story of Rockhampton Hospital and those other institution administered by the Rockhampton Hospitals Board, 1868, 1980": Typescript, undated, Held at CQU Collection, Rockhampton.

³⁵ Correspondence ATNS with the Department of Health and Home Affairs, 1 March, 1945, QSA A/3 1852,4511920.

In a letter to the Board from T. Foley, then Minister for Health and Home Affairs, dated 12 February 1945 it was stated that he had been approached by the Australian Trained Nurses Association, ATNA, with the request that trainee nurses at the Rockhampton Hospital should only be required to work continuous night duty for three weeks, instead of the three months demanded at that time.³⁶ In reply, C. Pritchard of the Rockhampton Hospitals Board stated that the matter had been considered by the Matron and the Medical Superintendent. They had recommended that the period be reduced to two months but not three weeks as had been requested.³⁷ However, it must remain a matter of conjecture as to how much say the Matron had. In a letter from the Department of Health and Home Affairs to the Isis Hospital Board it was stated that, on some Hospitals Boards, it was the practice to exclude matrons from Board meetings.³⁸ However, for hospitals controlled by the Isis Hospitals Board, Matron was given the authority to set the hours to be worked.³⁹

Gert, a retired nurse who had nursed in both Brisbane and regional Queensland hospitals, stated that in her opinion, after the war nurses in Brisbane and the southern cities got a lot more benefits than the country hospitals.⁴⁰ An article in the *Central Queensland Herald* concerning the diet standard in country hospitals

³⁶ Correspondence Department of Health and Home Affairs 12 February, 1945 and the Rockhampton Hospitals Board.

³⁷ Correspondence Dept. of Health and Home Affairs - Rockhampton Hospitals Board, 1945, QSA, A31852, 45/1920.

³⁸ Letter from Dept. of Health and Home affairs, to Isis Hospitals Board dated 24 May, 1945. Held at Bundaberg General Hospital Archives (unsorted papers and records).

³⁹ Bylaws of the Isis Hospitals Board, Bundaberg General Hospital Archives.

⁴⁰ Interview conducted by Grace Johansen with G.J. at Beecher, 17 April, 1998. Benefits included such things as better equipment.

supports Gert's statement to some degree.⁴¹ The article stated that nutrition courses of two weeks duration, at the Brisbane General Hospital starting on 18 August, 1947, were to be held in improve diet standards in regional hospitals. Either housekeepers or sisters-in-charge of diets from various towns including Rockhampton would attend the first course.

Two important issues with regard to nursing are presented by Glenda Strachan in her discussion of Queensland nursing at this period.⁴² Firstly she draws attention to the character of nursing in which "the ethos of dedication, self sacrifice and service for the love of humanity without material reward" was considered to be the criterion of a good nurse. She points to the fact that ironically, this also meant that hospitals were cheaper to run. Secondly, she considers the subordinate position of women as nurses within the medical profession was due to the predominant role of male medical officers within hospitals, and the dependence of nursing on medicine for its definition of itself.⁴³ She further states that as nursing developed so did a female hierarchy, ranging from the latest recruit to matron. An extract from Nurse Sarah Maud Green's lecture note book, commenced in 1907, taken down from a lecture by the then Matron at the Rockhampton Base Hospital, reads:

⁴¹ *Central Queensland Herald*, 7 August, 1947, p. 16.

⁴² G. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p148.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Hospital etiquette is similar to the etiquette of the army. A good nurse will appreciate order and lack of friction. Nurses must be careful to respect professional etiquette, remembering what is due to those in authority. Nurses must stand when those in authority enter a room or ward, also when speaking to them and to give precedence at all times, not only to superior officers namely:- medical superintendent, doctors, matron, sisters, but also to the senior nurses of the school.⁴⁴

As Gregory has stated these rigid hierarchical structures remained in place throughout World War Two and the ensuing post war period. These conditions, together with low pay, and the restrictions and strict discipline referred to previously, applied equally to both city and country hospitals.⁴⁵ A sociological approach to the question appeared in the June 1959 issue of *The Australian Nurses Journal*. An article by social scientist Professor C.A. Gibb, pointed to the conservative view still held by some sections of the medical profession who thought of nursing as a social role commenting that:

for nurses behave as they are expected to behave just as anybody else does. It is expected to be disciplined, impersonal and with a willing acceptance of drudgery. But these expectations have dropped out of account the loving emotional warmth for the helpless and dependent which was one of the basic ideas that caused nursing to be a feminine speciality.⁴⁶

This accentuates the patriarchal view, with emphasis on women as nurturers, caring for the “physically weak and helpless” who are “psychologically dependent and in need of love”.⁴⁷ Additionally, it suggests that women’s status in society placed them outside the real world, where things of primary importance fall within the male sphere.

⁴⁴ Extract from Nurse Sarah Maud Green’s Lecture Note Book commenced 1907. Held at Rockhampton Base Hospital Archives.

⁴⁵ H. Gregory, op. cit., p.89.

⁴⁶ C.A. Gibb, “Of Icebergs and Nurses” in *The Australian Nurses Journal*, Vol.57, No.6, June, 1959.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

As was to be expected, nowhere in the article was there the suggestion that nurses deserved a higher rate of pay. As stated in the *Courier Mail* in August 1945 weekly wages for both qualified nurses and trainees were very low ranging from one pound, five shillings (\$2.50) for a first year trainee, to four pounds (\$8.00) for a fourth year trained nurse.⁴⁸ As Law has demonstrated in a paper presented to the Women and Labour Conference in 1978, male medical practitioners were influential and held authority in decision making in hospitals and were often the spokesmen for nursing. "If a nurse questioned her working conditions it was tantamount to admitting she was not fit to be a nurse".⁴⁹ It was not until 1943 that the Queensland Branch of the ATNA had a nurse and not a doctor as president.

Entries in a Student Nurses Association Minute Book for the period between 1951 and 1957, show a breakdown had started to occur in the disciplinary practices at the Bundaberg Base Hospital by this time." These entries referred to the organisation of social evenings, fetes, play readings, and a film evening, and a variety of other recreational activities. An entry in the minutes dated 2 February 1956, stated that this meeting of the SNA was attended by the matron. The entry read "that a number of nurses concerns were discussed by those present". A further entry in these minutes, dated January 1958, stated that it had been decided

⁴⁸ Brisbane *Courier Mail*, 1 August, 1945, QSA A31847.

⁴⁹ G. Law, "The development of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation, Queensland Branch. Paper presented at Women and labour conference, MacQuarie University, May, 1978.

