



Community First Credit Union

1950's

1960's

1970's

1980's

1990's

2000's

2010 and into the future

Celebrating 50 years of working
Australians helping each other out



celebrating
50 years

1959
2009

Celebrating 50 years of working Australians helping each other out



Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen (1818-1888), Father of the Credit Union movement.

The Credit Union idea began in The Rhineland in 1849. Friedrich Raiffeisen, Mayor of Flammersfeld, organised his townspeople to combine their savings so they could make loans to each other. He believed this could reduce poverty without paying ruinous interest to the moneylenders. By the time he died in 1888, Raiffeisen had started 423 Credit Unions. The movement spread to Canada in 1900 and to the USA in 1909.

In Australia, Kevin Yates established the Catholic Thrift and Loan Co-operative Limited in Sydney in 1946. This was the first Credit Union in Australia to rely entirely upon member subscriptions.

Sydney Water employees get organised

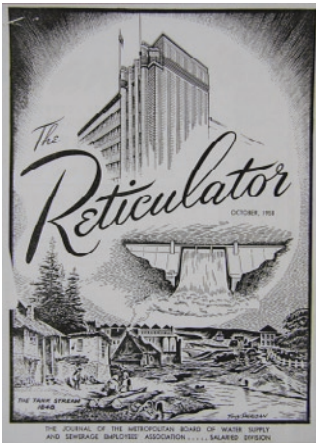
Though Community First was born in 1959, it was conceived in 1958, when the Secretary of the NSW Credit Union League approached officers of the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage Employees. The original Steering Committee were Eric Lukeman, Henry Binet, Bill Howe, Ron Birch, Paul Bounds and Gordon Dodd.

The idea went public in the October, 1958, issue of the Employees' Association journal, *The Reticulator*. A short item headed 'Credit Union Proposal' closed with this prophetic line: 'Officers interested in the idea of a Water Board Small Loans Group are invited to watch for further announcement at an early date.'

The further announcements generated considerable interest, and at the Formation Meeting on 5 August, 1959, 63 employees became the first members of Sydney Water Board Officers Credit Union Co-op.

Elected to the Board of Directors were Eric Lukeman (Chairman), Paul Bounds (Treasurer), Ron Birch (Secretary), Don Harvey, Bill Howe, Henry Binet, Sam Lowne, Gordon Dodd and Brian Dunne.

Membership was originally restricted to permanent employees in the MWS&D Board's head office. Loans were limited to £300 (\$600 at the 1966 conversion rate). By the end of its first financial year the Credit Union had 331 members and £15,565 (\$31,130) in Assets.



The October 1958 issue of *The Reticulator* announced the proposal to establish what became Community First.



Foundation Director Ron Birch (L) and (TITLE/NAME?) (R) model their skinny 1960s ties.

Growing up in the 1960s



'Desktop computing' circa 1964 – the Credit Union first became automated with this NCR National Accounting Machine.

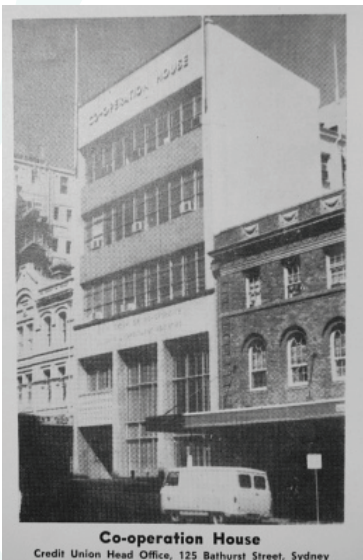
In 1961 the loan limit was raised to £750 (\$1,500). By the end of the 61-62 financial year, there were 1,052 members with Assets of £127,429 (\$254,858). But it wasn't until 1964 that a loan was not repaid. The 'bad debt' provision for that financial year was £110 (\$220). A far cry from the billions written off by big international banks these days.

In 1964 the Credit Union became 'automated' with the purchase an NCR National Accounting Machine. This mechanical marvel would have been hard at work on the year-end accounts on Thursday, 11 June 1964. That was the day The Beatles landed in Australia. Many people claim that was the day the '50s really ended, and the '60s really began.

