

**From Small Business Champion on Global Stage: Carol Hanlon addressed delegates on women's economic empowerment across borders : Asia-Pacific Women Conference attended by 28 countries.**

PERTH, WA – When Carol Hanlon stepped onto the stage at Malaysia's prestigious BPW Asia Pacific Regional Conference, she represented more than five decades of grassroots small business experience and mentoring that has quietly revolutionized how women approach entrepreneurship.

The Perth-based CEO, recently crowned COSBOA's National Small Business Champion, this week presented to over 200 delegates from 28 countries from across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond at the August 24-26 conference held in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

"I've spent five decades in small business and assisting women and have witnessed the many barriers to their business growth," says Hanlon, whose NFPs Belmont BEC Inc and TCFWA Inc have supported over 44,000 entrepreneurs since 1994. "Now I'm taking those solutions global."

Hanlon's two presentations tackle critical gaps in women's economic empowerment. Her "Women Connecting for Change" panel will unveil practical strategies for building cross-sector partnerships between NGOs and social enterprises - a model she's refined and also promotes through her annual NGO forums at the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York since 2012.

Her second presentation updates delegates on breakthrough initiatives from BPW International's Business, Trade & Technology Committee, where she's served since 2021. Current projects span from digital empowerment programs for African girls to AI skills development and investment readiness mentoring.

The timing couldn't be more significant. The conference coincided with BPW International's 95th anniversary, celebrating an organization that holds advisory status level with the United Nations ECOSOC on issues affecting women. The BPW International Asia Pacific region represents its second-largest expanding network of business and professional women.

"What makes Carol unique is her ability to scale grassroots solutions," explains conference organizers. "She's not just talking theory – she's delivering measurable impact and connects across 125 countries."

That impact is substantial. Beyond her 36,500 small business clients, Hanlon has also supported over 7,500 designers through her TCF organisation, created the 21-year-running designedge Innovation FESTIVAL, and established multiple programs recognizing fashion sustainability, energy efficiency, fashion business support for migrant and Indigenous small business. Through the BEC and TCF she is now conducting her 32<sup>nd</sup> annual Belmont & Western Australian Small Business Awards.

Her journey from establishing her own fashion label in the 1970s to becoming a global advocate for women's economic empowerment demonstrates the evolution she wants to see replicated worldwide.

"Women we support in Perth and beyond can connect to networks spanning from New York to Mongolia," Hanlon explains, referencing her international speaking circuit that has included BPW conferences across four continents, global trade expos and small business trade missions to many countries.

The BPW Asia Pacific Regional Conference theme – "Inspire, Innovate, Empower, Transform – Together We Shape a Sustainable Future" – aligns perfectly with Hanlon's mission of ensuring women work 'ON' their businesses, not just 'IN' them.

Ongoing highlights of global alliances that Carol formed during the BPW Asia Pacific Conference will be with the Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs Network who will connect with her BPW Business Incubator ONLINE Training & Mentoring Project to support women in Myanmar; BPW Damansara Malaysia expressed interest to connect with both BEC & TCF re trade and export training and opportunities; Final arrangements were also made with BPW Papua New Guinea who will be the beneficiary of the next 40<sup>th</sup> container from TCF & BEC of donated sewing machines, textiles and haberdashry to assist PNG women with sewing training and starting womens livelihood sewing businesses.

For journalists seeking fresh angles on women's economic empowerment, sustainable business practices, or Asia-Pacific trade relationships, Hanlon represents a compelling bridge between local impact and global influence.

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*Available for interviews*