



## First Woman Elected to the Queensland Parliament

**Irene Maud Longman MLA**  
**Member for Bulimba 1929 - 1932**

Irene Longman's role in Queensland politics stemmed from her natural enthusiasm to make Queensland a better place. She had two brothers who were members of parliament - Percy Bayley (MLA for Pittsworth 1915-1920) and James Bayley (MHR for Oxley 1917-1931) and (MLA for Wynnum 1933-1935). Irene was president of the Queensland branch of the National Council of Women from 1920 to 1924 and, in 1929, she was nominated by the Queensland Women's Electoral League (QWEL) for the state seat of Bulimba as a Country and Progressive National Party (CPNP) candidate. She convincingly won the previously safe Labor seat on 11 May 1929. This made Irene Longman the first woman to contest a Queensland state election and the first to be elected to the Queensland Parliament.

Irene Maud Longman, nee Bayley, was born at Franklin, Tasmania, on 24 April 1877, the daughter of a Congregational Church minister, the Reverend James Molineux Bayley and his wife Mary Alice, nee Frencham. She was educated at Sydney Girls' High School and 'Redlands', North Sydney. In 1895, Irene's family moved to West End, Brisbane, but Irene stayed in Sydney to train as a kindergarten teacher. She subsequently taught at Sydney's Normanhurst School and at the Sydney Girls' Grammar School. Irene followed her family to Brisbane in 1898 and, in 1899, commenced teaching at Rockhampton Girls' Grammar School. Irene married Albert Heber Longman in Toowoomba on 29 January 1904. Her husband was a keen naturalist and Irene assisted him with his



*The Queensland Parliament commissioned this portrait of Ms Longman for the 2005 Centenary of Women's Suffrage celebrations with a grant from the Office for Women. Unveiled on 11 May 2005. Painted by Mike Nicholas.*

botanical research. Although not formally qualified, Heber Longman acquired a scientific reputation. In 1911, the Longmans moved to Brisbane when Heber became an assistant at the Queensland Museum, eventually becoming its Director from 1917 to 1945.

Irene's interests were wide-ranging and included issues as diverse as town planning and the preservation of native plants. But, her principle interest was for the welfare of women, children and the mentally handicapped. Between 1913 and 1915, Irene trained students for the then recently established Creche and Kindergarten Association.



She also became the first secretary of the Playground Association of Queensland. In 1922, she led a deputation to Queensland's Secretary of Public Instruction and was successful in establishing opportunity classes for the intellectually impaired.

Upon her election as the first woman member of the Queensland Parliament, the government nominated her to move the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's opening speech. As a parliamentarian, Irene was responsible for changing the way things were done in Queensland. She was instrumental in securing the appointment of the first women police in Queensland; creating a separate Children's Court; and, for the appointment of an advisory panel in difficult cases of juvenile delinquency. Irene faced difficulties as this state's

first female parliamentarian, mostly oblique resentment. She was even prevented from using the parliamentary dining room, and had to eat her meals on the verandah. The CPNP government's drastic, economic policies used to counter the depression, swept them out of power at the 1932 election. As a result, Irene lost the seat of Bulimba to the Labor Party on 11 June 1932.

Although only serving one parliamentary term, Irene continued to be active in public life for over thirty years. She founded the Queensland Citizenship League, becoming its president in 1934 and was an active member of the Queensland Women's Peace Movement. Irene Longman retired from public life to look after her ill husband who died at their Chelmer home in 1954. Irene died ten years later, on 29 July 1964 in St. Andrew's Hospital Brisbane and was privately cremated. She had no children.



A panel from the 2005 Women's Suffrage display, created to celebrate the centenary of women obtaining the right to vote.