

Company: Small Businesses of Australia

Nomination Submitted by: Annette Densham, Award Writing Specialist

Company Description: Award Writing Specialist

Nomination Category: Company / Organization Categories

Nomination Sub Category: Company of the Year - Hospitality & Leisure - Small

Nomination Title: denu

1. Which will you submit for your nomination in this category, a video of up to five (5) minutes in length about the achievements of the nominated organization since 1 January 2023, OR written answers to the questions for this category? (Choose one):

Written answers to the questions

2. If you are submitting a video of up to five (5) minutes in length, provide the URL of the nominated video here, OR attach it to your entry via the "Add Attachments, Videos, or Links to This Entry" link above, through which you may also upload a copy of your video.

3. If you are providing written answers for your submission, you must provide an answer to this first question: Briefly describe the nominated organization: its history and past performance (up to 200 words):

Total 197 words used.

On a work trip in 2007, Sarah Fisher opened the complimentary shampoo, ready to clean off after a hectic day. The scent that wafted out of the tiny bottle was artificial, leaving her skin feeling like it'd been scrubbed with a scourer. She couldn't make sense of the ingredients list. She thought, "Why, in such a beautiful hotel, does this feel so cheap and soulless?" It felt impersonal, careless... and completely at odds with the comfort the space promised. denu was born.

Back in Melbourne, Sarah started blending essential oils and sourcing local ingredients, creating products that felt gentle, smelled real, and offered a moment of stillness. denu has become a range of sensory wellness products made with purpose, supplying high-end restaurants and cultural venues.

Seventeen years later, Denu has come full circle. Our natural hand, hair, and room products appear in the spaces that once frustrated Sarah, at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground, Marvel Stadium, and Neil Perry's restaurants with co-branded products and bespoke scents. We've helped venues move away from faceless, mass-produced amenities toward thoughtful, sustainable alternatives. With solar-powered manufacturing, recyclable packaging, and a loyal customer base, we're reshaping how guests are cared for.

4. If you are providing written answers for your submission, you must provide an answer to this second question: Outline the organization's achievements since the beginning of 2023 that you wish to bring to the judges' attention (up to 250 words):

Total 250 words used.

What if soap in a stadium bathroom could tell a story? What if hand cream in a hotel suite could reflect a brand's soul, not just clean your skin or hair?

That's the question we've been answering since early 2023, as denu reshaped what personal care looks and feels like across Australia's most iconic venues. We've expanded into co-branded body lotions and new scent profiles, touching over 45,000 guest experiences with care that feels custom, considered, and completely aligned with each venue's identity.

We launched bespoke collaborations with Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), developing a custom citrus hand wash and personalised labelling for their corporate suites. At Gin Palace, guests now enjoy our hand care range adorned in signature gold labels. These join long-standing relationships with Arts Centre Melbourne (now 15+ years), Marvel Stadium, and Neil Perry's restaurants. Co-branding is our industry defining point of difference.

Our customer base grew 40%, conversion rates jumped 55%, and online revenue lifted 23.5%. All of this, while keeping our promise: products made in Melbourne, in solar-powered facilities, using locally sourced, recyclable materials.

Five percent of every sale donated to charities like the Lighthouse Foundation, we're proving that even a bottle of hand wash can carry a story worth telling.

This momentum earned a Silver in the Company of the Year – Consumer Products – 10 or Less Employees category at the Stevie Awards for Women in Business, won a BX Business xCellence Award and 2023 Whitehorse Business Excellence Award for Micro Business Sustainability.

5. If you are providing written answers for your submission, you must provide an answer to this third question: Explain why the achievements you have highlighted are unique or significant. If possible compare the achievements to the performance of other players in your industry and/or to the organization's past performance (up to 250 words):

Total 248 words used.

Co-branding in hospitality isn't just a clever design choice, it's a strategic evolution of our product and for our client's branding. Until now, most venues treated personal care as an afterthought. Products were anonymous, imported, and disconnected from the guest experience. Often, these products weren't even kind to the skin. We saw an opportunity to transform that forgotten detail into something far more powerful, a brand's most intimate moment. The scent, texture, and feel of a product used in quiet, reflective spaces like a bathroom or dressing room can leave a lasting emotional impression. It's subtle, but powerful.

What makes this model innovative isn't just adding logos to labels. We create signature sensory experiences reflecting the venue's mood, aesthetic, and values. Science tells us scent is the strongest sense tied to memory. A custom fragrance becomes a story, a mood, a memory. Guests often ask, "Where can I buy that hand wash?" because it moved them. Guests often ask venues "Where can I buy that hand wash?" because it made them feel something.

Instead of stocking off-the-shelf products, venues collaborate with us to develop custom scents, design, and messaging that quite literally land in the hands of their guests. A cocktail bar might opt for a bold citrus profile with gold-accented packaging. A gallery may prefer calming botanicals and minimalist labels. These aren't just products. They're brand ambassadors in disguise. No other business in our space offers this level of co-creation, sensory branding, and local sustainability.

6. You have the option to answer this final question: Reference any attachments of supporting materials throughout this nomination and how they provide evidence of the claims you have made in this nomination (up to 250 words):

Total 178 words used.

Our support document shows exactly what our innovation looks like in the real world. You'll see examples of our co-branded products in places like the MCG, Gin Palace, and Arts Centre Melbourne—all customised to reflect each venue's identity. It highlights how our labels, scents, and presentation are designed in close collaboration with our partners, transforming everyday products into personal brand experiences.

We've also attached photos of our products in situ, like the gold-accented bottles at Gin Palace and the bespoke citrus blend created for the MCG. These images back up our claims about visual branding, premium quality, and the tailored nature of what we do.

You'll find a testimonial from Vincent Martzloff at Rockpool Dining Group, which speaks to the value Denu brings not just to their guest experience but to their brand as a whole. It's proof that this approach resonates with high-end venues and their audiences.

We've included recognition from the 2024 Stevie Awards (Silver winner) and the 2023 Whitehorse Business Excellence Awards, validating our innovation, growth, and sustainability practices at a national and international level.

Attachments/Videos/Links:

[denu](#)



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