

  
**CANTERBURY WOMEN'S CLUB** INC.  
Est. 1913



Canterbury Women's Club, Inc- CC 41122-190 Worcester Street Christchurch 8011 New Zealand 03 366 8957



Mayor Lianne Dalziel's  
Speech at the "Liberation of the Kate Sheppard National Memorial Bronze Wall –  
12 noon, 8th June, 2014. Avon Riverbank, Christchurch.

"Margaret Arnold, President, Canterbury Women's Club, Inc.,

Karena Brown, Chair of the Kate Sheppard Memorial Trust

Welcome to the liberation of the Kate Sheppard National Memorial. Commissioned by  
Women Towards 2000 Inc. and Sculpted by Margriet Windhausen, it was unveiled on  
September 19 1993 by Dame Catherine Tizard, Governor-General.

The Memorial was caught in the fall zone of the neighbouring building as was the case for so  
many buildings after the earthquake. When we were approached to see whether this would  
be possible, the council team pulled out all the stops for International Women's Day – three  
days after the worst rainfall the city had experienced in decades. But the team delivered  
anyway. But another date had to be set and here we are.

Let us acknowledge these women:  
Meri Te Tai Mangakanhia of Taitokerau, who requested the vote for women from the  
Kotahitanga Māori Parliament  
<[http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/DNZB/alt\\_essayBody.asp?essayID=2M30](http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/DNZB/alt_essayBody.asp?essayID=2M30)>

Amey Daldy, a foundation member of the Auckland WCTU and president of the Auckland  
Franchise League.  
[http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/dnzb/alt\\_essayBody.asp?essayID=2D2](http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/dnzb/alt_essayBody.asp?essayID=2D2)

Kate Sheppard of Christchurch, the leader of the suffrage campaign.

Ada Wells, also of Christchurch who campaigned vigorously for equal educational  
opportunities for girls and women.

Helen Nicol who pioneered the women's franchise campaign in Dunedin.

Hariet Morison also of Dunedin, vice president of the Tailoresses' Union and a powerful  
advocate for working women.

The history is inscribed on the panels, so I won't read it all out, but will note some of its  
features:

"On 19 September 1893 New Zealand women won an historic victory – the right to vote in  
parliamentary elections. New Zealand became the first self-governing country in the world to



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recognise this freedom for all women. Women of spirit had long campaigned for the vote. As early as 1869 Mary Ann Muller under the name of Femmina was writing articles on women's rights in The Nelson Examiner. The suffragists knew the vote was vital step in their struggle for equal rights. It would give them the political power to hasten social reform.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union established in New Zealand in 1885, joined the call for universal franchise. It realised women needed a voice in government to fight the poverty and violence many families suffered through alcohol abuse.

In 1887 Kate Sheppard of Christchurch was appointed superintendent of the Franchise Department of the WCTU, and led an intensive seven year campaign.

Her forceful writings in The Prohibitionist and in numerous pamphlets kept the debate alive. She spoke at public meetings, lobbied politicians with telegrams and letters and organised petitions to parliament. Kate Sheppard inspired and encouraged many women to join the cause of liberty and justice.

[This is not included on the panels, but in 1888 a pamphlet was produced setting out the 10 reasons to give women the vote:

1. Because a democratic government like that of New Zealand already admits the great principle that every adult person, not convicted of crime, nor suspected of lunacy, has an inherent right to a voice in the construction of laws which all must obey.
2. Because it has not yet been proved that the intelligence of women is only equal to that of children, nor that their social status is on a par with that of lunatics or convicts.
3. Because women are affected by the prosperity of the Colony, are concerned in the preservation of its liberty and free institutions, and suffer equally with men from all national errors and mistakes.
4. Because women are less accessible than men to most of the debasing influences now brought to bear upon elections, and by doubling the number of electors to be dealt with, women would make bribery and corruption less effective, as well as more difficult.
5. Because in the quietude of home women are less liable than men to be swayed by mere party feeling, and are inclined to attach great value to uprightness and rectitude of life in a candidate.
6. Because the presence of women at the polling-booth would have a refining and purifying effect.
7. Because the votes of women would add weight and power to the more settled and responsible communities.



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8. Because women are endowed with a more constant solicitude for the welfare of the rising generations, thus giving them a more far-reaching concern for something beyond the present moment.

9. Because the admitted physical weakness of women disposes them to exercise more habitual caution, and to feel a deeper interest in the constant preservation of peace, law, and order, and especially in the supremacy of right over might.

10. Because women naturally view each question from a somewhat different standpoint to men, so that whilst their interests, aims, and objects would be very generally the same, they would often see what men had overlooked, and thus add a new security against any partial or one-sided legislation.]

