

# Reliving the history of Coolamon CWA

COOLAMON Branch was formed at a meeting convened by the late Mrs.

WL Palmer on 16 July 1927, with Mrs. Fletcher, a State Vice-President, being the guest speaker. Mrs. TE Baird was elected the first President, with Mrs. Edgar Way as Secretary and Mrs. CM Stack, Treasurer. Vice-Presidents were Mesdames RK Pyke, HV Rogers, M Smith and L Dyce. Meetings were held in the School of Arts on the first Saturday afternoon in each month at 4 o'clock. Membership quickly increased and considerable sums of money were raised for charitable purposes.

In 1930 the first Rest Room was opened in rented premises and in 1931 the first Baby Health Clinic was commenced, with Sister

Thompson in charge. Sister Tuck continued the work until the Department of Health provided a sister in 1936. In 1934 the late Mr. Owen Furner donated a piece of land in the main street of Coolamon and on 17 August 1935 a new brick Rest Room was opened. The Baby Health Clinic was carried on in this room until March 1951 when a modern Health Centre was opened by Mrs. JM Gordon, State President, on land adjoining the Rest Room, free of debt. Another piece of land (10 acres) was bequeathed to the branch by Mr. Lome Menzies to be used as a park, but this was acquired by the Public Works Department. The finance obtained from this land enabled the branch to purchase an adjoining building and so extend the

existing Rest Room into an adequate meeting room.

In 1929 a Younger Set was formed, the first President being Mrs. Mary Hennessy (nee Curtis). Mrs. Ellie Lucas (nee Wilson) was also a foundation member of that first Younger Set. Mrs. Lucas became an active member of the Coolamon branch for many years. This Younger Set was disbanded in 1935 but was reformed in 1936, with Miss Olive Iverach as President. This operated for a few years, but later ceased to function.

Until 1936 Coolamon had belonged to Riverina Group but when that Group was divided, Coolamon was transferred to the new Sturt Group and remained there until October 1971 when the branch

returned to the Riverina Group.

Throughout the years some of Coolamon's members have served at Group level and some have also been successful in major CWA competitions.

Jane Smith won the Country Woman of the Year Contest at Group in 1971 and Ellie Lucas was the Special Service Award Group Winner during the Diamond Jubilee of CWA of NSW. Ellie Lucas was also a Garry Prize winner and June McKelvie won 'Friendship Poem', a State Cultural competition. Merle Maloney won The Daily Advertiser Publicity Award in 1996 and 1997.

Group Office Bearers from our branch have included Jean Boothey (Group Vice-President, Group

Secretary, Group Treasurer and Group Land Cookery Officer); Beryl Edyvean (Group Vice-President); Elizabeth Furner (Group Handicraft Officer and Group Vice-President); Ellie Lucas (Group Vice-President); Merle Maloney (Group President, Group Vice-President and Group Cultural Officer); June McKelvie (Group Vice-President and Group Treasurer) and Joyce Nolte (Group Vice-President).

Merle Maloney has also been the CWA of Australia International Officer, the CWA Representative on the Prime Lamb Committee and the State Study and Investigation Committee. Elizabeth Furner has been the Chairperson of the State Handicraft Committee.

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# Coolamon branch is 90-years and still going strong

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Amanda Hilton (2012) and Genevieve Davey (2013) were successful gaining first place in the State Handicraft Competition.

In February 2009 despite objections from the community at large, the Greater Southern Area Health Service relocated the Early Intervention Clinic to the Coolamon Community Centre. These rooms are now rented by a massage therapist. The Coolamon Evening Branch closed in 1991 with some of the members joining the Day Branch.

The Nola and Jack Veitch Memorial Scholarship, which was established with some of the funds left to the branch in 1998, is awarded to a student 16-21 years of age living within a 38km radius of Coolamon to further their education.

The CWA Rooms are now used by the Royal Far West and the Senior Citizens Club on a regular basis and is rented out when required by members of the community. The branch has hosted the Melbourne Cup Luncheon and

Fashion Parade since 1998 and the Biggest Morning Tea each year. We cater for Group functions and serve morning tea on Australia Day after the raising of the flag. CWA Awareness Week is celebrated each year and a Saturday morning raffle is conducted in the main street.

Four of our members were on the organising committee for the very successful Coolamon Rural Women's Gathering in 2014.

The branch has been saddened by the passing of valued members: Ellie Lucas (Life member, member for 71 years); Joyce Nolte (member 22 years); Merle Maloney (member for 46 years); Nell Gaynor (member for 40 years); Mavis Furner (member for 59 years); Cathy Thompson (member for 28 years); Madeline Lucas (Life member, member for 71 years); Edna Black, Pearl Smith (member for 35 years) and Jean Schultz (member for 31 years).

Membership has slowly become lower over the years. CWA is always encouraging interested people to come along to its various events during the year.

