

Census data helps regional women thrive in business

Spanning more than 150,000 square kilometres in Western Australia's south west and encompassing 42 local government areas, the Wheatbelt is home to an extensive network of small businesses from a range of industries.

At the heart of this region is the Wheatbelt Business Network (WBN) – a business association that provides support to businesses through advisory services, mentoring, networking and information.

These services help members develop their business, support their towns, and contribute to the economic growth of the region.

Since it began in 2010, WBN has relied on Census data to better understand the region.

WBN CEO Caroline Robinson said Census data has helped identify gaps in its initiatives for members and the wider business community.

"Census data helps the Wheatbelt Business Network forecast future trends and economic changes that could affect the area, and develop focused initiatives targeted at sub-regions, specific demographic groups and communities," Ms Robinson said.

For example, Census data shows that women in business is one of the fastest growing entrepreneurial demographics in the Wheatbelt. Two-thirds of businesses in the region have a female director, partner or senior decision maker.

In response, the WBN developed the WE Connect business mentoring service, which connects female business owners in the region with high profile and well-respected business leaders.

It also hosts an annual WE Shine event, where female entrepreneurs from across the Wheatbelt network learn from other women.

"This event equips our female business owners and senior managers with valuable skills and networking opportunities to support them as they take the next step with their businesses," Ms Robinson said.

"We know fostering relationships and building skills greatly contribute to business success, and we aim to provide women with these opportunities in the Wheatbelt.

"It's important that everyone takes part in the Census. Census data helps guide how the WBN supports women in business, WBN members as well as other rural businesses and the communities that rely on them," she said.