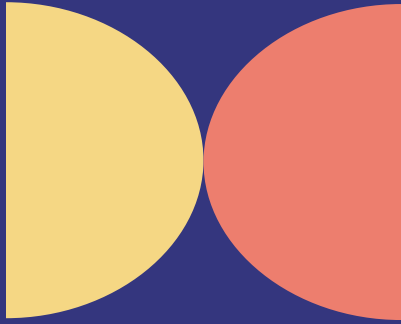


# MBEN.

Multicultural Business & Entrepreneur Network



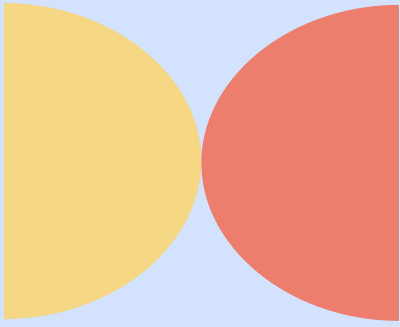
## CONNECTING BEYOND BORDERS

The Future of Global Leadership



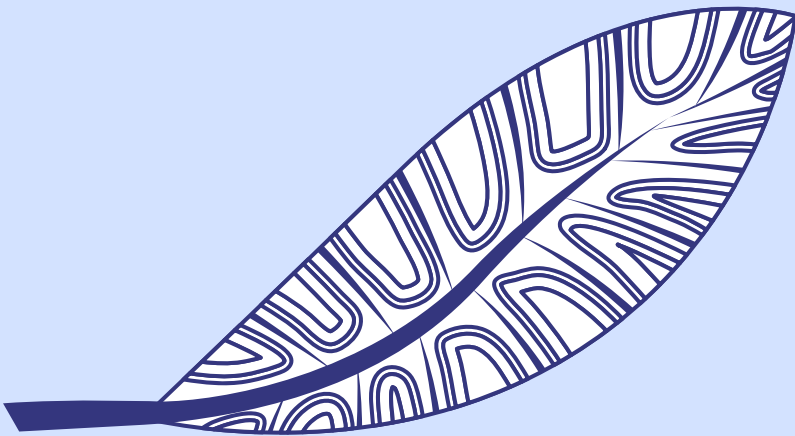
# 2025 MBEN CONFERENCE REPORT

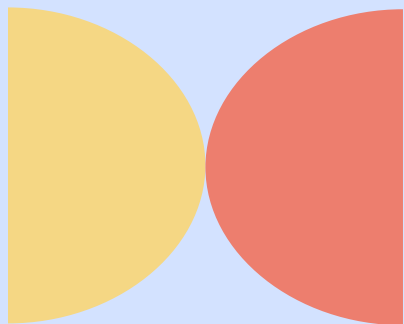




# Acknowledgement of Country

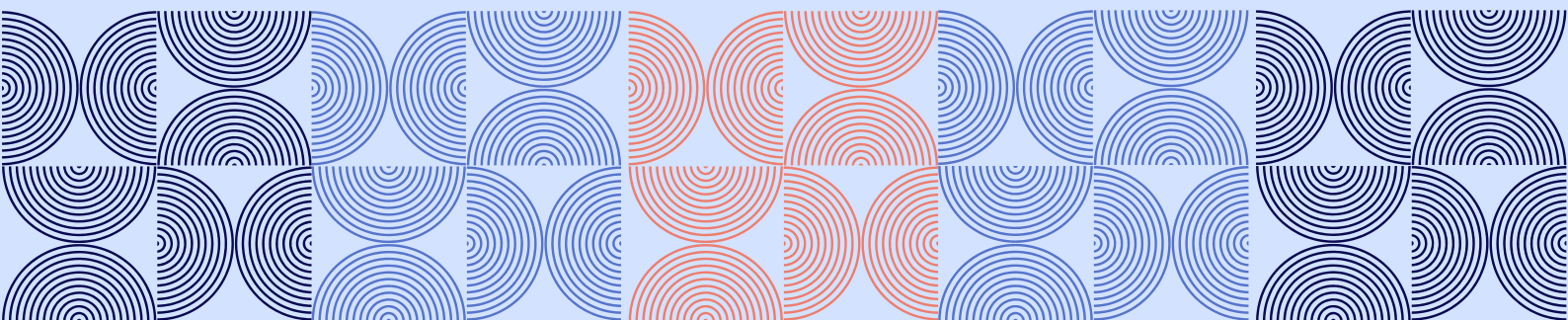
We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Kurna people, the traditional custodians whose ancestral lands we live, work, and raise future generations. We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of the Kurna people to Country.





