

# Work-life balance the



**WOMEN MEAN BUSINESS:** Sunshine Coast Business Women's Network award winners, front to back, Vicki Clark, Nicole Hoffman, Lisa Aitken and Kaitlyn Akers.

PHOTO: BRETT WORTMAN/BW168184

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What began as a single honour for one outstanding entrant has evolved into four separate categories and an overall winner, each receiving a cash prize, 12 months membership to the business women's network and admission to their monthly breakfasts.

Chairman of the judging team Michelle Hamer said the calibre of the entrants this year was exceptional and choosing the winners was a tough task.

"The awards have grown to recognise the styles of business women we have here on the Coast, and we had some incredible entrants this year," Ms Hamer said.

"Most of these women are highly successful, they are out there doing it, but they were mainly quiet achievers who attribute much of their success to the people around them."

Ninety-four nominees were eventually whittled down to 26 finalists and at a glittering ceremony at the Novotel Twin Waters on Tuesday night, the winners received their accolades and shared a little of their inspirational stories.

### Outstanding Business Woman of the Year: Vicki Clark

Local chief executive ANZ Retail Banking

Vicki's accidental banking career has propelled her to pioneering heights. And it all began with a conversation on the sidelines of a football field in Darwin.

"I was there to see (my husband) Gordon play and I started talking to a fellow who was a human resources manager for ANZ. I was 26, I had two boys, aged two and one, and I hadn't really decided I was going back to work.

"He asked me if I could type and I said 'yes', and that was it.

Six years later Vicki was assistant manager of the branch and she and Gordon

## PORTRAITS OF SUCCESS

### Outstanding Business Woman of the Year: Vicki Clark

Mother of two. Started as a typist with ANZ in Darwin in 1988. Relocated to the Sunshine Coast in 1994. Appointed district manager of Brisbane North in 2001, the first woman appointed at that level in Queensland. Appointed local CEO ANZ retail banking in 2004.

### Corporate Award: Nicole Hoffman

Mother of one. Started work as a legal secretary in 1991. Discovered her passion for hospitality while travelling overseas. Established Café Envy at Cotton Tree in 2004. Now has two cafes and plans more

### Micro/small Award: Lisa Aitken

Mother of three. Worked for law firm Minster Ellison in Sydney and Brisbane for 11 years. Moved to the Sunshine Coast in March 2004. Established Aitken Legal with one client in January 2006. Now has four employees and more than 70 clients.

### Professional Award: Kaitlyn Akers

Mother of one. Started with Suncorp as a casual teller in 1992. Named Suncorp supervisor of the year in 2002. Appointed deposit and payments manager for commercial and corporate funding on the Sunshine Coast, Fraser Coast and Toowoomba in 2005

### Young Businesswoman Award: Jade Guttridge

Mother of one. Started work as a dental nurse. Managed a ski lodge in Thredbo in her early 20s. Completed a degree in International Business. Purchased the Terrace of Maleny restaurant with her husband Nigel in 2005

moved to the Coast.

She had been told she would have no problem securing work as they were opening new branches. But she soon found that was not the case.

"But a job eventually came up in Buderim, which meant I went back a couple of levels – from assistant branch manager to sales clerk – but that actually really helped me and brought me back to basics."

Vicki progressed to branch manager in Maroochydore before being appointed the ANZ's Brisbane north district manager in 2001.

"I commuted for three years, I was studying for an MBA and had two children," she said.

"Gordon was a huge support. I spent my weekends running the kids around and we used to go away every couple of months to make sure we had that time together."

Vicki was appointed local chief executive officer of ANZ retail banking on the Sunshine Coast in 2004, and today is she oversees 16 branches and 140 staff.

### Corporate Award – Nicole Hoffman of Café Envy

The bright and bubbly owner of Café Envy at Cotton Tree, Nicole Hoffman, confesses that a change in career triggered a change in her personality.

In her former role as a legal secretary and paralegal, Nicole was quiet and serious, performing the job with professionalism but no particular joy.

Her true calling lay in hospitality – something she discovered while travelling overseas and around Australia.

Café Envy was born in January 2004 and a second, larger version is now also buzzing in Cotton Tree.

Initially, Nicole did most of the cooking but with the expansion, she now has six chefs whipping up culinary delights.

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