

Company: Small Business of Australia, Australia

Company Division/Group: Award Writing Services

Company Description: Time is of the essence for small businesses and the work we do, helping uncover their stories, digging into their successes and ultimately helping them see all they've achieved is worthy of celebrating. We help these businesses find and enter awards so they can leverage the opportunities for PR, credibility and visibility.

Nomination Category: Individual Awards Categories

Nomination Sub Category: Best Female Entrepreneur – Consumer Services –11 to 2,500 Employees

Nomination Title: Kerry Bolton - Putting the care into disability support



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 199 words used.

Kerry Bolton is a bold and values-led entrepreneur who founded Caring Lotus in her spare bedroom in 2021, reinventing the consumer experience in disability services. After working in mental health and consulting with the NDIS Commissioner of Compliance, Kerry saw firsthand how the system failed both clients and frontline workers. She recognised an opportunity to do better by building a service that was ethical AND scalable, human-focused, and financially sustainable.

Starting from her home with a website she designed herself, Kerry built Caring Lotus from the ground up. In just three years, she's grown the company from a small operation to a multi-million-dollar enterprise, achieving \$5.7M turnover in 2024. Her business delivers highly personalised NDIS support services, with standout innovations like interest-based worker matching, real-time communication apps, and partnering with a custom-built client preference platform - Wish Keeper.

Kerry's strength as an entrepreneur lies in her ability to turn insight into action. She doesn't wait for permission; she spots gaps, solves problems, and builds systems that improve the client experience at every touchpoint. Today, she leads a thriving team, empowers workers to build careers, and delivers exceptional service in one of the most complex consumer markets in Australia.

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.

Kerry's delivered exceptional business growth and launched multiple innovations that set Caring Lotus apart as a leader in disability care.

Financial growth:

- Revenue more tripled from \$1.78M in 2022 to \$5.7M in 2024
- Scaled without external funding or compromising values
- Built strong cash flow and reinvestment capacity for future expansion

Product & process innovation:

- Partnered with Wish Keeper, a secure platform where clients store critical preferences and information, ensuring their choices are respected throughout their care
- Introduced personalised matchmaking, pairing support workers and clients based on shared interests- cars, gardening, music, transforming a traditionally generic process into something meaningful
- Redesigned the intake process to be highly client-centric, helping clients feel seen and understood from day one

Operations & systems:

- Personally designed Caring Lotus App, centralising communication, resources, and form management for staff, boosting efficiency and service quality and launched an internal intranet to keep the team connected
- Launched a feedback system - MUD Miscommunication, Understanding and Directions - addressing client or staff concerns quickly and respectfully, including sending handwritten apology cards where needed

Team & market impact:

- Developed a fast-track certification and onboarding pathway for support workers with two or more years' experience, to become fully job-ready in under 4 weeks while completing their Cert III through a partnered RTO
- Invested over \$65K - local business partnerships through business development networks
- Staff retention rate - over 60%, industry rate <40%, investing in fast-tracked onboarding, meaningful staff-client matching, peer mentorship, regular connection points like team events and debriefs.

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 246 words used.

Redefining what good consumer service looks like in one of the most emotionally complex sectors in Australia is not an easy feat. For so long, disability care has been transactional, with many chasing the funding rather than significant and life changing client outcomes.

Disability support is often viewed as a government-funded system, not a consumer-led experience. Kerry challenged that. She reframed clients as consumers with choice and built her entire model around dignity, responsiveness, and real relationship-based service. That shift alone is transformative. It puts people in the driver's seat of their own care and builds a sense of agency, something that's often missing in the NDIS space. Today, 95% of Caring Lotus clients remain with the service, compared to an industry average of 60–70%, showing this approach resonates. Clients now co-design their care journey, matched with workers who share their interests, whether that's restoring cars or tending gardens.

Her tech innovations like the Caring Lotus app have become business-critical tools that empower participants to stay informed, express preferences, and feel genuinely understood. This level of accessibility and transparency is rare in disability services but expected in high-performing consumer brands. Kerry brought that same mindset into a sector where it didn't previously exist.

Her approach has also made support work more attractive in an industry that typically struggles with burnout and low morale. By streamlining onboarding, creating meaningful client-worker matches, and removing red tape, she's built a reputation as both a preferred employer and preferred provider.

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 241 words used.

FOUNDATIONS Pages 2–4:

- Kerry's lived experience, passion, and leadership journey.
- Vision & Mission:
- "7 Cs"

STRATEGY & INNOVATION Page 5:

- Local event participation, fundraising, and client inclusion
- Custom-built Caring Lotus app, Wish Keeper platform, and streamlined admin systems.
- Services around client preferences and barriers.
- Employment-based microenterprises, cafés, and community hubs for participants.

SOCIAL IMPACT Pages 6–7:

- Caring Lotus Got Talent, Trivia Nights, museum trips, and birthday celebrations

SERVICES Pages 7–9:

- Support process: 4-step intake to review → match → support → reassess.
- Services include: community participation, daily living support, personal care, medication management, overnight support, and complex care.
- Individualised support plans and team collaboration are core to their model.

TECHNOLOGY & SYSTEMS Pages 10–11:

- Caring Lotus app includes:
- Emergency contacts
- Staff profiles
- Help lines
- Events calendar
- Feedback forms
- Marketing & brand visibility

INFRASTRUCTURE & REACH Pages 12–14:

- Visuals of the Werribee office, signage, and welcoming reception space.
- Active social media presence - Facebook, Instagram - showcasing team stories, events, and updates.
- Website analytics

FEEDBACK Pages 15–16:

- Branded "We're Sorry" and "Thank You" cards to personalise communication.
- Used as part of the MUD feedback and repair process.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION Page 17:

Includes photos of Kerry winning:

- Gold Stevie Award
- Silver Stevie Women in Business
- CEO Magazine finalist

Finalist in multiple local and national awards - IWIB, She Inspires, Wyndham

MEDIA Page 18:

- Coverage from The CEO Magazine, BeanScene, BRAINZ, and more.
- Features focus on Kerry's vision, ethics, innovation, and consumer-first leadership.

Attachments/Videos/Links:

[Kerry Bolton - Putting the care into disability support](#)

[REDACTED FOR PUBLICATION]