Entry type: Organisation
Entry ID: AWE2116

Australian Greek Welfare Society

(1972 -)

Born	19720101, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Occupation	Ethnic Welfare Organisation

Summary

The Australian Greek Welfare Society (AGWS) was established in Melbourne in 1972 with the aim of lobbying for the rights of migrants and their children, and to improve services in the area of education, health, welfare, child care and language services. It's continuing purpose is to empower members of the Australian-Greek community to reach their full potential, by undertaking service provision, advocacy, policy development and research in an innovative, culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. The AGWS is not a women's organisation; nevertheless it has significant female representation in its executive and on its board and has historically advocated on behalf of women and their interests.

Details

The Australian Greek Welfare Society (AGWS) was established in 1972 as an outgrowth of the welfare subcommittee of the Greek Professional's Association. Politically neutral from the outset, the AGWS differentiated itself from other organisations representing Greek-Australians in both aims and style; it existed to lobby 'overtly and aggressively' from a rights-based platform. While existing Greek-Australian communal and Church organisations were 'defensively ethnic and more inward looking' in their orientation and operations, AGWS was outward focused and political, not in terms of party allegiance but in terms of promoting public debate about important multicultural issues. The organisation has been very influential at times when crucial debates about ethnicity and multiculturalism have been running in the community at large. During the 1977 Federal election campaign, it was one of only a few ethnic organisations visited by the leaders of the three key political parties, a key measure of its influence at a time when multicultural issues were being placed on the national agenda.

Some early AGWS initiatives directed towards the needs of women include the establishment of a child care centre and before and after school care programs. Further specific service development relevant to the women's area was the establishment, after extensive lobbying, of a marital guidance counselling position at the agency in 1981. From 1981-86 the agency was able to continue the running of this programme which met the very specific needs of the Greek community. Related to this, the AGWS also provided important counselling and information services for single parents who, in the Greek community bore the stigma of divorce and separation, as well as the loneliness and isolation experienced by single parents in the broader Australian community.

Published resources

Resource
Australian Greek Welfare Society: Twenty Years, Australian Greek Welfare Society, 2006, http://agws.com.au/history.asp

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Report
Greek Women of the Mass Migration Period Today, Australian Greek Welfare Society, 1988

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