



ADVANCING ECONOMIC EQUALITY  
**IMPACT REPORT 2024**



**A message from  
Rare Birds Founder  
and CEO  
Jo Burston**

Reflecting on 2024 fills me with immense pride and gratitude. This year, Rare Birds continued to accelerate our mission of advancing economic equality by empowering thousands of women across Australia — from Uber drivers launching tech ventures, to regional entrepreneurs scaling family businesses, to corporate leaders preparing for executive roles.

We delivered this impact through our three pillars: **Mentoring, Education, and Community** — and the results have been extraordinary.

Our mentoring programs reached hundreds of individuals at every career stage. In partnership with organisations like **Uber, American Express, City of Sydney, PwC, and BlueRock**, we supported over **300 mentees** through tailored one-on-one mentoring relationships. Whether helping a new founder pitch their idea or supporting an emerging leader step into executive roles, our **1,200+ volunteer mentors** contributed more than **9,700 hours of support**, a collective effort valued at over **\$1.4 million**.

Through the **Uber Business Booster Program**, we received over **7,500 applications across two years**, delivered **20+ masterclasses**, and witnessed powerful transformations. Many founders experienced revenue growth of up to 100%, and finalists received funding to fuel their ventures. This success has led to the program being renewed and scaled to reach **150,000** Uber partners nationally.

The **InnovateHer Program**, delivered in partnership with the **City of Sydney**, was designed exclusively for women founders and SME owners. Participants explored how emerging technologies like AI, Blockchain, and Web3 could drive innovation and productivity in their businesses. The results were compelling — **100% reported increased personal and business confidence**, and many built lasting networks and embraced new digital tools.

In the **Idea Exchange Program with AmEx Australia**, we delivered another year of powerful business mentoring to cardmembers and merchants. Participants walked away with enhanced financial capability, stronger business acumen, and a lasting belief in their own worth.

Through **Building Female Futures**, our mentoring program for high-performing women at **PwC and BlueRock**, we supported **40 emerging female leaders** to grow in confidence, develop new networks, and move forward with clarity in their leadership pathways. These were deep, transformative mentoring partnerships that created space for reflection, resilience and bold career moves.

On the education front, our **Incubator and Accelerator Programs** helped founders gain critical startup skills through a series of interactive and practical masterclasses. Over **31 expert-led sessions** were delivered, with **99%** of participants reporting increased



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knowledge and confidence to apply what they learned in real-world business settings.

And throughout this journey, we've been supported by a community that reflects what true equality looks like. Our programs today include **both women and men**, and this inclusion is intentional. **We know that real economic equality demands equal opportunity for all — and that men must be part of the solution.**

Many of the men involved in Rare Birds, as mentors and mentees, become true super allies — not only in their workplaces, but in their homes and communities. They break biases, share responsibility, and model what inclusive leadership looks like. At Rare Birds, we don't just advocate for equality — **we live and breathe it.**

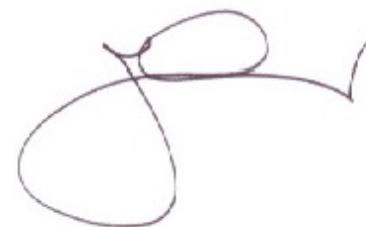
One of the year's standout moments was our **International Women's Day 2024 event**, themed "Accelerating Gender Equality Through Economic Empowerment." I had the privilege of hosting a powerful panel of experts including **Michelle Baltazar** (Editor-in-Chief, Money Magazine), **Christina Chun** (COO, Social Enterprise Australia), **Julia Scott** (Founder, Love Luck Wealth), **Carden Calder** (Founder, BlueChip Communication), and **Melissa Cuturich** (Founder, Diva Financial). Together, we explored what financial independence looks like at every life stage — from goal-setting to investing, income growth, and retirement planning. It was not just a panel — it was a rallying cry for women to claim ownership of their financial futures.

Our **Community** continued to thrive. With over **70,000 members**, we delivered events like the **Business Booster Pitch Final at Uber HQ**, brought founders and mentors together through peer-to-peer networking, and nurtured a powerful support ecosystem that is transforming what's possible for women in business.

At the heart of it all is one powerful truth: **mentorship changes lives.** It builds confidence, opens doors, and turns ideas into action. It proves again and again that yes — she can.

To every mentor, partner, facilitator, and community member — thank you. You have helped make 2024 a year of measurable, lasting impact. As we look ahead, I am more hopeful than ever about the future we're building together.

With gratitude,



**Jo Burston**  
Founder and CEO, Rare Birds



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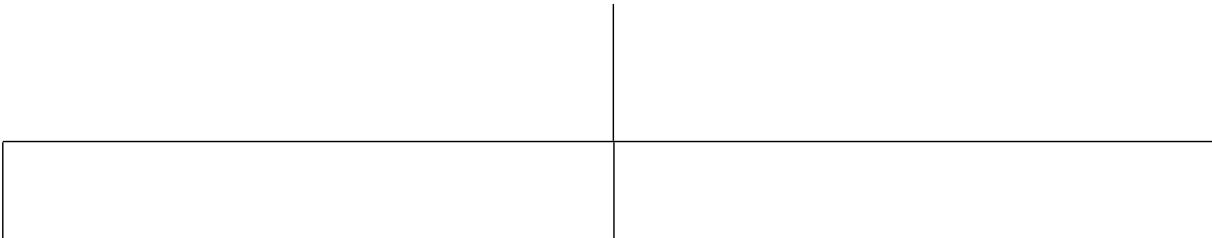


# OUR TEAM

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**JO BURSTON**

Founder and CEO



**SIMONE  
HENDERSON-SMART**  
Head of Marketing and  
Communications



**TEEGAN DIAMOND**  
Mentoring Partnership and  
Community Manager



**HELEEN TOL**  
Executive Assistant and  
Office Manager



## OUR VALUES

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**ENTREPRENEURIAL:** We don't fear failure, we dare to be uncomfortable and are always improving processes and programs with out-of-the-box thinking. We are curious and agile. We say yes and deliver the how. We stay informed and are lifelong learners and lovers of innovation.

**COMMUNITY:** Our products and services are designed and delivered by real people, for real people. We understand the value of support and connection and are building a strong and empowered community of practice. We have each other's backs and we set everyone up for success. We are enablers of self-agency.

**INTEGRITY:** We are reliable, trustworthy and diligent. We do what we say and act with integrity to deliver great outcomes. We strive to remain the best at what we do and learn from our past actions and interactions to be our best in the present moment and in the future.