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## About MBEN.

MBEN is a non-profit company committed to the advancement of diversity and inclusion within Australia's business community. MBEN empowers multicultural entrepreneurs and businesses by delivering multicultural networking events, mentorship programs, and business development opportunities that foster collaboration, provide support, and facilitate strategic, meaningful relationships. By creating dedicated spaces where members can learn from others with similar experiences and backgrounds, MBEN helps multicultural entrepreneurs thrive while contributing to the growth and competitiveness of the Australian economy.



“We have leaders, entrepreneurs, innovators and change makers that bring with them stories and experiences from across the world. Together, we represent what the future of leadership looks like”.

– Ethel Osazuwa, Chairperson, MBEN

# Executive Summary

On 14<sup>th</sup> October 2025, the Multicultural Business & Entrepreneur Conference brought together delegates from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and industries to share knowledge, build connections, mentor one another, and help shape a more inclusive and resilient business future in South Australia. The half-day program combined keynote addresses, panel discussions, interactive sessions and practical workshops that showcased lived experience, entrepreneurial insight and actionable strategies for leading in a globalised, fast-changing world.

MBEN's role as a not-for-profit platform dedicated to supporting multicultural business growth anchored the event. The conference amplified MBEN's mission to connect multicultural entrepreneurs with the mainstream business community and to provide practical supports, mentorship, and resource-matching that enable sustainable growth.

## Key outcomes:

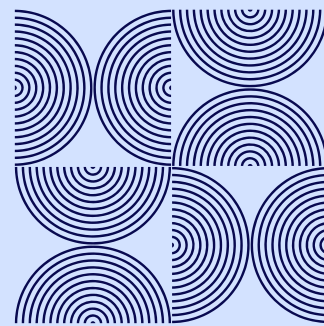
- Stronger networks: Delegates left with new business contacts, mentor relationships and collaboration leads that increase market access and capability.
- Practical learning: Breakout sessions delivered concrete takeaways on scaling, market entry and cross-cultural leadership that delegates can implement immediately.
- Narrative shift: Stories and panels reinforced the role of multicultural entrepreneurs as strategic global connectors, valued for cultural and linguistic agility, resilience and cross-border perspective.
- Collective themes identified: Courage to take risks; importance of meaningful relationships and trust; cultural and linguistic agility as competitive advantage; and migrants' vital contributions to the economy.

## Recommendations:

1. Scale mentorship programs: Formalise mentor-mentee follow-up pathways from the conference to convert connections into measurable business outcomes.
2. Expand resources: Deliver workshops and business tools to remove barriers to growth.
3. Create a year-round collaboration calendar: Leverage MBEN events to maintain momentum between annual conference.

