

# WEL-Informed

The Newsletter of Women's Electoral Lobby NSW

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## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH 2013

At midday on Saturday 9 March over 300 people gathered at Town Hall Square in Sydney for the annual International Women's Day march. An amazing array of women and supporters came from all over Sydney to mark this important day.

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**Next WEL meeting**

Wednesday  
3rd April

6.00 pm at  
66 Albion Street  
Surry Hills

ALL WELCOME

RSVP 02 9212 4374  
Or wel@welnsw.org.au

WEL NSW Inc is a member of WEL Australia and is dedicated to creating a society where women's participation and potential are unrestricted, acknowledged and respected, where women and men share equally in society's responsibilities and rewards.

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## **EARLY DAYS OF WEL – THE BEGINNING OF MY POLITICISATION— ANNE BARBER**

I first joined WEL when I was in my last year of university and heard about the women's movement – it was about 1974. I wasn't a feminist back then but had been brought up with the belief that anyone (including females) should be able to tackle anything they wanted to in their life and career.

I attended my first meeting at Humanist House in Chippendale. There were about 50 women present and there was much debate and discussion about topics of which I knew absolutely nothing, and lots of plans made for various activities. Whilst I became and remained a member since that time, I thought that there was very little that I could contribute in the political sphere and did not attend another meeting for some years.

My next practical involvement with WEL was when I was transferred through work down to Melbourne for two years in 1987 and decided to also join WEL in Victoria whilst retaining my membership in NSW. In those two years as a member of Victorian WEL I learned much about being a feminist and met many fascinating activist Victorian women; Beatrice Faust, Priscilla Todd, Mary Owen, Val Byth, Kerry Lovering, Eve Mahlab, Jo Wainer and many others.

The meetings were held monthly at Val Byth's house and while we held our meetings her husband Jim worked in the kitchen to provide lunch of marvellous soup and bread. Usually about 20 women attended. The meetings were well managed but very boisterous with much discussion about all the topics. We once used the attendees to 'stuff' envelopes for a mailout we did to all the libraries telling them of WEL (no technology and websites in those days). There was great camaraderie amongst all the women and much moral support for one another. It was a very inclusive atmosphere and one in which one could share opinions and learn. At the end of my two years in Victoria, I was very sad to leave my Victorian WEL friends behind and became much more active in WEL NSW.

In 1989 we had WEL sub-groups in Bathurst, Wagga, Newcastle and Coffs Harbour, we had reasonably healthy finances, a paid part-time co-ordinator and a representative in Canberra. As in Victoria, meetings were also held monthly and about 30 women attended on Sunday morning at the NCOSS building (our current location). I can remember double rows of chairs around the large table in the meeting room. There were many eager and willing hands to write letters, petitions, submissions to arrange protests and deputations.

About this time we decided to modernise and bought our first computer, but it was mainly used as a typewriter rather than as access to the internet. All of the newsletters were mailed in hard copy to members and were printed by someone at Wentworthville for us, which involved couriers to and fro.

I was dragooned into becoming the NSW Treasurer at a planning meeting held in a place owned by Eva Cox in Forest Lodge in 1992 – the same year that Women Into Politics was born and Edna Ryan was farewelled as she was leaving Sydney to move to Canberra. I joined WEL because I saw the need for such an organisation to promote equity for women and to oppose policies that were detrimental to their involvement in public life. Sadly, I think there is still a need for a WEL to exist and social change has not happened quickly.

**Anne Barber**

**Anne Barber**

## PUNISHING SOLE PARENTS WITH NEWSTART

On Tuesday 5 February sole parents and their supporters rallied across Australia calling on the government to reinstate the Parenting Payment Single. The cutting of the Payment was one of the harshest changes the Federal Government has made to the welfare system, pushing parents from the Payment onto Newstart once their youngest child turns eight.

The Sydney rally was held in Martin Pl and hosted by the Single Parents Action Group NSW (SPAG NSW), and over one hundred people and lots of media were in attendance.

