

# **What Do Rural Women Want To Know?**

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A Report into Rural, Remote and Regional  
Women's Information Needs and Future  
Webinar Topics



National Rural Women's Coalition

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## Foreword

Dear Friends,

I encourage you to read the National Rural Women's Coalition report titled "*What do Rural Women Want to Know – A Report into Rural, Remote and Regional Women's Future Information Needs and Webinar Topics*".

The National Rural Women's Coalition is proud of its continued advocacy by reflecting the skills and talents of rural, remote and regional women and their communities through promoting equality, diversity and inclusiveness.

This report has captured the voices of women. I ask you to take note and share this valuable resource.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Irene Mills".

Irene Mills AM

NRWC President

## The National Rural Women's Coalition

The National Rural Women's Coalition works to support and grow vibrant rural, remote and regional Communities throughout Australia. The National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC) provides a collaborative national voice for women living in rural, regional and remote Australia and does this by:

- Representing the diverse views of women in rural, regional and remote Australia.
- Providing advice to the Australian Government on policy issues relevant to the views and circumstances of rural women.
- Contributing to building a positive profile of rural women, their achievements and issues.

The core activities of the NRWC revolve around:

- Advocacy for women
- Influencing policy and decision-making
- Building capacity within women's organizations and for rural, remote and regional women
- Reflecting the diversity of the women's sector

The values which underpin the work of the NRWC are:

Respect – recognizing the diverse views of rural, remote and regional women.

Innovation –improving connections to and for rural, remote and regional women.

Professionalism – acting with integrity and transparency.

Empowerment – promoting equality, diversity and inclusiveness.

Current members of the NRWC are the Australian Local Government Women's Association; Australian Women in Agriculture; Country Women's Association of Australia; National Rural Health Alliance; Women's Industry Network Seafood Community; two rural Aboriginal Women and one Independent Director.



NATIONAL RURAL  
HEALTH  
ALLIANCE INC.

## The Need to Plan Information Sessions for Rural Women

The National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC) has embraced emerging technologies as a tool to offer short web conferencing webinars for women who live in rural, remote and regional (RRR) locations. With no down time, babysitting fees or travel costs, women can take part in learning and networking experiences from the convenience of their own homes. The added benefit of this is that there is no guilt that is often associated with caregivers leaving home, business and family to attend training and information sessions. The web conferencing software used is free and allows for open and collaborative communication and has proven to foster strong networks amongst the women who join the sessions.

In 2013, the NRWC offered a webinar and e-networking series known as A Cuppa With™ on a monthly (every second Thursday evening at 7 pm AEST) basis. These webinars enabled RRR women to be inspired by having discussions with other like-minded rural women without having to leave home. The A Cuppa With™ sessions were conducted in a web conferencing room which provides an engaging multi-media experience with a guest speaker. Participants are able to interact in a virtual classroom and network with rural, remote and regional women from all corners of Australia.

The NRWC has also embraced web conferencing technology to build leadership capacity and in recent years, has run a successful online leadership program known as E-Leaders. Each year, twenty women from rural and remote areas are given the opportunity to take part in professional development on the topic of leadership.

Nearing the end of 2013, the NRWC decided to seek feedback from rural, remote and regional women to ascertain what information topics are of interest to them with a view to using this information to inform planning for 2014 and beyond. An online survey was administered to discover what RRR women might like to learn about.

The National Rural Women's Coalition undertook a survey of rural, remote and regional women to discover what they might like to learn about and discuss in short webinars that might be offered by the National Rural Women's Coalition in the future. The short survey asked nine questions.

