

# The game CHANGERS

These eight very different women have *one big thing in common, they are inventors* – of new products; new services; new ways of thinking. *They're trailblazers who've found their purpose* and are working it with passion



## { PAY GAP CRUSADER

**Melissa Fuller, 40, deputy CEO, Rice Warner**

In her role at consulting firm Rice Warner, Melissa Fuller was responsible for researching the gap between what Australians need to retire comfortably and what they will actually have in superannuation when the time comes. "Females face unique challenges when they stop work to have children, they often return to part-time work and their super contributions fall. Worse than that, on average they're paid less and live longer which means their savings have to cover a larger period," says Melissa. "So I thought, 'What can we do for our own employees that will not only help them, but bring more attention to this issue.'"

And it was there the innovative idea to award female Rice Warner employees an extra two per cent in superannuation was born.

“ Our female employees have the same career opportunities they'd have if they didn't have children ”

**We developed the Valuing Females Package ...**

"It includes superannuation on parental leave, flexible working conditions and more. The solutions are designed to help our female employees have the same career opportunities they'd have if they didn't have children, as well as help them save more for retirement."

**I had to learn patience ...** "I promoted the idea to our Board and they said "great, let's do it" but we didn't foresee it would be a 12-month period before we could actually implement. The lesson is not to give up because sometimes change happens slowly, rather than instantaneously."

**Our biggest challenge was ...** "Seeking a special exemption from the Sex Discrimination Act by convincing the Human Rights Commission that it wasn't discrimination against males. Our request was unique so it was really drawn out, but they were very supportive of the idea."

**I have a mentor ...** "When you start out it's important you're surrounded by strong leaders as it has a huge influence on how you develop professionally."



## { BEAUTY MOGUL

**Jocelyn Petroni, 34, owner, Jocelyn Petroni**

Having worked as a beauty therapist around the world, including the UK, Alaska and the Caribbean, Jocelyn Petroni returned home to Australia to teach aspiring beauty therapists the tricks of her trade. The woman now considered to be Australia's first celebrity facialist, says her lightbulb moment came in 2006 when she found herself unable to find a space that felt right for her own business. "I didn't like the cubicle-style salons and spas I was introduced to and struggled to find an environment I wanted to work in – so I decided to create it," explains Jocelyn.

Now Jocelyn Petroni in Sydney's Woollahra is booked solid for months and its founder is one of the most in-demand names in the beauty business. Not only does she work on the glowing complexions of stars including Miranda Kerr, but has also been signed up by huge brands including Mecca Cosmetics and recently Chanel Australia, to help them achieve new standards in beauty.

**I was the odd one out ...** "My siblings studied pharmacy, law and actuarial studies. My decision to study beauty therapy wasn't seen as a higher discipline within my family, or society at large. So it was at that point that I set out to make it a higher discipline and my success is a reflection of this. Now I mentor my staff, and training is an integral ongoing process for our team."

**I'm a perfectionist ...** "I wanted to set a new standard in my industry for technical ability, customer service and atmosphere. Jocelyn Petroni's aim is to exceed client expectations. A manicure or a facial can be such a simple treatment, so we take an artisan approach to make it as layered and heart-felt as we can."

**Passion is key to success ...** "If you love what you do, then success will find you. And in any case, if you have passion for your job, then the outcome is irrelevant."

**The best advice I ever received ...** "Was to branch out on my own. I used to work above a hair salon and shared expenses and profits. I was scared to set up my own business but being responsible for myself and staying true to my goals galvanised my confidence. And the best beauty advice I've ever been given? Drink lots of H2O and wear sunscreen every day!" ▷

“ I struggled to find an environment I wanted to work in – so I decided to create it ”

PHOTOGRAPHED BY TOMASZ MACHNIK. HAIR AND MAKE-UP BY SARAH DAMICH/DLM; WAYNE CHICK/THE ARTIST GROUP





“ I don’t use the words work-life balance, I prefer work-life alignment ”

## ETHICAL ENTREPRENEUR

**Berry Liberman, 35, co-founder and creative director, Small Giants**

A scriptwriter and director, Berry Liberman and her husband Danny, the founder of Engineers Without Borders in Australia, were looking for a way to work together. Then they read the book *Small Giants*. “It spoke about businesses doing things in a new way and with a heart-driven agenda,” she says. “We were like, ‘that’s us!’”

Inspired, they started their impact investment company Small Giants. By investing 100 per cent of what they have into businesses that in turn have a positive impact, they became Australia’s first certified B-Corporation – a label attained by corporations who use business to solve social and environmental problems. Kicking off by buying magazine *Dumbo Feather*, as “I wanted storytelling to be a core aspect of the work here at Small Giants”, to date Berry and Danny have partnered with a multitude of brands, including TOM Organic, Australia’s leading organic feminine hygiene range; and STREAT, an enterprise which enables homeless youth to learn the hospitality trade.