The rally was addressed by Alison Peters from NCOSS, Katrina Rae from SPAG NSW, Cate Faerhmann from The Greens, Kelly March from Shellharbour City Council and Eva Cox from the F Collective.

The speakers condemned the further stigmatisation and punishment of sole parents with this change. Living on the Newstart allowance will leave sole parents and their children living in poverty.

Furthermore, it was pointed out that the purpose of the decision – to push more sole parents into the work-force – is at odds with reality. Already 60% of sole parents receiving the payments are engaged in paid employment. For others, the greatest challenge is finding a job that allows them to meet their parenting responsibilities.

Katrina and Kelly, both sole parents, spoke about the difficulty of finding work that has child-friendly hours and is flexible. They told stories of sole parents who had been fired from their jobs for taking too much sick leave to look after their children.

Katrina spoke about the difficulties of surviving on the Parenting Payment Single. She spoke of having too little food in the house, and not being able to buy her children fresh fruit and vegetables, of not being able to afford school books or school excursions, of not being able to afford school uniforms and shoes. Living on Newstart will present even greater challenges for Katrina and her family.

Since the rallies were held in February there has been some great forward movement on the campaign.

ACOSS reported the changes to the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, pointing out that the scrapping of the payment could: “[risk] violation of human rights under article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights but also risks poverty for sole parents dependent on social security payments.”

The Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights wrote to the Australian Government raising concerns about the changes and arguing that the changes may: “[threaten] the enjoyment of human rights of some of the most marginalised and impoverished members of Australian society.”

On March 13 a member of the Federal Labor Government, New South Wales Senator Doug Cameron, called on the Government to increase Newstart by \$50 a week. Senator Cameron said “[forcing] people into poverty is not a principle that I'm comfortable with in terms of the Labor Party” and argued that the recent welfare changes were driving children into poverty.

Also in March, the ACTU released research showing that most Australians were in favour of increasing the rate of Newstart payments. The ACTU is also calling on the Government to increase Newstart by \$50 per week.

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## CONVENOR'S REPORT

It's been a big start to the year and with a Federal Election on the horizon that is already playing out differently than any election previous, it shows no signs of letting up.

Joining us to take on the year is **Ashleigh Lustica**, our new Coordinator. She'll be working with us both on our state based lobbying and on WEL NSW's contribution to the WEL Australia's Federal election campaigning. Welcome Ash!

Spearheading our Federal election efforts is **Melanie Fernandez** since taking up her role as National Chair. She's usually the one writing to you in this capacity, keeping you up to date with all things WEL NSW. Big congratulations to Mel on the new role and enormous thanks for all her hard work for WEL NSW over the years. In this issue instead she'll be giving a run down of the WELA's work so far this year – make sure you check it out.

Which brings me (briefly) to myself. I'm **Laura Maclean** and I've stepped into the Convenor role since Mel took on her national role. I've been involved with WEL now for a year and a half and I'm really excited to take on this role in such a big year. I'll be working with our fantastic executive to make sure we keep a firm eye on the NSW Government activity whilst also working hard to make sure women are firmly on the agenda in the lead up to September.

To that end (an eye on the NSW Government that is), WEL NSW recently convened a meeting aimed at contributing to and coordinating a response to the *Women in NSW 2012* report released by Women NSW. The report aims to provide an annual evaluation of gender equality and gender difference in NSW, so that the baseline data presented now and in subsequent years can be used by decision makers in all spheres to drive change.

It's a good starting point for engagement on issues for women in NSW but it is, really, only a start. You can read an online copy of the report here: [http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/publications/women\\_in\\_nsw\\_2012\\_report](http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/publications/women_in_nsw_2012_report)

The report covers six key areas – health and wellbeing, education and learning, work and financial security, leadership and representation and safety and access to justice. It's a lot to cover and while it does provide a lot of interesting data there are a number of key areas that aren't covered adequately and there is no indication of what the Government will be doing to address areas of concern to come out of the report.

WEL NSW will be developing a considered response to the report with other organisations that will address these issues. We'll keep you posted on the development of that report.