⁵⁰ Student Nurses Association Minute Book, commenced 3 July, 1951. This association was evidently a Bundaberg Hospital initiative as an undated entry, after 4 September, 1957, in the minutes referred to copies of the constitution being sent to Maryborough, Gladstone and other hospitals in the zone.

⁵¹ Ibid, 2 February, 1956. Unnumbered.

to contact nurses at hospitals at Gladstone, and Maryborough to tell them about the SNA and enclose copies of the constitution.

No such organisation as the SNA was possible for women who served as nurses in the Australian Military Forces during World War Two. Treatment of these women, who were paid at lower rates than men, regardless of the fact that very often they were doing the same work side by side, amounted to discrimination by the state. As Power asserts, differences in earnings, reflect differences in jobs which result from unequal socialisation, education and employer exclusion, whether that employer is private or the state, as well as differences in wages for performing the same work.⁵² Gender differences were also apparent in the female veteran's family. Whereas the wife of a veteran who dies from war related causes received a war widow's pension, the husband of a returned servicewoman did not receive a war widower's pension, nor did her children receive orphans' pensions. Additionally, until December 1983 husbands did not receive a service pension, to care for a severely handicapped female veteran who required care at home.⁵³

Members of the Australian Army Nursing Service, AANS, also experienced discrimination in the form of Army protocols arising from the hierarchal system of the Australian Army. Although nursing sisters were given the commissioned rank of lieutenant, the lowest rank for a doctor was that of captain. This difference in rank indicated that nurses still came under the control of doctors, mostly male,

⁵² M. Power, op. cit., pp.2-14.

⁵³ Department of Veterans' Affairs, Study of Returned Servicewomen of the Second World War, File No. R355.1150994 Aus (Vet). Held at AWM, Canberra, p.30.

who maintained the status quo of male superiority. During an interview with an ex-Army nurse at Beecher,⁵⁴ she remarked that it was only through the good offices of one Army doctor, that they were supplied with floor boards for their tents during their time spent at the hospital in Bougainville. Male officers tents had been supplied with floor boards from the time of their arrival.

Illustration 4.2: Sister Eileen Johnson oversees a finger dressing for a serviceman during World War Two.



Source: Courtesy C. Ames

Domestic Work

Matthews draws attention to attitudes to what was considered suitable work for women between the time they finished school and were married. She states that:

⁵⁴ Interview conducted by Grace Johansen with G.J. at Beecher, 17 April, 1998.

in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, domestic service as a paid occupation was considered by the state, potential employers and population moralists as the most suitable employment of young women of the working class who could not be supported by their families.⁵⁵

In regional Queensland in the 1940-1965 period domestic work was sometimes the only available occupation for young women. As she has pointed out, the training of women as domestic servants in middle class homes was seen by their employers as providing them not only with the expertise to cope with the demands of their own homes after marriage, but also as “bringing the light of middle class respectability into a small corner of the working class”.⁵⁶ Middle class respectability related to the moral perceptions of women well versed in the Victorian ethos of the nineteenth century. As pointed out by Kingston the mistresses who employed domestic servants attended to the hiring and firing, and organised catering and accommodation requirements to meet the needs of the household.⁵⁷ Thus they too were bound by the dictum that a “woman’s place” is in the home. Moral principles for working class women stipulated that not only was a woman’s place in the home, but that it was also her duty to instil the precepts of the Protestant work ethic in the minds of her family, and to act as “God’s police”. Thus, Victorian social ideas continued to influence attitudes throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Oral testimony revealed that in the 1940s and 1950s women employed in domestic work were regarded as being at the bottom of the social ladder. Women

⁵⁵ J.J. Matthews, *op.cit.*, p.159.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ B. Kingston, as cited in J.J. Matthews, *op.cit.*, p.69.

who had been employed in this field were sometimes reluctant to admit they had “cleaned other people’s dirty houses”. One interviewee said she had been treated “like a skivvy”.⁵⁸ Class consciousness was a clearly defined social distinction between the haves and the have nots, and this was even more so in the case of Aborigines where it was often combined with racial discrimination.

Census figures supplied by Beverley Kingston.⁵⁹ showed that the onset of the 1930s depression made very little difference to numbers of women employed in the area of domestic service in 1921. Domestic work accounted for 20% of the female work force in 1920 and this rose to only 21.5% in 1933. However these were the official figures and did not take into account the large numbers of women who did domestic work on their own account.

The employment of domestic servants was restricted in Australia from 1 January 1943, as a war time measure to provide more woman power for the war effort.⁶⁰ This resulted in a drop from 129 000 to 31 000 women employed in private domestic service in Australia as shown in the 1947 census.⁶¹ The numbers remained the same in the 1954 census but the percentage dropped from 4.4% to 3.6%.⁶² Women interviewed who were employed in this sphere in Central Queensland in the 1940-1965 period gave varying responses to their treatment and conditions.

⁵⁸ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with B.S. at Rockhampton, 15 June, 1998.

⁵⁹ B. Kingston, “My Wife, my Daughter and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia”; J. Matthews, *op. cit.*, p.69.

⁶⁰ *Gladstone Observer*, 23 December, 1942, p.2.

⁶¹ *Australian census, 1947*, Commonwealth Bureau of Statistics.

⁶² Census statistics, 1933, 1947, 1954, in J. Matthews, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

Although it was not common for regular daily staff to be employed by private employers in regional Queensland between 1940 - 1965, a number of people employed women on a casual basis as house cleaners. In these instances women usually worked for a number of different people for a set number of hours each week. In some cases as Bonnie testified they were treated as “lesser mortals”.⁶³ Limited work opportunities for women in regional Queensland meant that a greater proportion of the population in the various centres were employed in domestic work. Given the regard in which domestic workers were held this contradicts the claim that Australia had a classless society in the 1950s.

In 1939 Bonnie’s mother had become ill, so that in order to look after the family she had to leave school at age 12 ½ years of age. When she was 13 years of age her mother died. She then got a job with an old lady doing general housework, for which she was paid 7 shillings, (70c) for a 7 day week, to provide herself with money for clothes. Later she worked at two or three places each weekday for 5 shillings (50c) at each place. She said that “anybody in domestic service was looked on by employers as if you were less than them”. She continued on to say that:

I’ve done people’s floors and they’ve had morning tea in the kitchen and you’re washing floor around them. They wouldn’t offer you a cup of tea, not even a cup of water. They would lift their feet so you could get underneath, and then put their feet down again. And you’d be trying to put polish on under their feet and they’d just lift their feet up and you’d ask them to move the chair otherwise you’d have four marks where you didn’t wash. They never ever got out of the kitchen to let you do it.⁶⁴

⁶³ Interview conducted by Grace Johansen with BS, 15 June, 1998.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