And talk about a revolution ... The Annual Report for 1965-66 reported Assets in brand-new Aussie dollars for the first time ever – 1,294,586 of them. A second accounting machine had to be purchased to handle the conversion to decimal currency. Membership had grown to 2,725, but the first of several name changes had them belonging no longer to a 'Co-op', but to the Sydney Water Board Officers Credit Union Ltd.

In response to interest from hourly workers, 'Officers' was dropped and the name became Sydney Water Board Employees Credit Union Ltd. in September of 1967. By December we had become the largest credit union in NSW.

According to his notes, '...on 5th February, 1969, at 5pm ...', The Hon S.T. Stephens, M.L.A., Minister for Housing & Cooperative Societies, spoke at the official opening of the Credit Union's first true home – Co-operation Office at 125 Bathurst St., Sydney. Price for the 4-story, modernist office block, complete with mod-cons like window air conditioners? \$250,000, or about what you'd pay for an inner-city bed-sit in 2009. And it probably wouldn't have an air conditioner.



Owning our own home – the Credit Union buys Co-operation House in Sydney for \$250,000.



Hand-lettered farewell card presented to Foundation Director Donald Harvey who served on the Credit Union's board throughout our first decade, retiring in May of 1969.

Swinging into the 1970s

And so began a new decade. Unlike the '60s, usually fondly forgotten as the decade we wish we could remember, the '70s are often ruefully remembered as the decade we wish we could forget.

In 1971 we were given a vision of the computerised future when a new system wasn't to materialise. The existing machines couldn't handle an interest rate increase and the Credit Union declared its first deficit of \$12,179.

But our people were functioning very well indeed. Increased demand throughout the Sydney area had created a team of two Financial Advisers and 22 representatives holding meetings for 1,070 members in Bankstown, Liverpool, Wallacia and Wollongong.

And in the closing days of 1972 – 29 December, actually – accounts and transactions were finally computerised.

By 1973 it was plain we needed an office outside the CBD. We joined with two other credit unions to open a Member Area Centre at Bankstown. Before the end of the financial year, offices were opened in Wollongong, Penrith, Miranda and Liverpool.

But the big change was expansion beyond the original base of Water Board employees. Membership was opened to the Board's contractors and manufacturers. This was the first step toward becoming what we are today – a truly community-based Credit Union.

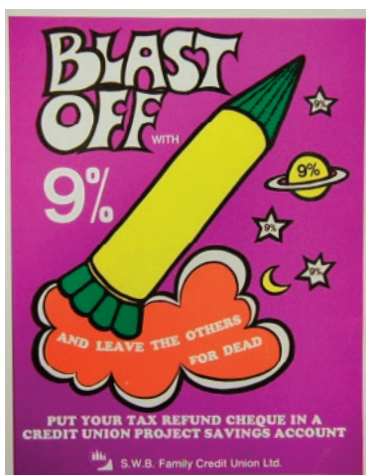
This strategic direction was strengthened throughout the early to mid-70s by mergers with the employee credit unions of T.A.A., Glass Containers and Sterlec. The T.A.A. Credit Union also provided our first non-Water Board and female Director, Margaret Slater.

Service levels rose dramatically. Members' accounts were converted to on-line processing in 1977. By the following year, balances were updated as transactions were processed in both Head Office and Miranda. Loans were being approved within 3 days, mortgages within 3 weeks. Managers in Penrith and Wollongong could approve loans and issue cheques without Head Office approval.

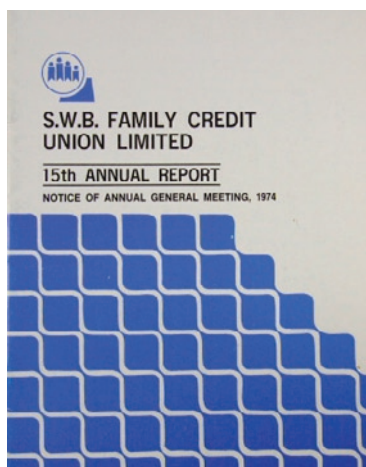
By 1978 the Credit Union was 12th largest in Australia, with 16,420 members and assets of \$14,039,267. The following year, as we turned 20, success was shared with members in the form of increased interest on deposits – up to 10% p.a. on term deposits.



