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# Listening to women's voices

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The Australian Financial Review | 16 Oct 2007 | Page: 58 | Enterprise

Diana Williams, inducted into the Franchise Council of Australia's Hall of Fame last week, has been handed a new brief - to head a newly elected executive committee that will look into, highlight and tackle ideas and issues raised by women in the industry.

The committee hopes to encourage more capable and enthusiastic women like star recruit Jaclyn Connelly.

Ms Williams is the founder of the Fernwood Women's Health Club chain.

The 23-year-old Ms Connelly has had a rapid rise in franchising. She went halves with her parents a little more than a year ago to buy a Muffin Break franchise in Northland Shopping Centre in Preston, Victoria.

She had previously worked as a shift manager at the store for 21/2 years. Before that, she worked at Gloria Jean's Coffees for four years as a sales assistant.

Ms Connelly achieved a 28 per cent increase in sales at the store in her first year in charge by introducing about 18 new enthusiastic staff, providing training on such things as customer service, and joining with shopping centre management and other shop owners on cross-promotions. She also introduced new products to her store and changed the way the food was presented.

Last month she won the Victorian retail industry's Young Retailer of the Year award in the small and medium-sized business category.

In other news, NSW-based franchisor Pack & Send was named 2007 Franchisor of the Year at the FCA's national convention in Melbourne.

Andrew Robertson of Worldwide Online Printing, representing the Queensland and Northern Territory region, was named the Franchisee of the Year.

Karen Matthews, chief executive of Ella Bache, was Franchise Woman of the Year.

The panel chaired by Ms Williams is the second such committee of women in franchising. The first was established last year and chaired by Julia Camm.

Corina Vucic, general manager of Clark Rubber, was chosen to replace Ms Camm as chairwoman for

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2008. She and the other committee members will report to Ms Williams.

Other women on the 2008 executive committee include sponsor representative Eleanor Fala of Whirlwind Print; Queensland and Northern Territory representatives Kate Johnson and Faith Manning; NSW representatives Elisabeth Richie and Melissa Anderson; Victoria and Tasmania representative Kara Wise; South Australia representative Vicki Prout; Western Australia representatives Linda Steele and Tamra Seaton.

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