

New businesses earning big bucks

By **Caroline Marcus**

A Sutherland Shire Council initiative to kick-start new businesses has turned into a millionaire factory, with at least five companies developed at the centre surpassing the \$1 million turnover mark.

The Sutherland Shire Hub of Economic Development was started two years ago and recently beat more than 70 other business incubators to win Incubator of the Year at the national Small Business Development Conference Awards.

One of its graduate companies, Mobile Messenger, landed the fifth spot in *BRW* magazine's Fast 100, a list of the fastest growing small and medium businesses released in its November edition.

The messaging provider turned over \$12 million last financial year.

The hub, located on the same grounds as Loftus TAFE and the University of Wollongong's Loftus campus, currently has 16 tenants, which conduct business from its premises, and four graduate companies.

Potential candidates are selected

through a careful application process and once taken on, are provided with a three-year plan and an onsite office.

The tenants attend business learning sessions, six-monthly reviews and have the benefit of support from staff and fellow entrepreneurs.

"They call themselves the SSHED family," marketing manager Liz Lette said.

"I know it's corny but it's lovely to watch."

Details: www.sshed.com.au or call 9545 7777.

Mature female workers helped retrain

By **Caroline Marcus**

THE sudden contraction of auto-immune disease lupus forced Lilli Pilli ballet teacher Kathryn MacMillan to quit her dream job and rethink her future.

Having left school in year 10, she was concerned limited qualifications would render her unemployable, but after completing a basic office skills course at TAFE, she landed a traineeship with an accountant.

Now, the 42-year-old wants to help other mature-aged men and women who are hoping to re-enter the workforce on a part-time, full-time or casual basis.

Her recruitment company Nine2Three was home-based for a year before being accepted into the Sutherland Shire Hub of Economic Development 12 months ago, and Ms MacMillan estimates this year's profits as approaching \$1 million.

"It took us to a whole different level because at home, we had our meetings in the kitchen," Ms MacMillan said.

"Probably the biggest aspect is that the staff here push you."

Cronulla bookkeeper and mother of two teenagers,



Opening doors: Lilli Pilli entrepreneur Kathryn MacMillan (left) with employees Jeanette Evans, of Cronulla, and Seema Wadhvani, of Penshurst, is thriving since being accepted into the Sutherland Shire Hub of Economic Development last year.

Picture: Lisa McMahon

Jeanette Evans, 44, left a full-time job because the hours became too much.

She said that since joining Nine2Three, she works three days a week and could vary the hours to fit around her schedule.

Details: go to www.nine2three.com.au

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