**My husband and I are both passionate about business ...** “We’ve seen the bad it can do, but it can also be a highly exciting and creative space. It has the power to move things, to activate communities and do good. By starting Small Giants, we create the world we want to live in and the business we want to work in. But to prove that our business model worked, we needed to take a lot of risks. I’ve had to learn that, I can’t say I’m good at it!”

**With Small Giants, we follow our gut ...** “We’re constantly exploring who is doing what in the areas we’re passionate about globally. We make contact, create relationships with those people and then follow our instincts. And then we also have people who approach us.”

**When we invest in a business ...** “There’s a lot of different criteria, but you have to tick the first three boxes: Is it good for the planet? Is it good for people? And does it make a profit? It doesn’t have to tick all three, but that’s a good healthy starting point. We want to work with good people, people who inspire us.”

**I don’t use the words work-life balance ...** “I prefer work-life alignment. I’ve got three little kids so I’m scheduled to within an inch of my life. But I work with my husband so my family is a part of my work and my work is a part of my family – not without boundaries, but what I care about as a human being I get to express with my work. I pinch myself every day, I’m in a permanent state of appreciation.”

“ One in three women experience domestic violence. As a community we need to do something ”



## CHARITABLE TRAILBLAZERS

**Founders of Assist A Sista  
Manuela 40, and Nicolle, 39**

Two years ago Manuela, a nurse, received a call from a friend who had been made aware of a woman and four children who’d fled their home due to domestic violence with a single backpack between them. Could she put some things together to help her out as she obviously had nothing? Knowing that her friend, Nicolle, had a wide list of contacts, Manuela enlisted her help to galvanise their social networks. Within the space of a few days, they’d raised all the family needed to make a new start, completely decking out the single mum’s new home: beds, clothes, nappies, white goods, kitchenware, furniture. The lot. And the idea for Assist A Sista ([www.assistasista.com.au](http://www.assistasista.com.au)) was born.

Assist A Sista sets up “havens” – homes to go to upon leaving a refuge that have been stocked with everything that particular family will need. The hope, say the pair, is that by having a safe place with all needs looked after they won’t feel the need to return to their abuser for support. Having recently expanded from their home state of Qld into NSW, they aim to have havens running nationwide. “We put our heads together and said, ‘This shouldn’t be happening,’” explains Manuela. “One in three women experience domestic violence – it’s the leading cause of homelessness for women and children in Australia”. As a community we need to do something.”

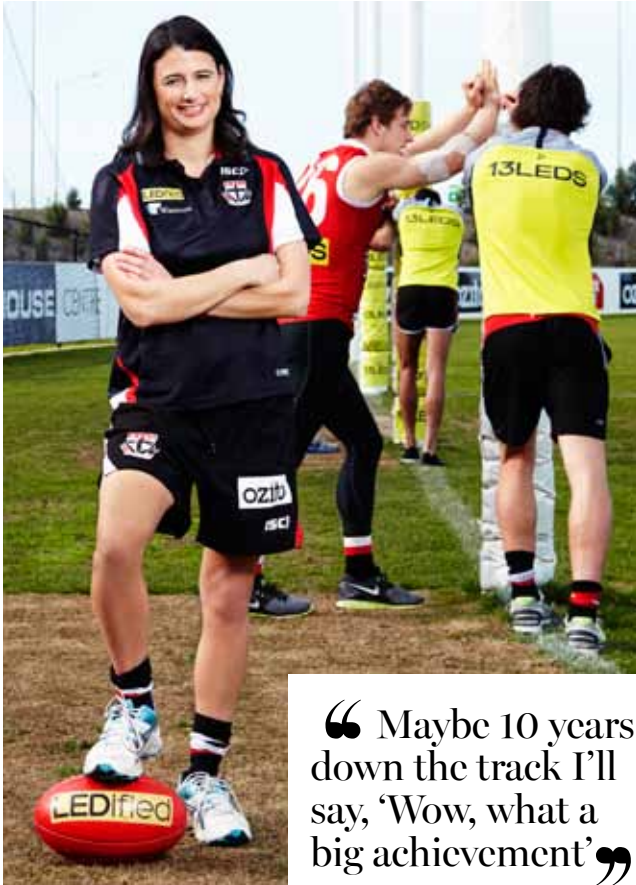
**We never meet the people we help ...** “We don’t want them to feel they owe us anything, they don’t,” says Nicolle. We had a refuge coordinator ring us recently to say, ‘You’ve given us 39 havens in the past year and every one of those 39 women have stayed’. If she had even said that one woman had stayed in her haven we would have fist pumped.”

**Assist A Sista started small ...** “It started as a Facebook page and we’ve now completed 109 havens,” explains Manuela. “Financially, we’re doing it all out of our own pockets at the moment. Given Nicolle and I both work, we’ve both got our own families, if we didn’t have teams in the community we could call on, voluntarily in their own time, we couldn’t do this.”

**The response is always phenomenal ...** “Within a couple of minutes of us posting a call out we’ll have people jumping online to help someone that they don’t know, that they’ll never meet. It shows the amount of passion people have to make a difference in a family’s life,” enthuses Manuela.

