



Amanda Brewster  
(centre) is a maternal  
figure to these four  
women she employs.

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WE ALL NEED A MUM, EVEN IF SHE ISN'T ALWAYS THE WOMAN WHO GAVE BIRTH TO US. **DILVIN YASA** MEETS SOME UNCONVENTIONAL MOTHER FIGURES

# THE OTHER MOTHER

PHOTOGRAPHY MICK BRUZZESE STYLING IRENE TSOLAKAS

## THE ADULT-ENTERTAINMENT PROMOTER AMANDA BREWSTER

**“Y**ou can run into a lot of disrespectful people in this industry,” says Rebecca Duncan, 29 (pictured, second from the right), of the leers and lecherous behaviour that can make her job as a promotions model and dancer a little dicey. “But Amanda always puts our safety and happiness first and won’t book us into jobs where we can run into danger.” She’s talking about her employer Amanda Brewster, 48 (pictured in the red dress), owner and founder of Sex Bomb Promotions, and her second “mum”.

The two met when Rebecca relocated from New Zealand eight years ago and joined the agency, seeking the work simply because “it’s really good money”. (She emphasises, however, that she doesn’t strip to complete nudity like some other girls in the agency.) And what began as a simple employee/employer relationship quickly evolved into something more.

Amanda was hesitant to bond with the younger woman at first, having been burnt before. “When the agency was smaller, I probably got too involved in the girls’ private lives,” Amanda admits, explaining that some used their connection with her to their advantage. But Rebecca, who is still close to her own mother back home, was different. From the outset, Amanda found her utterly disarming and says that she’ll be on her side no matter what, even if the younger woman moves on.

The feeling’s mutual. “People may think someone like Amanda would be all about making money but Amanda cares deeply for all her girls,” says Rebecca. “She’s understanding, kind, professional...”

And when Rebecca was recently rocked by a death in the family, Amanda was the first person she called to talk to. “She took me out and we talked and talked until the early hours of the morning,” says Rebecca. →

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT Caroline wears T-shirt, \$139, by Morrison, 08 9335 7200. Heels, \$149.95, by Wittner, 1300 137 463. Kelly wears Sweater, \$129, and Shorts, \$219, both by Country Road, 1800 801 911. Heels, \$199.95, by Wittner, 1300 137 463. Amanda wears Dress, \$129, by Trencery, 1800 801 911. Heels, \$159.95, by Wittner, 1300 137 463. Rebecca wears Heels, \$139.95, by Siren, 03 9419 4188. Melanie wears Tank, \$49.95, and Heels, \$149.95, both by Country Road, 1800 801 911. Heels, \$149.95, by Wittner, 1300 137 463.



"I DON'T KNOW THAT THE ABSENCE OF MY OWN MOTHER HAS PUSHED ME TO FORM A CLOSER BOND WITH MARLI, BUT I CERTAINLY DON'T CALL HER 'MUM'."

LEFT TO RIGHT Jo wears Dress, \$199, by Country Road, 1800 801 911. Heels, \$149.95, by Wittner, 1300 137 463. Marlie wears Shirt, \$89.95, by Country Road, 1800 801 911. Belt, \$49.95, by Witchery, 1800 640 249. Flats, \$129.95, by Wittner, 1300 137 463.

**THE MOTHER-IN-LAW**

**MARLI WALLACE**

**M**onsters-in-law. They're jealous and they want to take over your family. But for 71-year-old retiree Marli Wallace and her daughter-in-law, PR agency owner and mother-of-three Jo Wallace, 38, that stereotype is one more thing for them to laugh about together. Since they met 12 years ago, when Jo became involved with Marli's son John, they've been best friends, messaging each other throughout the day and conducting super-long conversations via email in the evenings.

For Jo, who has no contact with her own mother, the relationship could be seen as bittersweet, full of comparisons and reflection. But she doesn't consider Marli a replacement. "I don't know that the absence of my own mother has pushed me to form a closer bond with Marli, but I certainly don't call her 'Mum'," says Jo. "She's a wonderful friend, ally and grandmother to the kids. We're lucky."