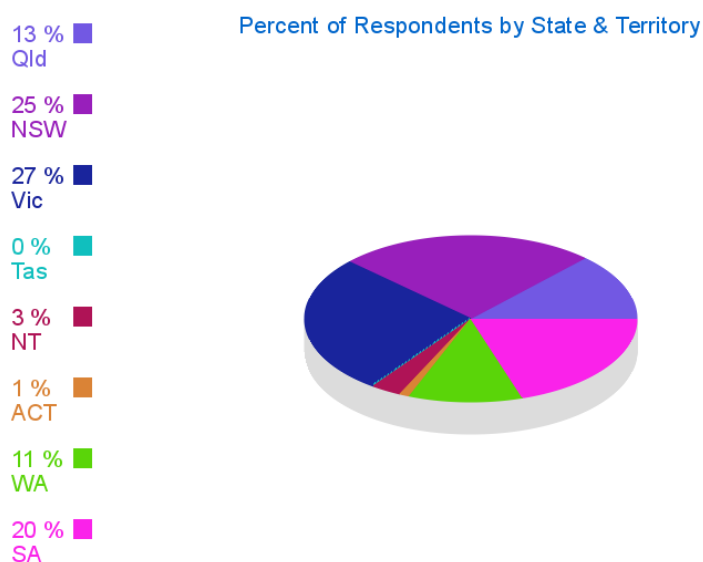
1. Do you require any information / training which would assist you in running a small business? Yes. No. Please specify what knowledge areas or information you would like to know more about that would help you to run a small business?
2. Do you require any information / training which would assist you as a volunteer with a not-for-profit committee or organization? Yes. No. Please specify what knowledge areas or information you would like to know about that will assist you as a volunteer with a not-for-profit committee or organization?
3. Do you require any information / training which would assist you as a rural advocate / lobbyist? Yes. No. Please specify what knowledge areas or

information you would like to know about that will assist you as a rural advocate / lobbyist?

4. Do you require any information / training which would assist you with your communication skills? Yes. No. Please specify what knowledge areas or information you would like to know about that will assist you with your communication skills?
5. Do you require any information / training which would assist you as a family carer? Yes. No. Please specify what knowledge areas or information you would like to know more about that would assist you as a family carer?
6. Are there any other gaps in your knowledge that could be provided by a short online information session? Yes. No. Please specify what knowledge areas or information you would like to know about?
7. What time of day would suit you best for a 1-2 hour web conferencing session? Please adjust for your time zone, as the NRWC wishes to find at time that suits women across Australia. You may select more than one time choice. Please add any relevant comments.
8. What day of the week would suit you best for a 1-2 hour web conferencing training session?
9. Which state/territory do you live in?

## About the Survey Respondents

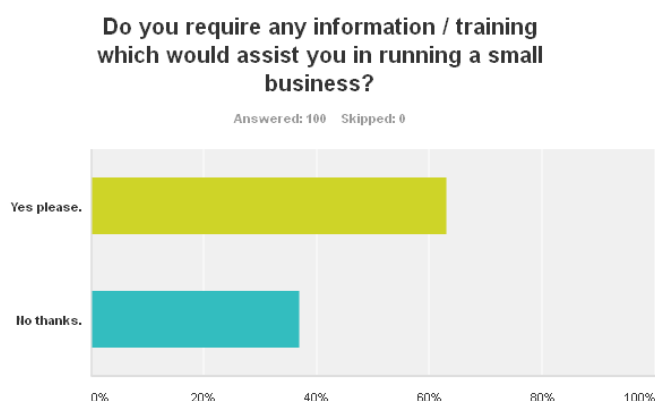
One hundred women from rural, remote and regional Australia responded to the online survey during the month of October, 2013.





## Small Business Responses

Sixty-three percent of women indicated that they would like information / training which would assist them with running a small business. 54% of the respondents provided additional information outlining their needs.



The top five topics (listed in priority order) which women wanted to know about were:

1. Business Budgeting and Financial Management
2. Business Planning
3. Navigating Government Regulations and Laws
4. Marketing
5. Starting a Business.

**Business Budgeting and Financial Management** – Overwhelmingly, rural women want to know more about the accounting, budgeting and streamlined financial management of running a small business, and in particular, agribusiness financial management. Keeping accurate records for good business management (e.g. with employees, invoicing, managing the books) was considered important as was the ability to read financial statements.

**Business Planning** – The establishment of and fine-tuning of business plans was considered an important skill by women. Rural women want to know how to plan, expand and grow successful businesses, establish a vision, determine their role within a business, cut down costs and prudently plan for a financially stable business.