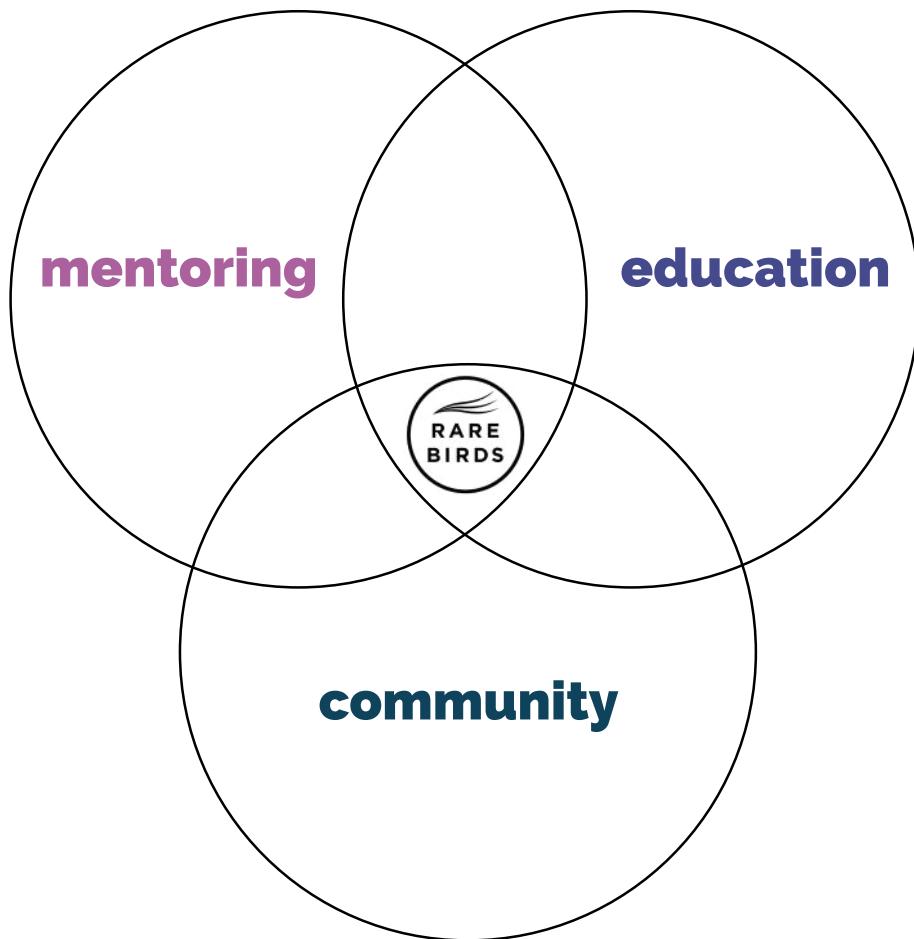
**PURPOSE:** We care about impact and improving lives. We are champions of change for the benefit of all and celebrate every win. We bring commitment, intention and passion to our work and the social impact that we deliver.





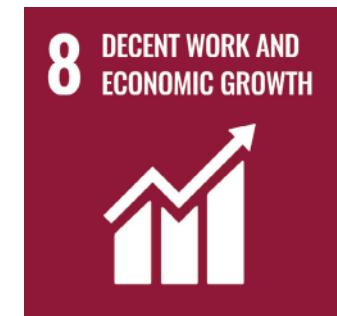
## SOCIAL + ECONOMIC IMPACT

RARE BIRDS IS **ADVANCING ECONOMIC EQUALITY**  
THROUGH MENTORING, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY



**OUR VISION:**  
A strong and resilient human and financial economy through equal opportunities in entrepreneurship and leadership for everyone

### U.N. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:





## SOCIAL + ECONOMIC IMPACT

Founded in 2015, Rare Birds runs **high-impact mentoring and education programs** to boost diversity and innovation across Australian businesses.

Today, Rare Birds is an **active business community** that reaches more than 70,000 women entrepreneurs and their supporters. It is one of Australia's leading communities for women to grow themselves and their businesses, with tools and resources from within a community of practice that reaches every state and territory, particularly rural and regional areas where business education and support can often be in short supply.

Importantly, it is not a women's organisation: roughly 40% of mentors are men. It is our mentors who underpin our success, donating thousands of hours every year in support of our mission. **Together, we:**



### GROW



### UP-SKILL



### SUPPORT



### SUSTAIN

Provide women with a program to build their confidence in business in seeking opportunities for **growth and investment**

Teach women **new skills** in business such as digital marketing, AI, productivity, team management, and procurement

Provide women with a trusted and highly experienced business confidante who provides **one-on-one support**

Continue to create impact beyond the program through a new **community of practice** and connected business networks



# OUR PROGRAMS

## WHAT WE DO

### BESPOKE MENTORING PROGRAMS

Since 2015, through partnerships with government, industry, corporations, and sponsors, we have been providing entrepreneurs and emerging leaders across Australia with fully managed mentoring programs to improve diversity in business.

- **Corporate programs** provide an important reward and retention tool for high-performing female talent inside companies, providing pathways to senior leadership roles;
- **Government-sponsored programs** provide pathways to financial independence through entrepreneurship for women from marginal and under-represented demographics;
- **Industry-sponsored programs** provide support to women in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as agriculture and wine making, to enable members to grow their business and networks;
- Programs are also available to individuals looking for **personal and professional development**.

## OUR PARTNERS



Australian Government

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet



CITY OF  
SYDNEY





# 2024 IMPACT SNAPSHOT

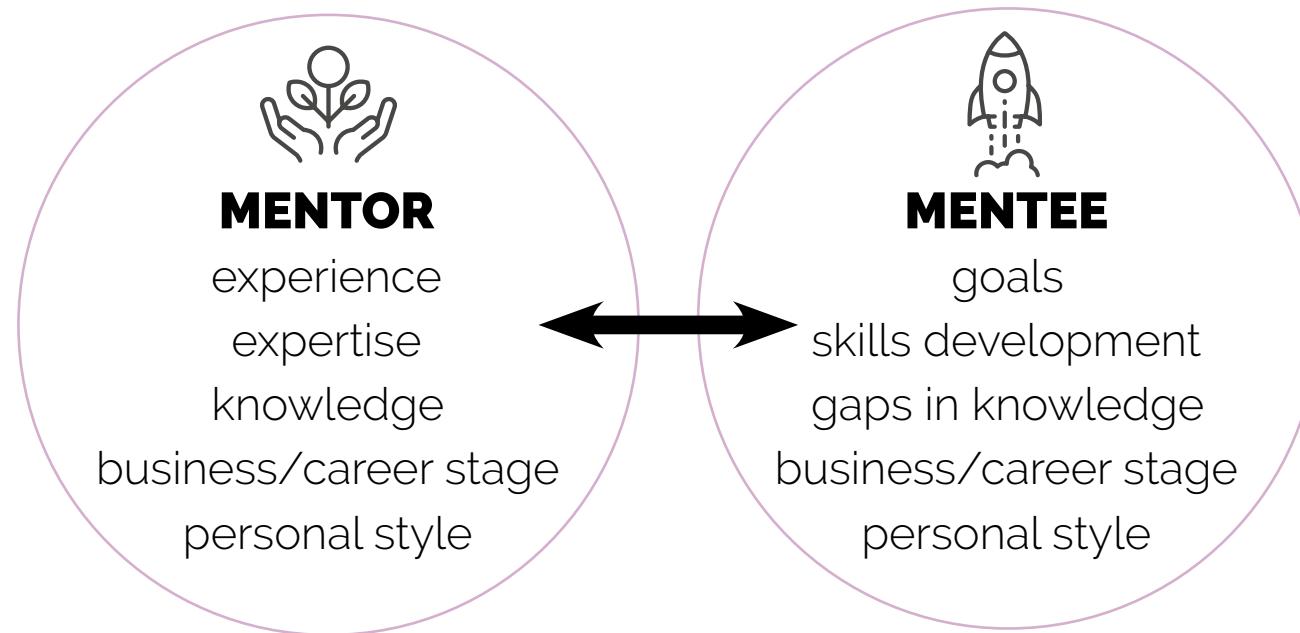
		What do we do?	Why?	What for?
Strategies	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<b>MENTORING</b>	One-on-one mentoring program for entrepreneurs	<b>262 x mentees engaged in a mentoring partnership for entrepreneurs</b>	Improved competence in business with a focus on aligning vision and purpose; introductions to new networks of support; greater business and financial success and economic security	<b>Economic security for women and people from diverse backgrounds</b>
	One-on-one mentoring program for emerging leaders	<b>40 x mentees engaged in a mentoring partnership for emerging leaders</b>	Higher rates of women seeking promotions and moving into leadership positions	
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Workshops on topics relevant to business and professional development	<b>11 x community workshops</b> <b>20 x cohort education modules</b>	Increased knowledge, networks and confidence of business owners and emerging leaders; better financial literacy	
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	Events to promote networks and connection	<b>2 x community events</b>	Sharing and connection between a community of business owners and leaders and their supporters; opportunities for learning in a peer-to-peer environment; growing the pool of mentors who want to give back and facilitating connections	<b>Enabling environment for diversity in entrepreneurship and leadership</b>
	Peer support through social channels and facilitated networking sessions	<b>11 x facilitated peer sessions</b> <b>4,476: following on Instagram</b> <b>20,334: following on Facebook</b> <b>5,917: following on LinkedIn</b>		
	Community content	<b>Newsletters and LinkedIn articles, website posts, mentoring case studies</b>		
	Mentor recruitment and engagement	<b>45 new mentors onboarded into the program</b>		
<b>ADVOCACY</b>	Research and reporting on issues relevant to diversity in business	<b>CEO JO BURSTON: 3 x external speaking engagements</b> <b>4,247: following on Instagram</b> <b>4,700: following on Facebook</b> <b>23,330: following on LinkedIn</b>  <b>21 active Ambassadors</b>	Amplified voice and thought leadership on gender equality and diversity in business	<b>Sector support for diversity and inclusion initiatives</b>