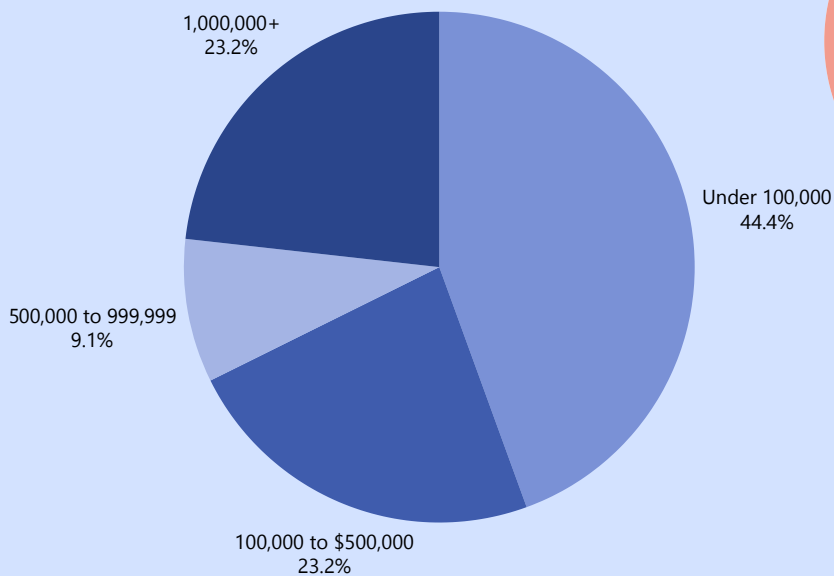
Now more than ever, it is important to support events that build bridges to forge strong relationships, and offer platforms for knowledge-sharing and collaboration.

# Business Breakdown

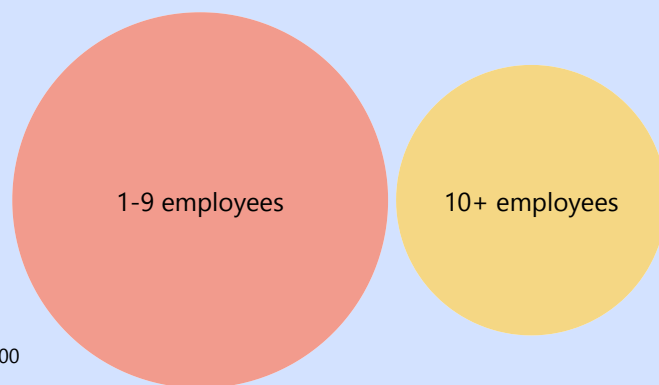


A look at the industries, revenue, and business sizes of the 2025 MBEN Conference delegates.

## REVENUE



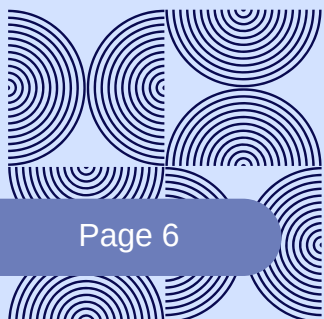
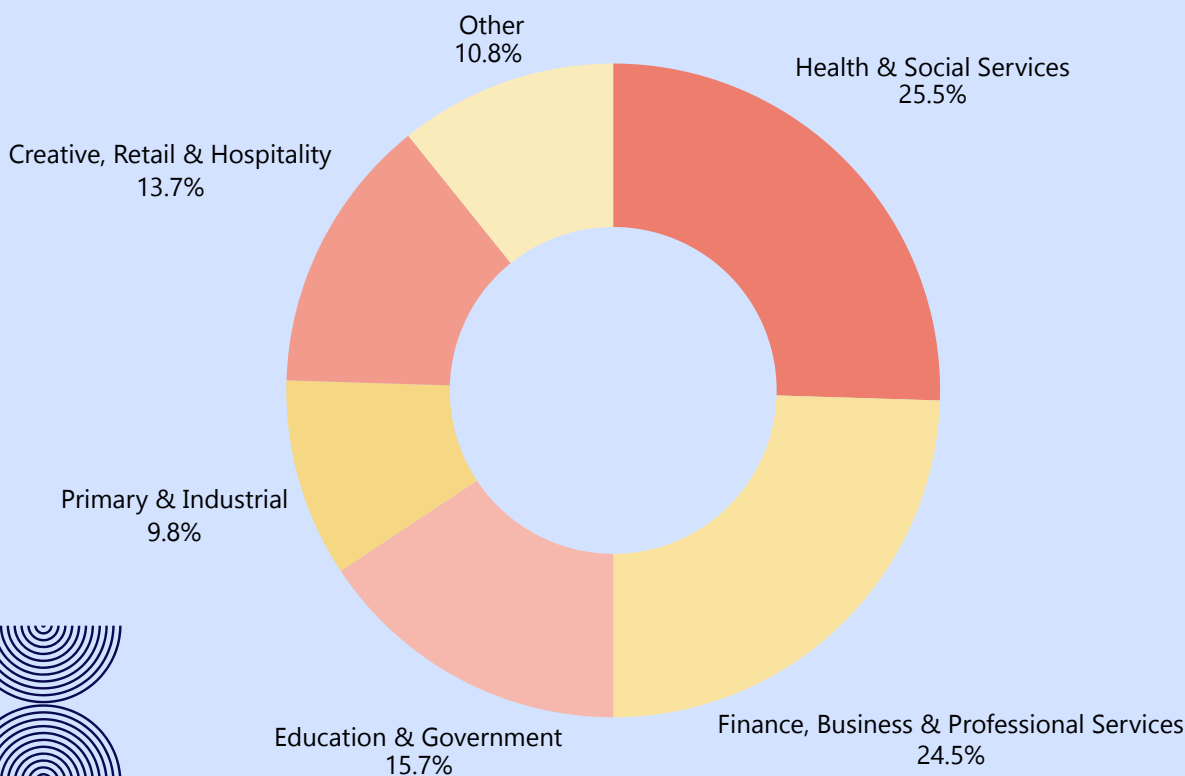
## SIZE

