

PART III

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF TASMANIA

1920 - 1939

CHAPTER SEVEN – THE INTERWAR YEARS AND EMILY DOBSON

The inter-war years were the end of an era. For the National Council they were the end of the presidency of Emily Dobson who died in 1934. By the beginning of the Second World War many of the National Council members who had been influential during the past forty years were elderly or dead. Emily Dobson was ninety-one when she died and she had been the active president for the previous thirty years. The key National Council women and members of the executive committee were of a similar age, for the average age of members was seventy-nine (see chapter ten). Most of these women had been among the pioneers of first wave feminism in Tasmania in the 1890s and had been working in the various societies affiliated with the National Council. There appears to have been a lack of new blood in the Council and as the new woman of the post-war years began to rise she displayed a disinterest in the National Council's style of philanthropic work and the woman question. Magarey notes that 'suffrage-era feminists' or the women who became the pioneers of first wave feminism, aged and died towards the end of this period, and although not all their aims were met, they made a tremendous impact by clearing a path for other women to follow in the second wave of feminism.¹ The Council was not obsolete. With the decline of Emily Dobson came the rise of Edith Waterworth who became more influential during this period. Edith Waterworth, though a National Council member, was primarily involved with the Women's Non-Party League and under its auspices ran for parliament and established the Council for Mother and Child.

During the inter-war years the National Council of Women of Australia (NCWA) was established. A similar body (known as the Federation of the National Council of Women) had been in existence for some time but this did not have any actual power. It was this Federation of which Emily Dobson had been president. The NCWA was a more formal organisation. Also during these years the Launceston branch of the NCWT disbanded. Although the National Council of Tasmania had been one body spread over

¹ S. Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists* (Sydney, 2001) p. 192

two centres since its inception in 1899, the Launceston branch appears to have had significantly less input into the running of the Council. By the early 1920s its meetings were not reported frequently in the Launceston newspapers and the Launceston branch officially disbanded in 1929. It re-formed in May 1943 and was able to grow into an effective branch.²

Emily Dobson was not as active during her final years as she was in earlier periods. Her decline and death were significant to both the National Council and Tasmanian society. She was respected in life and mourned in death. She was the force behind the National Council. She appeared domineering and forceful, but there is little evidence that her contemporaries saw her this way, which is not surprising. The tributes made and the apparent emotion felt at her death showed the esteem in which she was held.

The inter-war years in Tasmania showed no significant decline in the activities of women. Tasmanian women had several concessions granted during the inter-war years. The first women were appointed as justice of the peace, as special magistrates to the children's court and women were granted the right to stand for the Tasmanian Parliament. Although feminist activity was more involved than these few concessions, it does indicate a continuance rather than a decline in activity.

End of First Wave Feminism

First wave feminism continued in Tasmania into the 1920s. This seems to have been an Australian trend and separates the experience of Australian women from that of American or British women. Lake discusses this alleged decline stating that 'contrary to the popular idea that the women's movement languished with the achievement of the vote, feminism in Australia flourished in the inter-war years, decades that, in many ways, could be characterised as the golden age of the woman citizen.'³ Lake cites key events in the women's movement that were granted during this alleged lull period. For example during the 1940s, feminist activity was important in the new child endowment paid to

² Paper of the National Council of Women of Tasmania (NCWT) from Elaine Bushby, State President NCWT, Launceston, 2003

³ M. Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards, 1999) p. 9

mothers and not fathers, in the 1943 the Women's Charter conference was held and in the 1950s and 1960s women lobbied successfully for the right to sit on juries and for equal pay.⁴

It can be contended that a decline in feminism in Tasmania coincided with the Depression and not the beginning of the First World War.⁵ The Tasmanian women's movement had always been more conservative than the Australian movement. Tasmania lacked the population necessary to produce the divergent range of personalities that were seen in the Australian women's movement. At a Labor Women's conference in 1937 it was noted that ever since the Depression reached Tasmania the position of women in public life had been deteriorating. This was said to be affecting not only Tasmania but the western world.⁶ It was a matter of great concern that women were losing ground in the public world and a conference was held in Geneva in 1936 to discuss the problem. It seems then that the decline of feminism in the 1930s was felt by the women's movement as an actual losing of ground rather than a theory.

In the 1920s the women's movement on mainland Australia began to enter into discourse of women as individuals but during the Depression this moved towards a glorification of the family unit.⁷ In discussions, the Tasmanian women's movement had always placed the family unit as paramount. The Depression saw an anti-feminist backlash in Australia with women blamed for taking men's jobs.⁸ However, Tasmania does not seem to have suffered in the same way. The Tasmanian women's movement was never public sphere feminist as the Australian women's movement had been at times. The NCWT as representative of most women's organisations in Tasmanian were expediency feminists and therefore did not challenge the status quo in the same way as the more radical feminists on the mainland.⁹

⁴ Lake, *Getting Equal*, p. 10

⁵ J. Clarke and K. White, *Women in Australian Politics* (Sydney, 1983) p. 10

⁶ *Mercury* 29 January 1937, p. 3

⁷ Damousi, 'Marching to Different Drums: Women's Mobilisation, 1914-1939' in K. Saunders and R. Evans (eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* (Marrickville, 1992) p. 371

⁸ Damousi, 'Marching to Different Drums', p. 372

⁹ J. Allen, 'The "Feminisms" of the Early Women's Movement, 1850-1920', *Refractory Girl*, no. 17 March 1979, p. 11

This decline in feminism in the 1930s was further felt in Tasmania by the lack of interest the new generation felt in becoming involved in public works. In 1931, Frances Edwards discussed the problems of the rising generation and said that the perceptions of women's public work had changed since 1918. She said 'in the youthful part of the community particularly, there is a certain amount of distain for women who take up public work ... women did all these public works during the war and were upheld for them'.¹⁰ She also mentioned that the time had come when she would have liked to retire from the public sphere but 'among the younger people there are few with the inclination for leadership in social services'.¹¹ This is another reason why feminism declined in Tasmania in the 1930s. Many of the women who were involved in the public sphere in Tasmania had been so since the beginning of first wave feminism in the 1890s. By the 1930s these women were elderly and there was a lack of interest in carrying on their type of women's work by the younger generation. It is possible that the older women of the National Council kept such a tight grip that they discouraged younger women from becoming involved.

It can be suggested that the first push into feminism in Tasmania, starting in the 1880s with the formation of the WCTU (1885), then the Women's Sanitary Association (1891) and the NCWT (1899), ended in the 1930s with the deaths of many of these first pioneer women such as Emily Dobson. It is certain that the Depression also played a part in the decline of feminism in Tasmania. The new pressures inflicted on society by the Depression would have taken interest away from women's issues in some respects. Community interest in maternal mortality and infant welfare increased during this period and interest in extending rights to women, such as the right to sit on juries, declined. Young women in the 1930s had more options available to them than their predecessors in the 1880s. The options for women like Emily Dobson other than marriage, children and philanthropic work were limited but the new middle-class woman of the 1930s was more easily able to go to university and pursue a career before choosing whether or not to

¹⁰ *Tasmanian Mail* 11 February 1931, p. 23

¹¹ *Tasmanian Mail* 11 February 1931, p. 23

marry and how many children (if any) she wished to have. Philanthropic work, while once the main activity for middle-class women became one option of many. It is not difficult see why interest in this area waned. It would have appeared old fashioned to the new woman. To join a philanthropic organisation where the average age of members was seventy and to listen to discussions on the problems of the new woman and the 'despicable' new fashions would not have appealed to many young women.

Emily Dobson

Emily Dobson's influence over the National Council ended in 1934 with her death, although her ability to dictate the activities of the Council had been in decline for some years. From 1920 until the time of her death Emily Dobson remained active in the National Council. Just months before she died she was elected delegate to an ICW meeting in Stockholm, which she never attended.¹² When she was elected to the meeting she was ninety years old. It is interesting that she was appointed as the delegate. Perhaps it was her desire to go or perhaps few could afford the fares during the Depression.

In 1931 Emily Dobson was presented with the order of Officier d'Instruction Publique by the Consul for France in Tasmania W.H. Burgess, for her work with the Alliance Française. The presentation was made at Elboden House and the consul decorated Emily Dobson by pinning a brooch of two gold palms suspended on a violet ribbon to her dress and said:

On behalf of myself, as Consul for France in Tasmania, on behalf of the Consul-General in Sydney, and on behalf of the French Government, I have the honour and pleasure of presenting you with this decoration. It has been bestowed by the French Government in recognition of your fine work in the Alliance Française for over thirty years. It was you who founded the branch in Tasmania, and your interest in it has never flagged.¹³

¹² *Mercury* 17 February 1933, p. 6

¹³ *Mercury* 28 August 1931, p. 6

This tribute was significant as it was the highest honour bestowed upon her. Unlike other National Council women, such as Edith Waterworth or Mary Parker, Emily Dobson was never awarded an OBE. Mary Parker was awarded the OBE for her wartime work with the Red Cross. Perhaps Emily Dobson missed out because she did not devote herself to one patriotic cause? There are a number of possibilities why Emily Dobson was not awarded an OBE but they are all simply a matter of speculation. Firstly, as mentioned she may have aligned herself with so many organisations that she did not stand out in any of them but from references to her activities this does not seem likely. Secondly, it may have been that she was offered an OBE but refused it on some grounds, but Emily Dobson's character does not make this seem likely. Thirdly, it is possible that this was an oversight not remedied before her death. Fourthly, it is most likely her name was never put forward. Those responsible for the decision either did not put her name forward or certain sections of the community were annoyed with her trivial and imprudent comments.

Emily Dobson died on 5 June 1934 aged ninety-one years. She was survived by four of her children, Emily Parry, Clare Tyser, Louis Dobson and Marguerite Dobson. Ernest Dobson had died in 1911, Katie Minton-Taylor in 1928 and Louis was to die just months after his mother in August 1934.¹⁴ When Emily Dobson died the *Mercury* immediately distinguished her with the epithet 'Hobart's Grand Old Woman' and said that it could not call anyone to mind more deserving of the title.¹⁵ (A similar title had been given to the South Australian feminist Catherine Helen Spence who was dubbed the 'Grand Old Woman of Australia'.)¹⁶ Several of Tasmania's newspapers gave lengthy tributes to Emily Dobson. These showed that she was esteemed in the philanthropic community and among the middle and upper-classes. The newspaper spoke of her 'charm and sweetness of disposition which made her beloved by many beyond her family circle.'¹⁷ The *Mercury* credited her with having sailed to England thirty-three times and mentioned the International Suffrage Convention in Amsterdam at which she represented Australia. The

¹⁴ *Mercury* 24 August 1934, p. 8

¹⁵ *Mercury* 6 June 1934, p. 8

¹⁶ Magarey, *Passions of the First Wave Feminists*, p. 142

¹⁷ *Tasmanian Mail* 7 June 1934, p. 23

papers printed lengthy lists of all the organisations which she was involved in but the information given was not always correct and therefore has to be regarded cautiously. One example of this was the *Tasmanian Mail's* mention that she founded the National Council in 1904 but the Council was formed in 1899 and not by Emily Dobson.¹⁸

A number of Tasmanian dignitaries attended her funeral and this shows her standing in the community and how she was regarded. Among those present were politicians, the mayor and city aldermen and representatives from the many organisations with which she was connected. Sympathy notices from various sections of the Tasmanian community were also published in the papers. Her death certainly impacted on the philanthropic community and the general public.¹⁹

There is a temptation, when studying the life and activities of Emily Dobson, to dismiss her as being domineering, manipulative and frightening to all those around her, forcing people into submission. While she was certainly a strong, no-nonsense woman, the enormous out-pouring of respect and grief at her death was from admiration to a unique woman. The *Examiner* said 'Mrs Dobson was held in high regard, not only for her share in the public life of the state, but also for the wonderful hospitality she had always shown to members of societies with which she was associated.'²⁰ This said however, it is customary to speak highly of people in obituaries and remarks may have been from respect rather than emotion.

Emily Dobson was unique in Tasmanian society. While other women were active in the public and philanthropic spheres, Emily Dobson stands alone for her sheer volume of work in a wide range of organisations. Her commitment to the National Council was also extraordinary. She was a member of the Council for thirty-five years; but whether this was a good thing was problematical. Emily Dobson provided the face of the National Council and stability to the Council. Until her presidency, the Council had been led by a

¹⁸ *Tasmanian Mail* 7 June 1934, p. 23

¹⁹ *Mercury* 8 June 1934, p. 8; 16 June 1934, p. 2; 22 June 1934, p. 12

²⁰ *Examiner* 6 June 1934, p. 7

succession of Governor's wives, who were usually only vaguely aware of the history and work of the Council.²¹

After Emily Dobson's death she was replaced as President of the National Council by Amelia Piesse from 1935 till 1939 and then by Alexandra Banks Smith. Both were long-standing members and active in the Tasmanian philanthropic community (see chapter ten). Although these women took over Emily Dobson's role as president, Edith Waterworth took over as the visible leader in the public sphere. Very few women in Tasmania society were able to draw attention to themselves and the issues they were involved with. Emily Dobson had done this with the debate she incited in the community in regards to the curfew bell and her efforts to have girls taught cookery skills. Edith Waterworth did this in her campaigns for film censorship, civic rights for women and in this later period in her campaigns for the welfare of mother and child.

In 1914 Edith Waterworth had begun to assert her influence on the Tasmanian philanthropic community and this continued to grow into the 1930s. Edith Waterworth did not dominate the National Council but rather the attention of the community. Like Emily Dobson, Edith Waterworth was an 'expediency feminist' but Waterworth took this a step further. Emily Dobson was inhibited by the 'Victorian' ideals of her upbringing. She believed that women's sphere was in the home and her work was confined to assisting women but only in that role. She had not become involved in the campaign for the franchise in Tasmania, though she was not afraid to use it once gained. She was always conservative and did not wish to challenge the status quo. Edith Waterworth held many of the same ideals as Emily Dobson but was thirty years younger. In the 1930s she worked vigorously for women and children, particularly in regards to the maternity bonus which was changed in this period from a small sum paid directly to the mother to a series of government grants to enhance the medical expertise and support given to mothers.

Edith Waterworth appears to have exhibited some of Emily Dobson's personality traits but the first example of these did not appear in the newspapers until after Emily Dobson's

²¹ *Mercury* 12 February 1904, p. 6

death in 1934. At a meeting to discuss maternal mortality, Edith Waterworth caused friction when she denied the Queen Alexandra Hospital delegate the right to vote at the meeting because it was not listed as being involved in the campaign. Mary Parker (president of the Queen Alexandra Hospital Committee) was angry about this revelation and after pointing out that there was no point her being invited to the meeting if she could not vote, walked out. Edith Waterworth went on to tell the meeting, 'that although the people interested could attend the meetings, it was only those who had attended all of them and listened to the discussions who should vote. When people did not understand the discussions they moved resolutions which were not wise'.²² This incident was reminiscent of Emily Dobson asserting her authority at meetings of the National Council and ignoring other points of view. Mary Parker was an esteemed philanthropic worker in Tasmania and as president of the maternity hospital her input into discussion of the maternity bonus should have been valuable. This situation showed Edith Waterworth penalising Mary Parker for not attending all meetings. Like Emily Dobson, Edith Waterworth was unmovable when it came to an area of special interest. For Emily Dobson it was the training of domestic servants and for Edith Waterworth it was child welfare.

Although there were similarities between these two women, there were differences. Edith Waterworth lacked the connections and standing in the community that Emily Dobson had. Emily Dobson was 'Hobart's Grand Old Woman'. She was the wife of a premier of Tasmania and was connected to a well-known, prominent family. Emily Dobson was a wealthy woman who was able to travel the world at her leisure, while Edith Waterworth raised the money for her overseas trips by working as a journalist.²³ Edith Waterworth was also able to make some significant and tangible achievements in the area of child welfare in Tasmania and had been influential in the establishment of the film censorship board in Tasmania.

²² *Mercury* 15 February 1935, p. 9

²³ Lake, *Getting Equal*, p. 140

Emily Dobson was not always seen as an asset. In 1922 the current Governor's wife and patroness of the National Council, Lady Allardyce gave a farewell speech to the Council on her departure from Tasmania. She mentioned 'the difficulty of working with women who had been on the same committees for thirty-eight years in these days when independence and progressiveness were so generally desirable'.²⁴ This comment was surely a slight to Emily Dobson and other members like her who had been entrenched in the Council for so long. It was not uncommon for women to remain members of an organisation for many years, but it was very serious for the wife of the Governor to make such a comment publicly. Lady Allardyce was the patron of the Council and therefore by convention, should have made some encouraging parting comments to the members. The fact that she chose to express her frustration at the lack of work attempted by the Council is significant but did not have any effect on the Council. Her feelings in this regard must have been strong to publicly berate the Council when she was about to leave the State. There was no lack of earnestness among these women, many remained involved in the Council from the time it was formed until their deaths but perhaps this was the problem.

Criticisms of the Council

The Council received other criticism of its method of working. It appears from the comments made that the editor of the *Mercury* was growing tired of the National Council's habit of not actually producing any work. It is significant that contemporaries noted this. The *Mercury* commented in 1921, 'what we regret is that this organisation has no continuity of effort; and that its most educative discussions, and its most admirable resolutions have, at most, a very remote influence'.²⁵ This can be seen in any discussion of NCWT areas of interest or work attempted. They achieve little or no tangible results. The *Mercury* continued its tirade on the Council and it is interesting to understand its frustration at an organisation with national and international resources not actually doing anything:

We have no doubt at all of the earnestness of the women who promote these discussions and pass these resolutions. But we believe they would find some

²⁴ *Mercury* 20 January 1922, p. 6

²⁵ *Mercury* 20 January 1922, p. 4

difficulty in setting out plainly and in quite definite terms the total of the actual accomplishments of the National Council of Women, and to justify, by results, the name which they have taken.²⁶

By 1939 the National Council had been working in Tasmania for forty years and they had produced nothing that could be described as an achievement. But why was the *Mercury* upset with the Council's lack of achievement? This was explained in the editorial:

We are aware that it would be more chivalrous and more in accordance with convention if we gave unstinting praise, and spoke with enthusiasm of the work which has been accomplished. If we do not follow that easier and pleasanter course it is because we sincerely regret that so excellent a purpose should be so incompletely served by the methods adopted. We are very much afraid that because the press and persons holding positions of influence have taken the smoother path of praise, these women have failed to realise that a change in method is necessary if they hope to accomplish even some fair proportion of the good for which, so earnestly, they are striving.²⁷

These new methods were not adopted before the Second World War and it is unlikely that they changed after the war. It must be asked what was the Council trying to achieve? Did it only hope to provide a forum for discussion? If so then that was achieved and was a success. The Council drew together women from all over the state and at times from across the nation to discuss issues pertinent to women and families. It provoked debate and comment in the press, as illustrated above. But perhaps the annoying element in the National Council's *modus operandi* was the appearance it gave of trying to work in the different areas. If the Council had remained a solely advisory board and a means to facilitate dialogue between the existing women's organisations then the *Mercury* would not have had reason to criticise them. The NCWT did not do this. It gave every appearance, time and again, that it intended to start initiatives and to work tirelessly until it had persuaded the government to implement whatever it thought so necessary. Because

²⁶ *Mercury* 20 January 1922, p. 4

²⁷ *Mercury* 20 January 1922, p. 4

of this actual attempt to produce work it must be concluded that the Council failed and therefore the *Mercury* was justified in its attack. Although this period did see some tangible gains made to the rights and welfare of women, the Council still did very little besides hold discussions.

The inter-war years were a significant time in Australian history. The impact of the great Depression was significant on Tasmanian society although it does not appear to have influenced the Council's work programme.

Depression

Australia was thrown into depression in 1929. The impact of the international collapse was immediate and savage,²⁸ and led to a massive increase in unemployment from 9.3 per cent of registered wage earners in 1929 to 25.8 per cent in 1931. Loss of jobs meant that women and men were unable to feed, clothe and house themselves, and their children were often forced to leave school early to supplement the family income.²⁹ The Depression was said to be the first event in Australian history that affected almost every woman.³⁰ It was one of the biggest events in world history; it put millions out of work, forced countless families out of their homes and brought men, women and children to levels of near-starvation.³¹ There had been other Depressions in Australia, notably the Depression of the 1890s but the Depression of the 1930s was worst. Tasmania suffered from the Depression as all Australia did but endured the extra burden of isolation.

Although both men and women had to deal with traumas during the Depression, women and children without breadwinners suffered most significantly.³² The numbers of unemployed Tasmanian women during the Depression is unknown but it does appear that they were not offered any official relief until the winter of 1935.³³ Children also suffered severely during the Depression. They were the innocent victims of unemployment and

²⁸ C. Schedvin, *Australia and the Great Depression* (Sydney, 1970) p. 47

²⁹ P. Grimshaw, M. Lake, A. McGrath and M. Quartly, *Creating a Nation 1788-1990* (Victoria, 1994) p. 242

³⁰ A. Alexander, *Wealth of Women* (Potts Point, 2001) p. 156

³¹ L. Fox, *Depression Down Under* (Marrickville, 1989) p. 8

³² L.L. Robson, *The Tasmanian Story* (Melbourne, 1987) p. 87

³³ L. Robson, *A History of Tasmania* Vol. 2 (Melbourne, 1991) p. 435

poverty. This was a time of 'scientific motherhood' and with the words of Dr Truby King echoing in their ears, many women during the 1930s despaired over their children's failure to thrive. It was said, 'to be a child born into a family affected by the Depression meant that you were often hungry, sometimes homeless and always poor'.³⁴

Although all women were affected by the Depression, they were not all adversely affected. The upper and middle classes primarily escaped suffering. Women in this group were sheltered from the 'seamier side' of life. Domestic servants were employed to clean the house and prepare entertainments so these women were able to continue their pre-Depression activities including charity work. To be wealthy and secure was a guarantee that life would be relatively unchanged or even improved by the Depression, though it was customary to help alleviate the suffering of others.³⁵ It appears that many Tasmanian National Council members were associated with this privileged group. The available records indicate that the National Council did nothing to alleviate suffering during the Depression.

A letter received by the Grocers' Association asked the NCWT for support in an effort to reduce the price of sugar. The Association asked the National Council to send a delegate to its next meeting. Lillian Overell (NCWT member and head mistress) was appointed delegate but noted that she did not hold out much hope in securing a change in price.³⁶ There were some brief mentions in 1931 of the work being done in other states by the state Councils. In comparison to this meagre attempt at Depression relief work, the Victorian Council reported that it had established a fund for unemployed girls and raised £5000. Nine cooking centres were established and between two and three hundred girls trained in cookery. The NCWV had arranged to employ girls one day a week; homeless girls were employed for two days a week and established a camp for unemployed men. The South Australian Council had some success in teaching girls how to cook their

³⁴ C. Baker, *Depressions: 1890s, 1930: A Social History* (Melbourne, 1982) p. 55

³⁵ J. Mackinolty, 'Woman's Place' in J. Mackinolty (ed.), *The Wasted Years? Australia's Great Depression* (Sydney, 1981) p. 98

³⁶ *Mercury* 13 March 1931, p. 3

rations. It arranged with the South Australian Government to keep girls at school until they were sixteen years unless they had definite employment arranged.³⁷

Why was the Tasmanian Council apparently so deficient in charity work during the Depression? During the last Depression of the 1890s the NCWT had not been formed but individual women undertook aid work. Emily Dobson in particular had been active in the soup kitchen and the failed Village Settlement Scheme discussed in chapter one. It seems most likely that the Council either did not perceive a need to offer relief from the Depression or that it was being offered by other quarters. The Salvation Army (affiliated with the National Council) reported in 1938 that it supplied 250 families and 1500 children with bread and soup over the winter. Even during 1939 it provided 200 people with meals each day. During the First World War the National Council did not become involved in practical aid work as the Red Cross was already filling that need. Perhaps during the Depression the charity and benevolent societies of Hobart were already working to provide relief. There is a trend in National Council activity to ignore larger problems and focus on minor ones.

³⁷ *Mercury* 21 January 1931, p. 7

CHAPTER EIGHT – WELFARE WORK

The National Council of Women was often concerned with welfare though this was not always manifest in the work it undertook. The welfare of women and children was the primary concern of expediency feminists. Members believed that it was their duty as the mothers of the state to care for all children and to influence legislation to protect children. Lake states that it was the primary aim of Australian 'post-suffrage feminists to create a maternalist welfare state – with an array of infant maternal welfare centres, women's hospitals, children's courts, maternity benefits and eventually child endowment.'¹ During the 1920s and 1930s, the National Council's work in these areas became more practical. The Council discussed issues of illegitimacy, dress and beauty contests, supported the Girl Guides and tried to institute other such organisations to provide healthy diversions for girls. It briefly discussed educational standards in the state but its primary work in child welfare during this period was for the maternity bonus. But welfare work also included other areas. For example a minor amount of work was done in post-war peace work, international aid and discussions were held on Aboriginal welfare.

