

BUILD A BETTER BUSINESS:

Ideas and inspiration from the 2024 WYNnovation Festival



CONTENTS

Better together: What we learned at the
2024 WYNnovation Festival 1

The EQ leaders ‘Unlock Your Leadership
Confidence’ Masterclass 3

How to boost retention and employee morale3

Perspective matters

The Summit..... 7

Elevate your events.....7

The role of storytelling in innovation.....9

Should you get political?.....11

The intricate relationship between people,
place, and technology12

Cybersecurity pub trivia14

The Pitch Finale 15

Pitch perfect.....15

And the winner is...18

Why we all benefit when we support
women in STEM.....19

Final thoughts 21

Better together: What we learned at the 2024 WYNnovation Festival

In our increasingly digital era, it's natural for business leaders to want to leverage technology to maximise productivity and minimise costs. But a relentless pursuit of machine-driven efficiency gains shouldn't come entirely at the expense of human interaction, which has its [own immense value](#).

Whether they occur between your employees and customers, or within the team itself, authentic, positive in-person exchanges can increase [loyalty, trust and creativity, and boost mental health and overall wellbeing](#).

As our reliance on tech continues to ramp up, the 2024 WYNnovation Festival, which took place from 13-17 May, was a timely reminder to reconsider our connection to each other, the environment, and ourselves.

Organised by Wyndham City Council and sponsored by Victoria University and Workforce Australia, this year's events centred around the business benefits of relationship-building and collaboration. Diversity, and its potential to inspire innovation and improve outcomes, was another major theme.



The festival attracted 400 overall attendees from Wyndham and beyond, drawing 50 people to the EQ Leaders Masterclass, 250 to The Summit, and 50 each to The Pitch Finale and wrap-up celebration. Festival-goers swapped business cards, LinkedIn information, business stories and ideas, and in doing so, gained the kind of insights that will continue to flower and fruit for months to come.

For those who weren't able to attend the 2024 WYNNovation Festival, or who want to revisit some of the key takeaways, this eBook features some of its freshest and most exciting thought-starters. We hope they help you build a better, stronger, more successful business.



1

The EQ Leaders 'Unlock Your Leadership Confidence' Masterclass



HOW TO BOOST RETENTION AND EMPLOYEE MORALE

Ever since the pandemic, one of the most common things Emma Costin hears from the businesses she works with is that they “just can’t retain staff”. So, her masterclass was all about the importance of building trust and connection as a business leader.

The aim was to help people improve their leadership and communication skills, team dynamics, and general self-awareness.

Key takeaways

1. Want to upskill your team?

Then opt for experiential learning over boring boardroom presentations and “death by PowerPoint”. Practical, hands-on learning creates a stronger impression, which means the takeaways last longer. (The more novel and “out there” the experience, the better.)

2. Slow down.

Sometimes we can be so focused on a goal that we forget about the people helping us achieve it. Take a moment to check in with your team on a personal level and do some relationship-building first. You’ll end up with greater buy-in.

3. Communication is so important.

It’s not just what you say, but how you say it. Make sure your message has been heard and understood correctly, and that you adapt your approach to suit different people and audiences.

4. Your energy affects others.

So try to stay grounded, calm, and rational. Aim for self-awareness in how you’re coming across, which means looking for clues about how you’re being received.

5. Be adaptable and explore alternatives. If you feel yourself “taking flight”, or getting flustered, pause for a couple of breaths and reevaluate your approach.

6. Get curious.

Emma noted that “80% of performance issues stem from will, not skill.” So check in with underperforming employees — it’s less likely they can’t do something than that they don’t want to, don’t see the point, or otherwise aren’t fully on board.

7. Emphasise the positive.

It takes six or seven positive remarks to offset one piece of negative feedback. Keep confidence high for a happy, engaged team.

