Entry type: Event
Entry ID: AWE0020

International Women’s Day

(1928 -)

Born	19280101, Sydney New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Celebration

Summary

March 8 is International Women’s Day (IWD), celebrated throughout the world. Australian governments first officially recognised the day in March 1974, when Prime Minister Gough Whitlam announced Australia’s participation in the United Nations’ International Women’s Year for 1975. Since then International Women’s Day has become a regular event in every State and Territory, with a program stretching over the full week.

The first IWD was held on 19 March 1911 in Germany, Austria, Denmark and other European countries. The date was reputedly chosen by German women because, on the same date in 1848, the King of Prussia had promised votes for women among other reforms. The promise was made in the face of an armed uprising, and remained unfulfilled (see www.isis.aust.com/iwd/stevens/firstiwd.htm)

The first unofficial IWD in Australia took place in the Domain in Sydney on March 25 1928, organised by the Militant Women’s Movement and calling for equal pay for equal work; an 8 hour day for shop girls; no piece work; the basic wage for the unemployed and annual holidays on full pay.

Another rally took place in 1929 in Sydney and Brisbane. The late Edna Ryan – feminist and unionist – took part, and during the Whitlam years she successfully campaigned on equal pay before the Industrial Relations Commission. The movement spread, especially among trade union women.

(entry researched and written by Marie Coleman)

Published resources

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

Resource
A History of International Women's Day in words and images, Stevens, Joyce, 1997, http://www.isis.aust.com/iwd/stevens/contents.htm

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Ephemera Collection
[International Women's Day : ephemera material collected by the National Library of Australia]

[International Women's Day : ephemera material in the Riley Collection]

State Library of South Australia
International Women's Day Committee : Summary Record

Irene Bell : SUMMARY RECORD

International Women's Day Committee Research Project : Summary Record [sound recording] Interviewers: Celia Frank and Kirstin Marks

State Library of Victoria
Papers, 1948-1981. [manuscript].

Fryer Library, The University of Queensland
Brisbane International Women's Day Committee Ephemera

Ephemera relating to women's movement organisations

Report on I.W.D. celebrations, Cairns Branch, 1964 Apr 14 by Val [Davis].

John Oxley Library, Manuscripts and Business Records Collection
7592 International Women's Day 1979 Collection 1979

OH 15 International Women's Day Oral History 8 Mar 1993

Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection
[Collection of publications on the women's liberation movement, assembled by the Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre]

[Ephemera on Women : including material on feminism, women's liberation, international women's day celebrations, equal employment opportunity, violence against women and exploitation…]

Ephemera on Women : including material on feminism, international women's day celebrations, equal employment opportunity, women's health, domestic violence, rape and exploitation of women. Also includes material on women's studies…

Pat Richardson scrapbooks relating to the Women's Electoral Lobby and women's events, 1977-2002

AIATSIS Manuscript and Rare Books Collection
Speech by the Prime Minister the Hon. E. G. Whitlam, Q.C., M.P., at an International Women's Day reception Melbourne, 8 March, 1975

Flinders University Library, Special Collections
Message to the International Women's Day Committee.

Message for International Women's Day lunch.

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