



Enterprising Rural Women – North West Tasmania

Final Report

Prepared by: Professor Robyn Eversole
Centre for Social Impact, Swinburne University of Technology

Project Partners: Swinburne University of Technology, University of Tasmania,
Switch Tasmania, Tasmanian Women in Agriculture, Federation University,
NLS Tasmania & Good Shepherd Microfinance

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THE PROJECT

Enterprising Rural Women – North West Tasmania is a community development initiative designed to empower rural women in a disadvantaged region to achieve their aspirations for economic participation and leadership. The project received funding from the Collier Charitable Fund's 2017 disbursement under Fund 4: "Public Educational Purposes in the Commonwealth of Australia", under the Research and Development category, with a focus on rural, regional, and remote women in Tasmania. The project took place in Tasmania's North West region where many women face limited employment opportunities. The project was launched in mid-January 2018 and ran until 31 August 2018.

Objectives

The short-term objectives of the project were:

- 1) To encourage a group of rural women with enterprising aspirations to articulate their goals and the capacities and support they need to achieve these goals;
- 2) To identify relevant training, educational and support resources that have been developed by industry and university experts to support enterprise development (including social enterprise development); and
- 3) To co-design a supportive, women-centred program that adapts existing resources and institutional practices to meet the needs of enterprising rural women.

The long-term objectives of the project were:

- 1) To re-orient the existing institutional ecosystem for enterprise development to be accessible and relevant for enterprising rural women;
- 2) To empower enterprising rural women with the skills, knowledge and networks they need to achieve their aspirations; and
- 3) To strengthen multi-dimensional sustainable development outcomes in rural communities, by enabling women's leadership in social and economic innovation to stimulate positive change from the 'ground up'.

Investment and Achievements

Project funding of \$29,500.00 from the Collier Charitable Fund was instrumental in enabling the project team to pilot a new approach to entrepreneurship education and livelihood development for disadvantaged regions. Project partners Switch Tasmania, University of Tasmania, Tasmanian Women in Agriculture, NILS Tasmania and Good Shepherd Microfinance all provided valuable support, with Switch in particular playing a key role throughout the project and in the co-design process.

Support from Collier has enabled the project to leverage significant in-kind contributions from university, industry and community partners, well beyond initial estimates of in-kind support. In addition to contributions from supporting partners, the Centre for Social Impact and Swinburne University have made a significant in-kind investment in this project, to a value exceeding \$30,000. This investment is commensurate with our understanding of the significance of this work: not only for theory-building, but for rural and regional community futures.

The Enterprising Rural Women Project achieved all of its short term objectives, engaging over 40 women from North West Tasmania in a participatory workshop-based process where they articulated their goals and support needs, identified relevant resources, and co-designed a program for themselves and women like them. Further, the project has already begun to meet its long-term objectives, with evidence of positive shifts in the local institutional ecosystem, and various concrete achievements and leadership activities undertaken by participating rural women. These include the establishment, by participants, of a new organization for enterprising rural women: Ignite North West Women.

The project has established a strong institutional base for future work with enterprising rural women in North West Tasmania. Further, it has successfully piloted a model for women-focused, community-based enterprise development that can be replicated in other rural regions. The focus on enterprising rural women revealed the existence of a rich but often hidden resource of local women keen to create new ventures to enrich opportunities and quality of life in rural communities. Further, it has defined what sort of supports is required for these women to overcome obstacles and make their ideas happen.



THE TEAM AND PARTNERS

Project Research Team

The initial project team comprised:

- Professor Robyn Eversole, Centre for Social Impact, Swinburne University (Project Lead and Chief Investigator, based in North West Tasmania);
- Dr Cherie Hawkins, University of Tasmania (Co-Chief Investigator and gender and community development expert, based in North West Tasmania).

These two project leads played an active role in every stage of the project. In addition, the project was fortunate to leverage the involvement of two other internationally recognised senior academics in the area of women's entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education:

- Associate Professor Naomi Birdthistle, Faculty of Business and Law, Swinburne University (Co-Chief Investigator and international expert in women's entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education);
- Professor Patrice Braun, Federation University (Associate Researcher and international expert in gender, enterprise and regional development).

