Entry type: Organisation
Entry ID: AWE0632

Tailoresses’ Association of Melbourne

(1882 - 1907)

Born 18821215

Died 19071231

Summary

The Tailoresses’ Association of Melbourne, Australia’s first female trade union, was established at a meeting held in Trades Hall on 15 December 1882. At this meeting women met in response to attempts by the Melbourne clothing manufacturer Beith Shiess & Co to reduce piece-rate wages. A strike was called on 15 February 1883 when clothing manufacturers had not responded to the log of claims. As each manufacturer accepted the log, employees resumed work. The strike is generally regarded as instrumental in the establishment of the Shops Commission and the eventual passage of the Factory Act. When the new Factory Act was passed in 1885, the recommendations of the March 1884 Royal Commission regarding outwork were not incorporated and working conditions in the industry were not substantially affected by its operation. In 1906, the Tailoresses’ Union amalgamated with the Tailors’ Society.

On 15 December 1982 the Honourable Pauline Toner, Victoria’s first woman Cabinet Minister, unveiled a plaque to commemorate the centenary of the Tailoresses’ Union. The plaque was placed at the entrance to the offices of the Textile Clothing & Footwear Union of Australia (formerly Clothing & Allied Trades Union of Australia) in Leicester Street, Carlton.

Published resources

Journal Article
Centenary of the Tailoresses' Association of Melbourne, Anon, 1983

The Melbourne Tailoresses' Strike 1882-1883: An Assessment, Brooks, Raymond, 1983

Book
In women's hands? : a history of clothing trades unionism in Australia, Ellem, B L, 1989

Resource Section
Melbourne Tailoresses Strike (1882 - 1883), Elford, Ross G, 2002,
http://www.atua.org.au/biogs/ALE1526b.htm

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University
Clothing and Allied Trades Union, Federal Office deposit 1

Clothing and Allied Trades Union, Federal Office deposit 2

Clothing and Allied Trades Union of Australia, Federal Office and Branches deposit 1

Clothing and Allied Trades Union of Australia, Federal Office and Branches deposit 2

Clothing and Allied Trades Union of Australia, Federal Office and Branches deposit 3

The University of Melbourne Archives
Clothing and Allied Trades Union of Australia, Victorian Branch

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