



*If you are participating in the presentations this year, please provide a written report and a copy of your final report presentation by 31 October.
If not, please provide a written report by 30 September.*

Part 1 - Summary Details

Please use your TAB key to complete Parts 1 & 2.

CRDC Project Number: 1208

Project Title: The Mechanics of Government and How to Influence Change: rural women's workshop

Project Commencement Date: 01/07/2011 **Project Completion Date:** 30/06/2012

CRDC Program: Human Capacity - Please Select One -

Part 2 – Contact Details

Administrator: Barbara Grey

Organisation: NA

Postal Address: PO Box 67, Mungindi 2406

Ph: 0427 448712 **Fax:** **E-mail:** rgr33982@bigpond.net.au

Principal Researcher: Barbara Grey

Organisation:

Postal Address: PO Box 67, Mungindi 2406

Ph: 0427 448712 **Fax:** **E-mail:** rgr33982@bigpond.net.au

Supervisor: (Name & position of senior scientist overseeing the project).

Organisation:

Postal Address:

Ph: **Fax:** **E-mail:**

Signature of Research Provider Representative:



Part 2 – Final Report Executive Summary

Barbara Grey is an irrigated cotton farmer from Mungindi, in SW Qld, and the 2011 Rural Women’s Award Winner for Qld, and National Runner-up. The report outlines the results of the Rural Women’s Award project developed and delivered by Barbara.

The Report is of relevance to those organisations who have a vested interest in the capacity building of regional, rural and remote women, and in particular with regard to improving their understanding of, and interaction with, the political system.

People in regional, rural and remote areas often feel disconnected from and disconcerted with, those in Canberra who make the decisions that affect our livelihood and quality of life. The pilot educational work-shop, ‘Women Affecting Change’ (WAC), was developed to target women of regional/rural Australia who are in a position to affect change in their community or industry. The overall aim of WAC was to strengthen and develop the capacity of these women to influence and affect change, through an increased understanding of the political system and other national processes. The project embraced participants from across Australia, from each state and territory, and from a diverse cross-section of industries and communities. For example, agriculture, health, education, sport, small business, and not-for-profit

The key objectives:

- Raise awareness of the political system
- Developing their knowledge of how to engage media, policy makers, government agencies, and politicians
- Networking women who are developing leadership roles in rural, remote and regional Australia
- Developing their capacity to articulate their objectives and understand the barriers to change

The project involved development and implementation of the pilot educational workshop, delivered in Canberra during sitting week, October 2011.

Workshop results exceeded expectations. The high calibre and diverse cross-section of women participants was impressive, and the women eagerly seized the opportunity to connect, contribute, network, and share their community/industry stories. Participants indicated they hoped WAC would not be a one-off event, and expressed the need for the provision of similar workshops on a regular, on-going basis.

The WAC workshop delivered a clear message, that is, rural/regional/remote residents have much to gain from being politically astute, to being well-informed about the process, and to thereby engage constructively and proactively in the political debate. Ongoing support for the delivery of educational workshops that provide an increased understanding of the political system and associated agents, for regional, rural and remote women from across Australia, during parliament’s sitting week in Canberra is highly recommended.

Part 3 – Final Report Guide (due 31 October)

(The points below are to be used as a guideline when completing your final report.)

Background



1. Outline the background to the project.

From personal and on-the-ground experience, I believe there is a need to better equip rural, regional and remote residents to manage and influence positive change for their industries and communities. As the number of representative politicians with grass-roots agricultural backgrounds diminishes, I perceived an immediate and pressing need to focus on maintaining a strong, active regional profile and a solid connection between the people of the bush, and our representatives in Canberra.

With a desire to learn more about the political process, I decided I should bring other women along on this learning exercise. Educating women on the parliamentary process would enhance their political awareness and capacity, and consequently give them a more effective voice at the legislative process stage.

Objectives

2. List the project objectives and the extent to which these have been achieved.

The key objectives of the WAC workshop were to:

- Raise awareness of the political system
- Developing knowledge of how to engage media, policy makers, government agencies, and politicians
- Networking women who are developing leadership roles in rural, remote and regional Australia
- Developing women's capacity to articulate their objectives and understand the barriers to change

Post-workshop feedback from WAC participants indicates the workshop fulfilled its intended educational, capacity-building, and networking aims. Below is a sample:

Just a quick email to say that I think you've changed my life! Last week was absolutely brilliant – so inspiring but with practical advice on tangible ways to progress ideas.

Dr RACHEL BROWN, Senior Consultant, Dairying for Tomorrow Coordinator, TAS

Thanks again for such a wonderful week. I'm looking forward to going home and implementing some of the new skills I have acquired through your course....starting with an irrigator round table with Minister Burke on Thursday!

ELIZABETH WATSON, Policy Officer MI, Murrumbidgee Irrigation, NSW

It was a fantastic experience for me to meet so many wonderful rural, regional and remote women from around Australia. I have come home very inspired and ready to launch into a couple of projects that I now have more confidence in having a 'go' at.

LA VERGNE LEHMANN, Community Engagement Officer, Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, Vic

I am very supportive of programs and workshops such as the one organised by Barb, that allows participants to gain a greater understanding of how our political system works and that brings together community leaders so that they can build meaningful relationships. I have been involved in organising similar such events in the past for young farmers. My experience from this showed that many had a low understanding of how these processes work, what is important in terms of engaging with parliamentarians and others, and ways in which you can help be a better advocate.

