

# ELITE WOMEN

MPA SPOTLIGHTS SOME  
OF MORTGAGE BROKING'S  
GREATEST ACHIEVERS

# IN BROKING



## Elite Women in Broking 2013

### Kathy Cummings ...

I have always been a strong advocate of female brokers and I am proud to share with you the 'Elite Women in Broking 2013'.

The mortgage broking industry offers a level of flexibility that few others can. A flexibility which can suit the lifestyle of women, particularly mothers. Many brokers can choose the hours and location of their work and are free to balance the needs of their clients with their own. The industry offers a successful and rewarding career, a fulfilling personal life and a commitment to family.

Many women have the ideal qualities for mortgage broking. They tend to excel at networking and they have an innate intuition to fulfil the needs of their customers. Successful brokers are also using customer relationship management platforms that ensure they follow up, after the initial sale, with the subsequent nurturing of the relationship.

Commonwealth Bank is proud to sponsor 'Elite Women in Broking 2013' and we hope that the highly respected and successful female brokers who are featured here will inspire many female brokers to greater success and encourage more women into the industry.

Remember, customers may not remember exactly what you did or what you said, but they will always remember how you made them feel.

**Kathy Cummings**  
Executive General Manager, Third Party and Mobile Banking



**T**he prominence of women in the mortgage broking industry is nothing new. Broking has long been blessed with a number of high profile, influential female brokers. But while women may have been consistently achieving for a number of years, what has changed is the recognition they receive. There has been a recent groundswell of appreciation for the role women play in the industry, the unique talents they bring to the profession and the vital function many women are performing in guiding and mentoring new talent. With this in mind, MPA presents its inaugural Who's Who of Women in Broking.

"I'm living proof that you can have it all, and it doesn't have to be to the detriment of families, partners or spouses"

– KATRINA ROWLANDS



**Name:** Katrina Rowlands  
**Company:** Mortgage Success  
**Location:** Wollongong, NSW

**Katrina Rowlands** is most certainly a household name in mortgage broking. She's managed to be in top 12 of the MPA Top 100 list every year since its inception. But even as a veteran who entered the industry in 1997, Rowlands says she's encouraged by the quality of new women entering the industry.

"I've really enjoyed seeing the dedication and enthusiasm of newcomers into the industry. I love that fact that the women I've mentored see strength of relationship as so important."

This mentoring is one of the factors that has set Rowlands apart in the industry. She has been a vocal advocate of women in mortgage broking, and helps newcomers learn the ropes.

"I enjoy that I can show them the path, and although it's not easy, tell them that this is where it leads. I'm living proof that you can have it all, and it doesn't have to be to the detriment of families, partners or spouses," Rowlands says.

Moreover, the time she's spent mentoring aspirant brokers has paid not just emotional dividends, but business dividends as well.

"New minds in the industry bring about new solutions we may not have thought of, because we've always done things a certain way. I like to think I've been dynamic enough to lead from the front, but also learn from everyone around me. I think the challenging of ideas is great, and that's what's coming through."

**Name:** Susanne Massingham  
**Company:** Shire First Mortgages  
**Location:** Gymea, NSW

**Susanne Massingham's** goal isn't to get her clients a mortgage; it's to see them pay it off.

Massingham, who's been a mortgage broker since 1999, says her business focuses heavily on helping clients achieve financial wellbeing.

"Most of the loans we set up now, we set up in such a way as to teach the customer how to pay down their mortgage. We usually set a two or three-year goal and follow up with them. A lot of brokers would just ask if they want to pay it monthly or fortnightly, but we actually put a structure in place for them to pay it down," she says.

This structure includes some extremely hands-on aftercare, Massingham says.

"We set them a two-year goal, and after two years we reassess it and set a new goal. We bring them in to see if they're on track, and if they're not on track slap them over the wrists and keep them on track."

Massingham says this focus gets to the heart of what clients really want out of a broker.

"People are coming because they want a home, or a lifestyle or a future goal to create wealth or buy an investment property. They don't want a mortgage."

Massingham also believes that, as a woman, she's well-suited to providing this kind of client care.

"Traditionally women have been drawn to professions which are nurturing and caring, and I think a good mortgage broker has exactly those qualities."