Associate Professor Birdthistle and Professor Braun have been instrumental in ensuring that the project and the co-designed support program are situated at the cutting edge of international work on women's entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education.

Finally, the project was fortunate to attract a PhD-qualified principal research assistant with expertise in local and regional economic development:

- Dr Megerssa Walo, Centre for Social Impact, Swinburne University (Associate Researcher and Principal Research Assistant);

A Tasmania-based PhD candidate in entrepreneurship education:

- Ms Jillian Brandsema, PhD candidate, Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania (Associate Researcher and Assistant Project Manager);

And a Tasmania-based colleague who recorded in-depth notes and reflections on the co-design workshops:

- Dr Christine Angel, University College, University of Tasmania.

This strong team, all with a deep commitment to community-based processes, worked together closely over the course of the project with project partners and participants. The project benefitted greatly from the mix of international expertise in entrepreneurship, education, gender and regional development, alongside team members' in-depth knowledge of the local context. This enabled a robust Knowledge Partnering process (Eversole 2015) with local organisations and entrepreneurs.

The Partners

The Enterprising Rural Women – North West Tasmania project was developed in collaboration with key partners: Switch Tasmania (formerly Cradle Coast Innovation), Tasmanian Women in Agriculture, NILS (No Interest Loan Scheme) Tasmania, Good Shepherd Microfinance, and the University of Tasmania. Each of these partners has supported the project through the provision of staff time, information, access to networks, distribution and promotion of project information, and through participation in an informal project reference group.

Tasmanian Women in Agriculture actively promoted the project to its membership and provided important information and links to other resources and activities available through that organisation. NILS Tasmania developed a contact list of all former and current NILS Microbusiness Loan recipients in North West Tasmania and ensured a wide distribution of project information through this network. Good Shepherd Microfinance provided a link to the *Building Connections for Enterprising Women* project in Victoria, sharing resources from that project. The University of Tasmania provided local institutional support for the project from the Cradle Coast campus, staff time, and a PhD researcher on Entrepreneurship Education attached to the project.

Switch Tasmania emerged as the lead project partner, contributing a venue, promotional resources and social media, registration, project management assistance and advice, consumables, logistical support, and significant staff time to ensure the success of the workshops.

Further, the project received additional support from other local organisations such as the Circular Head Council (venue, logistical support), the Stanley Chamber of Commerce (staff time, promotional and social media activity and workshop participation), and the Coasters young professionals' network (project promotion).



PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Over the project period (January – August 2018) a number of activities were conducted that produced specific and measurable outputs, as follows:

- **JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2018: Project commencement**
 - OUTPUT: Re-engagement of project partners
 - OUTPUT: Recruitment of additional research team members: Associate Professor Naomi Birdthistle, Professor Patrice Braun, Dr Megerssa Walo, and Ms Jillian Brandsema

- **FEBRUARY-MARCH 2018: Development of project research and evaluation framework**
 - OUTPUT: Literature review and document library established
 - OUTPUT: Project methodology developed
 - OUTPUT: Ethics approval for research: 14 March 2018 (Swinburne University) and 16 March 2018 (University of Tasmania)

- **MARCH-APRIL 2018: Project promotion**
 - OUTPUT: Promotional materials for project and initial round of workshops: Email invitation and flier
 - OUTPUT: Mailing lists developed by partners, workshop invitations distributed, and Eventbrite registration site established
 - OUTPUT: Additional multimedia promotional materials: Facebook advertisement, video, and Adobe Spark presentation (**See Figure One**)
 - OUTPUT: Local media uptake (**See Figure Two**)

- **APRIL 2018: First Enterprising Rural Women workshop in Ulverstone**
 - OUTPUT: 13 enterprising rural women and 6 supporting partners (19 women in total) participate in a two-hour workshop on 5 April in Ulverstone to explore aspirations, enterprising experiences, entrepreneurial attributes, and available resources and gaps.
 - OUTPUT: Detailed notes and data from workshop activities
 - OUTPUT: Ignite North West Women established
 - OUTPUT: Ignite North West Women Facebook Page established (**See Figure Three**)
 - OUTPUT: Ignite North West Women flier developed, and meetings and workshop held (**See Figure Four**)
 - Due to strong demand, a second Ulverstone workshop was scheduled for those unable to attend the first one.