Post-War and Peace Work

In 1922 the National Council met to discuss the merits of disarmament, but it appears to have been the consensus of the meeting that disarmament was not a wise move. The women agreed that 'He keeps peace best who lives prepared for war'.² The National Council's interest in peace was inconsequential as it had little power to influence legislation in this regard.

In 1924, in conjunction with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Council held a meeting to discuss the prevention of the causes of war. The resolutions of this meeting were not reported.³ In June the same year another meeting of this kind was held with the view of forming a resolution to be sent to the next inter-state congress.⁴

¹ M. Lake, *Getting Equal: A History of Australian Feminism* (St Leonards, 1999) p. 11

² Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT) Non-State (NS) 325/9 A and B, Minute Book of the NCWT, 17 July 1922, p. 45

³ *Mercury* 20 May 1924, p. 4

⁴ *Mercury* 6 June 1924, p. 2

There was nothing more said on the abstract desire for peace in the lead-up to the Second World War and the Council did not discuss contemporary war issues. The formation of a League of Nations Union was discussed.

The Council was interested in both the League of Nations and in the forming of a local branch of the League of Nations Union. This was discussed throughout this period but as before, nothing apparent was achieved and records for this period have not survived.⁵ It is important to see the intentions of the Council in this regard rather than the results. The first mention was in 1921 when Emily Dobson told the Council that League of Nations Unions had been formed in both Queensland and New South Wales and it had been recommended that a branch be established in every state.⁶ In July 1922 the Council was approached to form a League of Nations Union as Tasmania was now the only state in Australia without one.⁷ The Council again delayed stating that it would be better to wait until Emily Dobson returned home from an ICW congress.⁸ The next month progress appeared to have been made when the Bishop of Tasmania gave a lecture to the NCWT on the League of Nations Union. Emily Cox (see chapter ten), president of the WCTU, gave assurances that the WCTU would give support to the establishment of the Union. The Council resolved to write to the mayor asking him to convene a public meeting in order to form a League of Nations Union.⁹ The meeting was reported in glowing terms, 'so convincing and clear was the Bishop's exposition, that a Tasmanian branch of the League of Nations Union was formed, of which more will be heard later.'¹⁰ Once the Union had been formed the National Council's interest shifted to which Australian woman would be appointed to the League of Nations.

In 1922 the Council received notice that three representatives from Australia would sit on the League of Nations. Adeline Stourton (see chapter ten) proposed a resolution that Prime Minister Hughes be asked to appoint a woman and that Emily Dobson would be

⁵ *World Review: The Quarterly Journal of the League of Nations Union*, April 1945, Tasmaniana Library

⁶ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 24 October 1921, p. 29

⁷ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 17 July 1922, p. 46

⁸ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 17 July 1922, p. 46

⁹ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 21 August 1922, p. 48

¹⁰ *Tasmanian Mail* 24 August 1922, p. 27

the ideal choice. This resolution was sent to each of the State Councils and to the Prime Minister. The Councils responded differently. The NCW SA was in favour of the resolution; the NCW NSW thought that nominations should be made through the League of Nations Union and not the National Council. The NCWV thought it was improper for the Council to make suggestions to the Government, the NCWQ asked for more information and the NCW WA wanted to nominate its own delegate.¹¹ This was all to no avail as in 1924 it was reported that Miss Allen of Victoria was appointed as the one woman delegate to the League of Nations. She was not a nominee of the National Council.¹²

In 1929 a meeting was held of representatives of five Tasmanian organisations: the NCWT, WCTU, Tasmanian Women Graduates' Association, Women's Non-Party League and the YWCA. The meeting was organised to recommend names of women qualified to act upon committees or commissions for the League of Nations.¹³ This was a promising idea of which nothing more was said. Some Tasmanian women appear to have been eager to participate in the League of Nations in some capacity but they were not able to impact on international affairs.

International Charity Work

The National Council worked for international charities to a limited extent. It became interested in the Save the Children Fund Russian Famine Appeal and in 1921 a special meeting of the Council was held to form a committee. Emily Dobson noted that a commonwealth appeal was about to be made for the Russian Famine and it was agreed that the Council should focus its energies and not divert interest into other charities. In 1923 the *Mercury* reported that the Tasmanian National Council had been working for the Save the Children Fund and that the editor had agreed to act as treasurer. Emily Dobson reported that consequently in Russia there were kitchens called 'The Mercury' and 'The Tasmanian Save the Children Fund'.¹⁴ The National Council's work in

¹¹ *Mercury* 16 May 1922, p. 8; 20 June 1922, p. 8

¹² *Mercury* 18 February 1927, p. 3

¹³ *Mercury* 2 April 1929, p. 2

¹⁴ *Mercury* 27 February 1923, p. 9

international aid was not extensive but significant as this was the only example of overseas aid offered outside the years of the war.

Maternity Bonus

The National Council's interest in the maternity bonus was the longest running and most involved activity of the inter-war years. The maternity bonus was established in 1912 under the *Maternity Allowance Act*.¹⁵ It gave £5 to each new white mother whether married or unmarried; this was the equivalent to five weeks wages to a working woman.¹⁶ The aim was to improve the declining birth rate in Australia. The *Bulletin* noted, 'not a single female will be inspired by the prospect of a fiver to do what she would not have done without any subsidy'.¹⁷ However, since 1912 there had been an improvement in infant death rates, which decreased from 103 to 66 deaths per 1000.¹⁸ This was not seen as enough. Concerns in child welfare were common among women's organisations during the inter-war years. State funded baby health centres were established in most states, beginning in Victoria in 1916. By 1926 there were seventy-eight clinics in Victoria and sixty-one in New South Wales. Experts such as Dr Truby King provided publicity about infant mortality issues and baby welfare weeks, designed to promote child welfare issues, encouraged attention to the ideal norm.¹⁹ The Council began discussing the issue in 1922 and only reached some resolution in the late 1930s when the Maternal and Child Welfare Conference was held, organised by Edith Waterworth. This evolved over its nineteen-year course. In 1922 the issue was the Federal Government's intention to up-date the baby bonus given to new mothers at the time of their confinement. Child welfare advocates thought this was not the best use of the money as it did not appear to decrease either infant or maternal mortality rates enough, even though there had been some reduction. By the 1930s the issue was the allocation of new money to the various organisations devoted to women and child health.

¹⁵ R. Howe and S. Swain 'Fertile Grounds for Divorce: Sexuality and Reproductive Imperatives' in K. Saunders and R. Evans (eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* (Marrickville, 1992) p. 170

¹⁶ Lake, *Getting Equal*, p. 75

¹⁷ Howe and Swain, 'Fertile Grounds for Divorce', p. 170

¹⁸ Statistics of Tasmania 1921-1922, p. 5

¹⁹ J. Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood: A History* (St. Leonards, 1997) p. 151

The NCWT became aware of the proposed changes to the maternity bonus in 1922 when it received a letter from the NCW SA urging that the Government be asked to take into consideration the views of a representative body of women's organisations. The SA Council suggested that the National Councils in each state act as the 'medium of communication for all such representative bodies of women whether affiliated with the Council or not'. This was the original aim of the NCW and the NCWT adopted this proposal.²⁰ This was followed by letters from both the NCW NSW and the NCWV urging the Tasmanian Council to commission a report on the maternity bonus question so that a conference of representatives from all states could be held and results from each state could be discussed.²¹

In October 1922 Dr Crowther gave an address on the maternity bonus. His audience included representatives from: the NCWT, the Child Welfare Association, Bush Nursing Association, Women's Health Association, Consumptive Sanatorium, Women's Council for Church Work, Criminal Law Association, YWCA, Free Kindergarten Association, Soldiers' and Sailors' Mothers' and Wives' Association, National Federation, Alexandra Hospital and the Women's Non-Party League. Dr Crowther discussed several alternatives to giving the bonus to individual women, and suggested the money be used either for training nurses and midwives, providing baby clinics, home visits after births, and training girls to assist in housework or for enlarging the Bush Nursing Association.²² He suggested that if it was only paid to mothers whose family income was less than £250 p.a, the additional money could be spent on forming pre-natal clinics or by other means assisting pre and post-natal mothers. Some thought that making the maternity bonus subject to income was elitist and encouraged class distinctions. Edith Waterworth proposed that:

In the opinion of this meeting it is more necessary than ever in view of the heed of population, [that] Australia should spend a sum equal to £5 per child born, but

²⁰ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 21 August 1922, p. 48

²¹ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 16 October 1922, p. 50

²² AOT, NS 325/9A, 30 October 1922, p. 54

that this money should be laid out in such a manner as to ensure some substantial return in stronger and healthier mother and lives of babies saved.²³

This was agreed to by all except Mary Bisdee who thought they should have a definite plan as the Government would not pay out £5 per child indefinitely. Emily Dobson called upon the mayoress to arrange another public meeting so opinions could be heard and a committee was set up to consider all opinions from the community. It included, Emily Dobson and Alexandra Banks Smith (NCWT), Edith Waterworth (Child Welfare Association), Ethel Darling (Bush Nursing), Mrs Harenut (Mothers' and Wives' Association) and Nurse Richards (Hospital Inspector).²⁴ This committee does not appear to have had any influence in the decision process. This was demonstrated at the NCW conference held in Melbourne on the maternity bonus at which Mary Bisdee, the delegate, voted as an individual and against the wishes of the NCWT. The NCWT minutes noted that it was regrettable that she had chosen to vote against the will of the Tasmanian Council and in favour of the maternity allowance being maintained. The Australian State National Councils resolved that the Federal maternity allowance be maintained and that the Federal Government should be urged to supplement it by making provision for assistance for other schemes to provide for the welfare of mothers and children in each state.²⁵

In June 1927 a deputation met with the Premier to ask for a national scheme to assist mothers when they needed help. Although Edith Waterworth was present, the National Council was not.²⁶ This was the beginning of a diminishing in the National Council influence in the maternity bonus issue. While it remained committed to merely changing the 'baby bonus', the other women's organisations in Hobart began looking to what was termed 'maternal mortality'. The main protagonist in the debate was Edith Waterworth and as president of the Women's Non-Party League she began to make her views known.

²³ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 4 December 1922, p. 56

²⁴ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 15 January 1923, p. 61

²⁵ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 16 April 1923, p. 63

²⁶ *Mercury* 16 June 1927, p. 11

In July 1927 the Government began its own investigations into maternal problems in Tasmania, so perhaps the deputation one month earlier had made an impact.²⁷ In June 1928 Edith Waterworth called a meeting under the auspices of the Non-Party League to discuss 'Maternal and Infant Mortality'.²⁸ The issue was no longer about how to distribute the baby bonus money but what had to be done to ensure a reduction in the mortality rates. At the 1925 Royal Commission on Health maternal mortality rates were described as a 'grave national danger'.²⁹ Lake notes that Australian maternal mortality rates were consistently higher than either England or Wales and in 1928 has reached its highest levels in seventeen years.³⁰ The Tasmanian meeting incorporated representatives of twenty-six Tasmanian women's organisations and included the National Council. Edith Waterworth spoke about the high maternal mortality rates in Australia, stating that in 1924, 738 women died giving birth, leaving behind 1,767 infants.³¹ Australia had spent £13,000,000 in baby bonuses but in 1935 still had the highest death rate out of twenty-five countries.³² The meeting passed several resolutions. It asked the government to establish a division of maternal hygiene including antenatal care. It asked that subsidies be granted to medical students and that midwives be trained and registered. The meeting also asked that mothers be given domestic help after their confinements and that stillbirths be reported. Finally it asked for the states to be granted a subsidy from the commonwealth to provide for mothers before, during and after confinement. The meeting appointed a committee to see to the resolutions passed and this included Edith Waterworth and an unnamed representative of the National Council.³³

There was some doubt as to whether women would be allowed to be heard at a Royal Commission on child endowment question to be held in 1929 and it was the Australian Federation of Women Voters (represented by the Women's Non-Party League in Tasmania) and not the National Council who prepared a protest to the Prime Minister. They claimed the right to be heard on this issue on the ground that they were community

²⁷ *Mercury* 20 July 1927, p. 6

²⁸ *Mercury* 20 June 1928, p. 7

²⁹ Lake, *Getting Equal*, p. 80

³⁰ Lake, *Getting Equal*, p. 80

³¹ *Mercury* 20 June 1928, p. 7

³² *Mercury* 15 August 1935, p. 3

³³ *Mercury* 22 June 1928, p. 10

members, tax payers and voters, and the homemakers and principal guardians of children. The *Mercury* agreed stating:

It is not unreasonable to say that as fully enfranchised citizens, and as tax payers vitally concerned in the issues at stake, women have a plain right to representation on this particular commission ... remembering that in Tasmania the women electors are actually in the majority, it is certainly possible to argue that their representation on the Child Endowment Commission is a matter of simple justice.³⁴

The Royal Commission on Child Endowment did hear evidence from several Tasmanians including Ethel Darling (representing the Bush Nursing Association), Frances Edwards (in her capacity as a justice of the peace) and Edith Waterworth (representing the Women's Non-Party League and the Child Welfare Association).³⁵ The National Council of Tasmania was represented by James Counsel, a Barrister. It is not clear why the National Council did not represent itself.³⁶ A Mrs Counsel was a one-time member of the Council and it is likely that James Counsel was a relative and perhaps working *pro bono publico* as the National Council's finances were not extensive at this point.³⁷

The Commission questioned the Council's position, but when pressed for details, James Counsel was unable to give specifics and the National Council appeared to be under-prepared in its discussions. When asked, 'has the Council any proposition to advance as to how the [basic living] wage shall be augmented in order to provide an adequate standard of life in the home for the worker who has a wife and six children?' James Counsel replied:

No, I think that they [NCWT] concentrated upon the extension of services and were careful purposely to avoid going into details or let me take the matter into details. Affiliated societies have already given evidence and in any case this

³⁴ *Mercury* 21 July 1927, p. 6

³⁵ Royal Commission on Child Endowment, Minutes of Evidence, Commonwealth of Australia 1928-1929, pp. 703, 717, 727, 749

³⁶ AOT, NS 1035/1, Minute Book of the NCWT, 1929

³⁷ AOT, NS 1035/1, *passim*

organisation is not by its constitution capable of going very closely into scientific and political economy.³⁸

In fact, when asked for clarification on various points, James Counsel repeatedly replied that he was not instructed in the matter or that the Council had chosen not to elaborate.³⁹ The National Council's evidence to the Royal Commission appears to have been ill considered and unhelpful. The Council seemed content to allow its affiliated organisations to work out the details of the child endowment. In comparison the Child Welfare Association presented well thought out logical evidence and was able to answer all questions posed in an intelligent, dignified manner.⁴⁰ It was perhaps unfortunate that the National Council was not represented by its own members rather than a lawyer who was unable to answer when he had not been instructed on a topic. Although not representing the Council, Ethel Darling, Frances Edwards and Edith Waterworth each gave similar evidence to the Council. It appears to have been the consensus of the Tasmanian philanthropic community that an extension to the services already in operation was needed, rather than money given directly to families to be squandered.⁴¹

The campaign to reduce maternal mortality carried on until 1937 in much the same manner. The representatives of the various women's organisations discussed the issues and little progress was made. In March 1935 a deputation met with the Minister for Health (Mr Hughes) in Canberra. He listened to eleven women talk for over an hour on the issues of infant and maternal mortality. At the close of their presentation he was reported as saying, 'Whatever it costs we are going to find the money'.⁴² In April that year the NCWT wrote to the NCWA to ask for permission to send a delegate to the next Maternal Mortality Conference in Canberra but were told that women were not to be included at the conference. Also at this time the Federal Health Council had submitted to the Federal Government its recommendations that a model maternity unit be established in each state capital and that State Governments be paid £1 per each 'viable'

³⁸ Royal Commission on Child Endowment, pp. 748-749

³⁹ Royal Commission on Child Endowment, pp. 745-749 *passim*

⁴⁰ Royal Commission on Child Endowment, pp. 727-734

⁴¹ Royal Commission on Child Endowment, pp. 703, 717, 727, 749 *passim*

⁴² *Mercury* 6 March 1935, p. 7

birth per year. This would have meant between £4000-£5000 p.a for Tasmania. This amount was dramatically less than the £5 per birth that the National Council had thought reasonable.

Although the National Council were not the primary force behind the push to decrease maternal mortality, in May 1935 it received a letter from the Federal Government outlining the proposed scheme and asking the Council for support in raising funds. The Federal Government scheme proposed that an advisory committee should be set up and include the head of the Health Department, a lecturer in midwifery from the university, two representatives from women's organisations (one of which should be from a Labor organisation) and a prominent business man. The National Council replied:

That while supporting the Federal Health Scheme, and considering it excellent, we, as laywomen, desire that it be broadened to take in the education of girls for healthy maturity and safe maternity by training all Australian girls in housewifery. This would reach one of the chief causes of badly built and unhealthy babies and would help materially in the reduction of maternal mortality and morbidity.⁴³

The Council also stipulated that the board should have nine members and five of these should be women. The Federal Health Department acceded to the requests and noted it was happy to remodel the committee to meet local needs.⁴⁴

In 1935 the allocation of the maternity bonus money was announced and was to be divided as follows:⁴⁵

⁴³ *Mercury* 10 May 1935, p. 7

⁴⁴ *Mercury* 21 June 1935, p. 3

⁴⁵ *Mercury* 21 February 1935, p. 9

Provision for maternity wards at the proposed new public hospital	7,000
Bush Nursing Association	1,000
St Mary's District Hospital	1,000
Child Welfare Association, Hobart	850
Queen Alexandra Hospital	500
Public maternity hospitals equipment	500
Child Welfare Association, Devonport	150
TOTAL	£11,000

There was no comment by the women's organisations as to whether they thought this was a satisfactory division of money.

In 1937 Edith Waterworth organised a Maternal and Child Welfare Conference which was supported by the National Council and other women's organisations.⁴⁶ This was again organised under the auspices of the Non-Party League. The conference included women from over ninety-nine organisations. Based on five principles, it encapsulated maternal ideology: 1, the child's first need is a healthy and competent mother; 2, the first necessity to safe child birth is a healthy body and a mind at ease; 3, no doctor or nurse, no matter how highly trained can achieve this for the mother; 4, the doctors and nurses can only treat the mother as she arrives in their care; 5, every under-fed and wrongly fed child weakens the fabric of maternal safety.⁴⁷

This conference marked the closing of the first phase of the work to prevent maternal mortality. The *Mercury* agreed, claiming 'the conference of last week may be taken as marking the end of one phase of the movement, and as the preparation for a great extension of the work which has hitherto be carried out by a few enthusiasts'.⁴⁸ The next phase was the establishment of the Tasmanian Council for Maternal and Child Welfare and this was welcomed by the community:

⁴⁶ *Mercury* 16 July 1937, p. 7

⁴⁷ J. Waters, 'To Help the Mothers and Save the Babies: An Episode in Tasmania's Population Debate', Unpublished BA Hons Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1983, p. 24

⁴⁸ *Mercury* 23 August 1937, p. 6

The attendance at the recent conference at Hobart, the unanimity of the views expressed, and the acceptance without disagreement of the principles put forward, show that Tasmanian women were only waiting to be called together to answer the call with enthusiasm.⁴⁹

The Tasmanian Council for Maternal and Child Welfare became the Council for Mother and Child of which Edith Waterworth was president for eighteen years until 1955.⁵⁰ Edith Waterworth was responsible for the maternal mortality conference and the formation of the Council for Mother and Child. As the *Mercury* commented in 1937, 'we are sure that none will contest the right which Mrs Waterworth might claim to the main credit.'⁵¹

Illegitimate Children

The Council's views on illegitimacy of children were conservative. They passed a resolution in 1922 from the Christiania International Council which had recommended petitioning for legislation in all countries to give children born out of marriage the right to the father's name and maintenance on proof of paternity.⁵² The Tasmanian Council was uncomfortable with this resolution. It thought that there was no need to punish the innocent child by withholding the father's name or financial aid but the Council had concern with how this would affect marriage.⁵³ The Tasmanian Council was concerned about respectable men, married with families, being forced to publicly acknowledge children born as a result of adultery. It is unclear how a woman would have proved paternity of a child. Without reliable medical tests it was surely a matter of a woman's word against a man's. The National Council was very conservative and although the matter was discussed briefly, change was not instituted.

⁴⁹ *Mercury* 24 August 1937, p. 10

⁵⁰ H. Radi (ed.), *200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology* (Marrickville, 1988), p. 96

⁵¹ *Mercury* 23 August 1937, p. 6

⁵² *Mercury* 20 January 1922, p. 6

⁵³ *Mercury* 20 January 1922, p. 6

Care of Girls

The Council was more concerned with the welfare of girls than boys. Its areas of discussion and work for protection were always about the welfare of female children. This was demonstrated in three areas that the Council discussed in the 1920s and 1930s, beauty contests, the immodest dress of girls and the distraction of girls from immorality by joining clubs. The Council's interest in beauty contests was not extensive. Beauty contests are said to have started in 1880 in America and although the women wore bathing costume in public, the event was said to be 'couched in respectability'.⁵⁴ The National Council did not find them respectable. In 1926 the Council supported a resolution sent from NSW stating that the National Councils should 'deplore the exploitation of the girlhood of Australia by means of beauty competitions and was of the opinion that such competitions can result only in harm to the community'.⁵⁵ The Tasmanian Council was strongly in support of this resolution and decided to protest against beauty contests but nothing more was said about this concern during this period.

The National Council maintained an interest in occupying girls with alternatives to avoid them slipping into immoral activities, as was seen in the early discussion of the curfew bell. In the 1930s the Council again became interested in providing an organisation for girls who were not catered for in other organisations. The idea was to provide a club where sewing and useful domestic occupations could be taught. A number of members put forward their names to assist but the club was never formed and not mentioned again in the National Council minutes or reports.⁵⁶ This was not surprising and was a typical feature of NCWT discussions. The Council lacked the enthusiasm and organisational skills to bring this idea to fruition but it does show the Council's vague and perhaps theoretical interest in providing for girls and an unfailing interest in domestic studies.

⁵⁴ C. Cohen, R. Wilk and B. Stoeltje (eds.), *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power* (Great Britain, 1996) p. 4

⁵⁵ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 18 November 1926, p. 122

⁵⁶ *Mercury* 18 March 1932, p. 13

Nationality, Marriage and Divorce

During the 1920s and 1930s, the National Council became involved in the campaign to have uniform nationality laws and marriage and divorce laws. This was not directly a Tasmanian concern but as part of the ICW the NCWT was asked to become involved. The interest in nationality laws also incorporated anxiety about marriage laws. Women in the British Empire took on their husband's nationality upon marriage but this meant losing their British citizenship if they married a non-British man. The concern with this was that not all countries did the same, so if a British woman married an American man she would be without nationality for a length of time. The NCWT discussed this at length but had no influence over international nationality laws.

The interest in uniformed marriage and divorce laws were simpler. The NCWA wanted all states to have uniform and tighter laws in this regard and this meant that the individual state Councils had to petition their Governments to take action. A federal Council meeting in 1926 discussed the divorce laws in the represented states and a resolution was passed, to be sent to the next premiers' conference. The women discussed the issue of divorce and decided that while it was not desirable it was sometimes necessary as drunkenness, lunacy and perversion sometimes meant a couple could not live together and to deny divorce would 'lead to irregular unions in other directions'.⁵⁷ But the problem was that there was no uniform divorce law between the states, for example lunacy was grounds for divorce in some states but not others. There was some dissent at the meeting as to the slackening of divorce laws, some women believing that divorce should not be made easier, others believing that the issue was really a federal matter.⁵⁸ It was finally agreed that each state would appoint a committee to look into their state's marriage and divorce laws and forward it to the NCWA. This matter did not receive further attention by the Tasmanian Council.

Finally the National Council worked in two areas in which it had only a vague interest but which are important to discuss. One of these involved issues relating to health and

⁵⁷ *Mercury* 28 July 1926, p. 2

⁵⁸ *Mercury* 1 March 1930, p. 10

covered concerns about responsible sex education and the incarceration of mentally unfit adults. The other was an interest in the treatment of Aboriginal Australians.

Health

The Council's interest in sex education was only fleeting and was again brought to the Tasmanian Council's attention by an inter-state Council. In 1922 the Queensland Council introduced a scheme for education in 'sexual hygiene' of school children. Mrs Bage (NCWQ) spoke about the fear women felt at the thought of discussing the topic of sex education. 'The matter was not new. Everybody had either tackled it or been afraid of it, and the most thoughtful had agreed and disagreed as to who should give it and to whom it should be given'.⁵⁹ The Council passed a resolution, which was to be forwarded to the state Councils to establish committees to consult with headmasters, headmistresses, experts and then take action in the matter. The Tasmanian Council did not take action, nor is there any evidence to suggest that a committee was formed.