**Name:** Bianca Long  
**Company:** Mortgage Choice  
**Location:** Glenwood, NSW

**At first blush**, the entertainment industry may not seem to have much in common with mortgage broking. But Bianca Long found the transition surprisingly natural when she left her job as a talent agent to enter the finance industry five years ago.

"I was dealing with actors, singers, dancers; that sort. I'd been there about seven years and sort of hit the point where there was no room for movement. Then someone suggested I look at mortgage broking."

Strangely, Long says the skills she gained as a talent agent transferred to dealing with clients looking for a home loan.

"It's the same sort of role. Being a talent agent, the whole focus is on clients looking for work, so all clients do now is come to me looking for a home loan instead," she says.

Though Long has now spent a few years in the industry, she says 2012 was the year she began to come into her own.

"The biggest change was really my attitude. I went from \$1.5m a month on a good month to \$4.5m a month."

This attitude change also saw Long win the Mortgage Choice CEO/GM Award and the Franchising Council of Australia's Excellence in Franchising Award for NSW and ACT. But Long says she most values the relationships she's built with her clients.

"I probably have more friendships that I've established through being a mortgage broker than I do externally," she says.

**Name:** Esther Porter  
**Company:** BROAD Finance  
**Location:** East Victoria Park, WA

**For Esther Porter**, being an entrepreneur was old hat by the time she came into the mortgage broking industry in 2000. Porter had already run her own business in the earth moving industry in Queensland and Sydney. Not only did the experience help her navigate the difficulties of self-employment, it helped her understand her WA clients.

"That actually gave me my entry into finance broking. I do plant and equipment finance along with mortgages. Not a lot of people were doing that in WA when I started."

Porter says her business handles an even number of mortgages and equipment and vehicle finance deals, and that WA has been a prime spot.

"It's not all mining, but obviously mining is substantial. But we do all types of industries. It's not just trucks and plant equipment. We'll do helicopters. We'll do anything from your 18-year-old's first car to an entire fleet," she says.

Porter says her knowledge of business' vehicle and equipment needs has helped her business grow with her clients' businesses.

"You need to have knowledge. You can't work in this area without knowledge. You need to know what you're doing both in understanding their business and its goals and understanding their needs."





**Name:** Effie Nicol  
**Company:** Yellow Brick Road  
**Location:** Earlwood, NSW

**From first entering** mortgage broking less than 12 months ago, Effie Nicol has managed to build from a zero base to a consistent \$2m a month in settlements. One of the keys to her quick success, Nicol says, is building referral relationships with like-minded female entrepreneurs.

“It’s a bit of a boys club out there, and this gave me the opportunity to run my own business and deal with other women in business as well. I deal with solicitors and accountants, and they’re all females. We set up referral arrangements where we know they’re looking after our clients and they know we’re looking after theirs,” she says.

Nicol is an ardent supporter of women in business, and says she’s coordinated events with other female entrepreneurs in her area.

“We did some shopping centre promos together. It’s all about doing a joint venture and helping each other out,” Nicol says.

Community engagement has also been key to her success, Nicol says. Part of this is supporting A Start in Life, a charity providing educational assistance to disadvantaged youth.

“Clients want to buy you flowers to say thank you. We ask them to support charity instead. That’s giving back to the community.”



**Name:** Bulelwa Freer  
**Company:** African Elegance  
**Location:** Newport Beach, NSW

**Bulelwa Freer** doesn’t see mortgage broking as a business of selling loans. She believes it’s better regarded as a platform for clients to create wealth.

“I realised after analysing the wealthiest people in the world, that no matter how people acquire their wealth, whether it be mining or in IT or something else, you’ll find that amongst their holdings the thing that underpins their wealth is somehow involved with property,” she says.

With this in mind, Freer says she tries to view every client interaction with the end goal of building financial prosperity.

“It’s always been my focus to set up a good structure for the client, so when they finish buying their home – even if they’re an owner-occupier – I’m always thinking about if the structure is good enough to help them build equity and eventually invest in property. I don’t ever see the loan as the single endgame.”

Freer is passionate about helping clients achieve financial security. So passionate, in fact, that she’s written a book on the subject, *Romancing Your Money*. Freer says her goal is to help her clients have a better relationship with their assets.

