

## Daring to Dream: Jannine Barron

*Jannine Barron's business at Byron Bay on the NSW North Coast is driven by a desire to improve the health and wellbeing of babies and children while reducing impacts on the environment. Starting with virtually no capital and little business experience, she has grown 'Nature's Child' from a small web-based business into a major online shopping enterprise with a physical shopfront, a wholesale division and warehousing. Nature's Child products are now sold nationally and internationally in six countries. She also has a budget range of 100 per cent chemical-free baby goods available through IGA supermarkets, via the brand 'biobaby'. Jannine's ultimate goal is for reusable, easily available, cheaper organic products to replace disposable, chemical products.*



### CONTACT DETAILS

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### What gave you the motivation/inspiration to follow your dream?

I was abhorred with the amount of chemicals used within the baby industry and so I started to research and collect natural and organic products. There weren't many when I first started. Fellow parents started asking about these items, so I thought I'd start a business – as simple as that! I was unemployed at the time, with no savings.

It has been a hell of a trip. I started Nature's Child on 1 July 2000, the same day GST was introduced, after some experience with a small non-profitable micro business selling baby carriers. Another mother and I would literally buy fabric, make up the carriers and sell them. Although we didn't make any profit and I left the business after two years, I learned from the experience that business could be an exciting place to promote positive change. That company (Hug-a-bub) is still going strong and I'm proud to have been associated with it in the early years. My previous business partner and I are still great friends and support each other in business. I took the web approach to start Nature's Child because we didn't have any money. I thought if I put a picture of a product and its price on a website, someone would want to buy it. So when buyers sent the money, I'd go and buy the item and send it off. It was very simple and it worked for a while in those early days. My 'mad' idea has now become an exciting and growing business. I design practical items as a priority. I design organic baby wipes, breast pads, and other items that parents need to use every day. I am a pragmatic person and a great believer in not gathering stuff we don't really need.

### At what point did you realise that your dream was actually possible and what was it that made you think you could really do it?

It is amazing how far belief can take you. I have struggled along at different times for the past seven years and the business has nearly fallen over a few times. I honestly think that it is only recently that I feel it is all going to work. My life experiences and university education, and my work as a volunteer, a teacher and in human rights have all been useful along the way. Initially, not earning money didn't have too much of an impact as I was used to that! As my kids got older, I realised families cost money and we couldn't just survive on a dream for the planet — it had to be a sustainable dream that supported us financially as well. So at that point I had to learn about finance, how to attract investors and do things 'properly' to help the business grow sustainably. I have done a few courses which helped, including the Department of State and Regional Development's Women in Business Mentoring Program, and I am now a business mentor myself.

### When you were a child, what did you want to 'be' when you grew up?

I remember wanting to be a bizarre collection of things, including a nun, joining the army, a window dresser and a teacher. I went on to teach at TAFE and university for a while and I really still consider myself a 'teacher'.

### How did your childhood influence you in later life?

I ended up in Byron Bay quite by accident in 1995 when my husband wanted to study music in Lismore. My childhood was spent in Campbelltown in the late 70s and early 80s when it was very much a country town. I had a very stable, loving life in a large Catholic family of seven children. I am now instilling in my two children and my husband of 17 years the same values

of caring for the world and nurturing loving relationships.

## Who are your role models?

Anita Roddick (of Body Shop fame) is an absolute role model as she had very strong ethics which were incorporated into her business. Nature's Child goods are chemical free, and we only buy through fair trade deals. My mother is also a massive inspiration in my life. And I read lots of motivational books about business.

## What does success mean to you?

Being able to support my family and give them a loving and safe environment is what is most important. The kids going to bed happy — that is what gives me a kick at the end of the day. From a business point of view, a parent coming to me and saying 'Thankyou, my child is no longer getting that rash' — that's when I feel most proud.

## What has been one of the biggest barriers you have had to face, what happened, and how did you overcome it?

Money and my lack of business understanding have been barriers. Coming from a working class background where I had no role models in business meant that I had no framework on which to build, so I had to learn the hard way from scratch. I have overcome many obstacles by having business mentors, and I'm happy to accept that I am 'business naive' and ask for help when I feel out of my depth. Being in 'organics' is another big challenge because the resources are limited. As there is only one small organic-cotton farm enterprise in Australia which can't meet our demand, most of our organic cotton comes from India.

## Where do you see yourself in 10 years time? What is your vision for the future?

I'll always work for children in some way, in connection with human rights. I would still like to be involved with Nature's Child but I would like to have more time for supporting and funding community initiatives. I also want to expand our second 'budget' brand to ensure our goods are affordable and accessible to everyone through supermarkets. Some people say I work too hard, but I love what I do so it doesn't feel like 'work'.

## What would you like to say to other women who may be just starting out on a 'Daring to Dream' journey?

Dare to dream! Really know and trust that what you are doing is your absolute passion and is aligned with your life's purpose. If what you are doing is true and that's what makes you feel at your happiest, then I believe everything else will fall into line. When you hit the bits where you want to cry and give up, keep going if it's your true life purpose. Being a good business woman is also recognising what you aren't good at, and so employ other people to do those things. I'd be thrilled to help anyone else wanting to take up this challenge to really dare to dream.