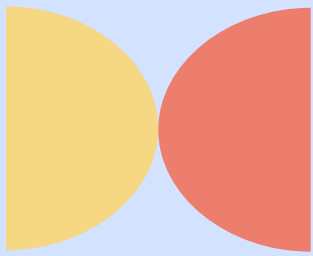


**66%** Smaller Sized Businesses

**34%** Medium to Large Sized Businesses

## INDUSTRY





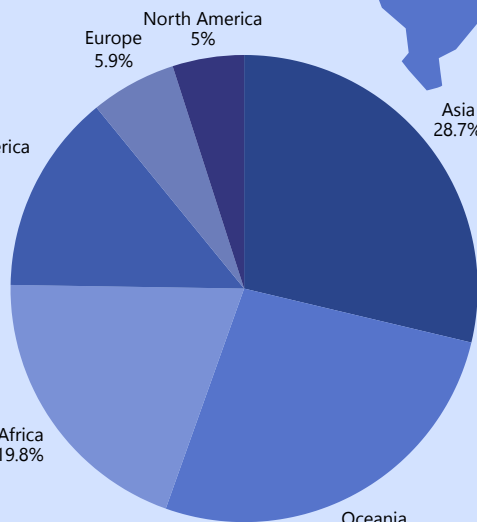
# DELEGATES

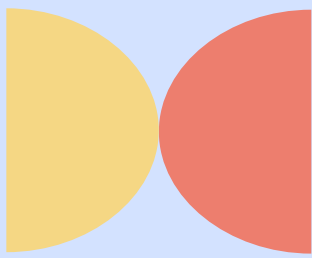
## Global Business Leaders

The 2025 MBEN conference welcomed delegates from 30 countries, representing every major world region.

### From 30 Countries

- Afghanistan
- Algeria
- Argentina
- Australia
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chile
- Colombia
- D R Congo
- Germany
- Greece
- India
- Iran
- Kenya
- Lebanon
- Liberia
- Mexico
- Nepal
- Netherlands
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Peru
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Venezuela
- Zimbabwe