Full-service branch offices meant members no longer had to trek into Sydney to conduct their Credit Union business.



In 1974, we became known as S.W.B. Family Credit Union Ltd. While most are glad to see the back of lairy '70s graphics, everyone would gladly return to the days of 9% interest on savings accounts.



Stylised graphic of flowing water on the 1974 Annual Report belied the strategic mergers that took the Credit Union beyond its Water Board roots into the broader community.

Life in the fast lane – competition, expansion and crisis in the 1980s

The '80s is often regarded as a time of free-wheeling financial activity. Partial de-regulation of the banking industry saw Credit Unions competing with banks, building societies and each other.

We responded by moving into most of Penrith as a Credit Union for all residents, not just employees with payroll deductions. This was followed in 1983 by a similar expansion in Liverpool, and in 1984 to the Shire of Hornsby.

New offices were opened in Campbelltown, North Ryde and Dee Why. The community nature of our membership prompted another name change, to S.W.B. Community Credit Union Ltd.

By 1981, technology had advanced to where we could offer direct deposits of pay. In 1983, Telecheque offered members 24-hour withdrawals, and the Redi Agency Access Network gave them over 40 agencies state-wide for withdrawals, deposits and loan repayments. And in 1984, the Credit Union Visa Card gave members debit-card access to their funds almost anywhere in the world.

The competitive environment saw new strategic mergers as well, with Martin Wells in 1981, AMOCO Employees in 1984 and Wool Broker and Trustees Staffs in 1986.

1984 marked our Silver Anniversary, seeing the Credit Union grow to serve 21,941 members with deposits and \$28,585,671 and total assets of \$31,756,576. We supported a wide range of community activities in Penrith and Liverpool districts, including the establishment of the Annual Credit Union Fun Day.

S.W.B. became the first credit union in NSW to install in-lobby ATM machines in 1986. And through an agreement with National Australia Bank, members could use their Redi-Cards in 500 ATMs nationwide. Financial services expanded to include an Approved Deposit Fund in which members could deposit lump sum retirement savings to save on tax.

But the latter part of the 80s was a challenging time, culminating in the share market crash in October of 1987. Interest rates stayed high even as disposable incomes and employment declined. A major concern was the re-structuring of our foundation employer group, The Water Board, which would result in a reduction of their employee numbers and therefore a source of future Members for the Credit Union.



For office workers of a certain age, the '80s will be remembered as the decade of big hair and IBM golf ball typewriters.



Winner of the New Opening competition for the Penrith office, Mrs Barbara Bell, proudly shows off her new Commodore 64 Family Pack. Computer and carton together would be worth more than \$499 today.



Expansion and improved technology brought far-flung suburbs closer together in the 1980s.

The 1980s (cont'd)

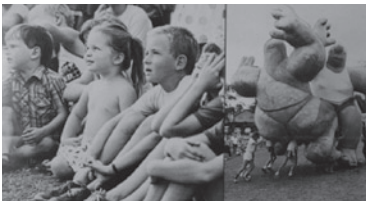
The Credit Union responded by expanding to community basis in the City of Bankstown and Ku-ring-gai Municipality, bolstered by strong growth in Penrith and Liverpool.

By the end of the decade, after 30 years in business, the Credit Union had 31,355 members with total assets of \$75,615,583. More importantly, we had granted loans worth \$35,530,000 in 1989 alone.

Foundation Director Bill How was President of the World Council of Credit Unions and host for the 1988 International Credit Union Forum in Melbourne. The Bathurst Street building was sold and Head Office relocated to Auburn.



When Community First first became a community Credit Union.



Rapt kids watch 'The Battle of the Titans' at the 3rd Annual Credit Union Fun Day, 14 April, 1986.

