

FAAW paves the way for women in leadership

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The **Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women** will be unveiling a series of new initiatives throughout the year, including the Global Interactive Library and the unique Innovation Labs to provide women in leadership in rural and regional Australia with further learning, business and sponsorship opportunities.

The challenges of rural and regional women in leadership require different solutions to their urban counterparts, and FAAW has designed tools specifically for women living and working in rural and regional areas.

President of FAAW Jane Cleeve said the new initiatives will introduce greater diversity of opportunities.

"We will be enriching rural and regional Australia as women in leadership will have better connections with business leaders who will help women make things happen, whether they are organising a community event or have a revolutionary business idea."

A tele-learning series successfully launched in 2009 will continue this year. The tele-learning series, which can be accessed from any landline, connects women from around the country with leadership expertise. The purpose of the series is to empower women to become more effective and confident leaders at home, in the community and in business.

The tele-learning project is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry as part of its Recognising Women Farmers initiative. More information about the series can be found at .

The Global Interactive Library is expected to launch mid-2010 with four distinct sections, including an online information resource and forum. The Library will be a dynamic exchange centre for users from Australia and around the world to share information they find interesting or helpful. The Library will also connect women in leadership to discuss insights, issues and solutions relevant to rural and regional areas. The Global Interactive Library is funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

"FAAW will be providing content through forums, seminars and workshops but more importantly will encourage users to interact from their knowledge and experience on the site. The Library is a place of knowledge creation. The Innovation Labs, the most ambitious part of our plans, will follow later this year and be developed over the next two years," Ms Cleeve said.

The Innovation Labs will link women with new business ideas and inventions to others with common interests and with experts and potential investors. Supported by a network of sponsors, including leading organisations in the field of law, agriculture, communication, engineering, and art, the Innovation Labs will provide a direct line between the business idea and investment capital and support.

"The Innovation Labs are designed to create business opportunities. We will feature an online gallery for rural artists and photographers to sell their work, as well as provide opportunities for women who have ideas, perhaps for sustainable farming, healthcare or design, to discuss their plans with experienced professionals in innovation and development," Ms Cleeve said.

The idea of the Innovation Labs has been positively received by business, with a prominent law firm and several companies in discussion with the Foundation. Ms Cleeve said this initial

interest demonstrates the value and faith business has in women from rural and regional areas.

“Women are important to the long-term development and sustainability of our rural and regional areas. With the new tools we currently have, and those we will implement, women in rural and regional areas will have the support they need to take truly significant strides,” Ms Cleeve said.