

A DESKTOP EDITOR WHO CONCEALED HER MANY
QUALIFICATIONS AND HER DISTINGUISHED CAREER
KATE JONES (1949–2015)¹

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When in 2008 the new editorial team took over *Explorations* from its co-founder, Wallace Kirsop, there was also a corresponding transfer of duties from Meredith Sherlock, the then desktop editor, to a new volunteer, Kate Jones. All we knew about Kate was that she was an experienced desktop editor and that she was the long-term partner of Stephen Alomes, Chair of our Editorial Committee. The new team had to learn on the job, and found Kate's assistance and advice exceptionally helpful. Kate played a key role in developing our new format, a fundamental development in the character of the journal. She was responsible for the preparation of camera-ready copy for twelve issues of *Explorations*, from 2008 to 2013, as well as for the first issue of *The French Australian Review*, in the winter of 2014.

It was a privilege to work with Kate, who gave generously of her time and considerable experience to enable the improvement of the journal. As a team member she answered questions and offered advice quietly and unobtrusively. During our six-year association we came to regard her with much admiration and affection.

We were shattered to discover some two years ago that Kate was suffering from motor neurone disease (MND), a rapidly progressing incurable disease which gradually destroys the muscles in the body. She accepted her illness with extraordinary courage and great dignity, and continued to do the desktop editing until only a few months before her death in early 2015. She also loved working on the journal and enjoyed her interaction with the editors.

Kate was a most unassuming and modest person: though ties of friendship had developed between us over those years of work association, she did not ever tell us of her own distinguished academic and professional

¹ This account of Kate Jones' life and career is based on her obituary written by Stephen Alomes, published in *The Age* on 15 May 2015:
<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/obituaries/versatile-researcher-revealed-the--personal-stress-of-politicians-work-20150514-gh1up9.html>

background. It was only by accident that we discovered she had a PhD and was the author of several scholarly publications.

An only child, Catherine Anne Jones came from a working-class family in Gladesville, Sydney. Her father, Bill, was from a Welsh coalmining family and worked as a rigger at Cockatoo Island dockyard and at Kurnell refinery. Her mother, Madge, did outwork when Kate was young and later worked as a barmaid.

Kate was educated at Riverside Girls High School, Gladesville. There, her interest in things French was nurtured by her French teacher, Miss Ferguson, who taught the girls a different song, not the usual 'Sur le pont d'Avignon', but 'Le déserteur', an anti-war song from the era of French involvement in wars in Algeria and Vietnam. As a socially and politically aware girl, Kate's interest in France was already developing, as well as a diverse literary awareness. That interest in France would evolve; it complemented her expertise in Australian politics and society, and her deep historical sense of the changing world.

Having gained a Commonwealth Scholarship, she then completed an Honours degree in economics/politics at the University of Sydney. She moved to Melbourne after meeting Stephen Alomes at a conference in Adelaide in 1980. In 1981, they settled in Kensington and her multifaceted Victorian career as a librarian, researcher and public servant began. She became business information librarian at the State Library, then one of the first research officers at the Victorian Parliamentary Library where she was involved in introducing computers. A lifelong member of the Labor Party, she was also active in the then radical movement for the unionisation of parliamentary employees.

In the course of a diverse professional career, Kate became research librarian at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library and senior researcher on the Bicentennial History Project at the University of NSW. She later had a policy role in the Victorian Premier's Department and did philatelic research at Australia Post where she became the co-ordinator of a very successful international stamp show, Australia 99, which attracted thousands of visitors.

While her primary field of expertise was in Australian politics and society, Kate broadened her linguistic skills during a year in Japan. There was also an evolving French connection which included working with Stephen Alomes on ISFAR conferences and publications on French-Australian connections and comparisons. It took a different practical form

in shorter or longer visits to France in the 1980s and 1990s, as well as close friendships with a French academic who had roots in the Akaroa settlement in New Zealand, and a French family in St Cloud, with origins at Montbrun-les-Bains (Drôme) in Provence. That personal connection would grow over the following decades: their daughter would do a PhD at the University of Tasmania, the family would visit Australia, and Kate's last visit to Europe in 2013 would take her to Montbrun, Nice and Paris. Perhaps in subtle ways, like her knowledge of Australia, that experience, including a return to French conversation groups, informed her keen-eyed desktop publishing work, although no trumpet was ever blown.

Professionally, she always took care to separate her research in political science from her personal political commitments, completing a PhD at LaTrobe University on the professionalisation of Australian politicians. Her study showed that popular attitudes failed to recognise the hard work of politicians and the personal stresses of the role. Her PhD marked her return to academia: she presented papers in the USA, Italy and Japan, occupied a visiting research post at the University of Tokyo and participated in the training of Pacific political leaders. In the final years of her life she was Research Fellow in the Public Policy Institute at the Australian Catholic University: her last major book arose from her pioneering research on politicised audit culture and on the changing character of political work—*Audit Commissions: Reviewing the Reviewers* (with colleague Scott Prasser), Ballarat Connor Court Publishing, 2014.

Kate's voluntary activities included membership of the boards of Doutta Galla Community Health, the Australian Society of Authors and the Peter MacCallum Hospital Ethics Committee, and of course desktop publishing of both the *Victorian Historical Journal* and ISFAR's journal *Explorations*, now *The French Australian Review*. In 2014, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria honoured her with a Distinguished Service Award, and we at ISFAR owe her our deepest and warmest gratitude for an exceptional contribution.

Kate's life ended at the Royal Melbourne Hospital on 13 March 2015 when she gave up life supports and died peacefully at the age of 65. She leaves cousins, friends and colleagues around the world and Stephen Alomes, her partner of 34 years.