

*Average minds discuss*  
Events

*Small minds discuss*  
People

*Great minds discuss*  
Ideas

Anonymous

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***NWR***

**National Women's Register**

Australia Incorporated



***LOCAL ORGANISER'S***  
***HANDBOOK***

**Connecting women ...**

**who are interested in everything  
and talk about anything!**

**Join us for lively discussion,  
to share ideas,  
meet other women  
and make new friends!**



## What is NWR?

“National Women’s Register” is an international organisation of informal, regional women’s discussion groups. Each group aims to provide its members with the opportunity to take part in stimulating discussion on a wide range of topics, both serious and light-hearted. By holding meetings on a regular basis the members of NWR groups have the opportunity to learn, appreciate other points of view, express opinions and ideas and develop friendships in an informal atmosphere. Women of all ages are welcome.

This is not a new concept. It was first introduced in England by a young housewife named Maureen Nicol in 1961. At that time the organisation was called “National Housewives Register.” The organisation flourished, eventually being named “National Women’s Register.” There are now members in many countries worldwide.

Prior to 1981 there were several groups in Australia without any formal ties. When Anne Burns emigrated from Scotland to Sydney she organised a group at Ryde during June 1982 which was called Women in Touch (WIT). This group was based on those in the “National Housewives Register.”

The Ryde group quickly expanded into four separate groups in Northern Sydney. An interview on ABC radio’s 2BL (now 702) “City Extra” programme with Margaret Throsby swelled these groups to eight in eighteen months. At the same time groups started in other states and by the end of 1983 there were seventeen groups.

Publicity on television and radio, together with an article in “Parent and Child” magazine in 1985, consolidated these groups to fourteen in Sydney with others springing up in many parts of NSW.

During the 1980’s the NSW Board of Adult Education granted WIT funds which were used to establish a management committee, organise annual conferences and publish newsletters. The organisation no longer receives any grant so the annual newsletter, publicity and administration costs are entirely funded by member’s subscriptions. The annual conference is self-funded.

In October 1992 at the annual conference in Cessnock members voted to change the name to National Women’s Register (NWR) in line with the parent organisation. On 9<sup>th</sup> March 1993, National Women’s Register became incorporated.

## How does National Women's Register Work?

### The Local Groups

Each group chooses when and where to meet and their own programme according to the wishes of members. One member takes on the role of Local Organiser (LO) and co-ordinates the group's activities and liaises with the Committee. The LO is generally changed each year, but this is not imperative and some groups even have joint LO's.

### The NWR National Committee

A committee is elected each year from members and is responsible for the overall administration of NWR in Australia. This includes the following aims and objectives.

- The formation of new groups throughout Australia.
- Keeping a register of all NWR groups which provides a network of friendship for women who move to a new area.
- Publicising NWR so that all women needing such a group have access to one.
- Delegate and support the group organising the annual conference.
- Delegate and support the group organising the annual newsletter.

Although NWR groups are autonomous they are never alone. The NWR Committee and other groups are always available to provide assistance, advice or support to any group that asks for help. The Committee and Local Organisers meet approximately 4 times a year. These meetings are held to bring the Committee and Local Organisers together to discuss the views and opinions of their groups and to take part in the running of NWR. LO's provide the Committee with written reports for the May and November committee meetings as well as questions, objections and any ideas members want addressed at these meetings. LO's then receive minutes of the meetings for their group.

Members of the Committee are available to assist new groups and any group/s experiencing difficulties. Often problems that a group is experiencing can be solved by having an experienced NWR member at the meetings, simply to give advice or assist if required. Remember even though you may be the only group in your area, you are not alone. Please do not allow your group to disband before you contact another LO, a committee member or attend a committee meeting.

## The Group Meeting

### Before the Meeting:

- Confirm with hostess, discussion leader/speaker.
- Email members to remind them of time etc.
- Contact new members who may welcome a lift.
- Buy a small thank you gift for guest speaker if applicable.
- If unable to attend a meeting, appoint a deputy and give her an outline of the business to be addressed at the meeting.

### At the Meeting:

- Open each meeting.
- Introduce new/prospective members, hand out name tags (optional).
- Relay any business which has arisen since the last meeting
- Have members sign attendance book.
- Hand meeting over to the discussion leader.

### Role of the Discussion Leader:

- Introduce the topic give some background information (no more than 10 minutes.)
- Ask appropriate questions to get the discussion happening.
- Keep discussion on track and flowing. Try not to get bogged down. Prepare questions to change direction if needed.
- Ensure as much as possible that all members have equal time to express their point of view.
- Bring the discussion to a close, summarise main points. Conclude by asking if anyone has anything further to add.
- Thank all members for their contribution - adjourn for tea/coffee.

### After the meeting:

Follow up with a phone call to new members to make sure they felt welcome and encourage them to come again.

### Social Events:

If your group would like to enjoy extra activities, organise social events (e.g. theatre night). Social coffee get-togethers are a good way to welcome new members.

## Role of the Local Organiser (LO)

**The LO is the link between her group and the National Committee. As LO you will need to:**

1. Inform the committee of your group's ideas on NWR matters.
2. Submit a written report for the May and November national committee meetings.
3. Where possible attend committee meetings.
4. Inform your group of matters discussed at the meeting and circulate minutes and address issues raised.
5. Keep a list of your group's financial members including name, address, date of commencement of membership (new members only).
6. Handle enquiries from prospective members referred to you by the committee.
7. Hold all the group's literature and correspondence on file.
8. Write a report on your group for the annual newsletter.
9. Distribute newsletter to paid-up members.
10. Keep in contact with all members so they feel part of the group.
11. Advise National Committee of any changes in membership new or resignations.
12. Inform National Committee of change to LO position.
13. Bring this handbook to the attention of incoming LO.
14. Encourage members and friends to attend annual conference.
15. Maintain attendance book (exercise book) which outlines, meeting topic, date, venue, members name and address and signature. (Required for insurance purposes.)