- **May 2018: Second Enterprising Rural Women workshop in Ulverstone**
 - OUTPUT: 16 enterprising rural women and 6 supporting partners (22 women in total) participate in a two-hour workshop on 2 May in Ulverstone to explore aspirations, enterprising experiences, entrepreneurial attributes, and available resources and gaps.
 - OUTPUT: Detailed notes and data from workshop activities
 - OUTPUT: Ignite North West Women continues to grow and meet regularly

- **May 2018: First Enterprising Rural Women workshop in Smithton**
 - OUTPUT: 6 enterprising rural women and 5 supporting partners (11 women in total) participate in a two-hour workshop on 3 May in Smithton to explore aspirations, enterprising experiences, entrepreneurial attributes, and available resources and gaps.
 - OUTPUT: Detailed notes and data from workshop activities
 - OUTPUT: Adobe Spark Presentation of the findings of the first three workshops and inviting participants to participate in the Co-Design process **(See Figure Five)**

- **May 2018: Enterprising Rural Women First Co-Design Workshop**
 - OUTPUT: A leadership group of 14 enterprising rural women and 7 supporting partners (21 women in total) participate in a two-hour Co-Design workshop on the 18 May in Ulverstone to interrogate findings from workshops and identify opportunities for the development of relevant support programs in the North West.
 - OUTPUT: Detailed notes and data from workshop activities and identification of four KEY SUPPORT AREAS:
 1. PEER LEARNING
 2. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
 3. FINANCE AND FINANCIAL LITERACY, and
 4. STEP BY STEP BUSINESS ADVICE/ GUIDANCE. **(See Figure Six)**

- **August 2018: Enterprising Rural Women Final Co-Design Workshop**
 - OUTPUT: A leadership group of 9 enterprising rural women and 5 supporting partners (14 women in total) participate in a follow-up Co-Design workshop to develop specific proposals for a support program for enterprising women in North West Tasmania **(See Figures Seven and Eight)**
 - OUTPUT: Detailed notes and data from workshop activities, outlining the KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS for the co-designed Enterprising Rural Women program:
 - GROW THE IGNITE NETWORK – Build the capacity and presence of this new organisation by and for enterprising women;
 - CREATE A CALENDAR OF EVENTS – including workshops, breakfasts, retreats, etc. for enterprising women, to enable peer learning and access to business advice;
 - GROW CONFIDENCE AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS through network activities and events; and
 - LINK ENTERPRISING WOMEN TO SOURCES OF FINANCE, for instance through a web-based 'Investor Hub'. **(See Figure Eight)**
 - OUTPUT: Adobe Spark presentation and video summarizing workshop activities and the results of the Co-Design process **(See Figures Six, Seven and Eight)**

Through these activities, the project has actively engaged 40 rural women from North West Tasmania as workshop participants. Many women attended more than one workshop. These women were from a broad range of backgrounds: they ranged from long-term residents of North West Tasmania to new arrivals in the region, and from unemployed women to high-profile community leaders. They evidenced a range of socio-economic backgrounds, came from localities all around the North West coast, and the age range was broad: from women in their twenties to women in their seventies (one over eighty!).

What these women shared was a common characteristic of being ‘enterprising’. Many were at the early stages of exploring enterprise ideas or establishing enterprises, and some had established enterprises. The workshops became a space where enterprising women could connect with each other – despite surface differences – and find others with experiences and interests like theirs. In each workshop, strong rapport was established among the women despite their differences.

Project activities have also actively engaged with ten institutional partners and supporters: these include three universities (Swinburne, University of Tasmania and Federation University), and seven community-based and local government organisations (Switch Tasmania, NILS Tasmania, the Coasters, Tasmanian Women in Agriculture, Stanley Chamber of Commerce, Good Shepherd Microfinance, and Circular Head Council). Through their participation on the project, representatives from these institutions have established cross-institutional research teams and future research plans.

