

the “Stolen Generation” Royal Commission, or the current government’s summary rejection of the “Uluru Statement” – suggests that this “definition” is unedifying. That is given some personal context (as well as a sober retelling of the central story) in the book which Lydon and Ryan have edited. None of us can hear and reflect upon this wretched narrative too often.

BOOK REVIEW

Caroline Chisholm: An irresistible force

Author: Sarah Goldman
Publisher: HarperCollins, 2018
ISBN: 978146075343 9
Hardback: 344 pages
Price: \$49.99

Reviewed by Irene Franklin*

There is quite a lot written about Caroline Chisholm, “the emigrant’s friend”. This book is the most in depth that I’ve read and by the incredible detail that the author’s research has unearthed she has been able to flesh out the person that Caroline Chisholm was. It is also the first account that I have read, of several, which has acknowledged that her husband, Archibald Chisholm, played an essential part in enabling Caroline to fulfill her ambition.

For those who don’t know her story: She was born in England into an Anglican family of the rural middle class. After she married Archie she converted to Catholicism. However her character was



* Irene Franklin is a member of the Australian Catholic Historical Society.

not typical of women in that position – she told Archie that she would not marry him unless he gave her the freedom to live a public life and she gave him time to think that over. Married women were totally dependent on their husbands in many ways including financially. Archie agreed.

She also went alone to meet important men in the government, church and business to make requests to enable her work to proceed, unheard of in those days.

Caroline arrived in Sydney in 1838, only fifty years after the First Fleet, when it was still a rough place. When she heard that poor single women hoping for a better life in Australia were enticed to travel there only to find themselves badly treated, even raped, on board the sailing ships and on arrival in Sydney, she determined to do something about it.

Over time, with her strenuous efforts and Archie's financial backing, she was able to stop the mistreatment on board ship. She laid successful charges against the brutal captain, ship's surgeon and other officers of the *Carthaginian*. Apart from that she changed the design of the ships' onboard layout to improve health and safety, met each ship and provided accommodation, and found immigrants real work in safe situations. She encouraged women to go to work for suitable single men in places outside Sydney such as Windsor, trying to match the couple well; she thus became Australia's first marriage bureau as well as job agency.

The colony had a surplus of single men, which Caroline felt prevented it from becoming civilized. She returned to England to advertise her scheme and to recruit women, also starting a low interest loan company for the travel costs.

There is much more to learn in this well-written book about this outstanding woman and her importance to the fledgling colony she helped to shape. I encourage every Australian to read it.