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Media release

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Victorian leaders partner with small business to help reduce energy costs

Victoria's emerging talent will gather in Melbourne today with leaders from The Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia (COSBOA), the Victorian Government, and leading energy retailer, EnergyAustralia, in a race to help small businesses reduce their energy costs in Victoria.

The COSBOA Innovation Games – the brainchild of Paddl Co, a startup changing the way professionals find meaningful work experiences – brings together students and graduates with leaders from government, industry, and business to develop innovation projects that deliver high-impact growth for businesses, while also providing emerging talent with access to new networks and valuable experience.

Taking place in the 'Albert by the Lake' Room at the Lakeside Stadium in the Melbourne Sports & Aquatic Centre complex in Albert Park, the day's theme will focus on 'How might EnergyAustralia assist your business to achieve greater control over your energy costs now and in the future?'

COSBOA Chief Executive Officer, Peter Strong explained that many small business owners are being challenged by an unprecedented level of change.

"Small businesses today have to respond to everything from changing consumer preferences to increasing competition from internet retailers and digital service providers, all while trying to convert various opportunities to grow their businesses," Mr Strong said.

"And yet, most small business owners don't have time to think about these challenges and opportunities, let alone develop the necessary solutions.

"We are delighted to partner today with leading energy retailer, EnergyAustralia. They're not just supporting today's event, they're also sending thirty of their leading industry specialists from innovation, operations, pricing, insights, strategy, technology and marketing disciplines.

"These are world-class professionals who understand and have a great passion for energy and helping customers to develop sustainable energy solutions for the future. This commitment reflects EnergyAustralia's commitment to helping customers reduce energy costs and transition to a cleaner energy future."

EnergyAustralia Chief Customer Officer Chris Ryan said business customers have said that keeping their lights on and energy costs under control were big issues and energy companies need to step up to help. Those competing in the COSBOA Innovation Games would take on the challenge of freeing business owners and managers from navigating the complex energy market so they can focus on what they do best.

"We're throwing away the rule book and asking ourselves '*what if? What if there's another way to take the hassle out of running a business?*'", Mr Ryan said. "The transition to a modern, cleaner energy system is already underway but can only succeed if it works for all the community; we need to make sure businesses and households aren't left behind."

The winning pitch as determined by a judging panel will be awarded \$5,000 off their electricity bill by EnergyAustralia; second place \$2,500 and third \$1,000.

Paddl Co. Co-founder and CEO Dominique Fisher described the Games as a win-win, with everyone involved walking away with valuable outcomes.

“Paddl’s commitment to preparing talent for the future of work has led us to develop a methodology in the Innovation Games that enables participants to experience the challenges faced by employers and the role effective employees play in solving them.

“Too often students have told us they can't get experience without a job and can't get a job without experience, and then employers have shared stories with us of the challenges in attracting great talent. Paddl Games provides a solution to both problems.

“For students and grads, the Games provide invaluable experience and potential employment opportunities. For small businesses, the games provide new skill sets, new ways of thinking about product and service development, and the ability to work on real-world challenges. And both our sponsors and the businesses gain access to the next wave of Australian business leaders.

“These challenges are critically important to the Victorian Government as well as COSBOA in support of their members. This is why it made sense for the Victorian Government and COSBOA to partner with Paddl Co. and sponsor the Innovation Games Series as it uniquely addresses these challenges.

“While Paddl Games participants are able to develop innovative IP, which may lead to new products and services, small businesses and emerging talent will also develop skills in critical and design thinking equipping them for the future of work.”

Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade, Martin Pakula said “We’re proud to be supporting our brightest young innovators to use their skills and expertise to help businesses grow, boost the economy and ultimately create more jobs.

“This is an excellent opportunity for university students and graduates to connect with small business and industry, show off what they can do and hopefully go on to future employment.”

Mr. Strong added, “Our hope is that this partnership with the Victorian Government will see the Games not only become an annual event on the COSBOA calendar, but a best practice model for encouraging small business innovation in other Australian states and territories.

“These day-long events unite small business owners with some of the brightest minds in the country to create real-world solutions to their problems with the potential to implement immediately,” Mr. Strong said.

