



Anna Stewart Memorial Project

Celebrating 25 years 2009

2009 Project Dates:

May intake: Monday 11 - Friday 22 May
October intake: Monday 12 - Friday 23 October

Who was Anna Stewart?

Anna Stewart, a former journalist and active Victorian union official from 1974 to 1983, died tragically in 1983, aged 35. Her involvement with the union movement began at a time when women workers comprised one-third of the paid workforce, but the few industries in which women were employed, offered jobs that were poorly paid, lacked job security and skills recognition.

What is the ASMP Project?

The aim of the Anna Stewart Memorial Project is to increase women's involvement in the union movement through training. The project has been in existence since 1984 and so far over 500 women unionists have participated in the Victorian arm of the project.

During the two week project women trade union members from diverse workplaces and occupations are placed with their own, and sometimes with another union. They experience the full range of union work, including mass meetings, enterprise bargaining negotiations and hearings in the Industrial relations Commission. All participants meet at the VTHC for three full days and one half day during the project to discuss women, work and union issues. They are generally sponsored by unions and there is no charge for attending the course.

Honouring Anna's contribution to women and unions

After Anna's death, a number of her trade union friends and colleagues met to determine the most appropriate means by which her work and life could be remembered. The founders of the Memorial felt that a project based around the Working Women's Charter demand for increased involvement in trade unions was immediately relevant to Anna's memory and to the needs of the female workforce. This was felt to be particularly appropriate in light of statistics that showed that, despite the large numbers of women joining trade unions, women were still under-represented in decision-making structures.

The Anna Stewart Memorial Project was thus born and the inaugural program was co-ordinated by the Municipal Officers Association in Victoria in April 1984.

The Project was conceived as an annual two week "on the job" training program for women unionists. It was designed to give participants unique levels of access to union organizations, and develop their awareness of the ways in which unions can work to redress the discrimination and exploitation of women workers in Australia. Unions also benefit by increased sensitivity to the needs of, and issues affecting women workers.