Report on the WEL History Survey

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WEL members helped bring about lasting changes to Australian society—changes that broadened women's opportunities and turned issues that had long been part of women's experience into public policy for the first time. But who were the WEL members who brought about these changes? Many stereotypes of WEL members have taken hold and are being passed on to generations of students through textbooks and websites

The WEL History project undertook a massive exercise in 2002–03, tracking down and surveying the women (and a few men) who had belonged to WEL over the last 30 years. The survey was part of a study being conducted by the Australian National University and funded by the Australian Research Council (LRG A00 104176). The findings presented in this report are largely in the form of cohort analysis—analysing the characteristics and priorities of four cohorts of WEL members: the Founder cohort (1972–75), the Fraser cohort (1976–82), the Hawke/Keating cohort (1983–95) and the Howard cohort (1996–2002/03).

So what did the typical Ms WEL look like in the early 1970s? She had been educated at a single-sex school, had been to university and was married with young children. She was probably in paid work, but under-employed relative to her qualifications. Her most important organisational experience had been in Parents and Citizens' Committees (P & Cs). She wasn't religious and her policy concerns revolved around family planning and abortion, discrimination against women, equal pay and childcare.

Figure 1. Changes in membership characteristics across cohorts
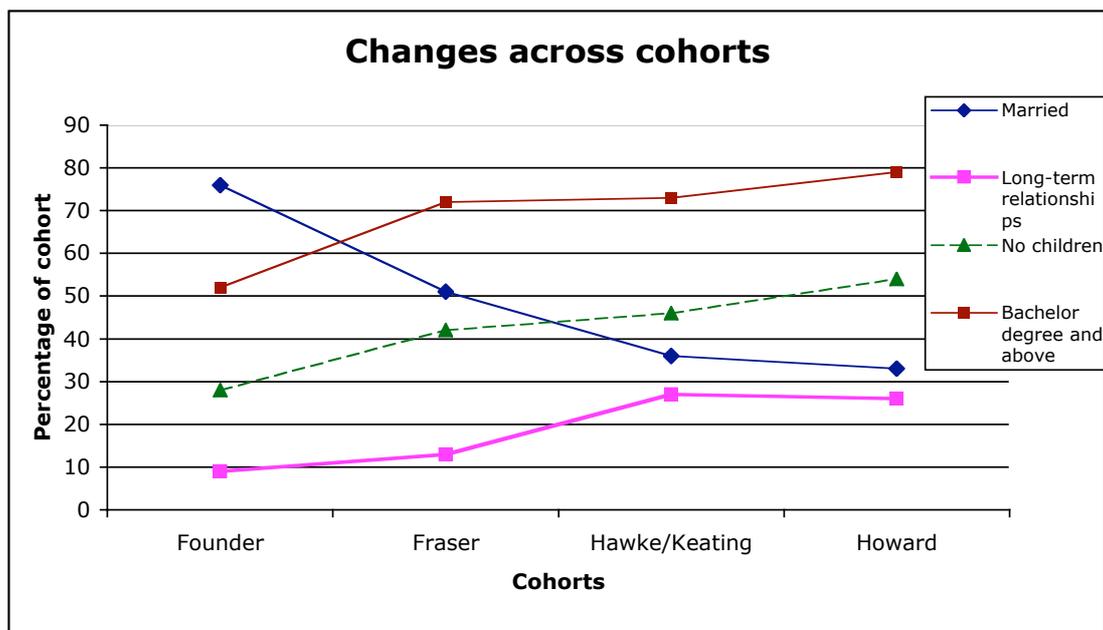
What changed with the later cohorts? They were less likely to be married or have children but even more likely to have university degrees and to be in the paid work

force. Their issues changed along with changes in the policy environment. They were more concerned about violence against women in the Fraser period and about the need for women in politics in the Hawke/Keating era. The concern with equal pay receded in the Fraser period but re-emerged with the introduction of enterprise bargaining in the Keating era. Childcare diminished as a concern in the Hawke/Keating era but rose again in the Howard era, although this was the cohort with fewest children.

Figure 2: Changes in issues concerning members across cohorts
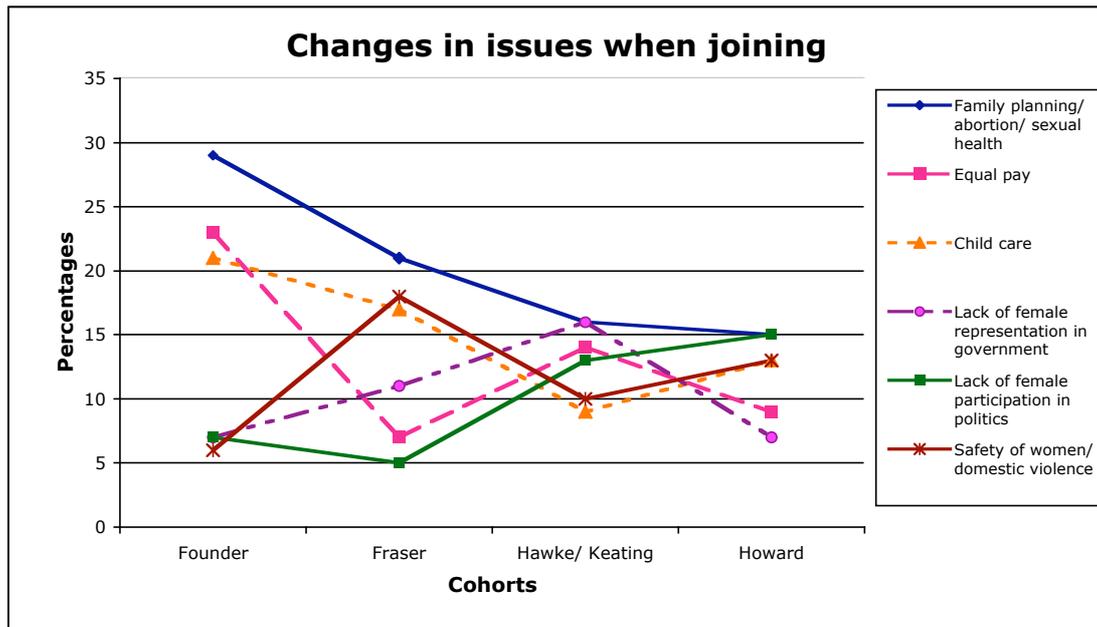
In general, being a WEL member increased confidence and skills as well as providing networks and friends. A significant number (12 per cent) of members of the first three cohorts moved into areas of employment relating to women. For all the cohorts what was important was raising awareness of women's issues and being part of putting and keeping women on the political agenda. 'Doing something practical' as the founders had said.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2002–03 the WEL history project team[1] carried out a survey of past and present WEL members. Finding the current location of WEL members who had been active as long ago as the early 1970s proved a time-consuming task. By the end, however, the project team had received 550 usable replies. The survey was part of a study being conducted at the Australian National University and funded by the Australian Research Council (LRG A00 104176).

This Report discusses the survey findings and provides detailed statistical tables at Appendix 1 and a copy of the survey instrument at Appendix 2.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part 1 asked about members' involvement with WEL. From the answers the project team has been able to obtain a picture of the whole range of WEL activities at different times and in different environments. Part 2 asked members about themselves as individuals. Some of these questions were similar to those on the Census, so that the WEL members could be compared with the wider community. Part 3 gave members the opportunity to record their memories and opinions.

Distribution of the questionnaire

The project team tried to contact as many past and present members of WEL as possible, to ask them if they would fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was posted or emailed to present members, advertised on various email lists and the WEL Australia website and put on the ANU WEL history website. Tracing former WEL members, starting with addresses in old newsletters, proved to be more difficult than anticipated and there was no hope of tracing them all. Sometimes a project team member would follow a long trail of addresses, only to arrive at the last address and be told that the WEL member had died.

Background of respondents

Despite all efforts, the responses were not quite representative of the geographic spread of WEL membership but they were not too bad. Not surprisingly, the largest number of replies came from those who had joined the bigger WEL groups in New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

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[1] The team that worked on the survey was made up of Gail Radford and Erica Fisher, assisted at various times by Julie Coker-Godson, Margot Harker, Sarah Morrison-Gardiner and PJ Aguilar. Three WEL members who had been involved with the design of the 1972 WEL questionnaire also provided advice and assistance—Dorothy Broom (WEL-ACT), Helen Glezer (WEL-Victoria) and Eva Cox (WEL-NSW).