—ENDS—

Business participants

The small business participants on 15 May 2019 include:

1. Bannockburn Pharmacy nominated by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia - [website](#)
2. Foxey's Hangout - [website](#)
3. Blakes Feast - [website](#)
4. Chew Burger - [website](#)
5. Mr Miyagi - [website](#)
6. Only Hospitality Group
7. Endeavour Group - [website](#)
8. 4Fingers Crispy Chicken - [website](#)
9. Tokyo Sushi Kitchen - [website](#)

COSBOA Innovation Games format – 15 May 2019

- Conceived by Paddl Co. and inspired by the popularity of hackathons, Paddl Games Innovation Challenges are high pressure, fun events that are designed to create a real workplace experience and surface innovation for the business. Each team is professionally facilitated and works on an innovation project and then presents their ideas and solutions at the end of the day to a judging panel in a competition to win prizes.
- Ten teams, comprising representatives from a small to medium business, emerging talent and EnergyAustralia employees collaborate in three design sprints: problem framing & ideation; concept design & development; and storytelling & tuning.
- Challenge Labs are manned by EnergyAustralia and are set up to help the team members access expert advice on the day to help them develop their ideas to form a validated solution.
- At the end of the day, each team presents their ideas and solutions to a judging panel that includes: Dominique Fisher, CEO, Paddl Co.; [INSERT JUDGES]
- Throughout the day, Paddl Co. runs an Employer Booth for all business participants to use if they have active employment opportunities and are interested in hiring any of the student/graduates as a free recruitment service for participating employers. These are also an opportunity for emerging talent participants to have a 15-minute career advice chat from industry experts.

About the COSBOA Innovation Games (Victoria) 2018/19 series

Paddl Co. developed Paddl Games in response to the critical need to prepare emerging talent for work. They partnered with The Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia (COSBOA) and the Victorian Government to deliver the COSBOA Innovation Games (Victoria) 2018–19. The Games consist of five day-long events that will see 50 – 70 Victorian businesses work with the state's emerging talent to identify innovative solutions for businesses. Following the success of the first four Games in Hastings, Bendigo and Melbourne, the fifth games event, sponsored by EnergyAustralia, is being held on Wednesday 15 May 2019. The theme for the day is, 'How might EnergyAustralia assist your business to achieve greater control over your energy costs now and in the future?'

About COSBOA

COSBOA is the Council of Small Business Organisations Australia – the peak national advocacy body for Australian small-medium businesses (SMEs). COSBOA is made up of 20-member organisations representing 600,000 SME's across Australia. COSBOA has partnered with Paddl Co. to run an initial five Innovation Games events across regional and metro Victoria.

About the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) was established on 1 January 2019 to ensure Victoria's strong economic performance by growing industries and regions. Here at DJPR, we're

making sure Victoria's economy benefits all Victorians by creating more jobs for more people, building thriving places and regions and nurturing inclusive communities.

Our work supports six ministers, spans 12 portfolios and operates across metropolitan, regional and international offices. We also oversee various public entities, including public corporations, regulatory authorities and specialist boards.

Ultimately, our work is about sustainably developing the Victorian economy by growing employment and improving the lives and prosperity of all Victorians. We work with many government, industry and community stakeholders to do this.

About EnergyAustralia

EnergyAustralia provides gas and electricity to more than 2.5 million residential and business customer accounts in Victoria, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and Queensland. We supply our customers with energy from wholesale markets and our own coal and gas-fired power stations and renewable energy sources. EnergyAustralia, which has its headquarters in Melbourne, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of CLP Group, one of the largest publicly-owned integrated power businesses in the Asia Pacific. Read more about us here: www.energyaustralia.com.au

About Paddl Co.

Paddl Co. is the creator and owner of Paddl Games. We are a tech company, based in Melbourne, focused on helping emerging talent achieve their career aspirations. Paddl.com is an employment and experience platform for emerging and mature talent. Users sign-up for free and develop their experience profile. Employers use Paddl to recruit and hire based on the demonstration of relevant experience and employment skills and not just education and background. Paddl Co. is constantly striving to find better ways for people to present themselves to prospective employers and for employers to create meaningful experiences to foster emerging talent and to identify and make more informed hires.

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