

Victorian Honour Roll of Women
2009



Inspirational women from all walks of life

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I thought I could do that.”*

Linda Beilharz



A BRAVE PERSONAL JOURNEY, AN INSPIRATION FOR ALL WOMEN

For 56 days Bendigo's Linda Beilharz, 45, walked and skied the windiest, coldest, driest place on earth to reach the South Pole on New Year's Eve 2004. She left the comfort of her family and friends to embark on the biggest adventure of her life, hauling 75 kilograms of food, fuel, camping, communications and navigation equipment some 1200 kilometres.

When Linda set out on her epic journey across the Antarctica ice-cap, she was setting out to prove to herself that she could do it. She never contemplated what it would mean to be the first Australian woman to reach the South Pole, nor did she realise the opportunities the public recognition would present, or the role model she would become for other women. "My journey challenges the stereotypes of women, what they are supposed to do, and what they actually do," Linda said. "Life for women is like that. We have more opportunities than we think, because what is perceived to be available and what actually is available are two different things."

As an avid bushwalker and outdoor enthusiast, it was a story of five British women's journey to the Pole that gave her the inspiration to try herself. "They made it sound do-able, rather than an impossible task. I thought I could do that." Many people didn't take Linda's plans seriously until she said her goodbyes and set off with great courage, drive and a dogged self belief, which pushed her across the vast white landscape. "You need to know your own limitations and what you are capable of. It was hard, but no more difficult than I expected." Although she faced danger and hardship the vastness and beauty of Antarctica's pristine wilderness left an indelible impression on her. Linda hopes her story will inspire women to set their own goals, have the courage to go out and face the challenges and achieve them. ❁