



# Meet our *women*<sup>30</sup> of the year

It's that time again: presenting the finalists for NEXT's Woman of the Year Awards. Introducing 2014's collection of phenomenal women

BY KAREN BURGE



**P**repare to get inspired as we reveal the finalists for the fifth NEXT Woman of the Year Awards. This year we were inundated with spectacular entries from around the country and we're very proud to introduce you to the 30 finalists. Across six categories: Arts & Culture, Sport, Education, Community, Health & Science and Business, these women have created amazing careers for themselves while also creating opportunities for others. There is a wide selection of skills and achievements across the board – from the mastermind behind a global creative movement, to the caring

mother who turned an idea for her own children's education into New Zealand's first Pacific charter school. The NEXT Woman of the Year Awards are the one place where the achievements of one of our most successful Paralympians sits alongside an 80-year-old grandmother who's volunteered 19,000 hours cheering up sick kids in hospital. The women here are examples of what happens when passion and innovation mixes with innovation and creativity – none of their career paths are the same, and all of their accomplishments are varied. But each has the spark and strength to ensure a well-deserved spot among the 30 finalists. »

# 30 OUR FINALISTS



## Arts & Culture

### LEANNE POOLEY Filmmaker

Leanne Pooley has a skill for telling New Zealand's stories, and her most recent documentary tackled our greatest ever adventure - Sir Edmund Hillary's ascent of Mt Everest with Sherpa Tenzing Norgay. Made with the support of the Hillary family, *Beyond the Edge* was written and directed by Pooley. Released last year, it puts her in an exclusive club of women who have directed a 3D adventure film. Her previous work covers a broad cross-section, from *Topp Twins: Untouchable Girls* - the most successful local documentary ever - to films on dancer/choreographer Douglas Wright, and the 1981 Springbok tour. Pooley has

won numerous international awards and is a strong supporter of emerging filmmakers.

### MICHELE A'COURT Comedian and writer

Stand-up comedy can be a man's world, but someone forgot to tell that to Michele A'Court. One of New Zealand's first stand-up comedians - and named Female Comedian of the Decade by the NZ Comedy Guild - A'Court's name has been synonymous with comedy in New Zealand and overseas for the past 20 years. An 'enthusiastic feminist', A'Court uses her public profile to highlight social issues. An actor, columnist, panelist and TV guest, A'Court talks openly about her issues with anxiety and speaks up on behalf of those with mental illness. She is in the midst of turning her popular solo show *Stuff I Forgot to Tell My Daughter* into a book due to be released next year.

### MIRANDA HARcourt Actress/performance tutor

Playing bitchy Gemma in iconic 80s television drama *Gloss* launched actress Miranda Harcourt's acting career, but over the years she has been in demand not just on screen and stage, but also as a director and internationally sought-after performance coach. She also spent seven years as head of acting at Toi Whakaari NZ Drama School, is a board member of Film NZ, and curator and head tutor at Scots College's Creative and Performing Arts School. Harcourt does voluntary work with deaf and disabled communities, performs in prisons, and works with female prison inmates, helping them to record stories for their children.

### EMMA ROGAN Design director, Augusto

Emma Rogan has a simple formula for inspiring global creativity: one thing, every day, x 100. She's the mastermind behind the 100 Days Project, which encourages people to choose one meaningful creative exercise and repeat it every day for 100 days. Rogan, design director for Auckland company Augusto, believes repeating a creative exercise breaks the habit of procrastination and helps develop creative resilience. The project, with culminates in the Day 100 Show exhibition, was inspired by Michael Bierut's '100 Days of Design' class at Yale School of Visual Arts. More than 1000 participants from around the world have signed up since Rogan launched it in 2011. Rogan launched it in 2011.