The 1990s – Swimming against the tide



While recession slowed down many businesses, the Credit Union recorded strong growth in the 1990s.



General Manager Keith Delaney was elected Chairman of the national peak industry body, Credit Union Services Corporation, in 1998.

The '90s dawned with an '80s hangover. Economic conditions were tight, but the Credit Union continued to absorb all Government Taxes and Charges without charging transaction fees like other institutions. This saved members around \$289,000. In 1991 we were rated as the strongest credit union in Australia.

Despite continuing recession, we grew loan balances by 16.5% and operating surplus by 30.7%. Even with 10% unemployment in 1990-91, we welcomed 4,501 new members and increased deposits by \$16.8 million, up 23.8%.

Despite continued recession our strong performance continued in 1992, with another 5,468 members joining, loans worth \$48,748,000 issued, and a surplus of \$1,986,000. The Liverpool branch moved to Westfield Shopping Town in response to the shift in shopping habits.

In 1993 our final name change introduced Community First Credit Union Ltd. To dramatise the new direction, we expanded membership eligibility to include everybody within the Greater Sydney area.

In 1995 assets exceeded \$200 million for the first time. The first Loans Centre opened at the Greenaway Centre in Wetherill Park. New technology enabled members to use their touch-tone phones much as they use computers today. Community First began calculating daily interest on loans, saving members a total of \$555,000 in the first year. It was another year of dramatic growth in membership as well, with 10,643 joining.

By the end of the millennium, membership had grown to over 57,000, with deposits of \$210 million. Loans were made worth \$199 million.

The little gathering of 63 Water Board employees in 1959 could have had no idea of what they would accomplish.

Into the 21st Century – 'May you live in interesting times'



'Lisa', Australia's first online concierge, helps members navigate through the website.



New concept stores make it easier for members to conduct business, with a mix of personal and digital access points.



In 2007, Community First became a sponsor of the Central Coast Mariners A-League team.

Introduction of the GST demanded even more complex accounting maths than the currency conversion in 1966. But that wasn't all.

Community First entered the regulatory sphere of the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. We were registered under the Banking Act as an Authorised Deposit Taker Institution. The administrative workload increased dramatically.

A new merger saw the members of Grand United Credit Union joining us. Penrith operations moved to the Nepean Square Shopping Centre. And we still found time to celebrate the Olympics.

The Internet Banking System went online in 2001, giving members 24/7 access to services and information. Assets exceeded \$300 million for the first time. Following the trend, the Liverpool office moved to Casula Mall in 2002.

We became sponsors of the Sheppard Centre, providing support for deaf children and their families. We also participate in community TV, with the 'Hip Pocket' segment that educates youth about responsible money management. The theme continued with the launch of Student Starter and Pocket Power savings accounts for young people in 2003.

In 2005 we began a program to improve financial skills for young athletes at the Western Sydney Academy of Sport.

At the Money magazine awards, our Easy Street online brand has won Best Paying e- Account for 3 years in a row. Our community TV project with Chaos TV received a Prime Minister's Community Business Partnership Award.

As the shock waves of the global financial crisis hit Australia, Community First weathered the storm. As a result of loans generated mainly by brokers, we had to write off \$2 million in 2008. It's a far cry from the £110 bad debt in 1964, but only a fraction of what many other financial institutions have lost.



In 2006, Community First merged with DANA Employees Credit Union. The following year, the merger with Elcom Credit Union was the largest in our history, raising assets to nearly \$700 million. It also dramatically increased customer service, adding 7 new locations. Two more mergers in 2008 saw another 2,000 new members from Croatian Community Credit Union and Hibernian Credit Union.

But size hasn't changed the fundamental vision upon which Community First was founded, 50 years ago. We are first, last, and foremost a servant of our communities. When Level 4 water restrictions were imposed on the Central Coast, Community First offered 12-month, interest-free loans for rainwater tanks.

The future — Looking toward our next 50 years

We have just introduced a range of 'green' loans with discounted rates for the purchase of climate-critical products like solar heating and hybrid cars. Other innovative technologies will be developed in response to the needs of both our members and our planet.

