

## Dr. ROSEMARY KISS: HISTORIAN, GRANTS COMMISSIONER, PROFESSOR, ARTS PATRON, EXPERT COMMENTATOR ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

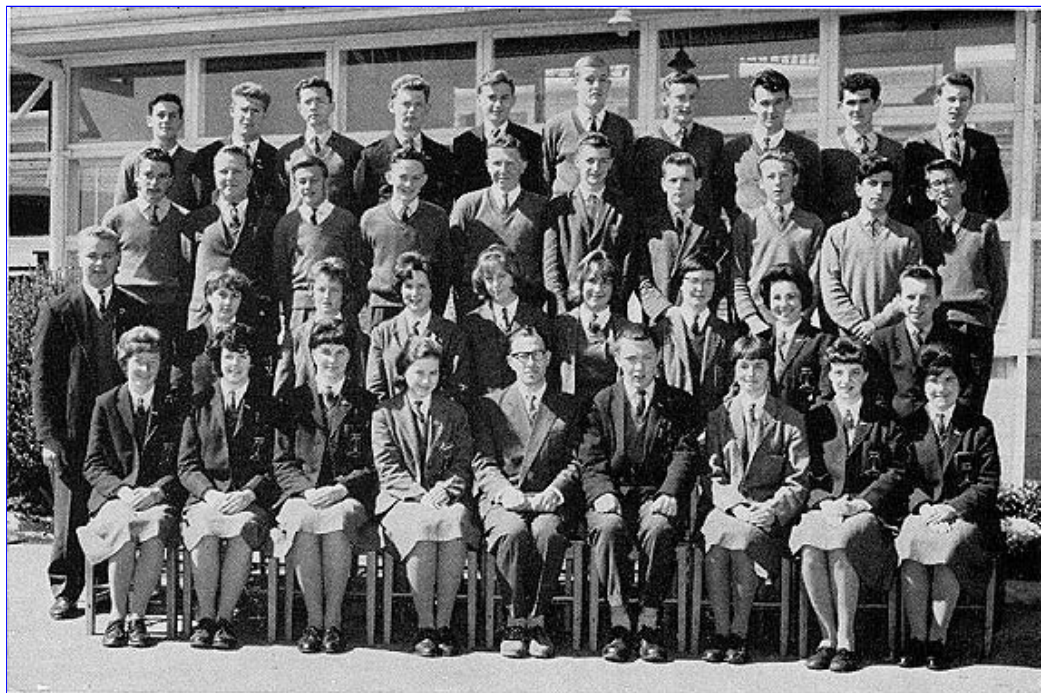
### Family Origins



Rosemary Esther Kiss is of Hungarian background and her family settled in St Albans during the 1950s. (Kiss, pronounced "Kish" in the original, is a common Hungarian family name meaning 'small'.) Rosemary's connection with Fitzroy also occurred at this time as she would join her family in attending the services of the Hungarian Reformed Church, which were held in the Napier Street Presbyterian Church.

### St Albans High School

Rosemary started at St Albans High School in 1958 in Form 1A. She became the form librarian and was also on the magazine committee as form representative. She continued on the magazine committee for several years. She was made a prefect in 1961 and then appointed head prefect in 1963.



Form 5A, 1962. Rosemary Kiss in front row on the right.

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M Bowkun, V Mahorin, C Castagna, R Kiss, Mr Conroy, Mrs Gliddon, S Gunew, R Keegan; 1963.



