

# WESTERN AUSTRALIAN *Business* News

## Frivolity finds a place at work

□ Noel Dyson

DID you hear the one about the comedian who went into business? It is no joke. Some people are finding that laughter can be a serious and lucrative business.

Spawned by the teachings of India's Dr Madan Kataria, also known as the Giggling Guru, laughter clubs are springing up around Perth.

Dr Kataria found his patients healed faster if they were in a good frame of mind and that laugh-

ter truly was the best medicine.

Laughter stimulates the production of endorphin, a hormone that mimics the effect of morphine, thereby bringing a sense of well-being.

Laughter club patron Bronwen Williams has her own spin on the benefits of laughter and created a business around it. Laughter Works Australia, which has been going for just one year, won the WA Microbusiness of the Year Award in the emerging business category.

Ms Williams said laughter helped people get on better in the workplace and proved to be a useful team building tool.

"If people are laughing together they work together better," she said.

"People are more productive when they are happy."

Ms Williams said she talked to corporate groups about the need to laugh, why we stop laughing, how to create more laughter and health and laughter and tried to let them know that play was good.

"There are a lot of things you can do in the workplace to get more laughter," she said.

"It helps to bring people together. It makes them less judgemental and more open to ideas."

Ms Williams also teaches juggling in her corporate classes, something she says is good for making people use both sides of their brain.

The left side of the brain is predominantly used for mathematical and reasoning type tasks while the right hand side of the brain plays a role in the creative side.

There is vast amount of scientific literature espousing the benefits of

keeping both sides of the brain stimulated.

Ms Williams said people often produced more rounded results if they used both sides of the brain at work.

"It also brings people's masculine and feminine sides together," she said.

"Laughter also helps to stimulate both sides of the brain."

Perth comedian Jon Doust has been working the corporate circuit in a motivational and team building role for several years.

Mr Doust takes a slightly different approach in bringing laughter to the workplace but agrees that it is a valuable workplace tool.

"They start with the laugh outside. My approach is to find the laugh inside and bring it out," he said. "I spend time talking to people and find out what causes stress in their office and then play with those things."

Mr Doust said he also picked up a lot of work as a master of ceremonies for corporate functions - something that stemmed from his beginnings as a stand-up comedian.

In addition, he teaches 'how to laugh your way out of a paper bag' at the University of WA.

Mr Doust said he believed that laughter in the workplace was a popular fad.

"I think what they [consultants such as Ms Williams] are doing is wonderful. Their approach has its place and it is booming for them at the moment," he said.

"A lot of people at UWA are those who have done all the other courses and mine is one that they haven't done yet."



**NO JOKE:** Bronwen Williams believes laughter and juggling can be valuable corporate tools. Photo: DONNA SWAN

