

# Awards recognise the source of 3.3m jobs, innovation and growth

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<http://businessnetwork.smh.com.au/articles/2006/09/07/6116.html>

ON TUESDAY night the 2006 Telstra Victorian Business Awards were announced. The awards, now in their 14th year, recognise the achievements of businesses in four categories, depending on the number of employees.

This year there was a new prize for a business that had introduced an innovative product, service or process.

The winners of the three categories and the innovation award each receive a \$7000 development grant.

The winner of the fifth category, the Panasonic category, for businesses with 20 to 50 employees, receives products valued at up to \$10,000.

The business voted the Victorian Business of the Year receives an \$8000 research and development grant.

There were more than 600 applications for the 2006 Victorian awards. Once they were assessed, a shortlist was drawn up and the businesses on that list came under close scrutiny from the judges.

From there, the judges decide on the finalists for each of the four categories.

Businesses can apply for the awards or they can be nominated. One finalist, Aquaterro, was nominated anonymously. Aquaterro, started in 1993, supplies protective clothing and equipment to government and industry.

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It started as the equipment division of a major Tasmanian marine slipway business. Initially it supplied protective and wet-weather gear, designed for extreme cold, to slipway customers. It has grown over the years and now supplies protective equipment to many organisations including the army, navy, police, Qantas, and private security companies. What it does could be described as providing "life support solutions to those whose profession or activities take them into the most extreme environments, and highest threat scenarios on earth".

Its growth rate was such that the business moved from Tasmania to Victoria to allow it to better support its customers. Aquaterro managing director Graeme Bulte said he found the job of completing the awards application a learning experience. Even if Aquaterro had not been selected as a finalist, he said, filling in the forms was worthwhile because it made him realise how much planning had been behind

Aquaterro's success. "(It) meant the business was more evolved than I had first thought," he said.

The application form requires each entrant to provide a brief history of the business including the three key factors that have led to its success, and its vision for the future. Applicants are required to give information about how the business attracts and keeps customers; a description of the business environment for employees; details of planning and how performance is measured; what innovations have been brought to market, and key performance financial information.

The winners in each of the five categories were:

- Australian Government Micro Business Award The Coaching Institute.
- MYOB Business Award Clyne Foods.
- Panasonic Australia Business Award Safetech Pty Ltd.
- Hudson Business Award AWMA Pty Ltd.
- AMP Innovation Award Safetech.

The winner of the 2006 Telstra Victorian Business of the Year was Safetech. Each of the Victorian winners will compete against the other state and territory winners at the national titles this month.

The proof in the strength of Victoria's regional businesses was the fact that there was only one metropolitan winner, The Coaching Institute in Albert Park. The Coaching Institute specialises in life and business coaching. Clyne Foods is a dried fruit processing and packaging company based in Warracknabeal.

AWMA Pty Ltd, located in Cohuna, designs, manufactures and installs water management, distribution and storage systems for Australian water and waste industries. Safetech Pty Ltd, based in Moe, specialises in the design and manufacture of materials-handling equipment that improves worker safety and increases productivity.

Victorian Small Business Minister Fran Bailey told those at the ceremony that the awards recognised the important contribution of the small-business sector.

"More than 95 per cent of all businesses in Australia are small businesses," Ms Bailey said. "Small business creates more than 3.3 million jobs and is a vital source of innovation, exports and economic growth."