Figure One: Excerpt from Adobe Spark Presentation – Project Promotion

Full presentation available at: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/Ldhn5V9onjWkm/>



The image shows a presentation slide with a background of a woman's hands working with a wooden bowl. The text on the slide reads: "Enterprising Rural Women - North West Tasmania" in a large, white, serif font. Below this, in a smaller, italicized serif font, it says "Swinburne University of Technology and University of Tasmania". At the bottom of the slide, there is a white box with the text: "We Invite Your Contribution" in a blue serif font, followed by "I am writing to invite your contribution to a new project to strengthen support for enterprising women in Tasmania. The Centre for Social Impact Swinburne (CSI-S) at Swinburne University" in a smaller black serif font.

Figure Two: Local media uptake
From *The Advocate*, Saturday, March 31st 2018



Figure Three: Ignite North West Women Facebook Page
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2003672293286878/>

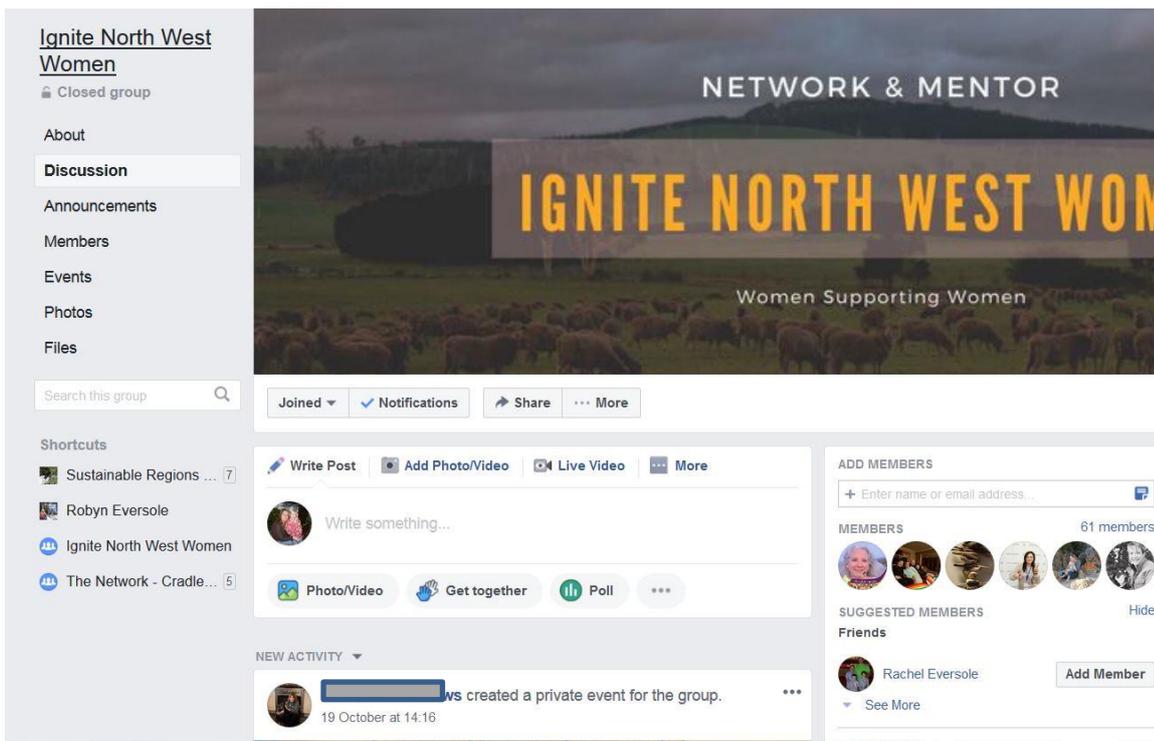


Figure Four: Ignite North West Women Flier and Women in Business Workshop Output



Figure Five: Excerpts from Adobe Spark Presentation – Workshop Findings and Invitation to Co-Design Workshops
Full presentation available at: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/KaN0JkB1Jch0g/>



Workshop Two

Welcome back everyone. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and ideas in the first round of workshops! We are now holding another workshop that follows on from where we were up to. It involves us working together to brainstorm more ideas that could help rural enterprising women in this region.