Table 1. Geographical distribution of respondents, when they joined WEL

State or Territory	Percentage
NSW	32
Victoria	19
Queensland	6
Western Australia	10
South Australia	8
Tasmania	4
ACT	19
NT	2

Three-quarters of the respondents were born in Australia and the vast majority of those born overseas came from the United Kingdom and Ireland, as well as other English speaking countries, such as New Zealand or the United States of America. Only one respondent identified as Aboriginal and only five of the respondents were male.

Most respondents to the survey were city dwellers; at the time of joining WEL 81 per cent lived in a capital city.

Cohort analysis

Rather than concentrating on the overall results, the project team divided the results of the survey into four cohorts, according to the years that the respondents joined WEL. This way the team could examine changes over time in WEL's membership, activities and the views of its members according to the federal government (or governments) in power in a given period. Years were allocated to each cohort according to the Government that was in power for the longest period during that year. Four cohorts were examined: the Founder cohort, which includes ten months of the McMahon Government as well as the Whitlam Government, the Fraser cohort, the Hawke/ Keating cohort and the Howard cohort.

Table 2. Number of respondents in each cohort

Cohort	Years respondents joined WEL	Number of respondents
Founder	1972–75	272
Fraser	1976–82	76
Hawke/ Keating	1983–95	101
Howard	1996–2002/03[2]	95
Total		544 [3]

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[2] The Howard cohort includes the years from 1996 until the survey swas held in the summer of 2002/2003.

[3] Six of the 550 respondents to the survey did not fill in the year that they joined WEL, so cohort analysis could only be done on 544 replies.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF WEL MEMBERS

Table 1, in Appendix 1, contains the results of questions about the characteristics of members when they joined WEL. Questions were asked about age, educational qualifications, employment, marital and parental status, organisational memberships and skills brought to WEL. Table 2, in Appendix 1, shows the results of similar questions about the member's parents and includes questions about the member's youth, such as place of birth and schooling. This section of the Report discusses selected results from these tables and compares some of the findings with those of the 1971 Census and with other surveys of WEL members that have been conducted in the past.

The Founder cohort: Ms WEL 1972–75

Who were the women who joined WEL in those early days? What were their backgrounds? Did these differ from the wider community?

The replies to the WEL history questionnaire, from members of the Founder cohort, showed that they were overwhelmingly Australian or British-born, well educated, in their twenties or thirties, married and with children. Almost two-thirds of them were in paid employment, a large majority working in managerial or professional jobs, such as teaching and nursing. Interestingly, the mothers of nearly half the founder respondents had also been in paid employment when the respondents were growing up, many also in managerial or professional occupations.

The majority of Founder members had been educated at State schools and, perhaps more important than whether the school was fee-paying or not, a majority had attended single-sex schools. Just over half had obtained a bachelors degree or higher by the time they had joined WEL. This percentage was to rise considerably in later cohorts of WEL members as access to higher education widened.

Comparison with data from the 1971 Census

How did the Founder members differ from the wider community? Some comparisons with population data from the 1971 Census are useful here. However, first it is necessary to sound a word of caution. It is not possible for the Founder members in the survey to be completely representative of the overall Founder cohort in the 1970s. First, there is the difficulty of contacting those who were members of WEL over thirty years ago. Second, at the time of the survey, the older joiners in the seventies were more likely to have been deceased than joiners in younger age groups. Therefore, it is likely that there is an under representation of the 50 years and above age group in the Founder cohort in the survey.

As reported by the Founder cohort respondents, they were almost all aged under 60 years when they joined WEL. The age distribution within this respondent group was therefore compared with the female population aged 18 to 60 years at the 1971 census.

Three major differences can be seen. In the WEL group the percentage aged 30–39 years was double that in the population. Proportions in the youngest and oldest age groups were lower for the WEL cohort than in the general population.

Table 3. Comparison of the age distribution of the Founder cohort with the age distribution of the Australian population in 1971 Census

	WEL History Survey	1971 Census
Age span in years	**Percentages**	**Percentages**
18–29	29	36
30–39	42	22
40–49	21	23
50 and above	7	19

As explained, the proportion of the Founder cohort aged 50 years and above in the WEL history survey is likely to be an underestimate. A survey of members in Sydney conducted in 1982[4], gives the higher and probably truer figure of 16 per cent for those aged 50 years and over for those who joined WEL in the years 1972 and 1973. Otherwise the age distribution in the Sydney survey was similar to that of the WEL history survey.

The published census figures do not provide an age breakdown for other demographic items of interest. Census data on other items reported here therefore refer to all women aged 15 and over, including over 850 000 aged 60 years and over—14 per cent of the total population. Given this, the differences between the WEL cohort and the population on various items are not surprising. For example, when compared to the population, a larger proportion of WEL members were married and separated or divorced, while far fewer had never married or were widowed.

Table 4. Comparison of the marital status of the Founder cohort with the marital status of Australian population in 1971 Census.

Marital status	WEL History survey	1971 Census
	Percentage	**Percentage**
Married	76	64
Never married	13	21
Divorced/ separated	10	4
Widowed	0	11

The expanded population age range will also affect the population figures for educational qualifications held and labour force status—women in the older age groups would be less likely to have tertiary qualifications and very unlikely to be in paid employment.

Around 1 per cent of women in the population had bachelors or higher degrees (with a further 2 per cent holding non-degree tertiary qualifications in education). This

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[4] Bev Munro, *A Survey of Sydney WEL 1972–1982*, Report of a fieldwork placement for a University of Sydney B SocStud, 1982.

percentage contrasts markedly with the WEL members. Fifty-two per cent of WEL members held a bachelors or higher degree. Only 15 per cent of WEL members had no qualification, compared with 88 per cent in the population.

In the general population 64 per cent were not in paid work compared with 36 per cent of WEL members.

Around 80 per cent of the WEL Founder cohort stated that they had no religious affiliation when they joined WEL. Yet only 22 per cent said that they had no religious affiliation when growing up. This was in strong contrast to the general population figure of five per cent recording no religious denomination (and another six per cent not responding). However, the 1971 census question asked simply for the person's religious denomination, and for the first time, the instruction *If no religion write 'none'* was included. It seems likely that the WEL members interpreted the question on religious affiliation as active involvement with a religious organisation, e.g. attendance at Sunday school, church or synagogue etc, while those answering the Census referred to a looser connection with a religion.

Turning to country of birth, the proportion of WEL members born in Australia (76 per cent) was similar to the total population (81 per cent). However, among those born outside Australia, 58 per cent of WEL members were born in the UK and Ireland compared to only 44 per cent of the population.[5]

Involvement with community organisations

While young women from Women's Liberation played a major role in the formation of WEL, most of the Founder cohort did not come from this background. In the WEL history survey, 38 per cent of the Founder cohort said that they had not been actively involved in any community organisations when they joined WEL or did not answer the question. The remainder listed organisations in which they had been active. Nineteen per cent said that they had been active in women's organisations, which included Women's Liberation.

The influence of Women's Liberation varied between WEL groups and over time. Women's Liberation members were more likely to have joined WEL when it was first formed than in later years. This can be seen from the results of surveys at early national conferences. A questionnaire was distributed at the First National WEL Conference, which was held in Canberra in 1973.[6] Thirty-two per cent of the respondents to this survey from WEL–ACT said that they were or had been a member of Women's Liberation, while the proportion of WEL members from all other WEL groups, who had been or were members of Women's Liberation, was 24 per cent. A survey of participants at the 1975 WEL National Conference found that only 9% of respondents were members of Women's Liberation. This Conference was held in

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[5] Nine per cent of the WEL cohort was born in NZ/Oceania, compared to 4 per cent of the general population. For the other European countries the proportion was 14 per cent and 4 per cent respectively for WEL and the general population.

[6] Anne Hooper, *The emergence of contemporary feminist groups in Australia: with special reference to the Women's Liberation Movement and the Women's Electoral Lobby in the ACT.* BA Hons, Political Science, The Faculties, Australian National University, 1973.

