

# PROFILING

## AN INDUSTRY LUMINARY



Karen Meiring de Gonzalez is an inspirational industry leader and an APAN member. She is the Founder, Owner, and Director of Skin Correctives, a dedicated skin clinic in Shellharbour in the Illawarra region. With over 35 years of experience across four continents, Karen is an internationally qualified skin therapist with a deep commitment to her field. The expertise of her and her team has been recognised with over 40 local and national awards. We are delighted to interview Karen as she shares her industry journey and her philosophy and values that have contributed to her success.

### APJ Q1: KAREN, HOW DID YOUR JOURNEY START IN BEAUTY THERAPY AND WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO PURSUE THIS PROFESSION?

My journey into Beauty Therapy began in South Africa, driven by my own experiences with low self-esteem and a desire to help others feel confident. Initially, I wanted to study Psychology, but I was concerned about the feasibility of sitting in one place all day and the potential emotional toll over time. With these concerns the commitment to completing a degree seemed daunting, especially if I ended up discovering it wasn't the right fit for me. To find direction, I completed a career guidance program at the local university that included personality profiling, interests, and aptitude tests. Surprisingly, Beauty Therapy emerged as one of the top suggestions.

### APJ Q2: MOVING TO AUSTRALIA HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND WERE THERE ANY CHALLENGES THAT YOU NEEDED TO OVERCOME?

I've always embraced diversity and avoided traditional ways of thinking. My experience working on cruise ships, where I interacted with passengers, crew and spa staff from around the world significantly helped me adapt to my new environment. However, relocating my family during the Global Financial Crisis posed a significant challenge. Our funds were extremely limited due to the poor exchange rate and high cost of living. One of the most challenging aspects was understanding the value of the Australian dollar and learning local consumer behaviour. Despite these hurdles, the warmth and welcoming nature of the Australian people were incredibly comforting.

Joining the Illawarra Women In Business local networking group was a game-changer. I built deep connections with many inspiring businesswomen who have become great friends and clients. Additionally, I made numerous meaningful industry connections that continue to shape me into the businesswoman I am today.

### APJ Q3: HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE SKIN CORRECTIVES' BRAND IDENTITY AND WHAT ARE THE VALUES THAT YOUR BUSINESS STANDS FOR?

Our philosophy revolves around 'doing the right thing' and 'doing things right'. This means we are deeply committed to ethical practices and meticulous attention to detail in everything we do. This principle is reflected in our unwavering commitment to delivering visible results through world-class service, treatments, and technologies. We prioritise our clients' best interests by providing safe and proven treatments, steering clear of fleeting trends.

Our brand identity is built on the pillars of high-quality products and services paired with high care. Our team values are the foundation of this identity:

- **WORKING AS ONE** (Communication and Respect): Ensuring every team member's voice is heard and valued.
- **DOING THINGS RIGHT** (Integrity and Care): Acting with integrity and genuine care for our clients and each other.
- **GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND** (Commitment and Consistency): Our commitment to excellence drives us to deliver the best outcomes.
- **SHINING BRIGHT** (Education and Excellence): Continuous education and personal development maintain our high standards.

These values, established by the team and reviewed regularly, form the foundation of Skin Correctives.