We'll also be coordinating with the F collective to hold a forum on cuts to single parent payments. We'll let you know the details once they are confirmed but **save Thursday 11 April, from 6pm** for a panel discussion about the impact of government attacks on welfare, what a well functioning support system might look like and strategies for future action. (See details on page 11)

WEL NSW was out in force at the International Women's Day march down

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Spearheading our Federal election efforts is **Melanie Fernandez** since taking up her role as National Chair of WEL Australia

## PREACHED BUT NOT PRACTISED

– flexible work may be the current hot topic, but the data to inform is not!

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has cancelled their plans to initiate 2013 cycle the Work and Life Family Survey (WoLFS) this year. This survey is actually the amalgamation of two surveys, *Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation (SEARS)* and *Time Use Survey (TUS)*.

WEL and a range of other organisations are extremely frustrated by this decision and have written to the ABS demanding the survey is reinstated for the 2013 cycle.

### What is the WoLFS?

The WoLFS were designed to collect detailed information about the way people use their time, as time use surveys offer a window into people's lives, like no other data source provides. Time use surveys are internationally recognized as the only accurate method of collecting the quantity of time devoted to personal care, work and leisure, providing the only reliably accurate information on unpaid work (including caring and volunteering).

It is also unique as it measures both paid and unpaid labour on the same metric. It is important to continue to record the division, intensity and amount of labour between men and women to further improve this balance in Australian society. The capacity of the current and future governments to make good social policy will be reduced by the absence of updated data on these very important areas.

### Why WEL cares...

We care for a whole bunch of reasons!

- The data provided from the various surveys, now to be included in WoLFS, helps us to establish policy platforms to lobby and advocate for the development of women.
- It also provides an ongoing monitoring of changing (or stagnating) division of labour between men and women and the policy implications.
- Using data on changing time allocations allows us and others to express support or concern when government policies are developed around flexible work conditions and other labour related decisions that affect women.
- The data can determine the impact and take up of strategies for increased flexibility at work to assist with caring responsibilities.
- Data can show possible changes in gender norms and particularly men and women engaging in non-traditional roles.
- The changing demand for and supply of 'informal care' and an ageing population needs to be measured to highlight the huge costs and benefits of caring in our communities.
- It provides the necessary data to inform discussion around retirement income needs and pay equity.

The Women's Electoral Lobby and other advocacy organisations in Australia need this information to continue to monitor progress in gender equity and fairness in all facets of Australian life.

### You can get involved!

- \* You can write your own letter to the ABS
- \* You can sign the online petition, go to: <http://chn.ge/Zskga2>
- \* You can support WEL in our campaign!

To get involved, contact Ashleigh at [alustica@welns.org.au](mailto:alustica@welns.org.au) or 0433703367.

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## CONVENOR'S REPORT

George St on March 9 to demand full equality and an end to misogyny, violence and harassment. (See report on page 1 and photos on page 10).

Make sure you catch **Gabe Kavanagh's** run-down of the day in this issue – it was a great turn out with a huge diversity of women and issues represented. All in all a fantastic day that WEL members were proud to be part of.

Last, but definitely not least, we want to hear from you. If you want to get involved with WEL no matter whether it's just to send us an email with an idea you have or an article you have written or if you want to get involved in our federal election activities or our NSW policy work - let us know.

I introduced you to Ash earlier, she'd love to hear from you. She's on [alustica@welnsw.org.au](mailto:alustica@welnsw.org.au). Till next time...

**Laura Maclean**

## WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2013

Each year, for International Women's Day, the State government recognises the work of women in NSW. This year it was held the day before IWD – March 7. There was such a great attendance that extra chairs had to be brought in and the awards were presented by The Premier, the Hon. Barry O'Farrell and the Minister for Women, the Hon. Pru Goward.

The MC, Anne Fulwood, raised a laugh of appreciation when she quoted her taxi driver of the morning 'that if more women were in charge of government there would be fewer problems' – which the Premier graciously acknowledged with a smile and a jest.

There are three categories of awards:

The People's Choice Community Hero Award: is nominated and chosen by the NSW community. The Award recognises local heroes and volunteers who contribute to their communities. This year there were four finalists; Dr. Frances Bodkin, Jessica Brown, Rebecca Morgan and Mary Slater.