Marli credits mutually "gutsy" personalities and a reluctance to overstep her mark. "I've always been mindful not to interfere," says the woman known to her family as "Marli Viduka" because of her nifty goalie skills when she plays soccer with grandson Jack, 11. "People can inadvertently do it when their natural instincts take over so you've really got to be careful." So far, so good.



LEFT TO RIGHT Barbara Clarke, Marnee May and Jessica Brown.

Barbara wears **Shirt**, \$89.95, by Country Road, 1800 801 911. Marnee wears **Skirt**, \$129, by Country Road, 1800 801 911. Jessica wears **Top**, \$39.95, by Trenerly, 1800 801 911.

**THE OLDER FRIEND**

**BARBARA CLARKE AND JESSICA BROWN**

Acherished mother figure can do more than simply enhance one woman's life. She can also inspire a chain reaction of friendship. Barbara Clarke, 57, and Jessica Brown, 40, became best friends when Jessica taught Barbara's son the flute more than 15 years ago. And thanks to the example set by the older woman, Jessica is now a close friend and confidante to Marnee May, the 21-year-old daughter of Jessica's former fiancée. Their unorthodox friendships are so successful that Jessica was inspired to develop a charity. She started the Sister2Sister mentoring program in 2003, which matches disadvantaged Australian girls with older

women who offer them guidance and stability. "My relationship with Barbara was a wonderful example of women supporting each other, so it's no wonder I set up a foundation [devoted to] doing just that," says Jessica.

The support each woman gives the other is invaluable. Recently, Jessica nursed Barbara through the demise of her 34-year marriage. "Jessica would stay over every Wednesday night and treat me to a pedicure and spa to make me feel better," says Barbara. In turn, Barbara was a rock when Jessica's younger brother, Eden, was murdered at a party last year. "I went with Jess to the venue where it happened as she tried to make sense of it. I held her

hand," says Barbara. Jessica, meanwhile, is teaching Marnee how to drive, "just like Barbara did for me when I was the same age". Marnee also works at Jessica's foundation and the pair have published a cookbook together, *Cooked with Love: Recipes My Mother Taught Me*, featuring contributions from more than 50 women, including Barbara. "Although life experience is the best teacher, having a mentor to help steer you in the right direction can be invaluable," explains Jessica. "I believe everyone should have at least one mentor in their life to guide and support them through life's hurdles."

See [lifechangingexperiences.org](http://lifechangingexperiences.org) for more about the Sister2Sister program. →

STYLING BY IRENE ISIDORAS. PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICK BRUZZESE. ALL ITEMS NOT CREDITED ARE TIA GANT'S OWN. HAIR BY DIANE DUSTING. MAKE-UP BY OLGA MALAFIOURIS.





### THE ORPHANAGE DIRECTOR

#### TARA WINKLER

Sometimes, Tara Winkler must wonder how she ended up where she is. Speaking from the Cambodian countryside, where the 25-year-old is "mum" to 46 orphans, she explains that "everyone's got a point of no return. And when I experienced mine, complacency was not an option."

She's referring to the day four years ago when she returned to a Cambodian orphanage where she'd previously volunteered, only to discover unimaginable horror. "The children were screaming and crying for me to help them," remembers Tara, who was raised in Sydney and once worked in the film industry. "They'd all lost staggering amounts of weight and were hanging onto me like they'd never let me go." What Tara learned next changed her future: the director of the orphanage had stopped feeding the children, forcing them to eat mice and rats to stay alive. Worse, the children were being beaten and some of the girls raped. "I resolved to save those kids," she says. "Whatever it took."

Within weeks, she had set up her own orphanage, Cambodian Children's Trust (CCT). Suddenly, at the age of 21, she was a "mum".

She now has a team to help her with the day-to-day tasks and is considered a true parent to these kids.

"She takes care of us just like a real mother," says 10-year-old Siunay. "When I see her face, I am happy in my heart," adds Nite, 12. "And when she speaks Khmer not clearly, I like to laugh!"

Tara, who plays guitar to her tiny charges as they fall asleep at night and also takes them to school each day, will have plenty of time to hone those foreign language skills. She says she has no plans to leave her "kids" behind and return to Australia. "My life here with the children is not something I'm ever going to be able to walk away from."

For more about the Cambodian Children's Trust, or to make a donation, visit [cambodianchildrenstrust.org](http://cambodianchildrenstrust.org). **m**