



The Privilege of Trailblazing

Call for papers for a workshop to be held at the Australian National University* on Friday 28 March 2025.

An initiative of the National Centre of Biography, convened by Dr Karen Fox, Professor Kim Rubenstein & Dr Michelle Staff.



Mascot, NSW in June 1930. Qantas Heritage Collection.

Women's and gender historians have long focused on 'firsts,' documenting the stories of those who were among the earliest to achieve particular milestones. Those individuals often provide both substantial source material and fascinating, rich, and inspiring stories, appealing to academic and public audiences alike. Part of a longstanding tradition of 'recovery' history, attention to these trailblazers emphasises women's contributions to their societies.

This workshop aims to critically investigate the figure of the trailblazing woman. Developments in contemporary feminist praxis, especially the emphasis on intersectionality, decolonisation, and privilege, enable and require us to approach 'firsts' in critical, historically informed ways. This workshop seeks to interrogate the concept of the 'trailblazer' to better understand how gender, privilege, power, and legacy interact.

We invite papers that investigate trailblazing women in a variety of fields of endeavour and historical time periods in Australia. We particularly welcome papers addressing questions such as: What has enabled trailblazing over time? In what ways other than gender were women trailblazers connected? What are the links between privilege, power, and trailblazing? To what extent did these women use their positions to make change for future generations? Why are we interested in these figures? And what are we trying to achieve in telling their stories in 2025? We encourage papers that provide comparative perspectives from other settings, particularly New Zealand and the Pacific, or that arise from disciplinary backgrounds other than history, such as biography, law, Pacific studies, or Indigenous studies. We also welcome co-authored papers, and may suggest this as a possibility where similar proposals are submitted.

This workshop is intended to be the catalyst for ongoing collaboration between participants on this topic. Priority will therefore be given to papers that provide a range of perspectives and that may be suitable to bring together in an edited collection of essays or similar. To allow deep intellectual engagement between participants, short draft papers will be pre-circulated, and the workshop will be structured around thematically based conversations responding both to those papers and to some of the pressing questions animating the event.



Please send proposals (250 words) and brief biographical notes (100 words) to Dr Michelle Staff (michelle.staff@anu.edu.au) by **Monday 30 September 2024**.

This workshop has been made possible by funding from the ANU Gender Institute.

* We intend for this to be an in-person event. If you are unable to attend, please contact us to discuss the possibility of participating online.