Extra resources

- ✓ [Dare to Lead Hub - Brené Brown \(brenebrown.com\)](https://brenebrown.com)
- ✓ [The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org)
- ✓ [Amy Edmondson: Fearless - Creating Psychological Safety for Learning, Innovation, and Growth \(youtube.com\)](https://youtube.com)
- ✓ [Hidden Brain | Hidden Brain Media](#)
- ✓ [Nudge Podcast](#)



PERSPECTIVE MATTERS

Fixed mindset

- Thinks intelligence and performance are static,
- Sees effort as fruitless,
- Avoids challenges,
- Gives up easily when there are obstacles,
- Ignores criticism,
- Feels threatened by the success of others.

vs

Growth mindset

- Knows intelligence and performance can be developed,
- Sees effort as the path to mastery,
- Persists in the face of obstacles,
- Learns from criticism,
- Finds lessons and inspiration in the success of others.



2

The Summit



ELEVATE YOUR EVENTS

Do you put on events for your business network?
Mykel Dixon, experience designer and host of the
spectacular 2024 WYNnovation Summit, has some
tips to shake up your next shindig.


These are his “quick and easy” wins:

Get a few couches... Throw in a few high chairs, get a few lounges, or a rug and a beanbag. Use what’s already in the venue. From the foyer or the green room! Think diversity, give alternatives, create an array of options when it comes to seating. It’ll fire up the curiosity and creativity of your guests!

Prioritise the lighting! Natural light over fluorescent. Lamps over downlights. Splash of colour always adds drama. It’s worth investing in lights as they drive so much of the atmosphere!

Live band over Spotify playlist! Sure, I’ve been pushing this agenda for a decade but it’s such a missed opportunity. Putting world-class musos to work, mid-week, architecting the vibe and energy. Responsive to the moment. Ready to shift gears as the day unfolds. Pure magic!

Disco ball. Absolute no-brainer! Why are we even talking about this? Every event needs a disco ball. Full stop. I will not discuss this any more.



“...with minimal budget and the courage to keep the cynics at bay, you can create something a little more dramatic, theatrical or experiential for your next event!”

—MYKEL DIXON
EXPERIENCE DESIGNER AND
HOST OF THE SUMMIT.

THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN INNOVATION

Antoinette Lattouf's very personal and moving keynote address focused on relating to your audience through story-telling. The multi-award-winning journalist and founder of Media Diversity Australia emphasised the holistic business benefits of diversity and inclusion, reiterating that differences are assets.

Key takeaways

1. Speak their language.

If you aren't catering and speaking to your audience, they'll go elsewhere.

2. Data is everything.

When it comes to knowing your audience, data and analytics are pure gold. Invest in collecting them however you can — e.g. customer surveys, social media metrics, website analytics.

3. Welcome diversity — of thought, experience and perspective.

Every area of your business will benefit from diversity and inclusion when it's done well — from your product team, to people's communication skills, and their ability to manage and resolve conflict.

