



**Veuve Clicquot  
BUSINESS WOMAN  
AWARD**

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**SARAH-JANE CLARKE AND HEIDI MIDDLETON  
WIN THE VEUVE CLICQUOT BUSINESS WOMAN  
AWARD 2010**

Today, on International Women's Day, Sarah-Jane Clarke and Heidi Middleton, co-founders and co-directors of sass & bide, were announced as the Australian winners of the Veuve Clicquot Business Woman Award 2010. The announcement was made by the global president of Veuve Clicquot, Stéphane Baschiera, in Sydney at the Veuve Clicquot Business Woman Award lunch, attended by some of Australia's most powerful and successful business leaders.

The Award commemorates Madame Clicquot, who was arguably the first woman entrepreneur. Janet Holmes à Court, a previous winner of the Award and chair of the Australian judging panel, believes Sarah-Jane Clarke and Heidi Middleton are outstanding winners of the Award. "Madame Clicquot was an innovator with global ambitions; creative, brave, tenacious, unconventional and ahead of her time." said Janet Holmes à Court. "These are qualities the Veuve Clicquot Business Woman Award recognizes and celebrates, and which Sarah-Jane and Heidi possess in abundance."

The Veuve Clicquot Business Woman Award began in France in 1972 to commemorate Madame Clicquot, and to honour women who possess her qualities of vision, innovation, entrepreneurial drive, leadership, individuality and tenacity. It is a global award given to a leading woman entrepreneur in 17 countries. In 2010, the Award places a greater focus on Corporate Social Responsibility, seeking out successful business women who have embedded socially and environmentally responsible practices within their businesses. Nominations were received from throughout Australia, with the judges short-listing three finalists: Sarah-Jane Clarke and Heidi Middleton (joint nomination), Belinda David-Tooze (CEO and founder, Envirosax) and Kylie Kwong (chef, restaurateur, presenter and writer).

"The calibre of all the nominations we received was extremely high and the four women finalists, in particular, are inspiring business leaders who embody Madame Clicquot's qualities and embrace the principles of corporate social responsibility," said Janet Holmes à Court. "The judging process was very difficult, but at the end of the day we felt that Sarah-Jane's and Heidi's entrepreneurship, audacity and creativity singled them out. Through their style, persistence and integrity, they have created a multi-million dollar global company which operates according to their own principles and vision."

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## **Sarah-Jane Clarke and Heidi Middleton**

Sarah-Jane Clarke & Heidi Middleton are co-founders and co-directors of sass & bide, one of Australia's best known fashion brands. What began eleven years ago as a cult denim label quickly expanded into a seasonal ready-to-wear business, evolving from an underground phenomenon in Australia to the runways of London and New York. sass & bide today has 150 stockists worldwide, ten stand-alone stores in Australia, and a rollcall of celebrity fans including Kate Moss, Mischa Barton and Cameron Diaz. It employs more than 80 staff working across design, sales, communications, finance, production and retail business.

A former accountant and an advertising art director, Sarah-Jane Clarke (sass) and Heidi Middleton (bide) are an anomaly in an industry where fashion college is a rite of passage. The sass & bide brand was born in 1999 out of a stall in London's Portobello markets selling customised pieces. By July of 2003, sass & bide debuted internationally at London Fashion Week and in 2004, was invited to show at New York Fashion Week, the first ever Australian label to do so. The brand's expansion continued, with the first sass & bide flagship store opening in Paddington, New South Wales, in 2005, and the label stocked nationwide in David Jones in Australia, Bloomingdale's in the United States, Harrods, Selfridges and Harvey Nichols in the United Kingdom. Sarah-Jane and Heidi are now showing back in London, the place they regard as their label's spiritual home, with talk of further expansion in the United Kingdom market and of a London store some time in the future.

The rise of Sarah-Jane's and Heidi's business has not been without its challenges. In 2007, Heidi was diagnosed with breast cancer at the same time as she gave birth to her first child, and the pair juggle the demands of running a fashion empire with their roles as mothers. Likewise, the rapid growth and expansion into overseas markets has brought with it financial pressures. In 2009, they restructured, brought in financial partners and are now poised for the next phase of growth. They have established three thriving brands, sass& bide, sass & bide denim and S & B VIE by sass & bide.

Sarah-Jane and Heidi operate the business according to their own ethics and principles. They are motivated by their hearts, their instincts and their moral compass: passionate about family, staff and helping out the broader community wherever they can, particularly children. They work four days a week, one day from home to ensure valuable family time, and the business is proudly staff-centric, creating a modern day culture where people love to work. In their dealings with suppliers in Australia, Bali, India, China, Philippines and Turkey, they set strict company terms and conditions to ensure that labour laws, environmental policy and best industry practice is followed. They are ambassadors for breast cancer, and Heidi has chosen to speak openly about the course of her illness and recovery as a way to raise awareness of the disease. To celebrate their tenth year, Sarah-Jane and Heidi founded their own sass & bide charity initiative with Barnados, The Shine Collective, with all proceeds going to creative workshops and grants for children in Australia and London.

As Australian winners of The Veuve Clicquot Business Woman Award 2010, Sarah-Jane and Heidi will fly to Reims, France, in October to join past and present laureates from other countries at the annual Veuve Clicquot International Businesswomen's Forum, where a vine will be christened in their name. They will also receive La Grande Dame champagne every year on Madame Clicquot's birthday.

## The Veuve Clicquot Business Woman Award

The Veuve Clicquot Business Woman Award was established in France in 1972 to commemorate Madame Clicquot, and to identify and celebrate women who possess her qualities of vision, innovation, entrepreneurial drive, leadership, individuality and tenacity. Such qualities earned Madame Clicquot her international reputation as “la grande dame de la Champagne”.

Madame Clicquot was widowed in 1805, at the age of 27 with a small child to care for. She defied the tradition of the day and took the reins of her husband's business, building it into the international champagne house of today, Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin. She overcame every obstacle that threatened her vision, including the Napoleonic trade blockade. Madame Clicquot also invented the 'table de remuage' intrinsic to the riddling process that leaves champagne so brilliantly clear. Her discovery was adopted by all other champagne houses and is still used today. Known throughout France as “La Veuve” - meaning “the widow” - Madame Clicquot died in 1866. Today, her legacy burns brightly and she remains an inspiration to women around the world.

The Australian judging panel of the Veuve Clicquot Business Woman Award comprises Chairman of the John Holland Group, **Janet Holmes à Court AC**; The Honourable Justice **Annabelle Bennett AO**; Director of Marketing and Special Events for Consolidated Press Holdings, **Deeta Colvin**; Group General Manager of David Jones, **Colette Garnsey\***; Chairman, Future Fund Board of Guardians, **David Murray AO**; Director, Paspaley Pearls Group, **Marilynne Paspaley AM**; Managing Director of Moët Hennessy Australia and New Zealand, James Paton; and CEO of the Bennelong Group, **Alison Watkins**.

*\* Withdrew from the final judging process due to potential conflict of interest with sass & bide.*