

## **'The Future is NOW'**

Social Entrepreneurs, change-makers and forward thinkers will gather together for this year Ethical Enterprise Hybrid Conference in December to build the capacity of their social enterprises, ethical businesses and purpose-driven organisations to create the impact and change needed for a more sustainable future.

Conference founder and fair trade advocate Susanna Bevilacqua emphasises how critical it is for leaders, experts and organisations to come together now to build collaborative relationships, learn new skills and share powerful insights, ideas and lessons.

Bevilacqua says the struggle of the last 18 months has put considerable strain on communities, businesses and individuals and there has never been more need for the local solutions and services social enterprises provide. The collective impact of social enterprises is felt by millions of Australians every day, and like the communities they serve, many have found the last year very challenging.

We've all learnt important lessons from the innovative pivots and fast-paced adaptations. It's time to come together, share our learnings and collaborate on initiatives and projects relating to environmental sustainability and social justice.

Everything has changed, and we now have the opportunity to create a more equitable and progressive future, Bevilacqua says.

Melbourne is the home of the emerging ethical enterprise movement for at least a decade. This includes over 3,500 social enterprises sustaining both profit and social outcomes across Victoria that employ over 60,000 people and are worth \$5.2 billion to the Australian economy.

Bevilacqua says the role of social enterprises has become even more critical in areas like environmental sustainability, where governments are slow to act. Social enterprises are well placed to lead the way as they tend to be small, flexible and deeply connected to the people, land and systems they work within.

The conference will also award Australia's Ethical Enterprises and host the Early Ethical Entrepreneur Pitch Competition. The Award showcases impact-driven enterprises and recognises their achievements in creating communities and connections that empower people and fuel change. The Early Pitch competition seeks to accelerate the best ethical start-up ideas and support social entrepreneurs with the skills, resources and networks needed to turn their concept into a reality.

Previous winners of the Ethical Enterprise Award include Victoria's own Pollinate Group focused on equipping women to lead themselves and their communities out of poverty through entrepreneurship, employment and education and Project Rokit focused on creating spaces where all young people have access to respect, acceptance, creative expression and real leadership skills

The Ethical Enterprise Conference will be held at Melbourne University on Monday the 6th of December and RMIT on Tuesday the 7th of December 2021, with the announcement of the winners of the Ethical Entrepreneur Pitch Competition and Ethical Enterprise Award on the evening of the 19th.

Early Bird Tickets available until October 31st

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