In the early 1920s the Council began to look into mental illness and discussed the best courses of action. It received two letters; one from Western Australia asking the Council to look into treatment in Tasmanian asylums and the other from a man whose brother had been mistreated at the New Norfolk Asylum. The Tasmanian Council agreed to look into the matter. In 1922 mental illness came under scrutiny at the inter-state congress. The women delegates thought that the best course of action was to segregate the mentally unfit for the protection of the community and give them colonies to live in. It claimed that one or two per cent of children in schools were mentally deficient and if they were not removed they would retard the other children. Most states of Australia had legislation to control the mentally unfit; Tasmania had passed similar legislation in 1920.⁶⁰ This matter was not taken any further. As Tasmania already had working asylums further segregation was not essential.

⁵⁹ *Mercury* 21 January 1922, p. 12

⁶⁰ Kociumbas, *Australian Childhood*, p. 155

Aborigines

The National Council did nothing to assist the plight of Tasmanian or Australian Aboriginal people, but for the first time in 1922 the Council began to discuss these issues. The issue of Aboriginal welfare was first raised at an inter-state congress, and it was primarily through the insistence of the mainland states that this topic received attention as Aboriginal concerns were not widespread in Tasmanian society. In 1929 the Council asked that consideration be given to the 'half castes and aborigines on Cape Barron Island' with the view to supply subsidies.⁶¹ In 1933 the Tasmanian National Council discussed options for better protection and preservation of Aborigines and it was proposed to petition the Federal Government on the matter.⁶² Again the Council said nothing else on this matter. As noted, the treatment of Aborigines was not of the same concern in Tasmania as it was on mainland Australia primarily due to the limited Tasmanian Aboriginal population.

⁶¹ AOT, NS 1035/1, 18 July 1929, p. 64

⁶² *Mercury* 16 June 1933, p. 10

CHAPTER NINE – CONTINUED WORK AND ADVANCES

During the war years the National Council worked in several areas which were returns to previous areas of interest, including the appointment of policewomen, the temperance question, and the establishment of reliable film and literature censorship. During this period the Council also looked at the training of domestic servants again. As before, nothing was achieved in this regard but it was significant that the Council returned to this perhaps outdated idea and is an indicator that the same women were still involved in deciding the Council's agenda. The Council also became involved in issues to advance the status of women. It has been said of British women's experience of the war that, 'of all the changes wrought by the War, none had been greater than the change in the status and position of women, and yet it is not so much that woman herself has changed as that man's conception of her had changed'.¹ The status of British women changed after the war because they were granted the vote in 1918, unlike Australian women who had been voting since 1902. The experience of British women during the war was significantly different from the experience of Tasmanian women on the other side of the world and comparisons are only helpful to highlight differences.

Policewomen

The National Council had hoped that policewomen would become a regular feature in the Tasmanian police force and in 1926 appointed a sub-committee to investigate the appointment. They asked the Commissioner of Police three questions. How many policewomen were acting in Tasmania? What were their duties? Did they have the same status as policemen?² The Commissioner stated that there was only one and that she had the same status as an ordinary constable. The Council moved a resolution 'that policewomen's work is so excellent and important that we urge the Government to appoint at least four, two for the north and two for the south.'³ It also resolved to discover if an ordinary constable had the power to arrest. This resolution was not received favourably by the police commissioner or Premier Lyons who replied that 'the

¹ D. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War One* (London, 1998), p. 1

² Archives Offices of Tasmania (AOT) Non-State (NS) 325/9A and B, Minute Book of the NCWT, 15 April 1926, p. 111

³ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 20 May 1926, p. 113

Government is of the opinion that the special interests of women and children are adequately met by the existing organisations of the police department and in the circumstances regret that no special appointments can be considered at present'.⁴

The issue was dropped until 1934 when the *Mercury* reported that the mainland women's journal *Dawn* had published an article about policewomen in Australia and noted that Tasmania was the most backward of all the States.⁵ The column pointed out that Tasmania started off well but had suffered a relapse:

we started out quite brightly with three, but they have dwindled to one, and we are sometimes haunted by the fear that that one might be torn from our grasp. I feel certain, though, that Tasmanian women would never endure that; it is bad enough to have our State stigmatised as 'backward'.⁶

The National Council did not pursue the appointment of policewomen. In 1934 the Council received a letter from the WCTU asking them to appoint a delegate for a deputation to the attorney-general to ask for more policewomen but although the National Council acceded to the request it decided that this was not the real problem. Ada Rogers (see chapter ten) and Ella Smith (National Council member, JP and special magistrate to the children's court) pointed out to the Council that the real issue was the patrolling of beaches and parks. They believed that young girls and women were in great danger from walking through parks at night and it was suggested that a voluntary band of workers be established to patrol these areas.⁷ This was another example of a minor issue that the Council took up rather than the larger issue which was the continued appointment of policewomen.

By the next monthly meeting the Council had changed its mind again and decided to form another deputation to ask for policewomen to be appointed and if this was not possible they would ask that a member of the Salvation Army be appointed and

⁴ AOT, NS 325/9 A and B, 17 June 1926, p. 115

⁵ *Mercury* 24 June 1931, p. 9

⁶ *Mercury* 24 June 1931, p. 9

⁷ *Mercury* 18 May 1934, p. 14

subsidised by the Government to supervise the voluntary patrols. But this was the last comment on policewomen in this period. It is likely that the voluntary patrols were never established and the Council's request for additional policewomen was not granted. The Council was unable to decide what it wanted in this area, whether policewomen or patrols and this undermined its efforts to have either appointed.

Temperance

The National Council was not very concerned about temperance issues. Concerns with 'shouting' emerged during the war years but apart from a few vague mentions of temperance issues and its temperance affiliates nothing was done in this regard. In 1931 a visiting temperance advocate, Miss McCorkindale of the WCTU, lectured on the temperance problem. Emily Dobson assured her that the Council took a keen interest in temperance work but this was the first time in ten years that it had been mentioned. Miss McCorkindale told the meeting that the real problem in Australia was that people expected temperance problems to be overcome by legislation but it was only through educating people that progress could be made.⁸

1932 was the centenary of temperance work in Tasmania and the Council decided that the Hobart Temperance Alliance should try and obtain a majority of votes at the City Council elections for the reduction of bars. In 1933 the Council joined others in protesting against the proposal to extend the liquor selling hours from six o'clock to ten o'clock. In 1934, the liquor hours were changed to ten o'clock. The Council could have protested this further, perhaps called a meeting or started a petition but this was not done.

Censorship

The National Council's interest in film censorship was really only beginning in the war years and continued till 1939 and beyond. The biggest achievement was made when the censorship board was appointed and women were appointed to sit on it, but this did not mean that all films screened in Tasmania would be deemed suitable by the National Council. Ideas of immorality and 'Victorian' prudery affected how the National Council

⁸ *Mercury* 23 April 1931, p. 6

saw the effectiveness of the censorship board. The National Council also became concerned about other censorship issues during this later period, specifically the censorship of film advertising and reading materials. These concerns were not as involved as the film censorship fight but do show the resolve of the Council.

In 1922 at the inter-state congress of the National Councils the delegates discussed the need for film censorship in all states. Edith Waterworth told the congress that in Tasmania 'the mere presence of the board acted as a sort of automatic check upon bad films, because producers would not send rubbishy films to Tasmania to be refused'. She then qualified this statement by saying that there were still too many films depicting 'philandering' husbands and wives and 'unpleasant dancing'.⁹ Edith Cowan of the Western Australian Council (see chapter ten) moved that the conference should support all National Councils in pressuring their Governments for state censorship boards, with no fewer than two women sitting on those boards.¹⁰ This was on the same lines as the Tasmania censorship board which had been the first state board established in Australia.

In November 1922 the *Mercury* called for the tightening of the local and federal censorship bodies as immoral films had recently been shown in Hobart. The Council did not investigate this claim but in January 1923 began to express concern about film advertising. From 1922 the Tasmanian newspapers began to print more film advertisements which were often steamy pictures with lurid remarks about the film (for example see appendix two). The National Council approached the police commissioner who responded that he had no power to act in the matter as no laws were being broken. The Council then approached the Attorney-General William Propsting, who agreed to look into the matter and attempt to have the laws changed to bring film advertisement under the jurisdiction of the film censorship board.¹¹

In 1923 the National Council established the Good Film League to encourage the screening of morally uplifting films and women's focus moved from censoring films to

⁹ *Mercury* 19 January 1922, p. 6

¹⁰ *World* 19 January 1922, p. 6

¹¹ *Mercury* 16 January 1923, p. p. 6

encouraging the production of films of a higher character. The Tasmanian Good Film League was predicated on the Good Film League of NSW, which had been started by the NCW NSW in 1922. It was based on three aims: first, to encourage films of high ethical and artistic standards; second, adequate censorship of advertisement of films and third, to further the use of films as education.¹² In practice, the NSW League worked for tighter controls on the film industry but in Tasmania the League received little attention.¹³ The establishment of the League met with support from both the Archbishop of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Labor Party,¹⁴ but this was not the success it first appeared to be. In January 1924 Emily Cox reported that nothing further had been done with regards to the League but she had written to the Archbishop to arrange a meeting and still awaited the reply.¹⁵

At the annual meeting held in June 1924 the improvement in the moral tone of pictures was commented on. It was noted that cinema theatre managers had joined the Good Film League and that they had eliminated undesirable features from advertisements. 'The members were emphatic as to the improvement in the moral and presentation of the pictures being most marked. They thought it only right that this be made public.'¹⁶ The moral change in pictures could not have been dramatic as the Council again discussed this issue at the following meeting.¹⁷

In the meantime the Council became interested in a book by Dr Marie Stopes which was described as a 'semi-scientific book recently issued dealing with sex problems'.¹⁸ Emily Dobson obtained a copy and the members were asked to meet to decide what action should be taken. The Council was concerned that the book should not be given to young people as it was 'demoralising' and was thought to encourage sex outside marriage.¹⁹ Dr Marie Stopes was a renowned sexologist and birth control advocate who wrote about

¹² I. Bertrand, *Film Censorship in Australia* (St Lucia, 1978) p. 89

¹³ Bertrand, *Film Censorship in Australia*, p. 89

¹⁴ *Tasmanian Mail* 22 November 1923, p. 27

¹⁵ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 21 January 1924, p. 78

¹⁶ *Mercury* 6 June 1924, p. 2

¹⁷ *Mercury* 18 July 1924, p. 11

¹⁸ *Mercury* 18 July 1924, p. 11

¹⁹ AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 17 July 1924, p. 86

eugenics, sex education and women's rights within marriage. She wrote three books around this time, *Married Love* (1918), *Wise Parenthood* (1918) and *Radiant Motherhood* (1921), it is unknown which of these books the NCWT objected to. Many mainland women activists supported Marie Stopes' ideas.²⁰ But the NCWT organised a sub-committee to check the circulation of the book and other similar literature. This matter was not taken any further, which was common with National Council interests. It shows the difference between the mainland and Tasmanian feminist movements; the Tasmanian Council tried to ban a book promoted by mainland feminists. The Tasmanian women's movement was out of touch and obviously more conservative than the mainland women's movement.

Emily Dobson mentioned to the Council in July 1924 that she had written to the proprietor of the Strand Theatre appealing to him not to show a film called 'Flaming Youth' which had been criticised on the mainland. Although the Council approved this action Emily Cox pointed out that the film had been altered three times by the federal censors to remove the objectionable scenes. Another woman told the meeting that she had seen the film and had found that all objectionable features had been removed.²¹ This highlights the problems with the National Council acting as the moral guardians of censorship. What was offensive to Emily Dobson was not so to the Federal Censorship board or some National Council members. It was perhaps beneficial to Tasmanian society that the National Council was only able to discuss these issues without apparently influencing the process of censorship.

Women imposing moralistic prudery on the film-going public was an area of concern and was one of the reasons that women sitting on censorship boards was resisted. In 1927 the *Mercury's* women's columnist Cornelia wrote about the need for women on censorship boards. She quoted a man who had said 'he did not want women on censorship boards, and thought that every woman in Australia would reply to that "of course"'.²² She went

²⁰ J. Damousi, 'Marching to Different Drums: Women's Mobilisation 1914-1939' in K. Saunders and R. Evans (eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* (Marrickville, 1992) p. 366

²¹ *Mercury* 18 July 1924, p. 11

²² *Mercury* 18 August 1927, p. 3

on to say, 'men call women biased, prejudiced, and narrow-minded. The truth about the matter is that their view is "different"'.²³ Cornelia believed it was that difference which made it necessary for women to sit on the censorship boards. Women were entrusted with the care and training of the young and therefore they should be allowed a voice on censorship.²⁴ But the National Council left the censorship issue until 1932 when it again became interested.

The women at the July 1932 monthly meeting were read a letter from the Australian National Council of Women (NCWA). It asked for support for a motion asking the Federal Government to consider the setting up a board similar to the Australian Broadcasting Board, whose duties would be to censor and control the production and importation of films and posters.²⁵ This proposal was for a body the same as the federal censorship board, already in operation, so why it was being put forward by the NCWA is unclear from the limited information available. As a response the Tasmanian branch pointed out that many films went directly to the states and therefore missed censorship²⁶ and a copy of the NCWA's letter was sent to Premier McPhee together with 'an earnest request that something be done towards improving the existing state of affairs in Tasmania'.²⁷

This was remarkable considering that there was already a state and a federal censorship body. Why was there so great a need for tighter censorship when there were boards designed for this function? There are two likely possible answers, either that the censorship boards did not work or the National Council's expectations were not met. The National Council's interest in film censorship during this period sounds like there was no censorship in Tasmania. It seems likely that these women were aiming at an unrealistic, unattainable degree of film censorship unwanted by the majority of the community. This battle for censorship was the National Council trying to turn back the

²³ *Mercury* 18 August 1927, p. 3

²⁴ *Mercury* 18 August 1927, p. 3

²⁵ *Mercury* 22 July 1932, p. 10

²⁶ *Mercury* 22 July 1932, p. 10

²⁷ *Mercury* 22 July 1932, p. 10

clock and keep a 'Victorian' moral tone to the films and literature given to children and even adults.

In 1933 the *Mercury* reported on the book censorship body and its difficulties in establishing censorship guidelines. The comments made were a slight to the women campaigning for censorship in Australia:

The main consideration of Cabinet in facing the book censorship problem was the agreed impossibility of setting up a definite standard as to what constituted indecency. It was for this reason that Cabinet decided to seek a group of eminent litterateurs, whose judgement would be as nearly perfect as the difficult conditions make possible ... Sir Robert Garran made it clear to-day that 'mid-Victorian' ideas would not dominate the new committee. The committee would be attuned to modern thought and would not introduce [a] 'wowsers' spirit into its decisions.²⁸

Although they were not mentioned directly, this quotation appears to be directed at women's organisations like the National Council which were often labelled as wowsers. This seemed to indicate that the National Council's anxiety with censorship may have been confined to the Council and not the majority of the viewing and reading public. The National Council did try to hold back the tide with the advancement of the new woman in the early 1920s. It was uncomfortable with the new clothing and hairstyles of girls and it followed that it also tried to protect women and girls from films that were not so much immoral as broad-minded.

The National Council's interest in censorship continued on in the same manner for the rest of this period. It did not achieve anything new in regards to censorship but continued to make resolutions and pass motions that led nowhere. In 1937 the Council did express concern at American film interests obtaining a monopoly in Australia, and decided that no young country could expect to have 'Hollywood straight away'.²⁹ The Good Film

²⁸ *Mercury* 14 July 1933, p. 2

²⁹ *Mercury* 16 July 1937, p. 7

League, though affiliated with the National Council, was officially absorbed into the Council and run as a committee from 1937.³⁰

The only tangible achievement made in censorship during the inter-war years was the establishment of the Good Film League. The Council discussed both film and book censorship but nothing new was implemented during this period. Bodies to control these mediums were in existence and under the control of the state and Federal Governments so discussions by the Council were superfluous.

Domestic Servants

The Council's interest in the training of domestic servants had a long history. It was the pet project of Emily Dobson between 1899 and 1914 but had been sidelined during the war years. This interest was renewed by Emily Dobson but still nothing was achieved. In 1921 she asked the Council to discuss forming an association for the training of girls for household work. Maud Hay (see chapter ten) pointed out that the YWCA had already moved in this area by forming a household auxiliary corps. The Council decided to write to the YWCA to ask for more information. In 1922 the matter of training was again discussed at the inter-state congress of the National Council in Australia held in Hobart. The delegate from NSW, Miss Mallarky, proposed that the NCW affirm the need for domestic training and urge the establishment of domestic science schools in connection with the universities. This suggestion was not to train domestic staff but to equip women for their lives as mothers and wives. Emily Dobson appears to her shifted her standing on the training of servants; while this desire did not cease, she appears to have been content with trying to provide some girls with a little training rather than none. The state National Councils wanted one year of compulsory training for every girl and for boys to do the equivalent in physical education.³¹ Tasmanian girls were already receiving some training in domestic science at schools but this was apparently not enough for the National Council.

³⁰ *Mercury* 17 September 1937, p. 3

³¹ *Mercury* 21 January 1922, p. 12

In 1928 the *Mercury* featured the Central School Cookery classes and showed what the students were taught.³² It reported that ‘few people realise that Hobart is in the van of progress. It is the only city in the commonwealth in which all the primary school girls are being trained in that which will be the life work of most of them – home making’.³³ In 1935 the domestic training problem seemed at an end. The National Council had stopped discussing the issue (at least momentarily) and the *Mercury* again reported on the high standards of domestic training for Tasmanian girls: ‘it is amazing the proportions to which practical training in schools had expanded during the last ten years. The girl is being equipped with knowledge of domestic cookery’.³⁴

The National Council’s pre-occupation with domestic training lasted over a forty-year period and there is no direct evidence to suggest that it achieved any significant changes. It could be suggested that in part its persistence led the Education Department to institute training classes in primary schools but this can only be conjecture. A school solely for the purpose of training girls to be domestic servants was never successfully run in Tasmania. The closest the National Council appears to have come to its goal was the teaching of cookery and sewing in primary classes. Emily Dobson, although always interested in domestic training became less involved in the issue during this period. Perhaps the Council’s desire for domestic training died with Emily Dobson in 1934.

The New Woman

The ‘new woman’ who began to emerge out of the war years has been explained as growing from:

The gradual easing of social, political, and legal restraints on women, the opening of a new range of employment opportunities outside the home, and the dress reform which mirrored and assisted all these changes contributed to the appearance of the ‘new woman’, ‘bachelor girl’, ‘advanced woman’, ‘career girl’, [or] ‘flapper’ were all terms applied to this phenomenon. But for the most part

³² *Mercury* 14 March 1928, p. 5

³³ *Mercury* 15 March 1928, p. 3

³⁴ *Mercury* 14 March 1935, p. 5

the new woman was single, young, of the respectable lower middle-classes and supporting herself by her own efforts.³⁵

The image of the 'flapper' was a-sexual; she was a mate and sporty, a tomboy.³⁶ But the flapper was not the same as the new woman and there is evidence to suggest that the National Council did not agree with the 'new woman'.

In 1920 Emily Dobson spoke to the Council on the subject of the objectionable dress and behaviour of certain 'modern women'. The Council decided that while the new styles might appeal to some Hobart girls it was doubtful that it would have much effect on public opinion.³⁷ The Council concluded that the difficulty in this area was to agree on limitations. On this point the Council did not elaborate. Presumably, it wanted to allow women new freedoms while maintaining their 'femininity'. Changes to the position of women in Britain and mainland Australia cannot be said to be representative of Tasmanian society. Tasmanians were often seen to be one step behind and there was no exception for the new Tasmanian woman.

But the transition from the 'old woman' to the 'new woman' was not smooth. There was a noticeable backlash against the new woman and as early as 1921 there was a report from America that 'Bobbed hair is on the wane'.³⁸ In 1922 the *Mercury* reported a similar message, the flapper was waning: 'it has been ... a strenuous and torrid period both for herself and her seniors ... it is increasingly fatiguing to knock off ... ten years from the tale of one's birthdays, and vie in dress and bearings with the exuberant young person'.³⁹ In 1923 concern was expressed about the new woman and her place in the future of society:

³⁵ B. Kingston (ed.), *The World Moves Slowly: A documentary history of Australian women* (Melbourne, 1977) p. 41

³⁶ S. Rowbotham, *Hidden from History* (London, 1977) p. 124

³⁷ *Mercury* 21 February 1920, p. 10

³⁸ *Mercury* 20 December 1921, p. 6

³⁹ *Mercury* 14 January 1922, p. 14

It has been said by many people, in these days of freedom, that girls are growing up self-indulgent and pleasure-loving, with little thought for anything else. Taking life independently, as they mostly do, they are usually self-supporting and self-reliant. Can anyone see in the future any one of these girls, as married women, with, perhaps, children of their own?⁴⁰

But women kept on pushing the boundaries into the new world. In 1926 there was a report in the *Tasmanian Mail* that an Australian woman had been spotted wearing socks!⁴¹ But this was a frivolous remark at a serious time. Women were receiving new concessions and continuing to move into the public sphere, no longer just as proponents for women's and children's welfare but in state-appointed public roles.

Public Women

During the 1920s and 1930s more areas of Tasmanian public life were opened to women. Women were appointed justices of the peace and special magistrates in the children's courts and were legally able to nominate for parliament. All these concessions were granted despite no effort by the National Council; it was the Women's Non-Party League which was prominent in seeking new civic rights for women. Strangely, with these concessions easily secured, women were not permitted to sit on juries until much later, even though this was a right that women did campaign for.

In 1923 the Council heard that the Attorney-General was looking for names of women to be appointed as justices of the peace, and informed him that as the largest and oldest women's organisation it would like to put names forward for consideration.⁴² Several National Council members were appointed justices of the peace between 1924 and 1939 including Frances Edwards, Amelia Piesse and Ethel Darling. Frances Edwards spoke about her work as a justice of the peace in an interview to the *Tasmanian Mail* in 1931.

⁴⁰ *Tasmanian Mail* 20 September 1923, p. 18

⁴¹ *Tasmanian Mail* 4 August 1926, p. 27

⁴² AOT, NS 325/9A and B, 18 June 1923, p. 69

My work as justice of the peace entails many duties, particularly with old age pensions, signing legal documents, affidavits, etc... It is easy though. I am able to attend to most of it at home, and have got quite used to being interrupted in the midst of cake-making to have to deal with these matters. I find that women mostly prefer to come to a woman.⁴³

It was described how the four women justices of the peace took one day a week in turn to dispose of the work and by that arrangement were able to undertake all the work required.⁴⁴ The numbers of women justices of the peace grew quickly, with twenty-five appointed between 1931 and 1940 (for full list see appendix three).⁴⁵ Women were also appointed as special magistrates to the children's court from 1931 (for full list see appendix four). Of the women appointed to these positions, only six of the twenty-five justices of the peace and only four of the ten children's court magistrates were National Council members. However, of the justices of the peace, eight of the appointments were in districts without easy access to the National Council. Even though the percentage of National Council members appointed in these new positions was not high, Council women were still represented.

