

Company: Small Businesses of Australia

Nomination Submitted by: Annette Densham, Award Writing Specialist

Company Description: Award Writing Specialist

Nomination Category: Entrepreneur Categories

Nomination Sub Category: Best Female Entrepreneur

Nomination Title: Raquel Manning - a Blue Diamond in the off-market development space

1. In bullet-list form (up to 150 words), provide a brief summary of up to ten (10) of the chief achievements of the nominated entrepreneur in this category since 1 January 2023:

Total 128 words used.

- Closed or structured over \$300 million in strategic off-market land deals since January 2023
- Delivered the \$130 million East Picton masterplan, unlocking a 1,000-home future community
- Currently leading projects in North Richmond, Goulburn, South East QLD, and Western Sydney, totalling \$180 million+
- Grew Blue Diamond's pipeline by 80% and doubled the client base in 18 months
- Recognised with three Silver Stevie Awards including Woman of the Year and Lifetime Achievement
- Winner of three 2024 Women Changing the World Awards (London)
- Finalist in the 2024 Australian Small Business Champion Awards
- Mentor with Women Building Australia and Property Council of Australia since 2022
- Raised \$489,000 through Forever Giving Foundation, including a \$900,000 in-kind house rebuild
- Ambassador for Women Building NSW and keynote speaker at Sydney Build Expo.

2. Which will you submit for this nomination, a video of up to five (5) minutes in length or a written essay of up to 650 words? Choose one:

Essay of up to 650 words

3. 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:

4. If you are providing a written essay for this nomination, submit in this space an essay of up to 650 words describing the achievements of the nominated entrepreneur in this category since 1 January 2023:

Total 652 words used. If the word count is more than 25 words over the limit, please deduct one (1) point from your score.

When Raquel Manning, founder of Blue Diamond Property Group, stood on a dusty parcel of rural land in East Picton, walking the boundary with one of the six landowners she'd spent months convincing others to come to the table. The site was fragmented, unzoned, and politically sensitive. Local planners were cautious. Most developers wouldn't touch it.

She saw what no one else did: a future community of over 1,000 homes, schools, parks, and jobs, if she could align the right people. Over the next 10 months, she coordinated private landowners, planning consultants, legal teams, capital partners and government stakeholders. There were fallouts, rewrites, funding pressures and timelines that moved weekly. She held the deal together. In December, the \$130 million masterplan went under contract, which will inject long-term value into the region and generate thousands of jobs.

Blue Diamond specialises in early-stage land origination. She operates before the typical developer gets involved; finding land with potential, usually off-market, pre-zoning, and underutilised, leading the negotiation, structure, and path to approvals in a space where few women, if any, lead at scale. It's a space most developers avoid due to risk and complexity.

In 2024, she advised on land packages for private equity and mid-tier developers, supported stalled acquisitions, and delivered projects that will cause thousands of new homes.

She's the go-to for deals that're politically sensitive, structurally complex, or require long-term negotiation. Raquel's been brought in to restructure or revive stalled land projects, including sites where planning issues or fractured ownership caused delays and advises private equity and developer groups on acquisition strategy, deal structuring, and rezoning pathways.

She's closed or structured over \$300 million in strategic land deals, including the flagship East Picton masterplan project.

- North Richmond (NSW), secured an \$18 million land parcel now progressing through rezoning.
- South East Queensland, currently negotiating a \$65 million project involving over 500 homes and community infrastructure.
- Goulburn, structuring a \$40–50 million land acquisition for future residential development, working across private and government stakeholders.
- Western Sydney - delivered over \$55 million in infill and subdivision deals for builder and developer clients.

All these projects are off-market and pre-zoning, often involving complex ownership structures, planning risk, and stakeholder alignment. These outcomes are particularly significant given the absence of institutional backing.

Raquel navigates these high-stakes deals independently, with a client base that's doubled over the past 18 months and a current pipeline exceeding \$400 million across NSW and QLD. Her projects unlock long-term housing supply in regions that need it most., growing her pipeline by 80% over the past two years.

Raquel's one of fewer than 3% of women in senior property development roles in Australia, and one of the only Indigenous women leading large-scale land transactions. She leads in a male dominated industry using her voice to drive change, encouraging more women to enter. Her lived experience, of being shut out, spoken over, and underestimated, drives her approach to advocacy and inclusion.

- Ambassador - Women Building NSW and Sydney Build Expo 2024–2025.
- Mentor - Women Building Australia and the Property Council of Australia since 2022.
- Keynote speaker - Sydney Build Expo on gender equity and early-stage development complexity.
- Regular contributor - Florence Magazine, sharing insight as a woman in construction.

She's built a development model where commercial success is tied directly to social good. Through the Forever Giving Foundation, which she co-founded, she's raised \$489,000 since 2023, including:

- \$900,000 in-kind house rebuild for a family of 11 who lost everything in a fire
- \$160,000+ for domestic violence support and employment pathways

A \$10,000 investment in a children's empowerment program in Western Sydney.

Her work has been recognised globally:

- 3 Stevie Awards: Silver for Woman of the Year (Industry), Social Change Maker (Gender), and Lifetime Achievement (Business)
- Women Changing the World Awards 2024 (London): Winner in three categories
- Australian Small Business Champion Awards: Finalist, 2024
- Women in Property & Construction 2024: Winner



Attachments/Videos/Links:

[Raquel Manning - a Blue Diamond in the off-market development space](#)



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