

## Jessica Watson

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### *Youngest round-the-world solo sailor*

Jessica Watson was only 16 when she sailed into Sydney Harbour on 15 May 2010, having achieved her dream of sailing around the world solo, non-stop and unassisted. Now she is also a best-selling author, documentary maker, the subject of a feature film and an inspiring and in-demand speaker with an incredible story to share.

Jessica began preparing for her extraordinary journey when she was just 12: she told her family that she was going to sail around the world and unlike most teenagers, was absolutely determined to make it happen. Jessica sought advice, began researching solo circumnavigations, vessels and took every opportunity to sail when she could. Her years of preparation had begun.

When Jessica was 15, fellow adventurer Don McIntyre donated a 34-foot S&S yacht, providing a huge boost to the achievement of her goal. She then door knocked seeking sponsors and support so she could re-fit the boat to the proper specifications to sail around the world.

Jessica painted the boat pink and named her Ella's Pink Lady, after her major sponsor, Ella Bache. She also oversaw the entire re-fit over four intensive months of preparation in an outback country shed.

Finally, after years of preparation, both Jessica and the boat were ready. On the first night of a sea trial sailing from the Sunshine Coast to Sydney, Ella's Pink Lady collided with a 63,000-tonne bulk carrier and was dis-masted in the collision. Fortunately, she was able to retain control and return the boat to shore under motor.

The media pounced and politicians sought to introduce legislation to ban her from continuing on her journey. The media were relentless, with Jessica and her team the subject of some stinging criticism. However, Jessica maintained her composure, learnt from the incident and then set about repairing the damage. She was now more determined than ever to achieve her goal.

On 18 October 2009, she finally departed Sydney to achieve her dream of sailing solo, non-stop and unassisted around the world. In one horrific storm in the Atlantic Ocean the boat was smashed by hurricane force winds and 50-foot plus waves and was knocked down four times. On the third occasion, the rogue wave (believed to be 90 foot or more) picked up Ella's Pink Lady and smashed her into the next wave, turning her upside down, 10 feet underwater, with Jessica hanging on for grim life.



After six months at sea, Jessica re-entered Australian waters again, making front-page news across the country. Only four weeks from home, she then suffered two weeks of turbulent weather battling lightning storms and massive waves in the Southern Ocean near Tasmania.

As she rounded Tasmania, the whole country eagerly awaited her arrival into Sydney. On 15 May 2010, after 210 days at sea and 24,285 nautical miles, having not seen another person for seven months and having viewed land in the distance on only three occasions, Jessica was greeted by 1,600 support boats and over 100,000 cheering fans around Sydney Harbour as she crossed the finish line. A national television audience in the millions watched history unfold, with every major network in Australia broadcasting the final four hours of her voyage.

After docking at the Sydney Opera House, she walked up the pink welcome carpet, met the Prime Minister on stage and then delivered a simple but inspirational speech where she replied to the Prime Minister's summary of her as our newest Australian hero with:

'I would like to disagree with our Prime Minister. I do not consider myself a hero. I am just an ordinary person, who had a dream and worked hard at it. By sailing solo, non stop and unassisted around the world, I have proved that anything really is possible.'

In achieving her extraordinary feat, Jessica had captured the hearts and respect of not only her fellow Australians, but also millions of supporters around the globe as they cheered on the 16-year-old who had overcome great adversity to achieve what many had thought impossible.

During her long voyage Jessica's writings had captivated people. She became a storyteller and her website received 5 million hits when she sailed into Sydney. Within three months of her return, Jessica wrote a book called True Spirit, which told the story of her epic voyage. It went straight to number one in Australia and has been published in 11 countries - another extraordinary achievement from the girl who had suffered badly from dyslexia only years earlier. Jessica also filmed a documentary, 210 Days, which was narrated by Sir Richard Branson.

In January 2011 Jessica Watson was named Young Australian of the Year. In December that year, she skippered the youngest crew ever to compete in the 66-year history of the iconic Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race.

In 2012, Jessica was named in the Australia Day Honours list and received an OAM (Order of Australia Medal) for services to sailing and being a role model for youth.

In her early 20s Jessica co-founded a start-up company and became a Youth Ambassador for The United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP). She undertook an MBA and began to write her second book, a novel for young adults. Additionally, the producers of Oscar-nominated movie Lion commenced working on a film adaption of Jessica's story.

Jessica Watson is a truly unique and inspiring young woman and a skilled and natural speaker. She is proof that we all have the power to live our dreams - no matter how small or big they are, or no matter what obstacles life may throw in our way.

## Client Testimonials

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Jessica Watson and Macquarie Life share the same passion for challenging the status quo and we've been delighted to be supporting her for the last two years. Jessica's achievement of becoming the youngest person ever to sail solo, non-stop and unassisted around the world is an amazing feat and one that really shone a spotlight on what can be achieved with determination, passion and energy. As we have taken Jessica around Australia to share her story with our clients, what really connected with the audience was her self belief and positivity. In all her presentations, it was also her humility that really endeared her to the audience and she also demonstrates a maturity beyond her years in her ability to respond to questions and interact with people of all ages. Jessica is one of Australia's most inspiring and impressive youth leaders and is proof for us all that with the passion to succeed, people, like businesses, can achieve great things.

***Macquarie Life***



The theme of our conference was Inspire to Lead. Jessica certainly fulfills that theme in what she has achieved in her life to date. Her story of determination and following her goals and dreams was truly motivating for us all. The confidence she displayed combined with her charming personality was fully visible in her most entertaining presentation. Jessica explained that whilst she was the figurehead of the effort, she would not have been able to achieve success without planning and backing by a professional support team. Everyone present was left feeling that if you believe in yourself and your support team nothing is impossible. Our company also values the worth of individual effort backed by a good support structure. We wish to thank Jessica for a wonderful presentation and wish her all the best in the future.

***Electrolux***

## Client Testimonials

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Jessica's field trip to Laos with the World Food Programme (WFP) highlighted exactly why she was chosen by the UN to be a Youth Ambassador for WFP. Jessica gave presentations to undernourished children in schools in villages in the remote south of Laos and also in Vientiane, at Government level. Her ability to adapt and communicate to such a vastly different audience, is a credit to her. Despite the language barriers, Jessica managed to overcome the communication barriers and made a huge impression with the people of Laos.

*United Nations*



At just 21, she has a maturity way beyond her years, whilst also having the ability to adapt to any audience, whether it be schools, corporate or simply engaging people on a personal basis. It's an absolute privilege to have Jessica as our MTA ambassador and would be more than happy in endorsing her for any corporate engagement.

*MTA*

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