

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Organisation

Entry ID: AWE0078

Canberra Mothercraft Society Inc

(1929 -)

Born 1 January, 1929, Canberra Australian Capital Territory Australia

Occupation Community organisation, Women's organisation

Summary

Canberra Mothercraft Society (CMS) was established in 1929, one of many women's organisations at the time which formed around the National Council of Women in the Australian Capital Territory to meet the needs of public servants being transferred to the new capital city, and of workmen engaged in building it.

Details

Canberra had been proclaimed capital of Australia on 12 March 1913 by Lady Gertrude Denman, wife of the then Governor-General.

Initially the CMS provided its first mothers and babies health service in the same central Canberra premises housing the national newspaper, the *Canberra Times*. From these premises, visiting clinics were organised at workers encampments in the newly developing suburbs. Later the CMS also operated Canberra's first crèche.

The growth of Canberra was slowed during the Great depression of the 1930s, and during World War II, but the CMS continued to provide its services in partnership with the relevant Commonwealth Government agency, the Department of the Interior.

After World War II the Federal Government under Prime Minister Robert Menzies acted decisively to speed the growth of the national capital, and many more Federal agencies, with their staff, were transferred from other Australian cities to Canberra.

As Canberra's population grew, so grew the need for services for mothers and babies. To mark the coronation in 1953 of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, a public appeal in Canberra raised funds to build a post-natal residential care service in central Canberra on land donated by the Department of Territories.

The building was opened in 1953 by the wife of the Prime Minister, Mrs (later Dame) Pattie Menzies. Subsequently, the Commonwealth Department of Health through its territorial administration took on increased responsibility for the provision of infant welfare services.

After self-government was granted to the Australian Capital Territory in 1989, the ACT Health department took over responsibility for child health services and clinics, and continued to work in partnership with the CMS in the operation of the QEII.

Children's day care services became more commonly provided through a range of community based and commercial agencies as the Commonwealth provided financial support for child day care services from 1972 onwards, accelerating after 1975.

In 1999 the Territory Government provided a new building in Curtin, by now the demographic centre of Canberra, for the operation of the QEII under the aegis of the Canberra Mothercraft Society.

This entry was researched and written by Marie Coleman

Published resources

Book

The Mothering Years: The Story of the Canberra Mothercraft Society 1926-1979, Crisp, Helen and Rudduck, Loma, 1979

Report

Annual general meeting, Canberra Mothercraft Society, 1994

Annual report, Canberra Mothercraft Society, 1995

Constitution of the Canberra Mothercraft Society, Canberra Mothercraft Society, 1935

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition

From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,

<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg>

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[Papers of Helen Crisp, 1939-1983 \[manuscript\]](#)

ACT Heritage Library

[HMSS 0043 Canberra Mothercraft Society Records](#)

Author Details

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Created 9 February 2001

Last modified 19 February 2013