

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Organisation

Entry ID: AWE0501

National Council of Women of Victoria

(1902 -)

Born	19020101
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Occupation	Voluntary organisation
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Summary

Officially founded in 1902, with Janet Lady Clarke as president, and continuing today, the National Council of Women of Victoria is an umbrella organisation for a large and diverse number of affiliated Victorian women's groups. It functions as a political lobby group, attempting to influence local, state and federal government. Like all National Councils of Women, it operates through a standing committee system whereby specific issues are brought before the Council and, if there is general agreement that a question should be taken up, a subcommittee is established to investigate the matter. Until the 1940s at least, the Council was a major focal point for women's activism.

Its initial aims were:

1. To establish a bond of union between the various affiliated societies.
2. To advance the interests of women and children and of humanity in general.
3. To confer on questions relating to the welfare of the family, the State and the Commonwealth.'

While encompassing a diverse range of organisations, the Council emerged as a largely middle-class women's organisation especially in terms of its office bearers.

Although not always an overtly feminist organisation, the NCWV drew on the conviction that women had a special contribution to make to public life and the formulation of social policy. They were thus concerned with a wide array of social reform issues** as well as those more directly related to the legal and social status of women. It also drew on notions of gender unity and international sisterhood.

[Kate Gray, 'The Acceptable Face of Feminism: the National Council of Women, 1902-1918', MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1988.]

Details

Women's organisations affiliated with the National Council of Women of Victoria have a wide range of goals and aims. Thirty five organisations were affiliated in 1902, and 139 by 1977 [Norris, p. 10-11]. These organisations include groups dedicated to philanthropic and reform causes, social and cultural societies as well as professional organisations. These included the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Australian Women's National League, the League of Women voters of Victoria, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Business and Professional Women's Club of Melbourne, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Union of Australian Women, the Royal Australian Nursing Federation (Victorian Branch), the Right to Choose Coalition, the Victorian Association of Benevolent Societies, the Women's Electoral Lobby, the Family Planning Association and the Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria.

All National Councils of Women, and the International Council of Women, operate through a standing committee system. The process was for specific issues to be brought before the Council by individual delegates. Often the issues were of special interest to one or more affiliated organisations, who may have been working unsuccessfully on them for some time. Once it appeared from preliminary discussions that there was general agreement that a question should be taken up, a subcommittee was established to investigate the matter and draw up recommendations on which the Council could act. The first subcommittee formed in 1902 on the introduction of Police matrons in city and suburban lockups. Other early committees concerned themselves with the establishment of a colony for epileptics, with children playgrounds and with street lighting. Latter standing committees included: Arts and Letters; Child and Family; Education; Health; Home Economics; Internal Relations and Peace; Laws; Mass Media; Social Welfare; Women and Employment; Migration.

From at least 1919, they advocated equal pay for equal work – [Norris, p. 41] but it was not until 1954 that active steps were taken by the Council to promote wage equality for women [Norris, p. 46]

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Thesis

The Acceptable face of feminism : National Council of Women, 1902-1918, Gray, Kate, 1988

The Women's Movement in the New South Wales and Victoria, 1918-1938, Foley, Meredith, 1986

The 'Woman Question' in Melbourne, 1880-1914, Kelly, Farley, 1983

Book

Champions of the impossible: a history of the National Council of Women of Victoria, 1902-1977, Norris, Ada, 1978

From Vision to Reality: Histories of the affiliates of the National Council of Women of Victoria, 1987

A Brief history of the National Council of Women of Victoria, 1902-1945, Gillan, Helen E (comp.), 1945

Nine decades, Penrose, Patricia, 1997

Regional branches, 1927-2002, National Council of Women of Victoria Inc., 2002

Forty years on : women still pioneering : a collection of speeches from the Australia Day Women's Ceremony, Pioneer Women's Garden, King's Domain, Melbourne, 2002

50 years 1944-1994, National Council of Women of Victoria, Geelong Branch, 1994

Hints for the busy housewife, The Health Association of Australasia in conjunction with the National Council of Women of Victoria, [1938?]

Edited Book

Valuing the Volunteers : An Anthology for the International Year of Volunteers 2001, National Council of Women of Victoria Inc., 2001

Report

Annual report, National Council of Women of Victoria

Conference Proceedings

Women at work conference, National Council of Women of Victoria, 1969

Journal Article

The National Council of Women of Victoria, Suffrage and Political Citizenship 1904-14, Smart, Judith and Quartly, Marian

Archival resources

The University of Melbourne Archives

Oke, Marjorie (1911-2003)

Norris, Dame Ada May

Moore, Edith Eliza Harrison

State Library of Victoria

National Council of Women of Victoria

Papers, 1939-1974. [manuscript].

Papers, 1978-1987. [manuscript].

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

Minutes [1904-1960] [microform]

Author Details

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Digital resources



Title: NCW Victoria presents a mobile unit to the Australian Comforts Fund

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