Established in 1922, the Country Women’s Association (CWA) aims to improve conditions for country women and children in Australia. Women living in rural areas have long felt isolation, and suffered a lack of adequate health and support facilities. The CWA grew out of the need for country women to have better services and a unified voice in a male-dominated rural society. The CWA is now the largest women’s organisation in Australia.

Grace Emily Munro (1879-1964), founder of the CWA, was herself a country woman, married to a grazier with four children. Dedicated to improving medical conditions for women and children in the bush, she trained in first-aid and home nursing, giving classes in rural communities. A conference organised by Munro in 1922 resulted in the formation of the CWA of NSW and she was elected its first President. Within a year there were 68 branches of the Association across NSW and Queensland. Although Munro stepped down in 1926, she continued her fundraising efforts and was appointed a MBE in 1935.

“The drawing together of all women, children and girls in the country and making life better, brighter and more attractive, thus helping stop the drift from the country to the city”
- Aims of the Association, Country Women's Association NSW, 1920s

The CWA works to bring the local communities together by providing social activities and a range of educational, recreational and medical facilities for rural families. In country towns across Australia, they set up baby health centres, women’s rest rooms, and raised funds for bush nurses, maternity wards, local hospitals and schools. The CWA rest rooms in Merriwa (below) were described as ‘the prettiest ever seen' when they were officially opened by Shire President Mr A. M. Jennings in 1930 (Sydney Morning Herald, 6 Dec 1930).
New South Wales [cartographic material] : showing Country Women's Association branches [Album view].

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Portrait of Mrs. Hugh Munro, founder of the Country Women's Association of Australia, 10th April 1922 / Payne
Of course, the CWA is also known for its simple, wholesome food and recipe books which have influenced generations of family cooks across Australia, both in the country and the city. Their prize winning cooking attracts awards at country show and Sydney’s Royal Easter Show each year. CWA branches at both state and local level around Australia have published collections of recipes from their members and communities. The popular *Coronation Cookery Book*, first published in 1937 to coincide with the coronation of King George VI, is still in print and is now in its 15th edition.

The CWA remains an active advocacy and support group for women in country areas. By improving conditions and opportunities for rural woman and families, they increase the viability and sustainability of rural communities, making rural life better and happier. From humble beginnings, the CWA of NSW now has over 400 branches and over 10,000 members statewide.

**Country schools**

![a5524001h.jpg](a5524001h.jpg)
Cooranbong Public School, ca. 1870s / photographer unknown

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Near Pambula, NSW

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On the way to Wallundry school from 'Windover', Grogan. The horse's name was "Monkey" - Temora, NSW

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Scrub School (12 miles south-west of Tenterfield). "It was school picnic day, that's why we were dressed up. Also it was the teacher’s last day because she was joining the convent". (Spoken by Vera Rossington 15/12/88) - Tenterfield area, NSW
One teacher school at Willundry. School closed in 1927, because of falling enrolments. "You can see our mugs by the tank. Most of us used to walk to school". (Spoken by Albert Wiencke 21.3.88) - Temora, NSW
Moving Combaning South School from Kerry's paddock to present site in Combaning. It took 3 or 4 days to shift it. Horse team belonged to Watty Campbell and Jack Green. Coming out of creek bed - Temora, NSW.
School lessons at home, "Gnawalda" Station.

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AIMS OF
The Country Women's Association of N.S.W.

The improvement of the Welfare and Conditions of women and children in the country.

Reduced railway fares and freights, sleeping berths and better accommodation for women and children in second class compartments.

Maternity wards in public hospitals.

To induce women to take an active part in country development by taking their place on all kinds of public bodies, including election to hospital committees and Municipal Councils or Boards.

Ambulances in country towns, that in case of sickness or emergency will go out into the country and bring the patient in.

Extension of the Bush Nursing Association and the formation of First Aid and Home Nursing Classes in out-lying districts.

To assist the Bush Book Club by establishing Libraries in country centres.

The establishment of Health Centres in country towns.

A scheme providing accommodation at the seaside for country families unable to face the expense of a holiday under ordinary conditions.

Telephones at a cost within the reach of every small householder.

Rest rooms in country towns for country women coming into town, a place where they can rest and get light refreshments and leave the children while they shop.

The drawing together of all women, children and girls in the country and making life better, brighter and more attractive, thus helping stop the drift from the country to the city.

The Country Women's Association is non political and non-sectarian.

Membership fee, 4/- annually.

Office: No. 7 First Floor, 17 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Telephone B 3928


Hon. Auditor: Mr. L. E. Allworth, A.I.A.A.

Hon. Solicitors: Messrs. Piggott & Stinson.

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Aims of the Association / Country Women's Association of N.S.W.

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