We will respond with equally innovative ways to help our members live the best lives they can, in whatever futures they create.



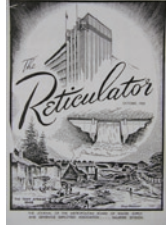
50 years of history serving c

50 years of history and growth

Merged Credit Unions

1961

The concept and ideals of the credit union were regularly communicated to Water Board employees in the Reticulator magazine.



1964

Community First enters the "machine age" with the purchase of a National Accounting Machine to maintain Member's accounts.

1965

Change of corporate name to Sydney Water Board Officers Credit Union Ltd.

1966

The credit union converts to decimal currency on the 14 February 1966 having converted all systems in readiness in advance by November 1965.



1967

The Board approves in September a change of name to the Sydney Water Board Employees Credit Union Ltd.



SYDNEY WATERBOARD EMPLOYEE'S CREDIT UNION LTD.

1968

In June the credit union purchased a new head office – Co-operative House in Bathurst St for the sum of \$250,000.



1959

In August the Sydney Water Board Officers Credit Union Co-op Ltd was formed.



SYDNEY WATER BOARD OFFICERS CO-OP LTD.

19

Full co
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Our Members across NSW

1972

Computerisation of member accounts and transactions completed in December 1972.



1974

In accordance with gradual changes to the membership bond the name of the credit union was changed to SWB Family Credit Union Ltd.



S.W.B. FAMILY CREDIT UNION LTD.

1977

A major achievement was the conversion on 1 April 1977 of Member's accounts to an online data processing system.

1980

Christmas Savings account was launched during the year.

1983

This is considered our chameleon year with the credit union transforming from a work based credit union to a community based one. It also saw the Rediteller ATM network launched and all Members were issued with REDICARDS.



1984

VISA debit card was launched in 1984 giving Members access to their funds throughout the world.



1985

A major service improvement for Members occurred with the introduction of Member cheque accounts.

1987

The October 1987 share market crash had little impact directly on the credit union which was able to increase its reserves to asset ratio to 6.6%.

1989

After 30 years of operation we had 31,355 Members and total assets of \$75,615,583. Our 30th year was also the year in which we moved our head office to Auburn.

1975

Sterlac Credit Union

1974

Trans Australian Airlines Credit Union
Glass Containers Credit Union

1986

Wool Broker and Trustees Staffs Credit Union

1984

AMOCO Employees Credit Union

1981

Martin Wells Credit Union

50 years of history serving c

50 years of history and growth

1993

Members resolved to change the name of the credit union from SWB Community Credit Union Ltd to Community First Credit Union Ltd.

COMMUNITY FIRST
CREDIT UNION LIMITED
you come first with community first

1994

Community First assists the Korean community in establishing an "incubator" credit union within Community First.

1995

In June 1995 we reached another milestone when assets passed \$200m.

1996

Telephone Banking was introduced during the year which allows Members to obtain current balances and transaction details.

2001

The introduction of our Internet Banking facility in September allowed Members to do all their banking online 24/7.

2002

We launched a new online brand Easy Street Financial Services which offered Members Australia-wide a high interest online savings account.



2004

Community First was awarded a number of major industry awards such as Personal Finance Magazines Best Unsecured Personal Loan Award and Personal Finance Magazines Best E-savings

2000

Community First completed a make-over of our corporate and our new corporate financial services including coffee, cha

2000

Grand United Credit Union Ltd.

1999

Manchester Unity Credit Union Ltd.

1990

Muniff Credit Union Ltd.

2000

Dana Emp
Elcom Cre

Merged Credit Unions

Our Members across NSW

awarded
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Investor
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s account.



6

Community First was given a brand
with a new logo and
colours. We also launched
Concept Stores – a first in
services with jukeboxes, free
at booths and concierge.



2009

McGrath Credit Card launch.



2008

Croatian Community Credit Union
Hibernian Credit Union

6

Employees Credit Union Ltd.
Credit Union Ltd.



**Credit Union and
Building Society group**