



MEDIA RELEASE

Issued Tuesday 3 August, 2010

SYDNEY BUSINESSWOMEN BAND TOGETHER TO SUPPORT SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FOR HOMELESS WOMEN

They've enlisted the help of some high profile female celebrities around the country, they've even got Cameron Diaz on the cover of their launch edition. Now The Big Issue has turned to some of Sydney's most high profile and successful businesswomen to launch a new social enterprise for homeless and disadvantaged women.

A Sydney Women's Advisory Network has been established to champion The Big Issue's Women's Subscription Enterprise, a new initiative that will see The Big Issue magazine subscriptions sold to corporate Australia, with homeless women employed to work as Dispatch Assistants to collate, sort and insert the magazines for distribution every fortnight.

Subscriptions are sold through professional services so there is no pressure on the women to sell and revenue is directed back into their pockets through provision of wages, training, mentoring and support. With every 100 subscriptions, a disadvantaged woman will be employed.

While The Big Issue has been working for more than two years to launch the new social enterprise, tight budgets and ambitious targets means there is plenty of hard work still ahead.

Head of the Women's Subscription Enterprise Natalie Susman said that the organisation had set a target to sell 9,000 subscriptions to the magazine over a 12 month period.

"The real challenge is only just beginning," Ms Susman said.

"We have turned to the business community, and formed a Sydney Women's Advisory Network to provide us with support and guidance as we begin this incredible journey."

The Sydney Advisory Network, Chaired by Gillian Calvert, includes a number of well known women including retired Netballer and sports commentator Liz Ellis, former Labor Shadow Minister Cheryl Kernot and TODAY Show co-host Lisa Wilkinson, among other well known Sydney businesswomen.

"I have always thought The Big Issue was a wonderful concept, allowing Australia's disadvantaged to earn an immediate income where they may have no other employment option," Ms Wilkinson said.

"While the statistics show that Australia has a long way to go in addressing the issue of women's

homelessness it is wonderful to see The Big Issue has taken the lead in tackling the issue, developing a ground breaking program tailored specifically for women.”

Australian businesswoman, entrepreneur and wife of the former Prime Minister Therese Rein, believes the Enterprise will make a major impact on the lives of the women taking part.

“The program aims to provide homeless women with a non-judgemental, safe and flexible work environment that can improve their financial circumstances while encouraging personal development, independence and hope for a stable future,” Ms Rein said.

“The initiative will lead to significant improvements for the women who are involved.”

The Sydney Women’s Advisory Network will play a key role in The Women’s Subscription Enterprise’s ongoing sustainability, as members are encouraged to champion its success through their existing and vast networks.

“With the help of the outstanding and accomplished women on the Sydney Women’s Advisory Network, The Women’s Subscription Enterprise is on well on track to achieve our ambitious target of 9,000 subscriptions,” Ms Susman added.

“Each and every one of the women on the Advisory Network understands the massive impact that employment, training opportunities, support and financial empowerment can have on the lives of homeless and disadvantaged women, and are passionate and determined in supporting us to make this life-changing initiative a success.”

Chaired by Gillian Calvert, members of the Sydney Women’s Advisory Network include: Ambassadors Liz Ellis and Lisa Wilkinson, Cheryl Kernot, Sue Cato (Cato Council CEO), Leeanne Grantham (Head of Women’s Football, FFA), Jennifer Hewett (Business Columnist, News Limited), Narelle Hooper (Editor, AFR Boss, Australian Financial Review), Belinda Hutchinson (Director, QBE Insurance Group), Sally Loane (Director Media & Public Affairs, Coca-Cola Amatil Limited), Charmaine Moldrich (CEO, Outdoor Media Association), Ros Morgan, Kris Neill (Executive Director, Head, Corporate Communications Division, Macquarie Group), Mary Patetsos, Therese Rein (Australian Entrepreneur), Diana Ryall (Managing Director, Xplore), Vivienne Skinner (Office of the NSW Minister for Arts), Regina Sutton (CEO, State Library of NSW), Jan Swinhoe (Head of Westpac Private Bank), Sheryl Weil (Head of Banking and Financial Services Service & Operations, Macquarie), Julie White (Head, Macquarie Group Foundation), Shemara Wikramanayake (Head of Macquarie Funds Group, Macquarie),

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High resolution images of Lisa Wilkinson, Gillian Calvert, Liz Ellis, Cheryl Kernot and Therese Rein can be downloaded at

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/bigissueaustralia/sets/72157624515495217/>

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