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## Victorian health business named Australia's best

A Victorian business which has developed an innovative coaching program to improve the lives of people with chronic illnesses has taken out the top honours in the 2009 Telstra Business Awards.

The COACH Program, devised by Dr Margarite Vale, is a telephone delivered coaching program to help people with illnesses such as coronary heart disease and diabetes better manage their health and lifestyles.

As the program is based on evidence of how patients have responded in controlled trials, its proven credibility means it can be rolled out in public and private health systems around Australia and overseas.

The win marks the first time in the 17-year history of the prestigious awards that a 'micro business' (one with five or fewer staff) has taken out the top prize.

The COACH Program was also named the national winner of the businessowner Micro Business Award. Other winners at the Telstra Business Awards included Edible Blooms from SA, Point Project Management from ACT, Vaxine from SA and R Radford and Sons from Victoria.

Telstra CEO David Thodey said The COACH Program was a great example of an innovative small business playing a fundamental role in Australian society.

"Businesses like The COACH Program and the other state and national finalists capture the powerful entrepreneurial spirit in this country and celebrate the people who form the very foundation of our economy," Mr Thodey said.

"They are the reason why Telstra continues to support these awards year in and year out.

"These awards are about recognising and rewarding the talent and determination of small businesses and helping them achieve even greater success."

Telstra Business Group Managing Director and Telstra Business Awards Ambassador, Deena Shiff, said The COACH Program stood out because it had translated the best of clinical research into a real world health delivery environment, with a viable business model and strong institutional demand ."

"The research that has gone into the program is being constantly updated, so patients receiving 'coaching' can be confident they are getting advice that is medically proven," Ms Shiff said.

"Although it is a very small business it has the potential to grow and improve the health of well-being of many thousands of people world-wide with chronic disease," Ms Shiff said.

Doctor Margarite Vale, the founder and director of COACH, said it gives patients the knowledge, skills and motivation they need to take control of their own health.

"With this program, patients are trained to be the 'driver' of the process of achieving and maintaining the target levels for their coronary risk factors while working in association with their usual doctors," Dr Vale said.

"It means they have a credible, knowledgeable source of information to go to for advice, support, clarification or to just act as a confidential sounding board.

“The coach can offer practical help with issues such as how to change your diet, modify your cooking style, and understand food labels. They can also help you plan ways to exercise to suit your lifestyle, discuss your medication and, if necessary, suggest alternatives to discuss with your doctor.

“It has been a rewarding challenge to translate a program developed from research into a commercial product over the years, but to be recognised as a business by the prestigious Telstra Business Awards provides us with the opportunity to take The COACH Program to another level.”

Other winners at the Telstra Business Awards were:

**MYOB Small Business Award: Edible Blooms (South Australia)**

Edible Blooms offers a unique twist on traditional flower and gift delivery, offering “bouquets” of gourmet chocolates, home-baked cookies, fresh fruit and even “beer cakes”. From its beginnings as a sole owner-operator business in 2005, Edible Blooms is one of the most popular and fastest-growing gifting websites in Australia and has developed a cult-like following by offering a unique range, easy online access, speedy delivery across Australia and the “wow” factor the blooms provide upon arrival. From humble beginnings, Edible Blooms has grown exponentially with current growth at 30 per cent, a database of 50,000 clients, stores in four states and 15 employees providing a national delivery service. A combination of technology in packaging and sophisticated courier networks has enabled delivery to include regional Australia, greatly increasing the market potential for the company to continue expansion into regional areas.

**Panasonic Australia Medium Business Award: Point Project Management (Canberra)**

To support its fast and efficient service offering, this project management consultancy has adopted a ‘mobile office’ policy. Point Project Management has provided every one of its employees with an iPhone™ with full internet, phone and email access to allow them to interact with clients and other members of the team wherever they may be. Founded in Canberra in 2006, Point is a dynamic client-side project management consultancy specialising in building and property. Point has grown to become one of Australia’s largest specialist project management consultancies, with offices in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. In just three years, Point has grown from one employee and one client to 33 employees and 54 clients. Revenue has grown by an average of 1,870 per cent since the company was founded. Point can also boast a stable employee base with a 95 per cent retention rate.

**AMP Innovation Award: Vaxine (South Australia)**

Small vaccine research and development business, Vaxine, has demonstrated to the world that hard work and an innovative approach can be the basis for unparalleled success. The company is at the forefront of delivering the first swine flu vaccine and recently signed an \$8.5 million five year contract to provide vaccine research and development services to the US government. When it opened its doors in 2004, against prevailing wisdom that a biotech needed a large pharmaceutical partner and an early listing on the Australian stock exchange to succeed, there was no inkling of the enormous success that the company would go on to achieve. Despite beliefs that vaccines were a dying and unprofitable business and that new vaccine technologies had no commercial future, Vaxine has proven that an innovative business model based upon a firm belief in its product can outperform a competitor many times its size.

**Sensis Social Responsibility Award: R Radford and Sons (Warragul, Victoria)**

With over 60 years experience in red meat retail, wholesale and abattoir operations, this Victorian business is leading the way in certified organic and ethnically-sensitive meat production. Radfords' Certified Organic facilities enable conventional producers to convert to organic practices, thereby removing chemicals and residual pollutants from stock feed and stimulating rehabilitation of grazing land. In the early 1980s Radfords identified and successfully developed a number of niche markets otherwise overlooked by many processors. Supply of 'Greek Lambs' has extended to similarly culturally driven requirements from other Mediterranean and South East Asian communities. Supply to meet these ethnic or religious observances typically includes offal products that would otherwise be relegated to commodity ingredient markets. Radfords is also leading the way in tackling long-term environmental issues in the industry, recently undertaking an industry-first project to recycle 95 per cent of waste water to potable quality with potential industry-wide annual water savings of over 13 gegalitres.

*Editor's note: Q&A's with the business owners, the contact details of the business owners and photographs are available on request from Lighthouse Communications Group on 02 9692 8811 or by email: [plaidlaw@lighthousecomms.com.au](mailto:plaidlaw@lighthousecomms.com.au)*

Media contact: Peter Laidlaw, Lighthouse Communications Group, 02 9692 8811 or 0419 210 306

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