Sydney and the largest proportion of respondents lived in Sydney; they were not asked if they had been members of Women's Liberation in the past.[7]

In the WEL history survey the most popular community organisations were school-based groups or other groups associated with their children, these were listed by 29 per cent of the cohort. This is not surprising, considering that most members of the Founder cohort were parents. The WEL history project appears to have revealed that Parents and Citizens organisations were a cradle of feminist activity.

WEL was set up as a non-party political lobby. Seventy-seven per cent of the Founder Cohort said that they were not active in political parties. The majority of respondents in later cohorts gave the same reply. Twenty per cent of the Founder cohort said that they were active in the Australian Labor Party (ALP), while two per cent said that they had been active in the Australia Party. Similar results were obtained by the survey conducted at the 1975 National WEL Conference, 72% did not belong to a political party, 19% were members of the ALP, 6% members of the Australia Party and two per cent were members of the Liberal Party.

A question about identification with political parties was asked in a postal survey of WEL members in Western Australia that was conducted in 1974. There were 127 replies to this survey. The WA survey found that, of those who identified with a political party, 41 per cent identified with the ALP, 24 per cent with the Liberal Party and 26 per cent with the Australia Party; two members identified with the Communist Party of Australia.[8]

In other respects, the results of the WA survey were very similar to those obtained by the WEL history project. The average Ms WEL–WA 1974 was aged between 26 years and 35 years, married with one to three children aged between one and 15 years. She was atheist or agnostic, and active in various organisations besides WEL. She was well educated, engaged in a professional or semi-professional job and had an annual income well above $6,000 p.a.[9]

The Fraser cohort: Ms WEL 1976–82

As mentioned earlier, the Fraser cohort of the survey consists of those respondents to the questionnaire who joined WEL in the seven years from the beginning of 1976 to the end of 1982.

Much of the data about this cohort is similar to the Founder cohort, but there are some important exceptions. The Fraser cohort had a much higher proportion of members with bachelor degrees or above (72 per cent) and a higher proportion of members in full-time paid employment (59 per cent). These figures remained high for the rest of the cohorts as WEL members took advantage of the increased educational and employment opportunities for which WEL had worked.

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[7] Edwina Doe, *Report on the survey of WEL members at the WEL National Conference held in Sydney, January 1975*. Of approximately 500 participants at this Conference 221 completed the questionnaire, 46% of these lived in Sydney and 72% of all respondents had joined WEL in 1972 or 1973.
[8] Survey of WEL Membership, *Broadsheet* 2 (3) 1974.
[9] Pat Burnett, *History of Women's Electoral Lobby Perth Western Australia 1973–1984*, Perth: WEL WA, 1985.

On the other hand, in the Fraser cohort the proportion of members who were married fell markedly, and the proportion without children rose. These trends continue in later cohorts, reflecting changing demographics in the population as a whole.

There is another difference, for which there is no obvious explanation. When compared to the other three cohorts, the Fraser cohort had the highest percentage of members who had attended single-sex schools and the lowest percentage that had attended government schools.

Not surprisingly, the Fraser cohort's involvement with school-based groups, and other groups associated with children, was much lower (18 per cent) than the Founder cohort. With their increased participation in the full-time workforce, the Fraser cohort's involvement with unions rose to 14 per cent (from 4 per cent in the Founder cohort).

Skills and experience brought to WEL

Respondents were asked what skills and experience they brought to WEL? Twenty-six per cent of the Fraser cohort, with their high proportion of degrees, answered writing and media experience. This compares with the most frequently stated answer (25 per cent) in the Founder cohort of perseverance and enthusiasm. This was the group who had set out to change society, whether society was ready or not. It seems that by the time of the Fraser cohort WEL was recruiting a more measured and skilled membership. However, organisational skills were high on the list for both groups and was the most frequently answer given by members of the Hawke/ Keating cohort.

The Hawke/Keating cohort: Ms WEL 1983–95

The Hawke/Keating cohort of the WEL history survey includes those respondents to the WEL history questionnaire who joined WEL in the thirteen years from the beginning of 1983 to the end of 1995.

In this cohort the proportions of married women and women with children continued to decline. However, the proportions of those in long-term relationships increased.

There were marked differences in the age at which respondents joined WEL. Of all the cohorts, the Hawke/Keating cohort had the lowest proportion of members who were under 30 years of age (13 per cent). However, the proportion of members over 50 years of age was much higher than the previous two cohorts. As already discussed, this was probably due to an under representation of those joining aged 50 years and above in the Founder and Fraser cohorts. The older joiners from those times were more likely to have been deceased at the time of the survey, than those who joined in the younger age groups.

Fifteen per cent of the respondents were studying full-time while a third were studying part-time. Half of the members of this cohort were in full-time paid employment and almost three-quarters joined with a bachelor degree or above.

This cohort had the highest proportion of respondents who said that they were not active in political parties (86 per cent). Those active in the ALP had fallen to 6 per cent while the figures for the minor parties had increased, the Australian Greens being mentioned for the first time.

The Howard cohort: Ms WEL 1996–2003

The Howard cohort included those respondents who joined WEL from the beginning of 1996 until the time of the WEL history survey in the summer of 2002–2003. A number of factors distinguished this cohort from the first three.

Compared with the other three cohorts, this cohort had the highest proportions of parents with a bachelor degrees or above and mothers who were in paid employment, when the members were growing up.

Turning now to the educational background of members of the Howard cohort. When compared to the other cohorts, a smaller proportion attended single sex-schools, but larger proportions joined WEL with bachelors degrees or above, or were studying full-time.

A large majority of the Howard cohort were in paid employment and were working full-time. As had been the case across all the cohorts they were working in managerial, administrative or professional jobs.

The age distribution for members of the Howard cohort also differed from that of previous cohorts. A larger proportion was 50 years and above when they joined WEL, but a smaller proportion of members had joined in their thirties.

Only one third of the Howard cohort was married, while a quarter were in long-term relationships other than marriage. This cohort also had the lowest proportion of members with children. If you compare this cohort with the Founder cohort in the 1970s, when three-quarters were married when they joined WEL, you get some idea of the magnitude of the social changes that had been taking place over the three decades. These changes are also evident in the increased access of women to higher education –whereas half of the Founder cohort had university degrees, this had risen to almost 80 per cent in the Howard cohort.

Figure 1: Changes in membership characteristics across cohorts
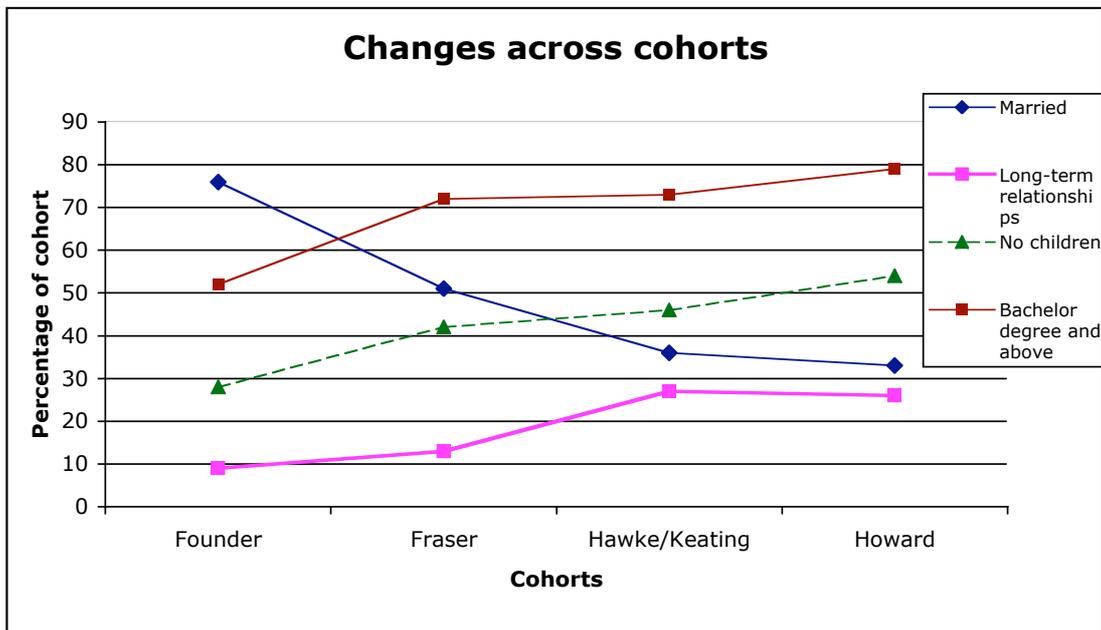
Fifty-eight per cent of the members of the Howard cohort were active in community organisations when they joined WEL. The Howard cohort had the highest proportions of members involved in environmental groups and local politics. This reflects the general rise in salience of environmental issues and the movement of reformers into this area. Other women's organisations and local community service groups remained popular choices. Not so popular were school or child-based organisations; the Howard cohort had the lowest proportion of members involved in these. The proportion stating that they had no religious affiliation when they joined WEL was the highest of all the cohorts.