The Premier's Award for Woman of the Year: recognises inspirational women who have accomplished significant achievements in NSW. This year there were six finalists; Chelsea Bonner, Gina Field, Dr. Cathy Foley, Dr. Diann Rodgers-Healey, Dr. Eman Sharobeem, Najeeba Wazefadost.

The Local Woman of the Year awards: nominated by Members of Parliament, recognise women who have made wonderful contributions to their local communities. This year there were 67 awards made.

For detailed information on the successful finalists: Jessica Brown and Dr. Cathy Foley – please go to the FACS website: [http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/women\\_of\\_the\\_year\\_awards/2013\\_women\\_of\\_the\\_year\\_winners](http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/women_of_the_year_awards/2013_women_of_the_year_winners)

I think it is excellent that IWD has grown to the extent that there is now official recognition of the, mostly unpaid, work of women in support of their communities.

On a personal note, and as a feminist activist, I did notice that most of the work carried out by these women (similar to the Australia Day and Queen's Birthday awards) is dominated by social work rather than changing the system to improve human rights.

**Anne Barber**

## WELA REPORT—MELANIE FERNANDEZ

### WEL's 41st Year - Regeneration and a Federal Election

At a National level WEL has had a busy few months. Last year saw us celebrate our 40th Anniversary with events across the country focused on honouring the amazing achievements of the last 40 years, and the women that worked tirelessly to get us there, and looking to the work that is still to be done. These celebrations acknowledged the past; but also emphasised the future and regeneration. We focused on engaging a new generation of women and re-engaging and activating established members. It was an inspiring time to see the commitment of our members and the excitement of new members to be involved. Now in our 41st year we need to continue this regeneration and mobilisation of our membership in a Federal Election year that will be crucial for women's rights in Australia.

We closed 2011 with me taking over the role of National Chair from our dedicated leader, Helen L'Orange. Helen has worked tirelessly to drive WEL at a national level, to ensure regeneration and reactivation of our states, and to ensure our contribution to progressing women's rights at a national level. Along with myself as Chair, we have a couple of new additions to our National Executive Committee. We welcome Sophie Wilson a young woman from WEL Tas, who works for ABS, and Emma Davidson from WEL ACT, whom some of you may know from her amazing work with the nationally funded women's alliance, Equality Rights Alliance (ERA). We start this year with a team of diverse and inspiring women to lead our organisation through its 41st year and I look forward to working with them and all of you!

WELA has put together a Federal Election Working Group to steer our election campaign. We are in the process of updating our national policy platform, with a focus on the following priority issues for our campaign:

- \* Children's Services
- \* Welfare - including Income Management, Sole Parents' Payments and Newstart
- \* Affordable Housing

Currently we are working with other women's groups, particularly through the ERA network, to form a coalition campaign and a stronger lobby campaign. We are also prioritising increasing our capacity and member engagement. So, if you want to get involved - whether through policy development work or campaign strategy and implementation, get in contact with us now!

WELA has a number of other diverse and exciting projects that we are currently working on. We are calling for volunteers, so if you are interested or want more info let us know!

These projects include:

- \* Funding for Australian Services Union (ASU) equal remuneration case - including gather information on state/territory commitments to fund their share

*(Continued on page 8)*

Now in our 41st year we need to continue this regeneration and mobilisation of our membership in a Federal Election year that will be crucial for women's rights in Australia.

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## WELA REPORT

of the costs of Fair Work Australia's decision in the ASU equal remuneration case; to use this information to lobby states and territories

\* ACTU's 'Secure Jobs - Better Future' campaign - working with ACTU on their campaign to link in to their election activities and WEL's election campaign

\* History of WEL - updating state and territory histories and preparing reports of all 40th anniversary events

In the last month WEL responded to an invitation from the Minister for the Status of Women, the Hon. Julie Collins, to comment on new reporting matters under the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012. WEL welcomed the passage of this legislation as an important development in workplace gender equality. However, WEL indicated that the effectiveness of the legislation is closely tied to the Minister's decisions with respect to the reporting matters. We indicated our view that the only means of achieving standardised reporting is by requiring organisations to report in terms of the Australia and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). We recommended that employers be required to provide numbers, not percentages, when reporting, and that these numbers be classified within the ANZSCO framework. Our other comments referred to the Draft Framework for reporting under the Gender Equality Indicators prepared by the Office for Women. You can read the full submission at <http://www.wel.org.au/>. WEL members in NSW and Victoria attended follow-up meetings to provide further feedback on the data measures.

