



# Dale Spender

A tribute to the woman who only wears purple

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Fashion Designer & Friend

## AWE FAREWELLS DALE SPENDER

Everyone listened when the woman in purple stepped up to the microphone.

Everyone who attended Australian events in the Eighties and Nineties where people gathered to discuss and debate the status of women was fully aware that when the woman in purple stepped up to the microphone it was time to listen carefully.

Dale was a warrior. Well-armed and well prepared to speak out, Dale told it, and wrote it, like she saw it. Comments and keynotes were fully researched and uncomfortable for many who had never considered the impact of language on shaping gender roles and societal structure. Her work inspired generations of feminists, scholars, and activists to examine and challenge the linguistic roots of gender bias.

She was widely published, writing over 30 books. *Man Made Language* (1980) and *Women of Ideas: and What Men have Done to Them* (1982) are still in print. Her PhD research was based around her argument that in patriarchal societies men control language and it works in their favour.



*Man Made Language* which resulted from her PhD studies, is a seminal work where she delved into the intricacies of how language has been crafted by men and for men, effectively sidelining women's experiences and contributions. Her analysis exposed the subtle ways in which language reinforces gender biases and offers a powerful critique of the social structures that uphold these disparities. Language is not just a tool for communication but also a mechanism for maintaining and reinforcing the status quo. She provided a framework for understanding how societal norms and structures are upheld through language, and how changing the way we communicate can contribute to more equitable gender relations.

Dale's approachability and willingness to engage with a broader audience made her ideas accessible. Her writing, marked by clarity and a profound depth of understanding, invited readers to question, reflect, and, most importantly, to act. Dale's work encourages us to look beyond the surface and to recognise the pervasive influence of language in shaping our world.



Dale's dedication to education and her efforts to bring feminist perspectives into the academic and public discourse must also be considered among her greatest achievements. She worked tirelessly to ensure that women's contributions to history and culture were recognised and valued, challenging the traditional narratives that have historically marginalised women's voices.

She also served as the Editor of *The International Women's Quarterly*, chair of Australia's Copyright Agency Limited, deputy chair of the State Library of Queensland, and co-founded Second Chance, which was set up in 2001 to address the urgent issue of women's homelessness.

Dale Spender's legacy is one of empowerment and enlightenment. Her tireless efforts to challenge the status quo, and her work as an activist for a more inclusive and equitable society, left an indelible mark on the feminist movement. As we continue to navigate the complexities of gender and power, Dale's work remains a source of inspiration, reminding us of the transformative power of language.

The Association of Women Educators salutes Dale Spender. We celebrate her contributions to feminism and her unwavering commitment to creating a world where every voice is heard and valued. Dale, here's to you—a true pioneer, an inspiring scholar, and a relentless advocate for gender equality. Your legacy will continue to inspire and guide those who strive to build a more just and equitable society.

Dale Spender died November 2023.



The image of Dale was taken by Pia, the Managing Director at Pia du Pradal, who celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) in 2021 by writing a great bio of her friend Dale on LinkedIn. Pia includes a link to a full list of Dale's books on Goodreads.