3. RESPONDENTS' RELATIONSHIP WITH WEL

This section summarises and discusses the results that are set out in Table 3 in Appendix 1. The questions concerned members' relationship with WEL. For example, why did they join WEL, what did they do in WEL and did it make a difference to them personally?

How did they find out about WEL?

Thirty-eight per cent of the Founder cohort said that they originally found out about WEL through publicity in the media. The WEL history project's media analysis showed how successful WEL has been over the years at generating publicity for itself and its activities, particularly in the early years. Almost as popular was the reply 'friends and relatives.' It is interesting to see that, in reply to another question, 50 per cent of the Founder cohort said that they had known a WEL member when they

joined WEL. Other members of the Founder cohort said they had found out about WEL through their activities in other organisations. This pattern was repeated in the Fraser and Hawke/Keating cohorts.

The Howard cohort members said that friends and relatives were the main way that they had found out about WEL, followed by publicity in the media. This was the only cohort that listed the Internet. WEL Australia started its own website in August 1995 and, following the loss of Federal Government funding in 1999, this website became an important resource for WEL. In addition, a number of State groups started their own websites.

Some members of the Howard and Hawke/Keating cohorts said that they had found out about WEL when they were at university. It was in this period that efforts were being made to recruit younger members and the larger WEL groups set up Young WEL groups.

Why did they join WEL?

Why did women join WEL? The most frequent response, given by members of all cohorts, was that they had joined because they had wanted to take action on matters that were of concern to women. The second group was more specific. They wanted to take political action, to promote women on the political agenda by lobbying politicians, getting more women into parliaments etc. Others said that they had wanted to work with like-minded women, or they liked WEL as an organization for taking action, or that they had a general interest in women's issues.

Networking, the sharing and gaining of information, was seen as an important reason for joining WEL for the first time in the Hawke/Keating cohort. These were issues that assumed importance on the feminist agenda in the late 1980s and the 1990s.

Particular issues of concern

Family planning/ abortion was the issue that concerned the largest proportion (29 per cent) of the Founder cohort when they first joined WEL. This proportion was higher than that in any of the other cohorts, doubtless a reflection of the many problems for young women in these areas in the early 1970s. Other concerns, of almost equal importance, were childcare, general discrimination in society, discrimination in the workplace and equal pay, with education as a particular concern to only 13 % of respondents.

Interestingly the survey carried out at the 1975 WEL National Conference obtained a different ordering of issues. Twenty-nine percent of Conference participants considered that education was their main issue of concern in 1975 while only 13 % listed abortion/ contraception. The first morning of the 1975 WEL National Conference was devoted to presentations on education, a reflection of the interest in this topic in 1975. At the time of the Conference the Schools Commission was conducting an inquiry into the education of women and girls and later in the year published its important report *Girls, schools & society*.[10] Therefore, it was not

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[10] Schools Commission (1975), *Girls school & society: report by a study group to the Schools Commission*.

surprising that the 1975 Conference participants rated education more highly than the WEL History Survey respondents. It was remarkable, however, that only 13% of those answering the 1975 survey listed abortion/contraception while it had been the top ranking issue with the WEL History Survey founder cohort. While WEL had achieved major breakthroughs in the funding and advertising of contraceptives and family planning services prior to 1975, the battle for available and affordable abortion was far from 'virtually won', as suggested in the introduction to the 1975 survey. In future years there were to be numbers of attempts to restrict public funding or challenge the legality of abortions.

Issues of particular concern to respondents in the Fraser cohort differed somewhat from those in the Founder cohort. There was a big drop in those who listed equal pay as one of their first three issues of concern when they joined WEL, 7 per cent compared to 23 per cent of the Founder cohort. Perhaps, with the publicity given to the successful cases on equal pay for jobs of equal value and the minimum wage for women, new members considered that there was not much work left to do here.

A higher proportion of the Fraser cohort listed women's safety and domestic violence as an important issue than did any of the other cohorts—perhaps a reflection of the concern many expressed when the untying of Federal grants to the States threatened the funding of women's refuges and rape crisis centres. More generally, the issue of violence against women was taking off in this period, as the growing network of women's refuges revealed the prevalence of the problem.

Figure 2: Changes in issues concerning members across cohorts
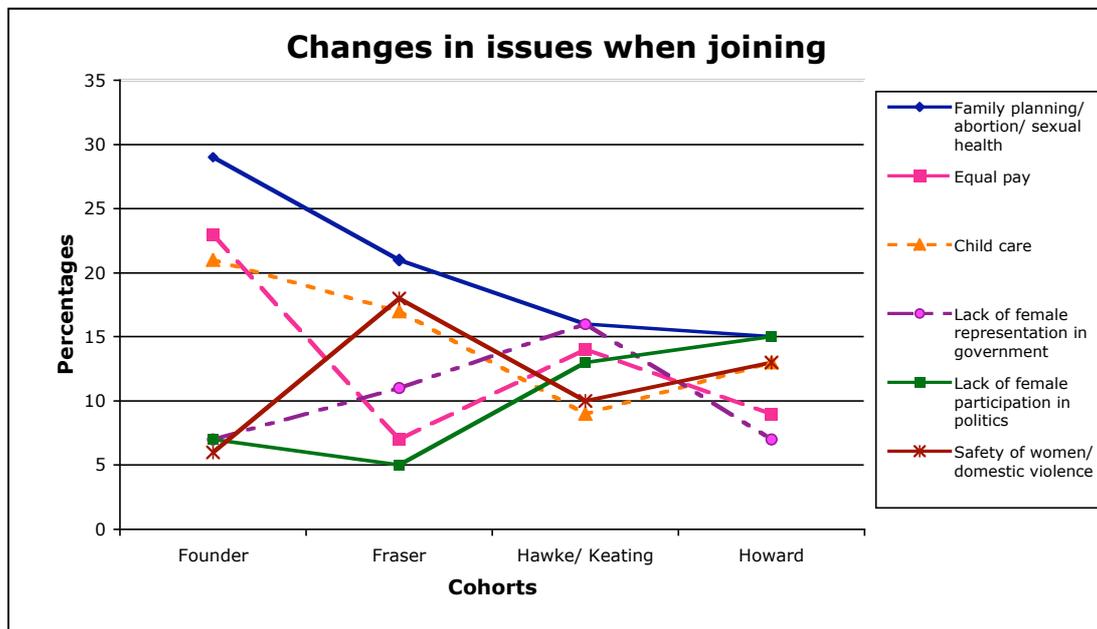
The concerns of women joining in the Hawke/Keating years differed from previous cohorts. Women who joined in this period were more interested in the lack of women at all levels of government and the lack of female participation in politics more generally.

There was more interest in equal pay than in the Fraser cohort, and interest in discrimination in the workplace remained high, perhaps as women realised that, despite the successful cases in the seventies, the battles for pay and employment equity were far from won. This period, with the introduction of enterprise bargaining, marked the beginning of the erosion of central wage fixing, which had served women well since the equal pay cases. WEL was active in stating its concerns to government and the Industrial Relations Commission about the negative impact of enterprise bargaining on women.

Women's issues, feminism and equality were of concern to the highest number of members in the Howard cohort. Lack of female participation in politics continued to be of concern in the Howard years. Safety of women and domestic violence were issues that were also listed by a high proportion of members, as had been the case in the Fraser years. These are issues that are generally given prominence by more conservative governments.

