

Welcome Speech to the Official Opening of the 12th APEC Women Leaders Network (WLN) Meeting

by

The Hon Julie Bishop MP

Minister for Education, Science and Training
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues

Welcome, everyone, to the 12th APEC Women Leaders Network (WLN) Meeting here, in beautiful Port Douglas, Australia.

What an exciting moment it is for me to be standing at the head of this room in front of such a large crowd of amazing women and other guests.

It is an honour and a pleasure to be surrounded by such a powerhouse of talent, energy and ability.

I know that we are blessed with a very diverse group of women leaders attending this meeting. Many of you are focussed on creating opportunities for developing your own business, many of you want to influence APEC policy agendas, and many of you have a particular passion you want to pursue – whether it be bridging the digital divide or developing tomorrow's women leaders. We have set ourselves the task of devising a programme that will cater for this wonderful diversity of interests.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Reference Group I appointed to guide the development of this year's programme.

This special group of prominent Australian women from business, government and academia have devoted an enormous amount of time and energy into designing the program for this important meeting.

They've also very carefully selected a talented group of speakers who will inspire us time and time again over the next couple of days.

You'll see in your conference satchels a publication called *Women in Trade*. I'm pleased to launch this publication today.

It's the second in a series and it's an important publication because it's written specifically for women entrepreneurs who have or are interested in going global with their products and services.

It's amazing how quickly times can change.

Just 20 years ago in Australia exporting was a forbidding prospect for many businesses, characterised by risk and venturing into the unknown. I've no doubt many of you in this room can relate to this in your own economies.

And in dollar terms women have not traditionally commanded a high profile in the export community.

However, today women are becoming an increasingly important force in the export community and are looking to increase their knowledge even further.

Women in Trade will help.

It's an initiative of the Australian Government through the Office for Women. It was commissioned in recognition of the growing number of women, particularly small to medium enterprises, who are actively exploring export opportunities.

Women in Trade is more than a handy reference on exporting. It's an inspiration for those thinking of embarking on an exporting career and it applauds women already selling products and services around the world.

It supports the undeniable upward trend in exporting by women and I can't think of a better place to launch it than at this 12th APEC Women Leaders Network Meeting. So enjoy the handbook's contents.

I would now like to introduce a highly esteemed guest who will officially open this conference ... His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffrey, the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, who is appointed by the Queen to be Her Majesty's representative in Australia.