Dr BEN GURSANSKY, Adviser to the Hon Simon Crean MP



Women acting collectively in the agricultural sector are a very powerful move. I wanted to offer support, and any information I could to assist. I wanted to hear viewpoints from the participants on the important issues, and that was certainly achieved.

Senator FIONA NASH, NSW Senator

The women have given me the direction to begin steps to organising local community events in the channel country region. I am in the process of applying for a RADF arts grant having secured an artist to run an artist workshop. I am also planning a women's day for the far south west QLD region and I feel this project will only get bigger and better with the support I have received and no doubt will continue to receive. In terms of political and advocacy insights gained from the project, the project has certainly made me aware of the importance of maintaining pre-existing networks with local MP's media advisors and contacts which I hope to further strengthen.

KRISTY MCGREGOR, Co- Senior Allie Health Portfolio Holder, National Rural Health Students Network
Durham Downs Station, SA

Methods

3. Detail the methodology and justify the methodology used. Include any discoveries in methods that may benefit other related research.

A WAC logo was developed, and used in all communication and promotion.

To distribute the workshop flier/application form, I tapped in my networks; it was remarkable how far and wide the flier was forwarded on.

Applications came from a cross-section of industries and communities, from across Australia. Selection was based on where I would see the greatest personal change in the participant, the greatest shift in understanding, and in particular giving consideration to women who would not otherwise be afforded such an opportunity. The workshop was initially intended for 22 participants, but such was the larger-than-anticipated response from exceptional women, the workshop number was increased to 32. This involved sourcing additional sponsorship and support from business houses, the cotton industry, various agricultural support networks, politicians, government agents, and Australian Parliament House Education officer etc.

The sponsorship covered the accommodation and meals for participants, and travel within Canberra. Participants were responsible for their own travel costs to/from Canberra, and asked to pay a small non-refundable fee to secure their place, and thus demonstrate their commitment to attend.

The workshop was delivered during sitting week in October 2011. My local member The Hon Bruce Scott MP provided considerable assistance, and thus provided a means to contact politicians to determine their availability to meet with the group. Politicians from all parties were invited to participate, as it was important to keep the project politically neutral. The workshop also included sessions on working with the media, and understanding the operation of a government agency, Department of Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry. Guest speakers from within these sectors offered practical insight, and guidance on engagement and lobbying.

An evaluation was conducted immediately the workshop concluded, with a follow-up evaluation 3 months later to determine any further outcomes post-workshop. Politicians and project supporters were also asked to provide feedback.

Results



4. Detail and discuss the results for each objective including the statistical analysis of results.

Hearing from attendees that they have overcome many of the previously perceived barriers and obstacles to engaging with politicians and government agents, and to better appreciating the political process, has been immensely satisfying. Many attendees identified they have been motivated to undertake greater community and/or industry participation, as a consequence of the inspirational women they met.

The selection process was difficult; it would have been possible to invite most of the 70+ respondents, such was their level of enthusiasm and interest in the educational opportunity. Many of the unsuccessful applicants indicated they would be interested in any similar, future opportunities.

Workshop results exceeded expectations. The high calibre and diverse cross-section of women participants was impressive, and the women eagerly seized the opportunity to connect, contribute, network, and share their community/industry stories. Participants indicated they hoped WAC would not be a one-off event, and expressed the need for the provision of similar workshops on a regular, on-going basis.

Post-workshop feedback from WAC participants indicates the workshop fulfilled its intended educational, capacity-building, and networking aims. The positive post-workshop media attention has been excellent for my cotton industry, and the broader agricultural community.

Conclusion

5. Provide an assessment of the likely impact of the results and conclusions of the research project for the cotton industry. What are the take home messages?

Our lives are influenced by distant governmental and bureaucratic decision-making and national policies, over which we often feel we have no control or cannot comprehend. People in regional, rural and remote areas often feel disconnected from and disconcerted with, those in Canberra who make the decisions that affect our livelihood and quality of life. The WAC workshop delivered a clear message, that is, rural residents have much to gain from being politically astute, to being well-informed about the process, and to thereby engage constructively and proactively in the political debate.

Extension Opportunities

Recommendations:

Ongoing support for the delivery of similar educational workshops for regional, rural and remote women from across Australia, during parliament's sitting week in Canberra, is highly recommended. Financial assistance for attendees improves the ability of women to attend, however some degree of co-payment fosters participant commitment. Assistance for those residents who live considerable distances from Canberra would ensure greater representation from these areas – the tyranny of distance presented a financial barrier, for example for WA residents.

Communication with WAC's participants confirms that a 'gap' exists in the political education and networking space; many have called for follow-up workshops and/or the opportunity for colleagues to undertake a similar workshop.



Several participants expressed interest for implementation of a similar, state-level governmental education workshop.

The development and implementation of the WAC pilot project has produced a 'model' for delivery of future workshops. While too big to organise again as a one-person event, the model is adaptable and applicable for organisations interested in capacity-building for example, agricultural industries, organisations involved in regional leadership, women's interest groups.

Project Funding Overview

Women Affecting Change; 3-day workshop for 34 participants, Canberra
Conference accommodation & meals provided for 34 participants; office supply, travel costs, taxis, telephone etc:

| *Approximate total expenditure \$34123*

Income - RWA (Qld) bursary: \$10000

Additional sponsorship (including CRDC project funding) + participant attendance fees: \$22442

Approximate total income - \$32442

(The difference/shortfall between expenditure and income, \$1681, was met by Barbara Grey)