Opposition was fierce and determined but the suffragists gained increasing support. The Franchise Leagues recruited women from outside the temperance movement and made votes for women their only goal. The campaign produced three major petitions in 1891, 1892 and 1893. The 1893 petition with 31,872 signatures was the largest ever gathered in Australasia.

A leading suffrage supporter, Sir John Hall, presented the 1893 petition to parliament during the debate on the Electoral Bill. The Bill, giving women the vote was finally passed with a majority of two.

Women rejoiced in their hard-won victory. At the next election, two months later on 28 November 1893, seventy percent exercised their new right.

Shown on the memorial with Kate Sheppard are Meri Te Tai Mangakahia of Taitokerau, who requested the vote for women from the Kotahitana parliament; Amey Daldy, a foundation member of the Auckland WCTU and president of the Auckland Franchise League; Ada Wells of Christchurch, who campaigned vigorously for equal educational opportunities for girls and women; Harriet Morison of Dunedin, vice-president of the Tailoresses' Union, and a powerful advocate for working women; Helen Nicol who pioneered the women's franchise campaign for Dunedin.

Other important leaders in the struggle of women's rights were Learmonth Dalrymple. Marion Hatton. Lily Kirk. Janet Plimmer. Annie Schnackenberg. Margaret Sievwright and Anna Stout. The National Council of Women, founded in 1896, grew out of the networks of able and committed campaigners. Kate Sheppard was the first president.

Some years after the vote was won, a WCTU editor wrote ... we, the mothers of the present need to impress upon our children's minds how the women of the past wrestled and fought, suffered and wept, prayed and believed, agonised and won for them the freedom they enjoy today."

Here is a quote from Kate Sheppard after the vote was passed:



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“The news is being flashed far and wide, and before our earth has revolved on her axis every civilized community within the reach of the electric wires will have received the tidings that civic freedom has been granted to the women of New Zealand. ... It does not seem a great thing to be thankful for, that the gentlemen who confirm the laws which render women liable to taxation and penal servitude have declared us to be "persons"... We are glad and proud to think that even in so conservative a body as the Legislative Council there is a majority of men who are guided by the principles of reason and justice, who desire to see their womenkind treated as reasonable beings, and who have triumphed over prejudice, narrow-mindedness and selfishness. “

Today is an opportunity for us to give thanks to Kate Sheppard and her fellow suffragists who have helped define our city's place in our nation's history. It is not surprising that Christchurch went on to produce the first woman MP, Elizabeth McCombs, and the first woman Cabinet Minister, Mabel Howard.

Although it was not without its challenges, New Zealand's journey to universal suffrage was essentially dignified, peaceful, and democratic, which can be contrasted with the distress, violence and disruption which characterised the movement in the United Kingdom.

And it is on this note that I want to issue a challenge to build on the lessons we have learned in this city as a result of the recent experience we have shared, along with this history.

When I left Parliament, my former staff gave me this necklace. It reads: “The most courageous act is still to think for yourself. Aloud”. It is a quote from Coco Chanel.

That quote is really about how important I believe it is to speak out for what you believe in. Sometimes that requires courage.

The three smaller beads speak to community, resilience and leadership. These are words I thought I understood, but didn't truly appreciate until after the earthquake.

A community is not the co-location of houses – that's a suburb. It is the relationship between people in those houses and their connection with decision-makers, be that central or local government. The social capital within communities is not measured by socio-economic status; it is measured by those relationships.

Resilience is not strong in the face of adversity – that's stoicism. Resilience is about the capacity to plan and prepare for adversity, the ability to absorb the impact and recover quickly, but more important it's about the ability as a community to thrive in the face of



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adversity, adapt to a new environment or even co-create a new kind or normal. Resilient communities have plenty of pre-existing social capital.

Leadership is not a position you hold – it's a mark of your character.

In a post recovery environment the words to describe the leadership we need are respectful, engaging, empathetic, inclusive and intuitive. Why do we think of women when we hear those words and yet we don't necessarily think of women when we look for a leader? Have we had the image of the heroic leader drummed into us to the extent that we don't see that these are the qualities that build enduring relationships and trust?

When we are defining who we are as a city and a province, we can claim to be the birthplace of the movement that means our country was the first that gave women the right to vote.

But there is a point to be made about how that goal was achieved - organisation on the ground was important, but so was the dignity and determination that characterised the way these women leaders negotiated with the political leaders of the day. After all it was the men who had to cast the vote for our right to vote.

The Christchurch Times reported Kate Sheppard's death in simple appreciation: A great woman has gone, whose name will remain an inspiration to the daughters of New Zealand while our history endures.

Let us continue to be inspired by her leadership, her relentless determination and courage as we seek to define a new future for our city. Releasing this Memorial today becomes a symbol of our rebirth as a city and of a positive and just future through co-operation leading change.