4. Know your story.

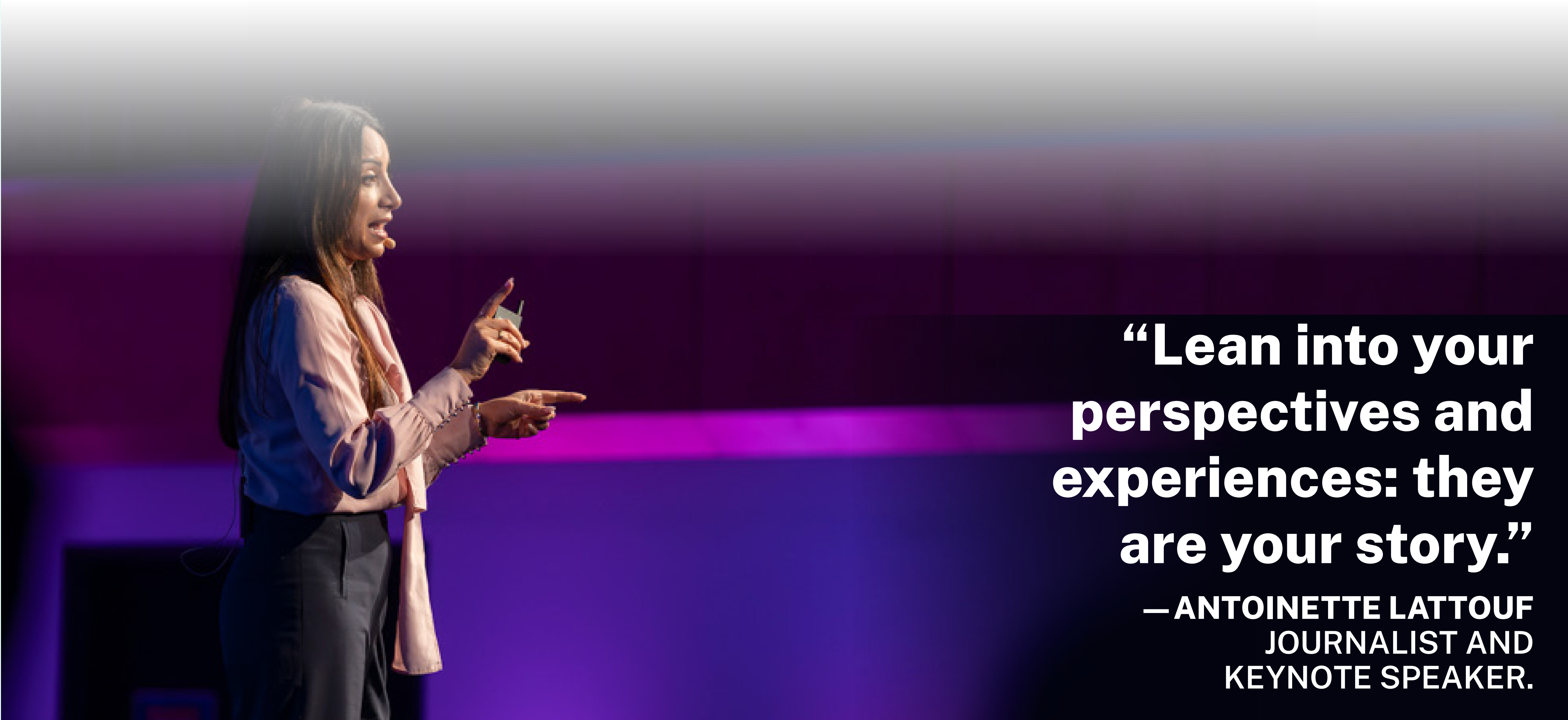
- Everybody — and every business — has a story. Make sure you know yours, and that you [spend time crafting it](#). Why?
- We are feeling beings and Gen Z in particular pay with their hearts! Storytelling can help you tap into people's emotions.
- Stories are more memorable than data and numbers, and offer a point of difference.
- When you really understand your background, your values, and what you stand for, you can get involved in local and international conversations.

5. Don't fake it.

Honesty and authenticity will always yield the best results.

Extra resources

- ✓ [How to Lose Friends and Influence White People](#) by Antoinette Lattouf
-Penguin Books Australia
- ✓ [Six steps to embedding DEI into the fabric of your company](#)
(smartcompany.com.au)

A photograph of Antoinette Lattouf, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a light pink long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers. She is standing on a stage, gesturing with her hands as if speaking. The background is a blurred stage setting with purple and blue lighting.

“Lean into your perspectives and experiences: they are your story.”

**— ANTOINETTE LATTOUF
JOURNALIST AND
KEYNOTE SPEAKER.**

SHOULD YOU GET POLITICAL?

Well, according to Antoinette:

96%

OF AUSTRALIANS

believe it's important for brands to "do good". By which they mean paying fair rates and the appropriate taxes, and offering stable and fair employment.

BUT
50%

OF AUSSIES

would boycott a brand over its position in current wars and conflicts.

AND A FURTHER
50%

think corporations should only get involved in social and political matters if they genuinely reflect the brand's purpose, values, and products.



THE INTRICATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLE, PLACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Barrie Barton’s inspirational keynote address provided a lot of food for thought. The [Right Angle](#) founder and urbanist encouraged business leaders to think hard about the interests of the people who work for them, and the impact they have on the places and communities they inhabit.