**Navigating Government Regulations and Laws** – Knowledge of the relevant government regulations that provide an obligation on business operators was considered important by rural women. In particular, the laws relating to the Australian Tax Office and managing taxation matters; Workcover, workplace health and safety / occupational health and safety; superannuation, contracts and human resource regulations were considered important. Assistance with navigating the relevant government websites which contain this information was



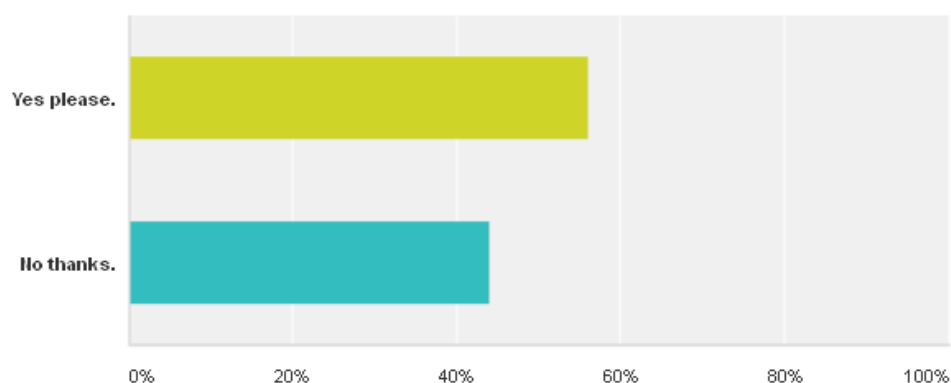


## Volunteering with Not-for-Profit Committees and Organisation Responses

Fifty-six percent of women respondents indicated that they would like information / training which would assist them with their volunteer roles working with not-for-profit committees and organizations. 48% of the respondents provided additional information outlining their needs.

### Do you require any information / training which would assist you as a volunteer with a not-for-profit committee or organization?

Answered: 100 Skipped: 0



The top five topics (in priority order) which women wanted to know about were:

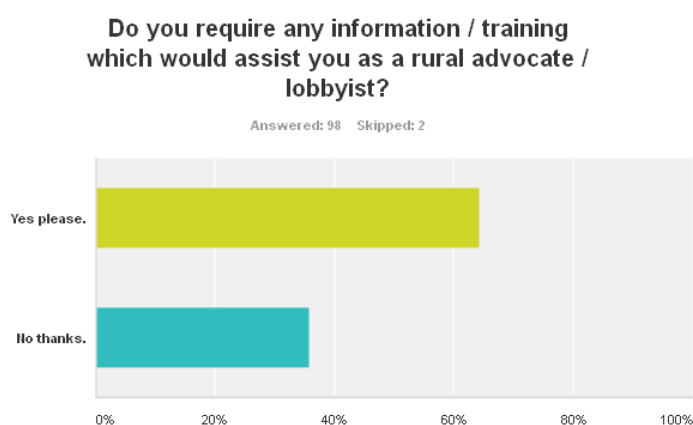
1. Governance
2. Fundraising
3. Sustainable Volunteerism
4. Managing People
5. Using Technology

**Governance** – A massive 59% of rural, remote and regional women who responded to the survey would like to know more about not-for-profit governance. This includes setting up a not-for-profit organisation; basic governance; obligations and responsibilities within and for an organization and the duties and roles of office bearers; financial management and accountability; planning great meeting agendas, following correct meeting procedure and chairing effective meetings; managing members; setting up and working with committees; succession planning; policy development; working with a constitution; ATO and other compliance requirements of not-for-profits; developing skills in order to make effective contributions and how to run governance health checks.



## Rural Advocacy and Lobbying Responses

Sixty four percent of women respondents indicated that they would like information / training which would assist them to be able to support and advocate for causes that are important to them. It should be noted that this was the topic was the second most important topic to survey respondents. 47% of the respondents provided additional information outlining their needs.



The top five topics (listed in priority order) which women wanted to know about were:

1. Lobbying and Advocacy Skills
2. Using Social and Traditional Media
3. Working with Government
4. Engaging Others in the Cause
5. Funding Advocacy and Campaign Work

**Lobbying and Advocacy Skills** – Rural women want to know the basic and advanced skills of effective lobbying. This includes how to start an advocacy process; how to persuade, empower and enlist other people in the cause so they can be advocates; how to form an advocacy group; how to effectively understand an issue; the process to set up and present arguments in the public arena using effective public speaking skills; planning who to lobby; the need for different advocacy skills for positive engagement with different groups e.g. other groups, men’s groups, health departments, governments etc, how to be hard without harming the cause; how to deal with hostile activism and any legal ramifications of being involved in advocacy.

