

Australian Church Women

NEW SOUTH WALES STATE UNIT



formerly

N.S.W. WOMEN'S INTER-CHURCH COUNCIL

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STORY OF AUSTRALIAN CHURCH WOMEN

NEW SOUTH WALES STATE UNIT

N.S.W. Women's Inter-Church Council

Forty years ago on 18th November 1938, women of different denominations gathered together in St. Stephen's Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney, to form the N.S.W. Women's Inter-Church Council.

The Presidents' Bible, which has been passed on from year to year to each new President, carries this inspiring message: "The first practical move towards Christian Unity". The aim of the early Council was to "promote friendship and co-operation between the various branches of the Christian Church, and to provide an avenue whereby they may unitedly serve the Kingdom of God". Those words still express the core of our work today.

Foundation members represented the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches and the Churches of Christ. Other Churches have since affiliated and the present roll comprises - Anglican, Baptist, Churches of Christ, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, The Salvation Army and the Uniting Church (formed in 1977 by the union of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches).

The Council consists of representatives from each member Church (eight may be appointed from each), two representatives from affiliated "Special Interest Groups" (the Y.W.C.A., Girls' Brigade and the W.C.T.U.), Life Members (presently 10) and one representative from each local Branch.

"Wybalena"

The coming of World War II in 1939 no doubt affected the growth of the early Council. The total war effort involved so many families that normal life was impossible. But with the easing of the strain in 1951 the Women's Inter-Church Council secured a valuable property "Wybalena" in Burwood. The Council established and operated "Wybalena" as a hostel for

about twenty students and business girls from March 1952. Much work went into the maintenance of the property and the running of the hostel by loyal and dedicated people, and it was a worthy community service project.

Changing needs and conditions resulted in the decision in December 1966 to sell. In 1967 the proceeds were invested pending the selection of a suitable project. Over \$36,000 were given in 1971 to the Y.W.C.A. "Tremayne" Hostel at Kirribilli, which provided similar accommodation and care.

On 22nd March 1972 Council members were invited to attend the dedication of the "Wybalena Wing" which provided extra accommodation, and the President of the N.S.W. Women's Inter-Church Council participated in the ceremony. In early 1978 the Y.W.C.A. sold "Tremayne" and remodelled their property in Liverpool Street, Sydney, renaming it "Wybalena House".

Australian Church Women

In 1962 the Australian Council of Churches received an invitation from the Asian Church Women's Conference to send a delegate to its 2nd Assembly to be held that year in Bangkok. There was no national ecumenical women's organisation to make an appointment, although the Women's Inter-Church Councils in the various states had been considering forming a federation.

A N.S.W. woman who was travelling in Asia at the time, attended the Assembly as an observer and reported back to a small group of prominent church women in Sydney. They had been called together by the A.C.C. to discuss ways and means of expanding the work of unity between the various churches at local, state and national levels.

There was no desire to set up new structures, but to work within existing organisations. The various State Councils, while remaining autonomous, agreed to be the State Units. The N.S.W. Council made this decision in 1963. Australian Church Women was launched, with its first National Committee Meeting, in Deaconess House, Sydney in February 1965.

A.C.W. is governed by National Committee Meetings, originally annual, but now held every two years. These meetings bring

together representatives and observers from each State Unit and each member church's federal women's organisation. They are vital sharing experiences and are invaluable to the ongoing work.

Between National Committee Meetings, a Working Committee of 10 appointed and 3 co-opted members, handles the administration. The Working Committee is located in the various states by rotation. The first two were located in N.S.W., as is the current one.

Australian delegates and observers were appointed to subsequent Assemblies of the Asian Church Women's Conference (1966 in Japan, 1970 Indonesia, 1974 Thailand and 1978 Japan). N.S.W. women were chosen as delegates in 1966 and 1978.

Two N.S.W. women were able to accept an invitation, received through A.C.W., to be present at an international Women's Ecumenical Conference in Taizé France in 1967 and one of them also attended a meeting of Church Women United in Kansas U.S.A. in 1971. The A.C.W. representative to the Family Life Seminar in Penang in 1975 also came from our state.

Programme and Projects

Special Days. A.C.W. sponsors Fellowship Day in July and World Community Day in October. Local groups throughout the nation come together for worship, using an order of service prepared for each occasion on behalf of A.C.W. by member groups.

Fellowship of the Least Coin, the first project of A.C.W. is a fellowship of prayer, shared by people in over seventy countries. As they pray at least monthly for peace and reconciliation, they put aside the least coin of their country. Gathered together, these least coins serve to promote reconciliation, love and peace. Grants are made to projects in every continent for these purposes. The fund is administered by the Asian Church Women's Conference and its Assemblies which are held every four years are made possible by the Fellowship.

Winifred Kiek Scholarship, the second project of A.C.W. is made possible by the offerings on Fellowship Day. Named after the first Australian woman minister, the scholarship offers supplementary training for a Christian woman in the Asia/Pacific area. Many of the scholars have studied in N.S.W. or have visited our state and we have been greatly enriched by their presence with us.

