

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE0011

## Owen, Mary

(1921 - 2017)

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**Born** 8 February, 1921, Balwyn Victoria Australia

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**Died** 23 March, 2017, Victoria Australia

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**Occupation** Trade unionist, Women's liberationist

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### Summary

Mary Owen was founding Coordinator of The Working Women's Centre Melbourne, 1975-1986, when it was absorbed into the Australian Council of Trade Unions. She was a staff member of AAESDA (Association of Architects, Engineers, Surveyors & Draughtsmen of Australia), 1965 -1975 and a member of La Trobe University Council 1983-1990. She was appointed Deputy Chancellor of La Trobe University 1989. A founding member of Emily's List, Mary Owen was also a Member of the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) for over forty-three years. She represented WEL on many Government committees, making a significant impact on policies advancing the status of women, especially the fight for equal pay.

In 1986 the first Mary Owen Dinner was organised in Melbourne to celebrate Mary's retirement. Held annually, the event lasted twenty years. There was always a female keynote speaker and the audience, normally in the order of 600 women, wearing the feminist colours of purple, green and white, was a sight to behold. The last dinner was held in 2005.

Mary Owen was a very early supporter of the Australian Women's Archives Project, which began as a community based organisation's response to a request from Mary Owen for help with conserving the records of her long and varied contribution to public life.

Born in 1921, Mary was a woman who effected change – and made Australia a better, more equal place for all of us coming after her. She died 23 March, 2017.

### Events

#### 2001 - 2001

Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

#### 1984 - 1984

#### 1977 - 1977

## Published resources

### Book

Getting Equal: the History of Australian Feminism, Lake, Marilyn, 1999

### Edited Book

Women We Know, Harper, Jan and Lee, Jenny, 1988

A decade of Mary Owen dinners, Waterfield, Dorothy, 1995

Working Women: Discussion papers from the Working Women's Centre, Melbourne, Owen, Mary and Shaw, Sylvie, 1979

Living generously: women mentoring women, Scutt, Jocelyne A., 1996

### Article

Vale Mary Owen OAM, 2017,  
<http://www.nfaw.org/farewell-mary-owen-feisty-strong-feminist/>

### Book Section

The Political Participation of Women, Owen, Mary, 1980

Women's Rights in the Workplace: What's being done to improve them?, Owen, Mary, 1983

### Conference Paper

Stress in the Workplace, Owen, Mary, 1982

### Journal Article

Edna Minna Ryan, Owen, Mary, 1997

Why have a Working Women's Centre?, Owen, Mary, 1979

I confess I'd rather work for a few reforms, Owen, Mary, 1977

Discrimination - what does it mean?, Owen, Mary, 1978

What Choice for Women?, Owen, Mary, 1979

What came out of Copenhagen? The definition and relevance of education for women in developing countries, Owen, Mary, 1980

The Working Women's Centre, Owen, Mary, 1981

Making Affirmative Action Work, Owen, Mary, 1984

Women: a wastefully exploited resource, Owen, Mary, 1984,  
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/52021989>

### Resource

100 Years of Women's Suffrage 1908-2008: Reflection and Celebration, RMIT University Students from School of Architecture and Design and School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning, 2007

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

## Archival resources

### **The University of Melbourne Archives**

[Mary Owen Dinner 1986](#)

[Women's Electoral Lobby](#)

[Owen, Mary](#)

[Working Women's Centre Papers](#)

### **State Library of Victoria**

[Papers of Mary Owen, 1951-2017. \[manuscript\].](#)

### **National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection**

[Papers of Edna Ryan, 1948-1993 \[manuscript\]](#)

### **National Library of Australia**

[\[Biographical cuttings on Mary Owen, co-ordinator of the Working Women's Centre, Melbourne, 1981, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals\]](#)

## Author Details

Patricia ni Ivor

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## Digital resources



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