Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1072

Reading, Fanny

(1884 - 1974)

Born	18841202, Karelizt Belarus Russia
Died	19741119, Sydney New South Wales Australia
Occupation	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.200australianwo

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

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Created 22 September 2004
Last modified 11 November 2025