Family planning/abortion and workplace discrimination were also listed, but by a lower proportion of members from the Howard cohort than any of the other three cohorts. On the other hand childcare, which had been declining as an issue, rose slightly in importance in the Howard cohort, which is interesting as this cohort had the lowest proportion of children. However, there were policy changes in the Howard years, such as the removal of operational subsidies for community-based childcare centres that were strongly opposed by WEL.

Activities while a member of WEL.

Respondents were asked to list the activities they had taken part in while a member of WEL; examples of possible activities were given. Only six per cent of the Founder cohort said that they did nothing but by the Howard cohort this had risen to 41 per cent. Nearly half the Founder cohort claimed they had done all of the activities listed, or more generally 'lots of things'. Over a quarter of the next two cohorts had been similarly active.

Of the specific activities mentioned, office holder and attending meetings were the most common responses across all the cohorts. Lower proportions mentioned lobbying (with no mention in the Howard cohort). Writing newsletters, letters to the press and submissions were also on the respondents' lists. Submission writing was a more frequent response from the Fraser and Hawke/Keating cohorts and letter writing from the Fraser cohort.

The relatively low proportions of respondents listing submission writing were unexpected, ranging from three to 13 per cent, given the high output of submissions by WEL over the years. The WEL history project has identified some 870 submissions prepared by WEL groups from 1972 to 2003. It may be that this was a specialist activity undertaken by only a small number of members, or it may be subsumed in the high proportion of members who said that they had done lots of things or all of the above (referring to the examples included in the question).

Given the high proportions of those who said that they did lots of things (or all of the above) it would not be wise to place too much emphasis on the proportions for the

individual activities. Nevertheless, what are of interest are the proportions of respondents who said that they did not take part in activities while a member of WEL. The Founder cohort was obviously extremely active, only six per cent saying that they did nothing, but by the Howard cohort this had risen to 41 per cent.

New skills, networks or other benefits developed through WEL?

The Howard cohort stands out here. Sixty-one per cent of the Howard cohort did not provide comments on this question, the largest percentage of all the cohorts. This compares with 26 per cent for the Founder cohort and figures in the thirties for the other two cohorts.

Across all the cohorts the most popular response was networking and the development of new contacts. The largest proportion (48 per cent) giving this response was in the Hawke/Keating cohort. This was followed by personal development, education and/ or confidence in the Fraser and Howard cohorts (35 per cent and 27 per cent).

All cohorts listed the acquisition of political skills and learning how to lobby as benefits. The proportion saying they had learned to lobby was higher than the proportion saying they had actually lobbied while in WEL. This inconsistency reinforces the need to treat with caution the figures in the table of activities undertaken while in WEL. Other replies concerned the development of competence in committee organisation and increased awareness of feminist issues.

Has involvement with WEL resulted in a difference to other aspects of your life?

Once again the Howard cohort stood out. Almost three-quarters of this cohort either made no comment or said that WEL had not made any difference to their lives. Only about a third of the Founder cohort and half of the other two cohorts gave this response.

Gaining self-confidence received the highest number of replies in the first three cohorts, followed by the making of good friends. Twelve per cent of the first three cohorts listed movement to employment in an area concerned with women's issues. This could be seen as WEL members reaping the rewards of their labour, as WEL had been extremely active in lobbying for women's affairs units, equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation and their support structures. However, the proportion of members moving into these jobs is much lower than suggested by Peter Walsh, an ALP Finance Minister, when he said that the campaigns for affirmative action and equal employment were achieving little other than giving 'jobs to hairy-legged Stalinists from Women's Electoral Lobby'.[11]

The decision to change their employment or study for higher education was seen as more important by the Founder cohort (11 per cent) than for the other cohorts. Burnout or other negative consequences of belonging to WEL was lowest on the list for the first three cohorts and was not mentioned at all by the Howard cohort.

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[11] Peter Walsh, quoted in Bob Browning, *The Network: A Guide to Anti-Business Pressure Groups*, Kew: Canonbury Press, 1990, p. 46.

Organisational activity after joining WEL

It is interesting to compare the replies to the question on activity in community organisations after joining WEL, with the replies to the same question at the time that the members joined WEL.

Overall respondents were more active in community organisations after joining WEL, than they were when they first joined.

After joining WEL, the most popular choice of activity for members of all cohorts was in other women's organisations. This was followed by activities in local/community services and local politics, e.g. being a member of a local council. The increased involvement in local politics by the Founder and Fraser cohorts would probably have been as a result of campaigns by WEL to raise the number of women in local politics.

Those involved in school-based activities followed the same trend that was seen when members first joined WEL. Interest in these organisations after they joined WEL, declined across the cohorts as the proportion of members with children fell.

All cohorts listed activity in unions, environmental groups and peace groups. The biggest increase in activity in environmental groups was in the Founder and Fraser cohorts. The biggest increase in activity in peace groups, compared with that at time of joining, was seen in the Howard cohort.

Political party activity since joining WEL

It is also of interest to compare the replies to this question with those to the same question, asked about the time that the respondents joined WEL.

The majority of respondents in all cohorts said that they were not active in political parties when they first joined WEL. This remained true after they joined, although only just for the first two cohorts where just over 50 per cent were not active in a political party. The proportion not active in political parties rose to about two-thirds in the third and fourth cohorts of WEL members.

Of the minority who were active, most were active in the ALP. Yet the percentage active in the ALP dropped dramatically with the Hawke/Keating cohort and stood at 12 per cent for the most recent cohort, while the proportion active in the Greens rose to 11 per cent. A smaller number said that they had been active in the Liberal Party, the Australian Democrats or in more than one party since they joined WEL.

Membership status

At the time of the WEL history survey 38 per cent of the Founder cohort respondents, 62 per cent of the Fraser cohort, 51 per cent of the Hawke/Keating cohort and 76 per cent of the Howard cohort were still members of WEL.

Reason for membership lapse—non-current members

The most common reason, given by non-current members of WEL in the Founder, Fraser and Howard cohorts, for letting their membership lapse was that they were overcommitted/ too busy with other matters. However, this was not so for the Hawke/Keating cohort. The most common reason from this cohort was that they were fed up with the organisation, its people, its directions and/ or its policies, other cohorts placed much less importance on this reason. Twenty-seven per cent gave this reason, more than twice the proportions in any of the other three cohorts. Why the Hawke/Keating cohort should have been so dissatisfied with WEL is not clear.

New priorities and/ or interests were important reasons for leaving WEL for the Founder and Fraser cohorts. Many members who joined WEL in these years went on to form or join specific interest groups such as the Australian Women's Education Coalition.

Twenty-six per cent of the Howard cohort said that they let their membership lapse as they had moved away from the WEL group. This was not an important reason for the other cohorts.

The cost of the membership and lack of reminders were given as reasons by a smaller number of respondents.

Reason for membership lapse—current members

Some WEL members at the time of the survey had let their membership lapse in the past. They were asked why they had let their membership lapse? As there were only 74 members who replied to this question, the answers were not divided according to cohort.

The reason given by the highest proportion of members (26 per cent) was that they had moved away from the WEL group. Next they said that they had been overcommitted/too busy or that they could not afford the membership. Smaller proportions said that they had had new priorities/interest or were critical of WEL.

4. OPINIONS ABOUT WEL

Table 4 in Appendix 1 gives the results of questions where members were asked for their opinions about WEL. They were asked what WEL had achieved locally and nationally, if WEL had a future and, if so, what should WEL be concentrating on now? This section summarises and discusses the results of these questions.

What have been the main outcomes of WEL activities at State or local level?

Successful law reform topped the lists in each cohort. Establishment of women's services and women's refuges, which mainly occurred in the 1970s, was next in importance for the Founder and Fraser cohorts. The greater representation of women in politics was more important to the Founder cohort than the others. The campaigns

to get more women into local government, which were mentioned earlier, would have influenced this outcome.

WEL as a channel for lobbying, or representing important women's issues at the local level was considered to be most important by the Hawke/Keating cohort; these outcomes received relatively high scores from the other cohorts. The organisation's role in creating awareness of women's issues in the general public also received relatively high scores across all the cohorts.