# ADVANCING ECONOMIC EQUALITY

## MENTORING SNAPSHOT

**2** HOURS PER MONTH FOR 12 MONTHS  
OF ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT

The Rare Birds mentoring program has facilitated thousands of mentoring partnerships since it launched in 2015, for both entrepreneurs and innovative leaders. Our matching system and ongoing partnership support are key to the success of our programs.



### TOP FOCUS AREAS

Marketing Strategy, Digital Marketing, Branding, Strategy and execution, Company vision and direction, Positioning Campaign Planning, Social Media

**7**  
**PROGRAMS**  
**302**  
**MENTEES**

**262** ENTREPRENEURS  
**40** EMERGING LEADERS

**7,248**  
VOLUNTEER HOURS

**\$1,087,200** value



# INSPIRING RARE BIRDS MENTORS

The Rare Birds Mentor pool is always changing and growing. We currently have more than 1200 men and women across a broad range of industries.

Inspiring Rare Birds has been fortunate to give hundreds of executives and entrepreneurs the ability to give back by doing something they love - nurturing entrepreneurs and emerging leaders on their journeys. They share their hard-won wisdom and experience in business to help those who are still finding their way.



**Shalini Nanden Singh**  
Lawyer, Legal Coach,  
Owner at Love Your Legals



**Cherry Ward**  
Founder and MD, Bluebird  
Leadership



**Dave Clare**  
CEO and Founder,  
Circle Leadership Global



**Brian Pereira**  
Director and Founder,  
Digital Reign



**Paul Cohen**  
Founder, Paul Cohen  
Consulting



**Mark Baartse**  
Digital Marketing Strategy  
Advisor



**Richard Nedov**  
Managing Director and CEO,  
Active Group



**Phil Talbot**  
Founder and CEO,  
Authentium



**Sally-Anne Blanshard**  
Coaching Specialist



**Alyse Sue**  
Co-Founder,  
Transhumanism Australia



**Anna Osharov**  
Co-Founder and CEO, Flintt



**Xander Hendricks**  
Firmware consultant  
specialising in startups



**Dianna Schinella**  
Founder, Head Business  
Consultant and Mentor



**Cissy Ma**  
Founder, Grow and Sell  
Your Biz



**Phil Ore**  
Co-CEO and Chief Mentor,  
25eight



**Phil Hayes-St Clair**  
Co-Founder, Drop Bio  
Health



**Roshan Sidhu**  
Senior Associate,  
PwC Legal



**Ekaterina Myshinskaya**  
Head of Transformation,  
Real Pet Food Company



**Belinda Paul**  
Founder, RCYCL



**Greg Rudakov**  
Senior Product Manager -  
AI and Innovation, 6clicks



**Simon Belousoff**  
Senior Manager - Data  
Discovery, Transport for  
NSW



**Katie Heathcote**  
Associate Director  
Technology, NSW Govt



**Gabrielle Browne**  
Founder, Dynamic Unicorns



**Doug Garske**  
Producer, Event Manager



# MENTORING PROGRAMS VALUE PROPOSITION

## Our Programs Empower Women at Every Stage of Their Career

Our Mentoring and Leadership Development Programs are expertly designed to support women whether they're just beginning, growing within an organisation, leading teams, building a business, or preparing to exit. From onboarding junior hires to shaping executive leadership, we equip women with the tools and confidence to thrive.

The programs create maximum impact with our **unique value proposition**:



### Drive Organisational Growth Through Structured Leadership Development:

We prepare future leaders with people and management skills, and empower existing leaders to build, motivate, and retain high-performing teams. By embedding leadership capabilities across all levels, our programs help foster a resilient, collaborative, and learning-driven culture.



### Showcase Impact with Real-Time Data & Reporting:

Our programs include comprehensive data collection and storytelling mechanisms—ranging from quantitative metrics to testimonials and case studies. These insights allow organisations to clearly demonstrate ROI, celebrate success, and promote internal advocacy.



### Seamless Program Delivery with Our Mentoring Platform:

The Rare Birds Mentoring Platform ensures structured progress with integrated calendars, agendas, meeting reminders, and toolkits—removing admin burden while keeping every mentoring relationship on track.



# MENTORING PROGRAMS VALUE PROPOSITION



## Dedicated Partnership Manager for Turnkey Support:

Every program is supported by a dedicated Rare Birds Partnership Manager who ensures successful onboarding, effective group matching, program monitoring, and community building across every cohort.



## Built-In Accountability for Measurable Outcomes:

From onboarding to feedback surveys, our team provides one-on-one support to ensure participants stay engaged, complete program milestones, and have a positive, productive mentoring experience. Clients receive regular updates and outcomes reporting tailored to their success metrics.



## Smart Automation for Scale and Reliability:

Our fully integrated CRM and mentoring platform automates matching, communications, tracking, and reporting—ensuring consistency, scalability, and reliability across programs of any size.

**OUR  
SUPER  
POWER**

## Precision Matching with Bias Mitigation:

Our unique algorithm assesses goals, skill gaps, and learning styles to deliver high-quality matches from our deep mentor pool. We then combine personal goal mapping, skill gap analysis, and communication style preferences to ensure every mentee is matched with the most suitable mentor—boosting engagement, alignment, and long-term impact.



### **Innovative Programs Led by Proven Experts:**

Backed by a diverse network of high-calibre mentors—executives, entrepreneurs, and leaders—our programs offer world-class knowledge-sharing, insights, and strategic thinking to accelerate mentee development.



### **Continuous Feedback Loops for Agile Improvement:**

With post-session evaluations and mid/end-point surveys, we provide real-time insights and tailored refinements to improve outcomes and ensure that program objectives are being met.



