

WOMEN'S ELECTORAL LOBBY : INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF WOMEN

As the Women's Electoral Lobby evolved through the 1970s and became a cohesive national organisation, it was realised that international ties were also important. A search was made for an international women's organisation with feminist ideals and objectives and application was made for affiliation with the International Alliance of Women. Pat Giles, then an ALP Federal Senator, was able to attend meetings and introduce WEL to a broad international audience and WEL became the Australian affiliate of IAW, joining longstanding associate members The League of Women Voters and the WA Women's Service Guilds.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries suffrage was the major cause for women. An International Woman Suffrage Conference was called in Washington in 1902. Susan B. Anthony, the famous American feminist, was in the chair and Australia, one of ten countries present, was represented by Vida Goldstein. This is described as the conception of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, subsequently inaugurated in Berlin in 1904 and later to become the International Alliance of Women as its objectives broadened.

The Alliance has held United Nations category B consultative status since 1948 with representatives (often multi-lingual) working and lobbying for the rights of women worldwide using the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as their bible.

Many notable Australian women have represented their country at Alliance meetings throughout the 20th century. More recently WEL women have held office: Patricia Giles (WA), President 1994-2004; Priscilla Todd (VIC), Secretary 1992-2002; Pat Richardson (NSW), Membership Officer since 1994. Priscilla currently edits the English pages of *International Women's News* (in publication since 1906) www.womenalliance.org

Schreiber, Adele and Mathieson, Margaret *Journey Towards Freedom*

The first 50 years of the Alliance

Whittick, Arnold *Woman into Citizen*

The Alliance up to the 1970s

Rupp, Leila J. *Worlds of Women - The Making of an International Women's Movement*

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A history of the major international women's organisations