

Healthy living the key to universal triumph



Out from the crowd: Rachael Finch of Townsville after being announced the winner of Miss Universe Australia at the Sydney Hilton last night

Picture: Adam

EL Finch stumbled on a s about the challenges of government, but that p the Townsville model ming the Miss Universe i last night. 3-year-old model and TV r beat a field of 30 in a ceremony at Sydney's hotel last night. eggy brunette won over dges despite getting ied during the Q&A of the contest.

ernment, the aspiring author of a self-help book said "a variety of things" before settling on healthy living.

Finch is an ambassador for the Australian Heart Foundation.

"I just did the best I could," she said after the ceremony. "People just need to be aware of their finances. They need to learn, listen and adapt to their budget and lifestyle."

As well as more than \$25,000 in prizes, the new Miss Universe Australia will earn the right to compete in the Miss Universe

Laura Dundovic, last year's winner, who crowned Finch, dismissed suggestions that beauty pageants were outdated.

"Jennifer Hawkins has shown it's not only a year but a career," Dundovic said, referring to 2004 winner Hawkins, who went on to become Miss Universe and the face of department store Myer.

Last night's competition comprised three categories: swimwear, evening wear and a question-and-answer session with the panel of seven judges.

"They'll be looking for someone who's warm and intelligent," Miss Universe Australia national director Deborah Miller said before the announcement.

"They'll be looking for someone whom the Australian public can relate to."

An attractive figure is also a key part of getting to the Bahamas. "A girl who looks fit and healthy will be marked higher," Ms Miller said.

Contestants answered questions from the seven-member

they would say about Austi an international audience.

The runner-up was Via cheerleader Jade Russell year more than 7000 w registered, double last year. Ms Miller said the stans entrants showed the conte not just about physical be

"We're seeing a lot mor educated and professional women this year, including from legal and medical p sions, who are hoping to es the success of previous win