### **A Thriving, Lifelong Network:**

Participants gain access to our extended Rare Birds community, with ongoing opportunities to connect, collaborate, and grow through monthly events, masterclasses, and alumni support.

## **SUCCESS METRICS**

### **Celebrate Success with Tangible Impact:**

At the program's conclusion, we provide a comprehensive impact report—complete with data, stories, and case studies—to help our clients champion gender equality and leadership advancement within their organisation and beyond.

# OUR PROGRAMS

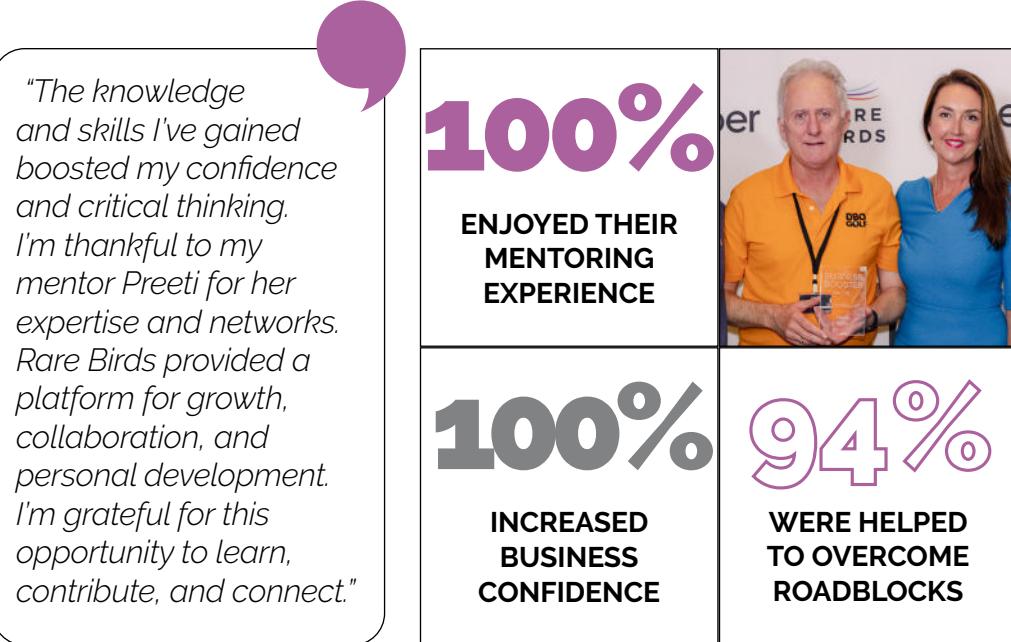
# 2024



## PROGRAM: 2023/24 Business Booster Incubator and Accelerator Programs for Uber

The Business Booster Program was designed for Uber to showcase its ties to innovation and entrepreneurship and acknowledge that many of its drivers and delivery partners were plugging an income gap while launching or growing another business. They completed their 12 months of mentoring in 2024.

- **2831** applications from a total of **95** different countries of origin
- **100** Uber Drivers and Delivery Partners participated
- **9 x 90-minute** Masterclasses for 2 Programs - **98** graduates in March 2023
- Community tech platform for participants to connect, support and share
- Pitch Competition - **86** videos submitted
- **10** finalists flown to Sydney for pitch final event at QT Hotel
- 1st prize \$50k** to Stephen Blain, DBO Golf
- 2nd prize \$20k** to Georgios Dimitriou, Astro Advanced Analytics
- 3rd prize \$10k** each to Thomas Schalch, whiskr and Julie Mlinaric, Wands of Lust
- **12 months** of one-on-one Rare Birds mentoring
- **Program renewed** for another 100 participants in 2024





## MENTORING PROGRAM TESTIMONIALS: 2023/24 Business Booster

"My mentor became a friend whose professional opinion I have valued. His background as a volunteer in Sydney communities led to his full embrace of my charitable endeavours. The original goal was a 'ready to launch business', but we achieved broader outcomes — knowledge, collaboration, and vision. Partnership and flexibility are key. The mentorship journey, much like therapy, is about openness and growth. I recommend Rare Birds streamline research tools, like AI, for faster, smarter business evaluations."

**"I am a co-founder and Chair of two charities... While the business didn't launch, mentorship led to real benefits for our target communities. With my mentor's guidance, we strengthened alliances, resulting in tangible outcomes for disadvantaged children in Fiji. This mentorship brought clarity and direction beyond the original business plan."**

"I've enjoyed the program immensely. It opened my mind to business in Australia, technology trends, and consumer behaviour. The insights from my mentor Joern helped me accept that business is a journey. Even if one idea doesn't launch, another will — and that hope motivates me to continue giving back to the communities I serve."

**"I learnt so much about vision, future goals, and how to take the next step. My mentor's confidence and guidance kept me going, even during life's ups and downs. Now I speak confidently because I understand my business. The mentoring gave me direction, motivation, and a sense of professional growth."**





## PROGRAM: 2024/25 Business Booster Incubator and Accelerator Programs

The Business Booster Program was designed for Uber to showcase its ties to innovation and entrepreneurship and acknowledge that many of its drivers and delivery partners were plugging an income gap while launching or growing another business. This was our second year of delivery.

● **4672** applications from a total of **97** different countries of origin

● **100** Uber Drivers and Delivery Partners participated

● **10 x 90-minute** Masterclasses for 2 Programs

● Community tech platform for participants to connect, support and share

● Pitch Competition - **88** videos submitted

● **10** finalists flown to Sydney for pitch final event at Uber HQ

**1st prize \$50k** to Suraya O'Brien, Flowrider

**2nd prize \$20k** to Nicholas Brbot, Cat Harness Australia

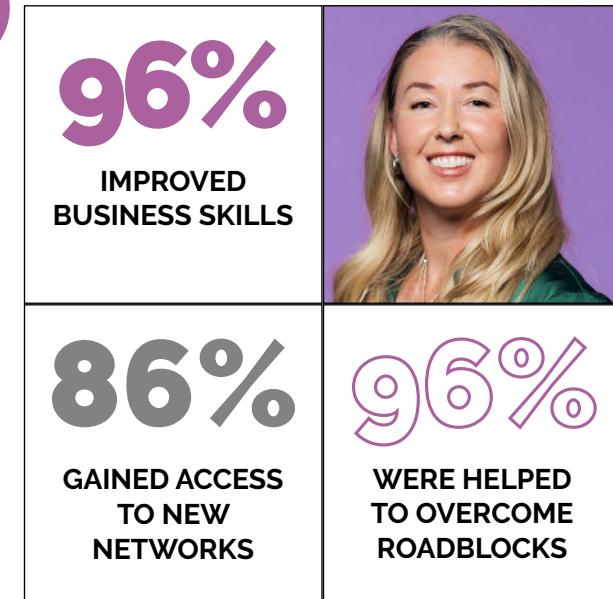
**3rd prize \$10k** Ali Zeerak, Supply Solar

● **12 months** of one-on-one Rare Birds mentoring

● **Program renewed** for 2025 to evolve into an 'always on' program accessible to all **150,000** drivers and delivery partners on the Uber apps.