In Rockhampton a good rapport existed between three women employed at the Lakes Creek Meatworks, who regularly worked in the same hotel every off season, for a number of years. To the questions as to the type of work they did at the hotel, and was it different to working in private domestic service Bonnie responded:

[We did] general domestic work. Yes it was different. In those days they couldn't get manpower and we went back to the same hotel three seasons running. We were happy working there and they were happy with us obviously. There were three of us. The pay was different but that didn't matter. The only difference between that and household work was the fact that they all had chamber pots. There was no toilet inside. The toilets were still way out the back. However the job kept you going with your money. There again we enjoyed each others company, I am still in contact with these women,⁶⁵

Gwen had two very different experiences. She had been brought up in an orphanage and at 14 years of age she was sent to work as a domestic servant. She related how on one occasion she had done the washing and put it out on the line to dry when the two daughters of her employer arrived home from school. They lowered the clothes prop so that the washing fell in the dirt and had to be re-washed.⁶⁶ Gwen declared that the girls just laughed and said, "you're only an orphanage girl".⁶⁷ After this episode she said she was employed by some people who lived near the gardens in Rockhampton. Here she was well treated. Her employers took her "everywhere" and treated her "like one of their own".⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with B.S. at Rockhampton, 15 June, 1998.

⁶⁶ Before the advent of Hills Hoists, clothes lines usually consisted of two wires strung between two posts. Because the weight of the wet clothes pulled the lines down a long pole which was forked at one end was used to hold the line up so the clothes did not drag in the dirt. This was called a clothes prop.

⁶⁷ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with G.B. at Rockhampton, 28 February, 1998.

⁶⁸ It is also possible that in the light of her previous experience this experience seemed much better than it actually was.

Jackie Huggins and Thom Blake have demonstrated how Aboriginal women were oppressed by European women. They point to evidence which demonstrates the ill-treatment of black women by white women from colonial times to the mid twentieth century, particularly those employed in the domestic sphere.⁶⁹ What they have written does not refer to any specific area in Queensland, but the oppression of Aboriginal women was widespread. They also maintained that this was more pronounced in the sphere of domestic service. **An** instance was cited of an Aboriginal woman whose face was scrubbed with a scourer by her white mistress because the silver had not been cleaned properly. The scar was visible 50 years later and had developed into a type of sun cancer.

You see this thing on my face, well I reckon it was done by her...You know those steelo pads with the gold threads running through them...well she reckon I wasn't doing it right...So she got it and scrubbed my face saying "now this is the way you rub"⁷⁰

Employers were almost invariably female, and although these women also treated white servants as being inferior to themselves, Aboriginal servants were designated as being of even lower status. It would seem that class and colour consciousness were the criteria by which these employers judged what was appropriate treatment for employees.

Norma testified that as a Pacific Islander descendant whose grandfather had come to Australia from Ambrym Island (now Vanuatu), she had been employed as a domestic servant during the 1940s. After she left school in Rockhampton she

⁶⁹ J. Huggins and T. Blake, "Protection or Persecution? Gender Relation in the Era of Racial Segregation" K. Saunders & R. Evans, *Gender relations in Australia*, Marrickville, Harcourt Brace, 1992, pp.42-58.

⁷⁰ A. Williams cited in J. Huggins & T. Blake, *Ibid*, p.55.

worked for a Chinese couple for seven shillings and sixpence, (75c), per week. Later she left that job and worked for two European families close by.⁷¹ None of these jobs required her to live in and she went backwards and forwards each day from her home. In all three places she stated she had been treated well, despite the low wages. In the mid 1940s, after the death of her parents, she left Rockhampton to take up work as a domestic servant at a sheep station at Maxwellton, north-west of Richmond. There were two other Pacific Islander girls here and the three of them did all the housework and cooking for the two houses on the property. Again Norma asserted that she was well treated. She said their quarters were nice although they were situated “a fair way from the main house”.⁷² This opinion might have been relative, as when she was growing up the family lived at Rockhampton in a tin shed with a dirt floor. It also raises the question of the expectations of Pacific Islander women in a social atmosphere of racial discrimination.

Hospital Domestic Work

Women who were employed at local hospitals, were frequently called the domestic staff and as such are included here as from a class perspective they fell into the same category as other domestics. They usually retained their positions over a substantial period of time, and although the work was hard, either found little cause for complaint, or were unable to find alternative employment. In an interview with Vi S. she stated that she was married just after the war but was later divorced.⁷³ She had no money and two children, so in 1949 she applied for work at the Rockhampton Hospital, which was close to where she lived with her

⁷¹ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with N.D. at North Rockhampton, 22 April, 1998.

⁷² The fact that “it was a fair way from the main house” suggests racial discrimination.

parents. Her application was accepted, and initially her job was to clean the nurses quarters, the outpatients building, and the single doctors' flats. She testified that her daily routine was to start at 6 am, and the first task for the day was to get down on her hands and knees and scrub the hall with sand soap, using Lysol when an antiseptic was necessary. Then the verandahs had to be swept and mopped. Mops had to be wrung by hand as mop buckets did not come on the market for another decade.

After breakfast she started work on the nurses quarters.⁷⁴ Here too there were wooden floors that had to be scrubbed on her hands and knees. The linen was changed every Monday but the 'nurses had to make up their own beds. Later she transferred to the Outpatients Department. This building had polished wooden floors. A dark stain polish was applied twice weekly and every other day mopped with an oily mop. Vi declared that they:

had to crawl in and around the patients coming in. It wasn't easy and you had to get down on your hands and knees and then and polish [the floors] and that was done in a brown polish because they were **all** polished boards in the Outpatients.⁷⁵

Working in the Outpatients building also entailed cleaning the dental clinic, and the Post Office situated nearby in the hospital grounds. Vi said that later on she became a supervisor. In this position she was responsible for making up rosters. It was also her responsibility to keep the work done by the domestic staff under surveillance, to see that the women maintained hospital standards of cleanliness. Similar work was required of domestics at hospitals in the Brisbane area and other

⁷³ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with Vi.S. at Rockhampton, 23 April, 1998.

⁷⁴ At that time the nurses quarters were huts which had been used by the American forces who had been camped to Rockhampton during the war.

regional centres. Some details of the work required of domestics at the Bundaberg Base Hospital⁷⁶ during the period of the thesis are set out in Appendix V.

