

THE BIG ISSUE & ROTARY: COMMUNITY SUBSCRIPTIONS CHAMPIONS PILOT

Woman's Subscription Enterprise FAQ

The Big Issue and Rotary Club of Melbourne partnership

The Rotary Club of Melbourne is working in partnership with The Big Issue and volunteering as Community Subscription Ambassadors (CSAs), visiting businesses and organizations in this area to drive subscription sales to The Big Issue magazine in support of The Women's Subscription Enterprise (WSE) which provides employment opportunities for homeless and disadvantaged women.

What is the Women's Subscription Enterprise?

The Big Issue launched the Women's Subscription Enterprise in 2010 after it was revealed that there was a need for appropriate paid work opportunities for homeless and marginalised women.

Through this initiative, women are employed as Dispatch Assistants to collate, sort and send off the subscriptions every fortnight. Distribution Centres are currently located in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide.

There is no pressure on the women themselves to sell the magazine - that is what I am here to do.

For every 100 subscriptions sold 1 disadvantaged woman can be employed - so, the more subscriptions sold, the more disadvantaged women can be employed as part of the Women's Subscription Enterprise.

As subscriptions to The Big Issue magazine are sold, the money is used to pay the wages of disadvantaged women, and cover the costs of additional training, mentoring and support.

By gaining financial independence, women in vulnerable situations are given economic empowerment and the skills and ability to change their lives and have control over their own future and, quite often, their children's future too, thus putting an end to the generational cycle of poverty.

How can I help?

You can help by purchasing an annual subscription/s to The Big Issue magazine for just \$155 (inc GST). The Big Issue is a fortnightly magazine so you receive a total of 25 editions! Each magazine is packed and wrapped by a disadvantaged woman working in one of our Distribution Centres.

Through your subscription your business also has the opportunity to:

- showcase its commitment to women in the workplace
- be part of a movement that addresses a critical social need in Australia

- demonstrate that you are committed to breaking cycle of poverty for women and their children by placing your magazine in staff rooms, waiting rooms, foyers or in-store for staff, clients or customers

How much do the women get paid?

The women are paid the award rate, plus get access to further training pathways, work experience placements and flexible work arrangements.

The Women's Subscription Enterprise enables homeless and disadvantaged women to earn a regular income while they develop their skills in a safe, secure and supportive work environment.

The initiative provides them with work experience and easily transferable skills to help prepare them for entry into other more mainstream jobs.

How does The Big Issue find the women?

The Big Issue works closely with community agencies in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide who refer women eligible to work in the Distribution Centres.

What makes a woman eligible to take part in the initiative?

The WSE is aimed at disadvantaged women. Disadvantage can encompass a range of circumstances such as: homelessness, fleeing domestic and family violence, newly-arrived refugees, the long term unemployed, those with a physical or intellectual disability, and/or those with a drug or alcohol dependence.

There are no real barriers to working as part of the Women's Subscription Enterprise and each woman takes part in an informal interview process before deciding to join the initiative.

Can men work for the Women's Subscriptions Enterprise?

Our research has shown us that homeless and disadvantaged women need structured work in a secure and women's only environment.

This is because they present with a far greater and more complex range of needs including safety and security, mental and physical health, disability, and, in many cases, childcare.

The majority of women who are homeless are fleeing domestic or family violence and therefore it's very important that the Women's Subscription Enterprise is able to offer a non-confronting work place.

As The Big Issue already operates the highly successful Street Magazine Enterprise, that has shown remarkable outcomes and positive changes predominantly for men, at this stage of the initiative the WSE focuses exclusively on the needs of homeless and disadvantaged women.

As the initiative continues to grow we will review its workings and may consider opening it up to others.

So will the women work at a Distribution Centre forever?

A big part of the Women's Subscription Enterprise is mentoring, on the job training, access to further training pathways and work experience placements for all the women.

The provision of certified training will give participants easily transferable skills and prepare them for entry into the mainstream workplace following their involvement with the Women's Subscription Enterprise.

For some women, working in the Distribution Centre is their only option for regular, on-going employment.

Who/what is The Big Issue?

The Big Issue is an independent organisation that develops and operates a range of social enterprises that provide opportunities for thousands of homeless and disadvantaged Australians to help themselves. The Big Issue offers a number of ways to connect homeless and disadvantaged people with the community including its largest initiative - the Street Magazine Enterprise (SME).