● **50%** of final survey respondents reported an increase of 20-100% in revenue,

*"The overall program, including the initial sessions and the mentoring partnership, has been transformative for me. It helped me become more confident and strategic. I'm a completely different person business-wise compared to before. This has truly given me the direction I needed."*





## MENTORING PROGRAM TESTIMONIALS: 2024/25 Business Booster

"I have cherished my time with my mentor. It's been invaluable to me as a new entrepreneur. This program has kept me sane during incredibly difficult times. I've learned to think critically, improve my financial literacy, and truly understand the value of the pivot — not as a failure, but as resilience. I believe I've formed a lifelong friendship with my mentor. Thank you, Rare Birds."

**"My biggest takeaway has been the value of self-directed learning. The program didn't just give me answers, it encouraged discovery. I now take initiative and find solutions confidently, knowing how to access and assess resources independently."**

"Thank you for creating such a supportive and empowering program. As a founder in the early stages of building a purpose-driven business, this mentorship has been incredibly grounding. I leave with more clarity, confidence, and direction."

**"You are doing amazing work by supporting startups. Where I am today, Rare Birds has played an important role. I'm truly grateful for that support — it's helped me find direction and confidence when I needed it most."**

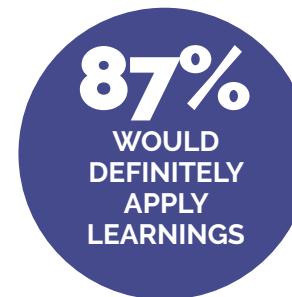




## INCUBATOR MASTERCLASS RESULTS:



## ACCELERATOR MASTERCLASS RESULTS:



## TESTIMONIALS:

**"My biggest take-away was Phil's structured approach to outlining the key elements of a pitch – from capturing attention with a compelling narrative to articulating the value proposition. I now feel confident in tailoring my pitch to investors and partners in a way that's clear and compelling."**

"The realisation that aligning my business with my capabilities, resources, and vision is paramount was life-changing. The Ask-Try-Do-Reflect framework gave me clarity. The session encouraged self-awareness and helped me visualise success not just in terms of outcomes, but in who I want to become as a founder."

**"This session gave me a whole new direction and purpose. Learning about P&L statements, cash flow, and forecasting helped me design a better tracking system. It emphasised that knowing your numbers isn't just about accounting – it's about business control and clarity. I have homework to do now, but I'm energised!"**

## TESTIMONIALS:

**"The leadership and management session was one of the best sessions that I have ever attended. I am thrilled to learn about clarifying goals, making sure you have them SMART... I have also mastered the concept of good leadership that includes giving clear direction regarding timeline, profit, revenue target and many more."**

**"There was an incredible amount of tools being shared by Mia in a beautiful and super clear way. In the boom of the AI tools it is mandatory to take advantage of it to maximise our productivity and presence in social platforms. All the pain points of mine have had some relieved in this session. It was practical, generous, and incredibly valuable."**

"Jenny's lived experience made all the difference. She provided an honest, detailed road map for approaching investors – from preparation, investor types, to red flags. The session was packed with real insights, and the interactive discussions with other founders made it even more meaningful. It changed how I think about funding my business."



# BUSINESS BOOSTER

# 2024/25

## PITCH COMPETITION

**As part of the Business Booster Program, participants created a 3-minute video showcasing their business**

From 88 entries, 10 finalists were selected to pitch live to a panel of judges at a special cocktail event at Uber HQ in Sydney

**MC:** Ben Fordham, 2GB Breakfast Radio Host

**1st prize \$50k** to Suraya O'Brien, Flowrider

**2nd prize \$30k** to Nicholas Brbot, Cat Harness Australia

**3rd prize \$10k** Ali Zeerak, Supply Solar

**People's Choice \$10k** Hashim Hilal, Sharepay

**Runners-up** all took home \$3,000 each





# INNOVATEHER»



## PROGRAM: InnovateHer for City of Sydney

With this free program, female founders and SME owners learned to future-proof their business by using AI and emerging Web 3.0 technologies such as Blockchain and NFTs to increase speed and productivity, reduce costs, drive innovation, and fuel growth. This program was funded by an Innovation and Ideas grant.

- **115** participants
- **2 x 90-minute** in person masterclasses on Marketing with Emerging Tech and Improving Productivity with Emerging Tech.
- Follow-up **Ask the Experts** sessions the day following a masterclass with the keynote speaker and a group of experts that involved further insights and extensive audience Q&A.
- **Ten** mentoring program scholarships sponsored by City of Sydney.

### CONNECT

Network, collaborate and build lasting relationships with technology visionaries and business pioneers, as well as a new community of innovative female founders and business owners.

### LEARN

Hear real stories from leaders and founders about how they're using emerging tech to drive new business models, reach new markets, and optimise operations – what they've learned and what's coming next.

### GROW

Implement practical knowledge in business to innovate and grow. Capitalise on new network connections for idea testing, strategic partnerships and collaborations. Be supported one-on-one with a Mentor scholarship.



**100%** OF PARTICIPANTS INCREASED BOTH THEIR BUSINESS AND PERSONAL CONFIDENCE

**60%**  
RECEIVED  
SIGNIFICANT  
SUPPORT TO  
OVERCOME  
ROADBLOCKS



**80%**  
GAINED ACCESS  
TO NEW  
NETWORKS

**100%**  
ENJOYED THEIR  
MENTORING  
EXPERIENCE



# INNOVATEHER»



## MENTORING PROGRAM TESTIMONIALS: InnovateHer

"My mentor has helped me to overcome significant roadblocks in my business. Her guidance has provided me with invaluable tools and advice that have allowed me to see the bigger picture and approach challenges from new and different angles... This shift in perspective has been extremely useful, allowing me to navigate obstacles with greater confidence and clarity."

**"What I enjoyed most about the mentoring program was the opportunity to broaden my knowledge and skills. The program introduced me to new technologies that have significantly enhanced my productivity. Additionally, I learned various strategies... empowering me to look at things differently and achieve greater efficiency."**



"The biggest takeaway from the mentoring program has been the invaluable insights and strategies provided by my mentor... offering a fresh perspective and practical advice that has significantly enhanced my approach to both personal and professional challenges."

**"The biggest takeaway from the mentoring program has been the confidence to challenge myself and try new ideas... This experience has been invaluable in fostering my growth and expanding my skill set."**

"Thank you Rare Birds team (especially Teegan) and the City of Sydney team for sponsoring the InnovateHER program... I encourage Rare Birds and the City of Sydney to continue their great work in providing opportunities like this program for women."





## PROGRAM: Idea Exchange Mentoring Program for AmEx Australia

This program is now in its fourth year and is rewarding AmEx Business Merchants and Cardmembers with a 12-month mentoring program and business grants to impact business growth and sustainability and increase brand loyalty.

- Program has expanded to **two cohorts of 20 per year** plus business grants
- **100%** of participants enjoyed their mentoring.
- **94%** said that the program helped improve their business capability.

<b>100%</b> SATISFIED WITH THEIR PROGRESS ON THEIR GOALS	
<b>94%</b> HELPED TO OVERCOME ROADBLOCKS	<b>94%</b> IMPROVED THEIR CONFIDENCE

*"Cin has been instrumental in helping me recognise my own professional worth and has provided practical advice on how to maintain that confidence, especially when imposter syndrome creeps in."*





## TESTIMONIALS: Idea Exchange Mentoring Program for AmEx Australia

"I can now see that significant progress is on the way having put in place necessary planning and actions. Thank you very much. I've had a complete change of attitude about finances. This has been the information I needed but didn't know how to get and was not previously exposed to."