Shop Assistants

Despite rigorous research, no secondary sources have been located concerning women's work in the retail business in regional Queensland between 1940-1965. Inquiries made at the Shop Assistants Union revealed that their records for the period had been destroyed, and nothing was found at the Queensland State Archives concerning women employed in retail work, with the exception of the names of women listed in the Firms' Register. Of necessity, therefore, information in this section of the thesis is restricted to the oral history survey. In the "Firms Register" for the period many businesses were listed in the names of both husband and wife.⁷⁷ Although no evidence has been located which would support the assumption, it is probable that some establishments were registered in both names to provide a saving on taxation as was the case with Italian tobacco and sugar farmers at Bundaberg.⁷⁸ However, given women's social status, this did not mean that business profits were shared equally, or that the wife received payment for her input into the business.

Between 1940 and 1965 shopping procedures throughout Queensland were somewhat different to the 1990s. Jean recalled that if customers wanted to buy

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Archival material held at the Bundaberg Base Hospital. This material has not been sorted or documented. Reproductions of lists of domestic duties in the Appendices of this thesis, together with others, were found amongst other lists, one of which is dated 1969 and are assumed to be authentic lists of duties relevant to the period of the thesis.

⁷⁷ Firms Register, A/5044, **QSA**.

⁷⁸ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with T.D. at Bundaberg, 12 May, 1998.

clothing, the shop assistant would go to the rack with them.⁷⁹ Once a sale was made the docket had to be counter signed by a senior staff member, then the assistant would take it to the office at the back of the shop with the payment so it could be receipted. At some stores a cash railway was installed and the salesperson would send the docket and cash to the cashiers via this method, and wait for it to be returned so she could give the customer his/her change and receipted docket. After six months working at a drapery store Jean had a fall at work. She received no compensation and her injury was such that she had to leave this employment. After taking a course in bookkeeping she later worked at both Penney's and Stewarts as a cashier. No evidence has been found of actions taken by militant women's organisations in regional Queensland, such as those described by Reekie, in an effort to improve conditions for female shop assistants."

Illustration 4.3: Rockhampton girls behind the haberdashery counter at Stewarts during the war.



Source: John Oxley Library"

During the war years the uniform for female shop assistants at Penney's and

⁷⁹ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with J.C. at Rockhampton, 22 April, 1998.

⁸⁰ G.Reekie, op. cit., pp.120-134.

⁸¹ Reproduced in *Queensland Industry at War*, Department of Business, Industry and Regional Development, Brisbane, 1995.

Stewarts in Rockhampton, as in most retail stores, was a dark skirt and white blouse. However it seems that as in the illustration both girls are wearing jackets uniform dress regulations may have been relaxed during the war years. At both these stores males and females were kept segregated within the workplace. At Stewarts the lunch rooms and bathroom facilities for men and women, were situated on opposite sides of the building thus ensuring complete gender division in the workplace. Jean did not return to her work at Stewart's after her marriage, but had she wanted to do so her marriage would not have prevented her from continuing in her employment.⁸² Gender division was standard throughout the retail business in Australia, and furthers the notions of middle class morality from the home into the work place.

Tasks for girls employed by a retailer were sometimes different from what might be expected. One interviewee was employed prior to World War Two in a draper's shop at age 13½ years and her job was to make ladies bloomers. She testified that:

I had to cut them all out and then machine them, put elastic in them. and they were sold in the store". I was there for about eighteen months and my services were dispensed with because I didn't go to church every Sunday. I went once a month. She got another girl who used to go to church every morning.⁸³

This reflected the moralistic and patriarchal attitude taken by some employers towards their employees at the time.

⁸² Although most women left their employment when they married their employers would have kept them on the pay roll. In fact some employers such as Moores in Gladstone preferred to employ married women because they were more reliable.

⁸³ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with F.S. and H.W. at Gladstone, 16 April, 1998.

In Gladstone, a general draper's store was owned and run by the Moore family, prior to and during the Second World War until 1959, when the business was sold.⁸⁴ Ken Moore, who with his wife was interviewed for the thesis, enlisted in the armed forces during the Second World War while the business was still owned by his father, but his wife worked at the store throughout the whole period. They usually employed about eight staff. The employees were mostly women but, except for the war years, there were three male staff. The men were employed in the menswear department, and the women worked in all other sections, although because of the shortage of manpower during the war, married women were placed in the men's wear department during that time. Hours worked were 8.30 am till 5.30 p.m. and 8.30 a.m. to midday on Saturdays.⁸⁵ Conditions included breaks for morning and afternoon teas, and lunch. There was no set times. Staff just went to the lunch room for their breaks whenever there was a lull in business. As Gert said:

They might have been a quarter of an hour late getting there but they always had it. If they were serving a customer, they couldn't say, "I'm sorry I've got to go to morning tea," so she'd just finish serving the customer and then go and have it.⁸⁶

Ken then commented:

The staff were more tolerant then and the shopkeeper was more tolerant of his staff also. They treated them like people. They were given a bonus at Christmas and things like that.⁸⁷

Uniforms were requested by the staff and were supplied by the proprietors at cost price. Gert declared that:

⁸⁴ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with K. & G. M, at Gladstone on 15 April, 1998.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with K. & G. Moore, at Gladstone, 15 April, 1998.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

They felt if they had a set uniform they weren't running around wondering what they were going to wear to **work** each day. Before they had uniforms they could wear whatever they wanted but they did always have to be neatly dressed. That was the only stipulation we put down.⁸⁸

From the testimony of these interviewees, and also from information supplied by others who were employees in the retail trade in both Rockhampton and Gladstone, it appears that there was a good relationship between owner and employee in most retail businesses in regional Queensland. This became evident in the number of women who were asked not to leave when they married, and/or the number who returned to their previous employment after their family had grown up.⁸⁹ However despite the good working relations owners and staff did not mix socially and the argument as to whether married women should work was still being strongly debated, and particularly during the 1961 economic recession, working wives were accused of taking jobs away from young single women

It appears that the Union was quite active in the 1940s for as Ken commented there was a lot of Union trouble in the late forties. He stated that it was then compulsory for the staff to be Union members. In his business the Union fees were deducted from wages and a representative from the Union would go around and collect the money from the office later. Moores employed one office girl. Part of her work was the responsibility during the war years, for submitting the returns required by the Rationing Commission.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid, and Interview conducted by G. Johansen with J.C. at Rockhampton, 22 April, 1998, interview conducted by G. Johansen with S.N. at Gladstone, 20 September, 1998, interview conducted by G. Johansen with V.D., 28 April, 1998, and others.

Good relations with their staff experienced by Moores was also experienced by the operators of a small “corner store”. Bray and her husband were joint owners of a “corner store” ‘in a Brisbane suburb. They only employed one or two women, but like Moores, Bray said there was respect for her as the owner by her staff, and that she respected them in return. One of her employees had previously been employed by Sydney Isles in Brisbane. Bray said it became obvious to her that training in the bigger stores in the cities was very strict, and there was not the same trust and understanding as in small businesses.⁹⁰ Super markets were unknown until after the 1960s, and it was sometime after that before they were introduced in country towns in regional Queensland. However the large department stores had become a way of life.

