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*“There was a genuine support of each other and we would have been happy had any of us won.”*

*Brooke Bennett*



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VENUE  
RESERVE  
RESTAURANT



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- 1. EMMA GIBBONS
- 2. VICKI CLARK
- 3. MICHELE DOUGHERTY
- 4. OUR LUNCHING LADIES
- 5. CARLY EARL
- 6. BROOKE BENNETT
- 7. MARIA WOODS
- 8. RESERVE DESERT



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# SCBWN AWARDS

## The Winners!

WORDS INGRID NELSON PHOTOS CHESTERTON SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY VENUE RESERVE RESTAURANT, MALENY

AND THE WINNER IS ... THOSE EXCITING WORDS CHANGED THE LIVES OF SOME VERY DESERVING BUSINESS WOMEN AT THE SUNSHINE COAST BUSINESS WOMEN'S NETWORK AWARDS LAST MONTH. INGRID NELSON SHARES A LITTLE OF THEIR AMAZING JOURNEY.

**I**t never fails to amaze me the plethora of incredible entrepreneurial business women we have here on the Sunshine Coast. Speaking of which, I was lucky enough to attend the Sunshine Coast Business Women's Network Awards recently and was blown away by the calibre of talent among these inspirational local ladies. I had the pleasure of getting to know some of the award winners, past winners and members of the network over a delicious lunch at Reserve Restaurant Maleny recently and discovered the story behind their success and what the award means to them. My guests included last year's Young Business Woman of the Year, owner of Eco Child Carly Earl; Emma Gibbons, owner of Huds and Toke Dog Treats, and Micro / Small Business Women of the Year; Maria Woods, Principal and CEO of Sunshine Coast Grammar and Outstanding Business Woman of the Year, and Brooke Bennett, Marketing Manager at Kawana Shopping World and Professional Business Woman of the Year. Joining us was the Judging Panel Chair and district manager for ANZ retail banking Sunshine Coast Vicki Clark; and last but not least, SCBWN coordinator Michele Dougherty.

**profile:** *Who nominated you for the award?*

**maria:** I had two nominations by both parents and staff. I had actually said to our P and F (parents and friends) previously that we should think about nominating some of the women in our school community. We have so many worthy parents at our school. There is a list two arms long but I never considered myself.

**emma:** I got my letter in the mail saying my best friend who lives four doors down had nominated me. Our business has won quite a few awards but I never thought it would

reflect on me personally. I enjoyed putting my submission together, it was very rewarding.

**brooke:** A good friend also nominated me. This was the second time I had been nominated so I was more familiar with the process this year, which was great. When I got the letter I was flat out busy. I am a bit shy and I struggle with that sort of thing but it was a real affirmation I was doing a good job and I enjoyed taking the time to sit down and think about my achievements. I thought 'wow, I did all that!'.

**profile:** *Tell us about your journey in the awards process?*

**maria:** I had just returned from overseas and my husband was terribly ill so it was not even on my radar. I know the previous winner Tsu Shan quite well as she was a past parent at the school and she had told me it was a wonderful opportunity to stop and reflect on what you do, and she was right. Often us women are busy, particularly mums, we just get on with it. To think about yourself and to write about your achievements can be difficult. I am used to writing about other's achievements. After the process, I felt as though I am where I am meant to be. It was nice to articulate why I do what I do and to have it affirmed by the broader community was quite overwhelming. It would be nice to bottle all of that and open some once a week, when I need it.

**brooke:** It has been fantastic. The other women are all an inspiration. There was a genuine support of each other and we would have been happy had any of us won. It was a great experience from start to finish.

**emma:** I really enjoyed the whole process. I am very hands on in my role and it took a fair amount of time to do all the paperwork. But like the others said, it was so worthwhile and I am so glad I did it.

**profile:** *How did you feel when you were announced as winner?*

**maria:** I actually didn't believe they called my name. I had two tables at the awards – everyone was there, my bosses, referees, everyone. They all jumped to their feet when they called my name. I said to my husband 'did they just say my name?!' I don't think you know how you will feel until you are in that position. I am used to public speaking. I speak to 1200 students every week, but I was shaking. I didn't think I would feel so emotional. I had to keep it in check and be able to get up and speak. I was genuinely impressed at how supportive everyone was to each other. I had calls and emails from people I didn't even know congratulating me!

**brooke:** My husband couldn't be at the awards night as he had a fall and had concussion. Luckily we were able to use Face Time on my Iphone on the evening and he got to watch the whole thing from the couch, head bandage and all!

**emma:** I was so shaky. I couldn't believe it. I can totally relate with Maria. I wasn't quite prepared with how emotional I was about the whole thing. I totally got what the past winners were talking about.

