



Country Women's Association of NSW

*Incorporated in 1931 by an Act of NSW Parliament
Constituent Society of the Associated Country Women of the World*

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Media Release

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CWA of NSW acknowledges role of rural women in Australia and overseas International Day of Rural Women: 15 October 2014

On 15 October when the United Nations (UN) observes the International Day of Rural Women, the Country Women's Association (CWA) of NSW will also acknowledge the valuable role of women in rural communities in Australia and overseas.

"The history of the CWA in NSW alone tells us that women have always played a huge role in developing rural communities," says President of the CWA of NSW, Tanya Cameron. "Historically in Australia and still today in many international communities, men are dominant in agricultural environments but the work of women is critical although often overlooked."

"The UN International Day of Rural Women is a good reminder to look around us and recognise the work that women do to contribute to sustainable agriculture and thriving rural communities – and to see what more we can do to support women in this role."

The CWA of NSW plays an active role supporting rural women in the South Pacific Islands and has done for many years. Each year the CWA of NSW sends hundreds of Mother Baby Packs to women in the Pacific Islands, including Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Samoa. These kits are used by women giving birth in remote locations, far from medical facilities and includes items such as newborn baby clothes, nappies, bunny rugs, and a nightie, underwear and bath towel for the mother.

In addition, each year approximately 20 women's organisations in the South Pacific Islands are sent three village packs over a period of 12 months. These packs include reams of material, cotton, scissors and other items required to make dresses and other items of clothing. Regular education scholarships are also provided for women to provide extra schooling and to build their agricultural skills.

Jenny Mitchell OAM, past State President of CWA of NSW and previous South Pacific Area President of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), has seen the impact this kind of support for women can have in rural communities first hand.

"The statistics tells us that women are responsible for much of the work in rural areas globally," said Jenny who has lived in North Star, 100 kilometres north of Moree, for 56 years.

Jenny has spent many years travelling to the South Pacific as part of a team of women working to up skill local rural women.

"I have seen villages in the South Pacific completely turn-around from being hostile places to being peaceful and productive when the women have been provided with the skills to grow food, sew clothes and

other items and earn their own money,” said Jenny. “The women do the bulk of the work in these rural villages and when they are better skilled, these communities really blossom.”

The United Nations acknowledges that empowering women is essential for the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities but is also boosts productivity because of women’s large presence in the agricultural workforce worldwide.

“Not only have I been able to help share skills with women in developing countries, the CWA of NSW has provided me with incredible opportunities that I would not have had otherwise,” said Jenny. “The CWA of NSW gives women the chance to thrive as they take on tasks and gain confidence in their abilities and entire communities benefit from the new skills of these women.”

The UN International Day of Rural Women celebrates and honours the role of rural women on 15 October each year. It recognises rural women’s importance in enhancing agricultural and rural development worldwide.

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For further information or an interview with Jenny Mitchell please contact:

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