

## CELEBRATING GIVING

# Matchmakers find partners for profitable liaisons

Business and charity benefit equally from a well-planned marriage of convenience

by Ellen Read

Bras, Father Christmas and Robin Hood may be an unlikely combination, but one Auckland charity is thrilled at the hook-up.

As Christmas looms, Dress For Success — which provides free suits to low-income women returning to the workforce — has received a donation of lingerie from Bendon.

The gift came with the help of corporate charity matchmaker the Robin Hood Foundation.

The foundation, set up last year, matches companies with a social conscience and not-for-profit organisations needing help.

It's an important area for companies. A Nielsen survey last year showing almost three-quarters of New Zealanders would change brands if a company was involved in a cause they supported.

Robin Hood has 600 not-for-profit groups on its books and manages relationships with more than 40 companies. Donations run into several

million dollars a year.

Chief executive Jude Mannion said with more than 60,000 registered charities in New Zealand, the scope was endless.

"Businesses might not have the time or resources to decide which charity to partner with, so they can come to us and we manage the process for them and find a group which makes sense for them," she said.

As many companies close their books for the financial year, she is urging them to make use of tax con-

cessions which allow them to write off up to 5 per cent of their bottom line if it is donated to charity.

The Inland Revenue department says a public company may claim a deduction of up to 5 per cent against its net income for money given to charity each year.

"I'm just horrified businesses don't know they can do this. It's wrong," Mannion said.

She said companies generally wanted to demonstrate to their staff, stakeholders and consumers that

they "give a damn and stand for something."

A bank, for example, might stand for security or peace of mind, so would be interested in non-profit organisations with the same goals.

Westpac is one bank which has joined the Robin Hood family. Regulatory affairs head Jo Sihamu said under the bank's new corporate social responsibility umbrella it planned to develop a strong focus on community involvement.

Westpac wanted to do more than just give money and this was where the Robin Hood Foundation came in — helping the bank articulate its

community values and goals and matching it up with suitable charities, she said.

"It fits with exactly what we were wanting to do — which was come up with some key values around community involvement and decide who we were going to partner with and what difference we were going to make," she said.

The idea of Robin Hood was that rather than just writing out a cheque, the corporate could get involved and share knowledge and staff volunteering. Westpac also planned to link its sponsorship with the non-for-profits, Sihamu said.