

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

DSTO champions more efficient collaborations between university and industry

Australia's 2011 defence expenditure may have been only one twenty-ninth that of the US's \$698 billion, but that hasn't stopped its front-line personnel being among the most well-trained and safest in the world.

To achieve this, Australia's Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) has been collaborating with Australian universities and industry for years.

Collaboration is a key issue for researchers, innovators and R&D businesses in Australia. According to Tony Peacock, Chief Executive for the Cooperative Research Centres Association (CRCA) of Australia, collaboration is "essential to improve the speed and quality of innovation".

That's why the CRCA's annual conference in Adelaide this month, Collaborate | Innovate | 2012, will put collaboration under the microscope.

DSTO's collaborations will be cited as successful case studies for creating products such as new armour-like fabrics, anti-ship missile defence systems, over-the-horizon radar and unique flight simulators.

However, while many innovations like these have been borne out of successful collaborations, Dr Len Sciacca, DSTO's Chief Operating Officer and Director of the new Defence Science Institute (DSI) in Victoria, believes that a collaborative approach can be made even more effective—especially where industry engages with academia in the early stages of research.

"The challenge in the transition of research to end users is to get industry engaged in the early stages of the innovation cycle— when the academic is forming the research project and team," says Dr Sciacca.

"Universities often apply for funding independently of the needs of end users, and industry is continually on the lookout for researchers who best fit their technology requirements. Sometimes the best fit is not always achieved, leaving a sour taste in everyone's mouths and reduced opportunity for future collaboration.

"There is an opportunity to have a more coordinated approach to building research networks, based on the end user's technology requirements. The DSTO, with its knowledge of defence technology, is taking a leadership role in forming these networks for defence that will leverage multiple funding sources and get industry hooked into the innovation cycle earlier," says Dr Sciacca.

DSTO aims to build collaborative environments between academia, research agencies, industry, and key defence and national security stakeholders, and promote the application of cross-disciplinary research to solve complex long-term challenges in the defence sciences and national security sectors.

Dr Sciacca believes that for such a strategy to work, it is necessary to look at the innovation system from a national perspective and build networks across Australia and, indeed, the world.

Ben Apted, Director of Strategic Project Partners in Melbourne, agrees with Len's critique and is working closely with universities, government and the public and private sector to make such networks more attainable.

"For collaboration to succeed there needs to be a need, an understanding of what's required to solve that need, a commitment that lasts beyond business as usual, and capacity and capability to deliver on the outcome," says Mr Apted.

"We are trying to educate all parties on this so we get more best-fits."

Dr Sciacca and Mr Apted will talk about the benefits and roadblocks associated with collaborating across sectors at the upcoming CRCA annual conference to be held in Adelaide from 15-17 May.

More information about the CRCA conference registration can be found at:

www.crc.aasn.au/conference

Collaborate | Innovate | 2012 is in Adelaide, May 15-17, at the National Wine Centre of Australia.

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