**"Kelley was a pleasure to work with — she provided just the right tension of guidance and information vs encouragement to complete the tasks independently but with a sound knowledge base."\***

"The program assisted in helping me realise that I was on the right path but need some guidance, consistency and accountability to keep on track."

**"Tiana has been brilliant, very helpful and I loved what she had to offer. Thanks for the opportunity to join the program, I got a lot from it."**

"Very grateful for this opportunity and thrilled to have made a friend and confidant with my mentor."

**"I had personal events that changed my goals and I decided to sell the business. My mentor could not help with that side but offered me to engage in a different mentoring focus on bringing awareness on how traumas influence on my management style and life goals. It has been a extremely in depth experience that brought a lot of awareness and is changing the way I view things in my life and business. Just brilliant."**



## PROGRAM: Building Female Futures

The Building Female Futures program is a reward and retention tool to create pathways to leadership for emerging female talent and create diverse and high performing senior management teams.

- **40** emerging leader participants
- **20** women at **PwC** and 20 women at **BlueRock**
- **12 months** of one-on-one mentoring with a person from outside the company/industry
- **100%** of participants said that their mentoring partnership was an enjoyable experience.

<b>82%</b> MENTOR HELPED DEVELOP THEIR SKILL SET	
<b>83%</b> REPORTED IMPROVED LEADERSHIP SKILLS	<b>71%</b> DEVELOPED NEW CONNECTIONS AND NETWORKS

*"Have loved connecting with Tiffany. She has been a great mentor, the scheduling has all been really simple, and she has provided me with so much value."*

## TESTIMONIALS: Building Female Futures

"There's so much I've taken away from my current mentor. She has helped me grow significantly, and what I've found most helpful is that she listens and provides clear advice on how I can develop further with tactical actions for me to apply after each session."

**"My mentor has challenged my perspectives and encouraged me to do various assessments and reflections I never would have done otherwise. This has been hugely valuable in helping me work out my priorities and sense of identity in the workplace."**

"The similarities in the skills required across different industries and the different perspectives that each individual has towards one situation. It has really opened up my mind and thought process for a wide range of scenarios."

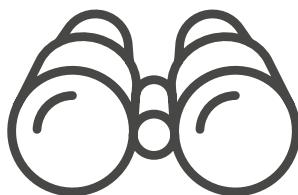
**"Taz has been brilliant, by far the best mentor I've ever had. Not only does she offer a world of experience, but she clearly understands my challenges and offers sound and clear advice on how I can tackle it head on."**

# ADVANCING ECONOMIC EQUALITY EDUCATION SNAPSHOT

90  
MINUTE

FREE business, personal and professional development masterclasses for the Rare Birds community and program cohorts

The Rare Birds mentoring programs' impact is augmented by continued and lifelong education masterclasses. We design custom education programs for our corporate and government clients and also facilitate monthly workshops and mentor deep-dive sessions for our community. We engage business leaders and experts from the Rare Birds Mentor community to deliver quality, actionable content.



**FOCUS  
AREAS  
2024**

**EMERGING TECH,  
SUCH AS AI TO  
ENHANCE MARKETING  
AND PRODUCTIVITY;  
PERSONAL BRAND  
STRATEGIES**

**10-WEEK  
INCUBATOR AND  
ACCELERATOR  
PROGRAMS TO  
DEVELOP FOUNDER  
SKILLS**

**31  
SESSIONS**

**20 FOUNDER  
MASTERCLASSES**  
**11 COMMUNITY  
WORKSHOPS**

**23  
PRESENTERS**

**2,460  
VOLUNTEER HOURS**  
**\$369,000 value**



## FREE COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS AND MENTOR LABS

Rare Birds leverages the knowledge, generosity, and real-world experience of its national mentor network to deliver impactful online workshops and Mentor Labs. These sessions support both **business growth and personal leadership development**, with a focus on practical skills, mindset, and peer connection. Offered at **no cost** to our broader community and their networks, all workshops are recorded and added to our growing library of **on-demand learning content**, ensuring continuous access to high-quality education. In 2024, a total of **1,381 participants** registered to attend these sessions – a testament to the growing demand for inclusive, expert-led, and accessible professional development.



### The Mastery of Modern Leadership

Cherry Ward

145 registered guests



### Founder Story: Navigating Entrepreneurship

Nikki Williams

119 registered guests



### Unlocking Opportunities: Navigating the Business Grants Landscape

Adrian Langdon

171 registered guests



### Honouring Your Personal Vision and Values - The Key to Achieving Success and Fulfilment

Dianna Schinella

132 registered guests



### AI and the Future of Business: What, How, NOW

Stewart Marshall

199 registered guests



### Empowering Women: Transforming Women's Health with AI

Dr Ariella Heffernan-Marks

88 registered guests



### Five to Thrive: Essential Wellbeing Hacks for Busy Professionals

Khyati Bhatia

117 registered guests



### Building a Marketing Machine That Converts

Racquel Collard

110 guests



### Maximising Social Impact in Your Brand Story

Tiff Ng

126 registered guests



### Cultivating a Culture That Embraces AI Innovation

Dave Clare

103 registered guests



### Beyond Change: Leading with Compassion for True Transformation

Jaymie Rowland

71 registered guests

# ADVANCING ECONOMIC EQUALITY

## COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT



Free membership to a community of Entrepreneurs, business leaders, C-suite executives, Founders and Investors

The Rare Birds community exists to create high impact and meaningful connections that enable members to increase their capabilities and expand their networks. As a social impact organisation, we are driven by a desire to build businesses and support the people who run them.



**SOCIAL  
MEDIA  
2024**



**FACEBOOK**

20,334



**LINKEDIN**

5,917



**INSTAGRAM**

4,476

*HOURS OF GOOD WILL*

**IN 2024 OUR  
COMMUNITY  
GAVE A TOTAL OF**

**9,708 HOURS =**

**\$1,456,200**

**70K  
MEMBERS**

**1,203  
MENTORS**

**11**

PEER-TO-PEER  
SESSIONS FOR  
MENTORS

**2**

IN-PERSON EVENTS



# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT

## KEY EVENT: International Women's Day Panel Discussion 'The Women's Financial Wellness Roadmap'

UN theme 2024: Accelerating Gender Equality Through Economic Empowerment.

MC'd by Rare Birds Founder and CEO Jo Burston, a panel of financial planning and economic empowerment experts discussed topics such as: How do women define and achieve financial independence at every life stage; setting and hitting financial goals; investing and optimising income; begin planning for retirement early; the roadmap for financial wellness.

### SPEAKERS:

- Michelle Baltazar, Editor-in-Chief Money Magazine
- Christina Chun, COO Social Enterprise Australia
- Julia Scott, Founder Love Luck Wealth
- Carden Calder, Founder Bluechip Communication
- Melissa Cuturich, Founder Diva Financial



# ADVANCING ECONOMIC EQUALITY **ADVOCACY SNAPSHOT**

**ALWAYS  
ACTIVE**

Rare Birds and its high profile Ambassadors publically advocate for Diversity and Inclusion in business.

Rare Birds Founder and CEO Jo Burston is an active and vocal advocate for Diversity and Inclusion and improving entrepreneurship and leadership opportunities for women as well as other under-represented demographics. She is a recognised thought leader and sought after speaker in the gender equality space.