The Workshop Is:

Thursday 17th May 5.15pm

Apex House - 3 Gollan Street Ulverstone

Note: For those of you who are unable to make it to Ulverstone, we have set up ZOOM so that you can dial in through your computer (no matter where you are!).

Key Questions for Discussion:

1. What support is required to enable enterprising rural women in North West Tasmania to turn their ideas into action?
2. What are the specific supports that rural women need to build their enterprising capacity?
3. What do regions and their institutions need to be in order to encourage women's entrepreneurship?

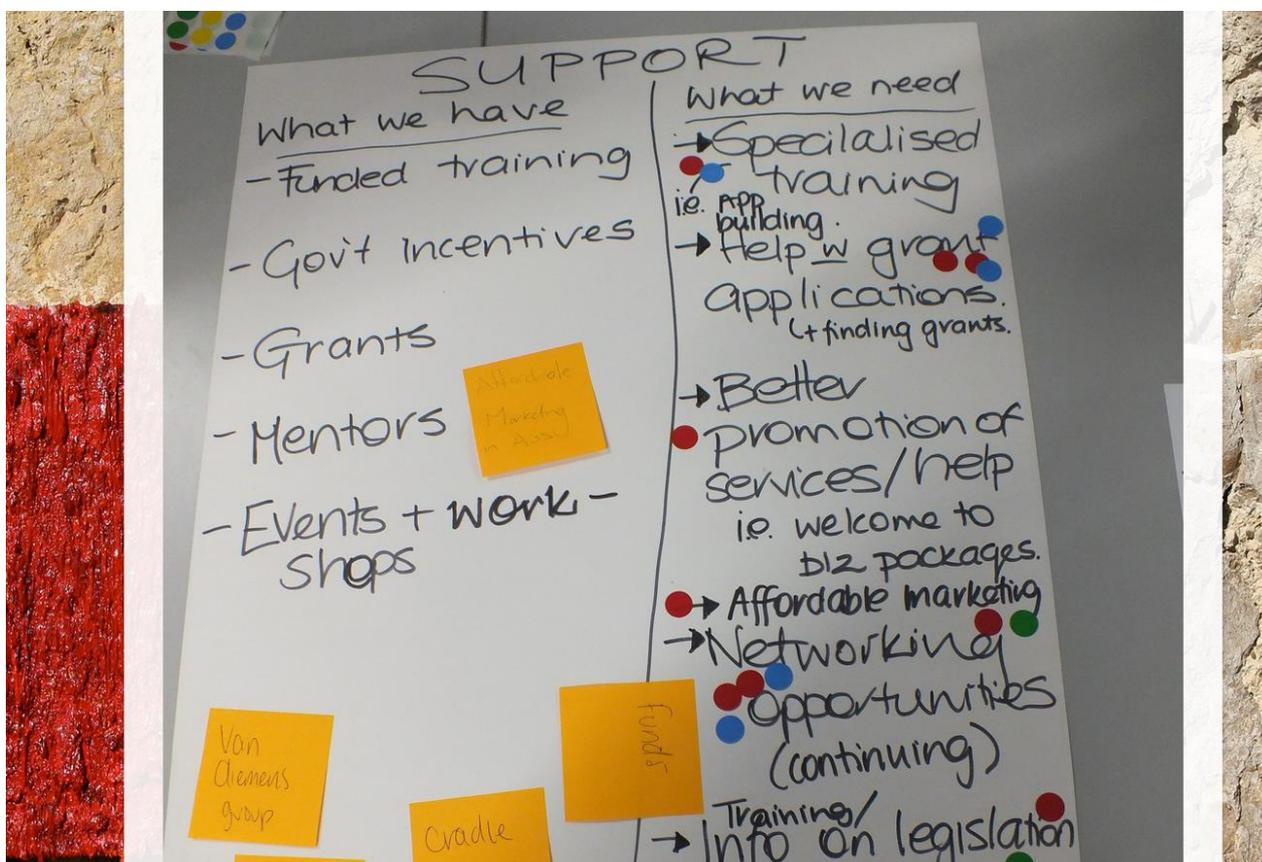


Figure Six: Key Support Areas Identified in First Co-Design Workshop (May 2018)

Full Adobe Spark presentation available at: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/Kh0SBXT00vzjl/>

Recap

After analysing the insights from the past workshops – there were 4 identified areas to support enterprising women in North West Tasmania:

- Peer learning, networking, mentoring, and peer support
- Personal Development (in terms of ‘sense of self’ and identity in relation to entrepreneurial attributes, behaviours etc)
- Finance and financial literacy (e.g. grants, schemes, superannuation, taxation, budgeting...)
- Step by Step business advice/guidance (e.g. starting up, marketing, regulations etc)

All of these 4 areas to support enterprising women were written up on large sheets of butchers paper ready to unpack even further in the workshop (see magic wand activity).

