

Company: Small Businesses of Australia

Nomination Submitted by: Annette Densham, Award Writing Specialist

Company Description: Award Writing Specialist

Nomination Category: Thought Leadership Categories

Nomination Sub Category: Thought Leader of The Year - Government or Non-Profit

Nomination Title: Rochelle Courtenay, Share the Dignity founder - Ending Period Poverty in Australia

1. Which will you submit for this nomination, a video of up to five (5) minutes in length about the nominated individual, 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 to the questions for this category, you must answer this first question: Briefly describe the nominated individual: history and past performance (up to 200 words):

Total 193 words used.

In 2015, Rochelle Courtenay read an article that would change her life, and the lives of thousands of others. It revealed that women in Australia were using socks and newspaper during their periods because they couldn't afford sanitary products. Outraged, Rochelle began collecting pads and tampons and her act of compassion sparked a national movement.

Rochelle founded Share the Dignity to restore dignity to people experiencing period poverty. What began as a grassroots initiative is now one of Australia's most recognised social justice organisations, with over 6,500 volunteers and national partnerships with Woolworths, Bunnings, and Priceline.

She led the successful campaign to remove the GST from period products in 2019; a 20-year political stalemate overcome through relentless advocacy and public pressure. She pioneered the world's first Dignity Vending Machines, giving people access to free period care at the push of a button. She launched It's in the Bag, now delivering over one million bags filled with essentials to women and girls in crisis.

Rochelle is leading one of the most important social conversations in Australia; making period poverty visible, measurable, and impossible to ignore. She's a relentless disruptor of silence and stigma.

4. If you are providing written answers to the questions for this category, you must answer this second question: Outline the nominee's thought leadership achievements since 1 January 2023 that you wish to bring to the judges' attention (up to 250 words):

Total 247 words used.

Rochelle is driving national change by flipping the conversation on period poverty, and making sure no one can ignore it anymore.

She led the Bloody Big Survey 2024, gathering 153,620 responses, the biggest dataset on menstruation ever collected. It showed 64% of people had struggled to afford products. That data is being used to push for free period care in hospitals, workplaces, and universities. She also launched #PadUpPublicHealth, calling out hospitals for not offering basic period products.

When momentum slowed, Rochelle didn't pull back, she pushed harder. She wore a dress made of sanitary pads for 30 days; to work, on stage, even paddleboarding. It was bold, uncomfortable, and exactly what the country needed. It sparked 100,000+ new survey responses, 379 media stories, and reached 2.2 million Australians.

She's also expanded menstrual education in schools with Period Talk (created "by kids, for kids"), launched a national Education Hub, and developed inclusive resources like A Bro in the Know and Dad's Guide to Periods.

In 2023, she launched the Eco Period Club, donating over 55,780 reusable products, a world-first that tackles poverty and sustainability at once. She launched the Menstrual Equality Solutions Program, installing free Dignity Vending Machines and Dispensers in workplaces and public spaces, reinvesting 100% of profits into the cause.

Under her leadership, Share the Dignity hit 1 million It's in the Bag donations, secured a \$34M government partnership, and began working to make the Brisbane Olympics 2032 the first period-friendly Games.

5. If you are providing written answers to the questions for this category, you must answer 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 nominee's past performance (up to 250 words):

Total 247 words used.

While many charities respond to problems already recognised by governments or institutions, Rochelle created visibility around a crisis that was actively ignored. Until Share the Dignity, there were no large-scale datasets, public health campaigns, or government funding streams for period poverty.

Rochelle tackles a problem most people don't even realise exists, period poverty, and exposes how deeply it's woven into gender and health inequity, and social exclusion. In Australia, up to one million people each month can't afford period products. Without them, people skip school, miss work, avoid sport, suffer infections, and silently endure the shame of managing their period with toilet paper, socks, or nothing. Period poverty isn't counted in most health data. It disproportionately affects those already pushed to the margins: women experiencing homelessness, First Nations people, survivors of violence, and teens in low-income communities.

Removing the GST on period products in 2019 marked a historic shift in how Australia values those who menstruate. For nearly two decades, pads/tampons were taxed as luxury items, while condoms and Viagra were GST-free. Rochelle's advocacy mobilised public opinion, partnered with media/business, and elevated a quiet frustration into a national demand for fairness. The tax was overturned, relieving an unfair burden on those most at risk.

She's helped make essential products more affordable for millions, opened the door to deeper policy conversations about equity in healthcare, gender bias in legislation, and the economic cost of menstruation. Menstrual health is no longer a 'women's issue' to be dismissed or ignored.

6. You have the option to reference here 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 150 words used.

We've included a number of documents to support this nomination and show just how far-reaching Rochelle's impact has been.

The Share the Dignity Annual Report gives a clear snapshot of everything that's been achieved under Rochelle's leadership, from the installation of over 1,100 Dignity Vending Machines, to distributing more than 5 million period products, and securing a \$34 million government partnership with Queensland schools.

The Bloody Big Survey Campaign Summary walks through how Rochelle led the campaign strategy that gathered 153,620 responses, created national conversation, and is now informing real policy decisions in hospitals, workplaces, and education.

You'll also find details of the Menstrual Equality Solutions Program, a social enterprise Rochelle launched to get free period products into public spaces and workplaces, with 100% of profits reinvested into the mission.

The Share the Dignity support document gives deeper insight into the work the organisation does, collaborations and impact.

Attachments/Videos/Links:

[Rochelle Courtenay, Share the Dignity founder - Ending Period Poverty in Australia](#)



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