“I think we could do much better in terms of making people’s relationship with money easier.”





# YOUR CUSTOMER GET A HOME LOAN THAT'S RIGHT FOR THEIR TOMORROW

A CommBank home loan can change as your customer's lives change. We can help you to make customers feel that their loan is right for them now and into the future. Your customers can reduce or pause their repayments, top up or redraw to meet their needs.

Find out more:  
[commbroker.com.au](http://commbroker.com.au)

Call:  
**Your Relationship  
Manager**



**You Tube**

**Things to know:** Applications for finance are subject to credit approval. Full terms and conditions will be included in our Loan Offer. Fees and charges are payable. Commonwealth Bank of Australia ABN 48 123 123 124. Australian credit licence 234945.

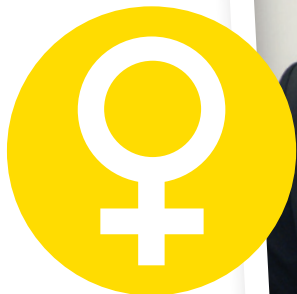


# HOMEOWNERS CAN EASILY GET A CASH-OUT REFINANCE FOR ALL THEIR BORROWING.

We have flexible features on our home loans  
to meet your needs.

Get a cash-out refinance on  
your home loan.





**Name:** Vivian Wang  
**Company:** V Money  
**Location:** Box Hill, VIC

**When Vivian Wang** came to Australia from China, it was because she wanted a career change. She had received a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering, but decided to take on her Masters in Finance when she arrived.

"In the town where I was a student, I was doing a part-time job working for a mortgage company in an administrative role. I was doing support work and processing deals. It helped to build a solid background of knowledge," Wang says.

Despite her choice to leave engineering for broking, Wang says she doesn't regret her original course of study.

"I think it was good background knowledge. The finance industry and the building industry are still related. But I think I have more passion for finance, and mortgage broking is a really great career for that."

Wang's background has also helped her connect with her client base, as well as bring on some valuable referral partners.

"I was recently introduced to a property development business, and they have a finance arm under their group. The person who was running the business decided to quit, and my aggregator introduced me because they were looking for someone bilingual and very experienced with investors," she says.

Wang, who speaks Mandarin, says this has been key in building a client base.

"My clients have become very diverse, and a lot of overseas investors play a very important role. They require someone who understands the cultural differences and can communicate in their own language."

**Name:** Rose De Rossi  
**Company:** Diversifi  
**Location:** North Perth, WA

**Diversification is the hot topic** among brokers at the moment, but Diversifi director Rose De Rossi has taken the concept to new heights.

"At the moment we obviously do what other brokers do with insurance and financial planning, but we also have started Diversifi Digital which can offer telecom services to clients who want to save money on their telephone or broadband bills," she says.

In addition to this, De Rossi says she's taken a course on becoming a buyers' agent, and is currently trying to navigate WA regulations to bring this service into her business as well.

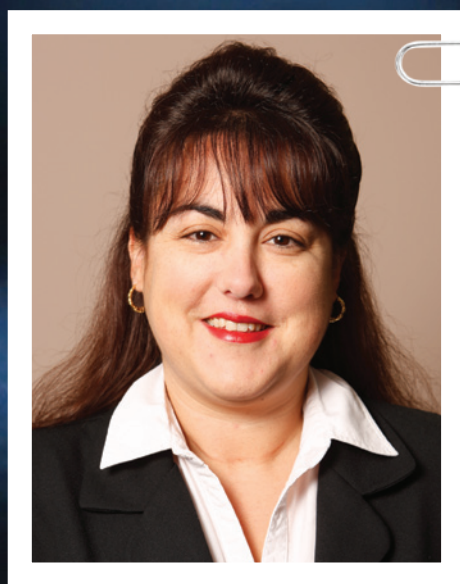
"It hasn't officially launched, but it's in the process of being done," De Rossi says.

De Rossi also has plans to one day delve even deeper into helping her clients manage their financial future.

"We're looking into the future where hopefully one day – using the same branding – we can help our clients save money on their power bills as well."

It's a broader view of diversification than many brokers take, and De Rossi sees it as a way to truly offer holistic financial solutions to her clients. And in addition to pioneering new arenas of financial services, De Rossi has stepped up to help lead other brokers as the MFAA's WA vice president. It's a move she says shows that women are increasingly willing to "be heard and seen" in the mortgage broking industry.