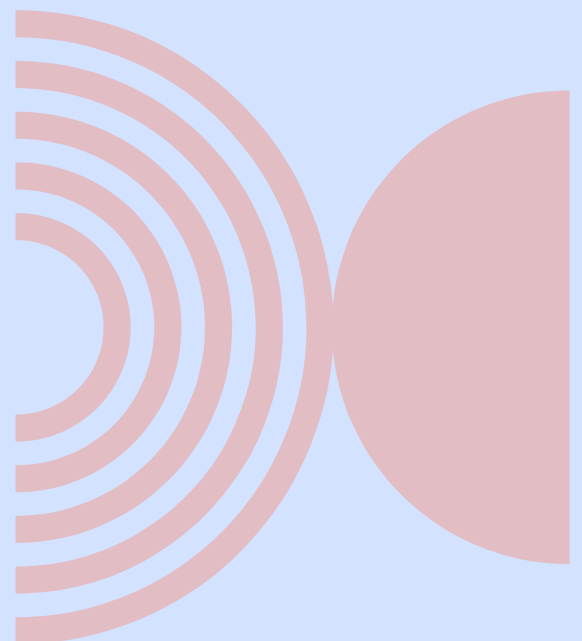


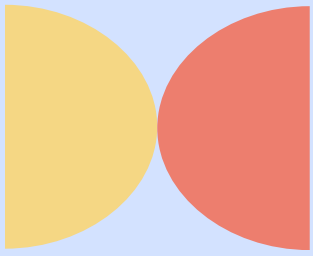
# Highlights



"Whether you've already started a business, you are hoping to start one, or you don't know where to start – you are in the right place."

– Sandra Moyo,  
Director, Zuva Allied Health





# AGENDA



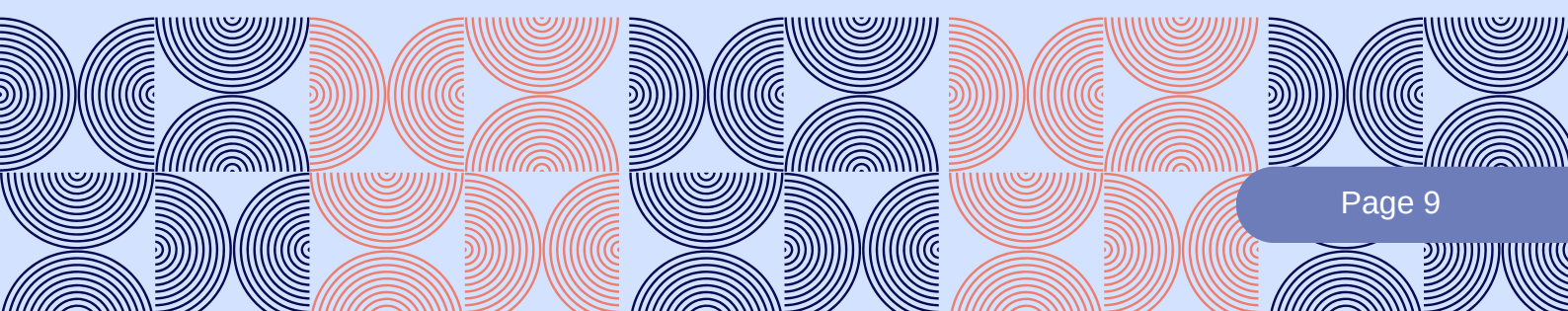
**“The secret to getting ahead is getting started”.**

– Amol Punni,  
Director,  
Keymark Real Estate

## Opening Address

**Ethel Osazuwa**, Chairperson, MBEN.

The Opening Address introduced this year’s conference theme, **Connecting Beyond Borders: The Future of Global Leadership** and its relevance in navigating and thriving in a world that has become not only more interconnected but where the impacts of global markets on economies require leaders who can think globally and act compassionately. The future of global leadership is diverse, inclusive and most importantly human. It is sharing ideas and cocreating an inclusive future where connecting beyond borders is not just referring to national boundaries, but is about crossing the invisible borders that often separate us from each other. As MBEN chair, Ethel Osazuwa states, “Leadership is about walking with others, listening, empowering and lifting each other. Take the opportunity to connect, ask questions, share your experiences, and celebrate your successes. Remember, relationship is currency in the business world.”





