

WOMEN IN RURAL, REGIONAL AND REMOTE ENTERPRISES

- WiRE SHOWCASE SERIES -



Kristy Sparrow

Better Internet for Regional, Rural and Remote Australia



"Be really forthright in your knowledge and your skills, and know that you really can make a difference."

ABOUT

Kristy Sparrow is a grazier and co-founder of BIRRR (Better Internet for Rural, Regional and Remote Australia), a Facebook group established in 2014 to address the telecommunication issues faced by people who live in rural and remote Australia.

Administered by Kristy and a small band of like-minded women, BIRRR is an advisory group that provides technical, practical and even emotional support to its followers, while lobbying for viable and sustainable solutions to a wide variety of telecommunication shortcomings and failures. From her family's cattle property at Alpha, in Central Western Queensland, Kristy instigated the often trending hashtags #datadrought and #fixbushinternet and assisted in creating the BIRRR resource website to help regional Australians navigate the often complicated and expensive options to accessing appropriate internet access.

As the public face of BIRRR, Kristy has established connections with service providers, government and industry groups and has successfully raised the profile of the #datadrought. She also spends countless hours every day personally problem shooting the particular issues that frustrate some of the 9000+ followers of the BIRRR page. The BIRRR admins are a group of equally passionate women who volunteer their time to the initiative. Each have their own specific areas of interest and contribution which, combined with Kristy's dedicated leadership, fast evolving knowledge and ever expanding network of stakeholders, makes BIRRR so successful.

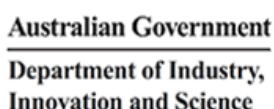
Kristy was the 2016 Queensland Rural, Regional and Remote Women's Network (QRRRWNL) Woman of the Year, winner of the 2016 Queensland Regional Achievement and Community Awards (Innovation and Leadership Category). A passionate internet warrior of the bush, Kristy Sparrow worked with selfless dedication to end the data drought in Australia's rural, regional and remote communities, to help bush businesses grow and rural kids get the best education.

OVERCOMING DOUBT

- We've learned a lot along the way. I think you just need to be persistent and you need to be confident that you have the knowledge, and not allow people to talk down to you, saying you're not good enough, or you're a woman and live in the bush and what would you know, and I'm in Canberra I know more about what's going on than you do.
- You have to really own your knowledge and be confident that you do know what you're talking about otherwise they will walk all over you.

PARTNERSHIPS

- We don't really have time to go and find partnerships, they tend to find us and they've been fantastic. We now have partnerships with lots of the telcos, a lot of the providers, NBN and the government.





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ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS

- Resilience, particularly in a regional area, needing to think outside the box and overcome the location.
- Tenacity.
- Be organised.

MENTORS

- Definitely important. My parents have been amazing mentors to me, not in terms of the Better Internet group, but in life in general. They have always been great volunteer people in their community.
- Georgie (Somerset) has been an amazing mentor.
- My team at Better Internet are a remarkable group of women and through this group we've met a lot of people who have been willing to help.
- I have 'go to' people who I go to about specific problems.

BIGGEST LESSONS LEARNT

- To be firm, and to be forthright in what you believe in. We've done lots of research now so we've got the statistics to back us up.
- Be forthright in your knowledge and your skills and know that you really can make a difference.

SOMETHING AMAZING TO CREATE OR IMPLEMENT CHANGE

- Our focus at the moment is to just keep swimming. We've always got these jobs to tick off. I'd really love to see the website redone so it's up-to-date, we just haven't had time to do that, but then again, is that our role, or is our role to be advocates.
- I'd really like to see that down the track that we can go back to the advocacy and lobbying role and that the troubleshooting role can be picked up by the telcos.