

# It pays to hold the frump card

If you are an actress who considers that you show up best as a little old lady who is funny in an eccentric way, you are assured of regular character work. Not that TV, stage and radio dramas are bulging with little old ladies who are funny, but if you have that sort of modest approach to your work, you are not going to demand perpetual leads.

And if you are a good actress into the bargain, there's enough work around to keep you in steady employment.

That's Babs Wheelton's experience and the Brisbane-based actress is used to commuting to Melbourne for Crawfords as easily as she slips into stage plays and TV commercials in her own city.

She's probably best known on the national TV scene as the Wicked Witch in the 0-10 network's Saturday Show.

In the Crawfords' cop shows she plays criminals' widows, stood-over housewives and vindictive farmers' wives with a bewildering range of ages.

"I prefer TV work because it's more subtle, you can express something with just a bat of the eye," she said.

"At the same time, I love playing to an audience in the theatre, because when you have a sympathetic part you can feel the waves of affection coming from the people."

Babs, who has five children, has to have a feeling of boredom as a young housewife in a northern NSW town nearly 20 years ago for her career.

She was living in Kyogle. In search of something uplifting she joined the local branch of the Arts Council.

Later, when she moved to Brisbane and joined the Arts Theatre, Babs went into major productions.

But it wasn't until she played Bea Blunt on Brisbane's QTQ-9 that Babs started to gain confidence.

For the next three years Babs played in theatre and ran a model and talent agency.

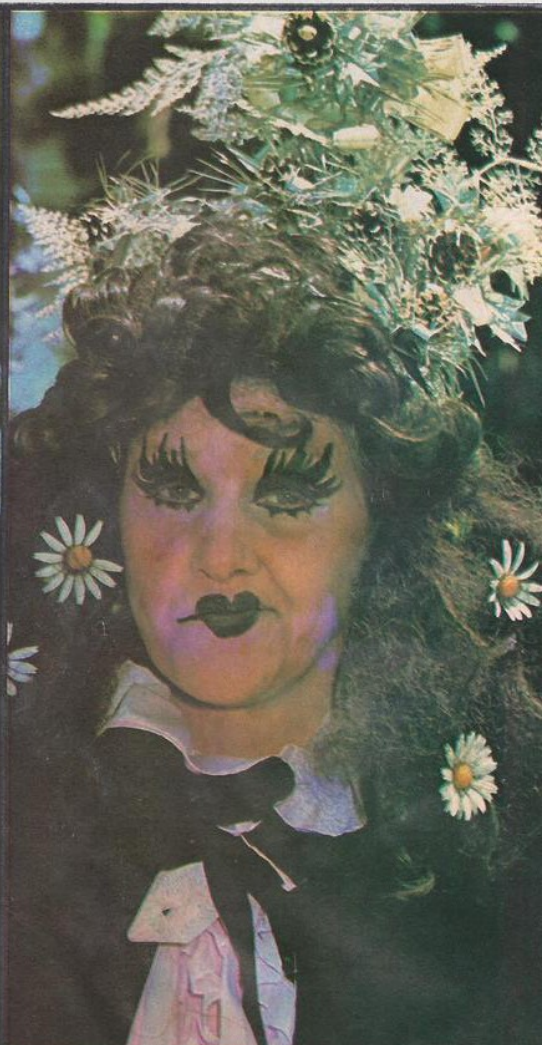
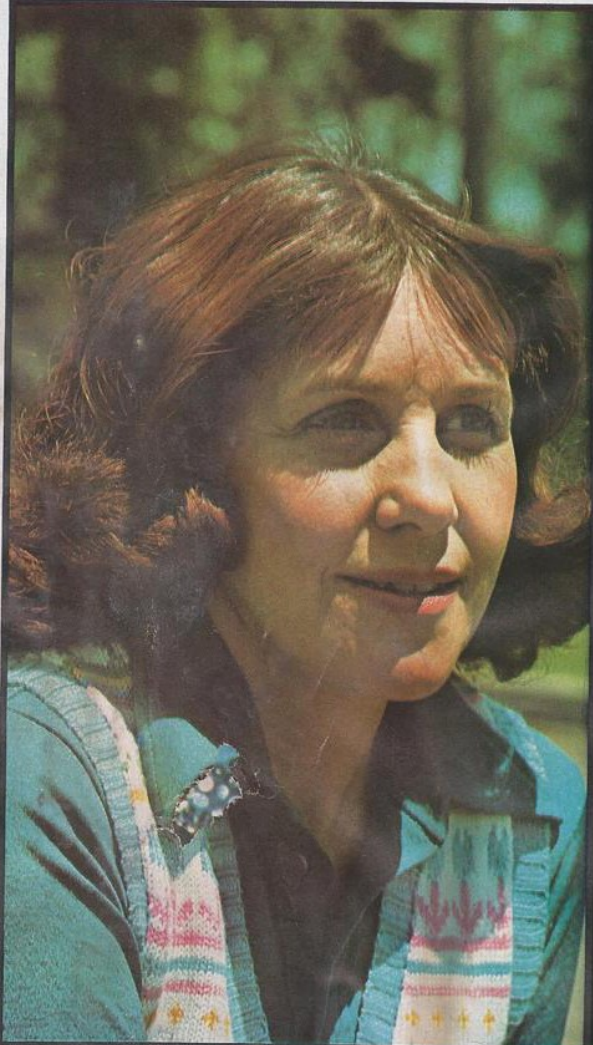
An old friend called Gerard Kennedy suggested she audition for Crawfords.

She moved to Melbourne, but missed Brisbane and returned for more theatre-restaurant work.

Since her return she has been back to Melbourne several times for Crawfords.

She said: "These days I like to do what I enjoy. I don't want to be in a permanent company or go on tour."

"I love Brisbane. Every morning when I get up for the papers and the milk, I wash my face in the dew. My grandmother used to do it; it has an astringent effect."



Story: Peter Dean

BABS WHEELTON . . . as herself she likes to enjoy life

. . . as an old lady, funny in an eccentric way

. . . as the Wicked Witch in the Saturday Show.