Women were granted the right to sit in the Tasmanian parliament on 19 January 1922 and this was received excitedly by the National Council which was in session when the news arrived.⁴⁶ The politicians debated the merits of the concession before the vote was taken. J. McDonald claimed that, since women had been enfranchised, the right to sit in parliament should 'naturally and reasonably follow'. He thought that women were not anxious to sit in parliament but it was their choice.⁴⁷ He was quoted as saying 'the hand that rocked the cradle ruled the world, but up to the present they had not been given that opportunity to assist in ruling the world'.⁴⁸ A seat in the Tasmanian parliament was

⁴³ *Tasmanian Mail* 11 February 1931, p. 23

⁴⁴ *Mercury* 3 March 1931, p. 2

⁴⁵ *Walch's Tasmanian Almanac* 1940, pp. 84-101

⁴⁶ *Tasmanian Mail* 2 February 1922, p. 10

⁴⁷ *Mercury* 20 January 1922, p. 4

⁴⁸ *Examiner* 21 January 1922, p. 9

hardly assisting in ruling the world, but it was a first step. No debate opposed to the bill was published.⁴⁹

One expediency feminist was quick to point out that although she was happy with the decision, it was only of necessity that this step into politics must be taken:

Sir, - I rejoice that at last a bill has passed the State Parliament, allowing women to become members. It is by no means the desire of the average woman to take this added responsibility, but it has become necessary, through the upset state of the world, that laws concerning women and children should be discussed and framed from a woman's point of view as well as the man's.⁵⁰

The newspapers speculated who the first women candidates would be and names suggested included Enid Lyons (wife of the opposition leader), Edith Waterworth and Mary Parker.⁵¹ Only two women put their names forward, both National Council members, Edith Waterworth and Alicia O'Shea-Petersen. Edith Waterworth as the selected candidate for the Women's Non-Party League addressed a meeting in May 1922. She said that her areas of concern and her desire to be elected to parliament were solely to assist women and children and influence legislation for the better. She mentioned the need to educate girls in homemaking and asked her audience to consider that the education system had been evolved by men and as a consequence girls were not provided with proper training for the work that most girls undertook.⁵² Her platform was limited and confined to the expediency feminist standpoint and she made it clear she was only encroaching on the male sphere because she had a duty to look after women, children and the family unit. Neither of these women was ever elected to parliament and it would be a number of years before any Tasmanian woman would win a seat. The first was Mabel Miller who won the seat for Franklin to the House of Assembly in 1955. She was also the first Tasmanian woman elected to the Hobart City Council in 1952 and was president of

⁴⁹ *World* 20 January 1922, p. 7

⁵⁰ *Examiner* 23 January 1922, p. 6

⁵¹ *Tasmanian Mail* 2 February 1922, p. 10

⁵² *Mercury* 16 May 1922, p. 7

the National Council of Women (1952-1954).⁵³ The first Tasmanian woman elected to the Commonwealth Parliament was Enid Lyons who in 1943 won the Tasmanian seat of Darwin.⁵⁴

It was harder to have women permitted to act as jurors than it was to allow them to sit for parliament and jurors would have had a more immediate impact on society. Perhaps this was why this concession was denied. Since the early 1920s women jurors had been campaigned for and during the early 1930s the topic of women on juries was discussed in the newspapers. In particular Hestia from the *Mercury* seemed concerned about the issue. In 1931 she discussed the different predictions made if women were allowed to sit on juries. People apparently believed that women jurors would either be too hard on other women or too hard on men. Hestia continued:

The simple fact that it is women's right to sit on the bench when a woman is involved in a case does not seem to occur to the foggy thinkers ... everything that women have asked for has been discussed in this way, and the philosophic experienced woman, having made her request, sits quietly while the disease runs its course. She knows that the end, however delayed, is certain.⁵⁵

This was apparently becoming traditional. According to Hestia, women knew that any new proposal to extend rights to women was going to met with debate and old-fashioned comments but instead of creating a fuss and protesting the injustice, Tasmanian women waited, knowing that what they asked would eventually come when men had a chance to work through the issues. This is an extraordinary thought. It was discussed in part one how Tasmanian women appeared apathetic to the suffrage and it has been shown time and again how the National Council did not seem to struggle much for anything they wanted. Perhaps this theory was in the back of the members' minds. They hoped that the rights they wanted would come in time and they were patient enough to wait.

⁵³ R.E. Miller, 'Dame Mabel Flora Miller (1906-1978)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol. 15 p. 372

⁵⁴ H. Radi (ed.), *200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology* (Marrickville, 1988) p. 204

⁵⁵ *Mercury* 24 June 1931, p. 9

Hestia continued to discuss women jurors in her column, always asserting her point of view that women need to be present as jurors for justice to be served.⁵⁶ In 1936 a deputation asked Premier Ogilvie for women jurors but the National Council was not part of the group.⁵⁷ Tasmanian women were not granted full rights as jurors until 1973. Before this it was possible for women to sit on juries but only if they put their name forward, which women were not encouraged to do. By 1973 only twelve women had done so. This was still a debated topic in 1973, some people believing that making jury duty compulsory for women was a form of discrimination.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ See for example *Mercury* 22 July 1931, p. 11

⁵⁷ *Mercury* 14 August 1936, p. 8

⁵⁸ *Mercury* 19 July 1973, p. 7; 4 October 1973, p. 2

SUMMARY OF PART III

During the inter-war years, the National Council of Women of Tasmania expressed an interest in several areas. Some of these were new and some were a return to earlier periods. The Council showed an interest in the League of Nations and participating in forming a League of Nations Union. Work was not extensive, neither were its efforts in international aid. During this period the Council worked in four areas previously discussed in earlier chapters such as the appointment of policewomen, temperance issues, and the appointment of a reliable censorship board and finally it became interested again in the training of domestic servants. This particular interest had been seemingly forgotten during the war years but was revived in the 1920s. The work had changed by the 1920s and the desire now seemed to be domestic studies for all schoolgirls to prepare them for their future lives as wives and mothers rather than as domestic servants.

The Council explored some new interests including the welfare of children. It had previously been interested in this area, for example its work to establish a curfew bell, but now it became concerned in perhaps the more pertinent area of infant and maternal mortality. The status of illegitimate children and to a small extent it debated health concerns in society and the health and welfare of Aboriginals, which was the first time that the Council had shown any interest in Aboriginal people. The Council showed an interest in the further advancement of women's civic rights. During this period women were appointed justices of the peace; they were appointed as special magistrates on the children's court and they were granted the right to stand for Tasmanian Parliament. They also fought for the right for women to act as jurors but this concession was not granted.

During the 1920s and 1930s the aims and motives of the National Council are difficult to assess. It only worked in one area to any extent and that was changing the maternity bonus. The Council wanted to protect women and children, which during this period manifested itself in the debate on the bonus. The National Council was a forum for existing women's organisations. It was established to promote unity and understanding between organisations working for the betterment of the community. This was achieved to a limited extent. Being a member of the Council would have had an element of

prestige among the philanthropic community as not everybody could be a member. In the earlier chapters it can be said that the Council was trying to enhance the moral values of the lower class, but there is less evidence of that during this period, which could be explained by the aging of the members.

Emily Dobson's influence lessened during this period. She was present at meetings during the 1920s, but in the early 1930s she was suffered from ill-health and was frequently absent. Her interest in the domestic servant question was revived but the Council was still unable to achieve anything tangible. Emily Dobson died in 1934 and with her died an era in the history of the National Council. She had been president for thirty years and a member for thirty-five years. This had provided continuity and stability to the Tasmanian Council but also allowed it to stagnate. It is possible that Emily Dobson's continued presidency over this period blocked new ideas and methods from being experimented with.

The Council was seen scathingly by the *Mercury* during this period and this was the newspaper which most reported its activities and meetings. Although the *Mercury* made some unpleasant remarks, it still supported the Council for the majority of this period. The *Clipper* had ceased publication. The *Voice* was the labor newspaper to take over, but unlike the *Clipper*, the *Voice* did not mention the National Council, let alone criticise it. There was less evidence during this period of the public responding to the Council. In previous chapters, there was community debate through letters to the editors about the Council and its activities but in the inter-war years, letters to the editor were virtually non-existent. Nothing particularly outrageous was proposed during this period, as in previous years. The Council appears to have gone about its business and created a minimum of disturbance.

As stated the women of the National Council, as expediency feminists, saw themselves as the mothers of the state. The Council was not interested in challenging the status quo; it existed because it believed women had a moral obligation to look after other women and children, less fortunate than themselves. It acted as an advocate to the lower classes,

whether this was welcomed or not. But there was less evidence of this in the inter-war years. During the debate on the maternity bonus the suggestion was made that only people earning less than £250 pa should be eligible for the maternity bonus but this idea was not liked. The Council believed that it was elitist and would promote class distinctions. It could be said of the Council, that it wanted to promote class distinctions. In this case it would have been the wealthier members of society who missed out on the bonus money and this was thought to be unfair. In part one, when lower-class girls were seen wearing upper class dresses, the Council was shocked, outraged, and thought the girls should be told not to dress above their station. It appears that they were only happy to champion the lower class, if they stayed obviously lower and were not given privileges that the upper class did not receive.

The National Council's benefit to society is difficult to assess and can only be suggested. The women of the Council benefited from being members. It provided them with a means to interact in the public sphere and to become involved in issues concerning women and children. It gave them experience in public speaking, the processes of administration in an international organisation and allowed them to comment on the state of Tasmanian society. It also gave members an element of prestige. Similarly, the affiliated organisations benefited from the National Council. It provided them with a forum for debate and discussion. Through the Council, affiliated societies were kept in touch with the work of the women's movement in Tasmania, Australia and to a lesser extent Britain and America. There is limited reason to think that the general public or people in need benefited from the Council. The Council perhaps worked to improve the conditions for pregnant women, but apart from this limited interest in maternal mortality, the Council really only worked to benefit the community in abstract ways.

The NCWT had limited success in this period, similar to that achieved in the pre-war and war years. The National Council had an aptitude for inability to produce a sustained effort and create any results in the activities it undertook. But although nothing tangible was achieved by the Council this should not be seen as total failure. The Council made achievements without producing substantial results. The existence of the Council was

significant in Tasmanian society. Throughout this period, the number of organisations affiliated with the Council continued to grow, which indicates that benefit was seen. It was approached by the Federal Government to support a committee in relation to the maternity bonus and was granted concessions when it made requests. It was approached by other organisations for support in various resolutions. It called several meetings and the philanthropic community responded. The Council was successful in its stated aims. It was only established with the aim of providing a means to encourage a dialogue between women's organisations. The *Mercury* criticised the National Council, stating that the Council itself would be unable to list its achievements and that it became so caught up in discussion that nothing was achieved. The National Council was established in the hopes of 'promoting unity and mutual understanding between associations of women working for the common welfare of the community'.¹ This was achieved.

The Council seems to have been unable to produce a sustained effort in other areas. If it had chosen one area of concern at a time and worked until it was achieved then perhaps something may have been achieved. The Council discussed a number of issues at once but was not committed to working in any of them for a prolonged length of time. Whenever the Council began to discuss something of interest a resolution would be passed and the matter would either be referred to another organisation (which was within the Council's aims), a letter would be sent to the appropriate person or the Council would agree to discuss the matter at the next meeting and then this was often forgotten. It got caught up in the red tape of bureaucracy or simply lost momentum. The Council could have had greater success if it had been able to commit its interest to one area. It could have held public meetings, started petitions and lobbied government but this was not done in a prolonged campaign. It is interesting that the members either did not seem to notice or did not mind that their labour resulted in little. This again would indicate that the Council only meant to act as an advisory board to promote dialogue rather than as an organisation committed to work.

¹ *Daily Telegraph* 11 May 1899, [p. 2]

Why was this enough for these women? How could some of these women spend forty years of their lives in an organisation that achieved comparatively little? Was the National Council of Women a social club disguised as a promoter of women's rights and welfare? Most National Council women were involved in numerous organisations (see part four for discussion); perhaps it was pleasant to be involved in an organisation where they did not have to do much. But then why not simply join the Lyceum Social Circle? The National Council was a prominent organisation which had socially important women involved. Meetings were held in the Mayor's Room at the Town Hall initially, then either at Elboden House (Emily Dobson's home) or at the Lyceum Club. It would have been a matter of prestige to be involved in the Council. Similarly for the organisations which affiliated with the Council, it may have appeared as snobbery for them not to join as a large percentage of Tasmanian organisations were affiliated. But if the National Council was a front for a social gathering why was the appearance of work given? Was this a further attempt at pretence? Or was there actually a hope to do some good in society? When questioning the motives and aims of the National Council one must come back to the question, what was the aim of the Council? If it was just to provide the means for a dialogue between existing women's organisations then this was achieved and the Council was free to spend most of its meeting times in a purely social capacity.

PART IV

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF TASMANIA

MEMBERS AND AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

CHAPTER TEN – NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

There were hundreds of women involved in the National Council of Women of Tasmania between 1899 and 1939.¹ Some women were delegates from affiliated societies; some were associate members, meaning they were allowed to vote at Council meetings without being the officially-appointed delegate. Some women influential in the NCWT were mainland Council members who attended Tasmanian congresses. Attendance varied at meetings and could range from eight to eleven women at executive meetings and from nine to thirty women at general meetings.² The minute books of the Council are incomplete and those in existence do not list members. The newspaper records, while thorough between 1899 and 1920, become abridged between 1920 and 1939 and did not list those present at meetings. The framework of the National Council meant that not all women could be members. The Council accepted two delegates from each organisation affiliated with it and then allowed a number of associate members. It was then possible for a woman to be active in all the same organisations as the National Council members but not be able to represent her organisation in the Council.

Short biographies of some of the women members allow some generalisations to be made on the type of woman who was attracted to and became involved in the NCWT. Studying the members helps to explain the motives of the Council. The National Council was comprised of women who all had an interest in welfare and philanthropy and this was expressed in the areas the Council worked. The NCWT expressed its aim to act as a facilitator amongst women's organisations and, as will be seen, the members of the Council were also involved in a large number of these affiliated organisations. These women all had certain things in common, which included the organisations they belonged to and their status in Tasmanian society. They were of the middle and upper-classes and were part of elite society. They were mostly Protestant women with adult children. All members were expediency feminists, and as such had a common goal, a desire to elevate the position and welfare of women and children. They attempted to do this in different

¹ Eighty-five different names were compiled from reference to National Council of Women of Tasmania members between 1905 and 1914 alone.

² Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT) Non-State (NS) 325/8, 9A and B Minute Books of NCWT, 1905-1928

ways either through politics, gaining new rights and laws or by working directly in organisations to help women and children. There are some differences, but these are few.

The women have been ranked in order to discuss and compare those members who influenced the women's movement nationally, those who impacted on a state level and those women who were National Council members but had little influence on the women's movement. Some of the women who influenced the national women's movement were mainland Council members. They have been included to show the differences and similarities between Tasmanian and mainland women and the women's movement.

NATIONAL INFLUENCE

Edith Alice Newham Waterworth (1873-1957)

Edith Waterworth was born in England to Henry and Emma Hawker. Henry Hawker was a builder. Nothing is known of Edith Waterworth's early life until she migrated with her family to Queensland where she was educated at the Brisbane Girls' Grammar School. She became a teacher and taught for fourteen years. She married John Newham Waterworth in 1903 when she was thirty years old and together they had three sons.³ John Waterworth was born in 1867 in Yorkshire, England. He had moved to Tasmania in 1887 and became a Baptist Lay preacher and described himself as a 'magnetic healer'.⁴ He studied optometry in Launceston and established himself an optometrist in Hobart in 1909 when he moved his family there. John Waterworth unsuccessfully contested seats in the House of Assembly in Wilmot and in Denison. He was a staunch Labor supporter.⁵

Edith Waterworth did not become active in welfare work until her forties, and her husband withdrew from public life after 1916 to support her in her work.⁶ She was vocal in issues affecting women and children. In a 1931 interview with the *Tasmanian Mail* she said 'my chief interest is the child welfare work. That includes everything. If one is a

³ J. Waters, 'Edith Alice Waterworth (1873-1957)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol. 12, p. 392

⁴ Waters, 'Waterworth' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol. 12, p. 392

⁵ Waters, 'Waterworth' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol. 12, p. 392

⁶ H. Radi (ed.), *200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology* (Marrickville, 1988) p. 95



Edith Waterworth

Tasmanian Mail 27 April 1922, p. 21

true child welfare worker one is obliged to take an interest in everything that affects the country because if the country is right for the child it must be right in every other respect.’⁷

Edith Waterworth’s interest in child welfare was reflected in the organisations she was connected with. She was honorary secretary and a life member of the Child Welfare Association, the Women’s Health Association, on the Advisory Committee to the Ashley Boys’ Home and was elected president of the WCTU in 1937.⁸ She was organising secretary of the Empire Trading Defence Association and was a member of the Criminal Law Reform Association, the Free Kindergarten Association and the National Fitness Club. In the 1920s she was appointed as one of two women on the Tasmanian Board of Censorship and was honorary secretary of the Federation of Women’s Societies for Film Censorship.⁹ She was a columnist for the *Mercury*, writing under the pseudonym ‘Hypatia’; her columns were concerned with women’s rights, child welfare and cooking tips.¹⁰ Her many letters to the editor of the *Mercury* earned her the epithet ‘Mrs Hot Waterworth’.¹¹ She belonged to the Women’s Non-Party League, under whose auspices she unsuccessfully stood for parliament in 1922, 1925 and 1943.¹² Undeterred by her parliamentary defeats she commented in her column in 1922:

Though no woman succeeded in obtaining a seat in parliament at the recent general elections, the signs are many and obvious that their campaign has had its effect. There is an interesting disposition upon the part of members of parliament and political organisations to admit the reasonableness of the requests put forward by women during the past few years.¹³

⁷ *Tasmanian Mail* 25 February 1931, p. 22

⁸ *Mercury* 19 March 1937, p. 6

⁹ *Tasmanian Mail* 27 April 1922, p. 21

¹⁰ Waters, ‘Waterworth’ *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol. 12, p. 392 and AOT NS 4/1

¹¹ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 96

¹² Waters, ‘Waterworth’ *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol. 12, p. 392

¹³ AOT NS 4/1, 7 August 1922

She was a member of the Broadcasting Educational Committee and chairwoman of the Pan-Pacific Women's Committee.¹⁴ It was said of her that 'although not a feminist in the extreme sense of the word ... [she was] outstanding among public women, working wholeheartedly in the interests of the whole of her sex.'¹⁵ Edith Waterworth spoke of herself in similar terms saying, 'I am not really a feminist, only a temporary one – that is until women's work is more nearly abreast of men's. Women have their special work, which up to the present they have not been able to do at all, or have been grievously hampered in the doing.'¹⁶ Edith Waterworth and most National Council women were expediency feminists.¹⁷ They accepted the theory of there being separate spheres for men and women but as the mothers of the state saw it as their duty to elevate the public sphere. They believed it was their role to care for the position and welfare of women and children but that their primary duty was as wives and mothers. She commented in 1911, 'I am convinced that many, many marriages would be happier and more moral unions if the woman had a clear understanding of her position'.¹⁸

Edith Waterworth represented Tasmania at the Women's Peace Congress at Washington in 1924 and again in Berlin in 1929 at the Women's International League for Equal Citizenship Conference. In 1931 she was appointed as a justice of the peace and in 1935 was awarded an OBE. She toured Tasmania in 1935 with Mrs Ransom of the Women's Non-Party League to raise funds for the King George and Queen Mary Maternity and Infant Welfare Jubilee appeal.

In an interview with the *Tasmanian Mail* in 1931 Edith Waterworth spoke about what she would like to see established in Tasmania before her death. She hoped that every girl would be trained in housewifery and mothercraft, that widows would be given a position of respect, and that a woman would be present in every court where a woman or child was tried. She also wanted to see women in parliament and better work done in dealing

¹⁴ *Mercury* 14 December 1933, p. 12

¹⁵ *Mercury* 14 December 1933, p. 12

¹⁶ *Tasmanian Mail* 25 February 1931, p. 22

¹⁷ J. Allen, 'The "Feminisms" of the Early Women's Movements, 1850-1920' *Refractory Girl* March 1979, p. 11

¹⁸ AOT NS 4/1, 7 October 1911

with mental deficiency, particularly the prevention of multiplication of such people.¹⁹ Eugenicist views were not uncommon at this time.

She was an adamant supporter of mothers having equal rights to guardianship of children.²⁰ This interest in the welfare of mothers culminated in the convening of a state-wide conference in 1937 to co-ordinate the welfare work for mothers and children. This conference formed the Council for Mother and Child which Edith Waterworth ran for eighteen years.²¹ Edith Waterworth died in 1957 aged 84.²² She was more active than many National Council women and was the protagonist in many welfare debates. Like Mary Bisdee, she worked as a journalist. As a builder's daughter, a labor supporter and a Baptist, Edith Waterworth was different from most Tasmanian Council members.

Jessie Rooke (1845-1906)

Jessie Rooke was one of the first Tasmanian women to gain prominence for philanthropic activities outside the State. She was born in 1845 but there is some debate as to where. Contemporaries believed she was a well-born Scotch woman, while it is now thought that she was born at Emu in the North-West of Tasmania.²³ Jessie Rooke was the wife of Dr. Charles Rooke and began her charitable work in Melbourne by becoming involved in the British Women's Bible and Prayer Union in which she became a leader. She joined the WCTU in Marrickville but soon afterwards Dr Rooke moved his family to Tasmania for the cooler climate where he was appointed Port Health Officer in Burnie.²⁴ Jessie Rooke became a member of the Burnie branch of the WCTU, and shortly after in 1898, was elected Tasmanian State President.²⁵ She was appointed Corresponding Secretary of the Australian WCTU, and in 1903 was elected Australian President by an overwhelming majority. In addition to her WCTU work, Jessie Rooke was also a delegate to the National Council from 1899 until 1906. Her disposition was apparently suited to the roles

¹⁹ *Tasmanian Mail* 25 February 1931, p. 22

²⁰ *Mercury* 14 December 1933, p. 12

²¹ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 96

²² Waters, 'Waterworth' *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol. 12, p. 392

²³ AOT, NS337/88, White Ribbon Signal, 1 February 1906 and Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 46

²⁴ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 46

²⁵ AOT, NS 337/88

she undertook. A tribute to her in the *White-Ribbon Signal*, the official journal of the WCTU, ran:

For this position she was pre-eminently fitted by reason of her sound judgement, large common sense, thorough grasp of any subject, strong sense of justice and patient forbearance added to her great tact and loving sympathy with all. Through her influence rough places were made smooth, discordant notes were made into harmony, and all who came into touch with her felt better for the contact.²⁶

Jessie Rooke was not always seen in such an agreeable light. She ran into some difficulties with the National Council, which thought she was 'autocratic and too extreme in her views'.²⁷ In 1905 Jessie Rooke replaced the long standing delegate from the WCTU to the National Council, Mary Parker, which caused some friction between the two organisations.²⁸

Jessie Rooke was the primary advocate of women's suffrage in Tasmania. In her position as state president of the WCTU she led the campaign for the suffrage in Tasmania, until the suffrage was conferred on all white Tasmanian women in 1903. After this was won Jessie Rooke addressed four meetings in September of 1903 on the use and privilege of the vote and formed the Woman's Suffrage Association in Hobart and Launceston. The association was created independently from the WCTU and aimed to educate women in their duty as voters; it encouraged women to join electoral rolls and not to align with any one party and provided a forum for candidates for federal election to address meetings.²⁹ Jessie Rooke died in January 1906 aged 61.³⁰ She was primarily interested in temperance reform and it was this which drove her desire for women to have the vote. Although she was a delegate to the National Council her philanthropic activities were organised through the WCTU. She was not a member of multiple interest groups.

²⁶ AOT, NS 337/88

²⁷ A. Alexander, 'The Public Role of Women in Tasmania, 1803-1914', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Tasmania, 1989, p. 232

²⁸ AOT NS325/8A, 18 April 1905

²⁹ V. Pearce, 'A Few Viragos on a Stump: The Womanhood Suffrage Campaign in Tasmania 1880-1920', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association papers and proceedings* Vol. 32 No. 4, 1985, p. 158

³⁰ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 46

Rose Scott (1847-1925) New South Wales

Rose Scott was born near Singleton in New South Wales. She was an 'elite', white Anglo-Scottish feminist and social reformer who never married.³¹ She was involved in the Women's Literary Society and became secretary of the Womanhood Suffrage League established in 1891. She was a leader in the suffrage fight in New South Wales. Rose Scott was well read in feminist literature. In 1892 she publicly supported a bill to raise the age of consent from fourteen years to sixteen. This bill was not well received which she saw as evidence that women were being ignored, a problem bound to continue until women were enfranchised. Rose Scott became the president of the Ladies' Committee of the Prisoners' Aid Association and called for a separate women's prison. In 1896 she was a founding member of the NCW NSW. She was president of the NSW Peace Society and spoke out against the Boer War. She withdrew from public life during the First World War and retired in 1922. She was said to have become disillusioned by the progress of women since they were enfranchised. Instead of making themselves a new political element they simply doubled the votes for the existing parties. Rose Scott died in 1925 aged 78.³²

Marie Elizabeth Kirk (1855-1928) Victoria

Marie Kirk was a temperance advocate and a social reformer. She was born in London and was raised as a Quaker.³³ In 1878 she married Frank Kirk, an ironmonger's assistant and later a boot-maker. She was involved with the British Women's Temperance Association and under its auspices travelled to Canada to help organise the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Marie and Frank Kirk migrated to Victoria in 1886 and helped to found the WCTU of Victoria. She was colonial secretary of the WCTU and editor of the *White-Ribbon Signal*. In 1891 she was appointed secretary of the newly formed WCTU of Australasia. Marie Kirk is described as typifying women involved in the WCTU, 'almost all of them were married women, aged anywhere between twenty-five and fifty, with husbands who were self employed in middle- or

³¹ J. Allen, *Rose Scott: Vision and Revision in Feminism* (Melbourne, 1994) p. 1

³² Radi, *200 Australian Women*, pp. 49-51

³³ M. Lake and F. Kelly, *Double Time: Women in Victoria, 150 Years* (Ringwood, 1985) p. 118

lower-middle-class occupations'.³⁴ She was delegate from the WCTU to the National Council of Women of Victoria from its inception in 1902. In 1891 she organised a suffrage petition to be presented to parliament and she was a founding committee member of the Victorian Women's Franchise League in 1894. Her areas of interest included the age of consent, equal pay for women, female factory inspectors and female gaol attendants, the introduction of police matrons and free kindergartens.³⁵ Marie Kirk died in 1928 aged 73.³⁶

Edith Dircksey Cowan (1861-1932) Western Australia

Edith Cowan was born at Glengarry, Western Australia. Her mother died when she was seven years old and her father murdered his second wife and was sentenced to be hanged.³⁷ A solitary person, Edith Cowan was said to be 'committed to social reforms which enhanced women's dignity and responsibility'.³⁸ In 1879 she married James Cowan who was the registrar and master of the Supreme Court. He was appointed Police Magistrate in 1890. Edith Cowan had five children between 1880 and 1891 and was involved in the Karrakatta Women's Club in 1894 as secretary and later vice-president and president. She worked on the North Fremantle Board of Education, and was a member of the Ministering Children's League and the House of Mercy for Unmarried Mothers. A foundation member of the Children's Protection Society, she was also a pioneer of day nurseries for children of working women. Edith Cowan was appointed as a special magistrate to the children's court in 1915 and as a justice of the peace in 1920. In 1912 she had been vital in the creation of the National Council of Women of Western Australia and was president from 1913 till 1921. In 1920 she was awarded an OBE for her work during the First World War. She became the first woman in an Australian Parliament in 1921.³⁹ Her decision to enter Parliament had apparently not been a long

³⁴ Lake and Kelly, *Double Time*, p. 119

³⁵ Lake and Kelly, *Double Time*, p. 122

³⁶ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 62

³⁷ P. Cowan, *A Unique Position: A Biography of Edith Dircksey Cowan 1861-1932* (Perth, 1978) p. 45

³⁸ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, pp. 76-77

³⁹ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 77

term plan and the decision to run was made four weeks before the election but she won by forty-six votes.⁴⁰ Remaining in parliament until 1924, she died in 1932 aged 71 years.