The more recent members of WEL, in the Howard cohort, were the ones least able to offer their views on this question. A third of these respondents said that they did not know or had no information about outcomes in their State or local area. They appeared to be unaware of WEL's role in the establishment of women's services and rape crisis centres; none of the Howard cohort identified these as outcomes. This suggests that the writing of WEL's history by the WEL history project is very timely indeed.

What has been the main effect of WEL activity in the wider Australian society?

It is interesting to see how the replies to this question differ from the previous one about local outcomes. It is not law reform, which is top of the list for each cohort, but WEL's role in increasing awareness of women's issues in the general society. This is followed by the related effects of putting or keeping women's/feminist issues on the political agenda and keeping these issues on the general agenda.

It was the Founder cohort, followed by the Fraser cohort, that set out specific gains, such as law reform, childcare and work conditions, as important effects in the wider society. They were of lesser importance to the last two cohorts.

Providing a high standard of lobbying and media commentary received general support. WEL providing a respectable image for feminism was viewed as of lesser importance. This had been one of the early aims of some members of Women's Liberation who founded or joined WEL in the 1970s. It is interesting to see it listed by all the cohorts.

It should be noted that respondents in each cohort made a relatively high number of general comments, which did not fit easily into any of the effects outlined above.

Does WEL still have something to contribute to Australian society?

 Eighty-eight per cent of all respondents answered 'yes'!

The most important contribution WEL could make to Australian society, as expressed by members of all the cohorts, was:

- Keeping women's voices and issues noticed.

Support for the following varied between cohorts:

- WEL must ensure that past gains are not lost.

- There are still things for WEL to do.

- The WEL approach is still needed.

Interestingly, for an organisation that was originally set up to lobby politicians, this was not considered to be a contribution of importance. However, as can be seen below, it was thought to be an important strategy for WEL to use to achieve its aims in future.

Once again there was a high proportion of general comments across the cohorts.

What are the main issues WEL should be addressing now?

The major issues identified were:

- Equity issues relating to employment, such as discrimination, the glass ceiling and pay equity.

- Work/ home balance, including maternity leave and flexible hours.[12]

- General social issues, such as education and health.[13]

- Childcare.[14]

- Political participation by women, including the need for more women in parliaments.

Other issues, listed by all cohorts, were violence against women, economic issues and general issues, such as land rights, refugees and the environment.

What strategies should WEL be using now to achieve its aims?

The strategy receiving the strongest support across all the cohorts was:

- Publicity to raise the profile of WEL, particularly in the media.

This was followed by:

- Strategic lobbying, providing support for sympathetic politicians and political parties.

Other strategies, which were supported in varying degrees by members of all cohorts, were:

- Encouraging young women, or younger women, to be active in WEL.

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[12] This issue was more likely to be have been mentioned by current members.
[13] This issue was more likely to have been mentioned by current members.
[14] This issue was less likely to have been mentioned by current members.

- Cooperating with other organisations.

- Effective research, policy development and action planning.

- General lobbying.

5. CURRENT CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

This section discusses the results in Table 5 on the current characteristics of respondents to the WEL history survey. Current refers to the time that the respondents filled in the questionnaire in the summer of 2002–2003. The results are compared with some of those on the characteristics of respondents when they first joined WEL, which are set out in Table 1.

Marital and Relationship status

When respondents first joined WEL the Founder cohort was the one with the highest proportion of married members, with the proportions steadily decreasing in the next three cohorts. While the Founder cohort still had the highest proportion of married members when they filled in the WEL history survey, with the passage of time this proportion had fallen significantly. This is the result of an increase in those who were separated or divorced and an increase in those who were widowed. The same pattern was seen with the Fraser cohort.

For the Hawke/Keating and Howard cohorts changes were less pronounced. These cohorts had larger proportions of younger members, at the time the survey was completed. The proportions that were married had not changed significantly but more members had separated or divorced. The Howard cohort still had the highest proportion of all the cohorts who had never married.

Since the respondents joined WEL, there had been increases in all cohorts in the proportions in long-term relationships. About a third of the Hawke/Keating and Howard cohorts were in long-term relationships at the time of the survey. For all except the Fraser cohort, the majority of these relationships were with members of the opposite sex.

Employment

The changes in the proportions in the cohorts in employment, since members joined WEL, are what might be expected.

It is now over 30 years since many members in the Founder cohort joined WEL. Whereas almost two-thirds of this cohort was in paid employment at time of joining, at the time that they filled in the survey 43 per cent were in paid employment and 42 per cent stated that they were retired. Similar, but less pronounced changes were seen in the Fraser and Hawke/Keating cohorts. In each cohort the big decrease was in full-time work. There was not a substantial change in the proportions of the Howard cohort working full or part-time.

It was still the case that the majority of respondents were working in managerial, administrative and professional jobs. However, by the time of the survey, the proportions in professional jobs in the first three cohorts had decreased and the proportions in the more senior managerial and administrative jobs had increased. This picture was not seen in the Howard cohort, presumably because the younger members had not yet had time to work their way into more senior positions.

Occupation segregation, a feature of the female workforce, was seen in the occupations of the respondents to the survey. Many WEL members had launched or supported campaigns over the years to encourage young women to enter what had been seen as non-traditional jobs for women, especially in the trades. Nonetheless, the distribution of the occupations of respondents at the time of the survey provides no evidence that WEL members themselves had taken advantage of these widened opportunities.

APPENDIX 1: STATISTICAL TABLES

Technical Note

a) Not all respondents answered every question. Non-response has not been included in the tabulated responses; listed responses may therefore not add up to 100%.

b) A number of the survey questions were left open-ended. After reviewing a sample batch of questionnaires for general patterns of response, each open-ended question was allocated a maximum number of responses to be included in the final data set.

c) All multiple response questions are listed in the order of the grouped total response, before division into cohorts, to assist in comparison between cohorts.

TABLE 1. Characteristics of respondents when they joined WEL

Name of cohort	Founder	Fraser	Hawke/Keating	Howard
Years of cohorts Years in which respondents joined WEL	1972–75	1976–82	1983–95	1996–2003
Age group (years)				
• 18–29	29	26	13	29
• 30–39	42	41	38	26
• 40–49	21	20	27	19
• 50 and above	7	11	22	25
	% of whole cohort	% of whole cohort	% of whole cohort	% of whole cohort
Educational qualifications				
• Bachelors degree and above	52	72	73	79
• None	15	4	9	7
Studying				
1. No	69	59	49	65
2. Yes full-time	7	8	15	19
3. Yes part-time	21	30	33	16
Paid employment				
• Employed full-time	43	59	50	59
• Employed part-time	21	17	22	19
• Not in paid employment	36	22	27	22
Unemployed (actively looking for work)	5	7	5	4
	% of those not in paid employment	% of those not in paid employment	% of those not in paid employment	% of those not in paid employment
Activity of those not in paid employment				
• Home duties	77	65	63	48
• Child care	6	6	11	14
• Education	7	18	4	33
• Voluntary work	2	--	11	5
	% of whole	% of whole	% of whole	% of whole

	cohort	cohort	cohort	cohort
Active in community organisations				
• No	38	36	36	41
• Yes	62	63	63	58
Organisation type (Up to 4 responses included)				
• School based/ child associated	29	18	12	4
• Women's organisations/ groups (including Women's Liberation)	19	14	19	14
• Local politics	12	9	9	19
• Local/ community services (general)	8	13	6	13
• Environmental groups	7	5	9	14
• Unions	4	14	11	8
• Peace groups/ anti-nuclear	4	5	11	5
• Professional organisations	4	7	11	3
Active in political parties				
• No	77	64	86	71
• ALP	20	26	6	15
• Liberal	--	--	--	1
• Australia Party/Democrats	2	3	4	2
• Greens	--	--	1	12
Religious affiliation				
• None	80	75	77	86
• Anglican	10	9	4	4
• Catholic	5	5	7	3
• Other Christian	4	5	6	2
• All others	2	3	4	3
Marital status				
• Married	76	51	36	33
• Divorced/ separated	10	12	25	15
• Widowed	--	1	5	3
• Never married	13	34	34	47
Long term relationship other than marriage These respondents would be included in the not married group above				
• Same sex	2	5	9	8
• Opposite sex	7	8	18	18
Parental status Respondents could have children in more than one age group				
• No children	28	42	46	54
• Had children aged				