**Using Social and Traditional Media** – There was strong interest in knowing more about how to get messages across using both social and traditional media. Overwhelmingly, people wanted more information on how to effectively use social media to support advocacy work at both basic and advanced levels and how to plan effective messages for different audiences e.g. urban and get them heard by that audience.



## Communication Skill Responses

Sixty five percent of women respondents indicated that they would like information / training which would assist them to be able to communicate more powerfully and adequately. It should be noted that this was the topic was the most important topic to survey respondents. 50% of the respondents provided additional information outlining their needs.



The top five topics (listed in priority order) which women wanted to know about were:

1. Using Computer and Digital Communication Technologies
2. Public Speaking
3. Communication with Purpose
4. Effective Verbal Communication
5. Media Skills

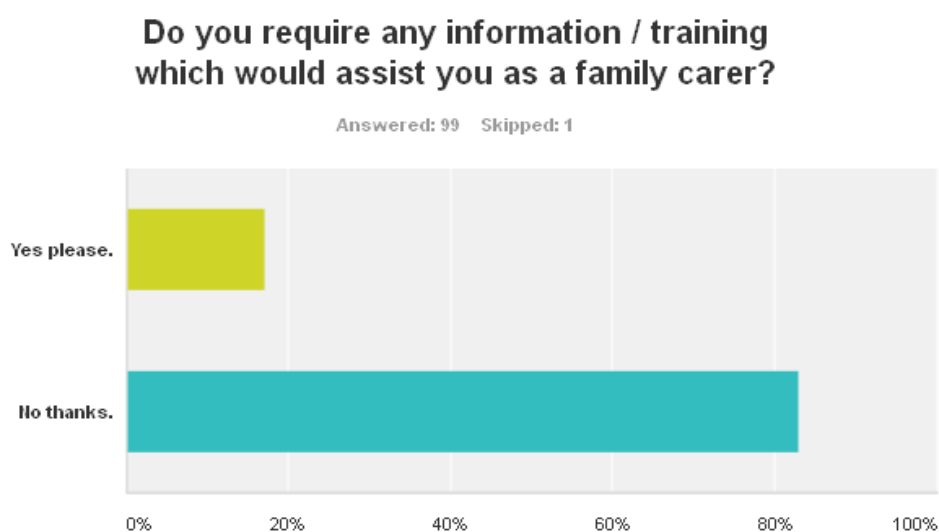
**Using Computer and Digital Communication Technologies** – It can be difficult to keep up with emerging communication technologies and ensuring that the communication is effective and best practice. Rural women would like have more knowledge about using various computer programs e.g. Excel, Microsoft Word, Picture Manager etc to their full advantage. The ability to use emerging digital technologies such as tablets/iPad/iPhone/Kindle and to be able to link these devices was knowledge that was required. Social media use can be effective and the need to be able to use applications like Twitter and Facebook for business was considered desirable. Women would like to develop confidence when using web conferencing as well as understanding what makes a powerful message when composing emails or blogging. Learning about cloud computing and knowing how to share and use files and applications over the internet was also considered worthwhile.



## Family Carer Responses

Seventeen percent of women respondents indicated that they would like information / training which would assist them to be able to undertake their family caregiver roles

It should be noted that this was the topic was of least importance to survey respondents. Only 15% of the respondents provided additional information outlining their needs.



The top three topics (listed in no particular order) which women wanted to know about were:

1. Finding “Me” Time
2. Accessing Help and Information
3. Parenting Skills

**Finding “Me” Time** – Carers would like suggestions as to how they can incorporate sufficient time for themselves whilst caring for others. They would also like to be able to access respite that is not patronizing or demeaning to the individual. Learning how to engage in mindful meditation would also be welcomed by carers.

**Accessing Help and Information** – Rural women can find it challenging to access information, support services and helpful government assistance on various aspects of their carer role when they live in a remote area. This includes information on legislation and guidelines relating to their area of care (including aged care) as well as Centrelink assistance.

