

Kate Sheppard



Long ago, women were treated very differently. They were meaningless dolls, placed on earth to do the housework, raise children and look pretty. Nobody cared if their corsets were so tight, they could barely breathe. Nobody cared if they were worn out and wished only to put their feet up after a long day of work, as men so often did. One woman devoted herself to changing these ways. Her name was Kate Sheppard. I am going to explain why Kate Sheppard was a great leader. I will be talking about who she was, why she wanted to change New Zealand and what she achieved.

Firstly, I will speak about who Kate Sheppard was. She was born in Liverpool, England, in 1847. Her Father was a lawyer, who encouraged the idea that people should have access to education and speak their minds. In 1869 she moved to New Zealand and joined the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) – an organisation that was for women voting and against the bond of addiction between men and alcohol. She married Walter Sheppard and brought up a son, Douglas. She fought gallantly for the rights of women, and is now featured on the New Zealand \$10 note.

Secondly, I will talk about why Kate Sheppard wanted to change the ways of this country. What was so bad about it? Well, while some females slaved away washing, cooking, cleaning and bringing up children, their husbands would drink away their moderate wages, then come home and abuse their exhausted wives. The women would also be forced to obey the rules of the Government, even though they had no say in what the rules were, and often disagreed with them. Sometimes the men in Parliament were completely unsuitable for the major job of running the country. They believed that women voting was against God, and despised the idea of females being in charge. They did not think that the two genders were equal, and therefore treated them like servants. 45,000 ladies were earning wages at that time, working as hard as any man, yet they were still prevented from voting. Women could not dress how they wanted to, play sport or do many other things that men were permitted to do. Kate did not understand this, and was desperate to make a difference.



Lastly, I will inform you about Kate Sheppard's actions. Along with other members of the WCTU, she encouraged women to ride bicycles. This sport freed the women of uncomfortable clothing and outraged the male gender. They spread brochures, wrote hundreds of letters to editors and politicians, and created petitions. Several petitions were signed by people who wanted women to have the right to vote, however the most effective were gathered in the years 1891, 1892 and 1893. In 1891, over 10,000 signatures were collected in support of the cause. In 1892, 20,074 women signed a petition in pursuit of gaining the vote. And finally, in 1893, Sir John Hall faced Prime Minister Richard Seddon in the House of Parliament, armed with a petition signed by almost 32,000 New Zealand citizens. Sir John Hall was a supporter of Kate Sheppard and the WCTU, while Richard Seddon was the complete opposite. He was disgusted at the idea of females voting. However, when he saw the petition that Kate had gathered (the largest petition New Zealand had ever seen) he knew he was defeated. In that same year, a law was passed, allowing women the right to vote. Kate

and her followers had finally succeeded! New Zealand had become the first country in the world that allowed women to vote!

In conclusion, Kate Sheppard was a brave woman who should be remembered as a great New Zealand leader. I spoke to you about who this brilliant lady was, about why she wanted to change things in New Zealand and how she achieved her goal. Females everywhere should be grateful to this person, who dedicated herself to improving the lives of other women. We are no longer made to cook, clean and raise children. We can now choose our own paths, partially due to the efforts of Kate Sheppard.

Written by Hannah Earl

