



**Lynette Lewis,  
Chief Executive,  
AusHealth International**

**<http://www.ahi.com.au>**

AusHealth International is a New South Wales government-owned health care consultancy company. It aims to be recognised as a dynamic health services provider and a leader in the delivery of innovative health care solutions. AusHealth has provided technical assistance and management expertise to facilities in Dubai and Qatar.

**Lynette Lewis says being a woman is no impediment whatsoever to doing business: 'I am treated with a great deal of respect and consideration.'**

'I've noticed an enormous change in the five or so years since I've been doing business in the UAE.

'My information anecdotally is that there are now more females than males graduating from universities and that there are more females holding government positions than in, say, Australia. There appears to be a women's movement gathering momentum, with women being highly educated and seeking senior positions in both the government and non-government sectors.

'There's also been a great change in the dynamics of UAE's relationship with the West since 9/11. It's opened the doors for Australians. The locals see us as relaxed and prepared to be flexible and go with the flow.

'Temperament is vital. You have to be prepared to cope with last-minute change. If you can't be flexible or tolerant, you should forget it.

'You see people all the time going there for the money alone. You have to go for the experience and to enjoy the culture or you may be disappointed.'

Lynette Lewis handpicks the staff she'll send to the UAE and briefs them on local customs, traditions and business practices.

'If the locals like you, they *really* like you. They will want your help in all sorts of things that might not have anything to do with the job you're doing. It is important to understand they have evolved from a trading background where traders dealt in a variety of goods, and they still adopt the basic business philosophy of having a go at anything – so we have to be able to go with that, to an extent.

'It is important to make sure that you and your client are on the same page because there can be misunderstandings about what you are doing together.

'The client is often reluctant to put things in writing so you have to be prepared to send a document stating what is being done. You need to keep this short, say two pages, because they don't like reading large reports.

'Presentation is also very important. Something like a PowerPoint presentation is effective in getting the message across.

'On important issues it is worthwhile having some things translated into Arabic.

'The client usually won't tell you that they don't understand something.

'People must not underestimate who knows who in the UAE or Qatar.

'At night at the *majlis* (an informal meeting held at a family home) people will be talking about who they've been dealing with and exchanging views. These are the behind-the-scenes relationships we know nothing about. They are very important relationships and if possible you should use them.'