### PIP HALL

#### Writer/actor/water ballerina

#### *Wet Hot Beauties*

Pip Hall is one of New Zealand's leading playwrights but when not writing she can be found in her togs, producing and

performing with the

contemporary water ballet

company she co-founded

seven years ago, Wet Hot

Beauties. The troupe

numbers 80-plus and

enjoys commercial and

critical success, with sell-

out shows and festival

awards. Hall also

empowers women through

her work, featuring female

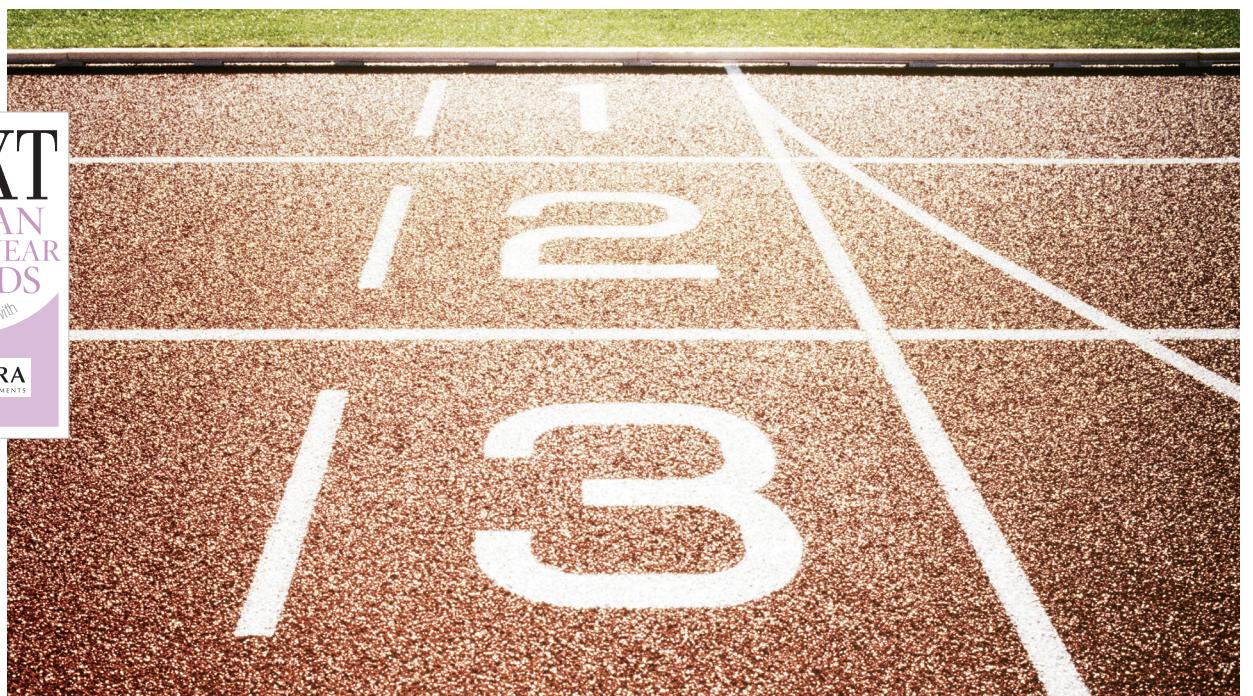
protagonists in her plays.

She has two films in development, is the president of the New Zealand Writers Guild, and

has been awarded New Zealand's most prestigious theatre honour, the Bruce Mason Playwriting Award.

She has also delivered two TED talks... in her togs. »





## Sport

### LAUREN BOYLE Swimmer

Hearing the national anthem played after she won a gold medal and set a new record in the 400m freestyle at this year's Commonwealth Games was a proud moment for swimmer Lauren Boyle. The achievement made her the first able-bodied New Zealand woman swimmer to win a Commonwealth gold in 26 years. She also won silver in the 800m freestyle final. Last year in Barcelona, she became the only Kiwi woman swimmer to win a FINA World (Long Course) Championship medal, taking out bronze in the 400m, 800m and 1500m freestyle. Boyle, 26, holds many Australasian and Oceania records and is a mentor to young swimmers and women in sport.

### SOPHIE PASCOE Swimmer

Swimmer Sophie Pascoe makes winning gold medals and breaking world records look easy. But the 21-year-old has overcome many challenges in her life since losing her left leg below the knee after a ride-on mower accident at the age of two. This didn't stop Pascoe, who began swimming at age seven and by 15 was New Zealand's youngest ever Paralympian, bringing home three gold medals, a silver medal and a world record. At the London Olympics she took home three gold and three silver medals, and won two gold medals at this year's Commonwealth Games. A full-time athlete, Pascoe advocates strongly for disabled athletes to be seen equally in society.