**Parenting Skills** – Rural parents would like information on constructive and practical parenting skills with the early childhood, pre-teen and teenagers. This ideally would include training for both parents so they can share strategies that work best for their family circumstance.





## What Other Knowledge Do Rural Women Want to Know About?

Survey respondents were asked if they had any other gaps in their knowledge that could be provided by a short online information session. There were three responses to this question.

- Information on money matters.
- *“There are lots of seminars on 'feeling good' or 'being inspired' but we really want facts and figures. Techniques and tools we can use on our farms. The issue is profitability not positivity”.*
- *“I think that we very much need an injection of confidence for women to get them to put their hands up for leadership. Can we have a scholarship program that gives substantial funds for training and follow up. What about targeting girls in leadership positions in schools in regional and remote areas”?*

## What Else Did Rural Women Say?

Many survey respondents also took advantage of this open ended question to provide feedback and perspectives to the NRWC on information and training sessions. Here is a selection of comments received.

*“This is a great service. I haven't been able to do any of the seminars yet, and am a bit nervous about making the technology work (because I'm not really sure what's necessary), but it's a great idea and I'm planning to get involved”.*

*“Thanks. After the last election and lobbying efforts being ignored it's nice to feel listened to by someone”!*

*“Ability to access others who have a child with a chronic illness in a rural/remote setting, work off farm and then run 3000 sheep in their "spare time". People not wanting to sit around a box of makeup or latest vogue magazine. I want access to those with get up and go, to feel like they can get things done or discussed to be able to use when they get home”.*

*“This is a great idea for people who have good access to web conferencing”.*

*Thank you. What a great idea!*

*“It is important to keep abreast of all opportunities available to strengthen the voice of rural, remote & regional women”.*

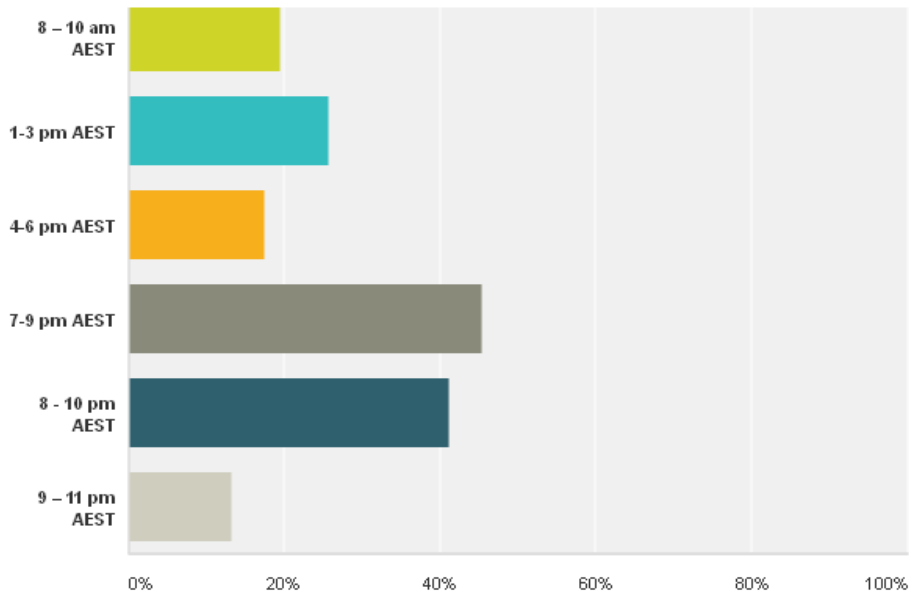
*“Great idea, as long as we know how to access it and have adequate Internet coverage”!!*

