

# today's woman

**Melanie Bawden is living proof that the web makes the world a much smaller place.**

From her Mount Gambier home-office, this energetic mother of three small children is running an international business booking overseas medical travel for clients around the globe seeking surgical, cosmetic and dental solutions. Her company, Destiny Medi-Travel, is an off-shoot of another business specialising in destinations for weddings and honeymoons. And

since her internet site went 'live' late last year, Melanie has been planning itineraries for people as far away as the United Kingdom and America, as well as across Australia. A majority of them are looking to reverse the ageing process - or defy gravity - and choose to undergo their dramatic transformations in exotic places like Phuket.

"Breast implants are the most popular request, followed by tummy tucks," she explains. "And

# working wonders on the web

many people who go over to Thailand for that type of surgery will also get teeth whitening or some other treatment while they are there, simply because it is so economical."

Melanie's role as an agent is a far cry from her former careers in hairdressing, police force, and business management. But with medical travel said to be the tourism industry's 'next big thing' with the growth estimated to reach US \$60 billion in 2012, she's confident she's found her niche. "Never in a lifetime did I imagine doing something like this, but it's absolutely huge and is now a billion dollar industry which is just going to get bigger and bigger," she enthuses.

According to Melanie, a large proportion of its popularity relates to not only the anonymity and privacy factor, but the potential savings which stem from travelling abroad for surgery.

"For a breast enlargement in Australia, you'll pay around \$10,000, but for half that price, you'll not only receive breast



implants, but a seven-day holiday on an island resort," Melanie claims.

After undergoing cosmetic surgery herself in September, Melanie says she can speak from experience.

"It's far from dodgy...all the hospitals have international standards, and all of the surgeons have worked for at least one year in a Western country," she explains. "In addition, 99% of the technology found in hospitals in New York, London or Sydney is available in Thailand Hospitals."