

**Company:** Fernwood Fitness, Melbourne, Victoria

**Company Description:** Fernwood Fitness is an award-winning premium, women-only gym with an unmatched level of service and product offering. We have over 74 clubs across the country with over 92,000 member. We focus on strong women, real results, and fitness services tailored to our members goals. A membership offers access to a supportive community, exclusive benefits, and a commitment to empowering women.

**Nomination Category:** Individual Awards Categories

**Nomination Sub Category:** Most Innovative Woman of the Year - Franchising

**Nomination Title:** Di Williams



1. Which will you submit for your nomination in this category, a video of up to five (5) minutes, explaining the achievements since July 1, 2023 of the nominated woman, OR written answers to the questions? (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 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. If you are submitting written answers to the questions for this category, provide them in the spaces below:
3. Briefly describe the nominated individual: history and past performance (up to 200 words):

**Total 200 words used.**

Di Williams' journey began with a barbell and a bold vision. In the 1980s, strength training facilities were male-dominated spaces, often unwelcoming to women. Di, a passionate weightlifter and powerlifter, saw opportunity to redefine the fitness experience for women. She envisioned a space that combined the intensity of strength training with the comfort, care, and community women value.

In 1989, she brought this vision to life by opening the first Fernwood Fitness club in a repurposed classroom in the backstreets of Bendigo, a regional town in Victoria, Australia. At a time when aerobics was the norm and strength training was stigmatised, Di challenged outdated narratives and empowered women to embrace physical strength.

Despite scepticism, her concept resonated creating not just a gym, but a sanctuary where women could feel safe, supported, and strong. Di's commitment attracted like-minded women and laid the foundation for a national movement.

Today, Fernwood Fitness is a thriving franchise network with over 74 clubs and more than 90,000 members across Australia. Di has not only built a business but cultivated a new generation of female entrepreneurs many of whom became franchisees through pathways they never expected. Her legacy is one of innovation, inclusion, and impact.

4. Outline the nominee's achievements since July 1 2023 that you wish to bring to the judges' attention (up to 250 words):

**Total 249 words used.**

Di Williams has consistently led innovation in the women's health and fitness sector, delivering transformative solutions that empower both members, employees and franchisees.

Under her leadership, the business developed and launched the Fernwood Masterclass platform an on-demand, in-house training app allowing franchisees and staff to access ongoing professional development anytime, anywhere. [REDACTED FOR PUBLICATION] this platform has significantly increased service uptake and consistency, ensuring a high-quality experience for members nationwide.

In 2024, Di oversaw the successful relaunch of Fernwood's FIIT30 small group training program through an exclusive partnership with the HIIT Factory. Designed specifically for time-poor women.[REDACTED FOR PUBLICATION]

She also introduced a strategic partnership with AstonRX, providing new members with a complimentary metabolic reset program that includes tailored meal plans, recipes, and access to health professionals. [REDACTED FOR PUBLICATION]

Di continues to champion innovation through Fernwood's exclusive partnership with HYPOXI in Australia a patented, low-impact fat-loss system that merges vacuum technology with exercise. [REDACTED FOR PUBLICATION]

Through her visionary leadership, Di Williams has created a franchising model that not only delivers results but continues to evolve empowering women across the country as both fitness members and successful business owners.

5. 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.**

Di Williams' achievements stand out in the fitness and franchising industries due to innovation, and measurable impact. Di's innovations are highlighted through several prestigious awards including:

AUSactive Awards: 2023 Mental Health Award, 2024 People's Choice Brand.

10 THOUSAND FEET Employer of Choice – Multi Location

Canstar Blue: Rated Australia's top gym by consumers.

TopFranchise Awards: Top 10 in all categories, including #2 for Passion and #3 for Innovation.

While many gyms offer standardised training, the Fernwood Masterclass platform developed under Di's direction delivers bespoke, on-demand training tailored specifically for the Fernwood network.

The relaunch of FIIT30 is equally significant. While short-format HIIT classes are common, Fernwood's program is designed specifically for women to drive results [REDACTED FOR PUBLICATION].

Traditional fitness models have long prioritised weight loss over strength and generalised approaches over female-specific needs. Fernwood's partnership with AstonRX challenges this standard, shifting the focus from "skinny" to "strong and healthy," empowering women with the information and tools to embrace strength, nourishment, and long-term wellness, transforming women's lives. [REDACTED FOR PUBLICATION]

[REDACTED FOR PUBLICATION]

Together, these initiatives reflect Di's ability to anticipate market trends and deliver, innovative solutions that drive results.

6. 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 228 words used.**

**AstonRX x Fernwood Testimonial** Please refer to URL link titled AstonRX x Fernwood Testimonial. This testimonial is from Rania a Fernwood member and outlines the profound impact of a program such as AstonRX has on women's lives.

After her fifth baby, Rania Alfredson joined the AstonRX program to shed a final 5kg and reboot her eating habits. What she gained was far more - better gut health, renewed energy, and a healthier relationship with food. Balancing motherhood and the program were tough, but with planning and meal prep, she stayed on track. She discovered possible intolerances, adjusted, and watched her weight drop from 65.2kg to 55.5kg. The program's structure, tools, and rapid results boosted her confidence. Rania calls her transformation "outstanding" and credits AstonRX and Fernwood for changing her life. She now lives stronger, healthier, and empowered. Refer to the attached images of Rania

**Fernwood Foundation Charity Partner Testimonials**

Refer to attachments - Community Engagement - Melissa Robinson and Community Engagement - RizeUp Testimonial.

Through the Fernwood Foundation, Fernwood partners with like-minded charities to uplift and empower disadvantaged women across Australia. Attached is a testimonial from the CEO of charity partner RizeUp, highlighting the meaningful impact Fernwood and its nationwide community have made. A second testimonial from franchisee Melissa Robinson underscores the power of uniting charitable partnerships with local franchise networks to create lasting, community-driven change.

**Attachments/Videos/Links:**

[Di Williams](#)

[REDACTED FOR PUBLICATION]