"A few years ago, I wouldn't have even considered going out of my comfort zone like that."







**Name:** Pei Chen  
**Company:** Aussie Home Loans  
**Location:** Rhodes, NSW

**When Pei Chen sits down with a client**, she's able to share a depth of experience that belies her short two-and-a-half years as a mortgage broker. That's because Chen came into the industry with extensive experience in finance and property.

Chen initially entered mortgage broking because of an interest in real estate.

"Before I joined Aussie I had been doing some property development myself. I thought to expand the business and incorporate all the knowledge and skills I had, so I thought mortgages were a good choice."

But property wasn't Chen's only relevant background. She's also a CPA, and has experience in financial planning.

"I cannot give customers advice, but I can give them the facts and solve all the problems they have. When the customer is sitting in front of me, I can look at what kind of structure is best suited for them," she says.

While Chen doesn't practise as an accountant, she says it adds to her skill set and gives her customers confidence in her abilities.

"I'm still a CPA and keep my accreditation, because mortgage broking is tied so closely to accounting. We still need to keep up with the financial side and the taxation side."

Chen finds that many of her clients are younger buyers, and that her background helps put first time buyers at ease with the mortgage process.

"Then they don't need to worry. At every step they can be reminded what needs to be done."

**Name:** Rebecca Hughes  
**Company:** Gr8 Numb3rs  
**Location:** Fullarton, SA

**Some brokers choose to diversify** outside of residential broking to take on commercial deals. For Rebecca Hughes, the process was just the opposite.

"My background was as a business relationship manager at ANZ, so I'd been doing that within banks for about 10 years. I actually went straight from school to working in a branch, and then I did commercial lending," she says.

As a commercial broker, Hughes says a market slowdown convinced her to look at diversifying into residential deals.

"I decided that with every business transaction there's a residential transaction as well, so I might as well do residential. I think it's quite natural because I think those two gel together."

As a solo operator, Hughes says her job can require an extreme level of attention to detail.

"You have to be quite focused on administration and being organised, and your time management needs to be very good," she says.

Regardless of the challenges, Hughes contends that her career in broking offers better opportunities than her previous career in banking.

"I can control where I want to take the business. Quite often in the mainstream finance world, I was limited as to where I could go."

**"[In broking] I can control where I want to take the business. Quite often in the mainstream finance world, I was limited as to where I could go"**

**- REBECCA HUGHES**



**Name:** Marie Belfiore  
**Company:** Mortgage Achievers  
**Location:** Melbourne, VIC

**Marie Belfiore has mentored** several people in her 20 years as a mortgage broker, but for Belfiore, mentorship started at home.

"I've mentored my daughter who works with me. She's moved away a few times over the years and gone off to work for larger organisations, but she's always come back."

Belfiore's daughter, Carmen, had a difficult time in school and left at 14. But when she did, it was under the condition that she come to work in the family business.

"Carmen runs my whole back office, and she's very efficient. She's now 31, and to think that she left school at 14 and to see her running it so well, probably managing 100 files and running our whole aftercare program, it's so wonderful," she says.

Belfiore's aftercare program is a point of pride for her business. She says she has a high-touch model which ensures she remains in constant contact with clients.

"We had some clients in the office yesterday who had been with another broker. I asked if they had thought about going back to this broker and they said they hadn't been contacted by him in three years. We touch our clients with emails every month, with a magazine every three months, with competitions we run for them as well as with an annual review."

And Belfiore says this kind of high-touch aftercare has yielded tangible benefits for her clients.

"All of our database is segmented, so when CBA recently increased their low-doc rate we ran a scan on our database and were able to ring all of our CBA low-doc customers. It's not about just setting up a loan. It's a lifetime of looking after the customer."

**Name:** Nancy Youssef  
**Company:** Classic Finance Group  
**Location:** Belfield, NSW

**By providing Cert IV and Diploma training** to new brokers entering the industry, it could seem that Nancy Youssef of Classic Finance Group is training up her own competition. As Youssef sees it, though, there's more than enough opportunity to go around.

