

# SUBMISSION 11

Inquiry into the current and future directions of Australia's service industry.txt  
From: Melanie O'Toole  
Sent: Friday, 21 July 2006 3:57 PM  
To: Committee, EFPA (REPS)  
Cc:  
Subject: Inquiry into the current and future directions of Australia's service industry

To: Secretary of the Committee  
House Standing Committee on Economics, Finance and Public Administration  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Colleague

I write in my capacities as a long time services exporter, and as a voluntary director of the International Women's Federation of Commerce and Industry.

As background, the International Women's Federation of Commerce and Industry is a dedicated chamber of commerce for women, established by Australians with close to 2,000 members in Australia and abroad. Members represent the corporate sector, public service, and increasingly from the small-to-medium sized enterprises (SME) export community. For further details, please visit the Chamber's website: [www.iwfc.org](http://www.iwfc.org)

In terms of exporting, Austrade data reveals that 80% of Australia's export activity comes from the SME community, and much of this is generated from women led businesses.

In the interests of time, members and I provide the following:

1. The services export segment is a fast growing area of the Australian economy.

However its growth has not in our opinion been properly documented in range of mediums such as Australia's annual Year Book, published by the Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS). There prevails within the Year Book a narrow recording of the range of industries that are involved in services exporting, and hence this may lead to narrow and misguided interpretations and policy development.

Secondly, to assist with policy development, we would ask that the ABS engage more rigorously in analysing business activity data and findings by gender. Austrade and others recognise the increasing numbers of women led businesses in the field of exporting. Yet, data collection and analysis of this group is currently done in an adhoc way.

Recommendations:

-ABS to expand its coverage of service based industries for the purposes of better data collection and analysis.

-Government departments and agencies nation wide commit to collecting and analysing business activity data by gender.

2. Use of Modern Technology

Compared to government and non-profit support in other developed countries, training programs and networking events focusing on exporting still tend to focus on face-to-face delivery mode. This method continues to isolate rural communities and home based business operators (many of whom are women).

Recommendations:

-We ask that training programs and networking events delivered by government agencies such as Austrade be made available through online/distance education, video and/or teleconferencing.

3. Strategic Framework for supporting Women Business Owners

Unlike the United Kingdom and the United States of America, Australia is without a nation wide strategic framework to engage, support and recognise its women business owners. For some time, the approach in Australia of

Inquiry into the current and future directions of Australia's service industry.txt supporting the development of women business owners tends to be adhoc and piecemeal. It is recognised by many that women in business face specific obstacles because of their gender in their pursuit of business development. For e.g. the vast majority of women in Australia are still expected to be the primary carers of young children and ageing parents and relatives.

Recommendations:

- That the Federal and State Departments of Trade, Small Business and Women come together to develop and execute a nation-wide strategy on women business owners involved in international trade.
- That the Federal Office of Women investigate and benchmark the work and policy development of the United States of America's peak business women's research body - the Center for Women's Business Research. Website: [www.cfwbr.org](http://www.cfwbr.org)

I and the members are grateful for the committees commitment in investigating the current and future potential of the services export field. We hope that collective effort, data, and policy will eventually extend the effectiveness of Australian women business owners in the world of international trade.

Yours sincerely

Melanie O'Toole