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MEDIA RELEASE

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2014 BUSINESSWOMEN'S HALL OF FAME

Nothing in your business career can equal recognition from your peers. It is a very special honour to join the fabulous women already in the Businesswomen's Hall of Fame.

An award is cause for reflection on the privilege of success and the fact that recognition does not belong to you alone. You are very aware of the hard-working team that supports you – those who make it possible.

The immediate question is "What more can I do to enhance other people's belief in me?" A feeling of "Now I had better earn my stripes at an even higher level! Almost a feeling of "I had better prove I'm worth it".

"Where to next?" This is my 40th year of business with my signature on the door. A lot has changed in retail in general. Clothing in particular, is faced with a new set of challenges. I have been challenged to this extent twice before. When the GST was introduced it changed consumer behaviour and affected the way people managed their disposable dollar. It also brought with it a mountain of compliance and an extra workload that sucked a lot of the fun out of running a business.

The second massive change was set off because of the downturn in spending as a result of the GST. The now much-more-cautious consumer became extremely price conscious. Fabrics I had enjoyed buying from France, Italy and Switzerland became too expensive. The costs in Australia compared with off shore clothing manufacturing were prohibitive. I remember discussing the fork in the road and the confrontational reality that my price had to come down for me to continue. There was only one way to reduce costs. Tragically I could no longer afford to manufacture in Australia.

At this time I had opened a shop on Bond Street in London (the only Australian designer who has been so courageous as to do so). We were nominated in the top three nominees for the Drapers Record Awards for the whole of the UK, and were into the final negotiations for concessions in Selfridges. They loved the product but it was too expensive.

I took a deep breath, listened to the market forces, reduced my prices and sailed on loving the vibrant fashion world, having embraced necessary change.

I have embarked on my third Houdini and said goodbye to expensive shopping centres and launched the concept of "Boutiques in the Sky". Now my clients join me in gorgeous premises such as the 60th floor Sub Penthouse suite of Q1 on the Gold Coast for private showings of my latest collection.

My consultants and I enjoy working with charities to assist with fundraising. By creating a fashion parade we provide a platform from which to sell tickets. We work with many groups, among them Zonta International for their Birthing Kit, and Stop Violence Against Women Campaigns. This year we will raise \$70,000 for Zonta alone, as well as our other charitable commitments.

Put the three elements together "A Catwalk of Life" in the penthouse "Boutique in the Sky" and helping raise funds for others and you have a recipe for a whole new reason to continue in the business of fashion design, manufacture and retail.

My company now puts greater effort into embracing Social Media and the power of the internet and on-line shopping. Our emails have become short videos – never intrusive and never boring – highlighting gorgeous clothes on real women.

In 2013 I enjoyed writing my contemporary autobiography "A Life of Colour" with 200 pages and hundreds of coloured pictures to explain my secrets of the Fitting Room, and how my knowledge gained from many years could change others' lives.

In 2014 the most serious leap of faith is just beginning as I embark on the global expansion I have always known I could undertake, but found challenging from the remote city of Perth. Over the next 12 months our brand will expand into Europe through Hong Kong.

I thank the Businesswomen's Hall of Fame for my nomination – it gives me the confidence to believe I can – the courage to climb a little higher.