## The Programme & Planning Meeting

1. Encourage ALL members to come with a suggested topic.
2. Plan length of programme/number of meetings.
3. Aim for a balanced programme a mixture of light hearted and more serious topics. Consider a guest speaker to add another dimension.
4. Organise a discussion leader for each topic.
5. Organise the hostess for each meeting.
6. Subsequent planning meetings, review and evaluate according to member's requirements.

## Newsletter

A Newsletter is printed and distributed every year to all financial members. It keeps NWR members in touch with each other and what they are doing. It reports on the Annual Conference, other group's activities, programmes and NWR happenings. All members are invited and indeed encouraged to contribute to the newsletter with articles which are in keeping with the spirit of NWR. Each LO puts in a report on her groups progress including activities and discussions, in each newsletter.

## Publicity

NWR provides publicity material which can be used in any likely places such as local libraries, doctor/dentist surgeries, hairdresser, local shops, community information centres, church groups, social groups, post office etc. The list is extensive, just try a few first. REMEMBER TO INCLUDE A CONTACT PHONE NUMBER OR EMAIL ADDRESS. If you see a notice board, put up a poster.

Publicise meetings in local newspapers. Most papers have a free community news section. Try to do this regularly as readers sometimes need to see a notice several times before responding. Perhaps send a short report to the editor with a date and topic to be discussed at the next meeting. First names and contact information is sufficient for publication.

Word of mouth is the very best method. If each member brings a friend the numbers in your group will double. The most effective way to publicise NWR is to talk about it. Mention NWR at any other group that you may be involved with. Personal approach is always the best method to make prospective members feel welcome.

## Help:

1. The National Committee is there for its members. Contact for help and support when needed.
2. If enthusiasm is flagging, ask members what they expect from the group.
3. Be open and flexible with selection of topics. Not ALL topics will suit ALL members ALL of the time.
4. Respect that each member is entitled to her point of view.
5. Share a meeting or social outing with another group or establish email contact for exchange of ideas.

- Remember we are part of an international organisation. If travelling, make contact with groups either in Australia or overseas.
- GET INVOLVED. Attend the annual NWR conference which is held each October, hosted by a regional group. Support the organisation as a whole.

*BE ENTHUSIASTIC... IT IS CONTAGIOUS!*

*Encourage members to bring friends...*

The best asset any NWR group can have is an enthusiastic Local Organiser

### How can Members Support the Local Organiser:

- Attend meetings regularly, phone hostess when unable to attend meeting.
- Prepare for discussion topics, share your information.
- Support each meeting by participating in the discussion.
- Organise a guest speaker.
- Suggest discussion topics.
- Host a meeting.
- Attend Committee Meetings and contribute to the Newsletter. NWR works best and members get more out of it if there is a spirit of involvement and cooperation.
- Encourage the LO and offer practical support. Thank her for her efforts on your behalf.
- Do not worry if your group is small. Smaller groups tend to encourage participation in discussion.
- Share the responsibility and learning experience of being a discussion leader, offer to help with publicity.
- Talk about NWR to the women you meet.
- Encourage like-minded women to join your group.
- Bring a friend - ask your friend to bring a friend.

### Money Matters:

- The LO's responsibility is to collect and receipt annual membership fees and forward to National Treasurer. Include name and address of each member.
- Annual Fees are due NO later than 31<sup>st</sup> March each year. Half yearly fees apply from July/December (where applicable for new members only).
- Each new member must complete the Application for Membership form which is forwarded with the subscription to the Committee Treasurer.
- Potential members are allowed 3 meetings before being asked to pay their subscriptions.

- New groups have 6 months to establish before paying subscriptions.
- An additional levy is advisable for group expenses for such things as gifts for guest speakers, LO's out of pocket expenses including postage, receipt book, printer paper etc.
- NWR is incorporated and has a public liability insurance policy which is required as part of the incorporation and is paid annually. This policy covers all financial members when attending meetings.

### Starting a New Group

**It is not difficult to start a group.** Three or four women meeting over a cup of tea armed with a few topics for discussion is all that is necessary for the first meeting. The important points to decide at the first meeting are:

- Choose a leader. This person will be the Local Organiser or LO. The LO's role is to co-ordinate the group.
- Where to hold the meetings? Meetings are normally held in each other's homes. A member volunteers her home for a meeting but there should be no obligation for a member to host a meeting. A LIGHT supper, tea/coffee concludes the meeting on a social note.
- When to hold meetings? Most groups meet one day/evening per month. However your group may choose to meet fortnightly.
- What topics to discuss? The first meeting will be the planning meeting where the group will decide on a programme which will consist of topics for the first three to four meetings.

Remember the first few meetings you will be feeling your way so make the topics light and easy to handle. Decide on the venue and start time for your meeting. The LO will present the programme and distribute it to members. Keep a few spare copies for future new members. The programme should include, date time, hostess's name, address, phone and email contact, discussion topic and discussion leader's name.

Where possible a member of the committee or long standing member will be available to attend your meeting/s to make it easier to sort out any problems and answer any questions about the organisation. Each group arranges the kind of activities its members want keeping within the framework of the aims of NWR.

All members research the topic beforehand so the discussion is well informed. Members suggest topics for discussion. Included with this handbook (as a separate attachment) is a short list of topics which may help stimulate ideas. Your group may want to ask a guest speaker, the decision rests with the members.