Reekie looks at women’s consumer associations during the 1920s and beyond, such as the Housewives Association which had branches in all Australian States.⁹¹ She states that they saw their function as protecting the home and “fighting the consumers’ battle”. Inquiries made in oral history interviews elicited no knowledge of branches in Central Queensland. She also states that middle class women considered it as their right to criticise retailers on the grounds that they underpaid and overworked their female staff. Other organisations such as the National Council of Women, Labor Women, and Young Women’s Christian Association also continued their activities on behalf of female shop assistants. They even initiated a campaign to establish a Vocational Guidance Bureau for the development of careers for women in the retail industry. The activities of some of

⁹⁰ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with B.G. at Rockhampton, 20 August, 1998

⁹¹ G. Reekie, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

these groups especially the Housewives Association and the National Council of Women were continued into the period covered by the thesis.

Vi D worked for a newsagent at Gladstone. She testified that she had attended High School at Mt. Morgan and had left school at age 17 in her Senior year. The Newsagent also had a Commonwealth Bank Agency and it became part of Vi's job to attend to this part of the business. She reported that:

There wasn't any High School. P.M. Jones always used to get girls from Brisbane but I had what was considered a good education in those days. The Bank Agency work was easy for me. He had tried other girls [from Gladstone] but they couldn't do it.⁹²

It is worthy of note that at this time there was no High School at Gladstone, where girls might have been taught the basics of bookkeeping methods. It was 1953 before a High School was established although some secondary classes were conducted prior to that date..⁹³ Like all interviewees Vi declared that she had a good working relationship with her employer. Her work was varied. She was taught to develop and print film and this became her regular Monday morning job. Additionally, Jones had a contract with the Railways Department to run the book stall at the Gladstone Railway Station. Looking after this also became part of Vi's job. She stated that:

⁹² Interview conducted by G. Johansen with V.D. at Gladstone, 28 April, 1998.

⁹³ Typescript, "Opening dates of High Schools", Queensland Education Department Library. R. Goodman, *Secondary education in Queensland 1860-1960*, Canberra, ANUP, 1968, p.279. Goodman states that "no new state high schools were opened in Queensland between 1924 and 1939.

When the train was nearly due I had to go down to the Station, and take the papers and the books and a bag of things, whatever you could find off the rack [that you thought might be bought by passengers]and you took them down. You got to know what people wanted. When the train left you gathered up your papers and bags and went back and did shop work.⁹⁴

The work of barmaids was similar to that of shop assistants in as much as they sold a consumer product to consumers. In an interview conducted for the thesis at Rockhampton, Mavis testified that because her mother worked as a barmaid, other women were particularly unfriendly.⁹⁵ She stated that her mother said she could not stop and speak to a man in the street, because his wife would say “what’s going on”. It seemed it was impossible for women to understand that as a barmaid, “you would speak to the men in the bar, but after they had gone you wouldn’t even remember them”. Mavis said her mother found that the ladies who ran the church guild were the worst offenders, as they thought she should have starved on a pension rather than worked in a hotel bar. She said that her mother had said to her that the only thing which gave her respectability, was that she was a widow, and that her husband had been at Tobruk.

As confirmed by Dianne Kirkby, during World War Two hotel hours were restricted to 6 pm closing in all States.⁹⁶ She also states that Queensland had later closing hours before the end of the war, but the 10 pm closing that had been mooted in 1941, had been opposed by the Liquor Trades Union. Additionally Kirkby indicates that wages for barmaids were comparatively high compared with other work opportunities for women, with the exception of those employed on

⁹⁴ Interview conducted with V.D. at Gladstone, 28 April, 1998.

⁹⁵ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with M.S. at Rockhampton, 17 September, 1998.

⁹⁶ D. Kirkby, *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs*, Melbourne, CUP, 1997, p.163.

high wages during the war years.⁹⁷ This is confirmed by Mavis who stated that as her mother had a child she wished to provide for adequately, she needed the higher wages available for bar work.⁹⁸

Kirkby goes to some lengths to demonstrate that during the 1950s under the Menzies government emphasis was placed on the ideal of the family.” She states that barmaids then became a mother figure: ‘motherly, neatly dressed women’,

sometimes ‘widows with grown children’...[who] looked after their customers, minded their money, stopped serving them, particularly the young ones, if they were drinking too much.¹⁰⁰

This may have been the case in suburbia but Mavis’s story of her mother’s experiences tells a rather different story.¹⁰¹ This lady worked in hotels in country towns. She had a wide variety of experience as she kept moving from one place to another Mavis said there was a protocol her mother would follow to make sure she was kept on at her job. She always dressed smartly, but never better than the publican’s wife, as the publican might look at her and she’d be out of a job. She also stated that as a barmaid you had to be prepared to work for less than the Union rate if you really wanted the job. This woman also suffered from very bad migraines which would last 2 or 3 days. She never took more than one day off, as she would not be paid for any days she missed and she was so afraid she would be put off because she was so often sick. Neither publicans nor other employers of domestic help paid their employees sick pay.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 172.

⁹⁸ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with M.S. at Rockhampton, 17 September, 1998.

⁹⁹ D. Kirkby, op. cit., pp. 172-176.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p.173.

¹⁰¹ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with M.S. at Rockhampton 17 September, 1998.

Office workers

Like other areas of what have been deemed women's traditional work in the 1940s and 1950s, women's employment in offices in regional Queensland has been mostly overlooked by historians. It was not until 1964 that the school leaving age was raised from 14 to 15 years. Until this time most children, particularly girls would have left school at age 14. Even in 1964 the strongly conservative belief that women did not need higher education was still adhered to in sections of regional Queensland communities. It can therefore be assumed that few would have had the necessary education which would have enabled them to be employed in offices.

In the author's own experience of such work in a large government department in 1942, women employed by the public service were placed in positions requiring repetitive work, as became their position in the lower strata of the office hierarchy. By far the largest group of female employees were typists and bookkeeping machine operators. Known as the typing pool, typists occupied an area in the building separate to other sections thus perpetuating the concept of gender divisions in the work place. Other women were employed as receptionists, telephone switchboard operators, and mailing clerks. In Commonwealth government departments during the war years all staff were expected to donate their time, as their part of the war effort, by working for three extra hours one night each week. This was later changed to Saturday mornings. As was the case throughout the public service married women were not employed, although this was often circumvented by women failing to notify the department of their marriages. During the 1940-1965 period most government offices were situated in

Brisbane, although branch offices were established in regional city towns by some government departments and working conditions were the same throughout.

