

## MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 16 May 2019

### Australian Government supports High Resolves' school-based programs tackling hatred and intolerance



High Resolves welcomes today's announcement by Minister for Families and Social Services, Paul Fletcher MP, regarding the *Mutual Understanding, Support, Tolerance, Engagement and Respect Initiative*. This initiative will allocate \$6 million to High Resolves over two years to provide in-school programs designed to inoculate high school students against hatred and intolerance.

High Resolves Australia Chief Executive, Donna Hutchison, said, "High Resolves programs are designed to help young Australians contribute to an inclusive society. Our organisation is the leader in the design and delivery of learning experiences which help young people identify and analyse bias. Through this investment, we will support students to recognise divisive messages and fake news, and resist vulnerability to the messages of hatred and intolerance."

"Our highly-immersive program helps teenagers think critically, to build social cohesion and empathy in their communities. It provides an opportunity to simulate decision making in the real world, and assess the outcomes of short-term, self-rewarding decisions, versus longer-term, community-based action."

This grant will build on the existing hub infrastructure of High Resolves in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne to expand into a further eight regional centres, including Newcastle, Wollongong, Albury, the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Townsville, Ballarat and Bendigo.

Since its inception in 2005, High Resolves has engaged more than 250,000 high school students across Australia and is rapidly expanding internationally. Its work has been repeatedly recognised for its distinctiveness and excellence.

High Resolves has received multiple awards including, the Good Design Australia Patron's Award and the Aspen Institute's prestigious John P. McNulty Prize. It has been independently evaluated by a number of external agencies, including the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER), showing that its work is achieving its intended purpose. Additionally, its approach has been identified as the world leader by the Omidyar Network, which has funded High Resolves' expansion into the United States.

High Resolves Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Mehrdad Baghai, said, "Our solution is education through experience. Our formula, based on learning science, recognises that sustained personal transformations must begin with peak experiences that shift a person's thoughts and feelings about themselves and the world around them.

"In delivering this grant, we will focus on collective identity and independent thinking. Our curriculum prompts students to consider diversity, recognise their unconscious biases and develop the skills to think critically about what they hear, read and experience, and choose to respond with confidence and insight. Our programs have been well-received by students, teachers, principals and parents, and we are proud of our engagement with young people and their communities."

The organisation has 15 years' experience in working closely with Australian schools, and continually refines programs based on feedback from students, teachers and principals to ensure the educational experiences remain relevant and applicable to the needs of local communities.

Principal of St Johns Park High School, Effie Niarchos, said, "The High Resolves program positions our students to problem-solve effectively and to think critically and creatively to respond to some of the world's biggest challenges. High Resolves is building a school community of future leaders and compassionate global citizens."

Principal of Granville South Creative and Performing Arts High School, Melissa Johnston, said, "The impact of the High Resolves framework is long-term, with our school community developing a stronger understanding of individual responsibility in addressing global issues and building positive productive relationships."

There is a strong appetite in regional schools to have greater access to these programs.

Principal of Kariang Mountains High School, Anne Vine, said, "In regional and rural centres, students often don't interact outside the local context or have exposure to global speakers. By having High Resolves based locally, our students will have access to the program, designed to develop the confidence, mindsets and associated capabilities in students to be change agents for a better society."

Ms Hutchison said, "With the increasingly complex challenges of our world, we can all play a role in making our communities more accepting and inclusive. This funding will engage young people across the country to build the skills, vision and confidence to lead their communities towards greater understanding and social harmony."

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