"I don't see it as competition. We're an industry that still has huge opportunities, and working with new entrants is a great way to see new, fresh talent coming through," she says.

Not only has Youssef been active as a mortgage broker since 2003, she also mentors and provides training to people looking to enter mortgage broking. She says the role gives her enormous satisfaction, and, as a by-product, helps her clients as well.

"I guess where that helps my clients is having the training background. It's not just about transactions. It's about training my clients as well. And my clients benefit because I'm always keeping up to date with industry changes and new products," Youssef says.

Youssef has seen a number of women enter the industry, and says mortgage broking holds a special appeal for female entrants.

"Being a mortgage broker, there's no glass ceiling. The sky's the limit, and you can achieve as much as you'd like. You can work as long as you like and as hard as you want, and if people are happy with your service they're going to refer to you and your business is going to grow."





**Name:** Jo Attard  
**Company:** Jo Attard & Co Finance and Property Advisors  
**Location:** Moonee Ponds, VIC

**When Jo Attard** entered mortgage broking in 2001 after working for a bank, the thought of finding herself without a safety net was alarming. “It was really hard. When I worked for a bank I had marketing, I had support personnel. When I went out on my own there was nobody. If something went wrong with my computer I just had to fix it.”

Moreover, Attard stepped into what was – at the time – a male-dominated industry. “It was predominantly a man’s world out there. Every event I went to and every function I attended was male-focused,” she says.

But Attard found success, and she says this success came from taking a holistic view of her clients’ needs.

“They think they’re coming in for a loan, but they’re really getting a big financial overview. We don’t even look at product until the very, very end.”

This in-depth analysis means Attard has built up a huge amount of trust with her clients, she says.

Attard says she ultimately sees her role as that of a mortgage adviser, regardless of what job titles may be applied to the industry.

“I hate that word ‘broker’. We’re there to provide advice in those areas we can, and refer when we can’t,” Attard says.

**Name:** Leeanne Scott  
**Company:** Mortgage Choice  
**Location:** North Sydney, NSW

**When Mortgage Choice** finally launched its long-mooted financial planning venture last year, long-time broker Leeanne Scott jumped at the opportunity. Scott, a broker for the past 15 years, said it made sense to bring new revenue potential into her business. She was the first franchisee in the Mortgage Choice network to sign up for one of the financial planning businesses.

“My husband and I both work in the business, and I think we wanted more strength in more baskets. We’d been looking at financial planning for quite some time and had been referring our clients to a financial planner, so it seemed like a natural fit to make the transition,” she says.

Rather than try to gain expertise in financial planning, the move will see a financial planner come on as a partner in Scott’s business.

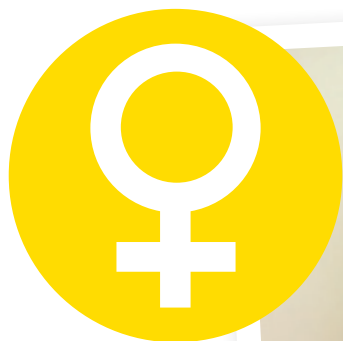
“You need to stick to your knitting. Stick to the core of what you’re really good at. People who want to go into financial planning can’t do it all because you can’t be all things to all people. Our decision was really about having the trust to refer clients to a trusted brand, and that we would know the person understood the ethos.”

This trust is something Scott tries to engender in all her customers, and she feels she’s in a unique position as a woman when communicating with clients.

“In many relationships, women actually make the decisions. If I can relate to them better then I’m more likely to get them to make a decision, because the woman is going to end up doing it anyway!”







**Name:** Novina Waddell  
**Company:** Club Financial Services  
**Location:** Southport, QLD

**Novina Waddell** already had banking experience when she moved to Queensland from New Zealand. She had worked as a lending consultant and was second in charge of her local branch. But the financial services job market was a difficult one to crack in Australia.

"When I moved over from New Zealand three years ago, I wanted to get back into banking but I found it very hard," she says.

When she met Ray Dib, principal of Club Financial Services in Southport, he took her on as a personal assistant and loan processor, but her job wasn't just administration.

"Basically, Ray would meet with the client initially, and then I would take over from there. I would move the file from the initial application through to settlement. I would do all the follow-ups and make sure everything was running smoothly and get the loan to settlement as soon as possible," Waddell says.