**Just do it ...** “If there’s a cause you’re passionate about speak out and just do it!” urges Nicolle. “Assist A Sista is a great example of how social media is being utilised in its best form. Every day we get into people’s lives and remind them they’re able to participate. As a nation we need to get involved and stand up against injustice.” ▷





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## SPORTING HERO

**Peta Searle, 40, development coach, St Kilda Football Club**

The first woman to ever be appointed to a VFL coaching assistant position, Peta Searle should be used to making history. But now she’s in the news again, with St Kilda recruiting her in June as a development coach for the club. It’s the highest a female has ever climbed in AFL coaching, with Peta working with the one-to-three year players who are being groomed to an elite club level.

“I guess it’s groundbreaking but I don’t understand the magnitude of it,” says Peta. “Maybe 10 years down the track I’ll say, ‘Wow, what a big achievement!’ I know it’s important to celebrate the appointment as a means of encouraging others to follow their dreams, but for me it’s about doing the best job I can for the St Kilda Football Club.”

**This was never my career plan ...**

“I started out playing footy, then moved into coaching. It was when I had to give up coaching VFL to earn some real dollars as a teacher a couple of years ago that I thought, ‘I would love to be in an AFL club’. Not just to make a living, but because that was the next step of me evolving – getting better at what I do – and an opportunity to work with the best.”

**The toughest part of my job ...** “Is juggling family [Searle is single mother to a daughter, seven and son, four]. My mother’s played a big part and surely she’d like to do something else in her life than always help me, but I know she’s proud. That keeps driving me.”

**I want to be a good role model ...**

“By following my dreams, I want to show my daughter that if you persevere you can find a way.”



“ When you have pride in yourself you have pride in everything you do ”

## MINING MAVERICK

**Kym Clark, 29, founder, She’s Empowered**

A former high school dropout who went on to complete a Bachelor of Commerce several years later, Kym Clark may have taken some time to find her career passion, but she’s always known one thing: “I wanted to start my own business,” she says.

Working as an accountant in the mining industry, Kym had an epiphany when she noticed her pregnant boss was struggling to fit into her high-vis work uniform. “It was like the stars aligned,” she says. “I knew I could make a positive change for women in the industry, so I set up She’s Empowered and designed the industry’s first high-vis maternity uniform range.”

**I looked at all the men on site and how comfortable they were ...** “I wore a men’s uniform because the arm length was too short on the women’s shirts. I couldn’t do up the buttons, which mean I wasn’t in compliance with the Australian safety standard. So I figured I could

not only create a maternity option, but also a comfortable and stylish high-vis choice for women which they’d want to wear. Because when you have pride in yourself you have pride in everything that you do.”

**In the beginning, Google was my best friend ...** “The textile industry was brand new to me and I had to learn how it worked so I went home one night and started Googling ...”

**I did everything myself ...** “I designed all the clothing because as well as being a girl and knowing what you like when you shop, I knew the practicalities of working on mine sites.”

**My biggest lesson is ...** “To write down your goals, even if you don’t know how you’re going to get there. Earlier this year I was thinking, ‘It would be amazing if I could talk about She’s Empowered in *marie claire* magazine!’ Put your goals down on paper and somehow they’ll manage to come true.” ▷



## { SOCIAL PIONEER

### **Lauren Bath, 33, professional Instagrammer**

Lauren Bath had only been taking photos for two years when she made the jump from being a working chef to becoming Australia's first professional Instagrammer and monetising her weekend passion. Now, Lauren is not only the most in-demand travel photographer on social media, she also mentors up-and-comers who want to make their Insta hobby a full-time job. "You have to love what you do first and foremost," she counsels. "If you love something, you're going to do it well. If you do it well, you'll grow an audience. That's when you can think about monetising."

**I was an early adopter ...** "Three years ago I read a blog post saying Instagram was more fun, interesting and fast-moving than Facebook. I downloaded it and started shooting on my iPhone 4. Three months later I had 5000 followers and invested in a camera. When Instagram sold out to Facebook and the android market came on, I was already up and trending on the popular page – all of a sudden I skyrocketed and was gaining 1000 followers a day."

**Time to give up the day job ...** "Late in 2012 Tourism ACT reached out to me for a campaign and Hamilton Island asked me to be an ambassador for the world's first Influencer Instameet. I started thinking, 'There could be something in this.' So in January 2013, after a really bad shift, I quit my chef job."

**At first, I wasn't sure what I was selling or what to charge ...** "So I

started researching marketing to wrap my head around it. Now I have a basic service for which I charge a day rate and travel rate. It's four social posts a day, images for the destination's social media,

a detailed media report, plus all the traffic I send their way."

**Now I'm cutting back on quantity to focus on quality ...** "Then the smaller campaign

market will open up to all the influencers coming up behind me. Instagram won't be popular forever so you have to have a future plan. As well as destination marketing, my annual income now comes from keynote speaking, workshops, consultancy and running and hosting multiple influencer campaigns." □

“ If you love something, you're going to do it well. If you do it well, you'll grow an audience ”