



jean cannon

Managing Director, Enviro Action

Jean Cannon was involved in her former husband's business – a venture that went belly up in the late nineties. When he decided to retire, she decided to move on and start her own Environmental and OH&S business. Things were purring along nicely until disaster struck in 2004 when she broke her back and was forced to run the business from her bed. Cannon is up and about again and Enviro Action is now a profitable nation-wide business on the rise.

"In 2004, I was moving a huge plant with a crowbar. I should have asked a couple of men to help me instead of being so bleeding independent. I suddenly heard a scunching noise and I gently subsided to the floor and thought, "Oh dear, what have I done?" I had broken my back.

My life as a business person really began when my former husband wanted to retire. But that didn't work for me. I had not passed my used-by date. I'm not a retiring sort of person. I'm a doer.

So I assessed my skills and started my own business. My first target market was the Tuna industry, because they were under threat from public opinion and constant court cases. They were in desperate need of environmental management, which is what I'm really good at. OH&S was actually more attractive to them so I combined the two and added quality and food safety. I was told that women were only useful in the kitchen and the bedroom. This was 1999. They were astonished that I understood fishing and could help them. I almost starved during that process. It was just awful.

After the injury, I spent two months lying down with a notebook computer on my tum and a phone at my hand. It was a huge financial drain.

My clients were really understanding – apart from laughing like heck and telling me that I needed someone who knew something about OH&S. They really ribbed me on that one. (Laughs)

I'm absolutely passionate about what I do, but I know that growing the business has to be a team approach. Hurting my back like that really drove that home.

I've been out to sea on fishing boats again. I fly somewhere nearly every week. I'm working with large sections of the seafood and marine sectors in almost all states. And I'm really keen to move into a broader range of industries. I have all the systems in place. My training programs are franchisable. So now I'm really looking for experienced business people who can take this business to the next stage."