

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Organisation

Entry ID: AWE0651

Catholic Welfare Organisation

(1939 - 1948)

Born 16 September, 1939, Melbourne Victoria Australia

Died 1 June, 1948, Melbourne Victoria Australia

Occupation Social support organisation

Summary

The Catholic Welfare Organisation (CWO), an initiative of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix on the outbreak of World War Two in September 1939, foresaw the need to establish service canteens, hostels and rest rooms, in addition to catering for the spiritual needs of servicemen and women. Its objectives were to promote the spiritual welfare of the Catholic members of the fighting forces and to cater for the material welfare of all the fighting forces, regardless of creed. On the retirement of the inaugural president, Dr A L Kenny, Mary Daly was appointed to the position in 1941. She held that office until the completion of the work of the Catholic Welfare Organisation in 1948.

Details

The Catholic Welfare Organisation's role was two fold. The Catholic Chaplains who were allocated to the various military units met the spiritual needs of the service men and women. The Executive of the CWO aimed to provide a substantially built appropriately equipped and dignified Catholic Chapel in every military camp. Catholic women assumed responsibility for the day to day running of the amenities hut in Elizabeth St Melbourne. The canteen, which was open for thirteen hours a day, was staffed by members of the Catholic Old Collegians' Associations of the Girls' Schools, the Ladies' Committees of the Catholic Boys' Schools and the Catholic Women's Social Guild. Women also formed Catholic Welfare Organisation auxiliaries in many Victorian Catholic parishes. They helped to raise funds, knitted, sewed and collected comforts for the benefit of men and women of the services. Women were responsible also, for the Catholic Welfare Organisation's Hospitality Bureau, which placed troops in hostels, guest houses and private homes.

Although the Reverend Dr Stewart was the Director, the major credit for the success of the CWO was attributed to 'the untiring energy and great organising ability of its president', Mrs Mary Daly.

Published resources

Book

Catholic Welfare Organisation: its work for the men and women of the Services during World War II, September, 1939-June, 1948., 1948

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Catholic Church Archdiocese of Melbourne

[Catholic Welfare Organisation records](#)

Author Details

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