Figure Seven: Final Co-Design Workshop

Full presentation available at: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/Kh0SBXT00vzjl/>



Final Co-Design Workshop

The final co-design workshop was held on 9th August at Switch in Ulverstone. The purpose of the workshop was to **'recap'**, **'build'** and **'extend'**. We therefore started with discussing the previous workshops and key themes, then moved onto exploring what could be built on and extended. Most of the activities were brainstorming sessions but we also introduced participants to a range of new resources and worked through how to co-design our own supports/programs/initiatives.

Build

The first activity was the ‘Magic Wand’ activity where we asked the participants to reflect on the four sheets and then write down the one thing they would like to see happen that would make the biggest difference to them as enterprising women to achieve their goals.

If I had a magic wand to help me achieve my enterprising goals I would....

- Think big... where would you like to be in three years, what could help you get there?
- Look at the material from last workshop and brainstorm specific initiatives
- Walk around all tables (once brainstorming has finished)
- Place stars/dots on the ones that you really want to see happen

This generated a lot of conversation and activity in the workshop with everyone building on previous work. Participants wrote down ideas that fitted under each section and added more detailed explanations. This made it clearer than before what potential actions might be employed to address challenges.

Extend

Figure Eight: Key Program Elements Identified in Final Co-Design Workshop (August 2018)

Full presentation available at: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/KhOSBXT00vzj/>

From there, participants came up with new initiatives and projects for the group to focus on and for the university to support them to do (with the help of Switch! and IGNITE! and potentially other partners...e.g. Cradle Coast Authority, Chamber of Commerce, Local Government)

In short, the initiatives include:

- IGNITE: An initiative by and for rural female entrepreneurs (mentoring, support, information, events, story sharing)
- EVENTS CALENDAR: An initiative to encourage networking and sharing knowledge
- GROWTH PLAN: An initiative that supports entrepreneurial women in terms of personal development and building confidence
- UNIVERSITY WEBSITE/INVESTOR HUB: An initiative to advertise the range of products and services inventors and entrepreneurs have created and connect people with investors

PROJECT OUTCOMES

The project activities generated a number of specific outcomes that went well beyond the active engagement of partners and participants in project activities and positive feedback on these. In only five months of active work with enterprising rural women, the project evidenced several significant outcomes.

1. **Visibility of Enterprising Rural Women**

‘[The project is] clearly hitting the mark and I can see already, that it has brought into the Switch community, a cohort that otherwise may not have approached us.’ – Project partner

Enterprise support organisations in North West Tasmania had not previously adopted a gender focus, and some were initially confused as to why a program focusing specifically on women was needed. Over the course of the project, enterprise support providers became aware that the project was attracting a number of women who had not previously engaged with them. Rural women were coming ‘out of the woodwork’ and becoming visible to each other and to support providers, who began to see the potential of taking a gendered approach to enterprise support, in line with best practice internationally.

2. **A New Organisation of Enterprising Women**

‘In a discussion about the unique challenges women unique face in business, it was decided that Ignite will reach out and connect with female local representatives to have our voices heard and our needs met.’ – Ignite North West Women workshop notes

When peer support was identified as an unmet need for enterprising women on the North West Coast, workshop participants created their own support organisation: Ignite North West Women. This organisation, by and for women entrepreneurs, began as a Facebook group in April as a direct outcome of the first Enterprising Women workshop. It now holds regular meetings and events. Further, Ignite North West Women is now working with mainstream enterprise support organisations such as Switch Tasmania and the Central Coast Chamber of Commerce, further raising the visibility of enterprising rural women and creating a more supportive institutional landscape for women’s entrepreneurship in the North West.