Key takeaways

1. Business builds great places.

Enterprise is about much more than local economics. Places that foster employment opportunities are generally where people are proud to live and care for the community around them.

2. Humanise the technical.

Business often forces us to abstract what we do and forget the real people who are touched by our work. You may spend a lot of time looking at big data in spreadsheets, but try to also maintain a “small data” discipline. This means meeting with and talking to real people — the individuals or small groups impacted by your work.

3. Diversity breeds life.

The business world and our cities are full of “plantation thinking” — reproducing a saleable product without variation so that it does as well today as it did yesterday. That’s why our suburbs all look the same. But real innovation requires us to adapt and change for the better, and to never be satisfied with the same result. [Expose yourself to different people](#) and their different ideas. Inject different ingredients into your life and work.

4. Disruption is ugly.

Disruption used to be a fun word to use in the start-up game — then Covid showed us what real disruption looks like and it wasn't very fun at all. If you talk a brave game about disrupting, you better be capable of dealing with the moments it gets ugly and scary.

5. Just because it can, doesn't mean it should.

Technology can save time and money but there is actually more to life. For example, "Click & Collect" is convenient but it takes away human connection and employment, leaving us with lesser communities. Technology should only be embraced after critical thought.

6. Don't confuse popularity with value.

The business world is full of people telling stories about their products, without really considering whether that storytelling is worth the effort. If it doesn't build customer relationships and convert sales, it's just vanity.

Extra resources

- ✓ [Matt Klein's Substack](#) on cultural theory
- ✓ [Zygmunt Bauman on love and fear](#) in 032C Magazine
- ✓ [Mutualism](#) by Venkatesh Rao on Ribbonfarm Studio



CYBERSECURITY PUB TRIVIA

Do you know?

- 1.** Which type of malware is designed to replicate itself from one computer to another without human intervention?
- 2.** What is the minimum number of different “factor types” required for valid multi-factor authentication?
- 3.** Or what to do if you receive an email with an attachment from a sender you don't recognise?

John Burgess, the Education Manager of Cyber Security and Digital Technology Programs at Victoria University, ran a “cybersecurity pub trivia” workshop at The Summit.

Unfortunately, too many workplace cybersecurity awareness programs are “boring and ineffective”, John says. He wanted to inspire business owners to [create more interactive, fun and engaging ways](#) to raise cybersecurity awareness, so that the information really sticks.

Answers

- 1.** Worm.
- 2.** Two.
- 3.** Possible answers: Delete it, Report it as Junk/Spam.

3

The Pitch Finale



PITCH PERFECT

Phil Ore, Co-CEO and Chief Mentor of 25Eight and WYNNnovation 2024 Pitch Competition Trainer and Mentor, has a few hot tips to take your pitching skills to the next level, which he kindly provided via this short Q&A.

Q. What should SMEs focus on when researching potential sponsors, partners, or investors?

A. “Finding a perfect sponsor, partner or investor requires strategic thinking, which will enable you to articulate your unique value proposition. The more you have worked on your purpose, market position, target customers and your brand and messaging, the easier it is to find someone who aligns with your goals.”

Top tip: Find other businesses who have worked with them and ask them about their experience.

Q. What’s the secret of a compelling pitch for SMEs seeking funding or partnerships?

A. “Strategy is not a swear word! If you have a really good understanding of the market and how you stand out from the crowd, it will be easier for people to see why they should buy into what you are doing.”

Top tip: Consider your audience and don't use technical jargon if people won't understand it.

Q. What techniques or strategies help a pitch stand out?

A. “Our ‘6 pillars’ framework explains how to tell a human-centred story. That is, how to create a persona of a customer and tell the story from their perspective.”

Top tip: Once you’ve explained your purpose, describe the problem and then how you can help solve it or improve the situation. Follow this up by highlighting your expertise, whether other customers similar to the persona you’ve created want it, and finish with a call to action.

Q. What are common pitching mistakes, and how can they be avoided?

A. “The most common mistake is starting by talking about you and your business first rather than talking about the problem that exists. Business is all about relationships.

