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## **Ethical Clothing Australia launches Women's Leadership Network in Victoria**

*Not-for-profit organisation supports women in Victoria's textile, clothing and footwear industry*

(Melbourne, Victoria – Friday 8 March 2024) On International Women's Day, Ethical Clothing Australia announced the launch of their Leadership Network for women in their accredited businesses in Victoria.

The launch will take place at the Queen Victoria's Women's Centre and bring together representatives from businesses who have received accreditation from Ethical Clothing Australia – including founders, designers, garment workers, outworkers and machinists, managers and more – with members of the Homeworkers Code Committee and other stakeholders.

Open to any woman who is employed by an accredited business in Victoria, the network has been established thanks to funding from the Victorian Government and is an extension of the core work of Ethical Clothing Australia, a not-for-profit organisation established in 2000 that protects the rights of workers in the textile, clothing and footwear industry.

"This network reflects the vibrant diversity of our textile, clothing and footwear industry and helps women to connect, learn and collaborate with each other," said Minister for Jobs and Industry and Minister for Women Natalie Hutchins.

"We are proud to support the important work of Ethical Clothing Australia and the growth of local and sustainable textile, clothing and footwear manufacturing."

Ethical Clothing Australia's National Manager, Rachel Reilly, says that the network directly responds to the uniquely gendered makeup of the TCF industry.

"77% of workers in the Australian garment industry identify as women," she reports. "It's a space where women are founders, owners and entrepreneurs, but also one in which women are overrepresented in issues including poor working conditions, exploitation and unequal pay.

"The network will act as a platform for women from all part of the industry, both fashion and manufacturing, to elevate their voices across a local and national stage and support them in creating spaces and opportunities to connect, learn and collaborate."

A business that holds an accreditation from Ethical Clothing Australia has undertaken an extensive audit of their local supply chain from design to dispatch, ensuring fair working conditions and social rights for workers are upheld and embedded into both the operations and core values of the business. Rachel believes it is these values that will make the network an essential part of transformative change in the industry.

"Victorian businesses who hold accreditation with Ethical Clothing Australia have already shown their commitment to protecting the rights of their workers," she says.

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“The network is an opportunity for us to celebrate and support these women, who are emerging or established leaders in the garment industry, equipping them with the connections and resources they need to be the changemakers of the TCF industry and ongoing advocates for the protection of workers across the entire industry.”

Throughout the year, the network will offer women from every level of an accredited businesses a calendar of in-person and online events including professional development, mentoring, social gatherings and more.

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