### LISA CARRINGTON Professional flatwater canoe racer

Getting to the top means lots of solitary sessions on the water for canoeist Lisa Carrington, but she's seen her hard work pay off. The 25-year-old won Olympic gold in 2012 and set a new world record in the K1 200m canoe sprint at the recent World Champs. She mentored young athletes at the 2014 Youth Olympics in China, one of 37 international athlete ambassadors chosen. Carrington, who is Ngati Porou and Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, inspires many young Māori to aim high.

She also competes nationally in surf lifesaving and is studying part-time towards a Bachelor of Arts at Massey, majoring in Māori Studies and Politics. Edwards

### JOANNA EDWARDS Lawn bowls player, New Zealand Blackjacks

Joanna Edwards made her debut 13 years ago and is acknowledged as the most outstanding international bowler New Zealand has ever produced. She has been world number one for the past three years, has won seven world titles, and at the recent Glasgow Commonwealth Games took out her second gold medal in the singles.

### MOIRA DE VILLIERS Judoka, Judo New Zealand

de Villiers was third at the European Championships and won silver at Glasgow.

In addition to training, competing and coaching, de Villiers holds down a full-time job and cares for her four-year-old stepson.

### FRANCES DENZ Executive director, Stellaris Ltd, Stellaris PTE Ltd

Frances Denz has seen hundreds of success stories during her 40-year career educating and empowering some of society's most vulnerable citizens – such as refugees, the unemployed, disabled and drug dependent. Her work has seen 800 seriously disabled people

### SILVIA ZUUR CEO, Chalkle

Whether you want to learn Te Reo or the ukulele, polish up your CV or improve your coding skills – Silvia Zuur's online adult education platform Chalkle has a class for you. Following funding cuts in 2009, many schools across New Zealand closed their community classes, leaving a gap for learners and local educators. Enter Zuur, who started Chalkle in 2012 to provide a place where individual teachers, organisations and businesses could offer their skills. The initiative now has 40 partner organisations and is in five regions, with more than 6800 learners. Zuur describes herself as social entrepreneur, facilitator, event planner and mentor, who never takes no for an answer.

### GAEL OGILVIE Chairperson, Urban Ecoliving charitable trust

Gael Ogilvie had an early start as an eco-warrior, and 42 years later she's still inspiring future generations to make a difference. Her initiative, the Tread Lightly Caravan, has visited 100 schools, hosted 16,000 students, and this year won a Green Ribbon Award from the Ministry for the Environment for outstanding contribution. Ogilvie was a member of the Enviroschools National Board, educates private and public sector

### CATHERINE BELL Founder and trustee, Garden to Table Trust

Cooking and eating well is a simple pleasure, one Catherine Bell wants all Kiwis to enjoy. Bell, a registered nurse by profession, founded Garden to Table Trust six years ago to give kids the skills to grow, harvest, prepare and share nutritious food. The scheme now runs in 21 primary schools and Bell, a mum of two, wants all Kiwi kids to gain those vital life skills. Involved in the good food movement for 25 years, she started cooking school Epicurean Workshop, wrote two cookbooks and founded import and distribution business Epicure Trading, but she sees Garden to Table as her most important contribution to New Zealand. »

### SITA SELUPE CEO, Rise UP Trust

Primary teacher Sita Selupe's dream to lift the educational outcomes of

Pasifika and Māori children started in her garage when she was on maternity leave. Eight years later she is CEO and

Principal of Rise UP Academy, the first Pacific charter school. The school's vision is 'sharp minds, strong bodies, good hearts'. Selupe initially started Saturday classes for her own children and extended whanau to help them develop inquiry-based learning and problem-solving skills.