#### **APJ Q4: SHARE WITH US AN EXCITING STORY OF A CLIENT EXPERIENCE THAT INSPIRED YOU AND YOUR TEAM?**

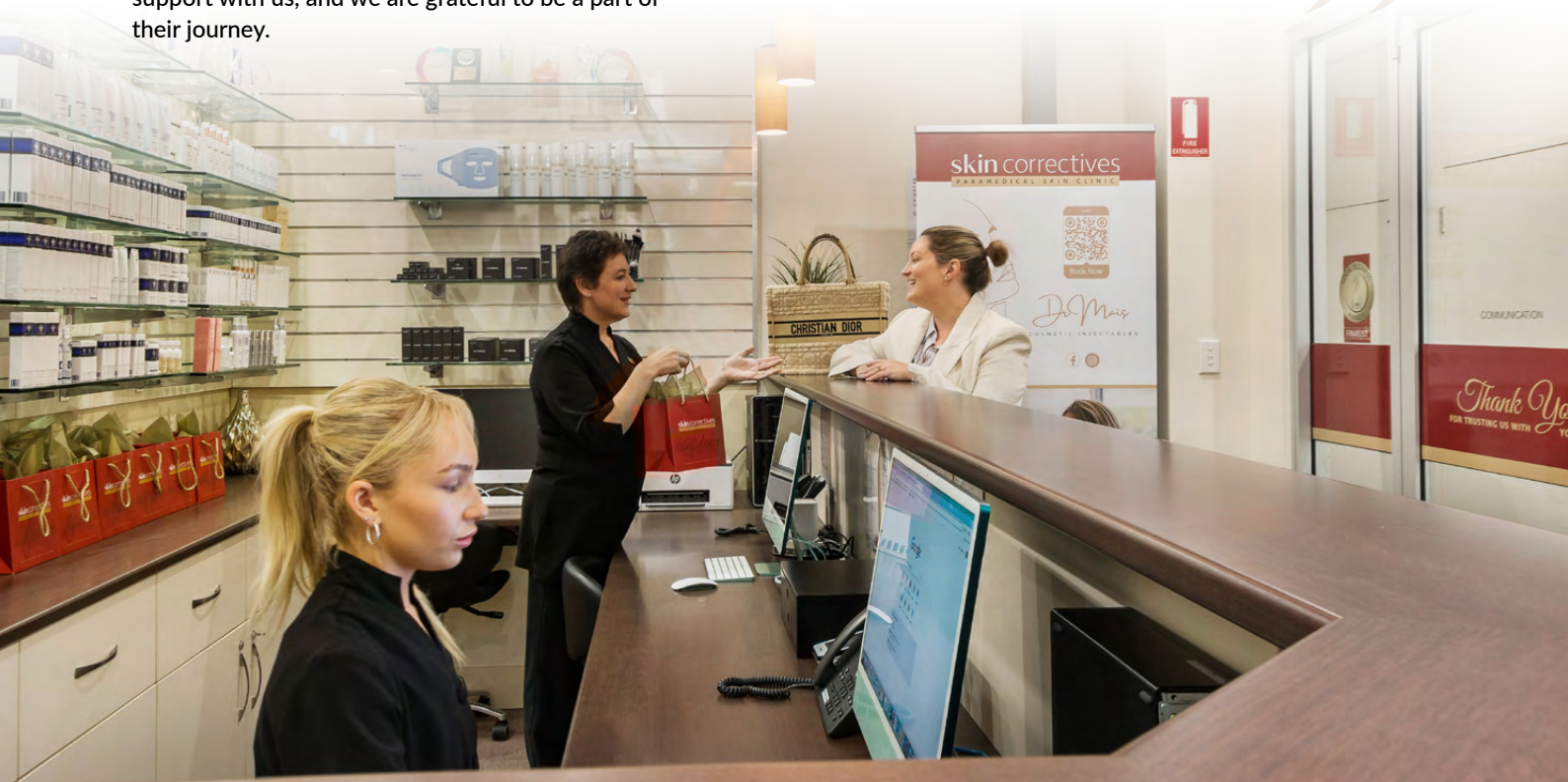
Having been in the skin industry for over 35 years, I have countless stories of how we've changed people's lives. One profoundly impactful experience involves supporting clients through their gender transition journeys. Our role often begins with hair removal and extends to skin refining and evening out skin tone, ensuring they look and feel their best at each stage of their transitioning journey. These clients have shared that they feel particularly comfortable with us due to our personalised service and the safe, welcoming environment we create. It is incredibly moving to be among the first to know and be part of their changes, such as calling them by their preferred name and providing a space where they can speak openly about their experiences and progress. One of the most touching aspects is hearing their stories, especially when they share how their families may have turned their backs on them or cut them off because of their decisions. For some, it was a choice between taking their own life or transitioning, prioritising living authentically over maintaining family relationships. Despite these hardships, they find solace and support with us, and we are grateful to be a part of their journey.

