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Written on the 4 January 2017 by James Perkins

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DESPITE the fast-growing number of women studying STEM subjects at school and university, women continue to be underrepresented as tech entrepreneurs, and that is something the Springboard Accelerator Bootcamp is aiming to change.

Springboard is an entrepreneur accelerator for women that was founded in the United States 16 years ago and was established in Australia in 2013. It has 36 Australian alumni, who together have raised \$120 million in capital, including two IPOs for [Flamingo](#) and Adalta.

Springboard Enterprises Australia chair Topaz Conway says the program takes a non-competitive approach to mentoring entrepreneurs.

"For the Springboard program, once selected you become part of the camp and alumni and there is zero competitive process. The women have responded better to this, they are self-competitive and want to do well, but they also want to help each other and our process facilitates this," says Conway.

The 2017 class of 10 Springboard entrepreneurs begins the 10-day camp in February.

Among them is Brisbane-based Sujata Karandikar, co-founder of Unscrabble, a supplier intelligence platform that connects corporations with suppliers.

As Karandikar explains, corporations require a large amount of information with suppliers to meet corporate social responsibility requirements, and often suppliers are forced to complete similar forms over and over for various customers.

"Because there is no efficient way to store this information, they are asked to do it again and again. We have created a system where the information is stored online and it is easy to access," says Karandikar.

She, along with co-founder Steve Mardon, have extensive experience in procurement through working for a number of global mining companies.

"We saw the same problems again and again. Whether it was in banking or government, it was the same problem," says Karandikar.

Unscrabble previously won a startup competition sponsored by Westpac, and then was accepted into the Blue Chilli incubator program, which helped take the idea to the prototype stage.

This positions Unscrabble firmly in the Springboard demographic a company with a prototype ready for investment and growth.

"We have been engaging a few corporates and government entities and actually secured our first enterprise customer a couple of months ago and we have been working closely to them in the New Year to onboard their suppliers onto the platform," says Karandikar.

As Conway says: "The companies need to have a good product in the market that is ready to scale and the business should be ready for growth capital, and it should be looking to the US market".

The women pitch three times during the program: at the start of the bootcamp, at the end and then again at the Dolphin Tank event at the end of the eight-week program.

Mentors work with the entrepreneurs throughout the process and beyond, providing the women with an extensive network of contacts not only in Australia, but through its sister program in the United States.

"We stick with the companies and work with them to keep going we have a network of 650 alumni and thousands of investors; it is the beginning of a much bigger process."

The 10 businesses in the 2017 Springboard class are: Bookmarc, Helen Awali, NSW; CoviU Global Pty Ltd, Silvia Pfeiffer, NSW; Data Creative, Renece Brewster, VIC; Elanation, Katherine Pace, NSW; Instatruck Siobhan Lancaster, WA; Life Cell Marine Safety, Jenny Aiken, NSW; Modibodi, Kristy Chong, NSW; TCPinpoint Rachel Kidwell, SA; Unscrabble, Sujata Karandikar, QLD; and UrbanYou, Noga Edelstein, NSW.



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