3. **Personal and Enterprise Development Outcomes for Participating Women**

“This is where I’m going and this is how I’m going to get there” – Quote from workshop participant, August 2018

Women involved in the project have valued the learning opportunities from the project and have identified concrete outcomes for their businesses and personal development as leaders. One

participant, for instance, observed that as a result of the workshop, she was twelve months ahead of where she would otherwise have been with her business, mainly as a result of the connections she had made with other enterprising women. One participant connected with the local university and has enrolled in an Associate Degree program to provide an additional skills base for her business. Another grew her confidence to the point that she decided to run for local council.

4. Practical Research Capacity for Rural Entrepreneurship Development

'It never ceases to amaze me how many pleasant, clever, interesting, smart, resourceful, and caring women there are in our region (this team included).' – Project team member

A unique team of researchers and practitioners has been created through this project, with in depth knowledge of what is required to support enterprising rural women to achieve their goals. The project's research team brings together global expertise in entrepreneurship, gender and rural development with accessible community-based methodologies and a commitment to local solutions. Their strong partnership with practice-based organisations, especially enterprise support organization Switch Tasmania and project champion Jodie Clark – recently appointed Switch Executive Officer – adds considerable expertise in the delivery of community based enterprise education.

5. A Co-Designed Program by and for Enterprising North West Women

'Women do business differently from the way men do'. – Project team member

The workshops identified a wide range of available supports for enterprising rural women, as well as unmet needs and gaps. These were the raw material for the co-design process, which identified four key areas of support need: PEER LEARNING, PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, FINANCE AND FINANCIAL LITERACY, and STEP BY STEP BUSINESS ADVICE/ GUIDANCE, and the program elements required to deliver these:

- THE IGNITE NETWORK – Build the capacity and presence of this new organisation by and for enterprising women;
- CREATE A CALENDAR OF EVENTS – including workshops, breakfasts, retreats, etc. for enterprising women, to enable regular opportunities for peer learning and access to business advice;
- GROW CONFIDENCE AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS through network events; and
- LINK ENTERPRISING WOMEN TO SOURCES OF FINANCE, for instance through a web-based 'Investor Hub'.

These program elements form a **co-designed Enterprising Rural Women Program**: a program of women focused activities that strengthen the presence and reach of the Ignite North West Women network and provide participants with regular opportunities for peer learning and personal development. The program that these women designed for themselves is a practical response to identified issues such as isolation, lack of confidence, and a tendency to 'sell yourself

short'. The program revolves around regular, concrete, women-focused activities (workshops, breakfasts, events, retreats) designed to enable peer learning and personal and business development via:

- Cohort-based support and resource sharing– learning from one another, strengthening Ignite as an organisation for women entrepreneurs, exploring innovative ways to share resources for mutual benefit;
- Targeted networking and strategic links with key institutions – extending access to learning opportunities and sources of finance, through face to face and digital platforms; and
- Learning through storytelling – sharing experiences, learning from others who have 'been there'.

This program's focus on peer support and relational learning is unique in the enterprise development space and represents a potentially significant innovation in community-based enterprise education.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

There is clear evidence for significant project outcomes in only a few months' work; however, longer-term impacts are yet to be seen. This project simply aimed to understand what enterprising rural women required to meet their goals and then work with a subset of them to co-design a relevant learning program. The program has been designed and has, we believe, the potential to deliver significant outcomes and impacts if delivered. This project is an early but vital step in a long term project of work that in many ways is only beginning.

This project has, however, started to uncover what the potential impacts of working with enterprising rural women might look like – in North West Tasmania, and elsewhere in the country. There is a growing awareness of rural women as entrepreneurs in North West Tasmania, with the potential for more role models to emerge. Ignite North West Women, as an organisation by and for enterprising rural women, has the potential to provide a durable institutional presence, and potentially stimulate and network with similar organisations elsewhere. The ongoing leadership activities of participating women, their enterprises, partner organisations, and team members have the potential to generate significant impacts in and beyond the North West Tasmanian region.

