

## 16<sup>th</sup> July- Central Coast “Seeds of Change Accelerator “Roadshow Article

The Central Coast roadshow for the Mars “Seeds of Change was hosted by Central Coast Industry Connect in partnership with Regional Development Australia Central Coast on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

The Central Coast was the last of 5 destinations for the Mars “SEEDS OF CHANGE” Accelerator Roadshow that had also travelled to Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. There has been fantastic engagement and interest from nearly 300 people in attendance. The Central Coast, the only regional destination, punched above its weight, with 50 people in attending.

Mars Food Australia launched its new SEEDS OF CHANGE™ Accelerator in May of this year with the aim to support the next generation of food businesses transforming the way we eat.

The Seeds of Change Accelerator, in partnership with Food Innovation Australia Limited (FIAL), will select six Australian participants to join the program. The accelerator has been designed to help early stage Australian food-focused companies fast-track growth and build a healthier and more sustainable future.

SEEDS of CHANGE is looking for next-generation businesses that are making a mark on the future of the food in one or more of the following ways:

- Sharing World Flavours
- Easy-Meal Solutions
- Responsible Food
- Creating with Care
- Better for You
- Plant-Based Eating
- Accessing Asia
- Food Manufacturing and Value Chain Transformation”

The event began with a networking session that was followed by a number of speakers to carry the formal part of the evening.

Alex Blow, Innovation Manager – R&D at Mars welcomed everybody and gave a brief overview of the Mars Foods business. Alex was followed by Rachel Cofrancesco representing FIAL who acknowledged the partnership with Mars and spoke about the importance of such a program to the food industry.

Frank Sammut, Executive officer at Central Coast Industry Connect (CCIC), spoke about how CCIC is a founding member of Food innovation Australia Limited and one of only four recipients in Australia to receive funding from the FIAL Cluster funding program. He went on to say “Clusters are important to a region; they are a driver for innovation and regional development and in the context of tonight they can support startups and scale ups in the areas of knowledge, mentoring and networking”

Dr. Christine Pitt, CEO of Food Futures Company and an Advisor to the prospective participant’s in the program, provided an overview of how the program would work with applications closing 19<sup>th</sup> July ,finalist selected to pitch for a spot in the program ,with six organisations moving into the program to undergo a 4 month tailored program, graduating in December of this year.

Christine went on to say “This accelerator has been established as a “No strings attached” program where IP and ownership of the business remains with the business, not a normal occurrence in such programs”

A \$40,000 (AUD) grant is available to the successful applicants with \$20,000 provided with no strings attached and up to \$20,000 towards an agreed business growth plan.

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Finally, the highlight of the evening was the panel discussion with Peter Crane, R&D Director Mars Foods Australia, Danielle Minnebo and Natasja Jirwander founders of West Gosford company “Food to Nourish” which was facilitated by Christine.

After Danielle and Natasja gave an overview of their business Christine posed a number of questions to the panel and then took questions from the audience. Peter Crane made a stand out point: “If you get the people ingredients right, often the business successes come. It’s got to be as much as the people as it is the idea”.

The night concluded with more networking and the opportunity for potential applicants to speak to Mars personnel and Christine about the program.

“The enthusiasm and passion exhibited by our local food and beverage businesses in this process gives me confidence that we will see some Central Coast Finalist” said Frank Sammut.



Panel discussion. From Left to right

Peter Crane, Danielle Minnebo, Natasja Jirwander , Dr. Christine Pitt