

Archiving WEL's history

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Introduction

This paper describes the archiving of material donated to the WEL history project, including the important and substantial donation from WEL Australia, and where this material can be found in the National Library of Australia (NLA).

The WEL history project

In the course of the WEL history project researchers located and collected documents, newsletters, posters and photographs. Also, WEL members past and present were stimulated by the WEL History Survey to donate material that they had accumulated over the years. For example, Carol Ambrus donated her poster collection, which included originals of posters that she had designed for Women's Liberation and WEL.

By far the largest 'donation' came from the WEL members, Merrindahl Andrew and Erica Lewis, who were responsible for closing the WEL Australia office, prior to its move to Sydney. Merrindahl brought many boxes of material on the understanding that when they were no longer needed they would be archived in the National Library of Australia, where earlier documents from WEL Australia and WEL-ACT were stored.

In 2010 the Australian National University (ANU) commenced a major re-organisation and, as a result, the WEL history project had to move to much smaller accommodation. The time had come to archive the contents of WEL Australia boxes!



The WEL Australia boxes were, in the main, unsorted, although newsletters and submissions had been removed and added to the project team's existing collections. The remainder of the contents had to be sorted by topic and date, placed in the folders and boxes provided by the NLA and entered on an Excel spreadsheet. Much to the relief of the members of the WEL history project team, WEL-ACT members Elizabeth Kentwell and Sarah Brasch volunteered to help with this.

Photo 1. Elizabeth Kentwell sorting papers



The work was completed by 25 June 2010 when Susan Thomas from the Pictures and Manuscripts Branch of the NLA arrived with a large van. Fifty-eight archive boxes of WEL documents, as well as a large folder containing posters, were loaded into the van and left for the NLA. These boxes also contained copies of reports and papers prepared by the WEL history project.

Photo 2. Erica Fisher working on the WEL history project's newsletter collection prior to its transfer to the NLA.

Photographs and survey data

The collection of photographs was moved to new accommodation at the ANU and the WEL history project responds to requests for the use of these as in the past. Data from the WEL History Survey has been placed in the Australia Data Archives at the ANU (www.ada.edu.au) and will be available for use by scholars in late 2013.

Records transferred to the Manuscript Collection (MS Acc10.116).

The documents transferred to the NLA on 25 June 2010 were added to the Library's Manuscript Collection and were allocated the accession number MS Acc10.116.

The contents of MS Acc10.116 can be viewed and copied in the Manuscript Reading Room on the second floor of the Library. A scan of the Consolidated Box List, which provides details of the contents of MS Acc10.116, is on this website (*ANU History of WEL* <http://wel.anu.edu.au/>) and in the Manuscript Reading Room. Researchers should cite the box numbers of the records required when requesting access and contact the Library in advance to allow sufficient time for the Library to make the material available for viewing,

WEL in the Media

Boxes 1-4 contain the WEL history project's material on WEL in the Media, newspaper clippings and the Consolidated Media Database. These formed the basis for a paper on this subject and chapter 4 in the book *Making women count: a history of the Women's Electoral Lobby in Australia*.

WEL Submission Database

The tables of submissions in the WEL Submission Database on the *ANU History of WEL* website, indicate with an asterisk if the WEL history project had a copy of the submission. All those submissions that were in the project's possession in June 2010 can now be found in Boxes 32-39 of MS Acc10.116 at the NLA, together with a hard copy of the database.

Newsletters

Most of the WEL history project's newsletter collection is in boxes 48-59 in MS Acc10.116 in the Manuscripts Collection. However, newsletters from South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria, including Border WEL, (Boxes 60-63) were placed in the Library's General Collection and researchers should ask for these in the Main Reading Room on the ground floor.

Posters



All large-sized posters were transferred to the General Collection and researchers should ask to see these on the ground floor. They are in PIC LOC Poster drawer 245. A detailed description of each of the 32 posters, prepared by the WEL history project team, is in the Consolidated Box List for MS Acc.10.116 under Box 47.

Photo 3. Gail Radford with a Women's Liberation poster that is now in the National Library of Australia.

Other papers in MS Acc.10.116

The NLA catalogue summarises the remainder of MS Acc.10.116 as follows: "A substantial portion of the WEL Australia records consists of research and working papers on women's issues and legislation relating to women, such as affirmative action, casual and part-time workers, childbirth, contraception, abortion, divorce, domestic violence, feminism, health, human rights, parental leave, pregnancy, reproductive rights, sexism, sex discrimination, single mothers and tax reform."

WEL Australia records also include: papers relating to conferences and other events conducted by WEL; election material; WEL National Management Committee minutes and correspondence; policy documents; funding papers; and records reflecting relations between WEL Australia, various women's organisations and WEL state and territory groups.

For further details see the Consolidated Box List for MS Acc.10.116 on the *ANU History of WEL* website <http://wel.anu.edu.au/>



Photo 4. L – R, Susan Thomas and Sarah Brasch. Formal handover of the June 2010 instalment of WEL Australia records at the National Library of Australia. Sarah is holding the CD of the Excel spread sheet of the contents of the instalment.

Additional consignment in April 2013

In April 2013 an additional consignment of WEL records was given to the NLA. These had been safely locked away in a storage unit at Fyshwick and forgotten. Once discovered, Elizabeth Kentwell and Sarah Brasch sorted these papers and handed them over to Susan Thomas. As with all material given to the Manuscript Collection it may be some time before these records can be assessed, but information about them can be obtained from the staff in the Manuscript Reading Room.

Other WEL material in the NLA.

The WEL records forwarded to the NLA in June 2010 joined an existing collection of records from WEL-Australia (and WEL-ACT). The collection can be found in the Library's catalogue under the heading 'Records of the Women's Electoral Lobby, 1952-2010 (manuscript)'. (1952 refers to the date of the earliest document in the collection; it is not the date of the establishment of WEL, which was 1972.)

MS 3683 (63 boxes) was donated to the Library in five consignments between 1973 and 1995. The NLA catalogue has a Finding Aid for MS 3683, which provides details of the contents of the boxes.

Later in the 1990s another two instalments were forwarded to the Library, Acc98.302 (20 Boxes) and Acc99.169 (7 cartons). There is a summary of these boxes in the catalogue but detailed information about their contents has to be sought from the Manuscript Reading Room.

As well as the collection of WEL records, the National Library has the papers of numbers of WEL members, a collection of WEL ephemera and a number of WEL publications. Consult the Library's catalogue for further information.