

GRACE MUNRO

Grace Munro, one of seven sisters, was born in 1879 on the family property near Warialda in New South Wales. After her marriage in 1898 to Hugh Munro, a grazier from the Bingara district, Grace became increasingly aware of the difficulties of living conditions in rural Australia. Following the death of one of her sons in 1911, Grace was determined to improve medical services in the bush.

Grace trained as a sister of St John of Jerusalem and worked with the Red Cross during the First World War. After the war, Grace lectured for the St John order and organised first aid classes in country areas. She became the first woman to serve on a hospital board in rural New South Wales.

The magazine, *Farmer and Settler*, examined conditions for country women in 1921. In 1922, Grace organised a three day conference held during the week of the Royal Easter Show in Sydney. The CWA was formed at the conference, with Grace Munro as the first president. Grace then travelled extensively in New South Wales and Queensland forming new branches of the Association. By 1923, there were sixty eight branches and seventeen Rest Rooms for mothers and children in country towns. The Association appointed bush nurses and established seaside homes at Coffs Harbour and Dee Why in New South Wales.

Grace campaigned actively for maternity wards in hospitals and separate railway carriages for mothers and children, badgering and cajoling Cabinet ministers to consider women in all forms of government planning. By 1926, when Grace Munro stepped down from the presidency, the CWA had a membership of 4500 in 100 branches. Grace Munro died on 23 July 1964¹.

¹ J Oppenheimer, 'Grace Munro' in H Radi, ed, *200 Australian women*, pp 117-8.