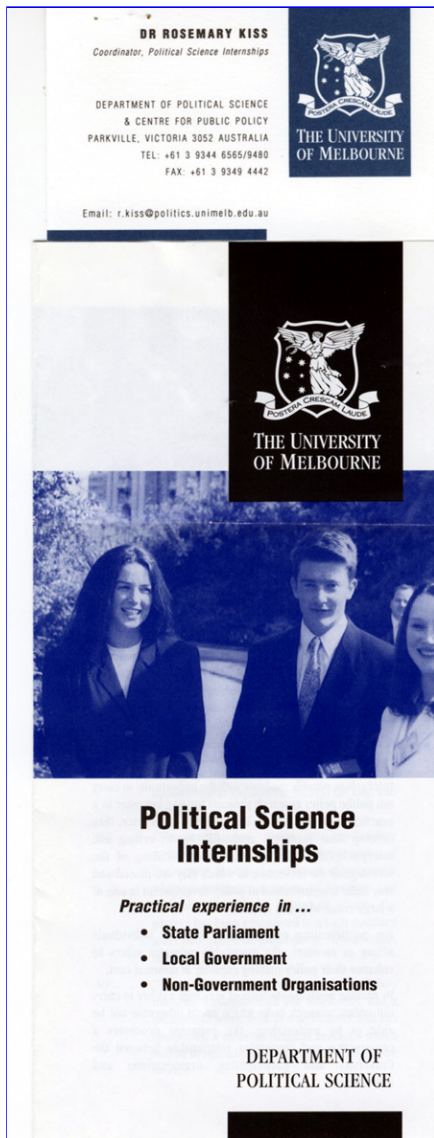
Rosemarie Kiss receiving award as School Captain, Speech Day, 1963.

## Melbourne University

Rosemary's career aspiration at high school was to become a teacher - her classmates obviously recognised loftier academic potential, as it was said of her that *"She rises to sublime heights in the realm of philosophy and it is often a job to bring her back to the more mundane levels of matriculation."* They were right. She enrolled in the Arts faculty at Melbourne University been a resident at the University Women's College and studied at the university during the late '60s and obtained awards for her examination results in 1967 and 1968 and graduated with honors.

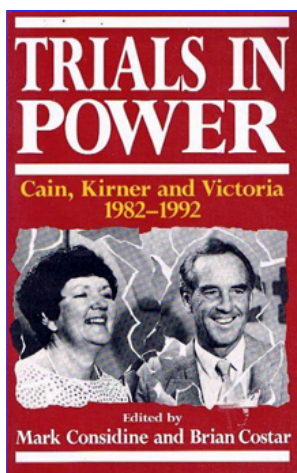
In 1974 she was appointed as a lecturer in history at Melbourne University. She would have been familiar with the institution as she had studied there from the late '60s. She qualified for her Master of Arts in 1982. Her major tertiary qualifications thus included B.A.(Hons), M.A., and Grad.Dip. Data Collection & Analysis. Later, she held the position of Research Fellow in the Department of Political Science at Melbourne.

Kiss established herself in Gore Street Fitzroy in 1972, where she became involved in local history and local government concerns. In 1976 she married Melbourne academic Leslie Lloyd Robson. Robson was an Australian historian who was born in 1931 at Ulverstone, Tasmania. He was also wrote poetry. In the late 1950s he undertook postgraduate study at the University of London and then in 1963 he was appointed lecturer in history at the University of Melbourne, where he taught mainly Australian and Imperial history. Robson was promoted to senior lecturer in 1966 and to Reader in 1977 and retired in 1988 but remained an active associate of the History department. He died of cancer in August 1990 at Fitzroy and was buried in the old cemetery at Penguin, Tasmania. In 1994 Rosemary Kiss donated \$25,000 to Melbourne University to establish a research award - the Lloyd Robson Memorial Award - in memory of her late husband. The purpose of the award was to assist postgraduate students of Australian history to undertake research interstate.



## Fitzroy Council

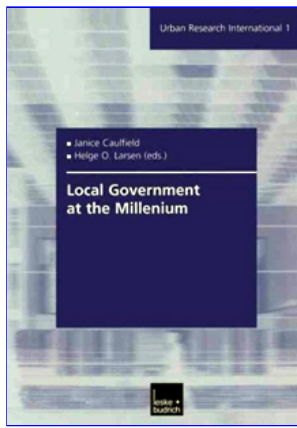
Kiss became actively interested in planning and conservation issues and served on the Fitzroy Council from 1978 to 1981. She was a foundation member of the Cutten History Committee of the Fitzroy History Society and wrote an MA thesis on the growth of suburb in the 1800s. In 1980, Melbourne University published her thesis as a book: *Neither Power Nor Glory: A Study of the Origin and Development of the Suburb of Fitzroy, Melbourne, in the Nineteenth Century*.