Importantly, when the forty participating women spoke of their current or planned enterprises, it was notable how many of these had an aim to generate positive social impact. Many of these women had observed real needs in their communities – health issues, social isolation, stress, lack of spaces for self-realisation – and were taking concrete actions to do something about these issues. Others had identified latent resources in their local communities or environments and were seeking to leverage and value-add these, for instance by harvesting native berries or offering unique tourism experiences. All forty participating women demonstrated the key entrepreneurial qualities that are regularly called for when contemplating the future of rural communities: the ability to identify resources and configure them to meet unmet needs.

At the same time, the majority of participants in this program had limited practical experience as entrepreneurs. Many were in the early stages of enterprise development, and there were many things they did not know. It was unclear how many of their initiatives would actually happen or survive, let alone grow. The women identified a number of obstacles – many related to their geographic positioning as rural, and their social positioning as women – that could easily sap entrepreneurial energy and block further progress. Many were trying to work out their strategy for moving forward, and were unsure how to do so. While they presented compelling entrepreneurial visions with important potential impacts, it was clear that without support, many of these initiatives could simply disappear.

Throughout the project, enterprising women articulated a strong need for peer learning and personal development opportunities to accompany mainstream enterprise support. The co-designed Enterprising Rural Women program is built around this insight, taking a relational learning approach to strengthen the capacity of enterprising rural women. Work to date suggests that this may provide a particularly compelling and effective strategy for stimulating social impacts from the ground up: by investing in the often-latent entrepreneurial capacity of rural women.

NEXT STEPS

The project provides a strong foundation for supporting enterprising women that can be built upon moving forward. It has generated a co-designed Enterprising Rural Women program: a set of concrete, regular, women-focused activities designed to enable peer learning and peer-supported personal development for enterprising women, taking an explicit relational learning approach.

A relational learning approach can be defined as an approach to education and learning that is based in interpersonal relationships and multi-way knowledge exchange, rather than one-way knowledge delivery. Relational learning is informed by the feminist literature, which emphasizes the centrality of relationships in learning (Gallos, 1989; Parker *et al.* 2008). Project participants proposed a series of relational learning activities to allow enterprising rural women to learn from peers who have ‘been there’ and to share knowledge and resources with each other.

The capacity of the established team and partner institutions, and the emerging grassroots institutional capacity represented by Ignite North West Women and its leadership, provide a strong basis to deliver the co-designed program and ensure long-term sustainability of activities to support enterprising women.

As the logical next step for this project, it is proposed to deliver and evaluate the co-designed Enterprising Rural Women program in North West Tasmania – a series of women-focused, peer-supported relational learning activities, structured as workshops, breakfasts, events, and retreats – over an initial one-year period, with the aim of:

1. Testing and assessing the effectiveness of relational learning approaches in developing the entrepreneurial and leadership confidence and capacities of rural women;
2. Strengthening the presence and capacity of Ignite North West Women as an community-based institutional actor capable of leading ongoing programs of support from the grassroots for women at different stages of their enterprising journeys;
3. Further leveraging and developing the institutional resources of Switch Tasmania, University of Tasmania Cradle Coast campus, and other key partners in the region to support enterprising women; and
4. Generating and measuring concrete outcomes and impacts in the form of women’s entrepreneurial and leadership activities and their flow-on benefits for rural communities.

Further, it is proposed to explore the potential to scale up the co-design process undertaken in the current project to other rural regions where key partners (universities or TAFEs and enterprise support providers) are present. The establishment of Enterprising Rural Women programs in other regions not only creates the potential to generate similar outcomes for women and institutions in those regions; it also provides a basis for comparison, inter-regional peer learning, and the establishment of larger-scale networks of enterprising rural women.

Overall, this project has opened up a clear agenda for future work to support enterprising rural women – an area of work that is almost completely neglected in Australia. Working with enterprising rural women reveals untapped potential to generate significant impact: not only for women themselves, but for the communities and regions that benefit from their entrepreneurial leadership. As rural communities face volatile times and uncertain futures, they need entrepreneurs who are embedded in local contexts and capable of solving problems and leveraging opportunities. The project team has thoroughly enjoyed working with enterprising women in North West Tasmania, We hope to both deepen and extend this work in future projects.

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**Enterprising Rural Women
North West Tasmania
2018**

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