

# Natural-born leaders on national stage

By GREG ELLIS

WOLLONGONG will be showcased nationally by four city businesswomen chosen by Women and Leadership Australia to speak at its second bi-annual Australian Regional Women Leaders' Convention in Melbourne.

Important and Imperative Business Solutions owner and Illawarra Business Chamber director Wendy Fogarty, University of Wollongong senior strategic management project manager Michelle Kellaway, Best Catch Foundation managing director Melissa Abu-Gazelah and Junior Chamber International Illawarra president and Illawarra Business Chamber director Jessica Saad will address more than 400 women from throughout Australia committed to embracing strong leadership in regional areas.

The March convention is a two-day event dedicated to supporting female leaders, their businesses and their communities.

It deals with leadership development, networking and empowerment and combines self-analysis, interactive group exercises, practical advice and presentations.

The hour-long session involving the four Wollongong women will start with a visual presentation on the city and region organised by Tourism Wollongong's Vera Cvetkoski.

The panel members will each speak for 10 minutes before



**Top billing:** Illawarra businesswomen Wendy Fogarty, Michelle Kellaway, Jessica Saad and Melissa Abu-Gazelah will speak at a women's leaders' convention in Melbourne. Picture: KEN ROBERTSON

being involved in a Q&A session with the 400 delegates where they will talk about the opportunities being created by women for women in the region through initiatives such as Illawarra Women in Business.

The invitation to speak came when Mrs Fogarty inquired about opportunities for Illawarra women to speak at a workshop Women on Boards was considering holding in Wollongong early next year.

"They said we have a better

idea," she said. "They said they hold the convention every two years and would like to showcase a regional area and would like to choose the Illawarra."

The invitation followed Mrs Fogarty, Ms Abu-Gazelah and Mrs Kellaway winning scholarships to attend the second Diversity on Boards Conference in Sydney last month. The city's presence could have been even more significant had Ms Saad been able to attend.

However, she had previously

been invited to Geneva to represent Australia at a United Nations and Junior Chamber International summit on climate change.

Ms Saad's invitation to speak at the Melbourne conference came after Mrs Fogarty sent the organisers clippings about her prominent role in the Illawarra community.

In Melbourne she will talk about the significant role UOW and JCI plays creating opportunities for youth.