

Australian Dictionary of Biography

Parks, Stanley Walter (Stan) (1925–1994)

by Malcolm Allbrook

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Stanley Walter Parks (1925–1994), Fremantle city manager, was born on 8 October 1925 at Subiaco, Western Australia, son of Victorian-born Walterena Jane, née Lay, and her Western Australian-born husband Clement Ormond Parks, barman. Growing up in a working-class community, Stan was educated at North Fremantle State and Fremantle Boys' schools. When he was a child his father abandoned the family. To supplement his mother's income as a cleaner, Stan sold newspapers, worked on a baker's round, and delivered ice. In January 1941 he was employed as a junior clerk at Fremantle Prison.

On 14 January 1943 Parks was mobilised in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve for service in World War II. Following his training, he was posted in November to the sloop HMAS *Warrego*. The ship carried out escort, screening, survey, and shore bombardment duties in the South-West Pacific Area. In 1945 it supported the landings at Lingayen Gulf, Philippines (January), and Balikpapan, Borneo (July), and land operations around Wewak, New Guinea (June). Parks had been promoted to able seaman in August 1944. He was demobilised in March 1946. Back home, he trained as an accountant under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme and was appointed assistant town clerk (1949–53) and then town clerk (1953–61) with the North Fremantle Municipal Council. After the municipality amalgamated with the City of Fremantle in November 1961, he became deputy town clerk (1961–66). He was promoted to town clerk in 1966 and in 1970 he was appointed city manager.

Collaborating with two influential mayors, Sir Frederick Samson (1951–72) and Bill McKenzie (1972–84), Parks was instrumental in transforming the council into a 'people servicing agency' (Lindsey 1978), a significant extension of the customary local government functions of land management, roads, and rubbish collection. Better access to Commonwealth taxation revenue and grants allowed the council to expand health, welfare, and environmental services to benefit the city's working-class and multicultural populations. He supported efforts by community organisations, including the National Trust of Australia (Western Australia) and the Fremantle Society, to develop an inventory of heritage buildings (1974) and thus to preserve and restore convict, Victorian, and Edwardian-era buildings and streetscapes threatened by redevelopment proposals. Adept at securing grants for restoration and re-use, he helped to save a number of decaying and moribund public buildings during his tenure, including the Fremantle Lunatic Asylum (1970) and the Fremantle Markets (1975). Following his retirement as city manager in January 1983, he was made an honorary freeman of the municipality, the third person after Samson and Kim Beazley senior, the Federal member for Fremantle (1945–77), to be granted such an honour.

After a short period as commissioner of the Camarvon Shire Council, in March 1984 Parks became chairman of both the State Housing Commission and the Urban Lands Council. Appointed a commissioner of the State Planning Commission in 1985, he was later deputy chairman (1991–93) and chairman (1993). He was awarded the OAM in 1985. Described as a 'big man with a quiet but clear voice ... and ready smile' (Lindsey 1978), and a 'born diplomat and negotiator' (Prince 1994, 4), he played a pivotal role in the revitalisation of the city he loved.

In 1948 Parks had married Elizabeth Lindley Hicks; she died suddenly in February 1952. Lorna Anne Peck became his second wife at Fremantle on 11 July 1952. After divorcing in 1954, he married Pearl June Lorraine Thomson, a typist, on 7 June 1954 at Scots Presbyterian Church, Fremantle; the marriage ended in divorce in 1975. He then married Joan Nina Davidson, née Hodgson, a widow. Survived by his wife, a son from his first marriage, and two sons and one daughter from his third marriage, Parks died suddenly on 13 April 1994 and was cremated. The Fremantle regional headquarters of the State Housing Commission (Homeswest) was named in his honour.

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Additional Resources

- World War II service file, A6770, Parks S W (National Archives of Australia)
- Trove search, third marriage, *West Australian*, 7 June 1954, p. 16

Related Entries in NCB Sites

- Samson, William Frederick (work colleague) 

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