



Kate Sheppard

1847-1934

Suffrage stories

Kate Sheppard, the woman on New Zealand's 10 dollar note, spearheaded the campaign to achieve women's suffrage. She was an intelligent, educated woman who believed in helping others. After emigrating to Christchurch in 1869, Kate married, taught Sunday School and helped with church fundraising.

In 1885, Kate was inspired by Mary Leavitt, a visiting American speaker from the Women's Christian Temperance Union movement (WCTU). She became convinced that women needed a political voice to help make New Zealand a fairer society. Kate was a founding member of the Christchurch WCTU branch. In 1887, she was elected national superintendent of the WCTU's franchise and legislation department.

For the next six years Kate made it her mission to promote women's suffrage. She wrote persuasive pamphlets on why women should vote and strategised with allies in parliament. A major task was coordinating women around the country to collect signatures for three parliamentary petitions asking for women's suffrage. She got on well with all types of people, and argued her case in a convincing but charming manner.

When women finally won the right to vote in September 1893, Kate was given the pen with which the bill was signed, but she never took personal credit for achieving women's suffrage in New Zealand.



■ Kate Wilson Sheppard. Credit: 1/2-C-09028-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



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