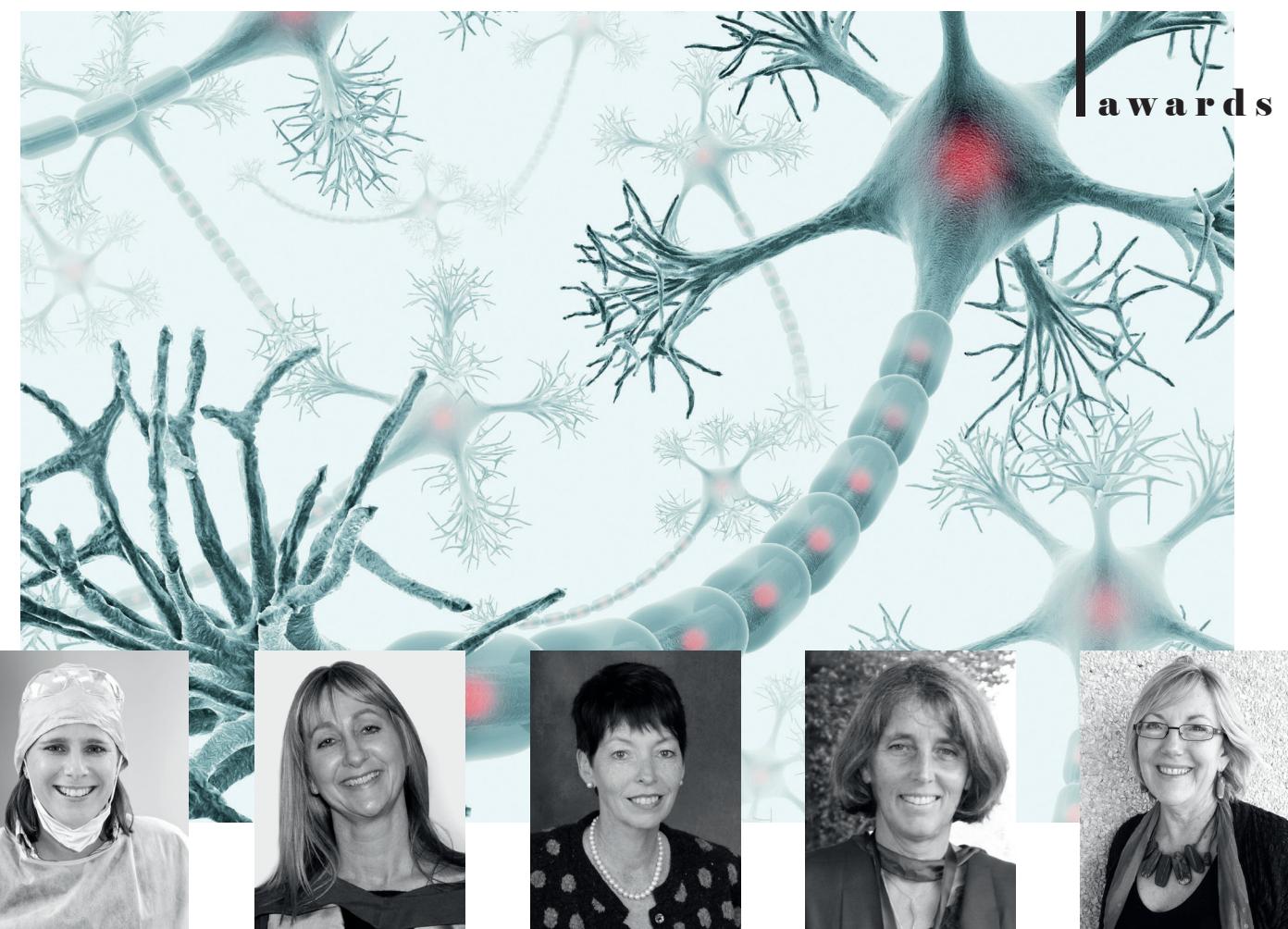
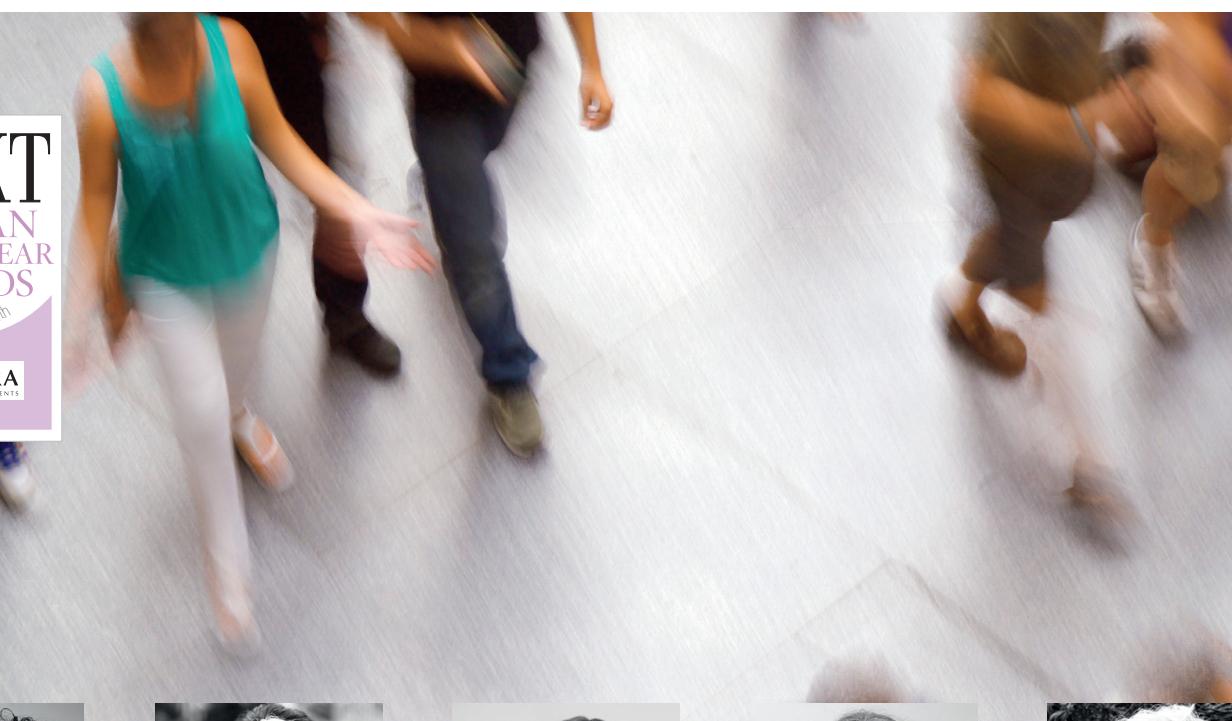
Aunty Sita's Home School kept growing and in 2007 Selupe co-founded Rise UP Trust, delivering innovative and culturally-responsive programmes to