Think of your favourite brand, then think about how it makes you feel. Business is about having emotional connections and people.

Top tip: If you went on a date and spent the first 10 minutes talking about yourself and how amazing you are, do you think you would get a second date?

Q. What are common challenges SMEs face when pitching, and how can they overcome them?

A. “Being able to change the length of the pitch to suit the situation. Meeting someone at a networking event versus a formal meeting in front of customers means you need to adapt.”

Top tip: Tell a story that others can share on your behalf. If you do this then others will be your unpaid marketing department and advocate what you do.

Extra resources

- ✓ [What to include in your pitch: Early stage vs Scaling Startup — 25eight](#)
- ✓ [10 common mistakes a Startup makes when pitching — 25eight](#)
- ✓ [25eight's Pitch Training Program — 25eight](#)



“Pitching is about testing and refining. There is no such thing as a perfect pitch. Use it for market research and modify it for the next time you pitch.”

— PHIL ORE
CO-CEO AND CHIEF MENTOR OF 25EIGHT.

AND THE WINNER IS...

On Friday 17 May, five Wyndham start-ups took part in a Pitch competition. The [overall winner was Restify](#), a human-centric platform to support first-generation immigrants who are dealing with the loss of a loved one and trying to navigate unfamiliar Australian systems and processes.

Its founders Karthik Viswanathan and Devipriya Selvaraj took home a \$10,000 cash prize from Wyndham City Council, two 12-month memberships with [SPARK Innovation Hub](#) and [The Startup Network](#), and a \$10,000 credit with [Amazon Web Services](#).

“We’re in the ideation stage so this win will help us to work with community groups in the local area and start helping people,” Devipriya said.



“The Pitch competition is a wonderful opportunity for all the local businesses to pitch their ideas, and events like this are a great networking opportunity to connect with people in the area.”

**—DEVIPRIYA SELVARAJCO
FOUNDER OF RESTIFY.**

WHY WE ALL BENEFIT WHEN WE SUPPORT WOMEN IN STEM

At The Pitch finale, iSTEM Co. presented the findings from a first-of-its-kind research project for Wyndham, released exclusively at the WYNovation Festival.

The report into employment challenges for women in STEM — particularly First Nations women and women from diverse and multicultural backgrounds — was commissioned by Wyndham City Council via the SPARK Innovation Hub.



KEY FINDINGS

27%

Despite accounting for **36% of enrolments** in university STEM courses, women only make up **27% of the workforce** across all STEM industries.

43%

Only **43%** of women with STEM qualifications are currently engaged in STEM-qualified work.

15%

Only **15%** of STEM-qualified jobs are held by women.

8%

Just **23% of senior management** and **8% of CEOs** in STEM-qualified industries are women.

18%

On average, women still **earn 18% less** than men across all STEM industries.