Vida Jane Mary Goldstein (1869-1949) Victoria

Vida Goldstein was a political activist, born in Portland, Victoria. Her parents insisted on her being well educated and in 1877 she matriculated from the Presbyterian Ladies College with honours. After leaving school she began working with her mother in the anti-sweating movement. Vida Goldstein held strong social reform beliefs and took these ideals into the public sphere, looking for political solutions rather than confining herself to a private charity. She became 'a forceful public speaker and developed her political education by reading widely while frequenting the Victorian Parliament and campaigning for legislative reform'.⁴¹ In 1900 she became the first full-time paid organiser of the United Council for Women's Suffrage and from 1900-1905 she produced the journal *Woman's Sphere*, in which she wrote about issues affecting both women and men. She was present at the foundation of the NCWV and was enthusiastic about the organisation saying 'its practical and broadminded aims will give impetus to women's work'.⁴² She founded the Women's Political Association to organise women's votes in the 1903 federal elections. In 1903 she was also nominated as candidate for the Senate and was the first woman in the British Empire to do so. She polled over 50,000 votes but was not elected and ran again unsuccessfully in 1910, 1913, 1914 and 1917. Between 1909 and 1919 she produced a new journal *Woman Voter* in which she spoke on the issues of equal marriage and divorce laws, equal pay and wide ranging legislation to redress the inequality in society. She died in 1945 aged 80.⁴³

Frances Meliora St. Clair Edwards (1865-1939)

Frances Edwards was a notable Tasmanian woman worker who was associated with the National Council but worked primarily outside it. She was closely connected with Edith Waterworth in the battles for film censorship and civic rights for women. Frances

⁴⁰ H. Phillips, *The Voice of Edith Cowan* (Perth, 1996) p. 2

⁴¹ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 85

⁴² J. Bomford, *That Dangerous and Persuasive Woman: Vida Goldstein* (Melbourne, 1993) p. 32

⁴³ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 86

Edwards became involved in community work in the 1890s with the typhoid epidemic which prompted the formation of the Women's Sanitary Association. In the 1930s she was disabled by an injury to her leg but still managed to remain active in women's issues.⁴⁴ She was one of the first women appointed as justices of the peace in Tasmania in 1924.⁴⁵ She was also a special magistrate for the children's court between 1931 and 1939⁴⁶ and was active in the Protection of Children Society and later the Child Welfare Association. Frances Edwards was the first president of the Women's Non-Party League and held that position for a number of years. She was vice-president of the Women's Health Association and represented Tasmanian at a conference of Government official of the State Children's Department in Adelaide. During the war she was president of the French Red Cross and was awarded the Medal of Reconnaissance, which was one of only two in Australia.⁴⁷ In 1910 Frances Edwards published a series of articles on infant mortality. She was said to be 'educated and articulate and one of the few women to use the press to publicise her beliefs'.⁴⁸ The *Mercury* wrote she was 'a very nice speaker' who combined 'practical work and clear judgement'.⁴⁹ Frances Edwards died in 1939 aged 74. She was typical of National Council women in the 1930s, in that she was more practically involved in community work and primarily interested in child welfare and as a magistrate to the children's court she was both theoretically and practically involved in this work.

Only four Tasmanian women can be noted as having been active in the national women movement. Emily Dobson, Edith Waterworth and Frances Edwards through their work with the National Council and Jessie Rooke, who although a NCWT member, influenced the Australian women's movement as the Australasian President of the WCTU. The mainland women mentioned were NCW members but identified for other reasons, Edith Cowan as the first Australian Member of Parliament and Rose Scott as a women's suffrage advocate and pacifist. Marie Kirk was well known in her WCTU work and Vida

⁴⁴ *Mercury* 28 December 1933, p. 7

⁴⁵ *Tasmanian Mail* 11 February 1931, p. 23

⁴⁶ *Walch's Tasmanian Almanac* 1931-1939

⁴⁷ *Tasmanian Mail* 11 February 1931, p. 23

⁴⁸ Alexander, 'The Public Role of Women of Tasmania, 1803-1914', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania 1989, p. 197

⁴⁹ *Mercury* 28 December 1933, p. 7

Goldstein as a women's advocate, and journal editor. The Tasmanian women were married, though Frances Edwards was widowed. Rose Scott and Vida Goldstein were both independently wealthy single women.

The mainland National Council members were not that different to the Tasmanian women but the backgrounds of the mainland women were diverse. Edith Cowan, for example whose father was hanged for murder is quite different from Rose Scott's stable upbringing. These women were all involved in multiple organisations which was also a feature of Tasmanian women in the public sphere (discussed later). The mainland women were more 'feminist' than the Tasmanian women discussed. The mainland feminists appear to have had greater successes than their Tasmanian counterparts but this does not mean that had significantly different characters. They were more radical than the Tasmanian expediency feminists. Vida Goldstein for example could be called a public sphere feminist, but at times, Edith Waterworth also exhibited public sphere traits. Only two of these eight women were alive in 1939 and it is significant for the end of first wave feminism that many of these well known advocates died around this time.

TASMANIAN INFLUENCE

Mary Helen Bisdee (1862-1941)

Mary Bisdee was born at Lovely Banks, the family home of the Bisdées, who were an established and well known Tasmanian family and part of the landed gentry. She was the honorary secretary of the National Council for most of the period 1899-1939 and was made a vice-president. She was also involved in the Lyceum Club where she held the position of honorary secretary and was credited with founding the Lyceum Club Literary Circle, of which she was deputy president. The *Mercury* noted that Mary Bisdee was most interested in Psychic Science; she was secretary of the Psychic Circle. She was the author of the *Tasmanian Mail's* social notes for twenty-five years but it was not mentioned which pseudonym she wrote under. The *Mercury* concluded by saying that, 'of a very charitable nature and a kindly sweet disposition, Miss Bisdee fills a place in the affections of all with whom she is intimately associated that is rarely attained by many

women.⁵⁰ Mary Bisdee died on 16 April 1941 in her eightieth year.⁵¹ Her work as an a journalist for the *Tasmanian Mail* made her distinct from most National Council women. The only other known newspaper columnist was Edith Waterworth. Given Mary Bisdee's family connections, it is unlikely she worked to support herself, so perhaps she wrote for the paper for enjoyment. Her interest in psychic science was also unusual.

Adeline Constance Stourton (1854-1943)

Adeline Stourton claimed to be connected by marriage to the oldest titled family in England, that of Lord Mowbray and Stourton.⁵² She was the only daughter of Mr and Mrs Donald Cameron of Lowestoft, Berridale and belonged to an elite and established Tasmanian family. Adeline Stourton was an important member of the National Council of Women during the 1920s. She was often appointed as acting president of the Council when Emily Dobson was absent from Tasmania; and also acted as president of the Girl Guides and the Social and Literary Circle of the Lyceum Club. The *Tasmanian Mail* credited her primary work as for the Victoria League which was largely a social organisation. She was secretary and president between 1913 and 1918, but became deputy president for life in order that Lady Newdegate, the wife of the Governor, could fill the position. Adeline Stourton was president of the Bush Nursing Association for eleven years between 1921 and 1932. She was also patroness of the Cananore Football Club and was described as 'a force in any organisation, for she [had] a strong vitalising power that seems to infuse fresh energy into the work and the workers.'⁵³ Attending a number of international congresses for women in Canada, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Stockholm and Copenhagen,⁵⁴ Adeline Stourton was clearly wealthy. She died in 1954 aged 89. Her involvement with the Cananore Football Club makes her different from some National Council members but this was a charitable club for underprivileged boys. It was only in the 1930s that women began to get involved in sport, as will be seen in the biographies of Margaret Saunders, Ada Rogers and others who were involved in women's hockey and basketball.

⁵⁰ *Mercury* 29 March 1934, p. 10

⁵¹ *Walch's Tasmanian Almanac* 1942, p. 421

⁵² *Mercury* 8 November 1943, p. 4 and Cornelian Bay Cemetery data base <http://www.srct.com.au>

⁵³ *Tasmanian Mail* 13 April 1922, p. 21

⁵⁴ *Mercury* 25 January 1934, p. 2



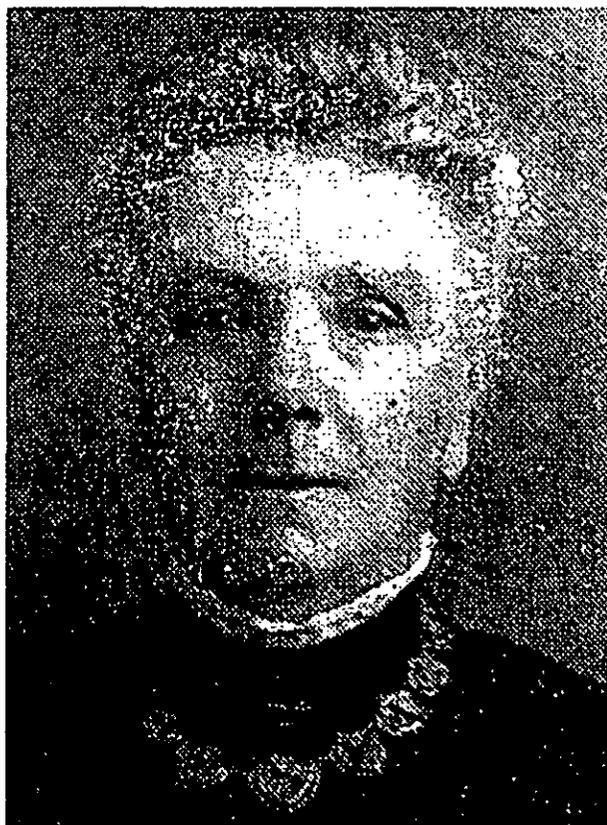
Jessie Rooke
AOT NS 337/88 White Ribbon Signal



Frances Edwards
Tasmanian Mail 11 February 1931, p. 23



Mary Bisdee
Tasmanian Mail 2 April 1930, p. 37



Adeline Stourton
Tasmanian Mail 13 April 1922, p. 21

Amelia Piesse (1868-1938)

Amelia Piesse was a Tasmanian-born woman and was active in public work for a number of years. She was honorary treasurer of the National Council and was also a vice-president. After Emily Dobson's death in 1934, Amelia Piesse was elected president of the National Council and remained in that position until 1938. She was one of the first women justices of the peace appointed in Tasmania in 1924 and was a magistrate at the children's court from 1931 till 1934.⁵⁵ During the war she was honorary secretary of the Red Cross voluntary committee and was president and treasurer of the Sailors' and Soldiers' Mothers' and Wives' Association. She was a member, chairwoman and honorary treasurer of the Tasmanian Sanatorium for nineteen years. She was also involved in the Alexandra Hospital Committee and was the vice-president of the Wattle League of Tasmania. She was said to be 'a woman of sound common sense and a fluent speaker, she [was] a steady and determined worker in any cause with which her sympathies and energies [were] connected'.⁵⁶ She died in 1938 aged 70. Amelia Piesse was typical of Council members; her interests were health care and later in the care of enlisted men after the war. These were stereotypical womanly duties and although she worked outside the home, she did not challenge women's lack of role in the public sphere.

Alexandra Banks Smith (? – 1945)⁵⁷

Alexandra Banks Smith married Arnold Banks Smith, a Crown Solicitor, in 1906.⁵⁸ She was very much involved with National Council work and in 1922 was appointed secretary of the Council and served as such for fifteen years. In 1938 she was elected president of the Council and was then made honorary life member.⁵⁹ Because of her work as secretary for so many years she was credited with being in touch with every women's organisation in Hobart and aware of all areas of work.⁶⁰ Alexandra Banks

⁵⁵ *Walch's Tasmanian Almanac* 1931-1934

⁵⁶ *Mercury* 1 February 1934, p. 12

⁵⁷ Alexandra Banks Smith was cremated at Cornelian Bay Cemetery in 1945 but her age at this time was not recorded, making her birth impossible to accurately establish. If she was c. twenty years old when she married, she would have been c. sixty when she died. www.srct.com.au

⁵⁸ *Mercury* 18 May 1945, p. 7

⁵⁹ *Mercury* 18 May 1945, p. 7

⁶⁰ *Mercury* 5 April 1934, p. 10

Smith was involved with a number of women's organisations including the Victoria League, Women's Non-Party League, Lyceum Circle, St John's Hospital committee and was vice-president of the Good Film League. In her private time, she was interested in tapestry. She was 'a popular figure in the circles with which she [was] connected'.⁶¹

Florence Mary Parker (1873-1966)

Mary Parker was highly regarded by the *Tasmanian Mail* which credited her with:

Much mental ability, she unites with it a very strong individuality, which is one of the factors making for success in her various and arduous undertakings. Anything Mrs Parker takes up she works at with zeal and energy, and with thorough comprehension of the results she wishes to achieve, and the best practical methods to achieve them.⁶²

Among Mary Parker's commitments was the Queen Alexandra Hospital of which she was honorary secretary for sixteen years. She was honorary secretary of the Blind Society and was delegate to the National Council of Women from the WCTU and was a life vice-president of the National Council.⁶³ It was her position as delegate to the Council that caused some conflict in 1905 when Jessie Rooke was appointed in her place at the last minute. She worked during the First World War as the honorary secretary of the Red Cross and was awarded the OBE. Mary Parker was also the President of the Liberal League women's branch which had over 2,500 members. This league merged with the National Federation but she retained her presidency and was treasurer of the Victoria League for five years, having to resign due to other commitments. Nothing much was said of her family background, although it was noted that her late husband Major A.C Parker worked for patriotic causes as did her young daughter, Madge Parker.⁶⁴ She died in 1966 aged 93.

⁶¹ *Mercury* 5 April 1934, p. 10

⁶² *Tasmanian Mail* 2 June 1921, p. 14

⁶³ *Daily Telegraph* 17 March 1926, p. 2

⁶⁴ *Tasmanian Mail* 2 June 1921, p. 14

Sarah Elizabeth Hannaford (1836-1923)

Sarah Hannaford was prominent in the Hobart philanthropic community. She was an Englishwoman by birth and was 'exceptionally well versed' in French. The *Tasmanian Mail* commended her on bringing up a family which was a credit to her name. She was a member of the National Council from its inception in 1899, was one of its first vice-presidents and a member of its executive committee. Her most prominent work was with the Women's Health Association. She was present at its inauguration in 1890 and became the honorary secretary before assuming the presidency, a position she still held in 1921. Sarah Hannaford was involved with the Homeopathic Hospital and the Bush Nursing Association. The *Tasmanian Mail* also noted that in spite of her 'advanced age' Sarah Hannaford had recently accepted the position of vice-president of the Child Welfare Association. Her other credits included vice-president of the Alliance Française and vice-president of the Red Cross.⁶⁵ Although this was not mentioned in the *Tasmanian Mail* article, she was a member of the WCTU and was a strong temperance advocate. Sarah Hannaford was typical of National Council members. She was elderly and respectable, her family was grown up and she was interested in organisations working for the wellbeing of the community. She died in 1923 aged 87.

Mrs Alicia O'Shea Petersen (1862-1923)

Alicia Teresa Jane O'Shea Petersen was born to a Catholic farming family at Broadmarsh. In 1884 she married Patrick O'Shea who was a draper. She was widowed in 1886 and lived with her stepson in a house she inherited. She remarried in 1891 to Hjalma Petersen, a Swedish mining investor, but was again widowed in 1912. She did not have any children of her own.⁶⁶ Alicia O'Shea Petersen was credited with having certificates in sanitary science and in psychology.⁶⁷

As a woman from a poor Catholic background, widowed twice and without children, she was significantly different from the other women involved in the National Council. Alicia O'Shea Petersen had political aspirations that were unique for her time. She was

⁶⁵ *Tasmanian Mail* 4 August 1921, p. 14

⁶⁶ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 79

⁶⁷ *Tasmanian Mail* 16 March 1922, p. 11



Amelia Piesse
Tasmanian Mail 1 February 1934, p. 12



Mary Parker
Tasmanian Mail 2 June 1921, p. 14



Sarah Hannaford
Tasmanian Mail 4 August 1921, p. 14



Alicia O'Shea-Petersen
Tasmanian Mail 16 March 1922, p. 11

the first woman in Tasmania to stand as a political candidate and contested the federal seat of Denison unsuccessfully in 1913; and again stood unsuccessfully in Denison for the House of Assembly in 1922 when women were permitted to stand.⁶⁸ In 1922 her biography in the *Tasmanian Mail* was written for political purposes, advertising her as a candidate. She does not appear to have been taken seriously as a political candidate, especially in the 1913 election. Newspaper reports of her candidacy made her out to be a joke and she only polled 1.5 per cent of the votes.⁶⁹ As the first Tasmanian woman to stand for election this was not surprising.

Alicia O'Shea-Petersen's resumé of community work included the Women's Health Association of which she was vice-president; and through this she claimed to be responsible for the creation of the Child Welfare Association and the Bush Nursing Association.⁷⁰ She was the founder and president of the Australasian Women's Association and was on the executive committee of the National Council and the State Council of the Workers' Education Association. She was also a member of the Victoria League, the Overseas Club, the WCTU, Criminal Law Reform Association, the Women's Non-Party Political Association, the Wattle Day League and the Town Planning Association. During the war she was vice-president of the Red Cross and claimed to have devoted 2,750 hours of her time to work for this association,⁷¹ but this is only equal to two hours a day. Alicia O'Shea Petersen said she wanted to 'alleviate disease and poverty to help the mothers and babies in the bush far from the comforts of the cities, to bring help to the sick poor in the city; to improve the town, the country and politics'.⁷²

Alicia O'Shea-Petersen was often at odds with the National Council. There were several examples of her personality causing problems at meetings. For example in 1907 she actually resigned from the Council over a matter involving the secretary, Mary Bisdee, who refused to forward her resolution to the Attorney General. Emily Dobson asked her not to take the matter further but at the next meeting she sent a letter tendering her

⁶⁸ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 79

⁶⁹ Alexander, 'The Public Role of Women', p. 259

⁷⁰ This claim can not be verified and appears to be an exaggeration.

⁷¹ *Tasmanian Mail* 16 March 1922, p. 11

⁷² *Tasmanian Mail* 16 March 1922, p. 11

resignation.⁷³ When other women resigned from the Council they were met with vehement objections from members who would beg them to reconsider. Alicia O'Shea Petersen's resignation received no such remarks recorded in the minute book. This resignation however was not permanent as shortly after she was reported as present at a Council meeting. During the war years Alicia O'Shea Petersen publicly supported anti-conscription, while there is evidence to suggest the NCWT was pro-conscription.⁷⁴ In 1920 it was reported that she was moving to New Zealand. This did not happen as she ran for parliament in 1922 as mentioned above, but it did afford an occasion for the NCWT to say goodbye and express kind sentiments about her:

She has always had the courage of her opinions, and held her opinions with tenacity. Though not invariably in accord with her, her fellow workers in the same causes have always recognised her sincerity of purpose and singleness of aim and all united in wishing her good luck and happiness and also in hoping that she would eventually return to Tasmania.⁷⁵

This shows praise was offered for her commitment to work in Tasmania but does indicate her problem with fitting in with the agenda of the Council. The phrase, 'though not invariably in accord with her', shows that there were differences of opinion. She died in 1923 of abdominal cancer at 61 years of age.⁷⁶

Alicia O'Shea-Petersen was different from most National Council members in regard to her religion, social status and her interests. She was Catholic, from a poor background and was childless even though she had been married twice. Her interests included politics which most National Council members did not become involved in, and she actively campaigned as an anti-conscriptionist, when the Council was pro-conscription. Her qualifications in sanitary science and psychology also made her unique from other members. The organisations she joined were typical of National Council women. It is unclear why Alicia O'Shea Petersen joined the National Council, as she was often at odds

⁷³ AOT, NS 325/8A, 22 July and 23 September 1907

⁷⁴ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 80

⁷⁵ *Tasmanian Mail* 20 May 1920, p. 12

⁷⁶ Radi, *200 Australian Women*, p. 80

with it. Perhaps it provided her with an element of respectability to belong to this prestigious organisation?

Maud Caroline Hay (1871-1940)

Maud Hay was the wife of the Bishop of Tasmania. She was involved in mainly church-based societies and she was the president of six different organisations.⁷⁷ She was also involved in the Sailors' and Soldiers' Mothers' and Wives' Association and the Harbour Light Guild. Maud Hay was a vice-president of the National Council of Women and was spoken of in very sympathetic terms by the *Tasmanian Mail*. Apparently she:

exercised a great influence for good in Hobart. To the highest principles she united a broad mind and great kindness. She never turned a deaf ear to anyone wishing advice and help, and as she [was] blessed with what is rightly called the most uncommon of all senses, common sense, her advice [was] always practical and to the point.⁷⁸

She was president of the Good Film League and occasionally acted as president of the National Council in the months approaching Emily Dobson's death in 1934. She was a vice-president of the Victoria Convalescent Home and had held the offices of both president and vice-president of the Bush Nursing Association. Maud Hay was often assisted in her work by her daughter, Kathleen Hay.⁷⁹ Maud Hay resigned as vice-president of the National Council in 1938 due to her failing health.⁸⁰ She died in 1940 aged 69. As the wife of the Bishop of Tasmania it is natural that she would be involved in Christian philanthropic organisations as well as general outreach and welfare societies such as the Victoria Convalescent Home. Maud Hay was similar to other National Council women.

⁷⁷ Including: the Women's Council of Church Work, Diocesan Mothers' Union, Girls' Friendly Society, the Diocesan Women Workers' Committee, Missionary Society of St. Barnabas and the St. Barnabas Guild for Nurses.

⁷⁸ *Tasmanian Mail* 26 May 1921, p. 14

⁷⁹ *Mercury* 4 January 1934, p. 2

⁸⁰ *Mercury* 18 February 1938, p. 3

Emily Constance Cox (1879-1941)

Emily Cox was better known in Tasmania for her temperance activities than for her National Council work. She was the delegate to the National Council from the WCTU after the war years and was secretary of the Hobart branch of the WCTU. Emily Cox was a well travelled woman, and although Tasmanian born she had spent six years living in Africa and had also lived in England, France and New Zealand. Emily Cox had a seat on the Temperance Alliance, first as a delegate from the WCTU and later as an elected board member.⁸¹ During the war she was secretary of the Red Cross Sewing Circle. Her other interests included the Good Film League and the Women's Pan-Pacific Movement. In 1934 she had been working in the WCTU for twenty-one years.⁸² Like Jessie Rooke, Emily Cox's interests were primarily temperance reform and she was not significantly involved in the National Council's other areas of interest. She died in 1941 aged 62.

These nine women were prominent in the Tasmanian women's movement. They were mostly known for their work with the NCWT but Emily Cox, Mary Parker and Sarah Hannaford were prominent in the WCTU. Amelia Piesse and Alexandra Banks Smith were both elected president of the Council after Emily Dobson's death and Adeline Stourton often acted as president when Emily Dobson was out of the state. Maud Hay was the wife of the Bishop of Tasmania and therefore was prominent in Christian women's organisations and Mary Bisdee was from an elite family and wrote a column for the *Tasmanian Mail*. These women were all expediency feminists, only interested in working in the public sphere to help other women and children. Alicia O'Shea-Petersen perhaps took this a step further, standing for parliament on numerous occasions. Unlike the women who impacted nationally, these women did not often travel and rarely attended the inter-state or inter-national conferences. There is no reason to suggest that these women were less wealthy than the others discussed, so this was probably not due to financial reasons. Of the nine women discussed, seven died during the Second World War and, as with the women who impacted nationally, this indicates a decline in the

⁸¹ *Mercury* 15 February 1934, p. 11

⁸² *Mercury* 15 February 1934, p. 11

Tasmanian women's movement at this time with so many of its more prominent women dying.

