

## **ABCN'S *Focus* program - winner of three 2014 Global Best Awards**

The Australian Business Community Network (ABCN) was honoured last week in Brussels with three 2014 Global Best Awards for *Focus* - a leadership development mentoring program for female students from high-needs schools.

Held every second year, the Global Best Awards are hosted by the International education business Partnership Network (IPN) – an international network of education, business and community partnerships which aims to improve and enhance the learning of young people through targeted programs. This year, *Focus* not only received the coveted overall Global Best Award for 2014, but also two awards within the *Partnerships Crossing Boundaries* category – acknowledging programs that create bridges between different socio-economic, cultural or demographic groups.

'We are incredibly proud of the *Focus* program and are delighted to receive this award. It is a unique opportunity for young female students to be mentored by executive women at work – and for many, it will open their eyes to their own potential and new possibilities', says Jacqui Jones, ABCN CEO.

*Focus* was created in response to research indicating that Australian women remain underrepresented in senior roles and leadership positions and are often paid less than their male counterparts. This gender disparity and inequality particularly affects women from disadvantaged communities where there are limited working female role models and outdated stereotypes about the role of women in the workplace.

Initially piloted with Minter Ellison Lawyers in 2012, *Focus* encourages young women to aspire to senior roles, supporting them with the skills and resources they need to realise their leadership potential. Take-up from within ABCN's member companies and response from mentors has been extraordinary - and in 2014 over 580 female high school students from over 70 schools had the opportunity to be mentored by senior female executives.

Student feedback has been outstanding: '*Focus* was a great opportunity to learn about work opportunities and planning. I have never felt more confident about my future and I know I can do it!'

### About ABCN

ABCN is a not-for-profit organisation that partners schools with business through the development and delivery of mentoring programs for students from high-needs schools. A coalition of 35 member companies, and entirely business-funded, it is led by an experienced body of CEOs from well-recognised organisations, who represent a breadth of industries. The focus is on building critical skills, developing leaders and raising aspirations.

Through their Scholarship Foundation, ABCN also provides scholarships to high potential, high needs students. Twelve scholarships were awarded in 2013 with at least another twelve due to be announced at the end of 2014. Winners receive mentoring support and \$7000 over Year 11, Year 12 and their first year of tertiary education.

**For more information on this story or ABCN please contact Amy Weaver on [amy.weaver@abcn.com.au](mailto:amy.weaver@abcn.com.au) or visit [www.abcn.com.au](http://www.abcn.com.au)**