As previously mentioned some female office staff were employed by Port Curtis Dairy Co-operative (PCD). Cyril recalled that in 1941 in Gladstone the full male rate was four pounds, nine shillings, \$8.90, compared to a probable female rate of three pounds, fifteen shillings, \$7.50.¹⁰² He remembered that there were two female clerks "doing some bookkeeping type work", two typists, and a typist-switchboard operator who also operated an adding machine.

There was also one woman employed as a laboratory assistant. When asked if this position would have required any special qualifications, he said the only requirement was that she had done well at school. He was of the opinion that if female staff requested to be kept on after they married the request would probably not have been granted.

¹⁰² Interview conducted with C.W. at Gladstone, 20 November, 1997

Illustration 4.4: Port Curtis Dairy Buildings, Gladstone



Source: Courtesy Rockhampton and District Historical Society.

According to an informant who was employed at PCD at Gladstone for many years at a later period, it was the early 1990s before PCD promoted a woman to a position of authority. In this instance she was promoted to office manager. Matthews asserts that office work was divided along the lines of a “gendered ideology” and maintains that routine work was divorced from managerial work. She states that the division of work was gender based on the precept that men would not work for a woman boss. However this does not entirely mean that women were forced into the lowest ranks of the office hierarchy. As previously demonstrated they sometimes had a lower standard of education and thus did not have the training and ability to rise to higher levels in their place of employment. This reflects class and gender expectations, as in so far as girls from working class backgrounds, usually did not have the opportunity to be educated to a standard

which would enable them to undertake more specialised work.¹⁰³ This was generally the case in regional Queensland.

An English migrant interviewed in Bundaberg, recalled that when she arrived in Queensland in 1958, she was instructed by a vocational guidance officer that she was well suited to work as an accountant. However despite many applications to accounting firms Jenny was never able to find employment in this field.¹⁰⁴ The refusals to give her employment always stipulated that she could not be given employment by an accountancy firm because she was a woman. Thus discrimination against women on the grounds of gender effectively prevented class mobility .

In another situation class seems to have played a part in the employment of women. An article in *Gladstone commemorating 140 years of development*¹⁰⁵ states that bookings for the Catalina Flying Boat Service, operated by Barrier Reef Airways, flying from Brisbane to Gladstone to Heron Island were made at the office of VAJ Byrne & Co., Solicitors. The article then goes on to say that their staff at this time included the daughter of the manager of the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney and the daughter of a magistrate. However, prior to the establishment of the Gladstone State High School this firm, like P.M. Jones as mentioned earlier in the chapter, may have had difficulty finding working class women in Gladstone with the necessary skills to do the work required.

¹⁰³ R. Compton and G. Jones, *White Collar Proletariat*, London, MacMillan, 1984, pp. 129-134.

¹⁰⁴ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with J.B. at Bundaberg, 2 September, 1998.

¹⁰⁵ *Gladstone Commemorating 140 Years of Development*, Gladstone Observer, 1995, p.5

a woman had a sound basic education this lack of training was not a deterrent to women seeking to enter the nursing profession.

Teaching

Teaching has long been considered a “suitable” occupation for women, but during the 1940-1965 period, and for some time afterwards, in accordance with the gender ideology of the time, there was inequality in both conditions of employment and pay rates. In 1851 the Colony of New South Wales introduced the pupil-teacher system, and on separation in 1859 the Colony of Queensland continued the practice of employing female teachers and female pupil-teachers. Edna, a retired teacher began her teaching career as a pupil teacher at Mt. Morgan during the 1930s.¹⁰⁶ She declared it was required of all female pupil teachers that they be proficient in needlework as the strict curriculum of the time specified that all female pupils must be taught this subject. Joan also testified that it was considered essential that female teachers should be proficient in sewing and a high standard was required in this subject by students at the Teacher’s Training College in Turbot St, Brisbane, in the late 1930s.¹⁰⁷ Needlework was compulsory for female pupils at all levels of primary education ensuring that girls learned about the division of labour in the home at an early age. It was also on the curriculum throughout the 1940-1965 period.

No primary documents have been located which explain the reason for the establishment of separate schools by the Department of Public Instruction, for girls and infants, or girls only, from boys schools. Clarke maintains that these

¹⁰⁶ interview conducted by G. Johansen with E. McG. at Bundaberg on 4 September, 1998

¹⁰⁷ interview conducted by G. Johansen with J.W. at Gladstone on 225 October, 1998.

schools were common during the nineteenth century as it was felt that, as was expressed by J. Kerr head teacher of the Brisbane Normal School, before the Royal Commission on Education Institutions, **1874** that:

they [female teachers] deal with little children in a gentler spirit and their discipline is more effective whilst at the same time it is milder ... they are more painstaking and patient.¹⁰⁸

It is possible that under the influence of the moral outlook of the Victorian era, based on “the doctrine of separate spheres” popularised by Queen Victoria, that the notion took hold that segregation of the sexes in separate schools, was to be preferred to co-educational schools. It is also reasonable to assume that the provision of separate schools was made as the result of pressure of public opinion, rather than the Department of Public Instruction, by which name the Education Department was known until renamed in 1957. A contributing factor to the latter theory is that co-educational schools were to be found in both large and small towns. This indicates that while it might be expected that boys and girls were educated together to facilitate the best use of available teaching staff in schools in small country centres such as Gladstone, that such decisions in larger towns were made according to moral and social standards of local communities.

¹⁰⁸ J. Kerr as cited in E. Clarke, *Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools*, Brisbane, Dept. of Education, 1985, p.9.

Illustration 4.5: Rockhampton Central Infant and Girls School c. 1940s.



Source: Courtesy Rockhampton Municipal Library.

Although it was not the usual practice, there was nothing to prevent married women from continuing to work as teachers prior to 1902, although severe pay restrictions had been placed on their earning capacity in 1895. However the practice of the continued employment of female teachers after marriage ceased in 1902 unless they were widowed, divorced or deserted by their husbands.

