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## **Mary Nixon – Hon FAPS**

By Emeritus Professor Ron Taft Hon FAPS

Mary Nixon belongs among the relatively small group of psychologists who have played a significant role in the operations of the APS during its first 25 years. She also has made an immense contribution to the development of an appreciation of psychology as a profession. She accomplished this in several ways: 1. through her publication (with Taft) of the first collection of chapters on the status of applied psychology and professional practice in Australia (Nixon & Taft *Psychology in Australia: Achievements and Prospects*, Pergamon Press, 1977), together with other publications on similar topics in overseas media; 2. by establishing and developing a core course on *psychology as a profession* for psychologists in training at Monash University Faculty of Education for which she produced some widely used curriculum materials; but even more importantly, 3. by establishing and guiding committees of the APS (and before that, in the Australian Branch of the BPS) that were concerned with professional practice.

Between 1968 and 1985 she chaired committees and working parties on *Ethics and Professional Standards; Training Needs of Educational Psychologists; Role of Psychologists in Health Care; APS Membership; and Professional Supervision*. She was particularly influential in the initiation and development by the APS of its first Code of Professional Conduct. While she was Chair of the Membership Committee she pressed for the need to formalise the regulations concerning the professional supervision of graduates in psychology for the purpose of membership. She was a member for five years of the Victorian Psychological Council. Mary was Honorary Secretary of the Australian Branch of the BPS in 1958-60 and subsequently became President (1972) of the APS. She was the first woman to hold that office in Australia and there have been only two female Presidents of the APS since then (now three, including Amada Gordon). She was elected to the grade of Fellow of the Society in 1979.

After working as a primary teacher in NSW, Mary obtained 1<sup>st</sup> class BA and MA degrees in Psychology from the University of Sydney. Her PhD dissertation at the University of Melbourne was on *The development of classification skills in young children* for which she developed a test which was subsequently used by practitioners. After serving as Principal of Women's College at the University of Queensland and as a Research Officer at ACER, she was for 20 years Senior Lecturer in Psychology in the Education Faculty at Monash. Her contributions to research have included studies of cognition in children and especially of their understanding of television programs. She is one of the few psychologists who have published extensively on the rights of children. She has also chronicled the current status of psychology in Australia, a subject on which she has been invited to contribute to international platforms.

Mary's important contributions to psychology in Australia make it very appropriate for her to be appointed as an Honorary Fellow of the APS.