Entry type: Organisation
Entry ID: AWE0012

Working Women’s Centre Melbourne

(1975 - 1984)

Born	19750901, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Died	19841231
Occupation	Social support organisation

Summary

The Melbourne Working Women’s Centre was the first trade union women’s research and advisory centre in Australia. Established in 1975, under the auspices of the white collar union peak body, the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations (ACSPA), it operated as an independent lobby and research group concentrating on women’s issues in employment. When the ACSPA amalgamated with the ACTU in 1979, so too did the Working Women’s Centre. It became defunct in 1984.

Details

The Working Women’s Centre (WWC) was established in 1975 with the assistance of an International Women’s Year seeding grant and received ongoing support from the National Women’s Advisory Council. Mary Owen and Sylvie Shaw were coordinators and the service employed two part-time migrant liaison officers. A multilingual poster was the Centre’s first publication followed by a discussion paper on the particular needs of migrant women. The centre’s periodical *Women at Work* saw a growth in circulation numbers from 6000 subscriptions in 1977 to 13,000 in 1982.

The WWC conducted a range of activities from researching issues affecting women in the workforce to running training programs dealing with women’s work issues (occupational health, worker’s compensation, trade union training, dealing with discrimination etc). It gave expert evidence in industrial tribunals, lobbied governments and unions for changes to women’s position in the workforce, participated in government committees dealing with social security and job training etc., helped establish transition programs (at TAFE colleges) for women wishing to return to the workforce, spoke regularly at workplaces, conducted research on shift work, child care and occupational health problems including stress among ‘blue collar’ women workers, and developed a Register of Women in Non-Traditional jobs made up of women who would go to schools and community groups to talk about breaking the ‘traditional’ workforce mould.

Published resources

Book
Getting Equal: the History of Australian Feminism, Lake, Marilyn, 1999

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

State Library of Victoria
Papers of Mary Owen, 1951-2017, [manuscript].

The University of Melbourne Archives
Working Women's Centre Papers

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