

Obituary

BETTY DURSTON – Inaugural Editor of the HPJA 5 November 1926–7 June 2016

Betty Durston was a key senior member of the small Health Education Unit in the Western Australian Health Department, as Manager and Editor-in-Chief of Publications. In 1985, when the Unit became the Health Promotion Services Branch, Betty's role covered numerous publications in prominent campaigns, such as Quit and Drinksafe.

The idea of a health promotion journal came from discussions between Betty, Ray James and me, following the creation of the Australian Health Promotion Association (AHPA) in 1990. We felt that if WA could set up the Association, it was also a good place to start the journal. Of course, setting up a journal requires more than just enthusiasm (which Ray and I provided). It needs hard work and editorial expertise – and this is where Betty came to the fore.



Charles Watson, Betty Durston and Ray James at the HPJA editors' monthly meeting, 1991.

Betty was a first-rate editor because she was herself a very good writer. She knew how to turn technically heavy material into very readable text. She had a keen eye for stylistic and grammatical imperfection. She was Co-Editor of the journal from 1991–1994.

Betty had a problem-solving approach and an ability to gain consensus on important issues. She was determined and willing to work hard to get a project finished. She was also a caring friend and loyal colleague. I was lucky to have worked closely with her on important projects.

Charles Watson
Founder and inaugural Editor of the HPJA

The inaugural AHPA Board recognised that to be a viable society and grow quickly, it needed flagships. A national health promotion conference and journal were the strategies of choice. As the first national President, I was fortunate to gain support from people of the calibre and tenacity of Charles Watson, Ray James and Betty Durston. It is one thing to have a vision but another to make it happen. Charles and Ray provided the original vision and leadership, and Betty the editorial eye and hard work to make the journal a reality. Betty quickly applied her editorial talents, and her great eye for detail and quality, to delivering a first-class journal. To this day, the HPJA remains a standard bearer for the AHPA.

I also had the pleasure of working closely with Betty in her later years, when she was an employee and, later, a volunteer at the National Heart Foundation in Perth. The Foundation benefited greatly from her in-house wordsmithing. I remember fondly the many discussions we had around the right word, the misplaced hyphen or the overused semicolon.

Betty was a good friend and is greatly missed by us all.

Trevor Shilton
Inaugural National President, Australian Health Promotion Association



The inaugural issue of the HPJA, published in August 1991.