

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE4928

Giddings, Maureen

Occupation Community worker, Women's rights activist, Women's rights organiser

Summary

Maureen Giddings has worked with a wide range of community organisations, many connected with the National Council of Women. She served as president of NCW NSW from 1970 to 1974, and as president of the National Council of Women of Australia from 1988 to 1991. She also worked for many years with the Liberal Party, serving as president of the Women's Council of the Liberal Party of Australia (NSW division) from 1974 to 1979 and chairman of the party's Federal Women's Committee from 1977 to 1980. She was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1974, in recognition of service to the community.

Details

Maureen Giddings was born in Melbourne, the only child of Eleanor Bell Quinton (née Wilson) and Frederick Robert Quinton, a manufacturer of electroplated metals. She was educated at the Presbyterian Ladies' College, East Melbourne, the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and the University of Melbourne. Her university studies were interrupted by enlistment in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF), where she trained as an orthoptist. On 30 January 1946, she married her fiancée, Major Niels Giddings, whom she had known since Sunday School. The couple had two daughters.

Both of Giddings' parents were involved in voluntary and philanthropic work; her mother was active in the Federation of Mothers' Clubs and the National Council of Women of Victoria. On her mother's advice, she joined NCWV: 'It gives people the opportunity to put their point of view. And the government will listen to you'. Maureen joined as an associate, and, on moving to Sydney, transferred her membership to NCW NSW where she was elected to the executive as the associates' representative. In 1970, she took on the NSW presidency, and became vice-president of the National Council of Women of Australia when Jessie Scotford formed her NCWA Board in the same year. She remembered the highlights of those years as the NCWA activities associated with the opening of the Sydney Opera House and the organisation of the ICW regional conference, both in 1973; Board meetings were 'fun and productive'.

The political awareness learned from her mother also led Giddings into long-term membership of the Liberal Party. She was president of the Women's Council of the Liberal Party of Australia (NSW division) from 1974 to 1979 and chaired the Federal Women's Committee from 1977 to 1980.

Giddings' work in NCWA led her into leadership roles in other organisations. From 1973 to 1975, she was deputy chairman of the NSW International Women's Year committee. In 1978, she became chairman of the Status of Women, Committee United Nations Association of Australia (NSW branch) then president of the UNAA (NSW) and vice-president of the National UNAA. In July 1980, she was chosen by the Australian government to attend the forum at the NGO UN Decade of Women conference in Copenhagen.

In 1988, the NCWA Board returned to NSW under Giddings' presidency. Issues taken to government by her Board included paid surrogacy, which NCWA strongly opposed; and the UN *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, which they strongly supported in line with ICW policy, despite 'widespread disquiet' in the state Councils. Projects included a report on ageing and a seminar that led to the adoption of the Seniors' Card in NSW; and a report on women's unpaid work for voluntary organisations and within the home, which moved the Australian Bureau of Statistics to undertake a national survey. Other highlights of Giddings' presidency included a visit to the USSR as a guest of the Soviet Women's Committee in 1989, and the leadership of the Australian delegation to the ICW conference in Bangkok in 1991. In the same year, she was appointed a life member of ICW.

Maureen Giddings has contributed to many community activities during her life. She was honorary secretary of the Captain Cook Bicentenary Women's Committee 1968-1970, deputy chairman of the Festival Women's Committee for the opening of the Sydney Opera House 1972-1973, a member of the Royal Flying Doctor Service NSW 1971-1974, president of Child Care Week 1974-1978. Giddings has also contributed to other organisations and causes as president of the Australia-Britain Society (NSW), councillor at Enterprise Australia, deputy chairman at the Volunteer Centre (NSW), chairman of the Intellectually Handicapped Organisation of NSW, a member of the Board of Management of Chatswood Sheltered Industries, and vice-president of the NSW Torch Bearers for Legacy and president emeritus the English Speaking Union of NSW. She was a life governor at the Rachel Forster Hospital and a member of the Wahroonga Preparatory School Council, the Wahroonga Progress Association, Meals on Wheels, the Heart Campaign, and the committees of the Asthma Appeal and the Churchill Appeal.

In August 1971, Maureen Giddings wrote in the NCW NSW's *NCW News* about the past, present and future of NCWA: 'Australian women, while enjoying a formal equality, do not as yet possess a complete practical equality ... Confidently we look to the future, proud of our past achievements but remembering one of the objects of the National Council is that we must promote the interests of women and secure their proper recognition in the community'.

Events

1968 - 1970

Captin Cook Bicentenary Women's Committee

1974 - 1978

Child Care Week

1972 - 1973

Festival Women's Committee for the opening of the Sydney Opera House

1973 - 1975

NSW International Women's Year Committee

1974 - 1979

Women's Council of the Liberal party of Australia (NSW)

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition

Stirrers with Style! Presidents of the National Council of Women of Australia and its predecessors, National Council of Women of Australia, 2013,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ncwa>

Edited Book

Who's Who in Australia 1983, Draper, W. J., 1983

Newspaper Article

Like Mother Like Daughter, Vesta, 1946,

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article22223871>

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[Records of the National Council of Women of Australia, 1924-1990 \[manuscript\]](#)

[NCWA Papers 1984 - 2006](#)

Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection

[National Council of Women of New South Wales further records, ca. 1891-2002](#)

Private hands (These records may not be readily available)

[Interview with Maureen Giddings](#)

[Interview with Betty Davey](#)

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Digital resources



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