Under 5 years	38	17	8	12
5-17 years	44	36	30	19
18 years and above	11	14	27	23
Skills and experience brought to WEL (Up to 3 responses included)				
• Nothing/ no comment	19	22	21	38
• Perseverance/ enthusiasm	25	17	17	13
• Organisational skills	22	21	27	8
• Writing/ media experience	16	26	18	11
• Networking/ contacts	13	11	16	16
• Education (experience)	15	5	10	5
• Politics	11	8	11	14
• Research skills	9	9	12	8
• Bureaucratic skills	6	7	5	3

	% of those in paid employment	% of those in paid employment	% of those in paid employment	% of those in paid employment
Occupations of those in paid employment[15]				
• Manager/ administrator	8	12	12	9
• Professional, including nurse/ teacher	70	62	49	67
• Associate professional	6	8	9	5
• Trades	--	--	--	--
• Advanced clerical/ service	7	7	9	3
• Intermediate clerical/ service	2	2	5	1
• Intermediate production/ transport	1	--	--	--
• Elementary clerical/ sales/ service	1	2	1	4
• Labourers/ related workers	1	--	--	--
• Public servants, did not give further details	5	7	9	9
• Several occupations	1	2	1	1
• Inadequately described	--	--	3	--
Type of occupation of those in paid employment				
• Public sector	63	62	65	57
• Private sector	9	5	5	11
• Self employed/ Family business	6	3	3	4
• Status not specified	22	29	27	28

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[15] Using the occupational groupings set out in ASCO – Australian Standard Classification of Occupations *Information Paper* Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996

TABLE 2. 'You and Your Parents'

Name of cohort	Founder	Fraser	Hawke/ Keating	Howard
Years of cohort Years in which respondents joined WEL	1972–75	1976–82	1983–95	1996–2003
RESPONDENTS				
Sex of respondents 1% of all respondents were male	--	--	--	--
Current age of respondents Age range, in years, at time of filling in the survey	48 - 90	41 - 86	27 - 79	20 - 81
Place of birth Australia Percentage of all respondents in cohort	76	75	74	75
State/ Territory of birth Percentage of Australian born in cohort				
• NSW	40	39	40	39
• Victoria	26	19	23	24
• Queensland	7	14	9	6
• Western Australia	11	9	7	6
• South Australia	4	11	12	10
• Tasmania	4	--	3	6
• ACT	2	5	--	1
• Northern Territory	0	--	--	1
Place of birth in Australia Percentage of Australian born in cohort				
• Capital city	56	75	60	75
• Regional city	13	9	15	7
• Country/ rural	28	16	23	15
Overseas born Percentage of all respondents in cohort	24	22	26	25
Country of birth Selected countries only Percentage of overseas born in cohort				
• UK and Ireland	58	24	38	42
• NZ/ Oceania	9	29	19	13
• Other English speaking	12	24	19	13
• Rest of Europe	14	18	8	29
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Origin 1 respondent only				

Education				
Type of secondary school attended Percentage of respondents in cohort				
• Government/ state school	58	50	61	59
• Fee paying				
Catholic	11	12	11	9
Other religious	18	26	12	24
Other	7	11	9	2
• Multiple (more than one type)	5	--	5	5
• **Single-sex school** (Any of the above types)	56	66	41	39
Religious affiliation when growing up Percentage of all respondents in cohort				
• None	22	21	19	38
• Anglican	30	33	32	15
• Catholic	14	17	20	18
• Other Christian denominations	28	21	25	22
Language spoken at home by parents Percentage of all respondents in cohort				
• English	92	91	92	93
PARENTS of RESPONDENTS				
MOTHER				
Australian born Percentage of mothers of respondents in cohort	67	68	69	66
Overseas born Selected countries only Percentage of mothers of respondents in cohort				
• UK and Ireland	18	11	13	17
• Rest of Europe	4	7	2	8
• NZ and Oceania	4	5	7	3
Educational qualifications Percentage of mothers of respondents in cohort				
• Bachelors degree and higher	13	8	17	20
• None	46	49	46	36

Paid employment Percentage of mothers of respondents in paid work when respondent was growing up	45	45	56	73
Occupation Percentage of mothers who were employed				
• Manager/ professional (including nurse and teacher)	40	50	53	39
• Several/ varied occupations	17	6	4	23
Involvement in community organisations Percentage of mothers of respondents in cohort				
• Very active	21	26	18	22
• Some activity	38	28	34	33
• Not active	40	43	47	44
Involvement in political organisations Percentage of mothers of respondents in cohort				
• Very active	2	3	5	1
• Some activity	9	12	11	7
• Not active	86	80	81	92
Mother a member of WEL	3	3	4	2
FATHER				
Australian born Percentage of fathers of respondents in cohort	59	64	64	64
Overseas born Selected countries only Percentage of fathers of respondents in cohort				
• UK and Ireland	20	13	18	15
• Rest of Europe	7	5	4	12
• NZ/ Oceania	6	5	4	4
Educational qualifications Percentage of fathers of respondents in cohort				
• Bachelors degree and above	22	24	28	36
• None	34	26	34	23

In paid employment Percentage of fathers of respondents in cohort	99	96	98	99
Occupation Percentage of fathers who were employed				
• Manager/ professional	49	56	44	57
• Several occupations	12	4	5	12
Involvement in community organisations Percentage of fathers of respondents in cohort				
• Very active	21	21	12	16
• Some activity	34	24	42	35
• Not active	41	49	43	48
Involvement in political organisations Percentage of fathers of respondents in cohort				
• Very active	6	12	3	7
• Some activity	14	11	21	17
• Not active	77	72	72	75
Father a member of WEL				
Overall one father a member of WEL in cohort 4				

TABLE 3: Respondents' relationship with WEL

Name of cohort	Founder	Fraser	Hawke/ Keating	Howard
Years of cohort Years in which respondents joined WEL	1972–75	1976–82	1983–95	1996–2003
	% of whole cohort	% of whole cohort	% of whole cohort	% of whole cohort
State of residence, when joined WEL				
• NSW	33	29	27	38
• Victoria	25	12	16	15
• Queensland	4	16	7	3
• Western Australia	8	13	12	9
• South Australia	6	5	13	9
• Tasmania	5	--	4	6
• ACT	15	24	22	19
• Northern Territory	3	1	--	--
Lived in a capital city	76	79	93	81
Original source of information about WEL				

• Media/ publicity	38	34	31	23
• Friends/ relatives	35	28	28	28
• Activity in other organisations	15	24	15	11
• Miscellaneous (includes university and Beatrice Faust)	4	9	15	15
• Internet	--	--	--	6
• Don't know/ can't remember	7	5	12	16
Knew a member				
• No	47	37	33	46
• Yes	50	61	66	54
• Not applicable, founder member	1	--	--	--
Membership status				
• Current member	38	62	51	76
Belonged to more than one WEL group	23	17	14	5
Reasons for membership lapse (non-current members)				
• Over committed/ too busy	21	28	18	30
• Moved away	7	7	4	26
• Cost	5	3	6	9
• New priorities/ interests	21	17	8	--
• Fed up with organisation/ people/ directions/ policies	13	10	27	9
• Organisation slack/ no reminder	5	7	6	--
• Various/ miscellaneous	15	14	10	13
Activities in WEL Up to 4 responses included)				
• Office holder	34	28	27	17
• Attending meetings	25	24	35	28
• Lobbying	12	11	11	--
• Writing/ helping with newsletters	10	5	13	8
• Submission writing	8	13	10	3
• Letters to press	7	13	6	6
• Lots of things/ all of the above	48	28	29	11
• Nothing	6	16	16	41
Reasons for joining WEL Up to 2 responses included)				
• To be active in relation to women's issues (general)	43	49	45	45
• To promote women's/ feminist issues in a political context (specific)	32	29	26	24
• General interest/ support in women's issues in society	14	20	24	19

