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How Clusters can reinvigorate Australian regions and Industry

Australasia's leading cluster practitioners and experts met in Sydney today to discuss ways in which Clusters could reinvigorate Australian industry and manufacturing.

The conference showcased the more than 30 industry clusters operating in Australia.

Speakers challenged conventional State and Federal governments' regional and industry development policy.

"Our conference will show how cluster strategies can create new jobs and investment. And set hard hit traditional industrial regions like Geelong and Northern Adelaide on a high growth, high performance trajectory", **said Richard Walker**, TCI Conference Director.

"But putting clusters to work means building smart collaborations between companies, industry leaders and government agencies. Something we need to do better in Australia if we are going to develop the industries of the future and not slide backwards as our current deficit deteriorates and we can no longer pay our own way in the world.

Speaker, Ifor Ffocws-Williams, CEO, Cluster Navigators, New Zealand, is one of the world's leading cluster experts having advised governments and clusters in over 50 countries and author of the book *Cluster Development, building competitiveness through smart specialisation*.

"The reason most countries support cluster strategies is because they work and build successful and resilient industries and communities.

"Firms that are based in clusters are more competitive than similar firms located outside the cluster, the firms that may be scattered around the country", he said.

Speaker Rodin Genoff, Managing Director, Rodin Genoff & Associates has taken his pioneering cluster work in Northern Adelaide between 2001 and 2006 and is now rolling it out across high cost economies. In Scandinavia these clusters include: intelligent engineering, electronics, cleantech, renewable energy and steel. Last year he made Singapore's ABC Carbon List of the *Top 100 Sustainability Leaders in the World*, for his innovative cluster approaches that forge global collaborations and create new jobs and investment.

"Denmark has globally competitive cleantech and renewables clusters integrating fabrication, engineering, electronics, artificial intelligence and design with end uses such as transport and the building and construction sector, compared to Australia's outdated preoccupation with traditional sectoral policy such as our car plans", he said.

“From Denmark to Singapore industry, innovation and technology policy are being informed by design thinking that helps companies to make the connections across industries and find those untapped spaces where they can spin off new products and services and start ups. Smart government programs help these companies to navigate these spaces and cluster together.

“Countries that are embracing this smart thinking and practice top the innovation rankings, unlike Australia which Boston Consulting identifies as a laggard among the 25 largest manufacturing nations in the past decade”, he said

Speaker Rod Brown, CEO, Cockatoo Network, is one of Australia’s leading cluster experts having worked at executive levels of government and the OCED in Paris.

“Our thinking and policy emphasis needs to shift to state and local government to fund cluster managers, and to industry to fund the outcomes. The emphasis must be on outcomes and products, rather than processes.

“It is important that major Federal government initiatives such as proposed \$20 billion medical research program should embrace cluster concepts to optimise Australian expertise and inputs, and ensure balanced wealth creation”, he says.

The conference was opened by video link by **Christian Ketels**, President of TCI and Professor at Michael Porter’s Institute for Strategy & Competitiveness at Harvard University. Christian emphasised the importance of location on competition in one’s industry and the need to develop industry specialisation profiles of regions.

Other speakers include:

Zoran Angelowski [META] and **Barry McGookin** [FIAL] addressed the state of manufacturing and emphasised the most appropriate approach for a successful manufacturing future. **Dr Phillip Walls**, i3Net Engineering Cluster, addressed Collaboration in Clusters

Tracy Scott-Rimington from RDA Brisbane presented an innovative cross regional multi level agency Joint Action Plan (JAP) for boosting the international competitiveness of SEQ’s world class Advanced Manufacturing specialisations.

Dr David Ireland, General Manager, Precinct Program gave a CSIRO view of participating in Clusters.

Mark Bell, RDA Riverlands, explained how to build successful clusters in Regional Australia.

The conference presentations and a video of proceedings will be available at TCI's [Slideshare](#) and [YouTube](#) channels.

For more information Contact:

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