

A powerful opportunity for SSTUWA women



The Anna Stewart Memorial Project continues to be one of the most respected leadership development opportunities for women across the Australian union movement. In 2026, UnionsWA will again run the one-week program and the SSTUWA is seeking two members to participate.

This program offers union women the chance to deepen their understanding of how unions operate, build leadership and organising skills, and strengthen their voice within their workplaces and the broader labour movement.

Over the years, the program has played an important role in developing women leaders across Australia. Within SSTUWA itself, several senior leaders have participated, including our current leaders General Secretary Sally Dennis, Senior Vice President Jonelle Rafols, and Executive members Renee Chapple, Sarah Dinan and Jill Pether (pictured above). Their involvement highlights the value of the program and the leadership pathways it can open.

Honouring a union pioneer

The program honours Anna Stewart, a pioneering union official and advocate for working women. Anna was a journalist who became deeply involved in the trade union movement during the 1970s and early 1980s, working tirelessly to advance equality and improve conditions for women in the workplace.

At a time when many women were employed in low-paid, insecure jobs with little recognition or workplace protection, Anna pushed unions and employers to address issues affecting women workers. She played a key role in campaigning for maternity leave provisions in industrial awards, led efforts to address sexual harassment as an industrial issue, and advocated for childcare support and better recognition of women's work.

Tragically, Anna Stewart died in 1983 at just 35 years of age. In recognition of her extraordinary contribution, union colleagues established the Anna Stewart Memorial Project in 1984 to encourage more women to become active in their unions and to develop the next generation of union leaders.

Building confidence, skills and networks

The Anna Stewart Memorial Project is typically a short intensive training program that combines workshops, mentoring and practical union experience. Participants gain insights into how unions organise and campaign, how workplace issues are addressed and how members can build collective power.

Participants often spend time shadowing union officials, attending meetings, learning about industrial campaigns and developing advocacy skills. The program also brings together women from different unions and industries, creating strong networks and a shared commitment to improving workplaces for women.

For many participants across Australia, the experience has been transformative - building confidence, expanding knowledge of the union movement and inspiring greater involvement in workplace representation and union leadership.

A chance for SSTUWA members

The SSTUWA is proud to support the development of women within our union and the broader labour movement. The fact that our general secretary, senior vice president and several current Executive members have completed the Anna Stewart program shows how influential the experience can be.

We are now seeking two SSTUWA members who would like to take part in the 2026 Anna Stewart Memorial Project with UnionsWA.

If you are passionate about workplace rights, interested in developing leadership skills and keen to become more active within the union movement, this program could be an incredible opportunity.

Encouraging SSTUWA members to apply

We strongly encourage female SSTUWA members who want to grow their skills, confidence and networks to consider applying.

The Anna Stewart Memorial Project is more than just a training program, it is an opportunity to join a proud tradition of union women who have stepped forward to advocate for fairness, equality and better workplaces for all.

Further information about how to express interest can be found [here](#).



By Jonelle Rafols
Senior Vice President