

# The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)

is the oldest continuing non-sectarian women's organisation in the world. It was formally organised at a national convention in Cleveland, Ohio in 1874 and has since spread around the world.

Kate Sheppard was a foundation member in New Zealand in 1885. She remains the most prominent New Zealand member due to her key role in New Zealand's women's suffrage movement, and is the country's most famous suffragette. Because New Zealand was the first country to introduce universal suffrage, Sheppard's work had a considerable impact on women's suffrage movements in other countries. The first unrestricted women's suffrage in terms of voting rights (women were not initially permitted to stand for election) in a major country was granted in New Zealand.

The women's suffrage bill was adopted mere weeks before the general election of 1893.

Among the WCTU's primary objectives in temperance reform was "protection of the home."

The slogan "For God and Home and Humanity" expresses the WCTU's priorities.

The WCTU was organized by women who were concerned about the destructive power of alcohol and the problems it was causing their families and society.

### This work continues today.

WCTU members chose total abstinence from all alcohol as their life style and they adopted this definition of temperance:

Click here for more information on Heron

**Temperance may be defined as:**

**Moderation in all things healthful;**

**Total abstinence from all things harmful.**

- Greek philosopher, c. 400 BCE Xenophon

Through education and example the WCTU encourages people to sign pledges of total abstinence from alcohol, tobacco and all other drugs. The white ribbon bow was selected to symbolize purity, and the WCTU's watchwords were, as they are today:

**"Agitate - Educate - Legislate."**



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