The idea is simple – authorized Vendors buy The Big Issue magazines for \$2.50 and sell them for \$5, keeping the difference.

Since its inception in Australia in 1996, The Big Issue Vendors have sold over 6 million magazines and \$13.2 million has gone into the pockets of Australia's homeless and unemployed.

What is The Big Issue magazine?

The Big Issue magazine is a general interest magazine. It features arts and entertainment, current affairs, lifestyle, personal experience. Edited by Walkley award winner Alan Attwood, this high quality magazine is free of any political, social or religious agenda

Circulation exceeds 30,000 nationally and it attracts 242,000 readers per fortnight.

The Big Issue magazine is not sold in news agencies, it's only available to buy from authorized Vendors located in CBD areas throughout Australia or by subscription.

Cover stories in the past 12 months include:

Kylie Minogue: Into her fourth decade in showbiz – The Big Issue talked fame, fans and staying power ahead of Kylie's lavish tour in Australia.

Al Pacino: In this edition Al Pacino talked to The Big Issue about some of his classic movies including *The Godfather* trilogy, *Scarface* and *Dog Day Afternoon* and about rumours he is first choice to play Frank Sinatra in a forthcoming project.

Julia Zemiro: Julia Zemiro chatted to The Big Issue about RockWiz, her work with various charities and Eurovision.

What is a social enterprise?

Social enterprises use creative and business-based approaches to developing innovative ways to tackle social issues and drive positive social change.

Simply put, a social enterprise is a business that provides a benefit to society.

The Big Issue, for example, provides a product (The Big Issue magazine) that people can buy and it's through these sales that homeless and disadvantaged Australians are able to earn an income.

The Big Issue Street Magazine Enterprise and Women's Subscription Enterprise are true social enterprises in the sense that they do not rely on donations or government funding and are independent, viable, sustainable and self-funded businesses.

Can women become Vendors?

Women *can* become Big Issue Vendors, but many homeless women are fleeing domestic or family violence and are usually accompanied by children so this is not a viable option for the majority.

The Women's Subscription Enterprise gives women in vulnerable situations the opportunity to earn money in a safe and secure environment.

Does this initiative have any impact on those that currently sell The Big Issue on the streets?

The Women's Subscriptions Enterprise has a positive impact on the vendors currently selling The Big Issue magazine as increased awareness and circulation increases overall vendor sales.

This increase in circulation will help to sell advertising, increasing revenue for the publication.

The focus of this initiative is selling subscriptions to businesses, not individuals, which is the primary market for vendors.

What else does The Big Issue do?

The Big Issue uses various business models to connect people with the community including:

- Street Magazine Enterprise - where vendors sell copies of The Big Issue Magazine on CBD street corners around Australia's capital cities
- Community Street Soccer Program - known as Street Soccer, uses the power of sport to promote social inclusion and personal change for homeless, marginalised and disadvantaged people. It changes lives and creates healthier communities across Australia
- The Big Issue Classroom - the program works with secondary schools and community groups to break down stereotypes surrounding homelessness and encourage understanding.

How can people get in touch with the WSE?

Women can get involved with the WSE through a referral from a community agency, or by contacting The Big Issue directly on 03 9663 4533 or by email: bigissue@bigissue.org.au.

Can our business become more involved in other ways (not necessarily through buying subscriptions)?

Sure! Businesses can make a donation to the Women's Subscription Enterprise or perhaps consider championing the sale of subscriptions through their own networks by:

- hosting a Women In Business lunch where you invite a Big Issue guest speaker
- encouraging staff to participate in a subscriptions drive
- profiling the Women's Subscriptions Enterprise in news bulletins (internal and external) and/or on your website

There are plenty of opportunities for your business to be part of this groundbreaking program. To find out more contact The Big Issue on 03 9663 9136 or by email: bigissue@bigissue.org.au

Are subscription purchases tax deductible?

The purchase of a subscription to The Big Issue magazine can be claimed as a business expense, not a donation, as you will be receiving a product.

When should I expect my first subscription?

Approximately four weeks from payment.

Can I make a donation?

Yes, visit the website at www.thebigissue.org.au or call (03) 9663 4533