

CWA of NSW Awareness Week 2 - 9 September 2017



Media Release

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CWA calls for greater support for regional and rural families

The Country Women's Association of NSW has announced a major campaign championing women and families living in regional and rural New South Wales as part of its annual Awareness Week, launching on Saturday 2nd September. The CWA is calling for greater support across a number of key issues, and partnering with other organisations to deliver support and resources.

This year's campaign focuses on four key areas – the rights of grandparents as primary carers of their grandchildren; encouraging and assisting rural and regional women in starting their own small business; advocating for greater financial literacy amongst rural and regional women; and building resilience amongst teenage girls in rural and regional NSW.

State President Annette Turner says the structure of and demands placed on families today has shifted significantly in recent years, and now more than ever families of all shapes and sizes need more support.

"We have chosen to raise awareness of the changing face of families in the bush this year because as women who have raised, been part of or supported families ourselves, we've observed just how much day-to-day life has changed in recent years, and what this means for families in terms of new or added pressures," said Annette.

According to a study by the Australian Psychological Society in 2014, financial issues and family issues remain the leading causes of stress amongst Australiansⁱ.

"We've identified these four areas as key in helping families and women, both young and old, navigate and enjoy life in the 21st century.

"Specifically, we are calling on grandparents as carers of grandchildren to be recognised as a family, rather than foster carers, and for changes to out-of-home care provisions for children being cared for by grandparents," said Annette.

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, in 2009-10, there were 16,000 grandparent families in which the grandparents were guardians or main carers of resident children aged 0 to 17 yearsⁱⁱ, but it is likely the real numbers are much higher than this due to informal arrangements.

"Caring for a child in your later years is very rewarding, but also challenging, and we are calling on legislative changes to simplify and streamline the administration behind this family unit."

The CWA of NSW is also encouraging women to take up the challenge of starting their own small business, and also equip themselves and their families for a successful financial future.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows women make up 34 per cent of all small business operators (668,670 women). This represents a 46 per cent increase during the past two decadesⁱⁱⁱ.

“However, for rural and regional women there are barriers including digital connectivity issues and a lack of support to realise their dream,” said Annette.

“We’re calling for the establishment of business hubs in major centres to allow women who want to start their own business or already have to come together for advice and support, as well as access a one-stop-shop for all the requirements and red tape involved in launching a business.”

Entrepreneur and Awareness Week ambassador Rebel Black, founder of The Rural Woman is based in Lightning Ridge and started her first business at 21. She says that now is the time for rural and regional women to make a go of that business idea they’ve been thinking about.

“I started my first business with no experience, no financial safety net, a clunky laptop, dial up internet and an office in a caravan on the opal fields! Being in business, as a rural women, represents true freedom. Rural women make great leaders and entrepreneurs; they are nimble, creative in their thinking, resilient and brave; they just need to surround themselves with like-minded people and back themselves,” said Rebel.

Simone Eyles, founder of 365cups agrees.

“If you have an idea in your head and it keeps you awake at night, you can start a business from your kitchen table at the touch of a button, in spare time. Many great businesses are born from a problem, just like 365cups - why wait in line when you can order ahead,” said Simone.

However, according to recent research by the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, almost a third of regional Australian women reported that they worry about money ‘weekly’ and 28% worried about money ‘daily’. Those living remotely worried more frequently about money than those living regionally. Single parents (40%) were significantly more likely to worry about money than other household types^{iv}.

“Our focus is to help deliver resources and support to women to enable them to launch a small business if it’s something they’ve always thought about but never had the confidence to give it a try, as well as bridging the gap when it comes to personal and family financial management,” said Annette.

The CWA of NSW is partnering with 10 Thousand Girl, a non-profit organisation launched in 2009 dedicated to improving the financial wellbeing of Australian women through education that empowers and connects. The organisation provides a wealth of online tools and resources, which will be accessible via the CWA of NSW website, along with workshops and seminars planned for 2018.

Founder and CEO Zoe Lamont said women in regional towns are natural investors when it comes to their families, schools, community groups and local businesses, however this investment doesn’t always extend to their own financial education and long term financial security.

“10thousandgirl wants to strengthen the financial outlook for women across Australia, and living in a regional area shouldn’t be a barrier. Our objective is to create the opportunity for women, no matter where they live, to learn the skills and build the confidence to become better at managing the money they have, so they have the financial acumen to achieve their dreams,” she said.

“We’re partnering with the CWA for Awareness Week to get the message out that there are tools and resources available to assist you, no matter how rural and remote you may be,” said Zoe.

Future female entrepreneurs, managers, volunteers and mothers are also a focus this year, with teenage girls found to be more than twice as likely as boys to be in severe psychological distress, according to a recent Mission Australia report^v.

“We are encouraging the formation of new branches around the state that cater to the needs of younger members, as well as inviting teenage girls in the community to connect with our senior members for mentoring support,” said Annette.

“We’re also partnering with The Girls Academy for Awareness Week, who are dedicated to empowering and developing Aboriginal girls in regional NSW. “

Girls Academy founder, Ricky Grace, said the Academy’s mission is to ‘Develop a Girl - Change a Community’.

“As future community leaders, and as future parents, resilient and educated young women are critical to closing the unacceptable gap that exists between Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and other Australians.

“Over the past decade the Girls Academy has made great progress, helping thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls realise their potential, but there is still much work to be done.

“With New South Wales home to 30 percent of the nation’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, the state is a major focus for the expansion of the Girls Academy. We will have 800 girls enrolled in our program in NSW by the end of 2017,” said Ricky.

“For many decades the CWA of NSW has been lobbying the state government and industry bodies to ensure the right decisions are made for our state. All of this year’s Awareness Week key areas resonate strongly with our members, because they are central to what we do – improving the lives of women and children in regional and rural New South Wales,” concluded Annette.

Ends

For further information or to arrange an interview with Annette Turner or Awareness Week partners and ambassadors, contact:

Virginia Johnstone, Seftons, 0430 793 875 or Virginia.johnstone@seftons.com.au

Sonia Morris, Seftons, 0421 672 162 or Sonia.morris@seftons.com.au

Kylie Galbraith, Seftons, (02) 6766 5222 or kylie.galbraith@seftons.com.au

ⁱ Stress and Wellbeing in Australia Survey 2014, Australian Psychological Society: <https://www.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/2014-APS-NPW-Survey-WEB-reduced.pdf>

ⁱⁱ 4442.0 - Family Characteristics Survey, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009-10
<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Previousproducts/4442.0Main%20Features22009-10>

ⁱⁱⁱ A Profile of Australian Women in Business Report prepared by the ABS for the Office for Women, 2015
https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/profile_of_australian_women_in_business.pdf

^{iv} Russell, R., Green, R., Rankin, G., & Kutin, J. (2017) Promoting Women’s Financial Wellbeing in Regional Australia. Report for 10thousandgirl. Melbourne: RMIT University.

^v Mission Australia’s 2016 Youth Survey
<http://www.missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/research-evaluation/youth-survey>