The Opportunity

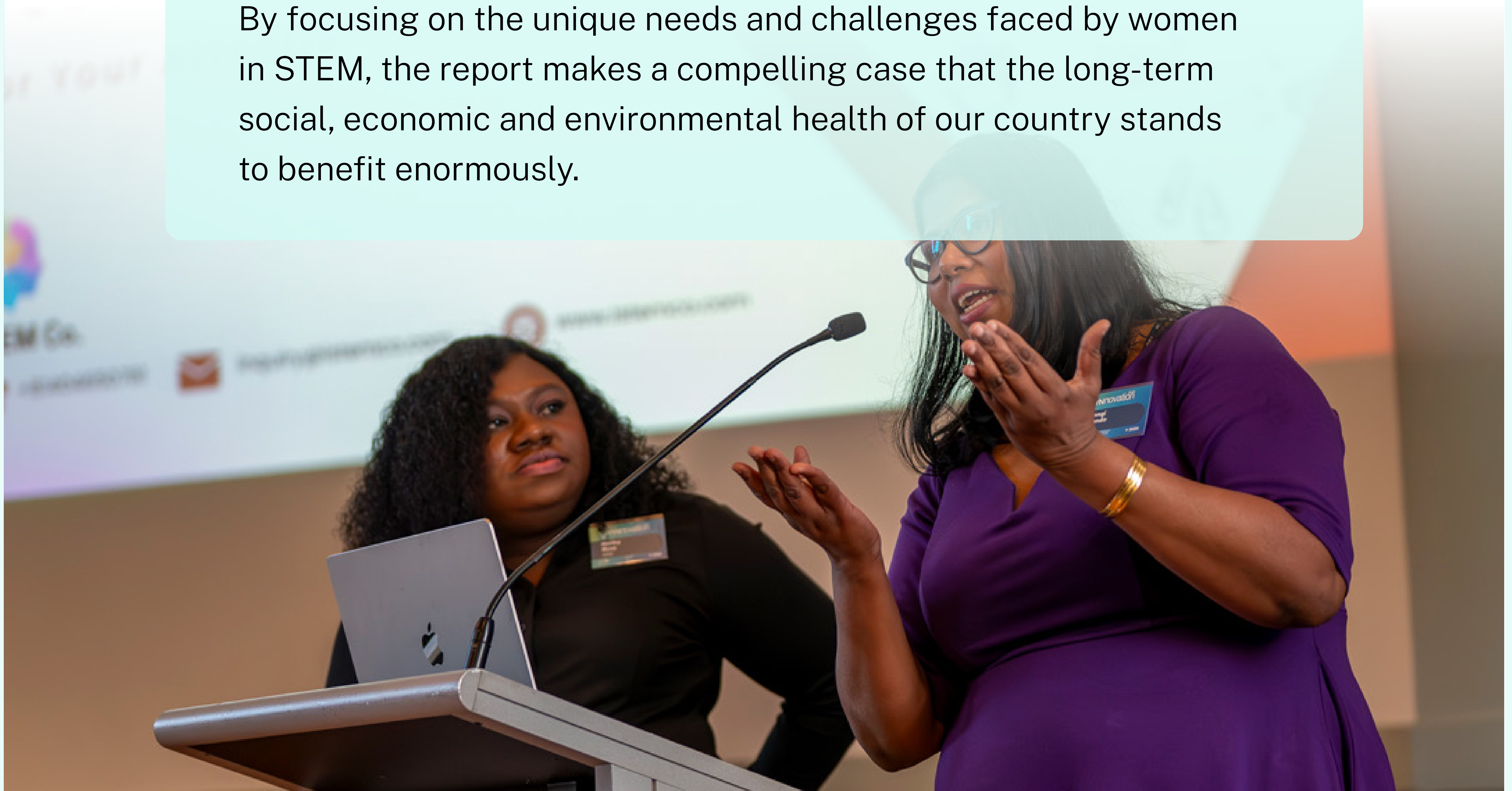
The report estimates that by 2025, 90% of the jobs in Australia will require STEM skills, and that by 2030, Australia will need an additional 1.3 million tech workers.

The report also found that barriers to women fully participating in the workforce cost the Australian economy \$128 billion. And that gender-diverse teams could increase their financial performance by 25%, and ethnic-diverse teams by 36%.

Furthermore, iSTEM Co. found that 62% of women with STEM qualifications are open to entrepreneurship or starting their own business.

To capitalise on the opportunities presented here, iSTEM Co. proposed a pre-accelerator program to encourage and support women with STEM qualifications to explore entrepreneurship or commercialise their innovative ideas.

By focusing on the unique needs and challenges faced by women in STEM, the report makes a compelling case that the long-term social, economic and environmental health of our country stands to benefit enormously.



Final thoughts

This eBook has been only a small selection of all the incredible ideas and insights to come out of the 2024 WYNnovation Festival. We hope you found them as inspirational and reinvigorating as we did.

To experience the magic for yourself, search #Wynnovation for some love from Wynnovators on LinkedIn. You can also get involved in WYNnovation 2025, and, in the meantime, check out Wyndham's economic development programs, initiatives and other events.

Don't forget about the power of connection and keep in touch.

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