• To work with like-minded people	15	22	12	14
• Liked WEL as an organisation for action	13	11	16	8
• To share/ gain information (networking)	6	3	16	16
Issues of concern when joined WEL (Brought these issues with them. Up to 3 responses included)				
• Sexual health/ abortion/ family planning	29	21	16	15
• Discrimination against women in the workplace/ employment (including affirmative action)	24	22	24	14
• Women's issues, rights and equality	19	20	19	23
• Discrimination against women in society (general)	24	20	16	11
• Equal pay	23	7	14	9
• Child care	21	17	9	13
• Lack of opportunity/ limited choices for women (general)	15	18	11	7
• Education issues	13	16	11	8
• General sexism in society	13	8	5	9
• Safety of women/ Domestic violence	6	18	10	13
• Lack of female representation in government (all levels)	7	11	16	7
• Lack of female participation in politics	7	5	13	15
Development of new skills through WEL (Up to 3 responses included)				
• Networks/ contacts	37	43	48	23
• Personal development/ confidence/ education	35	13	27	13
• Political skills/ knowledge	21	16	14	7
• How to lobby	19	16	16	4
• Competence in committee organisation	17	17	12	5
• General development and awareness of feminist issues	15	8	13	11
• No comment	26	37	33	61
Other life differences through involvement in WEL (Up to 2 responses included)				
• Self confidence	23	18	17	5
• Good friends	17	11	13	7
• Move to employment in women's issues area (specific)	12	12	12	2
• Employment change / decision	11	3	9	5
• Decision to attempt higher education	11	7	3	5

	Founder	Fraser	Hawke/Keating	Howard
• Burnout/ other negative result	3	4	3	--
• No difference/ no comment	30	49	49	72
•				
Organisational activity after joining WEL (Up to 4 responses included Selected groups)				
• None/ no comment	15	13	25	27
• Women's groups/ organisations	31	38	39	25
• Local/ community services	28	24	16	17
• School-based associations	31	18	15	6
• Local politics e.g. member of a local council	26	21	13	18
• Environment groups	23	16	13	11
• Unions	11	18	16	14
• Peace groups/ anti-nuclear/ amnesty international	9	9	12	14
• Health services	11	12	13	4
Political party activity after joining WEL				
• None	51	53	65	67
• ALP	34	36	16	12
• Liberal	1	1	--	1
• Australia Party/Democrats	5	3	3	4
• Greens	3	1	8	11
• More than one party	6	7	4	3

Current members whose membership had lapsed in the past at some time = 74 respondents

Reasons for lapse	% of all lapsees			
• Overcommitted/ too busy	19			
• Moved away	26			
• Cost/ couldn't afford	12			
• New priorities/ interests	4			
• Fed up with people/ organisation	9			
• Organisation slack	9			
• Other reasons	20			

TABLE 4. Opinions About WEL

Name of cohort	Founder	Fraser	Hawke/Keating	Howard
Years of cohort Years in which respondents joined WEL	1972–75	1976–82	1983–95	1996–2003

Question 15. What have been the main outcomes of WEL activities at your State or local level (directly or indirectly)

Outcomes (Up to 3 responses were included)	% of cohort	% of cohort	% of cohort	% of cohort
• Successful law reform	21	17	22	13
• Establishment of women's services	18	12	4	--
• Channel for lobbying/ public representation on important women's issues (local)	10	9	18	7
• Awareness of women's issues by the general public	10	9	13	7
• Greater representation of women in politics	16	4	4	2
• Action in relation to social issues affecting women	8	8	6	--
• Establishment of women's refuges	10	12	1	--
• Don't know/ no information	14	13	17	32
• No comment	15	28	20	25
• General comment only	11	8	7	5

Question 16. What do you think has been the main effect of WEL activity in the wider Australian society?

Main effects Up to 2 responses were included	% of cohort	% of cohort	% of cohort	% of cohort
• Increased awareness of women's issues in general society	30	33	34	23
• Putting/ keeping Women's/ feminist issues on (specific) political agenda	16	18	18	18
• Keeping women's/ feminist issues on general agenda	10	18	19	23
• Gains on specific issues e.g. child care, law reform, work conditions	19	11	7	6
• Provided high standard lobbying / media commentary	6	14	14	12
• WEL respectable image for feminist activities/ issues	6	8	3	3
• Other general comment	24	18	23	9
• Don't know/ no information	3	1	7	8
• No comment	9	9	5	18

Question 17(a). Does WEL still have something to contribute to Australian society?

Contributions Only one response was included	% of cohort	% of cohort	% of cohort	% of cohort
• No	14	12	12	7
• Yes, to keep women's voices/ issues noticed	17	24	35	26
• Yes, still things to do	17	11	16	13
• Yes, WEL general approach still needed	15	17	8	15
• Yes, making sure past gains	13	11	9	2

not lost				
• Yes, continue lobbying politicians	3	7	--	5
• Yes, other general comment	10	16	7	15
• Yes (no other comment)	12	3	11	16

Question 17(b). What are the main issues WEL should be addressing?

	% of cohort	% of cohort	% of cohort	% of cohort
Main issues Up to 3 responses were included				
• Employment issues - discrimination, glass ceiling, pay equity	22	28	24	18
• Employment –specific work/ home balance, maternity leave, flexible hours	18	22	19	28
• General social issues including education, health	19	22	18	15
• Child care	16	12	13	17
• More women in parliament/ women politicians	10	18	15	15
• Current general issues in society e.g. refugees, land rights, environment	13	12	11	15
• Economic issues	11	13	11	7
• Violence against women	8	7	14	12
• No comment	19	16	12	15

Question 17(c). What strategies should WEL be using to achieve its aims?

	% of cohort	% of cohort	% of cohort	% of cohort
Strategies Up to 2 responses were included				
• Media push/ publicity to raise profile of WEL	15	18	16	23
• Strategic lobbying/ support of politicians / political parties	10	12	13	13
• Encourage young(er) women to be active in WEL	9	17	4	9
• Co-operate with other organisations	8	9	11	6
• Effective research/ policy development/ action planning	10	4	6	4
• General lobbying	8	4	9	8
• No comment/ Don't know	36	34	29	42

Current and Non-current Members: Important Issues for WEL Today

Issues	% of all non-current members	% of all current members
Non-current members were more likely:		
• To have no comment	22	12
Current members were more likely to mention:		
• Employment –specific work/ home balance, maternity leave, flexible hours	19	23
• General social issues including education, health	17	21

Current members were less likely to mention:		
• Child care	16	13

TABLE 5. Current (2002/03) characteristics of respondents to the WEL History survey

Name of cohort	Founder	Fraser	Hawke/ Keating	Howard
Years of cohorts Years in which respondents joined WEL	1972–75	1976–82	1983–95	1996–2003
Current Age Age range within cohorts in years	48–90	41–86	27–79	20–81
	% of whole cohort	% of whole cohort	% of whole cohort	% of whole cohort
Current marital status				
• Currently married	44	39	33	34
• Divorced/ separated	32	22	33	19
• Widowed	11	9	4	4
• Never married	13	21	25	41
Long term relationship, other than marriage				
• Same sex partner	6	11	14	7
• Opposite sex partner	10	11	19	24
Current employment status				
• Paid employment full-time	27	30	42	54
• Paid employment part-time	16	21	18	21
• Not in employment, but looking for work	3	4	5	3
• Not in employment, not looking for work.	13	16	14	14
• Retired from paid labour force	42	26	19	7
Current member of WEL Was a member of WEL at the time of the survey	38	62	51	76
	% of those in paid employment	% of those in paid employment	% of those in paid employment	% of those in paid employment

Occupations of those in paid employment[16]				
• Manager/ administrator	24	27	23	8
• Professional, including nurse/ teacher	47	54	52	68
• Associate professional	4	--	6	5
• Trades	--	--	--	1
• Advanced clerical/ service	5	2	--	--
• Intermediate clerical/ service	2	--	--	3
• Intermediate production/ transport	--	--	--	1
• Elementary clerical/ sales/ service	1	--	--	4
• Labourers/ related workers	1	--	--	--
• Public servants, did not give further details	15	12	14	9
• Several occupations	1	2	--	1
• Inadequately described	1	1	4	--
Type of occupation of those in paid employment				
• Public sector	58	56	63	60
• Private sector	11	2	3	11
• Self employed/ family business	14	12	16	7
• Status not specified	17	29	19	23

APPENDIX 2: WEL HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

http://wel.anu.edu.au/Appendix 2.e-quest.html

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[16] Using the occupational groupings set out in ASCO—Australian Standard Classification of Occupations: *Information Paper* Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996