“When people are valued for their skills, before their name, before their background, innovation can grow. When people belong, the economy grows and when they connect, then we all go further”.

– **Mirsia Bunjaku**,  
Chief Executive Officer, AMRC

## Connect, Thrive, and Contribute:

Multicultural communities are the foundation of every thriving society, yet they face barriers that have nothing to do with their skills and expertise. Their potential is unseen. Despite this, in every challenge they see opportunity, no matter how much was endured to get there. “It always seems impossible until it’s done,” said Mirsia Bunjaku, Chief Executive Officer of AMRC. Migrants grow through these experiences, but they also need an opportunity and a chance. Programs that help support migrants to be work-ready skilled and connected with the right opportunities serve as vital bridges to a more inclusive economy.



“I was never afraid of failure”.

– **Eduardo Donoso**,  
Executive Director, D&S Resources

## From Grass to Grace Building Resilient Entrepreneurs & Successful Businesses:

The story of D&S Resources is a migrant success story defined by resilience, adaptability, and community. After fleeing political persecution in Chile, Eduardo Donoso settled in Whyalla, South Australia – home to 36,000 people from 54 nationalities, where he studied engineering and launched his first business. What began 30 years ago with four employees has grown into a \$320 million company employing 1,200 people and is now one of Australia’s fastest growing companies. The journey has not been without its challenges. From weathering the 2008 economic crash to Covid-19, D&S Resources has continued to rebuild and innovate. “Never be afraid if something doesn’t work”, says Executive Director Eduardo Donoso. The key to success is adaptability, learning new skills and having the right connections.



**“I never see anyone as competition but as potential partners to help each other”.**

– Eduardo Donoso

## PANEL DISCUSSION

### Diaspora Powerhouses –

### From South Australia to Global Investment and Trade Opportunities:

**Facilitator:** Amol Punni, **Panellists:** Sam Donato, and Eduardo Donoso

This panel discussed the journey from establishing businesses in South Australia to expanding into global markets. Speakers emphasised the importance of establishing a high-quality product or service domestically before pursuing international growth, alongside having clear passion and purpose. Building trust and making connections with people who have the skills that you need to overcome barriers, like language is paramount. Tapping into the right providers overseas and the right networks helps to maintain consistent quality. It is important to bring people in, support those working for you, encourage and empower others, be genuine, and look for congruence. “People want to know that you are genuine, that you are real, and have the same values that they hold. More than what you do, they want to know who you are”, said Sam Donato. For aspiring exporters, the advice was simple: start, learn by doing, and do not be discouraged by not knowing everything, as Sam observed, “No one was born taught”.



### Empowering Adelaide City Businesses for a Thriving Economy:

**Jordon Tomopoulos,**

Advisor | Economic Research, AEDA

This presentation provided a data-driven overview of the current economic conditions in the City of Adelaide. Consistent with broader national trends, Adelaide is experiencing elevated cost-of-living pressures and high interest rates, creating a challenging environment for businesses. However, inflationary pressures are beginning to ease, and employment levels remain strong, supported in part by sustained public sector investment. While moderate wage growth has been observed, consumer confidence and household savings have declined significantly, falling from approximately 20% to 5%. As inflation continues to normalise, household spending is expected to increase. At the state level, South Australia is performing more strongly than in previous periods, driven by robust construction activity and an increase in businesses establishing physical premises. Although overseas migration has softened slightly, Adelaide continues to demonstrate strong performance in its visitor economy, high levels of event participation, and sustained property demand, despite overall economic growth remaining relatively subdued.



