Entry type: Organisation
Entry ID: AWE0199

Office of Women’s Affairs

(1974 - 1977)

Born 19740101, Canberra Australian Capital Territory Australia

Died 19771231

Summary

Formed under the leadership of Sara Dowse, the Office of Women’s Affairs (OWA) was the bureaucratic support unit of the women’s adviser to the Prime Minister, a position created in 1973 under the Whitlam Labour government. OWA became the state apparatus through which many Australian feminists worked to achieve measures of women’s advancement in equal employment opportunity, legislation and law reform, health funding, refuges, childcare, arts and sport, media representations and school curricula.
The OWA played an important role in securing government funding for women’s services. The Office was originally located in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. However, in 1977, under the Fraser Liberal government, bureaucrats announced the Office was to move to the Department of Home Affairs, representing a significant loss of status given Home Affairs was ranked 26th out of 27 ministries in seniority. Dowse resigned over this move, having always argued for the importance of having the Office located in the chief policy-making agency of the government (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet). The Office (by then called the Office of the Status of Women) was restored to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in 1983 when Labour returned to office; prominent feminist academic Anne Summers was then appointed its head.

Sources: Sawer, M. 1996 and Caine, B. 1998

Published resources

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
Australian Feminism: A Companion, Caine, Barbara, Gatens, Moira et al., 1998

Report
Interdepartmental Working Group On Women's Affairs: Report of Task Force on Migrant Women, Office of Women's Affairs, 1977

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Papers of Elizabeth Reid 1963-1981 [manuscript]

Papers of Sara Dowse, 1958-2007 [manuscript]

NULL
Papers, [manuscript]

National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra
Cabinet documents for the Office of Women's Affairs, single number series with alphabetical prefix

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