Entry type: Organisation
Entry ID: AWE0422

Council of Ex-Servicewomen’s Associations (NSW)

(1975 -)

Born	19750120
Occupation	Ex-Armed services organisation

Summary

The Council of Ex-Servicewomen’s Associations (NSW) was established in Sydney, New South Wales on 20 January 1975, as a vehicle for uniting and representing the many wartime service women who served Australia.

Details

The inaugural meeting of the Council of Ex-Servicewomen’s Associations (NSW) was held in Sydney on 20 January 1975 with five wartime servicewomen’s organisations as Founder Member Associations:
• Australian Women’s Army Service Association (NSW)
• Ex-AAMWS Association of New South Wales
• Ex-WRANS Association (NSW)
• The Ex-Servicewomen’s Association
• WAAAF Branch, RAAF Association (NSW Division).

The Council’s formation was due to the encouragement of the then Deputy Commissioner of Repatriation, Mr Bruce Auld. He suggested the establishment of a united body as a way of pursuing common objectives for the benefit of as many wartime servicewomen as possible.

As a result a Joint Council was formed in order that the policies and representations of the Member Associations could be co-ordinated and means could be considered whereby through unity, common objects might be pursued for the benefit of as many wartime Australian female veterans as possible. Council has a restricted membership with state-wide membership but as a representative group it obtains and affords information and advice to kindred ex-servicewomen’s associations and other ex-servicewomen throughout New South Wales.

Council keeps faith with the objectives and purposes for which it was established. All work is carried out in the interests of all Australian wartime servicewomen; it disseminates relevant information and acts as a joint voice for all; it preserves the memory and record of those who have died; it guards the good name and preserves the interest and standing of women who have served in the Navy, Army and Air Force; it assists in the provision of housing and other accommodation for Australian wartime servicewomen and it perpetuates the close spirit of friendship created by mutual service in the wars of the Commonwealth.

Council’s most important achievement was the conception and completion of the ex-servicewomen’s building project: 12 self-contained units of The Friendship Court at the RSL Veterans’ Retirement Villages at Narrabeen for AAMWS, AWAS, WAAAF and WRANS. The units were handed over to the Board of the Veterans’ Retirement Villages on 31 March 1984 after 7 years’ hard work, not only by the Council but also by the ex-servicewomen of New South Wales and friends in the ex-service movement who assisted in raising money. The way they all related to this project was a source of inspiration to everyone and for Councillors it was a rewarding and enlightening time. There is a waiting list for admission from members of the four Women’s Services who do not own their own home and would find it difficult to provide themselves with one.

Council placed a Memorial Plaque commemorating the WAAAF, WRANS, AWAS, and AAMWS in the foyer of the State War Memorial of New South Wales, Hyde Park, Sydney and it was unveiled on 7 February 1986 by Council’s Patron, Miss Clare Stevenson AM MBE, and dedicated at a small ceremony.

Council commenced raising funds in 1987 for a State Memorial to the Wartime Servicewomen of New South Wales and finally on 16 February 1990 it was unveiled by His Excellency Rear-Admiral Sir David Martin KCMG AO, Governor of New

South Wales at that time and dedicated in the presence of hundreds of war-time servicewomen, their friends and representatives of ex-service organisations from all parts of New South Wales, most of whom made its erection possible. It was the result of a labour of love. Erected in the Spirit of Friendship and located in Jessie Street Gardens in Loftus Street, Sydney, it is dear to the hearts of thousands of World War II servicewomen. Wreath laying ceremonies are held there on commemorative occasions.

On 12 December 1991 a Tree Planting and Memorial Plaque Dedication Ceremony was held by Council at the western side of the main building of the Australian War Memorial to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the Australian Women's Services in the Defence Forces. The tree was a mint leafed peppermint.

Throughout the years Council has continued to make representations to the Governments of the day and has had its wins and losses. Council's support of its Chairman was the main catalyst for Defence Service Home Loans being granted to all World War II servicewomen in the 1995-1996 Budget, irrespective of where they served.

It pressed for the recognition of men as war widowers when their TPI wives died or other female veteran wives died as the result of their war service, knowing full well how dependent upon their wives many men in the World War II age group were. Discrimination was also an issue in both these cases and this was recognised after much lobbying.

Council is well-respected in the ex-service community and has been involved in many Federal projects, e.g. inter alia its Chairman was invited to represent the Australian World War II female veterans at the official proceedings at the Entombment of the Unknown Australian Soldier; to take part in the planning of Wartime Servicewomen's National Day in Canberra during the 1997 Australia Remembers Year and to be a member of the Advisory Group to the Australian War Memorial for the Australian Servicewomen's Memorial in the Sculpture Garden at the Australian War Memorial. The Councillors all contribute to the reputation Council has for reliability, as well as deep concern and action on behalf of those it represents.

An annual Church Service has been held since 1981 at The Holy Trinity Garrison Church, Millers Point, to commemorate the four Women's Services and this is well-attended by female veterans, their families and friends. Council's only fundraising function is an annual Friendship Luncheon which provides funds necessary for administrative purposes, the annual subscriptions from Member Associations being kept to a minimum to assist those organisations.

Large State Reunions were held to celebrate the 40th, 50th and 60th Anniversaries of the formation of the four Women's Services. Simply, Council makes it possible for female veterans to meet and to celebrate on a state-wide basis when appropriate. Councillors are proud of what has been achieved and of the assistance that has been given to fellow female veterans since the formation of the Council of Ex-Servicewomen's Associations (NSW) in 1975.

Published resources

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Private hands (These records may not be readily available)
Council of Ex-Servicewomen's Associations (NSW)

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Created 19 December 2002
Last modified 5 June 2009