



IWD in Australia

Australia's first International Women's Day was held in 1928 in Sydney. Organised by the Militant Women's Movement, participants called for pay equality, paid leave, and an 8-hour working day for shop girls and paid leave. By 1931, annual marches were held in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne and protests continue to be held today to demand:

- equal pay
- equality in employment and education
- affordable childcare
- reproductive rights, including abortion on demand
- an end to both violence against women and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ women.



Above: Clara Zetkin
(1857-1933)



Below: Clara Lemlich
(1886-1982)

Origins of IWD

International Women's Day was first officially observed on 19 March 1911, with over a million women protesting across Europe against sex-based workplace discrimination, and demanding the right to vote and hold office.

Clara Zetkin, a German Social Democrat, anti-war activist and suffragist, called for the establishment of an International Women's Day at the Second International Conference of Socialist Women in 1910, as a means to promote political and economic equality for women.

Zetkin was inspired to organise IWD following a strike by New York female textile workers in November 1909 to demand higher wages and improved working conditions. As a predominantly migrant and feminised workforce, they were notoriously underpaid and highly exploited, working up to 75 hours per week and often locked on the factory floor to prevent toilet breaks. The strike, comprising mainly Jewish and Italian migrant women, was led by Ukrainian-born Clara Lemlich and won better pay and shorter hours, setting a benchmark for American garment workers' rights.



IWD

A brief history

International Women's Day (IWD) is held every year on 8 March, to celebrate historic progress made by women's liberation movements, and in acknowledgement of ongoing and pervasive gender inequality.



Resources

Films and documentaries

Brazen Hussies, directed by Catherine Dwyer

Abortion, Corruption and Cops: The Bertram Wainer Story, directed by John Moore

Period. End of Sentence., directed by Rayka Zehtabchi

Feminists: What Were They Thinking?, directed by Johanna Demetrakas

Books and novels

You Daughters of Freedom: The Australians who won the vote and inspired the world, by Clare Wright

Sister Outsider, by Audre Lorde

The Feminine Mystique, by Betty Friedan

Delusions of Gender: The Real Science Behind Sex Differences, by Cordelia Fine

This is What A Feminist Looks Like: The Rise and Rise of Australian Feminism, by Emily Maguire

IWD 2024

Count Her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress

WHISE is supporting the UN Women International Women's Day 2024 theme, Count her in: Invest in women, accelerate progress.

Women's economic empowerment is central to a gender equal world. The gender pay gap continues to be a barrier for women and gender diverse people achieving equality.

The introduction of the Gender Equality Act 2020 and the establishment of Victoria's first Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, councils and universities (known as defined entities), now have a legal obligation to promote gender equality in their policies, programs and services and take action to achieving workplace gender equality.

One component of this is to report against their gender pay gap.

WHISE has developed a resource to support organisations to evaluate their own gender pay gap and identify concrete steps towards achieving gender equality.

View our resource



Gender inequality today



Why IWD still matters...

Gender inequality continues to disadvantage women economically, politically and socially. This occurs through mechanisms such as:



The gender pay gap

In Australia, women earn \$26,393 less per annum than their male counterparts. Women are underpaid in both male- and female-dominated industries.



Unpaid labour

Australian women still do the bulk of unpaid household labour and childcare, roughly double that of men, and are twice as likely as men to provide unpaid care for elderly relatives or those living with a disability.



Gendered violence

Australian women are five times more likely than men to experience sexual violence. An average of one woman a week is killed by a current or former partner. At least one in four women have experienced emotional abuse from a partner.