



WOMEN'S COUNCIL

All women members of the PSA are members of the PSA Women's Council.

Women's Council Committee is an advisory body to Central Council on issues affecting women members of the Association.

Women's Council meets at PSA Head Office, 160 Clarence Street, Sydney four times per year.

Women's Council Committee is made up of women members elected from each of the Women's Council Electorates.

HISTORY

Over eighty years ago, a new clause was inserted into the PSA Rules which continues to have a lasting effect on the PSA to this day.

The clause established the PSA Women's Auxiliary which is known today as the Women's Council.

During the 1920s, pressure began to be placed on the PSA Executive for increased representation of women and women's issues within the PSA.

However, it wasn't until a former PSA President, a Mr Flynn, allegedly made some infamous comments at the Australia Public Service Federation Conference in Perth in 1929, that a major push for change commenced.

Reported in the Sydney Morning Herald at the time, Mr Flynn allegedly stated, "Fundamentally, women are not honest."

The Herald report infuriated PSA women members.

A huge meeting of angry women was organised by the Women's Clerical Sub-Section of the PSA, where "the Council room was crowded to overflowing and many women were unable to gain admittance." Mr Flynn declined to attend.

At the same Conference where Mr Flynn made his controversial comments, Fred Willis, then General Secretary, stated "I believe that the time is approaching when the question of equal pay for equal work for men and women will have to be regarded seriously by employers, including Governments and by the community."

A further meeting of women members was held in early 1930 where a resolution was carried requesting that the Executive and Council of the union allow for a Rule change at the 1930 Annual Conference.

The Rule change was passed at Conference and brought about the creation of the Women's Auxiliary with the first elected President, Miss Grant Cooper, the elected Minutes Secretary, Miss DC Beveridge and the elected representative to the PSA Executive, Miss KC O'Keeffe.

The Women's Auxiliary had a name change to the Women's Council in 1973, but whatever its title, the members of Council have worked hard for women's rights.

Over the years, the Women's Council has fought for and won many advances on behalf of women.

It contributed to achieving permanency for female employees, access to the entrance exam, amenities, long service leave, removal of the marriage bar, representation on Labor Council, (now Unions NSW) maternity leave and pay equity for Librarians.

While Women's Council and the PSA have had many successes over the years in improving the situation of women members, there is always more to do.

WOMEN'S COUNCIL HAS WORKED ON ISSUES SUCH AS:

- Job security for women workers and the prevention of the casualization of women's work and pay equity
- Ground breaking workplace rights for victims of domestic violence
- Flexible work practices
- Purchased leave
- Paid lactation breaks for women returning from maternity leave
- Support for employees experience Domestic Violence

JEAN ARNOT – EQUAL PAY PIONEER



Miss Jean Arnot (above, right) was Chairwoman of the PSA Women's Auxiliary from 1937.

She was also a member of the Equal Pay Committee that represented the PSA at meetings with the Premier's Department.

Jean was awarded a PSA gold medal in 1937 and an MBE in 1967.

Early on in her career, Jean became aware of the disparity between male and female rates of pay.

One day she discovered that her male junior was paid more than her.

She complained to the Public Service Board but was advised that nothing could be done as it was "the law of the land".