more than 100 South Auckland families. »



## Education





## Community & Health & Science

### ROBYN TWEMLOW

Executive director, Tourette's Association of New Zealand. When Robyn Twemlow's daughter Analise, 10, was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome in 2013, the Christchurch woman was desperate for information and support but found a void. Instead of feeling defeated, she decided to start a New Zealand Tourette's support network, while also dealing with an earthquake-damaged home and her own recovery from post-natal mental health issues. Twemlow also organised the inaugural 'Camp Twitch', and is writing guidelines for schools on how to support students with Tourette's, based on international research and interviews with New Zealand educators.

### ANNAH STRETTON

#### CEO Stretton Group/ Stretton Foundation

She's best known for transforming women with her stunning clothing but for Annah Stretton, clothes are just the beginning. Her programme RAW – Reclaim Another Woman – matches disadvantaged women with a mentor, who guides them to a study or career pathway, creating choices, a better future for their children, and stronger communities. Stretton is also involved in numerous organisations dealing with sexual abuse disclosure. Over 30 years McGregor has worked as a therapist, advocate, author, social worker, and researcher. She believes educating adults on sexual violence can protect young people, who have unfairly carried the burden of keeping themselves safe.

### KIM McGREGOR

#### Executive director, Rape Prevention Education Whakatu Mauri

Surviving childhood sexual abuse has lead Dr Kim McGregor to a life's work preventing sexual violence and improving services for those who are sexually abused. For nine years McGregor has headed Rape Prevention Education – promoting respectful relationships for young people, safer environments, and educating professionals dealing with sexual abuse disclosure. Over 30 years McGregor has worked as a therapist, advocate, author, social worker, and researcher. She believes educating adults on sexual violence can protect young people, who have unfairly carried the burden of keeping themselves safe.

### CLAIRE DALE

#### Research fellow, Retirement Policy and Research Centre, University of Auckland Business School

Helping low-income households avoid the debt spiral of loan sharks and finance companies is one of the ways Dr Claire Dale is changing lives. She founded Nga Tangata Microfinance Trust in 2011, with support from Kiwibank and non-government organisations, to offer small, safe and fair loans to low-income households. The trust now offers no-interest debt-relief loans to help families escape rates of up to 500% interest. A member of the Child Poverty Action Group for nearly 20 years, Dale – herself a sole parent – knows debt keeps food off the table for low-income families.

### JOY CLARK

#### Hospital grandmother

Whether holding the

hands of little patients in pain or supporting worried

parents, Joy Clark has been at the bedside of sick

children for 30 years as a

hospital grandmother at

Starship Children's

Hospital. Clark started

volunteering after her

daughter Rachel died of

leukaemia, aged 20. She

has supported hundreds of

families through sickness

and loss with empathy and

understanding, all while

raising her family of seven,

opening her home to

foster children and

international students,

being a grandmother and

great-grandmother and

volunteering as a prison

visitor at Paremoremo.