*“This sounds like a fantastic idea! Hope it gets wings”.*



## What Time Suits Rural Women for a Web Conferencing Information and Training Session?

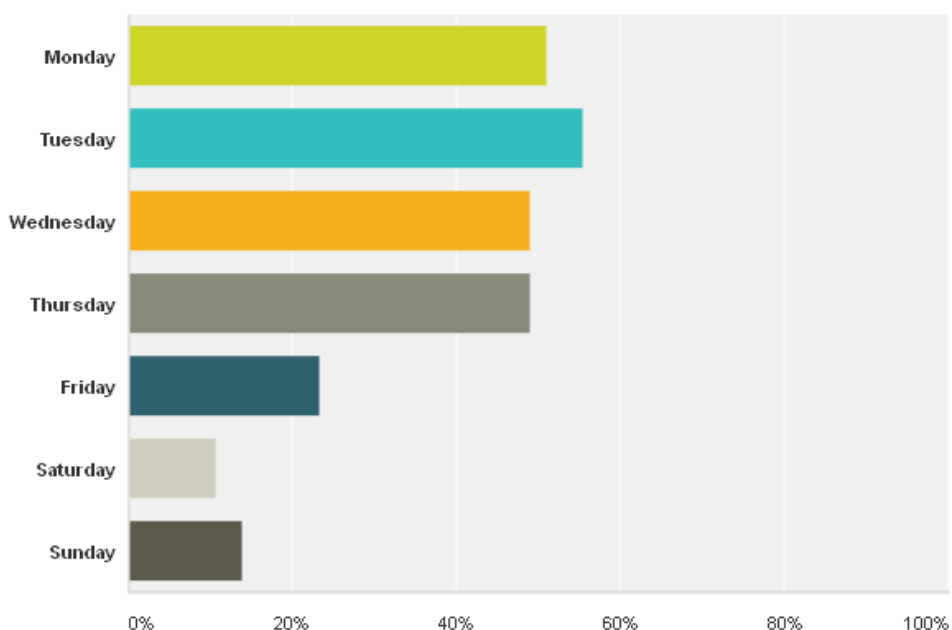
Rural Women were asked to nominate times of the day that would suit them best for a 1-2 hour web conferencing session. The preferred time for 45% of respondents is 7-9 pm AEST, followed by 41% who would prefer 8 – 10 pm AEST webinars.



Answer Choices	Responses
8 – 10 am AEST	19.59% 19
1-3 pm AEST	25.77% 25
4-6 pm AEST	17.53% 17
7-9 pm AEST	45.36% 44
8 - 10 pm AEST	41.24% 40
9 – 11 pm AEST	13.40% 13
Total Respondents: 97	

## What Day Suits Rural Women for a Web Conferencing Information and Training Session?

Survey respondents were asked what day of the week suited them best to attend a 1-2 hour web conferencing sessions. 55% of women nominated Tuesday as being their ideal day, with Monday (51%) being their most preferred evening. 48% of respondents nominated Wednesday and Thursday as their preferred day.



Answer Choices	Responses
<b>Monday</b>	<b>51.06%</b> 48
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>55.32%</b> 52
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>48.94%</b> 46
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>48.94%</b> 46
<b>Friday</b>	<b>23.40%</b> 22
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>10.64%</b> 10
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>13.83%</b> 13
Total Respondents: 94	

## Conclusion

The National Rural Women's Coalition will use this report to inform the future planning of webinars. These webinars are offered free to rural, remote and regional women. There are currently two forms of webinars offered. *A Cuppa With™* is offered on a monthly basis and features guest speakers where women are invited to log in, relax with 'a cuppa' and be part of a vibrant networking session whilst being informed on topics of interest to them. These sessions are open to anyone who has access to a connected computer. Each year, the National Rural Women's Coalition offers a series of webinars in an E-Learning course format to selected applicants who are chosen by a merit selection process.

The National Rural Women's Coalition will be incorporating the rich data and feedback that has been gained from survey respondents in the planning for 2014 and beyond. This includes examining the priority needs and incorporating the following in to planning:

- Communications skills (65% women)
- Rural advocacy and lobbying skills (64% women)
- Running a small business (63% women)
- Volunteering with not-for-profit organizations (56% women)
- Information about family caregiver roles (17%)

The NRWC Directors thank the many rural, remote and regional women who accepted the invitation to provide feedback and who took the time to complete the survey. This input is genuinely appreciated and will be used to improve webinar offerings in the future. Rural, remote and regional women – we thank you for your participation.

*The National Rural Women's Coalition - capturing diversity and resilience through the voices of dynamic rural, remote and regional women throughout Australia.*