#### **APJ Q5: IN RECENT TIMES WHAT ARE SOME OF THE IMPORTANT INDUSTRY CHANGES THAT YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED AND WHAT CHANGES ARE YOU IMPLEMENTING IN YOUR BUSINESS TO HELP YOU OVERCOME THEM?**

Navigating the evolving landscape of the skin industry requires staying informed and proactive. At Skin Correctives, I believe it is essential to support and collaborate closely with associations and industry bodies. This approach ensures that we are aware of current trends, potential changes, and best practices. It's easy to ignore the bigger picture and assume others will handle industry matters, but now more than ever, it's crucial for us to stand together and be a collective voice to the government. This unity will help protect our industry, support business owners, provide employment opportunities, and, most importantly, ensure the safety of our clients.

A major change post-COVID is the heightened need for deeper connections and personalised care. Clients now seek more meaningful interactions, which aligns perfectly with our business model focused on spending quality time with our clients and fully customising their journeys. This approach is crucial, especially considering the increased stress levels

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and health issues some people face both emotionally and physically which all needs to be taken into consideration when planning a client's skin treatment journey.

A proactive measure we've undertaken is becoming the first clinic in Australia to be certified as a SafeSkin™ Clinic by ABIC. This certification highlights our commitment to safe practices, exceptional service, skilled and qualified staff, and being an ethical and compliant business. Furthermore, my recently appointed role as an ABIC Councillor underscores my dedication to industry standards and best practices.

Additionally, APAN's COVID Skin Manifestations and Solutions document provided us with an evidence-based approach to understanding potential skin reactions post COVID as well as the emerging issue of Long-Haul COVID and evidence-based solutions in supporting our clients. This document was developed over a three-month in-depth review of numerous studies outlining over 100 skin manifestations and treatment solutions. The contributing studies were presented by three leading academics - Professor Laurence Walsh, AO, Professor Terry Everitt and Dr Greg Maguire.

In recent times we have also been faced with the new AHPRA and TGA regulatory restrictions relating advertising of cosmetic injectable services, which we are required to comply with. We must be mindful that similar restrictions could also be imposed in the future to skin therapies. This situation underscores the importance to operate at high standards and work collaboratively with our associations and industry bodies.

#### **APJ Q5: HOW MANY AWARDS HAS YOUR BUSINESS BEING ACKNOWLEDGED AND WHAT IMPACT DID THEY HAVE ON YOUR BUSINESS?**


We have been fortunate to receive over 40 local and national awards, which have endorsed us as a trusted skin clinic and recognised us as an industry leader. When I began my journey in Australia 14 years ago, my goal was to contribute meaningfully to our community and industry. Starting a career without any connections, family, or friends to vouch for my ethics and skills was challenging. Winning awards was the only way I knew to gain a stamp of approval and build credibility.

These awards have allowed us to be recognised, helping to give us a voice and opportunities to make a positive impact. Being acknowledged as an award-winning skin clinic has opened many doors for us, both locally and nationally. These accolades have helped shape our culture, setting high standards for us to strive towards. My team is genuinely proud of our achievements, and it motivates us to keep delivering our best.

#### **APJ Q7: YOU RECENTLY ATTENDED THE THRIVING AESTHETIC SUMMIT, WHAT DID YOU APPRECIATED AND ENJOY THE MOST FROM THIS EVENT AND WHAT TAKE-HOME MESSAGES TO YOU GAIN?**

Attending this event was a genuinely enriching experience, offering invaluable insights and networking opportunities. What I appreciated most was connecting with industry leaders and experts, exchanging knowledge, and gaining fresh perspectives on emerging trends and innovations in the skin industry. The summit's atmosphere of collaboration and learning was truly inspiring.

Some key take-home messages revolved around the importance of adaptability, resilience, and continuous learning in today's ever-evolving skin industry landscape. It reinforced the significance of staying ahead of the curve, embracing change, and prioritising our clients' well-being above all else. One of the panel discussions focused on the power of collaboration and referrals to achieve the best outcomes for our clients, highlighting the strength of working together.

Building meaningful connections with other industry professionals has always served me well. Knowing that I can reach out for advice, support, or simply another point of view is invaluable. Often, it's the conversations between lectures and demonstrations, or during a break or over a glass of wine, that spark the deepest connections and the most ongoing collaborations. These interactions remind me of the community we have within our industry, and the support and inspiration we can draw from each other. 

Skin Correctives is located at  
Unit 8B, 75 Cygnet Avenue, Shellharbour City Centre, NSW