GENERAL MEMBERS

Dora Forbes Sorell (1839-1932)⁸³

Dora Sorell was the widow of Hugh Percy Sorell, grandson of Governor Sorell. She had three grandsons who fought in the First World War, one of whom died. Dora Sorell was reportedly proud of reading and appreciating good literature and had 'quite a good singing voice in her younger days'.⁸⁴ She was reported as being a political woman above everything else, being the president of the first Tasmanian club with a political basis, but this club was not named. It later affiliated with the National Council and became the Lyceum Club of which she became senior vice-president. She was vice-president of the National Association Women's Branch which was a conservative political organisation and was a member of the National Council as well as the Women's Health Association and the Criminal Law Reform Association. It was noted that she was 'as generous with her purse as with her hands and her brain'. During the war years she raised money for the war effort by making bead necklaces and imitation beads on which there was apparently 'quite a run'.⁸⁵ Dora Sorell died in 1932 aged 92.⁸⁶ She appears to have been more politically motivated than many National Council women but her philanthropic activities were similar to other members. Her war-time activity of making and selling bead necklaces was unique; this is the only example in the biographies of a woman raising money by selling her own goods for the war effort.

Robina Frances Hodgman (1860-1945)

Robina Hodgman was a delegate to the National Council of Women from the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals. The eldest daughter of William Gunn who was warden of Brighton for forty years, she lived at Brighton her entire life. She married

⁸³ AOT, NS373/2 no. 2283 Marriage Licence of Hugh Percy Sorell and Dora Forbes Coverdale

⁸⁴ *Tasmanian Mail* 21 July 1921, p. 14

⁸⁵ *Tasmanian Mail* 21 July 1921, p. 14

⁸⁶ *Mercury* 18 March 1932, p. 13

Thomas Christophers Hodgman in 1883. He was in Parliament for thirteen years as the member for Brighton and then Monmouth. The *Tasmanian Mail* mentioned her contributions to the Brighton flower show as her primary achievement. The comment was extraordinary considering the philanthropic work she was involved in. The Brighton flower show was not her biggest achievement. She was president of the New Town branch of the WCTU and of the Ministering Children's League of Southern Tasmania as well as its New Town branch. As well as this she was honorary vice-president of the Victoria League and chairwoman of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Mothers' and Wives' Association. She was a committee member of the Bush Nursing Association and was a collector for the Bible Society and Hospital Day. She also collected for and organised the Brighton gymkhana. During the war she worked as a member of the Red Cross and apparently in 'all patriotic movements'. The Hodgman family was said to be in possession of a 'wonderful collection of old notes, papers and paper cuttings, and a great knowledge of old places, things and people'. Robina Hodgman had three sons all of whom died in the First World War. It was noted that luckily she had grandsons to carry on the family traditions.⁸⁷ Robina Hodgman was a typical National Council Member. She had a wide variety of philanthropic interests and it was patronising and patriarchal for the *Tasmanian Mail* to comment on her flower shows as her most important work. She died in 1945 aged 85.

Lilias Grace Walter (1862-1952)

Lilias Walter appears to have been an anomaly in National Council members. She was not prominent in the organisation and it is not known whether she was a delegate or an associate member, meaning she was not representing an organisation and was not permitted to vote in Council elections. The *Mercury* mentioned her as 'an outstanding personality in the work of entertaining visiting seamen Perhaps there is no worthier object than the providing of brightness and homeliness for the men whose home is on the rolling deep'.⁸⁸ Lilias Walter was a member of the Seamen's Institute and on the committee of the Ladies' Harbour Lights. Much of her time at the Seamen's Institute

⁸⁷ *Tasmanian Mail* 8 September 1921, p. 21

⁸⁸ *Mercury* 26 April 1934, p. 2

involved teaching the seamen chess and playing music. She was an adherent of the Church of England and was a member of the Alliance Française, the Lyceum Club and the National Council.⁸⁹ It is strange to imagine this eighty year old woman entertaining young sailors and it was perhaps an exaggeration of the *Mercury* to claim that there was 'no worthier object' than doing this work. Lilius Walter's interests were social and not philanthropic. Her connections with the Alliance Française and the Lyceum Club were social but her work with sailors could be regarded as community work. Lilius Walter was not typical of National Council members and it was not clear why she was thought significant enough to mention in the *Mercury's* list of notable women. Lilius Walter died in 1952 aged 90.

Ada Alice Rogers (1862-1945)

Ada Rogers was a well known 'woman worker and musician'. She was the Mayoress of Hobart in 1926-1927, during which time the Duke and Duchess of York visited Tasmania. Although she entertained royalty she was of an upper business class. Her husband, Edwin Rogers, was Mayor of Hobart as well as a real estate agent and had many charitable interests which included the Consumptive Sanatorium and the Blind Society.⁹⁰ Edwin and Ada Rogers were among the founders of the Hobart Symphonic Orchestra. She was a pianist for the Orchestral Society, the Philharmonic Society and was a member of the Tasmanian Sanatorium from which she was delegate to the National Council and was vice-president of the Bush Nursing Association. Ada Rogers was a member of the committee for the Blind, Deaf and Dumb Institution and was vice-president of the Southern Tasmanian Women's Hockey Association.⁹¹ She died in 1945 aged 83. Her interest and work for the Arts in Tasmania does seem to indicate an artistic nature that would have been welcomed in the Council.

Edith Mary Hall (1868-1953)

Edith Hall was recognised as belonging to a well-known political Tasmanian family as the daughter of Hon. William Giblin, who later became Premier and a judge. She was a

⁸⁹ *Mercury* 26 April 1934, p. 2

⁹⁰ *Mercury* 8 April 1934, p. 5

⁹¹ *Mercury* 21 May 1934, p. 10

member of the National Council as well as the Victoria League. Her primary work was with the Child Welfare Association. She also had an interest in politics, though not aligned with a party; she was probably a member of the Women's Non-Party League. She was president of the Lyceum Music Circle. Edith Hall was widely read and took part in the literary societies of Hobart including the literary association the Itinerants and the Lyceum Literary Circle. The *Tasmanian Mail* noted that 'Mrs Hall's outdoor recreations are golf and gardening, her indoor ones reading, music, and sewing. Altogether, she is an all-round, fine woman.'⁹² Edith Hall was typical of National Council women in her upper-class family connections. Her non-party political position was in line with the constitution of the National Council and her interests were similar to that of other members. She died in 1953 aged 85.

Elizabeth Quint Harcourt (1869-1955)

Elizabeth Harcourt began her work to help others at the age of fourteen when she started helping to teach adults at the Wapping School which was a charitable institution. She stopped this work upon her marriage and did not become involved in philanthropic activities again for eleven years. She worked as a Sunday school teacher and chorister at St David's Cathedral for many years.⁹³ She became president of the North Hobart branch of the Liberal League, a position she held for eight years, only resigning when she left the district. The Liberal League was a conservative political organisation. During the First World War Elizabeth Harcourt worked in the Red Cross and raised over £3000. For twenty years she was secretary and then president of the Queen Alexandra Hospital.⁹⁴ She was also president of the Sailors' and Soldiers' Mothers' and Wives' Association and it was from this association that she was delegate to the National Council of Women. She was vice-president of the New Settlers' League of Australia and the Criminal Law Reform League. She was a member of the Child Welfare Association, Empire Trade Defence Association and was honorary Secretary National Association and the Mothers' Union.⁹⁵ Her private interests included croquet and bridge. She died in 1955 aged 86.

⁹² *Tasmanian Mail* 17 November 1921, p. 13

⁹³ *Mercury* 19 April 1934, p. 6

⁹⁴ *Mercury* 19 April 1934, p. 6

⁹⁵ *Tasmanian Mail* 23 March 1922, p. 11



Maud Hay
Tasmanian Mail 26 May 1921, p. 14



Dora Sorell
Tasmanian Mail 21 July 1921, p. 14



Robina Hodgman
Tasmanian Mail 8 September 1921, p. 21



Edith Hall
Tasmanian Mail 17 November 1921, p. 13

Elizabeth Harcourt was actively involved in a wide range of philanthropic organisations. Her activities, war work and social status were all typical of National Council women.

Margaret Mary Helen Dew Saunders (1877-1965)

Margaret Saunders fits the usual National Council image. She was the wife of the deputy Lord Mayor of Hobart and was the mother of a grown up family of seven. Her time was said to be occupied in assisting the organisations with which her husband was connected. She was a member of the executive committee of the Tasmanian Sanatorium and was a member of the Good Film League, and from that organisation was delegate to the National Council. She played an effective part in supporting her husband's interests and in this role was a hostess at the City Bowls Club. He was the president of the Women's Basket Ball Association and she and her daughter Madge were reported to be ever ready to assist that association.⁹⁶ She died in 1965 aged 88. Margaret Saunders was typical of the National Council stereotype in her interests and the way she assisted her husband. Her work in sporting organisations was slightly different to most Council women. Sporting interests developed in the 1930s and were only starting to be seen in the activities of women.

Ethel Frenel Darling (1878-1958)

Ethel Darling was involved in several philanthropic organisations. Her first work was with the Ministering Children's League and then as secretary to the Women's Health Association. In 1914 she resigned this position to take on the role of secretary to the Bush Nursing Association and was appointed president of this Association when Sarah Hannaford resigned. She became secretary of the State Council of the Bush Nursing Association when it was formed in 1920. Ethel Darling's 'dream' was apparently to see 'a bush nurse in every district where she is needed'.⁹⁷ She was also connected with the National Council, the Lyceum Club, the Criminal Law Reform Committee and the Victoria League.⁹⁸ She was appointed a justice of the peace and was interested in the welfare of girls under twenty years of age who appeared before the court. She organised

⁹⁶ *Mercury* 3 May 1934, p. 2

⁹⁷ *Tasmanian Mail* 18 August 1921, p. 14

⁹⁸ *Tasmanian Mail* 18 August 1921, p. 14

the Toc H Unemployed Girls' and Mothers' Club which was later handed over to the Government to organise a permanent system.⁹⁹ Ethel Darling was also responsible for starting women's hockey in Southern Tasmania. In 1930 she began assisting evicted families and worked in community settlement schemes for these families. The *Mercury* said of this work, 'her work among the less privileged women of the community was done quietly, but [was] none the less effective'.¹⁰⁰ She died in 1958 aged 80. Ethel Darling's philanthropic activities were typical of National Council members. Nothing is known of her personal life or family position so it is difficult to assess whether she fulfilled other stereotypes.

Hyacinth Susan Valerie Riddle Stanley (? – 1948)¹⁰¹

Hyacinth Riddle Stanley was a Victorian-born woman who moved to Tasmania. She was the widow of Dr. Henry Riddle Stanley M.D who was an 'old boy' of the Hutchins School, Hobart. She was the convenor of the Health Committee of the National Council. She was a member of the Lyceum Club and Literary Circle. During the war years she worked with the Red Cross. She was a life governor of the Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital. Hyacinth Riddle Stanley was a member of the Melbourne Alexandra Club and the Victoria League.¹⁰² In 1936 she was appointed Hon. Secretary of the National Council.¹⁰³

Beatrice Fox Clarke (dates unknown)¹⁰⁴

Beatrice Clarke was originally a South Australian woman and was widowed in the First World War when her husband, Colonel Lancelot Fox Clarke, died at Gallipoli. In 1921 she was the honorary Secretary of the National Council. She was also honorary Secretary of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Mothers' and Wives' Association. She was active in war

⁹⁹ *Mercury* 18 January 1934, p. 2

¹⁰⁰ *Mercury* 18 January 1934, p. 2

¹⁰¹ Hyacinth Riddle Stanley's birth date is impossible to establish. It is known that she was married to Dr Henry Riddle Stanley and that she died suddenly in Victoria in 1948.

¹⁰² *Mercury* 10 May 1934, p. 6

¹⁰³ *Mercury* 20 March 1936, p. 6

¹⁰⁴ Attempts to establish Beatrice Fox Clarke's date of birth or death have proved difficult. It is likely that she married inter-state and she is not known to be buried at Cornelian Bay cemetery nor is her death recorded in any of the Tasmanian indexes.

work, belonging to the committee who regularly visited soldiers at the Claremont camp to give them lessons in colloquial French.¹⁰⁵ Beatrice Fox Clarke's area of wartime work was interesting; instead of the practical sock knitting, she taught the soldiers how to speak French.

Ellen Anna Williams (dates unknown)¹⁰⁶

Ellen Williams was a newcomer to Tasmania in 1921. She had been married to a minister in New South Wales but she remarried the W. M Williams, OBE, MLC and mayor of Hobart, making Ellen Williams the mayoress. She soon became involved in the Girl Guides, the Lyceum Music Circle and the Lyceum Club. She was also a member of the National Council and the Victoria League. Ellen Williams, 'though retiring in nature' was also described as an accomplished public speaker.¹⁰⁷ Her husband, William Micah Williams, was from New Norfolk and ran a large shop. Williams was praised for his 'energy, courtesy and aptitude in the chair'.¹⁰⁸ Ellen Williams was not a prominent member of the National Council. Her activities were similar to that of other National Council members.

These brief biographies show something of the women involved in the National Council. Without exception all of the Tasmanian women belonged to multiple organisations, although none belonged to as many as Emily Dobson, who was the founder, president or a member of over nineteen women's organisations. To be a delegate to the National Council, women had to be involved in at least one other organisation but the number of associations that some of these women belonged to was exceptional. Primarily these women belonged to the same organisations. Many were members of the Victoria League and some branch of the Lyceum Club. Many of them worked in the area of health, whether for the Women's Health Association, on a hospital auxiliary or for the Bush Nursing Association. It must have been bizarre to work with the same women in

¹⁰⁵ *Tasmanian Mail* 20 October 1921, p. 15

¹⁰⁶ Ellen Williams's date of birth and death are impossible to establish. It is known that her husband, William Micah Williams died before her in 1924 and left his estate to his wife. AOT, AD 960/48 no. 14839 p. 565. Ellen Williams was his second wife, the first was Elizabeth Higgins.

¹⁰⁷ *Tasmanian Mail* 3 November 1921, p. 13

¹⁰⁸ *Mercury* 12 August 1924, p. 10



Elizabeth Harcourt
Tasmanian Mail 23 March 1922, p. 11



Ethel Darling
Tasmanian Mail 18 August 1921, p. 14



Beatrice Clarke
Tasmanian Mail 20 October 1921, p. 15



Ellen Williams
Tasmanian Mail 3 November 1921, p. 13

different organisations and to be president of one organisation and just a member of another. The numbers of women in the different organisations can be seen in the below table:¹⁰⁹

<u>Type of Organisation</u>	<u>% of women</u>	<u>Example</u>
Health	60	Women's Health Ass.
Social	52	Lyceum Club
Wartime Aid	43	Red Cross
Political	34	Liberal League
Child Welfare	30	Free Kindergarten Ass.
Temperance	21	WCTU
Sporting	17	Women's Hockey Ass.
Civil Administration	17	Justice of the Peace
Religious	4	Mothers' Union

The most common area of interest was in health care, followed by social organisations and war time aid work. Only four per cent of the women discussed showed an interest in religious organisations but this is not surprising as the National Council was secular. Sport was a growing area for women during this period and the seventeen per cent refers primarily to sporting organisations created in the 1920 and 1930s. Civil administration refers to women who were involved as justices of the peace or special magistrates to the children's court. This was again a growing area. Women were only permitted in these positions from 1921.

The women who moved in the Tasmanian public sphere were not radical women and as Edith Waterworth was described were not 'feminist in the extreme sense of the word'.¹¹⁰ They were expediency feminists and justified their work as being good wives and mothers, caring for the welfare of the community. The Tasmanian women's movement involved the protection and care of women and children and was not directly concerned with equality. It was therefore natural that the women would involve themselves in organisations concerned with health and caring for the needs of women and children.

¹⁰⁹ This table shows the percentages of women involved in organisations as listed in their biographies. Some of these women were probably involved in other organisations unknown at this time.

¹¹⁰ *Mercury* 14 December 1933, p. 12

They were not radical feminists. Their ambition was to raise the status of motherhood and to promote family life as well as to raise the moral values in the community.

The fact that they found time to devote themselves to such vast areas of work means that many must have been women of 'leisure'. They cannot have been tied to the responsibilities of home and family and this kind of freedom came with wealth and the means to employ servants and governesses. Frances Edwards said herself, 'I think all women who have the leisure should put their backbones into community service'.¹¹¹ Many of the women were like Emily Dobson in this regard, her children were grown up and she employed servants. Even when her children were young she employed a governess. Many National Council members were married to politicians and leading men of the day and this gave them a social standing in the community. It also gave them access to Tasmanian's influential men, and although there is little evidence of the National Council benefiting from this connection, it is highly unlikely that there would be any evidence of this kind. These women were respectable middle and upper class and although part of their work was to assist working class women they were sure to maintain the class distinction. This was seen in the Council's discussion of working class girls wearing the second-hand clothing of middle class women. Their interest was in the girls dressing above their station. They were the matriarchs of Tasmanian society, caring for those beneath them.

The women of the National Council were also of a certain age. National Council members were between forty and ninety years old. This was of course part of their having 'leisure' time to become involved in different organisations as younger women would probably been tied to young families. Most of the women lived into their eighties and remained Council members until their deaths. It was suggested in part three that the end of the first wave of feminism coincided with both the Depression but also with the deaths of many of these women who had been active in the first wave. Frances Edwards commented that the next generation of young women were not interested in public work

¹¹¹ *Tasmanian Mail* 11 February 1931, p. 23

so as these National Council women aged and died, so did feminism in Tasmania to an extent.¹¹² Many of these women discussed died before the end of the Second World War.

With the exception of Alicia O'Shea Petersen, as far as is known the religion of National Council members were Protestant. This would have been relevant to their status. In general terms Catholic women were more likely to be poor and working class. Traditionally Catholics would have been descended from Irish immigrants and were often farmers, labourer or skilled workers. While this is only a generalisation it does seem to have applied to the women involved in the Council. There are no known Catholic women's groups in Tasmania, unlike the mainland which had the Catholic Women's Association, established in Sydney in 1907 and the Catholic Women's League, established in South Australia in 1914.¹¹³ With only a few exceptions the National Council women did not join Catholic societies and these did not affiliate with the Council. There was no stipulation for the religion of members in the constitution of the National Council but Catholic women did not usually join. Emily Dobson was said to have been a devout Christian but she did not join any primarily religious organisations.¹¹⁴ The reasons for this are unclear but this does seem to have been the trend with many of the women. Examples are Mary Bisdee, Edith Waterworth or Frances Edwards all of whom did not appear to join religious organisations.

The politics of the National Council members was not as obvious as their other similarities although the women seem to have generally been affiliated with their husbands' politics as conservatives. The only known exception was Edith Waterworth whose husband was a Labor supporter. Many of the women however chose to remain independent from party politics. As members of the Women's Non-Party League they were interested in supporting men willing to assist women and children regardless of their party affiliations. The National Council was a non-political organisation and would refuse to become involved in matters relating to party politics. As middle and upper class

¹¹² *Tasmanian Mail* 11 February 1931, p. 23

¹¹³ S. Kennedy, *Faith and Feminism: Catholic Women's Struggle for Self Expression* (Manly, 1985) pp. 1 and 9

¹¹⁴ Interview with Gladys Dobson, 1 August 2002

women it is natural that their husbands were conservatives as Labor was traditionally a working man's party. The Labor newspaper the *Clipper* despised the National Council and Emily Dobson in particular as has been shown in previous chapters. The *Clipper* ceased publication before the First World War, but it would have been interesting to see if its view of the National Council softened with its later work. The *Voice* replaced the *Clipper* as the Labor paper in Tasmania but did not report on the National Council. It is interesting that the majority of the members were conservatives as it was the Labor Party which traditionally showed a greater interest in the welfare of women and children. These women appear to have automatically aligned themselves with their husbands' politics rather examining which party better represented their interests.

Members of the National Council seem to have become involved in the war effort as individuals and not as an organisation. As described in part two, the NCWT did not become involved in the stereotypical womanly wartime activities of sock knitting and money collecting. The Red Cross did not affiliate with the National Council either, possibly because it had a defined role and did not need the National Council to help it fulfil its duty. As can be seen however by reading these biographies, almost without exception the women involved themselves in some form of war work. The women were members of various branches of the Red Cross or they worked in less well known ways such as teaching French to the troops, like Beatrice Fox Clarke, or by making and selling bead necklaces, like Dora Sorell. What is clear is that the women felt a duty to 'do their part' during the war years and they found outlets for this away from the National Council of Women which was preoccupied with less essential areas of wartime aid. Emily Dobson's wartime work appears to have been limited, she may have volunteered to a branch of the Red Cross but her work in this area was not significant. She was not noted for her war work in any of her obituaries, and these did tend to comment of all her varied interests.

The members all had a similar out-look on life. The Tasmanian members were not radical women and were not academics. None of the members attended university, although Alicia O'Shea-Petersen was noted for holding a certificate in sanitary science

and psychology. Only Mary Bisdee and Edith Waterworth were employed as columnists and this was certainly part-time. These women wanted to uplift the position of women and children and they wanted to be involved in the policy making process to better do this. While not all active in seeking the suffrage, these women did want women to be in the position of looking after other women and therefore pursued women police, women justices of the peace and women children's court magistrates. They all appear to have had a basic belief in the need to help others. This was probably because of an intrinsic need to nurture and as middle-class women they probably felt the need to act as patrons of the working-class.

Finally, a number of the women were involved in sporting organisations. These were a later addition to women's activities and only began to be mentioned in the 1930s. Although men's sporting associations had been around for many years, women's sporting organisations only started to emerge from the 1890s.¹¹⁵ Women enjoyed cycling, cricket, golf, bushwalking and even rifle shooting.¹¹⁶ Adeline Stourton was patroness of a football club but it seems likely that this was a club for young or disadvantaged boys and it was in a philanthropic capacity that she was involved. Other women mentioned were involved in women's hockey and basketball. Margaret Saunders was involved in the City Bowls Club but this was a male institution where she was probably involved in catering or some form of administration, although women did play bowls.

There are some minor differences between these women that should also be mentioned. Although all the women were of a similar class, not all were married. Many of the women were involved in multiple organisations, some more so than others. Some confined their interests to a few similar areas, such as Lilius Walter who was involved in work for sailors and little else. Although a National Council member she had a limited interest in work for the welfare of women and children. Lilius Walter was not significant in the Council. Women involved in several different areas of community work also found time to be leaders in the National Council. How they found the time to be involved

¹¹⁵ Alexander, 'The Public Role of Women', p. 277

¹¹⁶ Alexander, 'The Public Role of Women', pp. 275-282 and *passim*

in such diverse areas is unknown. Perhaps being a member of the National Council was a break from other more active organisations? How at ninety years, Emily Dobson managed fulfil the duties of being president or a member of such a variety of organisations is remarkable and her input was probably minimal.

These similarities and difference are generalisations but do provide some idea of the women involved in the National Council. Naturally there were women who did not fit into this stereotype but these were of a minority. In general terms, National Council members were middle or upper class, wealthy, elderly, Protestant and eager to work for the betterment of women and children.

CHAPTER ELEVEN – PROMINENT AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

Thirty-two Tasmanian organisations affiliated with the National Council when it was formed in 1899 and although this number grew, in 1927 there were only thirty-eight listed.¹ Between 1899 and 1939 there were 110 Tasmanian organisations which affiliated and disaffiliated with the Council for unknown reasons.² A list compiled of the 194 more prominent Tasmanian organisations of this period shows that only eighty-four did not affiliate with the Council (see appendix five). The table below shows the percentages of the organisations affiliated with the Council.

<u>Organisations Affiliated</u>	<u>%</u>
Political	100
Women's Welfare	100
Child Welfare	76
Philanthropic	75
Health	73
Intellectual	68
Social	60
Church	59
General	51
Sporting	0
Men Only	0

Some of the percentages are similar, for example the numbers of church based or general organisations are roughly the same. There were high numbers of sporting or men only organisations that did not affiliate with the Council but is not surprising. There were significantly higher numbers of child welfare, women's welfare, health and philanthropic organisations affiliated. All the recorded political organisations affiliated with the Council. This was perhaps the most significant result, showing that women's impact on politics was recognised and political based organisations chose to affiliate with the National Council which represented large numbers of women and possible voters. It is

¹ Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT) Non-State (NS) 325/9A and B, Minute Book, 5 May 1927, p. 131

² For full list see appendix five

possible that the male political organisations were not included in the more prominent organisations.