**“At the end of the day, we are always together in what we are doing”.**

**– Sobia Hashmi**

## PANEL DISCUSSION

### Couples in Business: Love, Leadership, and Legacy

**Couples:** Sobia Hashmi & Irfan Hashmi, Sam Donato & Vicky Donato, Ethel Osazuwa & Possible Diessa



*“There is this healthy tension that will always exist. Marriage is the triumph of intimacy over perfection. You’ve got two people who are very close to each other and see the world differently yet are willing to deal with their differences at the same time to get to a level of success. I think working together really does foster that”.*

**– Sam Donato**, CEO, Auctus Training Institute



This panel featured successful couples who jointly operate family businesses, with a focus on managing partnership, parenting, and profitability. From delving into their business genesis, to allocation of roles and responsibilities, and the strategies used to balance professional and family commitments, these couples’ ability to make it work share many similar threads. Common themes emerged across the discussion, including the importance of mutual trust and respect, clear boundaries between work and home life, and the intentional prioritisation of time as a couple. The ability to define roles based on individual strengths and to operate as complementary partners were identified as central to sustaining both business success and personal relationships.



“

Australians as a nation have adaptability, agility, and resilience and for every person I know who has made the decision to migrate, that is in your DNA. You know how hard it is at times to move to a new location but within you, you are bolder and braver than the average person and that is why global leadership is a great opportunity, and it is possible”.

– **Hon Zoe Bettison MP,**  
SA Minister for Multicultural Affairs

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Amidst global political shifts, economic and trade upheaval, and rapid technological change, the Keynote Address highlighted the importance of connection points and diversification as key strategies for managing uncertainty, both within South Australia and internationally. While these challenges are global in nature, the address emphasised South Australia’s proactive approach to positioning itself as a global leader. Key initiatives outlined included strengthening international connectivity through direct flights, negotiating free trade agreements, and leadership in renewable energy. Collectively, these efforts highlight South Australia’s compelling value proposition for investment and growth. The address further noted that to ensure inclusive access to these opportunities, targeted initiatives that empower multicultural communities, particularly through youth engagement and language education will be essential to strengthening South Australia’s competitiveness in the global market for talent.



### Successful Women in Business Stories: Good Shepherd, LaunchMe

**Facilitator:** Sally Smith, **Panellists:** Wafa Bouchahed, Valeria Reategui, Violeta Abarzua, and Regina Rutto

The Good Shepherd, LaunchMe Multicultural Program, funded by the Government of South Australia, supports multicultural women to progress their business ideas to the next level through practical advice, skills development and tailored coaching focused on starting, managing, and growing enterprises. Hearing stories from the four speakers showcased the resilience, passion, and drive that has been the foundation for their success. From overcoming health crises to facing the challenges of finding meaningful employment, experiences of racism, and burnout, these women have built businesses despite setbacks and hardships to pursue their passions and turn adversity into purpose. The discussion highlighted the role of connection, mentorship, and community in building confidence and sustaining motivation to achieving business goals.



## Business Huddle:

**Facilitators:** Sandra Moyo, Amol Punni, Possible Diessa, & Navneet Bal

This interactive session segmented into three different groups facilitated by industry leaders to discuss franchises, recruitment, and business finance. Facilitators provided an overview and information on their topics and participants had time to ask individualised questions. Afterwards, each group shared what they learned with the rest of the conference delegates. Some key takeaways highlighted the pros and cons when considering a franchise, noting that while franchising provides an established system, it can also have multi-year fee commitments and reputational risks, making due diligence essential. Participants also discussed practical finance considerations relating to business structure for better financial protection, tax payment plans and carrying forward losses, as well as identifying organisational gaps, ensuring financial capacity, and maintaining a clear vision for each role when recruiting.

**“Money is not for money’s sake, it should enhance your wellbeing”.**

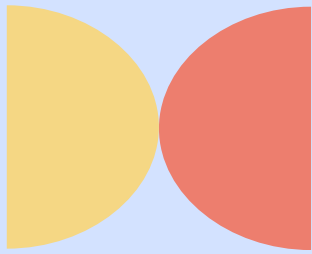
– **Harpinder Chipra**, Founder, Your Wellth



## Wealth and Wellbeing:

**How to create space for true success - and rise above the bottom line**

This presentation emphasised the importance of building a strong financial foundation as the basis for wealth growth and wellbeing. Developing this foundation requires setting clear financial goals, maintaining a disciplined spending plan, and adopting a consistent approach to saving and investment. Whether through investing in stock options, saving for an emergency fund, or estate planning, preparation and consistency are key to achieving financial stability and long-term success. Money should be used as a tool to enable individuals to do the things they want to do and build those moments of joy.



