

Jennifer Strauss was born Jennifer Wallace on a dairy farm in rural Victoria on 30 January 1933. She was the first in her family to attend university, something made financially possible only by the introduction of the Commonwealth Scholarships scheme. Graduating BA Hons with the University Exhibition in English Language and Literature in 1954 when the university sector was entering a major expansion, she immediately gained academic appointments and, in 1957, a postgraduate scholarship at the University of Glasgow. Her planned academic career was, however, interrupted by her 1958 marriage to Werner Strauss (1930 -78), a fellow Australian chemical engineering graduate pursuing a PhD in industrial air pollution control at Sheffield University.

In 1959, with Werner appointed to CSIRO, they returned to Melbourne, where Jennifer struggled to maintain her career with part-time and temporary appointments after the 1959 birth of her first child. In 1964, however, shortly after the birth of a second son, she gained a lectureship at the newly opened Monash University. Promotion up the academic scale was probably impeded by her passion for teaching – variously in Medieval Literature, Australian Literature, Women’s Writing and Feminist Criticism -- and for involvement in university governance, along with the birth of a third son in 1967 and a preference for writing poetry rather than a postgraduate thesis. It was not until 1992 that she finally completed a PhD and was promoted to Associate Professor. In 1998 she took up an Honorary Senior Research Fellowship, retiring in 2008.

Her publications include numerous academic journal articles and book chapters; critical monographs on Australian poets; editorship of anthologies of Australian poetry and of the Academy edition of *The Collected Verse of Mary Gilmore*; co-editorship of *The Oxford Literary History of Australia* and four collections of her poetry.

A committed feminist and human rights advocate, she was three times elected academic representative on the Council of Monash University. She was President of the Monash University Staff Association and as Vice-President of the Federation of Australian University Staff Associations took part in negotiations to found the National Tertiary Education Union and was founder and Vice-President, of which she is a Life Member. Three times President of Graduate Women Victoria and twice President of the Australian Federation of University Women (now AGW), she also served two terms on the Status of Women Committee of the International Federation of University Women (now Graduate Women International) and two terms on its Board. She has played an especially active part in the scholarship programs of all three associations.

In 2008, she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for “service to education as an academic and scholar in the field of Australian literature and poetry, and to a range of organisations involved in women’s issues and industrial relations.”