**JO BURSTON  
SOCIAL  
MEDIA  
2024**

 **FACEBOOK**  
4,700

 **LINKEDIN**  
23,330

 **INSTAGRAM**  
4,247

**SPEAKER EVENTS**

**OPTUS  
ROADSHOW**  
**PEARCEY AWARDS**  
**WOMEN IN  
PROPERTY**

**21**

**AMBASSADORS**

**242**

**MENTIONS  
ON SOCIAL MEDIA**

**3**

**SPEAKING EVENTS  
KEYNOTES, MC AND  
PANEL PRESENTATIONS  
BY CEO JO BURSTON**



## SPEAKER EVENTS

### OPTUS



Optus Business launched the **Optus Business Plus Roadshow**, a dynamic series of regional and metropolitan events designed to support and inspire SMEs. The roadshow featured leading mentors including Mark Bouris, Chairman of Yellow Brick Road; Jo Burston, Founder and CEO of Rare Birds; and Jamal Elsheikh, Founder of One Love Australia. Together, they shared valuable insights on business growth, resilience, and innovation with an engaged audience. In her address, Jo Burston spoke passionately about the critical value of women entrepreneurs and business owners, particularly in regional and rural areas of Australia—emphasising their potential to drive local economic growth, foster inclusive communities, and create lasting impact through innovation and leadership.

**AUDIENCE: 80**



## SPEAKER EVENTS



Jo Burston, awarded the **Pearcey Foundation NSW Entrepreneur of the Year** in 2012, has remained a prominent figure in the ICT sector. In 2024, she returned as MC for the NSW Awards, where she also delivered a keynote address highlighting the progress and national impact of Rare Birds. Jo's presentation was met with strong acknowledgement from many ICT industry leaders, who praised Rare Birds' role in fostering entrepreneurship and driving meaningful change.

**AUDIENCE: 200**



## SPEAKER EVENTS

### WOMEN IN PROPERTY



The inaugural event of the **Women in Property Sydney Chapter** showcased the enthusiasm and determination of a community committed to advancing equality and diversity in what has long been a male-dominated industry. With an audience of 130 attendees, the event brought together both women and men from across the property sector—demonstrating a shared commitment to collaboration, mutual support, and meaningful change.

Jo Burston spoke powerfully about the role everyone must play in actively driving equality, emphasising that meaningful progress depends on both women and men working together as allies. She highlighted the importance of shared leadership, visibility, and accountability to ensure long-term cultural change.

**AUDIENCE: 130**



# SOCIAL MEDIA MENTIONS



**Raquel Medrano Clemente** · 1st

Empowering Conversations that Change the World.  
8mo · Edited · 0

After 6 years as a Mentor with [Inspiring Rare Birds](#), I am closing this chapter as I move onto new adventures in my life.

It has been an honour to be trusted by companies including [Seven West Media](#), [Uber](#), [WesTrac Cat](#), [American Express](#), [Rainy Day Recruitment](#), [BlueRock](#), in supporting their leaders and executives during personal and professional transitions, even during the extremely challenging times we all faced 4 years ago.

Mentoring is certainly not a way one street; I have learnt so much and have been infinitely inspired by the vision, purpose and drive of so many individuals that came into this very intimate relationship with a dream and a desire, and left with an altered life, as did I.

Thanks [Jo Burston](#) for that first conversation we had in Perth, which inspired me to join this cause, and to every single person in the IRB team, all the mentors that have walked alongside me throughout these years... it takes a very special kind of person to stand for the greatness of others: I admire you all. You have enriched my life in ways you'll never know.

And to every single one of my mentees (I wish I could tag you but you know who you are!) I love you, I am grateful you are still in my life and that I can call you my friend.

If you ever thought about mentoring, I highly recommend [Inspiring Rare Birds](#). Flick [Sarah McLachlan](#) or [Teegan Diamond](#) a message, or check out their website here: <https://lnkd.in/gFQ3YyJy>. - And so, the adventure continues!

**MENTOR CALL-OUT**



**Party Higher: Wireless Headphone Entertainment Specialist**  
**Inspiring Rare Birds**  
**American Express**



**Kirstie Fisher** · 1st

Business Consultant & Mentor / Featured Author - Between Worlds (Ashwin...  
10mo · 0

I've always believed in the power of mentorship to unlock potential and guide careers. I'm thrilled to share that I've reached a milestone of over 10 mentoring sessions at Inspiring Rare Birds, earning the Mentor badge. This journey has been incredibly rewarding, and I look forward to continuing to support and inspire others in our industry! #MentorTogether



**Dianna Schinella** · 1st

Founder, Business & Career Mentor | Sales & Partnerships Strategist | Em...  
8mo · Edited · 0

A little while back, I had the opportunity to be part of something really special. I mentored Paul Rosenberg, the founder of Party Higher, through the American Express Rare Birds mentorship competition. Paul's story is pretty remarkable - what started as a fascination with silent discos at a festival has grown into an innovative business that's making a real difference and creating memorable experiences all over Australia.

We worked through some key challenges, like staffing issues post-lockdown and expanding into exciting new areas like haptic vest technology for the hearing-impaired.

It's been amazing to see Paul succeed and really take things to the next level. Seeing Paul scale his team, implement game-changing ideas, and achieve 43% year-on-year growth has been incredibly rewarding.

This experience reminded me once again of how valuable collaboration and mentorship can be. When you're clear on your purpose and have the right support in your corner, it can make a world of difference.

Whether you're looking for guidance or thinking about mentoring someone yourself, it's such a rewarding outcome for both parties.

If you're curious to learn more, feel free to check out the article here.

[Party Higher: Wireless Headphone Entertainment Specialist](#)  
[Inspiring Rare Birds](#)  
[American Express](#)



**Heather Disher** **Author**

Certified Chair - Advisory Boards | Director, NED & Chair | Ad...

**Teegan Diamond** Thank you. [Inspiring Rare Birds](#) offers so much to so many. I'm honoured to be a part of serving your community.

Love · 0 · 1 | Reply



**Alyse Sue** + Following

Pre-sales Architect @ PALO IT | Founder building enterprise-grade AI age...  
1yr · 0

I gave a fun keynote for [Inspiring Rare Birds](#) and [City of Sydney](#) event on using emerging tech for productivity.

Then joined a panel with:

- [Katie Heathcote](#) from [Investment NSW](#)
- [Angela Clark](#) from [WalletNation](#)
- [Phil Hayes-St Clair](#) from [Drop Bio Health](#)

It's worth looking into [Inspiring Rare Birds](#) programs.

It was founded by [Jo Burston](#) with the objective of advancing economic equality.

Program features:

- Connecting female founders with mentors. Learning from those who've been there done that can't be underestimated
- Learning how to master different aspects of business through masterclasses, workshops and panel discussions
- Meeting and networking with fellow founders. Knowing you're not alone really helps

Thanks again for having me [Teegan Diamond](#)!

Reach out if you're thinking of joining the next program 😊



# SOCIAL MEDIA MENTIONS



**Doug Garske** • 1st  
Creative Event Producer | Problem-Solver | Connector of People and Ideas  
11mo • Edited •

I am a Mentor with [Inspiring Rare Birds](#) and this term I am working with [Nicholas Brbot](#) and [Taylor Brbot](#) who created a really interesting business [Cat Harness Australia](#). They were finalists in the Rare Birds + [Uber](#) Business Booster competition to win a share of \$100,000. Tonight they came second and won \$30k to help them take the next step in growing their business.  
Here at Uber HQ Sydney, with [Bree Kirkham, F5 Collective](#), - one of the judges.  
Link in comment below...



