

## Women working together

*Jan Hunter*

The Business and Professional Women's Club of Albury had a problem in 1968. They were hosting the 16th Australian Conference of BPW clubs and 320 women had registered. This put a strain on Albury's accommodation and an even greater strain on venues for conference sessions. The Civic Theatre (since demolished) was booked but the cloth for the stage table of guest speakers (including Dame Zara Holt) was inadequate and revealed the ladies' knees, "some graceful, some not." A hasty purchase of damask by the yard and dyed to match the stage curtains solved the problem.

Formed in 1953 the Albury BPW Club's foundation members included a music teacher, a drama teacher, a hairdressing salon owner, several family-business women, a secretary and a librarian. The Club closed in 2008 ending 55 years of service.



Standing from left: Doris Watkin, Thelma Abikhair, Marion Chambers (secretary), Madge Cuthbert, F G (Michael) Huey  
Seated from left: Lilian Boyes, Letitia Costello, Vera Chubb (president).

BPW aimed to encourage the personal development of women, "to formulate and publish considered opinions on matter of public interest." They researched issues that affected women such as equal pay, superannuation, the role of educating young women and how to raise cultural awareness.

One local issue was the representation of women in sport reported in the *Border Morning Mail* – BPW Albury counted photos, surveyed local sporting clubs, lobbied the BMM with their figures and eventually took their concerns to a national conference.

For decades the club awarded monetary prizes to high achieving secondary public school girls then expanded to include all district schools and the Conservatorium in Albury. 'Career Days' were held for Year 10 girls, aiming to inform and expand the horizon of local students. Later, business and professional young women were encouraged to nominate for 'Career or Professional Woman of the Year,' and again a monetary prize was awarded.

Part of a worldwide network of Business and Profession Women's Clubs, Albury members travelled to conferences, contributing to discussions such as 'The Changing Discipline of Motherhood,' 'New Dimensions of Leadership,' 'The Changing Patterns of Work' and 'The Responsibilities of Individual Freedom.' In the 1980s Albury BPW combined with the 'Women and the Arts Festival,' running a seminar on Women in Literature when Blanch D'Alpuget and Beatrice Faust were keynote speakers.