**brooke:** When I heard my name I thought 'omg I have to talk now!'. I really had to hold myself from crying. Luckily Vicki insisted we all had a speech written! Since then, like Maria, I have had so many messages and calls. It's really overwhelming.

**profile:** *Vicki, as Chair of the judging panel, what has your experience been of the awards?*

**vicki:** This is my second year as Chair and my fifth year of judging. Each year I am inspired by these women. I am the lucky one to hear all their amazing journeys. The calibre of business

*“I was genuinely impressed at how supportive everyone was to each other.”*

*Maria Woods*



women we have on the Sunshine Coast really blows me away. The finalists are all amazing. The judging process is rigid and one of the best I have been involved in. Many of these women have children and the way they balance their business and family life is so impressive. Most impressive though is how humble they are. We don't understand what an amazing job we do until we sit and reflect.

**profile:** *What have you taken away from the awards?*

**carly:** When something pops up and I am having a low week I will often get a call from someone from the network to meet up for a coffee or have a chat. As a past winner, it's the connection you make with the other women that is so special. Sometimes you can't talk to your mum, dad, partner, girlfriends or staff about it, you need to talk to someone like-minded, someone in business who gets where you are coming from.

**michele:** I have been involved in these type of networks my whole life but the difference is the support. It's nice to hear it's reflected through the awards and how the finalists and winners feel about each other.

**maria:** I think it breaks down the myth that women don't support women. That is what the network does so well.

**profile:** *What do you expect from the year ahead?*

**emma:** I am looking forward to interacting with other women in business. Our industry is mainly male so it will be nice to connect with like-minded business women on the Coast.

**brooke:** I am hoping to come out of my shell more and hope to get to know more people. I want to start more networking and spread my wings more.


**maria:** I am looking forward to working with the network and lending my support to other business women and mentoring those who are nominated for next year.

**profile:** *Michele, tell us a little about your role as co-ordinator?*

**michele:** I look after the administration, membership and events. It is such an interesting role and great to connect and be inspired by the amazing women on the Coast. I am very blessed to have this position. I really get to know the winners over the year.

**profile:** *What advice you would give to other women?*

**maria:** I would say do it. Don't think about it. Do it. I have a list of women I am going to nominate next year. There are incredible women on the Coast and they deserve to be recognised.

It was a pleasure getting to know these ladies a little more and I came away from our lunch feeling inspired and humbled by their success. I would also like to mention Corporate Business Woman of the Year, Debbie Battaglini Clarke and Young Business Woman of the Year Melinda Bingley, both of whom were overseas and whose company we missed at lunch. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of Profile to congratulate the finalists and winners of the awards. You truly are a bunch of inspirational ladies and great role models for the younger generation of women on the Sunshine Coast to aspire to. Cheers to that! 

## **i** RESERVE RESTAURANT, MALENY

This was not my first visit to the beautiful Reserve Restaurant, Maleny. In fact, it is a firm favourite of both myself and my husband and the perfect choice for those seeking fine dining in a delightful setting with top class service. I am not surprised to hear Reserve was recently awarded a coveted chef's hat in the *Queensland Good Food Guide*, owner and sommelier Stephen Heffernan has been in the business for 25 years and is passionate about delivering a world-class menu and wine list.

Nestled among the lush rolling hills of Maleny, perfectly positioned overlooking the breathtaking Blackhall Ranges, the charming reproduction Queenslander oozes warmth and rustic charm.

We couldn't have picked a nicer day to enjoy our lunch-time visit. As the soft rain fell, the sounds of chilled jazz set the tone for a relaxed and decadent dining experience.

For entree, we were treated to smoked zucchini soup with chicken liver parfait, quince and watermelon radish, perfectly accompanied with Charles Pelletier blanc de blanc from Burgundy, France. This was perfectly followed by confit duck yolk, crispy leek, beurre noisette crumb, guanciale and perfectly unripe strawberry, washed down with a delightful capercaillie Chardonnay from the Hunter Valley.

Next, we all had fun guessing the flavours of the refreshing apple and verjuice palate cleanser, the perfect pre-cursor to our main of venison, black garlic, pine nuts, truffled polenta, salsify and bone marrow foam. It was perfectly-matched with S. C Pannell 'tinto' Grenache, touriga blend from South Australia. Last but not least, the chocolate-lovers dessert of aero chocolate, cocoa sorbet, peppermint and white choc ganache, cocoa crumbs and dehydrated white choc mousse was the piece de resistance! Accompanied by Pedro Ximenez - a stunning Spanish sweet cherry, it was the perfect end to a memorable lunch. Our friendly waiter Will, was attentive, yet not intrusive, with a wonderful knowledge of both the food and wine.

Once again I was reminded of why I love Reserve restaurant. And judging from the rave reviews from the lunching ladies, the five-star restaurant has just gained some new fans!

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