

Karyn offers best advice

Karyn Hilton, Risk Insurance Manager for leading chartered accounting and business advisory firm William Buck, has made her mark amongst the country's best female advisors after becoming a semi-finalist in the 2011 Association of Financial Advisors (AFA) Female Excellence in Advice Award.

This is the first year of the award, which was created with a specific focus on women in leadership roles in the advice profession. More than 100 nominations were received for female advisers of all ages, from all states, with the majority of nominations coming from South Australia and Victoria.

After working as a registered nurse for more than a decade, Karyn made the career change to financial planning in 2002, and specialised in risk insurance in 2008, drawing on her medical knowledge to understand more deeply the circumstances of her clients requiring insurance for sickness, injury or death.

One of only two South Australian advisors to make the semifinals, Karyn believes her unique career path placed her in good stead to be selected as a semi-finalist in the AFA Awards.

"I think my X factor in this industry is the fact that I also have a nursing background which dovetails nicely with my specialist risk advising role," Karyn says.

"I have a different understanding of underwriting decisions and I often challenge underwriters to hopefully achieve a better outcome for my clients.

"My nursing knowledge is particularly useful when handling claims and my offering to all of my clients is that I am there for them at claims time and I do deliver. I am empathetic and sympathetic and am not afraid to have the difficult conversations with my clients about their health and prognosis for certain conditions.

"I am passionate about risk insurance because I have seen first hand as a nurse and as a financial planner the impact on families when people don't have any or enough insurance."

Karyn, who was nominated for the AFA award by numerous insurance companies and clients, was delighted to be recognised amongst the top females in her profession.

"When the AFA informed me that I had made the top 16 out of 102 nominations I was over the moon," Karyn says.

"To be recognised alongside the top female advisors in the country is such an honour.

"When it comes to financial affairs, I find a lot of females have the mind set that they need a man to be financially secure but of course this is not the case. Being a female myself I can relate to the myriad issues often experienced by female clients and self-esteem is often one of them.

"I have empowered my female clients to take control of their finances with successful outcomes. Being available anytime and having an empathetic ear is also important and valued by my female clients."

Before specialising in risk insurance, Karyn ran her own holistic financial planning business, which serviced several hundred clients at its peak. Realising her interest was in Risk she joined a financial planning business as a Risk Insurance Manager to set up a Risk Insurance department before joining William Buck.

"We are extremely proud of Karyn's achievement," says William Buck Director of Wealth Advisory, Chris Kennedy.

"Karyn's skill set is unique in that she can use her health knowledge to get a better outcome for clients, whether that's a matter of speeding up a claim or advising on the type of insurance required in relation to a particular illness or condition."

The Female Excellence in Advice Award is a joint initiative of the AFA, TOWER Australia and the Macquarie Graduate School of Management. It has been established to encourage greater participation by females in leadership roles within the profession and to take a strategic step towards addressing the issues of female under-insurance and generally low level of women's superannuation savings.

GOLDNetwork Member
Financial Planners - Page 107

business property

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Renew Adelaide calls for retail energy

An urban renewal project may be the next practical step to furthering business growth and revitalising consumer interest and confidence in South Australia's retail potential.

Commercial property owners, Kambistis Group and Maras Group are assisting with Renew Adelaide, an urban renewal scheme, by allowing entry-level businesses to use vacant property at minimal cost.

The Renew Adelaide project was initiated by Ianto Ware and Lara Torr in 2010, driven by a belief that artist- and community-run spaces have the power to transform cities.

Working in conjunction with a small number of commercial property owners, Renew's organisers aim to fill vacant tenancies, shop fronts, basements or upper level spaces, with artist and community-run ventures that incur least possible cost.

The process of engaging property owners with businesses has seen four projects open through Renew Adelaide in just over 12 months, with more on the horizon. Initially focusing on Adelaide's West End, the Renew project has expanded into Prospect and talks are underway between Renew and Norwood Payneham & St Peters City Council for trial programs in 2012.

Renew is still a young project but has won high profile supporters. Renew's recently revamped Board now includes Maras Group MD, Steve Maras, CBRE State MD, Philip Rundle and Guardian Insurance chief, Evan Jackson.

"The addition of some of Adelaide's high profile thinkers and property investors has given Renew a reinvigorated sense of direction," Steve Maras says.

Renew's goal is simple: to reduce vacant space in inner suburban Adelaide by helping SMEs move into

unoccupied retail and commercial spaces. To assist with start-up, businesses are offered a 30-day rolling lease by property owners and operate as temporary tenants, working to reactivate vacant properties. Renew Adelaide helps businesses with signing leases, dealing with council and working with business partners.

Ianto Ware believes small business makes a healthy city, noting the problem many SMEs struggle with is initiating projects.

"The major issue is the volume of regulatory issues impacting on smaller businesses entering old buildings," he says.

"A lot of what we do is about looking at the regulatory frameworks that make it harder for smaller ventures to succeed.

"The city is still suffering from the preference for suburban malls. Over the years, Adelaide has let its audience drift away; there's not enough diversity and interest to get them into the city itself - but that's changing.

"We can recapture that diversity and interest by offering the kinds of unique activities that tend to come from smaller, owner-operated business and small cultural and creative venues."

Ianto says Renew Adelaide is a more sustainable method of supporting local communities than many State-funded initiatives.

"This is a different way of producing community initiatives. Instead of putting a lot of money into one thing, you put money that then feeds out into lots and lots of small things," he says.

He believes the difference between Adelaide's Renewal project and others initiated in Newcastle and Townsville is cultural attitude.

"Newcastle and Townsville's problem was essentially vacancy. The need here is support for the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs to play their part in the city's health," he says.

Start-up grants provided under the Melbourne Postcode 3000 reforms reinvigorated Melbourne's cultural hub and Ianto believes Adelaide has not encouraged small business ventures similarly. The key to the success through Renew Adelaide is to work with right-thinking property owners who can help.

Steve Maras says working with Renew Adelaide is beneficial for both his business and the health of the city

and he encourages other property owners who may have vacant spaces to look at working with Renew.

Maras Group recently provided Renew Adelaide with a temporary retail showroom on Prospect Road. Littlest Vintage and Studio Lingo enterprises opened in the retail space previously occupied by bridal house, Princess Collection. The space sits within a group of buildings Maras Group has earmarked for redevelopment. When the bridal house vacated the space, Steve was quick to engage Renew to find temporary occupants while searching for a more permanent operator.

"I was happy to support the Renew initiative and have some aspiring businesses take occupancy in the space whilst we looked to secure a longer term tenant," he says.

"The two businesses that have co-located under the same roof have brought a quirky edge to Prospect Road which is undergoing significant changes.

"It is better to have someone occupying vacant space as it fills a void - which may be temporary - and it also assists in discouraging theft and vandalism. Importantly, it helps with reducing any potential insurance risks, premiums and excess payments. This is something that property owners need to be aware of."

As well as occupying commercial and retail tenancies, budding small businesses can also help property owners to upgrade.

"The main barrier the project faces is identifying property owners who have vacant spaces fit for occupancy and are willing to participate in the program," says Ianto Ware.

Steve Maras' involvement and substantial expertise on innovative approaches to utilising temporarily empty spaces has Ianto optimistic about Renew's future ventures.

"This is a program that works well with a passionate property owner who cares about welfare for cities and main streets," Ianto says. "It's better to work with one amazing industry partner than try to convince people who are either too busy or not particularly interested.

"At the moment it seems like businesses brave enough to venture out to them suffer simply through the lack of foot traffic and the limited support to help re-grow the audience for suburban main streets."

Nick Ben