# IMPACT

This year's conference demonstrates MBEN's commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive professional space, where people from all backgrounds, ages, genders, and career stages felt welcome to engage. Delegate demographics showcased a multi-generational, gender-balanced, and internationally connected audience, ensuring a wide range of voices and perspectives were represented and contributed to the dialogue.



**73%**  
born overseas

73% of delegates were born overseas, showcasing the conference's ability to engage globally connected professionals and amplify multicultural perspectives within the Australian business context.

**58%**  
women

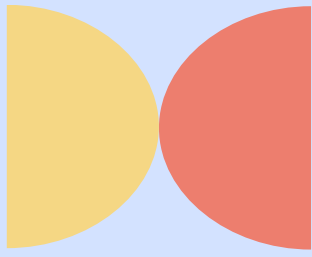
58% of delegates identified as women, signifying a strong gender-balanced representation that supports inclusive leadership.

**10%**  
students

10% of delegates were students, highlighting the conference's support for emerging professionals and ensuring that the next generation of leaders receives much needed guidance and mentorship.

**100%**  
all age groups

All adult age ranges were represented, from early-career attendees aged 18-24 to senior professionals aged 55+. The largest group were aged 35-44, at **52%**, reflecting strong engagement from mid-career professionals and business owners.



# Testimonials

Delegates engaged deeply with the presentations, interactive sessions and panel discussions, garnering new perspectives on cross-cultural leadership, global business strategy, and how to leverage their unique strengths as multicultural entrepreneurs. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, emphasizing the value of the connections formed, the inspiring stories shared, and the welcoming, inclusive environment created throughout the conference.



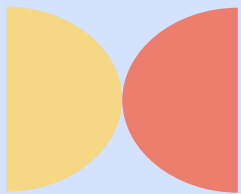
"I really enjoyed participating in the event, particularly appreciating the diversity of perspectives and cultures present. I found the panellists' insights and the personal stories shared to be inspiring". – **Lilian Pinilla-Medina**



"I had the privilege of attending the MBEN Conference where I heard from a fascinating lineup of speakers and panellists. Hearing their insider stories was something no book can teach". – **Kanchana Vishwanath**



"It was wonderful to meet so many driven professionals and hear from leaders who are truly shaping their industries. What stood out most was the power of multicultural perspectives – how diversity doesn't just add variety, but brings a unique depth of insight, innovation, and collaboration that drives real progress. It was especially meaningful to connect through a multicultural lens – the rare opportunity to see and share space with others who carry similar experiences and perspectives. So grateful to be part of a community that champions diversity and keeps pushing boundaries". – **Mitchell Matemayi**



# Looking Ahead

As we look to the future, MBEN will continue to build upon the momentum of this year's conference and expand opportunities for multicultural entrepreneurs to connect, collaborate, lead, and grow together. Future events will utilise the valuable insights and feedback gathered as guidance for our ongoing efforts to strengthen networks, amplify diverse voices, and create a more inclusive and globally engaged business community.



# Thank You

**Auctus** Training Institute

**POSSIBLE** CONSULTING

**D&S** RESOURCES

Adelaide Economic Development Agency

Office for Small & Family Business

Government of South Australia

Hotel Grand Chancellor ADELAIDE

**kwelii** Finance

Multicultural Consulting Services

**KEYMARK** REAL ESTATE



## **Additional Resources**

[MBEN Conference Highlights Video](#)

[2025 Conference Handbook](#)

[MBEN Membership](#)

## **More Information**

For more information about the conference, upcoming events, membership, and resources:

<https://mben.au>

[info@mben.au](mailto:info@mben.au)

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