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Chris Muir

A community initiative of The Big Issue.

The WOMEN'S SUBSCRIPTION ENTERPRISE

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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… this week marks the beginning of a groundbreaking new social enterprise for The Big Issue, and it's all about women.

TODAY Show co-host, Lisa Wilkinson, The Circle's Chrissie Swan, Fox FM's Jo Stanley, Journalist, Tracee Hutchison, and high profile athlete Liz Ellis have all thrown their support behind the Women's Subscription Enterprise which will provide work, training and pathway opportunities for homeless and disadvantaged women.

More than two years ago The Big Issue recognised this problem and went about finding a solution. Natalie Susman, Head of the Women's Subscription Enterprise for The Big Issue said that while the Street Magazine Enterprise has been successfully operating in Australia since 1996, it primarily helps men, with only 15% of vendors being female.

"Our research found that homeless women are often fleeing domestic violence situations and present with a far more complex range of needs than men; including safety and security or somewhere to leave their children while they work," Ms Susman said.
"Standing on a street corner selling a magazine is not a suitable option for many of them."

With a dedicated team at The Big Issue working tirelessly for the past two years to develop a sustainable business mode, this week marks the beginning of The Women's Subscription Enterprise.
The new initiative will see subscriptions to The Big Issue magazine sold to corporate Australia, and homeless women employed to work as a Dispatch Assistant 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 and revenue is directed into the pockets through provision of wages, training, mentoring and support.

With every 100 subscriptions, a disadvantaged woman will be employed. "Women will be given economic empowerment and the skills to change their lives and control their futures," Ms Susman said.
"As a stepping-stone, the program also provides work experience and pathways opportunities to help prepare them for entry into mainstream jobs," Ms Susman added.

And with the hard work only just beginning, with an ambitious target of 9,000 subscriptions to be sold over the next 12 months, The Big Issue has sourced the help of some of Australia's most popular female identities, including Lisa Wilkinson, who herself has spent a large part of her career in publishing.

"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."

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