Entry type: Organisation
Entry ID: AWE1111

Woman’s Christian Temperance Union of New South Wales

(1882 -)

Born	18820101, Sydney
Occupation	Lobby group, Religious organisation, Women's suffrage organisation

Summary

The Sydney Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was founded in 1882, at a meeting hosted by Mr Eli Johnson, a visiting American temperance lecturer. From 1884, other local Unions were started in suburbs of Sydney as well as in country areas of New South Wales. In 1890, a Colonial Union, to be known as the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union of New South Wales, was formed to embrace the whole colony. The local Union, however, was to remain as the important unit of power.

The Union is primarily dedicated to promoting total abstinence from alcohol and other harmful drugs and all members sign a pledge to this effect. However, under its broader agenda of ‘home protection’ and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, and in its belief that the dangers of alcohol could not be tackled in isolation, the group has pursued a very wide-ranging reform agenda mostly relating to the welfare of women and children. Importantly, influenced by its sister organisation in the United States, the Union became a major supporter of the campaign for women’s suffrage in Australia as it was believed that power at the ballot box was the only way to achieve their goals. While at its most influential in the years up to WWI, the movement continues today.

Details

Among the first activities of the Sydney Union was to organise petitions against the new Licensing Bill then before the Colonial Parliament. They also protested against the employment of women as barmaids in hotels.

From its inception, in addition to prohibition, the Union advocated ‘an equal moral standard for men and women’, and soon other women’s issues were included in its agenda, and it advocated women’s suffrage from at least 1890.

In 1965 the WCTU of the Australian Capital Territory was incorporated into the New South Wales Union.

Published resources

Pamphlet
Alcohol and Efficiency, Campbell, T. G. (Thomas Graham), 1917

Flower Missions, Pemell, Amelia J., 1898

Book
The Woman's Christian Temperance Union of New South Wales, 1882-1976, Taylor, Lennie T., 1977

Golden Records: Pathfinders of Woman's Christian Temperance Union of N.S.W., 1926

Report
Report book : annual general meeting ... State Convention / Woman's Christian Temperance Union of NSW Inc.

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection
Woman's Christian Temperance Union of New South Wales - records, 1882-1978

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