WEL has been seeking meetings with the Prime Minister and Treasurer's offices and various relevant members of Parliament to advocate our Federal Budget submission, which you can read at <http://wel.org.au/index.php/publications/submissions/page/2/>. We have a meeting with an advisor to Bill Shorten this week.

WEL has written to ABS to express our grave concerns about the cancellation of the 2013 Work Life and Family Survey (WoLFS). The Work, Life and Family Survey: Work, Care and Family Balance (WoLFS) collection is intended to combine key components of the previous *Survey of Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation (SEARS)* and *Time Use Survey (TUS)*. Time use surveys offer a window into people's lives, like no other data source provides. It is unique in that it measures both paid and unpaid on the same metric. It is important to continue to record the division, intensity and amount of labour between men and women to further improve this balance in Australian society. WEL has expressed our concerns and indicated the multiple and important uses that we have for this data in our lobby work. WEL has called for the reinstatement of the WoLFS, as a matter of priority.

### *News Round the Country:*

WEL ACT has put forward a pre-budget submission to the ACT government, particularly concerned with housing stress for women. The submission acknowledges the financial constraints on the ACT Budget as a result of reduced revenue from the Commonwealth and as a result of reduced growth and economic secu-

(Continued on page 9)

See article on page 5 about how you can get involved in lobbying for the reinstatement of the Work and Life Family Survey

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## **WELA REPORT**

ity. These constraints are likely to have an effect on both the cost and supply of private housing in Canberra, and the availability of funding for public and community housing. You can read the full submission at <http://www.wel.org.au/>.

For their State election WEL WA canvassed Liberal, ALP, Greens and National candidates with a series of questions that focused on housing, children's services, country and rural women, and gender related violence.

The draft bill to reform Tasmania abortion laws has been released and submissions will close soon. WELA are currently putting together our submission.

The WEL National Executive Committee bi-monthly teleconference took place on 17 March. The main topics on the agenda were, of course, the Federal Election, and also our volunteer projects.

*Coming up!*

ERAs face to face meeting is coming up in Melbourne in the first week of May. This is a great opportunity for WEL representatives to get together with other member organisations and be involved in the Alliance strategic planning. We will be talking about the upcoming election and the policy work ERA will be doing in the lead up.

**Melanie Fernandez**

*(Continued from page 3)*

## **PUNISHING SOLE PARENTS ON NEWSTART**

The Federal Government is now discussing a proposal to allow sole parents to earn more income before their Newstart payments are docked. While this would be a welcome reprieve for some sole parents, it does not address the core issue of too little welfare being provided for sole parents who are unable to work.

SPAG NSW is planning another round of protests. The Sydney protest will be held at 11am on 13 April 2013. For more information see: <http://singleparentsactiongroup.org/>

**Gabe Kavanagh**

"Feminism has fought no wars. It has killed no opponents. It has set up no concentration camps, starved no enemies, practiced no cruelties.

Its battles have been for education, for the vote, for better working conditions...for safety on the streets...for child care, for social welfare... for rape crisis centres, women's refuges, reforms in the law.

If someone says, "Oh, I'm not a feminist," I ask, "Why, what's your problem?""

**Dale Spender, Feminist**

The WEL National Executive Committee bi-monthly teleconference took place on 17 March. The main topics on the agenda were, of course, the Federal Election, and also our volunteer projects.

(Continued from page 1)

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2013

A delegation from WEL NSW were in attendance, as were a huge delegation of women from Asian Women at Work who came to raise the profile of migrant women workers in Australia. Lots of Unions turned out to mark the day including the FSU, MUA, TWU, USU, United Voice and others.

