Entry type: Organisation
Entry ID: AWE0790

The Country Women’s Association of Tasmania

(1936 -)

Born	19360101, Tasmania
Occupation	Lobby group, Voluntary organisation

Summary

The Country Women’s Association of Tasmania is a non-sectarian, non-party-political, non-profit lobby group and voluntary organisation working in the interests of women and children in both urban and rural areas. It was founded in 1936 in Launceston, with Mrs C. W. Peart as President, and grew quickly across the state.

The Association was formed partly in response to the formation of similar groups in other states. Its major activities have revolved around the provision of services to its members, fundraising, the improvement of amenities in rural areas (initially with an emphasis on child health services) and social activities.

Details

The Country Women's Association (CWA) of Tasmania was founded in February 1936 at a meeting in the Launceston Town Hall attended by around 80 women. The meeting was addressed by the State President of The Country Women's Association of Victoria, Miss Elsa Grice, who outlined the history of women's organisations throughout the world and the progress of the CWA in Australia. The Tasmanian Governor's, Lady Clark, agreed to act as patron for the new Association and Mrs W. C. Peart (a clergyman's wife and former member of the CWA of Victoria) was elected foundation president. A month later a similar meeting was held in Hobart, with addresses this time from the Bush Nursing Association, the National Council of Women, the Women's Non-Party League and a past treasurer of the South Australian CWA.

The motto adopted by the league was 'Honour to God, Loyalty to the Throne, Service to the Country, Through Country Women, For Country Women, By Country Women'.

Initially the Associations in the north and south operated separately. In 1937 they joined to form a single body, with a Northern and a Southern Division. During its first 18 months, 18 branches were formed and membership reached 550. This increased to 2500 members and 71 branches by 1940.

From its establishment the Association focussed particularly on issues relating the welfare of women and children. In conjunction with local councils, they established numerous child health centres. Restrooms were also established in many regional centres to provide facilities for members when they had to visit town. Some of these also provided rooms for visiting doctors, clinic sisters, libraries and other community services.

During WWII, as in other states, much of the Association's energy was directed towards supporting the war effort. Twenty thousand camouflage nets were made, along with sheepskin vests, slippers, mittens and gloves. Thousands of pounds were donated to the Red Cross, Australian Comforts Fund and other causes and an ambulance was purchased for the AIF. Food parcels were sent to soldiers and British civilians. A Voluntary Aid Detachment was established which gave classes in first aid and home nursing.

From the 1946 the Association produced its own semi-annual journal, *The Tasmania Country Woman*. From 1966, this became a weekly new sheet published in the Tasmania Farmers' Federation Newspaper. From 1977 they again published their own *News and Views*.

Handcrafts and home industries have been a particular focus of the Tasmanian Association since 1937 when committees were established to promote these activities. Numerous classes, craft schools and exhibitions have been held since this time. They have also published several cookery books. In the postwar years, choral and drama activities also became a prominent feature of the Association's social functions. They also became interested in 'beautification' – planting hundreds of trees., shrubs and garden beds in public spaces. From 1942 to 1982 they also ran a Housekeeper scheme, although insufficient funds limited its success. In the 1950s and 1960s numerous holiday homes were established for members. They also showed an interest in new migrants and were represented on Good Neighbourhood Councils.

Over the years the Association has raised funds to support or establish a wide range of community services – from community Halls and playgrounds, to aged care homes, to facilities for disabled children. They have supported the Asthma Foundation, St John's Ambulance, and Meals on Wheels and provided emergency relief in times of fire and flood.

In 2004 the aims of the Association included:
-To encourage interest in current affairs, home management and cultural activities.
-To support schemes which provide for:
(a) Education in nutrition
(b) Training in Home Economics and Home Management
(c) To encourage the production of home grown foods and use of them to the best advantage.
(d) Community Centres and/or Projects of Community value.
(e) Children's activities.
(g) Child Care.
(h) Youth Organisations.
(i) Crime prevention.
-To take interest in education at all levels.
-To welcome and take kindly interest in all newcomers in every district.
-To encourage tree planting, for home and town beautification and to assist conservation.

Published resources

Book
The 21st birthday cookery book of the Country Women's Association in Tasmania, Country Women's Association in Tasmania, 1958

The Many Hats of Country Women: The Jubilee History of the Country Women's Association of Australia, Stevens-Chambers, Brenda, 1997

Getting things done : the Country Women's Association of Australia, Country Women's Association of Australia, 1986

Glimpses of gold : a brief history of the Country Women's Association in Tasmania, Miles, Ena., 1987

Playing our part : sixty years of the Country Women's Association in Tasmania, 1936-1996 : in celebration, a Roll-of-Honour, and graphic evidence, dedicated to our membership., 1996

The Formation and History of the Devonport Branch, Bligh, Marjorie and Jean Potter, [1986]

A History of the North Eastern Group: Country Women's Association, Carins, Allison, 1986

More than tea and talk :the story of CWA in Taroona, 1942-1986, Acton, Amy, 1987

Newsletter
News and Views / Country Women's Association in Tasmania, 1977-

The Tasmanian Countrywoman, 1946-1972

Report
The Official Annual of the Country Women's Association in Tasmania, 1948-

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Australian Historic Records Register
Country Women's Association of Australia, North Bruny Island Branch

Australian War Memorial, Research Centre
Women's Land Army, Launceston, Tasmania

Archives Office of Tasmania
Minutes and associated papers

Minute Book of the Frankford branch of the Country Womens Association.

Author Details
Jane Carey and Anne Heywood

Created 19 March 2004
Last modified 29 April 2009