

Recommendation Paper

The Economic Security of Women in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia

ISSUE

Women owners of small and medium businesses in rural, regional and remote areas of Australia face different challenges to their sisters in cities and towns. A survey of 192 women indicated that their businesses would benefit from enhanced government procurement strategies aimed directly at their business operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhance the existing procurement policies from Federal, State and local governments in relation to 'buy Australian' to focus on 'buy from businesses owned and run by women in rural, regional and remote areas.

RATIONALE

Small business is a critical part of the Australian economy and focussing on women owned and operated business would not only help to support the economy in a general sense; it would improve the economic security of women in rural, regional and remote Australia.

A lack of regular and reliable buyers and procurement support policies for their produce, simply because of their geographic location and access to finance, undermines the ability of many women to kick-start their small business models and then for them to prosper and expand.

IMPLEMENTATION

The procurement policy would be through a business register which would be the point of contact for government procurement managers.

The Rural Woman Cooperative would be the Supply Nation equivalent, creating a verification process, database and procurement strategies. Education and training on both sides of the marketplace would be part of this function.

A partnership with Supply Nation would be important to expand the reach and support for rural First Nations women.

CONCLUSION

Women in RRR Australia have a strong entrepreneurial flair but are often constrained in their goals by uncertain sales and lack of access to credit. A simple change in procurement policies will allow these businesses to succeed which will be an important element of enhancing the economic security of women in RRR Australia.