



## News release

12 May 2017

### **Winner announced for Valerie Baker Memorial Award 2017**

AIMS, Gold Seal and the Steadfast Group were delighted to announce the winner of the Valerie Baker Memorial Award at a special event hosted by Lloyd's on 11 May in Sydney attended by senior executives and leading lights from throughout the industry. The Valerie Baker Memorial Award recognises excellence in professional practice in the General Insurance Intermediary sector.

#### **The winner is Karen Hardy of ACME Insurance Brokers in Far North QLD.**

The other highly commended finalists were:

##### **Karyll Dean – PSC Connect**

Karyll has been an active part of the underwriting and broking fraternity for over 25 years, going from strength to strength during that time. Following 5 years she took out to go travelling, her decision was to return to the Insurance industry at a time she could have chosen just about any career. She has been part of PSC Connect since 2011, and has overseen its successful growth to the organisation it is today.

##### **John Farrell – Steadfast Taswide**

John has been with Steadfast Taswide for over 8 years and during that period has progressed from Account Executive, to State Sales Manager and now Shareholder and Director. In 2016, John was nominated for the NIBA Broker of the Year and was runner-up in the Victoria/Tasmania region.

##### **Maria Parry – Austcover**

Maria has been with Austcover for an astounding 29 years, rising from Receptionist to CEO in that time. She was the Warren Tickle Award winner in 1995 and in 2016 NIBA's Student of the Year. She is an accomplished manager and leader, determined and resilient and has an outstanding reputation throughout the industry.

Regional Queensland has its first winner with the judges being impressed by Karen's track record during her 21 years at the helm of Tully based ACME Insurance Brokers. Her contribution to the industry has been immense and Karen clearly demonstrates many of the values epitomised by Valerie Baker during her career and her deeply loyal client base are a testament to her hard work.

Her intention of what she wants to do with the Award was clear and altruistic. Martin McAvena, from the judging panel, summed up Karen's candidacy as follows:

"Karen represents what is best about our business. The mission of insurance in the broader community could not have been better articulated. Overlaid with her experience, good humour, political activism, and excellent product knowledge, she showed a clear view of what she wishes to achieve if she wins the award...She is thinking about the future in not only her community but Australia in general as a risk exposure".



Karen will receive a career enhancing opportunity to see first-hand how the London Market operates, including:

- Expenses-paid trip to London - business class air fares and accommodation
- An education experience tailored to the winner's special interests
- Career enhancing meetings and networking with key underwriters and brokers
- Thorough familiarisation of Lloyd's of London and meeting with senior managers

Sheila Baker, Managing Director Gold Seal said, "The nominees for this Award keep getting better and better. They all come with great career track records and have plenty of scope to grow, develop and add to our fantastic industry even further. Bring on 2018's applicants, we can't wait."

Award nominations were shortlisted and the finalists interviewed by the judging panel. The panel consisted of Chris Mackinnon, General Representative Lloyd's Australia, Jim Rudkin, Chairman of Steadfast Insurance Brokers Pty Ltd and Steadfast Underwriting Agencies Pty Ltd, representing the Steadfast Group, Martin McAvenna, representing the AIMS Group and Sheila Baker, Managing Director of Gold Seal.

"I continue to be thankful to the judges, who once again were generous with their time and industry knowledge as well as AIMS, Steadfast and Lloyd's for their support of this respected cross-industry award." Baker added.

The nominees were judged on criteria that centred around – ethics and values, business success, client relationships, teamwork, innovation, entrepreneurship, and industry contribution.

### **Editor's notes**

Gold Seal is the Australian insurance intermediary industry's largest business management, compliance, regulatory and people development organisation.

Gold Seal has developed its core business through knowledge of its clients' regulatory obligations and business operating practices, enabling it to offer on-the-ground support and training courses. Their learning programmes have become the benchmark for the industry and are used by those who want to receive excellent tuition and service as learners.

Gold Seal is staffed by insurance professionals, has been providing services to the insurance industry for 20 years and operates nationally.

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