Sole parents from Sydney were there to protest the Federal Government's recent cuts to the Sole Parenting Payment, which leaves single parents on the inadequate Newstart allowance. The F Collective delegation were promoting the (joint WEL and F) forum on how these cuts to the welfare system disproportionately impact on women, and what can be done to address this in a federal election year.

Colectivo Mujer brought pink crosses to represent women who have lost their lives due to the femicide in Juarez, Mexico. Women's Collectives from Sydney University and UNSW were there with banners, their year of activism is just getting started!

United Voice activists came to talk about their Big Steps campaign, which calls on the Federal Government to put more funding into the Early Childhood Education and Care sector in order to pay educators an equal wage. The Women's Abortion Action Coalition marched behind their banner, standing strong against Fred Nile's recent attempts to undermine a woman's right to choose in NSW. Representatives from the Older Women's Network marched, reminding everyone of the vital role that older people play in our community.

Speakers addressed the crowd on a diverse range of issues from the rights of breastfeeding mothers, to equal pay, to human rights. The diversity and passion of women at the march was a powerful reminder of the breadth and depth of the Sydney feminist movement.



(Left and below) WEL members marching



(Left) WEL members with Tara Moss

## WHY PICK ON SOLE PARENTS? SEXISM, WELFARE AND BAD POLICY DECISIONS

The F Collective and Women's Electoral Lobby NSW are hosting a forum on women and welfare.

Thursday April 11th, 6pm-8pm

At the Wesley Centre - Level 3, 220 Pitt Street Sydney

Speakers include:

Amanda Parkinson - journalist and F Collective member  
Beth Goldblatt - Research Fellow at UNSW Social Policy Research Centre  
Dr Cassandra Goldie - CEO Australian Council of Social Services  
Eva Cox - feminist activist, the Single Parents Action Group.

The attack on our welfare system has intensified in recent years, culminating in the axing of the Sole Parenting Payment, forcing single parents onto the totally inadequate Newstart allowance. The total abolition of the Sole Parenting Payment, for single parents with children over eight, is just one example of how our social safety net is being undermined by government decisions. Accompanying this is the opportunistic stigmatisation of members of our community currently relying on the welfare system.

Come along to this forum and talk about the role of the feminist movement in fighting for a decent social safety net, and what we can do to create change before the election!

Cassandra Goldie will be speaking about ACOSS' appeal to the United Nations to challenge the Sole Parenting Payment cuts.

Child minding: Let us know at [thefcollective@gmail.com](mailto:thefcollective@gmail.com) if you require child minding, and the age of your child.

Next WEL  
meeting

Wednesday

3rd April  
6.00pm

66 Albion St  
Surry Hills

ALL WELCOME

### NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

A special welcome to new members, and many thanks to all members who renewed their membership in the past months, and especially to those who gave so generously to WEL.

**Renewal**—If a renewal form is enclosed with your newsletter or included with your email copy, then your membership is now due. We encourage you to renew your membership of WEL as your ongoing support is important to us.

**Don't forget to let WEL know if you change your address.**

### Consider a Bequest to WEL NSW

A bequest enables you to perpetuate your ideas and make a difference far into the future. Please remember WEL in your will.

The following wording is recommended:

'I bequeath the sum of (amount written in words and figures) free of all debts, duties and taxes, to the Women's Electoral Lobby (NSW) Inc (ABN 50 242 525 012) for its general purposes, and I declare that the receipt of the Treasurer for the time being of the Women's Electoral Lobby (NSW) Inc shall be complete discharge to my executors for this gift, and that my executor shall not be bound to see to the application of it.'

**WEL NSW Executive**

Convenor: Laura Maclean  
Treasurer: Anne Barber  
Members: Josefa Green, Helen  
L'Orange, Melanie Fernandez, Gabe  
Kavanagh, Lorraine Slade

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**To join WEL NSW**

Download a membership form from [www.welnsw.org.au](http://www.welnsw.org.au) or phone (02) 9212 4374 for a membership package.

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