Regulation 61 concerning the employment of females read as follows:

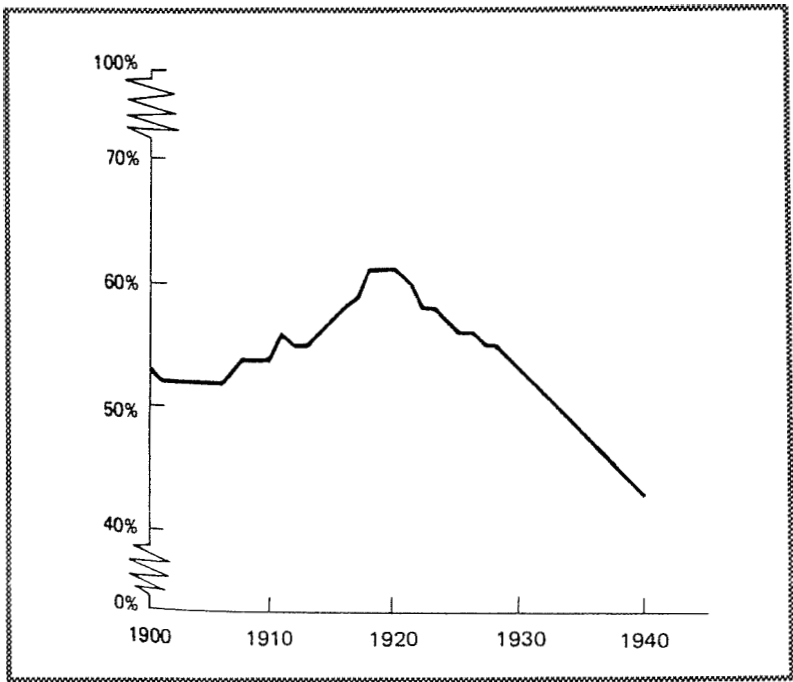
A female teacher on her marriage shall resign, otherwise she shall be deemed to have forfeited her office, and shall thereupon cease to perform her duties and to receive her salary.¹⁰⁹

As shown in Graph 4.1, there was no immediate fall in the percentage of female teachers until 1921 after which numbers dropped dramatically despite a greater number of women widowed during World War One. It was then not until the shortage of teachers caused by World War Two occurred that numbers rose as

¹⁰⁹ Department of Education, Regulation 61, cited in E. Clarke, op. cit., p.23

demonstrated in Graph 4.2. A sharp rise followed in the mid 1960s when married female teachers were employed on a regular basis, albeit still as temporary employees.

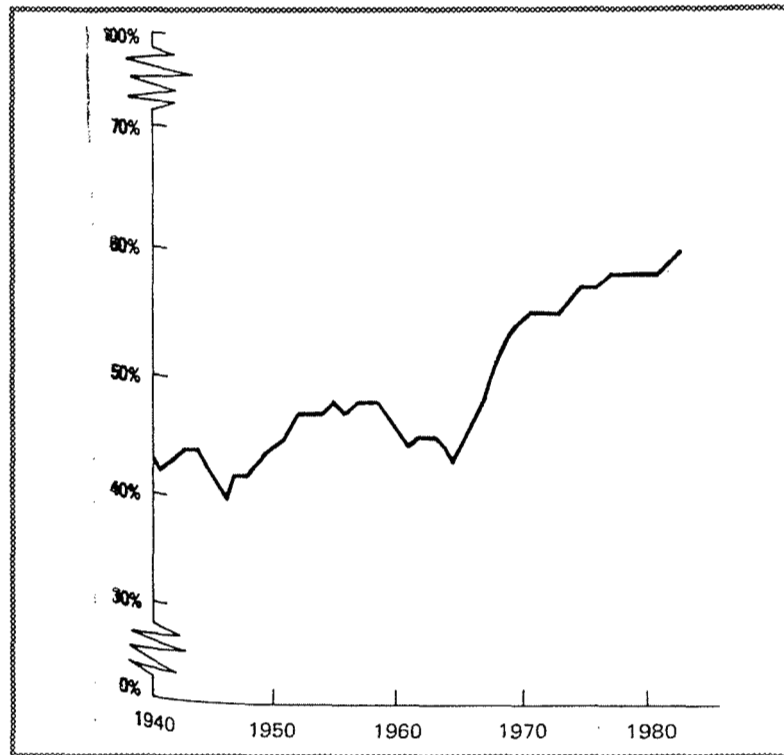
Graph 4.1: Graph showing percentage of female teachers in the teaching service 1902-1940.



Source: *Female teachers in Queensland State Schools.*'''

¹¹⁰ E. Clarke, op. cit., p.23.

Graph 4.2: showing percentage of female teachers in the teaching service, 1940-1980.



Source: *Female teachers in Queensland State Schools*.¹¹¹

Regulation Number 61 regarding the non-employment of married women applied throughout the Public Service. However, after the outbreak of the Second World War, the request of a married woman public servant that her employment be continued while her husband was overseas on war service was granted. Nevertheless her extension of service was to be in the category of temporary employment only.¹¹² The Education Department was informed of the decision and from that time, due to a continued shortage of teachers, married female teachers were employed on a regular basis as temporary teachers until 18 November, 1966. However, the criteria for obtaining permanent status was so stringent that in

¹¹¹ Ibid, p.39.

¹¹² As stated by E. Clarke, op. cit. "The measure was implemented within the provision of the *Public Service Acts* 1922-1924 which allowed a Public Service Commissioner to approve the temporary employment of a person for up to 12 months if it was in the public interest, and for a longer period of time with the consent of the Governor in Council, p.39.

1970, 30 percent of those who applied failed to be accepted. It was not until 1973 that the criteria were relaxed.¹¹³ During an interview conducted at Rockhampton Ailsa commented on the practice of employing women as temporary teachers:

When I resigned in 1951 to be married I had to break my period of employment by two weeks...I had to ask for reinstatement as a temporary teacher one week later...married women were employed in a temporary capacity but at the end of the year we were dismissed. We were paid for part of the year because we had been dismissed and we wouldn't then be re-employed in the first week that school started no matter how short [of teachers] the Department was...There had to be that break in continuity [of employment] and if we'd been employed straight away the Department would have had to pay holiday pay.¹¹⁴

This testimony is supported by a question addressed by Mr. Coburn, Member for Burdekin to G.H. Devries, the member for Gregory on 26 October, 1951. Confirmation was sought as to whether it was a fact that teachers employed at the request of the Department had their employment terminated as at 31 December, and were then re-employed at the resumption of school the following year. The reply received from Devries was:

It is not the practice to deal with matters of Government policy in reply to a question asked in this House.¹¹⁵

The struggle of female teachers against discrimination because of their marital status and unequal pay rates with men took place over a period of some seventy years. As argued by Claire Williams,¹¹⁶ such institutional oppression of female public servants stemmed from a male power base which decreed that women's labour did not have the same value as that of men. She points out that in any

¹¹³ E. Clarke, op. cit., p.40.

¹¹⁴ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with A.K. at Rockhampton, 27 August, 1998.

¹¹⁵ Queensland Legislative Assembly 32nd parliament, Hansard, 1952 Vol.202, p. 1001.

¹¹⁶ C. Williams, *Opencut*, North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1991, p.26.

patriarchal society biological differences are historically determined both culturally and politically to accord sex roles for women less power.

