

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1195

Conway, Josephine

(1920 - 2007)

Born	19200101, Newcastle New South Wales Australia
-------------	---

Died	20070626
-------------	----------

Occupation	Women's rights activist
-------------------	-------------------------

Summary

Josephine Conway is a feminist activist who has made a difference to the lives of women living in New South Wales' Hunter Valley District for over thirty years. Best known for her long term involvement in the Right to Choose Abortion Coalition, she remains active in the Women's Electoral Lobby, the Hunter Valley Home-Birth Group, Women's Action against Global Violence, the Union of Australian Women, Jobs for Women and the Women's Action Group. In 2005, as a mark of appreciation and respect for her commitment to the promotion of women's issues, she was awarded the National Foundation For Australian Women's Edna Ryan Award for Community Activism.

Details

In 1972 Josephine Conway, a woman in her fifties, was nursing at William Lyne Hospital at Waratah, when she saw a Women's Electoral Lobby newsletter in the change-room. From this epiphanic moment on, she became an activist for women's rights, with a strong belief in the slogan, 'the personal is political'. In 1979, on returning from a trip to Canada, USA and Mexico where she observed the conditions for women, she formed the Waratah Discussion Group. When her husband died in 1979 she moved to Cook's Hill, Newcastle, Australia and opened up a Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) office in her new home. This later became the Women's Information Service. From here she ran phone-ins on rape, women's property rights in marriage and home-birth.

Josephine campaigned strongly for women's right to Freedom from Violence and participated in setting up the first Newcastle Women's Refuge, Jenny's Place. She also focussed on Equal Employment Rights .

After joining WEL in 1972 she saw women's right to safe abortion as a major concern, a position influenced by her experience of work as a nurse. In 1982 she convened the Right to Choose Abortion Coalition and sent abortion literature around New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. She collected hundreds of signatures, sent thousands of postcards and networked with other groups.

In the 1990s she set up the Josephine Conway Fund, administered by the National Foundation for Australian Women, to promote women's right to abortion. She continued her work as a committed feminist activist until her death at the age of 87.

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Private hands (These records may not be readily available)

The Papers of Josephine Conway

Author Details

Nikki Henningham

Created 26 May 2005

Last modified 14 August 2018