

Archive No. 34

Eileen Capocchi (12 March, 1925 -)

Eileen Capocchi was born in Jaffa, Palestine, and moved to Australia with her family when she was two. She was educated at state schools, and after her parents separated and her mother went overseas Eileen and her brother were made wards of the state and put in an orphanage. She ran away at fourteen to work in a clothing factory in Lonsdale Street, joined the Eureka Youth League, married and had two children. She divorced and married again and had another child. She worked at a variety of jobs including as a drink waitress, welfare worker, receptionist, office worker and dressmaking at home.

Eileen was still a member of the CPA when she joined the Chelsea Group of the Union of Australian Women in 1957. She volunteered to help out in the UAW office and taught herself to type while she was working on Our Women and gained admin skills. She became the Secretary of the UAW, 1964 - 1968, and had to speak at official functions but never felt entirely comfortable in this role.

Eileen set up the Aspendale WL area group in 1972 which organised a women's weekend away down at Sorrento to discuss issues and to improve communication and solidarity between the women in the WLM. She also participated in a demo along Swanston and down Bourke Streets to highlight just how oppressive Xmas was for women with the model of a cash register, protesters draped in chains and a cross on someone's back.

By 1973 Eileen was a member of the editorial group that published the Melbourne Women's Liberation Newsletter and in 1977 she got the job as the paid Coordinator of the Western Region Women's Learning Centre, where she attended the home maintenance class and designed three courses: Theory of Driving, Maths for Fun, and Water Safety and Confidence for Mature Women. She taught women how to swim for several years at the Northcote pool.

Eileen became disillusioned with the male-dominated politics of the CPA and the communist men's lack of support for the WLM and let her membership lapse. She continued to be an active member of the UAW because she regarded it as a dedicated women's organization, a Sisterhood in action, covering the broad issues that affected women, including war.