

RUTH LILICO 1920 - 2008

Ruth Lilico's career spanned a number of roles in the Health Services in Southland. Ruth graduated as a Registered Nurse from the Southland Hospital School of Nursing in 1945 and went on to complete Maternity and Plunket training.

After overseas travel and work Ruth gained the Diploma in Public Health Nursing before returning to work in Southland, soon as Charge of the District Nursing Service.

Ruth's commitment to the elderly involved speaking to many community groups and setting up short and longer-term care in some 60 private homes. Alongside this system she was instrumental in developing and managing meals on wheels and home help services.

Other projects in the '50s and '60s were membership of the committees set up to develop major rest homes in Invercargill, management of admissions to the Southland Hospital Board's two geriatric hospitals as well as some private institutions, membership of the Old Peoples Welfare Council and subsequent setting up of the Invercargill Senior Citizens Centre. Ruth was also responsible for assessment of residents and buildings for the City Council flats (her priority was need).

Ruth was appointed to the Board of Health (Wellington) and this broader focus went alongside her advocacy for the needs of the elderly in the Southland community.

It seems obvious now that community activity should result in Ruth's appointment to the first Medical Social Work position in the Southland in the late 60's. This service gradually extended into all departments of the hospital, and by the late 70's was becoming increasingly professional. Ruth ensured that social workers had access to training, education and supervision, and was a member of the Southland branch of ANZASW from its inception.

Ruth was awarded Life Membership on her retirement in 1983. Ruth's forthrightness was part of her genuine caring for people, which included her staff and many people in the community who had worked with her.

Ruth was awarded a Lions Order of Merit in 1975 and the OBE in 1977.

Ruth Lilico stated that... "I believe the most fundamental principle which should guide planning services for the old is concerned with the enlargement or at least the preservation of the individual's sense of freedom and self respect".

She was a very special Southlander.

(Sources: *Southland Times*; *Step by Step*, Clive A Lind).