Unfortunately, the NCWT was not meticulous when recording which organisations affiliated and which disaffiliated from year to year. It is common in National Council reports to read that a society had affiliated when it had affiliated years earlier. Whether this was due to clerical error or the fact that they disaffiliated and then rejoined is unclear. It is likely that many organisations' membership lapsed and re-affiliated as secretaries changed. The organisations affiliated with the Council worked separately most of the time and it was uncommon for these societies to mention the National Council in their records. The minutes of some of the more prominent affiliated organisations vary. The WCTU kept thorough records, while the Free Kindergarten Association left nearly nothing. Nine prominent Tasmanian organisations will be briefly discussed which had similar interests to the National Council. They all worked in similar areas including animal welfare, children and women's welfare, health and sanitation, and in education. These organisations are discussed to show what their aims were, what they achieved and then some suggestions as to why they remained affiliated with the National Council of Women. Unlike the National Council, many of the affiliates produced tangible results and benefit to the community. Why this was the case for the affiliated organisations and not the National Council will be discussed.

Maternal and Dorcas Society (1835)

The Maternal and Dorcas society was founded in 1835. The aim of the society was to assist destitute women during the time of their confinement, to assist destitute children as funds permitted and in obtaining suitable clothing, especially for Sabbath school.³ The society's constitution confined its work to married women but there are examples of unmarried women obtaining assistance.

When they were first approached to affiliate with the National Council of Women, the Society noted that, 'after a good deal of discussion it was decided, somewhat doubtfully,

³ AOT, NS 1640/102

to accede to the request.’⁴ The Dorcas Society and NCWT shared several members including Emily Dobson and Mrs Bennison.⁵ Shortly after its affiliation however, ‘the committee being practical women, came to the conclusion that no benefit had accrued through the affiliation and ceased to subscribe to the Council.’⁶ There was a minor incident between these two organisations in 1904, indicating that the Maternal and Dorcas Society remained affiliated for at least five years. The National Council published a list of members but due to a printing error the Dorcas Society was omitted. The NCWT wrote to apologise but the Dorcas Society responded, ‘there is so much misunderstanding about the position of all affiliated societies (on your Council) that I think it should be more clearly defined.’⁷ Perhaps this was the reason for its resignation?

It is possible that the NCWT and the Dorcas Society had different views as to how to work in the community. An example of this was in 1912 with the introduction of the Maternity Bonus Act. The National Council saw this as a positive move while the Dorcas Society discussed this Act as a bad development because the need for their services would diminish.⁸ It is interesting that women obviously committed to the welfare of mothers and infants were not in favour of an Act that was created for the sole purpose of assisting mothers and infants.

Hobart Benevolent Society (1860)

The Hobart Benevolent society was founded in 1860 when it was decided to establish a society to ‘relieve the poor, the distressed, and the afflicted, and thereby to discountenance, as much as possible, mendicity and vagrancy, and to encourage industry among the indigent, irrespective of religious creed or denomination.’⁹ In its charter, members stipulated that ‘this Society investigates all cases brought under its notice, and relieves deserving persons in temporary distress.’¹⁰ The Benevolent Society was

⁴ AOT, NS 1640/102, pp. 9-10

⁵ Alexander, ‘The Public Role of Women of Tasmania, 1803-1914’, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1989, p. 200

⁶ AOT, NS 1640/102, pp. 9-10

⁷ University of Tasmania Archives (UTA), RS 1/1 (106)

⁸ AOT, NS 1640/102, p. 12

⁹ AOT, NS 1637/21

¹⁰ AOT, NS 1637/24, p. 1

affiliated with the National Council but apart from brief mentions at some annual congresses, the works of the two organisations remained completely separate.

The Benevolent Society was crucial to the Hobart poor in the mid to late nineteenth century. In the 1900s new charitable organisations such as the Salvation Army were established and this lessened the burden on the Society. The Benevolent Society was not a women's organisation so what benefit it received from being affiliated to the National Council is difficult to say. It probably affiliated in 1899 in a rush of enthusiasm as it appears many organisations did, and then perhaps enjoyed the congresses and the discussion which allowed societies to assess other work being done in Hobart. It is unknown how long this organisation remained affiliated.

Girls' Industrial School (1862)

Girls' Industrial Schools were established at both Hobart and Launceston in 1862 and 1877 respectively. Both affiliated with the NCWT with Miss Mosey of Launceston as delegate to the Council. The first Parliamentary Act created to accommodate these schools was passed in 1863 and 'provided for the establishment in Tasmania of institutions for the industrial training and benefit of vagrant children and youthful offenders'.¹¹ Both schools were founded by 'some philanthropic members of society who were upset to see neglected young girls around.'¹² The purpose of the schools was to provide orphans, or poor children a chance at a life without crime or degradation, by teaching them some skills of every day life; the aim was to make them respectable members of society,¹³ and for many years this was achieved. Both schools joined the National Council in 1899 when it was created but apart from occasional mentions at NCWT Annual meetings, the schools remained completely separate from the Council. As was the case with so many of the National Council's affiliated organisations, there is no evidence to suggest that they received any benefit from their affiliation, while the National Council claimed the successes and prestige of its affiliates.

¹¹ UTA, G3/8

¹² *Tasmanian Mail* 15 September 1900, p. 7

¹³ *Tasmanian Mail* 15 September 1900, p. 7

Society for the Protection from Cruelty to Animals (1878)

The Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)¹⁴ was founded in Tasmania on 19 July 1878. Tasmania had passed legislation for the protection of animals in 1836 but it was not until 1877 that the first comprehensive Act was passed and was enforceable. Both the foundation of the society and the passing of the Act were in direct connection to a growth in public opinion regarding the treatment of animals. The SPCA was later entrusted with the enforcement of the Act.¹⁵ The Society was founded on the principle that:

We are to apt to consider Animals under the dominion of man in no view but that of property, whereas the dominion granted to us over the animal world is not conceded to us absolutely. It is a dominion in trust, and we should never forget that the animal over which we exercise our power has all the organs, which render it susceptible to pleasure and pain. It sees, it hears, it smells, it tastes. It feels with acuteness. How mercifully, then, ought we to exercise the dominion entrusted to our care!¹⁶

The SPCA was instrumental in the debate on the destruction of birds for their plumage and feathers in Tasmania and worked with the NCWT in the establishment of the Anti-Plumage League. From 1908 the SPCA called for reform in this matter. Its minute books included various clippings from newspapers canvassing the debate. The society expressed the hope that: 'our bird lovers will not appeal in vain to the women of fashion, at least in Tasmania, to discourage this barbarous fashion, and so stop the murder of the mother birds.'¹⁷

The SPCA delegate to the NCWT was Robina Hodgman, who was one of the leaders of the Band of Mercy, a society formed to educate children on the care of animals. Robina Hodgman often presented papers at the NCWT meetings in relation to progress of the SPCA and on the plumage problem. This is one of the few examples of an affiliated organisation working with the National Council; this was the only issue that the NCW

¹⁴ Now known as the Royal Society for the Protection from Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

¹⁵ AOT NS647/2, 1877-1878

¹⁶ AOT NS 647/2,1910

¹⁷ AOT NS 647/1

and SPCA worked on together. The Council was concerned with women's impact on bird life but not on the welfare of animals in general terms. The SPCA benefited from its affiliation with the Council. While NCW meetings were frequently reported in the press, SPCA ones were not. It would have been useful to get the attention of the public on the issues of inhumane gathering of feathers used in hats.

Woman's Christian Temperance Union (1885)

The WCTU was the first international women's organisation to be formed in Australia. It was established in America in 1873 by Frances Willard in a desire to establish prohibition in America and then around the world. The WCTU believed that alcohol was the cause of all evil in society; alcohol abuse took food off the table, broke up families and left children neglected and wives mistreated.¹⁸ The WCTU believed that women had a moral purity that men lacked and it was their duty to transcend the private sphere of home and family and work in the public sphere for the betterment of humanity.¹⁹

The WCTU was established in Tasmania in 1885.²⁰ The WCTU was said to be the most militant and powerful Tasmanian women's organisation.²¹ Unlike the National Council, the WCTU was more representative of middle-class women in Tasmania and was particularly interested in alcoholic temperance. The WCTU shared many members with the NCWT including Emily Dobson, Sarah Hannaford, Jessie Rooke, Mary Parker and Emily Cox. It was highly interested in morality, but their work in this area differed to that of the National Council in that the WCTU actually worked with those in society deemed immoral. Criminals, drunkards and prostitutes as well as high risk groups such as barmaids, sailors and young children all benefited from the work of the WCTU.²² The WCTU worked in areas the other philanthropic organisations did not.

¹⁸ R. Jordan, 'White-Ribboners: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Tasmania, 1885-1914' Unpublished BA Hons Thesis, University of Tasmania, 2001, p. 1

¹⁹ J.R. Henderson, *The Strength of the White Ribbon* (West Perth, 1992) p. 1

²⁰ AOT NS337/8, p. 21

²¹ H. Reynolds, 'The Island Colony – Tasmania: Society and Politics 1880-1900' Unpublished MA thesis, University of Tasmania, 1963, p. 110

²² Jordan, 'White-Ribboners', *passim*

The WCTU did not receive much attention from the Tasmanian press. Unlike the NCWT, which incited debate, outrage and praise from the community, the WCTU was primarily ignored. They were rarely criticised and only occasionally praised. One example of this was a correspondent to the *Examiner* who remarked on the character of the kind of woman the WCTU had in its ranks:

Without exception Christian women who would prefer the retirement and social joys of home to the difficulties of public life, and the shame that is too often cast upon them. They are women who as mothers, wives or daughters have discharged, and are fulfilling the duties of their homes conscientiously and satisfactorily, and who have taken up the heavy cross of public work with the approval, sympathy, and prayers of the heads of their households.²³

The WCTU became involved in the community while the NCW did little more than hold meetings. The WCTU's work could be described as being 'hands-on', while the National Council kept more distance. WCTU members visited women in gaol and had small amounts of success, some women choosing to 'sign the pledge' to stop drinking.²⁴ Work was also done to educate sailors in the ways of temperance; this consisted of the distribution of literature at wharves and to certain vessels as well as providing entertainments and meetings for sailors.²⁵

In regards to the work undertaken by the two organisations they also experienced some conflicts. The WCTU suggested a curfew bell in 1899, but the National Council refused support. In 1910 the National Council suggested a curfew bell, which provoked debate and criticism in the media (see chapter three for discussion). The WCTU established a franchise department in 1893 and began to campaign for the womanhood suffrage. The NCWT did not assist in this campaign. It was not until the vote had been won that the National Council began espousing the merits and necessity of voting. Like the National

²³ *Examiner* 29 March 1899, p. 2

²⁴ AOT NS337/5, p. 30

²⁵ AOT NS337/4, p. 30

Council, the WCTU remained consistently working in Tasmania and is still in existence today. Its greatest impact was made in the early years.

Unlike the other affiliated societies discussed, the WCTU and the National Council shared a close and sometimes volatile relationship. They had common interests in the suffrage and curfew bell in its initial period, temperance concerns during the war years and the maternity bonus during the inter-war years. The WCTU achieved more success than the NCWT in its work programme. It successfully lobbied the Licensing Bench many times to have liquor licenses prevented or revoked. It was the main instigator in the fight for the franchise and it appears to have some success in reforming drinkers.

District Nursing Association (1885)

The Hobart District Nursing Association (HDNA) evolved from the YWCA's nursing band, which was established in 1885. The nursing band was created in the desire to 'attend sick people where only a slight knowledge of nursing was required, and to render help in any cases of emergency till the arrival of medical aid.'²⁶ The HDNA was established in 1896 and commenced work in 1897. One nurse was employed on a one-year contract.²⁷ The aim of the Association was to provide medical assistance to people unable to afford a doctor or in need of nursing assistance. The HDNA affiliated with the National Council in 1899 and disaffiliated before 1915, noting in 1915 that they resigned from the NCW 'some time ago.'²⁸ The HDNA did again affiliate with the Council but this was not until 1976.²⁹ The only evidence of the HDNA working with the National Council was in connection with a Bush Nursing Scheme, which was proposed in 1910. Both organisations were in favour and discussed the logistics until 1914.³⁰ The HDNA clearly did not feel that affiliation with the Council was beneficial.

²⁶ D. Snowden, *Caring for the Community: One Hundred Years of the Hobart District Nursing Service Inc. 1896-1996* (Hobart, 1996) p. 14

²⁷ *Tasmanian Mail* 18 August 1900, p. 7

²⁸ Snowden, *Caring for the Community*, p. 154

²⁹ Snowden, *Caring for the Community*, p. 154

³⁰ *Mercury* 11 February 1911, p. 10

Blind Society (1887)

The Blind Society, also known as Blind, Deaf and Dumb, affiliated with the National Council of Women at their first meeting in 1899 and remained a loyal affiliate throughout the early period.

At a public meeting held in April 1887 the problems for blind people were discussed. They were said to lead useless lives, unable to gain knowledge of any sort unless someone took the time to read to them.³¹ This was seen as unacceptable and it was decided to engage a teacher for the blind in Tasmania. A school was opened and the students, ranging in age from eight to seventy years of age, were taught useful skills with which they were able to earn their own income. This society claimed to have done some wonderful work for blind people living in Tasmania; Mrs Brown, the NCWT delegate, noted that once no noise was heard from the girls' dormitory, now it was filled with singing and chattering,³² indicating that the students were happy in their new school. The school for the blind continued to grow but had difficulties providing enough space. In 1901 a new school was opened after the government provided some funding.³³ The Education Amendment Act, 1907 made it compulsory for all blind children over seven years of age to attend school and this meant an influx in numbers.³⁴ In 1912 the government granted pensions to all blind persons over sixteen years of age which helped the blind community maintain self-sufficiency. By 1914 the school had fifty pupils and space was again short.³⁵

The Braille Writers' Association was begun in 1897 with the purpose of transcribing books into Braille; they affiliated with the NCWT in 1899. The first Braille Lending Library was opened on mainland Australia in 1894.³⁶ Marguerite Dobson became president of the Association in 1906 for a short time. In 1909 the Braille Writers Association wrote to the NCWT relaying their intention to disaffiliate, choosing to just

³¹ AOT, NS 1349/3, p. 1

³² *Tasmanian Mail* 1 September 1900, p. 7

³³ AOT, NS 1349/3, p. 18

³⁴ AOT, NS 1349/3, p. 21

³⁵ AOT, NS 1349/3, p. 22

³⁶ S. De Vries, *Great Australian Women: Vol. II*, (Sydney, 2002) p. xiv

stay in contact with other Braille Writers' Associations. Once Emily Dobson's daughter had stepped down as president of the association, it appears that the affiliation with the National Council was seen as being unnecessary. As can be seen with other affiliated organisations, the benefits of affiliation were often hard to recognise.

Women's Sanitary Association (1891)

The Women's Sanitary Association (WSA) was founded in 1891 in a desire to raise the health standards of Hobart. The call for sanitation reform followed several typhoid epidemics in Hobart during the 1880s but by 1887 women had discussed this topic with little success.³⁷ In 1891 an all male Sanitary and General Improvement Association was founded but its ineffectiveness and lack of action led to a meeting of women in September 1891 led by Emily Dobson, Lady Hamilton and Maud Montgomery, the wife of the Bishop of Tasmania.³⁸ Lady Hamilton told the group of women it was their duty to act, that women's highest duty was as health protectors.³⁹ The women responded and the WSA was formed. Members were allocated streets where they would visit houses and discuss health and hygiene with the women.⁴⁰

The WSA did not have any power to change or reform sanitary matters. Its work was characterised by petitioning parliament and government, writing letters, interviewing authorities and attempting to educate women on correct home hygiene.⁴¹ In this way the WSA achieved some success but by 1906 the government had established a health department and the members' work was needed in different areas.

The WSA affiliated with the National Council in 1899 and remained a loyal affiliate through this entire period. Although the two organisations had close ties through their membership (Sarah Hannaford, Emily Dobson and others) they did not collaborate on any ventures. While the WSA was actively working in the community to educate on

³⁷ Alexander, 'The Public Role of Women', p. 225

³⁸ Snowden, *Caring for the Community*, p. 11

³⁹ Alexander, 'The Public Role of Women', p. 225

⁴⁰ Petrow, *Sanatorium of the South?* (Hobart, 1995) p. 109

⁴¹ Alexander, 'The Public Role of Women', p. 226

hygiene, raise living standards and lower infant mortality, the National Council only discussed these issues and did not initiate any work in these areas.

Free Kindergarten Association (1910)

The National Council attempted to increase the educational standards of the State and improve social welfare through the introduction of Free Kindergartens. This cause was championed by the Dobson family and was not specifically an initiative of the National Council. The women involved in this movement however, were predominantly from the National Council, and the Free Kindergarten Association did affiliate with the Council shortly after its inception in 1910.

The Free Kindergarten Association was successful in Tasmania but at this time there was no suggestion that the government would be taking over responsibility for the kindergartens. In 1915 the government increased the subsidy to £200 on the £1 for £1 basis, but because of the First World War the Association commented that they could not take full advantage of this, because they could not raise £200 themselves.⁴² The kindergartens were finally taken over by the Education Department in 1970 when a committee report found that 'education for this age group is of particular importance, especially in the case of children from restricted backgrounds.'⁴³ The State's Education Department reached this conclusion sixty years after the Dobsons and other supporters of free kindergartens had espoused these views. But the government run kindergartens were for all children while the free kindergartens were designed to cater for the poor and were perhaps an example of the middle class trying to impose its values onto the working class.

These nine organisations all worked for the betterment of the Tasmanian community and were successful in many of their endeavours. They worked in a variety of areas including animal welfare, child and mother welfare, health and sanitation, and in education. These were all discussed by the National Council at some point. These organisations all

⁴² Report of Free Kindergarten Association, 1915, Tasmaniana Library TCP 372.209946 HOB

⁴³ D. Phillips, *Making More Adequate Provision: State Education in Tasmania 1839-1985* (Hobart, 1985) p. 280

included the same type of women as members, middle and upper-class and pioneers of the first wave of feminism. They were women who were able to transcend the private sphere and work in the public sphere, although this did vary in the organisations. For example the women involved in the Maternal and Dorcas Society moved less in the public sphere than the WCTU women. The Dorcas Society was in a sense about 'secret women's business.' Unmarried women were not allowed into the society and meetings were not commented on in newspapers, nor were reports of their work published. The WCTU was different from this. It petitioned government, led deputations, worked at regattas, was visible in the public sphere and attracted negative comments from the press.

Not all these affiliated organisations involved women. For example the Benevolent Society was primarily a male-run relief organisation. Similarly the Blind Society, the SPCA and the Free Kindergarten Association were run by male members and the women were part of the auxiliary for fund raising or involved in a limited capacity. Why these organisations affiliated with the National Council is difficult to say. The Free Kindergarten Association was founded by the Dobsons so it probably affiliated because of this connection. The SPCA and the Blind Society had women members but the Benevolent Society seems to have been mainly men. Perhaps it affiliated in be kept in touch with the work of other philanthropic organisations.

Why were these organisations able to produce some evidence of successful work when the NCWT was not? It seems probable that these organisations were successful because they were concerned with one specific area of interest, while the National Council briefly discussed everything. These nine organisations focused their attention on one primary goal. For the Dorcas society this was providing for newly confined mothers, for the SPCA this was animal welfare. The Benevolent Society was concerned with providing for the needy in Hobart while the Girls' Industrial School worked to provide education and training for poor or delinquent girls. The National Council's only stated aim was to provide the means for a dialogue between existing organisations dedicated to uplifting society and this certainly curtailed its active work.

Conclusion

The social condition of Tasmanian women and children was enhanced during the period from 1899 until 1939. Some concessions were granted by the federal or state government with little agitation made by women's organisations, but some were due to the efforts of women like Emily Dobson and Edith Waterworth and organisations like the National Council. Tasmanian women were granted the federal franchise in 1902 and the state franchise in 1903. Policewomen were appointed in Tasmania from 1917 at the insistence of women's organisations. Domestic studies were included in the curriculum of the state Education Department after years of agitating for some form of training. Six o'clock closing of public houses was introduced, although this was revoked some years later. A state board for film censorship was established and maintained in spite of opposition. Tasmanian women contributed to the war effort by becoming involved in Red Cross work and sending necessities and luxuries to the troops. Women were appointed as justices of the peace from 1924 and were permitted to act as special magistrates in children's courts. Women were granted the right to stand for parliament and the Council for Mother and Child was established.

No tangible achievements can be noted as the solely due to the National Council. But as an organisation of delegates from affiliated societies this is not surprising. There were some difficulties which arose between the NCWT and its affiliated organisations due to confusion in the National Council's aims. Although it said it only wanted to act as a facilitator, this did not stop the Council attempting practical work in many areas; but its success can only be seen in its collaborations. In conjunction with the other women's organisations of Tasmania, the National Council was involved in the successful campaign to establish a film censorship board in Tasmania under the auspices of the FWSFC. It was involved in the establishment of policewomen in Tasmania by sending several delegations on the matter to the attorney-general. It was perhaps influential in the establishment of domestic science in the curriculum of Tasmanian schools as it discussed and agitated for this for almost the entire forty-year period. The Council was also involved in the formation of the Council for Mother and Child. This does not mean that

the Council did not have minor victories in other areas, but nothing else long-term was established and sustained. Miriam Dixon said of the National Councils that they were 'narrowly issue-orientated', skirting around important equal rights issues such as equal pay and focusing on mundane areas such as domestic service'.¹ This adequately sums up the work of The Tasmanian Council. But it did have some successes in less tangible regards. For example it gave women a legitimate, respectable opening into the public sphere and experience in operating in public and dealing with bureaucracy. The Council brought issues affecting women and children to the attention of the public and opened up topics for debate that had not been discussed before in the public arena. Belonging to the Council facilitated national and international travel for those wealthy enough to afford it and it provided an outlet for philanthropic activities. The National Council in Tasmania was also an outlet for first wave feminism. The Council provided women with a forum to discuss the new issues affecting their gender.

The National Council stated that its aim was to act as a facilitator for philanthropic organisations and to co-ordinate their activities. The National Council of Tasmania today still follows this original aim. Delegates attend NCWT meetings to discuss their work and then report back to their organisation, support is given to affiliated organisations when requested, and public meetings are attended by Council members to express the NCWT point of view. It is the belief of the current Council that 'this has always been the on-going method of operation'.² This thesis has shown that this was not the case. Contrary to the belief of the current NCWT, there is no evidence to suggest that the Council always worked in this manner and that it took up the issues of affiliated societies. The NCWT expressed the desire to work as a facilitator but did not confine itself to this limited aim. It has been seen that the Council worked in a wide variety of areas in its first forty years, very few of these involved solely facilitating discussion or supporting affiliated organisations. The Tasmanian Council was not unique in this regard. In order to appreciate the work done in Tasmania it is beneficial to compare it with what was attempted and achieved by the National Councils in the larger Australian states of New

¹ M. Dixon, *The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia 1788 to the Present* (Ringwood, 1978) p. 203

² Correspondence with Linley Grant, National Council of Women of Tasmania secretary, 2003

South Wales and Victoria. Other state Councils had more success in tangible work than the Tasmanian Councils, although the areas of interest are similar and the areas which the women worked were prone to show little achievement.

The NCW NSW, founded in 1896, described itself as being at 'the forefront, initiating some projects, supporting others and helping to mould public opinion'.³ The history of the NSW Council lists its main areas of work which included efforts to have 'domestic arts' included in the school curriculum. It noted that until the suffrage was granted that this was of 'paramount importance'. The NSW Council worked in temperance and had special interest in the early closing and anti-shouting bills. It worked extensively in the area of child welfare, taking interest in a number of bills and acts including Girls' Protection Bill, Custody of Infants Bill and Equal Guardian of Children Bill. The Council was also concerned with other areas of child welfare including nursery schools, maternity bonus, registration of midwives, establishment of a chair in obstetrics and gynaecology at the University of Sydney and mothercraft training. Among the Council's other areas of work were the establishment of a registry for working women during the war, film censorship, treatment of mental illness, preservation of peace and League of Nations Union. During the Depression the Council established an unemployment centre for women and girls. In the late 1930s it became interested in radio broadcasting, control of poisons, lotteries, women on juries, free milk for children, equal divorce rights and finally in 1938 the NSW Council made an offer to the Government to make a registry of women for national emergency service.⁴ It has been described as an 'influential lobby group' that developed policies and sent deputations to state and federal governments.⁵ These activities were not very different from those of the NCWT and similarly there is no actual mention in its written history of things being achieved or established, merely areas investigated.