She has many other references and chapters in various publications, including:

- "Transport Policy" in *Trials in Power, Cain, Kirner and Victoria, 1982-1992*; Considine & Costar, 1992.
- "The Business of Politics" in *Fitzroy, Melbourne's First Suburb, 1989*.
- *Are We Kidding About Local Autonomy? Local Government in Australia*; European Consortium for Political Resettlement Joint Session of Workshops, Grenoble 2001.

From 1980 to 1989 she worked as a public servant where her responsibilities centred on housing issues and developing programs to involve tenants of public housing in management and decision-



making. During 1985 her position was Coordinator of the Rental Housing Co-operative Unit, Ministry of Housing.

In February 1989 she was appointed as a member of the Victoria Grants Commission, which consisted of a Chairman and two part-time members appointed by the Governor in Council for a period of not more than five years. The principal role of the Commission was to determine the allocation of general revenue grants provided by the Commonwealth to the State for local governments and to see that the funds are allocated to support the needs and disabilities of the more disadvantaged municipalities.

During the 'nineties Dr Kiss was coordinating the political science internship program at Melbourne University which enabled undergraduates to gain experience in state, local and non-government organisations - she led a dedicated group who supported the development of the Victorian Parliamentary Internship Program as academic supervisors and mentors. This program has continued operating ever since and has catered for over one thousand internees. Several of the interns in fact progressed much higher in their positions by becoming Members of Parliament - Daniel Andrews was one of these, starting with the program in 1994, being elected to State Parliament in 2002 and becoming Premier in 2014.

In 2002 Kiss was with Melbourne University's Centre for Public Policy.

## Retirement

In 1995 Rosemary married a retired school teacher, Conrad O'Donohue. Among other interests they became art collectors and patrons through donating items to various galleries. For example, the exhibition at the Geelong Gallery in 2011 featured a number of prints that were referred to as the "O'Donohue & Kiss gift." This was a selection of European and Australian drawings and prints from the seventeenth century to contemporary times, gifted to the gallery by "collectors Conrad O'Donohue and Rosemarie Kiss."

Rosemary has now retired to Rippleside in Greater Geelong. She continues to be active in her local community through networks such as Women in Local Democracy (WILD). She is a firm believer in democratic participation, as exemplified in comments about political power:

*Having power is a core component of effective political citizenship. Citizens can only truly participate when they believe, and actually have, transformative influence or power. It is only in these conditions that citizenship is widely seen as a worthwhile pursuit. (December 2004).*



**Dr. Rosemary Kiss, 2014.**

## Letter to Kathy



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NORMALLY 260 GORE STREET  
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12 June '96

Dear Kathy,

I hope this letter reaches you and I am sorry I did not write earlier but travelling around is, surprisingly, not only time-consuming but also exhausting. I'm afraid I don't have the energy to give you a full CV <sup>of my life</sup> since I left school. I will give you a brief resumé of the main points and enclose my card & some information about my current university teaching responsibilities which might help to fill out the picture.

Briefly, then, I have worked mainly as a university lecturer and, for just under 10 years (from 1980-'89) as a public servant where my responsibilities centred on housing issues and developing programs to involve tenants of public housing in management and decision-making.

I also spent some time in local government as a Fitzroy City councillor. I am still interested in local government and one of my reasons for being here in Hungary is to study the local government system here. At home I am also a member of a body known as the Victoria Grants Commission - which is responsible for the allocation of Commonwealth general purpose and road funding to local government. Each state has such a Grants Commission.

Personally, I have recently remarried (in 1995) to a retired schoolteacher whose name is Gerard O'Donohue. My first husband was the Australian historian Lloyd Robson who wrote especially about the convict system in Australia & about the effects of the 1st. World War. Unfortunately he died of cancer in 1990.

Next week I am attending an international conference of political scientists where I will be giving a paper about parliamentary committees in Victoria. Fortunately we are also finding a little time for sightseeing.

There is, of course, much more that could be said but perhaps the school might have a 50 year reunion at which time I will have more time to fill in the details.

Sorry to be so incoherent & brief but....

Best wishes,

HungarHotels

Rosemary Kiss

University pamphlet and personal letter by Rosemary Kiss.

School photograph reproduction courtesy of Nick Szwed.

Photograph of Lloyd Robson: [http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion\\_to\\_tasmanian\\_history/R/Robson.htm](http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/R/Robson.htm)