Entry type: Organisation
Entry ID: AWE0021

Women’s Electoral Lobby Australia

(1972 -)

Born	19720201, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Occupation	Lobby group

Summary

The Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL) was established in Melbourne in 1972 by Beatrice Faust. She was inspired by feminists in the United States who had been rating presidential candidates. The organisation quickly spread to Sydney, Adelaide and Canberra and in 1978 WEL Australia was formed as a coalition of state, territory and regional groups. Primarily a women’s political lobby group, WEL surveyed political candidates and their policies affecting women, wrote submissions and developed media skills for women to lobby for the inclusion of women in the area of government policy. Originally the WEL campaign was based on six demands: equal pay, equal employment opportunity, equal access to education, free contraceptive services, abortion on demand and free 24-hour childcare.

Details

In February 1972, feminist Beatrice Faust invited ten women to a meeting in her Carlton house to discuss the forthcoming Federal election. They decided to survey election candidates on issues of special interest to women, as Ms Magazine had done in the USA during a recent presidential campaign.

By the second meeting the initial membership had doubled, and 130 women attended the third meeting a short time later.

Early the following year, there was a Victorian state election, and WEL organised a major forum in Dallas Brooks Hall, bringing together on stage the leaders of all five current political parties to answer the question:
Why should women vote for you?

WEL’s first national conference in Canberra in 1973 was attended by 400 women.

Published resources

Book

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

Power and Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society, Burgmann, Verity, 1993

Social movements: The Politics of Moral Protest, Pakulski, Jan, 1991

Labor to Power: Australia's 1972 Election, Mayer, Henry, 1973

WEL Women: Recollections of Some of the First WEL-ACT Women, Mc Carron Benson, Julie, 1991

A Brief History of the Women's Electoral Lobby (SA), Fisher, Betty, 1986;1996

WEL: 21 years in South Australia, Sloniec, Elizabeth, 1993

A Brief History of Women's Electoral Lobby WA, Burnett, Pat, 1985

A History of Women's Electoral Lobby Coffs Harbour, Degens, Pat, 1998

Women's Electoral Lobby: Australia/New Zealand 1972-1985, Preddy, Elspeth, 1985

From the Gilded Cage, WEL, 1974

Catching the Waves, Ryan, Susan, 1999

Ducks on the Pond: An Autobiography 1945-1976, Summers, Anne, 1999

Making women count : a history of the Women's Electoral Lobby in Australia, Sawer, Marian, 2008

Sisters in Suits: Women and Public Policy in Australia, Sawer, Marian, 1990

Book Section
Researching WEL, Grahame, Emma, 1998

Greenwood, Irene, Caine, Barbara, 1998

Article
Can Ladies Work Here Too, Nanna?, Dudley, Janice and Palmieri, Sonia, 1999,
http://www.une.edu.au/apsa/wapsa_text_books.htm

Thesis
A Description and Analysis of Aspects of the Women's Electoral Lobby (Victorian Branch), Anderson, Peter, 1973

The Women's Electoral Lobby: An Historical Inquiry, Asher, Louise, 1980

The Political Development of the Women's Movement in Queensland, Gorring, Pam, 1978

Working Within the System: The Women's Electoral Lobby Fifteen Years On, Hill, Elizabeth, 1987

The Emergence of Contemporary Feminist Groups in Australia: With special reference to the Women's Liberation Movement and the Women's Electoral Lobby in the ACT, Hooper, Anne, 1973

The Women's Electoral Lobby and Women's Employment: Strategies and Outcomes, Nicholson, Joyce, 1991

The Interrelationship Between Interest Groups and Social Movement Organisations: The Experience of WEL 1972-83, Szramka, Annabel, 1986

The Women's Electoral Lobby 1972-1982: Sites of Conflict in Non-Party Feminism, Watson, Louise, 1982

Conference Paper
Femocrats and Ecorats: Women's Policy Machinery in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, Sawer, Marian, 1996,
http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/(httpPublications)/D1A254C22F3E5CC580256B67005B6B56?OpenDocumen

Edited Book
Women's Voices, Women's Lives, Scutt, Jocelynne A.

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Report

Report on Women's non-government organizations conference, Beijing, China, August 31 - September 8, 1995 / Deborah McCulloch, Women's Electoral Lobby, McCulloch, Deborah, 1995

Site Exhibition

The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders

Archival resources

The University of Melbourne Archives
Women's Electoral Lobby Poster Think W.E.L. Before You Vote

Bebbington, Laurie

Bethune, Dulcie

Nicholson, Joyce Thorpe

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Women's Electoral Lobby

Women's Electoral Lobby

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Women's Electoral Lobby

Women's Electoral Lobby

Women's Electoral Lobby

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D'Aprano, Zelda

Women's Liberation Movement

Cameron, Barbara

National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection
Elizabeth Ward interviewed by Sara Dowse [sound recording]

State Library of Western Australia
Womens Electoral Lobby records, 1973-1974 [manuscript]

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

State Library of New South Wales

[Collection of pamphlets relating to the Women's Electoral Lobby and the Women's Liberation Movement]

Judith Steanes - interview with Joan Bielski of the Women's Electoral Lobby, 2000

Joan Bielski papers, 1968-2004

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Papers of Sara Dowse, 1958-2007 [manuscript]

Records of the Women's Electoral Lobby, 1952-2010 [manuscript]

Papers of Meredith Hinchliffe, 1957-1981 [manuscript]

Speeches 1972-1973 [manuscript]

Papers of Meredith Stokes, circa 1970-1997 [manuscript]

Collection of realia and papers relating to women's issues and organisations, 1975-2008 [manuscript]

Papers of Edna Ryan, 1948-1993 [manuscript]

Papers of Di Graham, 1975-1997 [manuscript]

Papers of Margaret Reynolds, 1973-2005 [manuscript]

Papers of Shirley Kral, 1953-2015 [manuscript]

Northern Territory Archives Service
Women's Electoral Lobby Darwin

Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection
Women's Electoral Lobby records, ca. 1970-1995

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

Edna Ryan papers, 1965-1986

Edna Ryan further papers, 1961-1989

First Ten Years of Sydney Women's Liberation Collection, ca. 1969-ca. 1980

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

National Museum Australia
Meredith Hinchliffe collection no. 1

Archives Office of Tasmania
Subject folders

Correspondence and associated papers

Banner with handprints of those who attended the women for reconciliation dinner

Author Details
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Created 12 September 2000
Last modified 13 March 2019

Digital resources



Title: WEL banner made by WEL-ACT member Julie McCarron-Benson
Type: Image
Date: 3 May, 2023