³ The National Council of Women of New South Wales, *Seventy-five years 1896-1971* (Sydney, 1971) p. 4

⁴ The NCW NSW, *Seventy-Five Years*, pp. 4, 5 and 6

⁵ K. Whitehead and L. Trethewey, 'Vision and pragmatism in the educational and suffrage work of "two advanced Englishwomen" in New South Wales', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 89, part 2, 2003, p. 19

The NCWV was established in 1902, the third National Council established in Australia. Its areas of interest are again similar to that of the Tasmanian Council. The NCWV was interested in the establishment of police matrons from 1902 and in 1909 the first Victorian police matrons were appointed.⁶ In 1903 the Council began fund raising to establish an epileptic colony and raised over £11,000. A building for this purpose was opened in 1907. Like the other state Councils, the NCWV worked extensively in child welfare including interest in children's courts, children's playgrounds, infant life protection act, milk supply, inspection of boarded out children, baby health centres, midwives bill, neglected children, school leaving age and the child welfare act. Women's welfare was addressed in concern for bush nursing, the white slave traffic, women inspectors, maternity bonus and women public servants. Other areas of interest included domestic economy studies, policewomen, censorship, mental illness, nationality laws, women magistrates and similar war work activities such as temperance including early closing, anti-shouting, local option.⁷ The Victorian Council appears to have had a more extensive range of interests than the other Councils and also appears to have had some material successes when the Tasmanian and NSW Councils did not, although this is difficult to assess by using the histories written by the respective councils which tend to give credit where perhaps none or little is due.

It does become clear that the work, or lack of work, of the Tasmanian Council during this period was not unique. National Councils were to act as facilitators for debate amongst established women's organisations and it does appear that all Councils experienced similar problems when attempting actual work. The New South Wales and Victorian Councils had more radical members than the Tasmanian Council. Women such as Vida Goldstein and Marie Kirk of the Victorian Council and Rose Scott of the New South Wales Council were vocal women leaders and advocates of women and children's rights. Emily Dobson was similar to these women in some ways, although her ideas were very different and her impact appears to have been less. Perhaps the difference is that Emily Dobson was one of the only Tasmanian women energetically reported on in the press

⁶ Gillan, *A Brief History of the National Council of Women of Victoria 1902-1945* (Melbourne, 1946) p. 11

⁷ Gillan, *A Brief History of the NCWV*, *passim*

until 1914 when Edith Waterworth became more active; while the mainland had numerous women who were not only reported on in the press, but edited their own journals. Tasmanian women were victims of isolation; they were cut off from the Australian women's movement and were reliant on journals and yearly congresses, or correspondence with other Councils to stay abreast of developments. But the Tasmanian Council also appears to have had a pre-occupation with insignificant details. At the 1929 Federal Congress of the State Councils, the Victorian and New South Wales Councils passed resolutions concerning equal pay, right of married women to work, maternal mortality and women in government; while the Tasmania Council asked that Tasmania not be forgotten when the League of Nations delegate talked to the state councils.⁸ The Council's ability to work in the community was also limited by its non-party stance. The Council refused to become involved in party political matters, and while this was sensible on the one hand, in not limiting membership and not causing additional friction, it did limit the work the Council could become involved in.

The women of the National Council of Tasmania were expediency feminists as defined by Judith Allen. The National Council women were working for the betterment of society because it saw this as its role as the mothers of the state and as the only ones who could adequately represent other women's interests. They did not challenge traditional notions of femininity and were not perceived as a threat. 'Feminism' was not seen by the Council as a particularly good thing and it was a label that would have been rejected by many members. The Council was conservative in its activities and while it wanted women to have new rights, it maintained that woman's highest role was as a wife and mother. This has been shown in the Council's areas of interest; it discussed civic rights but constantly looked to establish a domestic training facility. In relation to mainland Australia, the NCWT was not very different from the other Councils. The areas of work they undertook were of a similar nature. It is important to note that the National Council was accepted in Tasmania society because it was not seen as feminist or a threat to the male establishment. Because women did not force their agenda, some concessions were granted without fuss. An example of this was women's right to stand for parliament

⁸ Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT) Non-State (NS) 1035/1, pp. 72-74

which was granted in 1921 or the suffrage, primarily a WCTU battle, which was conferred on Tasmanian women in 1903; the British suffragettes did not win the vote until 1918, fifteen years later.

The NCWT had one particular element that the mainland Councils did not have, Emily Dobson. She gave the Tasmanian Council thirty-four years of her life, spent incalculable amounts of money going to its national and international meetings and she manipulated the Council's agenda. She was an enigma. Emily Dobson gave tirelessly of her time to many of Tasmania's organisations but none so much as the National Council which occupied her final years. It was clearly seen in part one how the Council followed her lead in the campaign for trained domestic servants or in the desire for the curfew bell. But in part two this impact began to lessen. Her work with the Council was commemorated in the Emily Dobson Philanthropic Prize, inaugurated in 1919. Part three showed her renewed interest in domestic servants and her readiness to still represent the Council although elderly. She dominated the Council but there are few examples of her authority being challenged by members, there was no obvious rivalry. When Emily Dobson died she left a gap in the Council but had her continued interest been an asset or a liability? It does seem likely that Emily Dobson provided continuity and stability that allowed the Council to continue in the community when little work was being undertaken or achieved. Emily Dobson was domineering and skilled at organising the Council's agenda to suit hers, but if she did not push the Council, would it have attempted nothing at all? Or is it possible that younger, more active women may have taken over?

Why did the National Council not achieve more? It worked consistently over the forty year period covered and continues today. The work of the Council produces a paradox. The Council was clearly established with the aims of producing a dialogue between existing women's organisations and not in the hopes of instigating work. It can be assumed that the National Council did not produce tangible achievements because it did not intend to. But work was attempted and the Council suffered from either a lack of sustained effort or a lack of community enthusiasm. The Council worked sporadically. It would have a burst of enthusiasm in an area that would quickly fade. For example, its

efforts to establish monthly lectures failed soon after they started; it would have been comparatively easy to make these a success by providing a comfortable venue and an interesting speaker. If the Council had confined itself to its stated aim of providing a forum for other women's organisations, it would have proved a success, but this did not happen. Not everything the Council undertook was of direct interest to Tasmanian women. A number of its areas of work were at the instigation of the ICW or other Australian state Councils. For example its interests in nationality laws or Aboriginal health were federal and international issues and not immediately relevant to these white Tasmanian women.

The frustration expressed by the *Mercury* in 1922 was understandable when it said 'what we regret is that this organisation [NCWT] has no continuity of effort; and that its most educative discussions, and its most admirable resolutions have, at most, a very remote influence'.⁹ National Council on-lookers grew increasingly frustrated with its inability to produce some tangible results, but this does not seem to have influenced the Council's *modus operandi* at all. The overall amount of criticism levelled at the Council was negligible and considering its lack of work this is surprising. The *Mercury* noted that unlike convention, it was not going to take the 'smoother path of praise'.¹⁰ The National Council seemed to get away with doing very little because it was generally regarded highly by the press. The National Council appeared impressive. Its members were of the Tasmanian elite, it held meetings at the town hall and its members travelled to international congresses, all of which were reported in the press. The Council appeared to be doing more than it actually did and it is only on close examination that it becomes apparent that nothing attempted was ultimately successful.

The National Council kept going for so many years, although it achieved nothing substantial. The women members either did not notice their efforts amounted to nothing or they did not mind. There is only one example of members expressing either surprise or aggravation that that Council was not seeing results in the areas it discussed, and this

⁹ *Mercury* 20 January 1922, p. 4

¹⁰ *Mercury* 20 January 1922, p. 4

was in 1904 when Lady Havelock (president of the Council) said, 'I have so frequently heard the reproach brought against our council (even by some of its own members) that we originate no new schemes: in fact we appear to do nothing.'¹¹ But this was one remark made in the early years of the Council. So while bodies outside the Council were disappointed, the members were not; presumably if they were they would have resigned. A number of women and affiliated bodies did resign from the Council over the forty years examined, but the numbers of resignations did not out-weigh the numbers of new affiliates and members. At no stage did the Tasmanian Council have to discuss going into a prolonged recess, even though the Launceston branch and the New Zealand Council were forced to take this step. This therefore must have been what the members wanted. If the Council members were unhappy and saw no benefit from their affiliation then they would not have remained. In 1899 after returning from the London congress, Emily Dobson commented 'that such a meeting, composed of earnest, thoughtful women, gathered together for the single purpose of comparing views upon, and discussing, the most prominent world questions affecting their sex must result in good'.¹² This appears to have been the National Council's maxim for this entire period; women gathered together to discuss the questions affecting women. The National Council was the first organisation established with the goal in mind.

It seems that the members benefited from belonging to the National Council in numerous ways. It was a prestigious organisation and had a limited membership. Not all women could join the Council but had to be appointed as delegate from another society. The National Council was a socially important organisation to be involved in. It was patronised by the wives of the Tasmanian Governors and many members were the wives of premiers, mayors and the Hobart elite. But would women such as Edith Waterworth and Frances Edwards, who worked hard in the community and actually appear to have made some progress, have remained members for social reasons? This seems unlikely but perhaps the National Council was an excuse for a social gathering? It would have been beneficial for the women to net-work. It is possible that the women who came to

¹¹ *Mercury* 12 February 1904, p. 6

¹² *Tasmanian Mail* 23 December 1899, p. 8

the Council as delegates were tired from working in their other organisations and were happy to do comparatively little in the National Council. The NCWT had a self-important attitude. It expressed, what it believed to be, its right to comment on society and was not shy in telling the government that as the most representative women's organisation, it deserved to be consulted on issues relating to women and children. But when given a forum to contribute to debate, such as the 1929 Royal Commission on Child Endowment, the Council appeared to be unable to give constructive or well-reasoned input.¹³

In general terms the National Council did provide women with a forum. It allowed them to come together and present the developments of the organisation they represented. It gave women a reason to leave the private sphere and gave them something larger to think about than household matters. Of course there were many women's organisations in Tasmania by 1939 which allowed women this chance, but the National Council was special in a few ways. It was the first organisation to bring the different women's societies together on any scale. The National Council was the second women's organisation in Tasmania with an international network, the first being the WCTU which was limited in its aims. The NCWT provided women (with the resources) with a reason to travel interstate and internationally and it gave them a social connection with women interested in similar areas.

The National Council's achievements in Tasmania were intangible. It is pointless to examine its failure to implement any of its endeavours and conclude that it did nothing and meant nothing in Tasmania; this was not the case. Its impact went beyond physical evidence of its existence. It may not have influenced legislation or implemented programmes to help women and children, but it did help raise the status of women and children. Perhaps the less tangible achievement of Tasmanian women during this forty year period was their acceptance in the public sphere. They were granted the opportunity of higher education. They were able to play sports and attended clubs and organisations

¹³ Royal Commission on Child Endowment, Minutes of Evidence, Commonwealth of Australia 1928-1929, pp. 745-749

where they were able to discuss issues pertinent to their lives and to impact on legislation. Women had made the transition out of the home and were able to work within the male sphere without causing shock or alarm and only a little debate.

When the National Council began working in 1899 Tasmanian women had few civic rights, no influence in public affairs and were generally expected to remain in the private sphere or work for charitable institutions. On the eve of the Second World War, Tasmanian women had been granted the right to vote, to stand for parliament, to serve as justices of the peace and to sit as magistrates at the children's court. They enjoyed their right to higher education and entered into new professions such as medicine, law or police work. Tasmanian women had abandoned their long, restricting clothes and had cut their hair. They were able to join hundreds of different clubs or organisations that ranged from philanthropy to social or general interest groups. No longer were they trapped into tight stereotypes. A respectable woman could work and support herself, independently of any man. This was, in part, due to the impact of the National Council of Women of Tasmania. Unlike the mainland where a myriad of women's organisations existed, in Tasmania if a woman wanted to interact in the public sphere her choices were limited and the National Council was the largest, internationally connected organisation. Although the National Council appeared to achieve little, its impact on Tasmanian women was significant.

Appendix One

Women's Civic Rights

Women's Public Movement Programme 1919

This programme was compiled by a coalition of women's organisations involving the NCWT, WCTU, Child Welfare Association, Women's Health Association, Mothers' Union and the Bush Nursing Association. The organisations joined forces to gain full civic rights for women. The programme contained the areas in which this coalition planned to devote its attention (see part two for discussion).

Education – 1. Training in citizenship; duty to community. 2. School life preparation for after life. 3. Greater government assistance to free kindergartens. 4. Better supervision during school play hours. 5. All girls trained in domestic science and care of children. 6. Curtailment of home lessons. 7. Less time to be spent in preparation for school concerts and similar functions. 8. Medical supervision more effective, directed by public health department. 9. Curtailment of evening study for student teachers.

Public Health – 1. Greater care to prevent uncleanliness in cities. 2. More frequent removal of garbage. 3. Whole time city health officer. 4. More effective means to prevent spread of infectious diseases. 5. Regular disinfection and effective cleansing of state schools. 6. All cadets trained by regular lectures in dangers of contracting venereal disease. 7. Better housing of people. 8. Supervised playgrounds for children. 9. Provision for medical man and nurses in each municipality. 10. Better telephone service in country districts.

Social and Moral Questions – 1. Housing 2. Drink 3. Pictures and objectionable literature. 4. Little boys in New Town Reformatory. 5. Corrective school for naughty children. 6. Divorce Laws. 7. Criminal assaults on women and girls. 8. Deserted wives and children. 9. Payment for children of widows. 10. Taxation exceptions for children. 11. Foundling home for mothers and babies. 12. Payment by government of foster-mothers of children under Infant Life Protection Act. 13. Food profiteering. 14. Segregation and care of mentally deficient and moral imbeciles.

Mercury 29 July 1919, p. 5

Example of type of film advertisement protested about by the National Council in 1920s

The World's Greatest and Most Daring Love Story

HIS MAJESTY'S

Forming memories of their passionate love -- a love sacred in its being, yet impossible in its fulfillment -- burn into her soul.

WILLIAM FOX presents

"QUEEN OF SHEBA"

The Most Daring Love Drama Ever Filmed

"The Great Lover"

Magnificent PROLOGUE

Special Musical Accompaniment

BOOK YOUR SEATS - NO INCREASE IN PRICE!

Appendix Three

Women Appointed as Justices of the Peace 1899-1939

* Known National Council Members

° Unmarried Women

<u>Name</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Date</u>
Anderson, Elizabeth Jane	Queenstown	9 May 1924
Booth, Ellen	Glenorchy	5 September 1932
Bulling, Winifred	Burnie	4 September 1933
Burnell, Eliza	Burnie	11 April 1924
Culley, Mame	New Town	21 November 1925
Curtain, Elizabeth Frances	New Norfolk	7 May 1926
Darling, Ethel*	Hobart	18 July 1931
Davies, Lesley	George Town	14 January 1937
Edwards, Frances*	Hobart	11 April 1924
Elliot, Alice Gordon	New Town	10 March 1924
Everett, Mary Joan	Launceston	29 August 1934
Hill, Catherine Annie	Bicheno	20 September 1937
Hurst, Lucie Evelyn	New Town	10 March 1924
Kemp, Evelyn	Hobart	22 August 1925
Munck, Eunice Beatrice°	Zeehan	17 September 1925
Muschamp, Emily Louise*	Launceston	2 May 1925
Piesse, Amelia*	Hobart	10 March 1924
Ransom, Edith Mary	East Tamar	29 August 1931
Robson, Mary Frederica	Launceston	22 October 1928
Rose, Ada May	Scottsdale	29 August 1931
Smith, Ella Louisa*	Launceston	11 April 1924
Stephens, Rose	New Town	18 July 1931
Tynan, Ida Mary	Launceston	11 April 1924
Waterworth, Edith Alice*	Hobart	18 July 1931
Wiltshire, Eliza Marian	Hobart	25 October 1937

See *Walch's Tasmanian Almanac* 1925, pp. 83-106 and 1940, pp. 84 – 101

Appendix Four

Women Appointed as Special Magistrates to the Children's Court 1899-1939

* Known National Council Members

<u>Name</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Date</u>
Booth, Ellen	Hobart	1938 – 1945
Edwards, Frances*	Hobart	1931 – 1938
Elliot, Alice Gordon	Hobart	1931 – unknown
Fahlborg, Honora	Hobart	1938 – unknown
Piesse, Amelia*	Hobart	1931 – 1934
Mace, Evelyn	Hobart	1934 – 1938
Muschamp, Emily Louise*	Launceston	1931 – 1936
Robson, Mary	Launceston	1931 – unknown
Smith, Ella Louisa*	Launceston	1937 – unknown
White, Annie Maud	Launceston	1931 – unknown

See *Walch's Tasmanian Almanac* 1932 - 1940

Appendix Five

Tasmanian Organisations 1899-1939

Key			
I = Intellectual	SOC = Social	C = Church	WW = Women's Welfare
CW = Child Welfare	P = Political	H = Health	Ph = Philanthropic
SP = Sporting	G = General	MO = Men Only	

AFFILIATED WITH NCWT	Type	NEVER AFFILIATED WITH NCWT*	Type
Alliance Française	I	Anglers' Club	SP
Amateur Press Ass.	I	Antheneum Club	MO
Art Society of Tasmania	I	Apex Club of Hobart	G
Anchor Club	G	Ashley Boys' Home	CW
Anchorage Refuge League	WW	Band of Hope	C
Australasian Women's Ass.	P	Bible Society	C
Australian Penny League	G	Boy Scouts Ass.	CW
Baby Welfare Ass.	CW	Break O'Day Club	G
Bible Society	C	Broadcasting Educational Committee	G
Blanket Loan Society	Ph	Caledonian Society	G
Blind Society	Ph	Cananore Football Club	MO
Book and Magazine Society	I	Chess Club	I
Brabazon Society	Ph	Christian Endeavour Union	C
Bread and Food Reform League	Ph	Choral Society	G
Bush Nursing Ass.	H	City Bowls Club	SP
Chalmers Literary Ass.	I	Civic Club	G
Children's Home Libraries	I	Council of Churches	C
Child Welfare Ass.	CW	Derwent Club	G
Citizens' Moral and Social Reform League	G	Derwent Rowing Club	SP
City Mission	Ph	Derwent Sailing Club	SP
Consumptive Sanatorium	H	Early Closing Ass.	G
Council for Mother and Child	CW WW	Endeavour Club	G
Country Women's Ass.	WW	Fitzroy Club	G
Criminal Law Reform Ass.	P	Gaiety Amateur Dramatic Society	I
Deutscher Verein	I	Harbour Lights Guild	G
Diocesan Women Workers	C	Hawthorn Club	SP
District Nursing Ass.	H	Hobart Bathing Ass.	SP
Dr Barnardo's Homes	CW	Hobart Bowling Club	SP
Empire Trade Defence Ass.	G	Hobart Hunting Club	SP
Esperanto Club	I	Hobart Polo Club	SP
Evangelical Nursing Ass.	H	Hobart Sanitary and General Improvement Ass.	H
Everyday Cookery Classes	G	Kennerley Boys' Home	MO
Federation of Women's Societies for Film Censorship	G	Lawn Tennis Ass.	SP
Free Kindergarten Ass.	CW	Masonic Club	MO
German Club	I	Naval and Military Club	MO

Girl Guide Ass.	CW	Newlands Golf Club	SP
Girls' Friendly Society	CW	Old Hobartian Ass.	SOC
Girls' Industrial School	CW	Orpheus Club	I
Good Film League	G	Philharmonic Society	I
Hamilton Literary Ass.	I	Red Cross (Various Branches)	Ph
Happy Evenings Society	SOC	Rotary Club	MO
Hobart Amateur Writers' Club	I	Sabbath School Ass.	C
Hobart Braille Writers Ass.	Ph	Seamen's Institute	SOC
Hobart Crèche	CW	Shakespeare Society	I
Hobart Ladies Choir	G	Shipwreck Relief Society	PH
Hobart Liedertafel	I	Society of Friends	C
Hobart Madrigal and Ballad Society	G	South Tasmanian Railway Club	G
Home Mission Union	Ph	Southern Law Society	G
Homeopathic Hospital	H	Southern Tasmanian Athletic Club	SP
Horticultural Society	G	Southern Tasmanian Cricket Ass.	SP
Housewives Ass.	WW	St. David's Cathedral Guild of Perseverance	C
Itinerants	I	St. David's Literary Society	I
Ladies Christian Ass.	C	St John's Ambulance Ass.	H
Ladies of Charity	C	St. John's Hospital Committee	H
Launceston Travelling Library	I	St. John's Literary Society	I
League of Nations Union	P	St. Joseph's Orphanage and Industrial School	CW
Liberal League Women's Branch	P	Street Boys' Brigade	CW
Lyceum Club	G	Sunday School Union	C
Lyceum Drawing Circle	I	Tasmanian Arts and Crafts Society	I
Lyceum Literary Circle	I	Tasmanian Australian National Football League	MO
Lyceum Music Circle	I	Tasmanian Band Ass.	G
Lyceum Social Circle	SOC	Tasmanian Club	MO
Magdalen Home	WW	Tasmanian Natural Science Society	G
Maternal and Dorcas Society	WW	Tasmanian Poultry Society	G
Missionary Settlement for University Women	C	Tasmanian Racing Club	MO
Missionary Society of St. Barnabas	C	Tasmanian Regatta Council	SP
Ministering Children's League	Ph	Tasmanian Rifle Ass.	MO
Mothers' Union	C	Tasmanian Women's Hockey Ass.	SP
National Ass. Women's Branch	P	Teachers' Guild	I
New Settlers' League of Australia	G	Thelma Club	G
New Town Guild	G	Trinity Club	C
Overseas Club	G	Town Planning Ass.	G
Pan Pacific Women's Movement	P	Toc H Unemployed Girls' and Mothers' Club	Ph
Peace Society	G	Union Jack Club	G
Peace and Freedom League	G	University Union	G
Prohibition League	G	Wattle Day League	G
Psychic Research and Psychological Society	I	Wellington Club	G
Queen Alexandra Women's Hospital	WW	West Hobart Club	G

Queen's Jubilee Fund	G	Women's Basketball Ass.	SP
Ragged Schools	CW	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom	G
Refugee Council of Tas.	G	Women Graduates' Ass.	G
RSPCA	Ph	Working Men's Club	MO
Salvation Army	C	YMCA	MO
Society for the Protection of Children	CW	Young Women's Institute	G
Society for the Protection of Women and Children	CW WW		
Soldiers' and Sailors' Mothers' and Wives' Ass.	SOC		
Southern Tas. Camera Club	I		
Southern Tas. Progressive League	P		
Sunshine Society	CW		
Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club	G		
Tasmanian National Ass.	P		
Tasmanian Women Graduates Ass.	G		
Tasmanian Women's Political Ass.	P		
Temperance Alliance	G		
Trained Nurses Ass.	H		
Victoria Convalescent Home	H		
Victoria League	G		
Wildlife Preservation Society	G		
Woman's Christian Temperance Union	C		
Women's Council for Church Work	C		
Women's International League of Peace	G		
Women's National Club	P		
Women's Non-Party League	P		
Women's Public Movement	P		
Women's Sanitary Ass.	H		
Women's Suffrage Ass.	P		
Women's Total Abstinence Union	C		
Workers Educational Ass.	G		
Young WCTU	C		
Young Women's Christian Ass.	C		
TOTAL	110	TOTAL	84

* Includes the more prominent Hobart organisations listed in *Walch's Tasmanian Almanac* from 1899-1939 and is not meant to be a comprehensive list of all Tasmanian organisations during this forty year period.

Appendix Six

Office Bearers of the National Council of Women of Tasmania 1899-1939*

Presidents

1899	Viscountess Gormanston (wife of Governor)
1900-1901	Lady Dodds (wife of Administrator of Tasmania)
1902-1903	Lady Havelock (wife of Governor)
1904-1934	Mrs Emily Dobson
1935-1938	Mrs Amelia Piesse
1939-1942	Mrs Alexandra Banks Smith

Secretaries

1899-1900	Mrs McGregor
1901-1903	Mrs Caroline Morton
1904-1920	Miss Mary Bisdee
1921-1925	Mrs Fox Clarke
1926-1928	Miss Black
1929-1936	Mrs Alexandra Banks Smith
1937	Miss H. Riddle
1938	Mrs Hyacinth Riddle Stanley
1939	Mrs Cuthbert

Treasurers

1899-1900	Mrs Caroline Morton
1901-1903	Mrs Bennison
1904-1905	Mrs Seager
1906	Mrs Frances Edwards
1907-1917	Mrs D. Young
1938-1941	Mrs Puddicombe

Patronesses (Governors' wives)

1904-1909	Lady Edeline Strickland
1909-1913	Lady Barron
1913-1917	Lady Ellison-Macartney
1917-1920	Lady Newdegate
1920-1922	Lady Allardyce
1924-1930	Lady O'Grady
1933-1944	Lady Clarke

See *Walch's Tasmanian Almanac* 1900-1940

* The offices listed are those recorded in *Walch's Almanac* and do not include all officers of the NCWT. For example there were Honorary and Recording Secretaries which were not included.

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