51

6 comments • 1 repost



**Caitlin Guilfoyle** • 1st  
Modern Work Leader | Speaker | Coach and Mentor | Board Member  
[Visit my store](#)  
3mo •

There was one main takeaway in my masterclass with [Inspiring Rare Birds](#) on building a career with purpose and progress: your career is yours to shape.

The workplace is evolving fast, and the most successful professionals aren't just waiting for opportunities - they're actively building their skills, networks, and confidence to create them.

Some key takeaways from the session:

- A growth mindset is key – The ability to learn, adapt, be curious, embrace challenges and learn from mistakes opens your mind and opportunities
- Your career path may not be linear – Success isn't always about climbing a ladder. Sometimes it's about exploring different paths, taking strategic risks, and pivoting when needed
- Build your inner circle – A small group of trusted peers who advocate for each other, share opportunities, and provide honest support can be one of the most powerful career accelerators
- Skill stacking is ongoing – Continually building diverse skills and knowledge from different jobs and experiences, allows you to create a unique and powerful set of abilities that advances you forward
- Your personal brand speaks before you do – How you show up, add value, and build trust shapes opportunities
- Mentors provide guidance and perspective – They help you develop skills, navigate challenges, and set career goals by sharing their experiences and insights

However you define success, the best investment you can make is in your own growth. And remember that progress is made from a series of steps, however small.

[Sarah McLachlan Teegan Diamond](#)



**Kay Godfrey -Up Up and Away, Bookkeeping Soft...** • 2nd  
Implementation and Training on Xero and Quickbooks as well as on-goin...  
1mo •

Did you know that I am a mentor for [Inspiring Rare Birds](#)?  
Here is a link to a recent post:

<https://lnkd.in/gbnwcrHZ>



**Kay Godfrey -Up Up and Away, Bookkeeping Soft...** • 1st  
Implementation and Training on Xero and Quickbooks as well as on-goin...  
1yr • Edited •

Enjoying the monthly coffee catchups with [Inspiring Rare Birds](#)



**Kate Myshinskaya** • 1st  
Senior Transformation lead. Ph.D. MBA. PROSCI  
3mo •

Celebrating 12 Months as a Mentor with Rare Birds!

A year ago, I embarked on a journey with Inspiring Rare Birds, and I'm proud to celebrate my 12-month anniversary as a mentor! This experience has been incredibly rewarding, and I am truly inspired by the achievements of my mentees. Seeing their growth, confidence, and success has been one of the most fulfilling aspects of my career.

I deeply appreciate the Rare Birds community for fostering such a powerful network of collaboration and support. The ability to share insights, guide talented individuals, and be part of their transformation journey is something I truly value.

💡 As I continue this journey, I am open to mentoring new mentees—helping them overcome challenges, define their vision, and create a clear path toward their professional and personal goals. Whether you're looking to navigate career transitions, develop leadership skills, or refine your strategy, I'd be happy to support you.

To my network—thank you for your ongoing collaboration and encouragement! Let's continue to [#MentorTogether](#) and make an impact!

#Mentorship #RareBirds #Leadership #CareerGrowth #Transformation



Katerina Ali 1st

Founder & CEO at Immersifi. A white-label loyalty and clienteling platform...

[Visit my website](#)

1yr

Presenting the keynote last week to unpack the future of Marketing and Emerging Tech was more than an honor at the InnovateHer night with **Inspiring Rare Birds**— it was an exploration into the vast potential that lies ahead. The keynote was a deep dive into the basics of Web3, the consumer landscape of tomorrow, the metamorphosis of marketing, shopping experiences, and the unfolding chapter that **Immersifi** is scripting—from the tactile world to the limitless realms of the metaverse.

As we discussed AI's current capabilities, its transformative power in marketing, and the way it's reshaping consumer interactions. The discourse on adaptability and adoption revealed to me that:

People aren't afraid of change. They are afraid of being changed.

The true challenge isn't the technology itself—it's in nurturing a mindset ripe for evolution. While pondering over AI felt like a glimpse into an immediate future, conversations about the metaverse and the necessity for brands to foster a community-centric approach felt like a stretch for many. It's clear that envisioning a future shaped by digital spaces is still daunting for some.

But therein lies the pivotal role of Immersifi. We're not just builders; we are facilitators of change. We're here to guide brands through this transition, to integrate new technologies with their existing systems.

In a world that's rapidly pivoting to digital-first experiences, it's imperative that brands adapt—or risk being left behind as passive witnesses to the relentless march of progress.

Let's not wait for the future to change us. Let's change to meet the future.

Ashi Bhat Nicole McInnes GAICD Sarah Melrose City of Sydney Teegan Diamond Jo Burston

#DigitalTransformation #FutureOfMarketing #AI #Metaverse

#CommunityBuilding #Immersifi #ai



Uber

3,125,056 followers

2w

Took a drive with **Mark Bouris AM** and **Emma Foley** to chat about Uber x **Inspiring Rare Birds #BusinessBooster** program in Australia and New Zealand

It's all about helping people driving with Uber or delivering with Uber Eats turn their business ideas into reality, including getting free access to:

Exclusive Masterclasses

Funding opportunities

And practical tools to help them achieve their entrepreneurial dreams

Find out more! [uber.com/businessbooster](http://uber.com/businessbooster)



Judy Barker 2nd

Founder & Principal Consultant at Zenith HR | Leadership Dev...

9mo

[+ Follow](#)

...

I'm so thrilled to receive my official mentoring badge from **Inspiring Rare Birds**! It's such an honour to be given the opportunity to work with developing and future leaders in our region and I can't wait to watch them flourish as they progress in their chosen careers.

#mentor #zenithhr #careers #illawarra #shoalhaven #humanresources



Michelle Kvello 2nd

Fractional CFO | Speaker | Top 50 Women in Accounting 2021 & 2024 | T...

[Visit my website](#)

4w

Recently, the Small Business Organisations Australia ran a survey, from that survey 78.26% of respondents stated that Financial Management Skills were some of the most essential skills for running a business.

Are you struggling to run your business finances? You're not alone if you are. I often have conversations with business owners who feel the exact same way.

I always say - don't be an ostrich, if your money is messing with your mind, then your mind is messing with your money.

I have two ways you can work with me in the next month to get on top of your finances.

First up on the 29th May you can join me and **Teegan Diamond** the team from **Inspiring Rare Birds**, for my webinar - How to run your business finances like a boss!

<https://lnkd.in/e5ZiuZUt>



Deborah Power 2nd

Financial Mentor and Cashflow Strategist | I help Female Business Owner...

[Book an appointment](#)

1mo

I'm so proud to have been selected as Mentor for the Inspiring Rare Birds - Business Booster Program 2024.

Being able to help emerging leaders drive forward business and leadership outcomes is why I do what I do!

Take a look at the incredible work that **Inspiring Rare Birds** are doing led by **Jo Burston**

Their mission is to create, support and promote diverse and inclusive workplaces, where opportunities in entrepreneurship and leadership exist for everyone.

**#inspiringrarebirds #thefemalecfo #smallbusinessowner #mentoring**



To discuss this report, please contact:  
**Founder and CEO Jo Burston** [jo.burston@inspiringrarebirds.com](mailto:jo.burston@inspiringrarebirds.com)