Clark has given around

19,000 hours of service

and, at age 80, still

volunteers one day a week.

### JO-ANNE BRIGHT

#### Science leader, ESR

Jo-Anne Bright has co-discovered a breakthrough that could help solve previously unsolvable crime. STRmix™ software analyses DNA evidence previously considered too complex to interpret, with a function that can match mixed DNA profiles directly against a database – a major advance where there are no suspects and

DNA from up to four individuals in one sample. The tool boosts the power of DNA as a forensic tool by 30%, and is considered the most significant advance in forensic tools since DNA testing. It's been installed throughout Australasia and the US, and is particularly useful in cases of sexual assault, burglary, and breaking and entering.

### CLIONA NI MHURCHU

#### Professor of population nutrition, University of Auckland

Improving the diets of Kiwis is Cliona Ni Mhurchu's passion. The mum of two directs a world-leading nutrition research programme at the National Institute for Health Innovation, and has led ground-breaking research into the effects of pricing on buying habits, including how a tax on fizzy drinks could save lives. She and her team developed the FoodSwitch app, which lets you scan a food's barcode using your smartphone and receive nutritional advice and a list of similar, healthier foods. It's been downloaded by 44,000 people since its 2013 launch.

### DEBORAH HARRIS

#### Nurse practitioner, Newborn Intensive Care Unit, Waikato Hospital. Clinical lecturer at the Liggins Institute, University of Auckland

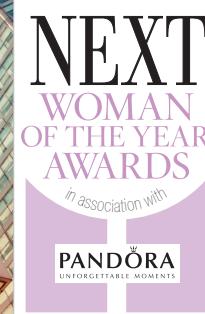
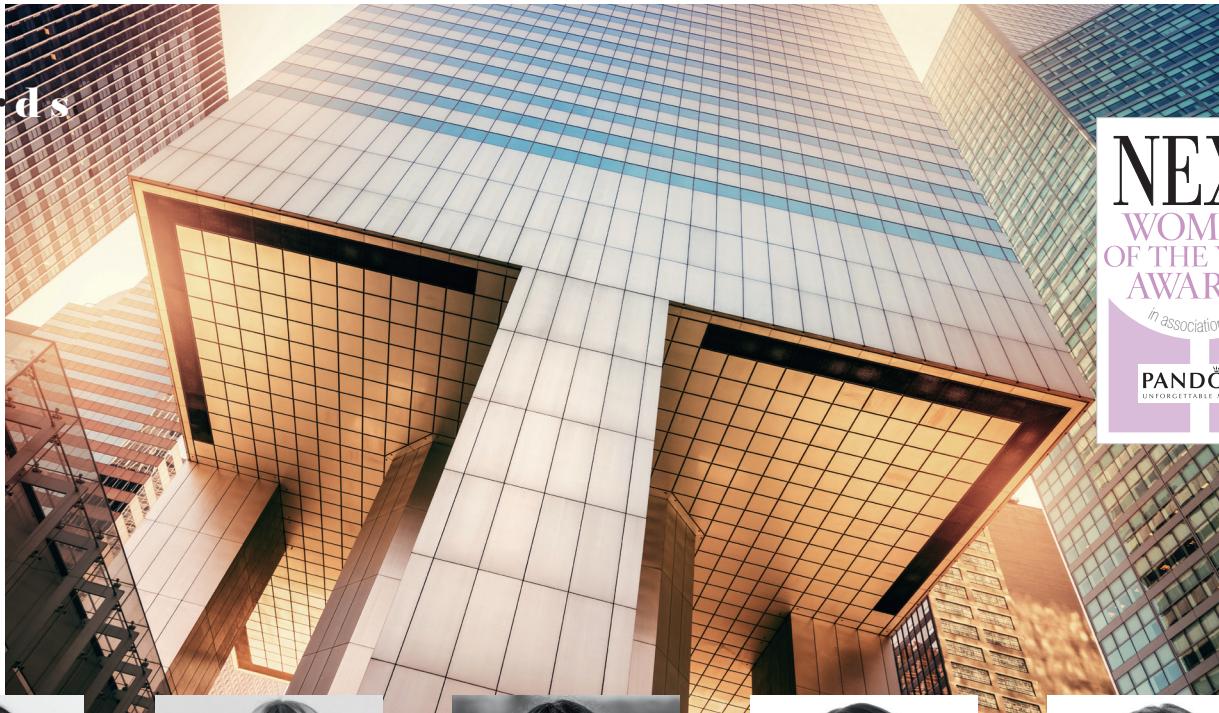
Fewer newborn babies will be sent to intensive care units thanks to new treatments discovered by Deborah Harris, whose clinical achievements are internationally recognised. In recent years she and her research team investigated the common condition neonatal hypoglycemia (low blood sugars), a preventable cause of brain damage in babies, and the findings are now changing treatment around the world. Harris has also improved respiratory care and cranial imaging for babies, driven by a desire to improve treatment for babies and their families.

