

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person

**Entry ID:** AWE1072

## Reading, Fanny

(1884 - 1974)

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| <b>Born</b>       | 18841202, Karelizt Belarus Russia                      |
| <b>Died</b>       | 19741119, Sydney New South Wales Australia             |
| <b>Occupation</b> | Medical practitioner, Women's rights activist, Zionist |

### Summary

Fanny Reading, medical practitioner and activist for Zionist and Jewish women's causes, was born near Minsk in Russia in 1884. After her family migrated to Australia, Reading taught Hebrew to private students before entering the University of Melbourne to study music and later medicine. Graduating in 1922, she moved to Sydney to join her brother's medical practice. In 1923, inspired by the visit of Zionist emissary Bella Pevsner, she founded the Council of Jewish Women – a Zionist organisation which was also active on a range of women's issues, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

### Details

Reading's father fled Russia for Ballarat soon after her birth. Fanny and her mother spent some time in London before they were able to join him, and the family relocated to Melbourne in the early 1900s. During WWI, due to hostility towards the Germans, they changed their name from Rubinovich to Reading.

In 1925 she travelled to the United States, Europe and Palestine. She attended the Sixth Quinquennial Conference of the International Council of Women held in Washington DC as an alternate delegate of the ten-person Australian delegation. In 1929 she organised a conference in Sydney at which the National Council of Jewish Women was formed.

Reading was active in many other organisations, including the National Council of Women and the Socialist Club, of which she was vice president in 1929. She was also vice president of the Youth Aliyah (which assisted Jewish orphans in Israel) and in 1948 she (unsuccessfully) represented this group in a libel suit against *Smith's Weekly* which had alleged that they raised money to buy weapons to fight the British in Palestine. Through both the National Council of Jewish Women and the Australian Jewish Welfare Society she was also active in immigration reception work in the 1930s, particularly assisting Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany.

### Events

#### 2010 - 2010

Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

#### 1911 - 1911

Founder and Vice-President, Jewish Young People's Association

#### 1923 - 1931

Founder and President, National Council of Jewish Women of Australia (NCJWA)

## Published resources

### Biography

The Angel of Kings Cross: The life and times of Dr Fanny Reading, Sarzin, Anne, 2023

### Newspaper Article

Service to Women: Dr Fanny's lifestyle, Cohen, Lysbeth, 1981

### Journal Article

Not merely housewives. Australian Jewish Women. Paper presented to Australian Jewish Historical Society. Meeting (1980: Sydney)-, Cohen, Lysbeth, 1981

The law of loving kindness: a tribute to Dr Fanny Reading, founder of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia in 1923, Andgel, Anne, 1998

Perspectives from the Australian Jewish community, Rutland, Suzanne, 2002

Dr Fanny Reading v Smith's Weekly, Ochert, Morris S., 1996

Biographers/Historians as Surrogate Family, Sarzin, Anne, Vol. 20 No. 4, 2023

Sailing from Past Memories towards Safe Harbours: Sea-change, healing and transformation?, Sarzin, Anne, Vol. 31, 2018

### Book Section

The changing role of women in Australian Jewry's communal structure, Rutland, Suzanne D., 1987

Dr Fanny Reading, Cohen, Lysbeth, 1988

Beginning with Esther: Some distinguished Jewish women of New South Wales, Cohen, Lysbeth, 1980

### Book

Making a Difference: A History of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia, Newton, Marlo Leigh, 2000

Meeting new migrants on the wharves: A significant part of National Council of Jewish Women history from the 1920s to the 1950s, 2003

### Report

Official report of the Second Jewish Women's Conference of Australasia : under the auspices of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia, held at Sydney, N.S.W., March 8th to 16th, 1932., 1932

### Conference Proceedings

First Jewish Women's Conference, May 21st to 27th, 1929, 1929

### Resource Section

Reading, Fanny (1884-1974), Rubinstein, Hilary, 2006,  
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110357b.htm>

### Edited Book

200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology, Radi, Heather, 1988,  
<https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20071105022623/http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/78644/20071105-1315/www.200australianwomen.org.au/>

### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

## Archival resources

### National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection

[Queenie Symonds interviewed by Brenda Factor in the NSW Bicentennial oral history collection \[sound recording\]](#)

### State Library of New South Wales

[Dr Fanny Reading papers, photographs and realia, ca. 1890-1974](#)

### Author Details

Jane Carey

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