



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **ALL HANDS ON DECK: AUSTRALIAN SMEs TO SELF-MENTOR**

**With service sector activity falling to its lowest level in almost two years, Australian SMEs will join together to uniquely self-mentor one another in innovation, internationalisation, digitisation and growth.**

In light of the service sector's decline and the recent focus on supporting start-ups, including the federal government's \$23m Incubator Support program, Australian Services Roundtable (ASR) will provide support to those small-to-medium enterprises who have managed to supersede start-up challenges but have been left afloat to navigate the big, wide multinational ocean.

"As the peak representative body of the service industry, we found SMEs are facing similar challenges, and those without support are finding it very difficult and isolating to grow their business," said Alina Bain, CEO of Australian Services Roundtable.

"This program acts as a buoy for SMEs to come together to workshop solutions, foster partnerships and broaden their focus from operational to strategic, and from domestic to international."

**Rising stars in the SME world - including Franklin Phillips, Full Profile, EverEdge, Dearin & Associates and Geotron - will offer one another the benefit of their experience, skills and contacts.**

Operating with no physical office base, Franklin Phillips CEO Vivianne Arnold founded her business to be digitally innovative and operate globally from the outset, a skill she believes will help her fellow SMEs.

"Australian small businesses have not realised the potential and simplicity of taking firms global. Using this program, I look forward to continuing to learn and to inspire my peers to look beyond the border."

Similarly Emma Weston's business, Full Profile, was founded with an international focus, using technology to solve real-world problems in the agricultural sector.

"The SME world actually has a real sense of community and generosity when it comes to sharing and fostering ideas, however there has been no place to do so."

"SMEs cannot operate in a silo - as Australia climbs the ladder of innovation, this is an opportunity to connect with different groups of thinking and frame the national conversation", said Yumi Millan, Managing Director of EverEdge, designed to navigate the complex global intellectual property market.

As a former management consultant in the Middle East and founder of Dearin & Associates, Cynthia Dearin believes this program will provide much-needed support and advocacy.

“Simply put, SMEs understand the challenges that other SMEs face. We need to address challenges head-on and reduce the high rate of failure that can be, at times, synonymous with SMEs.”

One year after launching structural and civil engineering consulting firm Geotron, Peter Geoghegan plans to investigate his options to grow his business internationally – his first stop, Asia.

“Whether it’s in law or agriculture or engineering like myself, we need to share the lessons we’ve learnt as we build our businesses, because at the end of the day, we are all services, we are all one body.”

For further information on ASR’s SME Mentoring Program, please go to <http://australianservicesroundtable.com.au/events/>

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#### **Background: Australian Services Roundtable (ASR)**

With 15 years of experience in enabling Australian service firms to grow nationally and internationally, ASR is the only dedicated whole-of-services industry organisation.

Services employ 85% of Australians, represent 78% of industry value-add, yet comprise only 20% of Australia’s total exports. Our purpose is to address gaps in understanding and realise opportunities for the benefit of our members, professional service industries, SMEs, and micro-multinationals.

The SME Mentoring Program will, once a month, workshop a range of contemporary issues affecting small businesses including:

- The global state of play: Australia, US and Brexit
- Speed dating through Free Trade Agreements
- A software update on E-commerce
- Masterclass on social media
- Looking over the horizon: Where to start with your Internationalisation
- How to turn cross border contracts into cash
- Smarketing: how to align sales and marketing
- Utilising disruption and innovation