### MARGARET VISSERS

#### Research professor, University of Otago, Christchurch

Professor Margaret Vissers has advanced research into vitamin C and its impact on health. Vissers and her team found vitamin C essential for the removal of dying white blood cells from an infection and, expanding this to cancer, discovered vitamin C plays a major role in controlling cancer cell growth. She led studies that proved for the first time that higher vitamin C levels in human cancers are associated with slower cancer growth and better outcomes.

Further research with young men showed measurable improvements between recommended daily levels of vitamin C and 'optimal' levels. »



# Business

## SARAH TOWNSEND Director and founder, The Aromatherapy Company

Sarah Townsend had a childhood love of making flower petal potions that has blossomed into an export business turning over \$25 million. Ethical practices are very important to Townsend, with products free from animal testing, made in New Zealand and packed in 85% recyclable packaging. Her company is a member of the One Percent for the Planet movement, donating 1% of sales to environmental organisations. Townsend, who has two daughters, is also a mentor to business women and a generous supporter of charities, causes and events, including the Mental Health Foundation.

**CECILIA ROBINSON  
Group CEO,  
My Food Bag**  
Cecilia Robinson's food delivery service My Food Bag has revolutionised meal times for many busy households. Robinson devised the business concept, which sees bags delivered to consumers weekly or fortnightly, featuring recipes by *MasterChef* winner Nadia Lim and top quality ingredients for home cooks to make meals from scratch. Robinson is no stranger to business success - at just 21 she founded Au Pair Link, which is now Australasia's largest au pair agency. Since launching in 2013, My Food Bag has attracted 8000 subscribers, a turnover of \$25 million, has launched in Sydney and is soon to start in Melbourne.

**TAMI LOUISSON  
SHOTT Beverages Ltd**  
Seeing a niche in the market is one thing, creating one is another challenge. Louisson is chief executive of SHOTT Beverages, which produces a range of fruit and coffee syrups including the popular Lemon, Ginger & Honey. Louisson knew it was a great product but had to create an everyday niche for it, moving it out of the 'drink when poorly' category in people's minds. A café range of coffee syrups and chai latte followed and SHOTT is now the dominant brand in the market, with a turnover of more than \$5 million. Louisson, who has three children in their early 20s, is a down-to-earth boss, happy to drive the forklift, pack boxes and work weekends.

**SERENA FISO  
Director, Connect Global Ltd**  
Serena Fiso has built a successful business that employs those most in need. In 2003 Fiso and her husband Siuai, who have five children, sold their family home to start Connect Global Limited, an outsourced centre in Porirua. The company has many long-term contracts with large companies and was the only centre willing to set up and run the Red Cross hotline after the Christchurch earthquakes, answering 20,000 calls on the first day alone. Alcohol and abuse featured in Fiso's childhood and now she uses her own life experiences to motivate her staff - many long overlooked by other employers - to create a better future for their families.

**JENENE CROSSAN  
Flossie.com / Flossie Concierge**  
With nearly 20 years of experience in digital media, 15 of those owning her own business, Jenene Crossan is a digital ground-breaker in New Zealand. She started online social magazine nzgirl.co.nz at just 21 years old, and has since set up four more digital businesses, including her latest, Flossie.com, a booking site for salon and spa treatments, and Flossie Concierge, a hair and beauty booking app. Known for thinking outside the box, Crossan seeks to introduce new concepts and ways of doing business digitally. A stepmother of three, Crossan's businesses have all focused on making women feel great about themselves. □