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## MEDIA RELEASE

### School for Social Entrepreneurs & BT launches inaugural program for budding entrepreneurs Introducing 17 social change-makers

This week the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) and BT Financial Group (BTFG) kicked off the inaugural *Social Entrepreneur Accelerator Program*, to support Australia's next generation of change-making social good entrepreneurs.

The *Social Entrepreneur Accelerator Program* has recruited 17 entrepreneurs who are committed to delivering positive, enduring social change in the community via their respective social enterprises.

Speaking at the program launch this week, BTFG's General Manager, Private Wealth, and program sponsor, Jane Watts said the initiative is closely aligned to BT's fundamental purpose of helping prepare people for their best possible financial future.

"The SSE & BT Social Entrepreneur *Accelerator Program* will help a cohort of talented social entrepreneurs to acquire the requisite expertise and experience to turbo-charge their social ventures" Ms Watts said.

Also speaking about the program, SSE CEO, Michele Goldman spoke to the unique value the program offers, not only in terms of helping to translate positive change ideas into sustainable commercial ventures, but also by creating a community of like-minded entrepreneurs, committed to making a difference.

"Our hand-selected entrepreneurs all have passion in spades, but where the program can really make a difference is to turn these ideas into a commercial reality, underpinned by a common goal to create social change" Ms Goldman said.

From entrepreneurs who support employment opportunities for youth, migrants and asylum seekers, improving digital connectivity in disadvantaged areas, to providing wholesome meals to disadvantaged groups, the 2016 cohort is set to drive social change across Australia.

One of the 17 students, Vanessa Ronan-Pearce, is the founder of *WOW Project* – a venture aimed at connecting school students with aged care and nursing care residents, said this intergenerational connectivity will have wider impacts on the community.

“It’s well known that there is a disconnect between generations separated by age, but we identified a strong value in younger generations understanding, appreciating and learning from the life experiences of older members in the community. Storytelling was particularly common centuries ago and was linked to those members considered the wisest member in the community. This is something we’d like to recreate in the modern day as a means to connect today’s generations,” Ms Ronan-Pearce said.

Another student of the 2016 Program, Rob Caslick, and co-founder of *Two Good*, was inspired to deliver wholesome meals designed by chefs like Neil Perry and Kylie Kwong to Domestic Violence Refuges.

“*Two Good* works by selling the same jar of lunch to people in the city, each jar you buy we give another jar to a refuge. But what we’re most proud of is that we employ women from the refuges we serve to make the lunches” Mr Caslick said.

Speaking at the program launch, Ms Watts said “This is the third year SSE and BT have partnered to collaborate on supporting talented, social entrepreneurs, following the success of the Social Entrepreneur *Incubator* programs in 2014 and 2015.”

The SSE & BT Social Entrepreneur *Accelerator* program will run from August to October 2016 and students will spend three months understanding how to prepare their existing social venture for longevity and a sustainable, social impact.

The program offers access to professional experts on social impact planning, sales pitching, law and communications. It involves access to first class tools and resources, a network of like-minded social entrepreneurs and mentoring.

In the three years to 2016, SSE and BT have supported 40 businesses with professional support, development and training.

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#### **Available for Interview**

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**About SSE Australia - [www.sse.org.au](http://www.sse.org.au)**

The School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) Australia ([www.sse.org.au](http://www.sse.org.au)) inspires and equips change-makers and social entrepreneurs to establish, scale and sustain social ventures that foster social and economic participation, and create a lasting impact within disadvantaged communities. The SSE Australia vision is to create a community powering positive change-makers for a more inclusive and sustainable world. Unlike a traditional school, SSE Australia is non-academic and based on a 'learning by doing' approach. Students gain practical business and life skills that they can apply directly to their ventures.

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