

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Organisation

Entry ID: AWE1003

Bardon Women's Club

(1926 - 1998)

Born	1 January, 1926, Brisbane Queensland Australia
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Died	31 December, 1998, Brisbane Queensland Australia
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Occupation	Social organisation, Voluntary organisation
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Summary

The Bardon Women's Club was formed in 1926 with the aim of providing a vehicle for community involvement for the women in this suburb of Brisbane, Queensland, as long as they were not Catholic. The initiative of Mrs. Vera Jones, a local mother and an ex-schoolteacher with a Masters of Science from the University of Queensland, the club was open to non-Catholic women who wanted to 'widen their own horizons', who wanted 'a voice in the community' and also needed some entertainment and 'a social focus'. The club amended its constitution in 1996 to allow membership to non-Protestant women, in accordance with State government anti-discrimination legislation. It ceased operation in 1998.

Details

The inaugural meeting of the Bardon Women's Club took place on November 19, 1926. Mrs. Vera Jones, in consultation with Mrs. Elizabeth Exley, a local resident with a long involvement in community service in the Brisbane, Queensland, area formed the club with the belief that it was vital that women take an interest, and have a *secular* voice, in community matters. A well educated woman who moved in academic circles, Vera Jones has been described as 'representative of the "new woman" who was emerging after World War 1', in that she was 'interested in women's affairs and aware of the need for women to have a voice in community affairs, but not necessarily through the churches as had been the case in the past.' Most of the founding members were young mothers who brought their children with them to the meetings.

Affiliated with the National Council of Women, the Bardon Women's Club's first achievement was the establishment of a member's library. Club members read voraciously and took an interest in the activities of other organizations, such as the Ithaca Benevolent society, the Mother's Union, District Nursing, and the Temperance Movement. Many of the founding members were involved in the Lyceum Club, the kindergarten movement and the campaign for a University Women's College, to name a few. Its list of guest speakers at meetings reflects this range and type of interests.

During the depression of the 1930s, members worked closely with the Ithaca Benevolent Society and other relief organizations. They also took an active interest in events happening in Europe, although members did not choose to affiliate with the Queensland Women's Peace Conference in 1936. Along with most affiliates of the National Council of Women, however, they joined the Women's National Volunteer Register during World War II.

After the war, the aims and activities of the club changed somewhat, as it moved from being a community service organization that provided women with a social outlet to a much more 'social' club. The founding members were getting on in age and their attendance at meetings was less frequent. New members were still young mothers but, according to an anonymous member who wrote a short history of the organisation 'domestic help was not so readily available as it had been prior to the war.' Perhaps post-war women in the suburbs didn't have the time and resources to devote to community involvement that the previous generation did? Nevertheless, even as a social club, the Bardon Women's Club served the suburban community well. It experienced its highest membership numbers during the early 1950s.

By the early 1990s, the club was struggling for membership, and committee members felt that it was unlikely that 'new, young, and active members' were unlikely to join. As one member in 1993 said 'young women have different interests and are either working or busy with small children.' The club amended its constitution in 1996 to allow membership to non-Protestant women, in accordance with State government anti-discrimination legislation, but this did nothing to halt the slide in membership numbers. After seventy-two years the Bardon Women's Club held its final meeting in 1998

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

John Oxley Library, Manuscripts and Business Records Collection

TR 2108 Bardon Women's Club

OM72-57 Women's Voluntary National Register, Queensland State Council Records 1939-1945

Author Details

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Created 11 June 2004

Last modified 4 May 2009