The N.S.W. State Unit

There were Branches of the Council prior to 1965 and these helped to raise funds for "Wybalena". With the Council's acceptance of the programme and projects of A.C.W., there came the need and the great desire to involve local church women's groups in ecumenical activity. A Promotion Committee was set up in 1967 to form branches and its members travelled extensively throughout the state. The Promotion Committee keeps in touch with Branches and centres, the present ones being:-

in the Sydney area - Chatswood/Willoughby, City, Epping, Lane Cove/Longueville, Gladesville/Hunter's Hill, Greenacre/Bankstown, Lindfield/Roseville/Killara, Northbridge, North Ryde, Parramatta, St. George (Hurstville), Strathfield/Homebush, Turramurra/Wahroonga,

in the country - Armidale, Bathurst, Bourke, Braidwood, Cobargo/Tilba, Cooma, Cootamundra, Gosford, Narooma, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga, Yass and Young.

In April 1966 the first Newsletter was printed, and since that time 15 have been distributed to Branches and groups, to the member bodies, etc. The most recent have incorporated the Annual Report of the Council.

A Publicity Officer was appointed in 1971 to send articles to denominational papers and the press. Information has also been sent to "Women at Work" the national A.C.W. paper which is sent to all states monthly.

Our Council's Other Concerns

As well as promoting the A.C.W. Programme and Projects, the Council has continued to take action at times on social issues. Letters of protest and encouragement have been sent over the years to civil authorities, etc. Support was given to a movement to resist hotels trading on Sundays. A submission was presented to the Royal Commission on Human Relationships, and another to the Committee of Enquiry into Religious Education in N.S.W. schools.

Study groups were held following Council meetings in 1971 and in 1978 another series of discussions took place.

In recent times the Council has held an Ecumenical Day of Retreat and also a Day of Renewal.

Representatives have brought reports from the following organisations with which the Council is affiliated, namely, the National Council of Women of N.S.W., Good Neighbour Council of N.S.W., Women's World Day of Prayer Committee, N.S.W. Council for Children's Films and T.V. Many of our Council members have become quite involved in these organisations over the years. The Council also sends a fraternal delegate to the N.S.W. Council of the Australian Council of Churches.

The Annual Service of Dedication (formerly Annual Rally) is held each May and it is at these services that new Presidents are installed into office. Each member church takes it in turn to nominate the President.

In March 1977 the Constitution was changed. The name, the N.S.W. Women's Inter-Church Council, became Australian Church Women N.S.W. State Unit, and the A.C.W. aims replaced the original ones. The term of office of the President was also extended to two years.

The Council's Presidents have each made a contribution in a kaleidoscope of diverse personalities and a variety of gifts. We pay tribute to them as well as to the Secretaries, Treasurers and Conveners who have served over the 40 years.

Much has changed in that time, and many have represented on Council, but to the women who set the background for the ecumenical work that is possible to-day, we express our very sincere thanks.

*"We praise God for all that is past,
and trust Him for all that is to come."*

Compiled from Records and Documents
by Dorothy Woodhouse, Hon. Sec.
Typed and Edited by Margaret Ralph
Hon. Secretary, 1965/67

More detailed information about the work to-day is in print and is available in the various leaflets and brochures.

It would be impossible to mention by name all who have contributed so much to the organisation, but following is a list of the Presidents.

PRESIDENTS

1938-1939	Hannah Jennings
1939-1940	May Renwick
	Gertrude Amy Roseby
1940-1941	Amy Gertrude Bowden
1941-1942	Ruby W. McCallum
1942-1943	Rebecca Swann
1943-1944	Mary Eliza Clouston
1944-1945	Gertrude Amy Roseby
1945-1946	Elsie E. Deane
1946-1947	Ruby W. McCallum
1947-1948	Rebecca Swann
1948-1949	Regina Stolz
1949-1950	Mary Millar
1950-1952	Annie B. Deans
1952-1954	Sylvia J. Lew
1954-1955	May Greenhalgh
1955-1956	Kathleen E. Lowry
1956-1957	Kathleen B. Garlick
1957-1958	Regina Stolz
1958-1959	Marianne Vines
1959-1960	Reta E. Farr
1960-1961	Effie H. Baldwin
1961-1962	Edris M. Manefield
1962-1963	Marjory I. Verco
1963-1964	Brucinda C. Montgomerie
1964-1965	Hazel V. Cross
1965-1966	Thelma M. Adam
1966-1967	Olga Badger
1967-1968	Grace Cowled
1968-1969	Joyce O. Gilbert
1969-1970	Mary M. Andrews
1970-1971	Marjorie A. Stanhope
1971-1972	Olive Carpenter
1972-1973	Nancy M. Pfeiffer
1973-1974	Winifred D. Dougherty
1974-1975	Doris M. Mitchell
1975-1976	Gladys Bent
1976-1978	Edna Baker
1978-	Marie McCann