Her ability to build rapport with clients saw Waddell move into mortgage broking in her own right, receiving her Cert IV in 2011 and becoming an accredited broker in May of 2012.

Waddell says her business' focus on investors means she has to have a sophisticated understanding of their financial needs, and provide more than a merely transactional service.

"We structure their whole portfolio to make sure it's running smoothly, and to keep the accountant happy as well. We're always keeping our clients informed," she says.

**Name:** Lindy Kelly  
**Company:** Loan Market  
**Location:** Sunshine Coast

While **Lindy Kelly's** background may be in business consulting, she says mortgage broking was a natural switch.

Kelly became a broker in 2005 after moving to the Sunshine Coast, and said she was drawn to the diversity in mortgage broking after a friend recommended she give the career a look.

"When I first came to the Sunshine Coast, I was introduced to someone who gave me a role, but I just needed something more diverse. I liked having the diversity of the different scenarios and every bank having different loans and features," she says.

Her background in business and accounting consultation has also helped lead her to success, she says.

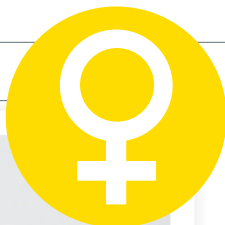
"I've been able to develop over time a very strong professional environment that is really a consultative process. There's the whole consultative process of giving clients the best possible resolution they can achieve. It's just now, as opposed to consulting in software and business processes, I'm consulting in lending and lending requirements."

Kelly says this in-depth consultation with a focus on looking after a client's financial wellbeing has also led to stickier customers.

"It's really important from our business' perspective to make sure people are borrowing in a manageable way. I've got lots of clients I've been seeing for six years."

"I liked having the diversity of the different scenarios and every bank having different loans and features"

— LINDY KELLY



**Name:** Pam Sullivan  
**Company:** All Finance Services  
**Location:** Wangara, WA

**Pam Sullivan believes** young brokers who want to ensure their viability ought to be looking at equipment finance. Sullivan has the experience to know. She's been an equipment finance broker since 1997, and was PLAN Australia's first broker in WA. Before that, she worked for vehicle and equipment lender Esanda. Though Sullivan runs a team of mortgage brokers, her specialty and her passion remains with helping businesses grow.

"I had clients at Esanda that I've now done loans for their children. My first client when I opened my business, I watched him grow from a single truck to a mega business which sold for millions of dollars a couple years ago," she says.

Sullivan also helps PLAN run its equipment finance referral program, which it launched in 2011, and was the first MFAA director for business and equipment finance, helping to establish the sector for the association. It's a sector she only foresees growing.

"If a young person is looking to go into something in broking now, they'd be better off looking to at least diversify into equipment finance. There's going to be a chronic shortage of brokers in the area, and there's just not enough young people to take up the slack," Sullivan says.

The sector can also pay attractive financial dividends to young brokers, she says.

"The cashflow is much quicker. We do a deal and we get paid. We can do a deal in a matter of days, and lenders pay as soon as it's settled."

**Name:** Rochelle Hall  
**Company:** Aussie Home Loans  
**Location:** Strathpine, QLD

**Rochelle Hall believes** so firmly in what she does, she had the Aussie logo tattooed on herself. That may be because mortgage broking provided Hall with a career and a passion when she was at a crossroads in life.

"I was an at-home mum prior to getting into mortgage broking. I was basically in a position where my marriage was over and I needed to get back into the workforce. I wanted to move into something where I was able to determine my income based on the work that I put in," she says.

Her passion for the job saw Hall find success right out of the gate, settling 14 loans in only her second month as a broker. Hall has also transferred this passion to others, recently completing a course to become an MFAA certified mentor. And though she only recently formalised her role as a mentor, Hall says she has always tried to guide new people entering the industry.

"When we have new people come into the industry, Aussie management sort of assigns them to me. I guide them through everything from how to build a successful business all the way to scenarios and credit policy."

She says her ultimate desire is to see industry standards continue to improve, which she believes will result in more people choosing the career path that has been so valuable for her.

"If I were to ask a group of Year 12 students what they want to do when they leave school, none of them would say they want to be a mortgage broker. I would really love to see that as something that changes," she says.

