



# Great Queensland Women From Our Past

## Margaret Ogg (1863 - 1953)

### Audio transcript

Various statements were made in parliament about women getting the vote, and one male politician claimed “It will be a sad day for Queensland if women get the vote. Having the vote will make them unwomanly. Only plain, ugly women want to vote.”

Well, one very beautiful woman was Margaret Ogg, who took issue with this. She was a Brisbane journalist, working on a magazine, or a newspaper, which went to rural women. In the 1890s, as a woman journalist, she was only allowed to write about cake-making, new frocks, or answer an agony column. She was a clever young woman, she wanted to write on political matters, but was not allowed to do so. So she took up the challenge of informing Queensland women about getting the vote, and she talked to her girls from her old school, at Brisbane Girls’ Grammar School, and she told them that they needed to understand the political processes, that they had to get as much education as they could, this is what they needed if the world was going to change, was educated women.

Now she wanted to get to the outback to talk to women, and she rented some halls. She was a clergyman’s daughter. She did not have a lot of money, but she’d seen a lot of sad cases come into the manse on Ann Street where her father was the clergyman. She’d seen battered women, she’d seen abandoned women, all with a lot of children to feed, all sad cases. And so she went round halls in country towns. She rented the hall and she talked to women, telling them that they had to take advantage of the vote, but men didn’t like what she was saying, and they stopped her renting the halls. So she rented a horse and buggy, and she was able to drive. She parked it outside the hall she was not allowed to rent, and she stood up on the buggy seat and talked to people as a mobile platform, and she told them that they needed the vote, and she was heckled by a lot of men. She had rotten fruit thrown at her, and she told them they had to support the idea of smaller, better educated families, free medical advice for mothers, controls on alcohol, and shorter hours for pubs, and of course she’d seen the sad cases of abused and battered women as a result of the long hours of the pubs being open. Nothing would stop her, rotten fruit, hecklers, nothing stopped her.

Back in Brisbane, Margaret Ogg, Leontine Cooper, and Mrs Leslie Corrie \* founded the Queensland Women’s Electoral League, specifically to get the vote, they were really very active. Margaret goes on to become one of the leading people in the Brisbane Lyceum Club. It’s an international organisation for women, and it is seen as a force for change in Queensland.

But she also put her money where her mouth was, and she left her money, when she died, to a fund to get women into parliament, because although women got the vote, just getting the vote isn’t enough to change things. You can influence your member of parliament, but clearly if you’ve got women in parliament, it’s a bigger force for change. And so the Margaret Ogg fund will be used by Irene Longman, the first member of parliament, and by Dame Annabelle Rankin, who is the first Queensland Federal Senator.

\* It appears that Mrs Corrie’s name was Christina, but in the records, she is usually referred to by her husband’s first name (ie Mrs Leslie Corrie), a tradition that continued for many women long after the early 1900s.