A concerted effort to address the discrepancy between rates of pay for males and females was made throughout Queensland in 1900 when female teachers began a campaign to lobby parliamentarians. This may have provided the impetus for the implementation of Regulation 61. Included in this campaign was a deputation by female teachers in the Central Queensland region, to Robert Philp, the then Premier of Queensland, on the occasion of his visit to Rockhampton. It was supported by G. Potts, head teacher of Rockhampton Central Boys School, and F.H. Perkins, president of the Central Queensland Teachers Association.¹¹⁷ A report of the meeting appeared in the 26 June 1900, issue of the *Rockhampton Mornington Bulletin*. However, in a social atmosphere which accepted that females occupied a lower social status than men, there was no question that the hegemony of male rule in schools should be jeopardised by placing women teachers on the same economic footing as males. Male domination was also a feature in the Queensland Teachers Union, and it was not until 1919 that the first major claim for equal pay was made by the Union. This was the outcome of a meeting of women teachers at Rockhampton on 27 September, 1919 held to discuss the equal pay issue.¹¹⁸ As pointed out by Jenny Hughey, the Union presented a salary claim before the Arbitration Court in 1934, “but despite equal

¹¹⁷ E. Clarke, op. cit. p.17.

¹¹⁸ J. Hughey, “Equal Pay and the Queensland Teachers’ Union: the Seventy Year Struggle by Women Teachers”, in S. Taylor & M. Henry (Eds.), *Battlers and Blue Stockings*, Deakin, The Australian College of Education, 1988, p.59.

pay being an objective of the Union, it was not included.¹¹⁹ Further claims were made in 1920, 1924, 1926, and 1948. Nevertheless, it was not until under the Union leadership of Miss Don that:

The Industrial Commission by a majority judgement on 31 August 1967, granted the application of the Queensland Teachers' Union for equal pay for female teachers.¹²⁰

In addition to paying female teachers at a lower rate, it was accepted practice to transfer young female teachers as well as males to schools quite some distance from their homes. In 1945, after a 16 hour train journey Nella Janson (nee Fleming) arrived at Gladstone.¹²¹ Her posting was at the Parson's Point School in the area, mostly consisting then of mud flats, where the Comalco Refinery now stands. She records that at that time there were no houses in the area, only the Meatworks. Fortunately the train had arrived during school hours and the head teacher was able to direct a taxi to take her to her accommodation. Such were the conditions school teachers sometimes found on arrival at a new posting.¹²²

Joan first came to Central Queensland in 1938 when she was transferred to Riverston State School at Taragoola (now below the water in the Awonga Dam at Benaraby, South of Gladstone). In an interview, she related that:

¹¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 57-59.

¹²⁰ "Equal Pay Decision", in *Queensland Teachers' Journal*, October 1967, p.296.

¹²¹ *Parsons Point/Gladstone South 1898-1998*, Centenary Celebrations Booklet, p.29.

¹²² Prior to the construction of the Comalco Refinery, Parson's Point School was moved to South Gladstone and became known as South Gladstone School. With the commencement of building operations at the Refinery the influx of construction workers, many of whom were married with families, increased the school population. In an interview conducted by G.Johansen with J.W. at Gladstone, 25 October, 1998, Joan declared that at South Gladstone School in 1964 there were 50-55 children in most classes.

I left Brisbane by train at 7 p.m. and after travelling all night arrived in Gladstone at mid-day the next day. She then had to wait five hours for a connection to Calliope and finally arrived at Taragoola at 8 p.m.¹²³

A further instance of young female teachers being forced to travel long distances from home, is related by Angela Brady who was transferred to Cedar Vale School in 1943. She arrived at Mt. Larcom on the Rockhampton mail train about 2 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon. Because it was war time and petrol was rationed she had been instructed to stay at the Mt. Larcom Hotel that night and the Chairman of the School Committee would pick her up on Sunday evening after he had attended Home Guard. She wrote:

The journey of 24 kilometres out to ...where I was to board seemed never ending as the district and town didn't have an electricity supply. The glimmer of little kerosene lamps in the few and far between houses made me very fearful of what was in store for me.¹²⁴

Postings such as these meant that it was often only possible to go home on leave over the longer school holidays such as the long break at the end of the year. This was an added disadvantage for teachers in small country schools compared to those teaching at schools in the metropolitan area.

The limitations of the thesis preclude the possibility of discussion of all types of traditional paid work undertaken by women in the period under review. The campaign by female teachers in their fight to obtain equal pay, even though this goal was not reached during the period of the thesis, provides an example of the difficulties women encountered in their battle for equality in Queensland, and the

¹²³ Interview conducted by G. Johansen with J.W. at Gladstone, 25 October, 1998.

¹²⁴ A. Brady, "Down Memory Lane" in *Bracewell State School 75th Jubilee*, No publication details, 1990, pp. 153-154.

ways in which the ruling male hegemony kept the reins of power firmly in their hands. Young female teachers were frequently posted to country schools where both teaching and living conditions were very different to those in the city; employment for young women in clerical occupations was not always available in small country towns due to the lack of school training.

In the area of office work prior to 1965 the over-riding factor, was that with few exceptions women in regional Queensland were given very little opportunity to advance beyond the lowest level in their particular work place. Even in Brisbane it was believed that administration was a male prerogative. Class distinction was at the root of ill treatment of both white and dark skinned women employed as domestic servants, although as testimony from interviewees has confirmed, they were well treated in some instances. Overall in the retail trade female shop assistants were just that, with very little hope of promotion. In all the areas of traditional women's work discussed in the thesis, differences between regional Queensland and Brisbane were mainly due to the nature of the economy based on primary production

In the hospitals, it was the outdated social ideology of class, led by men in the medical profession, which accounted for the development of a hierarchal system which placed nurses on the lowest rungs of the ladder, ranging from the newest recruit to the matron. Gender also played an important role in discrimination against women particularly in the armed services. It reflected the low social status afforded women by the state, once their service in the armed forces ended. This was despite the fact that many were nurses who served in theatres of war where

some were shot and killed or maimed, others lost their lives at sea, while some became prisoners of war under the Japanese. They were not given comparable compensation to that received by male members of the Australian Imperial Forces, nor was it adequate to meet their needs.

Government regulations introduced during World War Two which placed restraints on the employment of domestic labour by private individuals undoubtedly played a role in the demand for household technology thus resulting in the continued decline of the demand for women to undertake this type of employment. The chapter has also shown that retail work continued to be a low paid work for women and female clerical staff in regional Queensland had little chance of gaining administrative positions throughout the 1940-1965 period. Some gains were made by female teachers during the period, and it has been shown that this activity by women in this profession played an important part in their attainment of equal pay and permanent employment.