

Trio chosen for leaders role

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Mayi Harvests founder and owner Patricia Torres. INSET: Alanna Bastin-Byrne and Bianca Long. Picture: Cain Andrews

Three businesswomen from the Kimberley, two of whom are Aboriginal, have been selected for a joint leadership program with Femeconomy and Economic Security4Women.

Mayi Harvests owner and founder Patricia Torres from Broome, Jaru Girl designs owner and founder Bianca Crake from Kununurra and Red Rust Contracting co-owner Clare Cane, also from Kununurra, have been selected as leaders for the program.

Mayi Harvests, which collects wild native plants, fruits and nuts throughout the Kimberley using traditional Aboriginal harvesting methods, was started just three years ago by Ms Torres, who said it had been an amazing journey learning how a business operated.

"I was a sole trader for about 20 years and with a group of people we provided to major food companies in Australia that sell in supermarkets like Coles," she said.

"It's wonderful to be on a platform with other people who are highly respected in their field and it's great that Indigenous people have been recognised."

Ms Crake said she was very proud and honoured to be selected as a leader in the program.

"I started the Jaru Girl brand a year ago to launch my own Aboriginal clothing line, to promote and share my artwork, the area where I live and the connection I have to my country," she said.

"My business journey has had its ups and downs but the Jaru Girl brand journey has been an amazing and humbling experience for me in such a short time.

“Some of the challenges that I’ve had are living in a remote location, funding challenges and sorting bulk manufacturing for my clothing lines.”

Ms Crake said one of the highlights for her business was when the Jaru Girl clothing line was featured at the Darwin Arts Fair in the Country to Couture event.

Economic Security4Women is an alliance of membership organisations focused on creating economic security for women.

Femeconomy is a national membership organisation which works with Economic Security4Women and certifies companies with at least 30 per cent women on the board of directors and 50 per cent owned by women to encourage consumers and businesses to buy from them.

Femeconomy director Alanna Bastin-Byrne said alongside its advocacy work, Femeconomy also worked with female-owned businesses in remote Australia.

“From other programs delivered we know there are many challenges for women in business from regional and remote communities, including lack of access to technology and suppliers, difficulty of networking, household chores, child care and another job to supplement their income,” she said.

“Our programs have supported women-owned businesses in very remote drought-affected Queensland, in northern NSW and now in remote WA for the first time. These leaders were selected because they were ranked in the top 10 for their response to the assessment criteria.”

Ms Bastin-Byrne said the program provided a tailored pathway for each business to support the business leader professionally and personally.

“Once we understand their environment, we work with the participants quarterly to meet their identified goals and to assist overcoming their challenges,” she said.