



Darren Coomber

Welcome to this issue of *First to Know*.

It is with sadness that we announce the winding-down and closure of IXC Australia Limited on 30 June 2011. IXC UK and IXC Malaysia continue with IXC International and interested parties are exploring new ways to deliver IXC services in Australia.

IXC Australia is a not-for-profit organisation with limited resources and no institutional backing. The decision to close after 5 years was difficult as the company has a range of long term clients, service offerings and business development opportunities. However, the unexpected loss of a major contract in late 2010 combined with continuing softness in many sectors of the economy forced the Board to implement a controlled wind-down rather than expose the company to an uncertain financial future.

IXC Australia's achievements are significant.

- Clients report impact in projects valued at over \$500 million
- \$12 million of industry-academia collaboration projects
- Over 550 unique opportunity meetings for clients
- Australian industry and research linked to organisations in 14 countries
- Clients in 6 countries use IXC to access the Australian innovation system
- Recognised by the OECD as an exemplar for SME engagement with supply chains
- Expansion of Australian innovation model to UK and Malaysia with interest from 7 countries
- Model profiled in innovation texts and peer reviewed journal articles

It cannot be understated: the new projects and collaboration opportunities would not exist without IXC Intermediaries. IXC innovation training resulted in clients developing new products, enhancing internal and external collaborations and improving innovation performance. The IXC designed Techvouchers program was a fundamental change in how government can facilitate SME and research interaction and has gained international interest. Our corporate innovation training program ITRI Connect in Taiwan is set to expand throughout the Industrial Technology Research Institute and become a core part of staff development and cross departmental collaboration.

Our predecessor, the Australian Industry InnovationXchange network, was formed in 2002 with funding from Ai Group Tyree Foundation and various governments to address the need that: "Industry, research, education and government all seek assistance with understanding and accessing new technologies; accessing information; changing innovation culture and training staff in innovation for the benefit of the Australian economy." In 2010, the Australian Innovation System Report highlighted that Australia continues to consistently underperform in innovation and research-industry collaboration. The service offerings of IXC Australia today are vastly different to the offerings of 2002 but the need remains relevant.

IXC Australia services are market driven, using open innovation and the IXC Intermediary process to create relationships based on industry demand and intentions rather than technology push. IXC developed pragmatic processes to enable sharing of information between organisations in a framework of confidentiality and trust. Unfortunately, we were unable to develop a sustainable business model to deliver services in the Australian market. Trying to do so through an economic downturn added to the difficulty, but the challenge remains to find a model that provides innovation services that large corporations, SMEs and the public sector value on commercial terms, reducing the culture of dependence on free or subsidised government programs.

It has been a privilege to have worked with organisations here and internationally with a passion for innovation, to be exposed to new ideas, strategies, technologies and capabilities across diverse sectors. The IXC role is overwhelmingly positive in helping clients seek new partnerships and insights that could change their business. I wish to highlight and thank Walter and Eliza Hall Institute and Resmed who have been IXC Australia clients since inception and long term clients including Fonterra, Cochlear, Kimberly-Clark Australia, Victorian Department of Transport and Swinburne University. Our relationships spanning many years with these and other organisations reflects the continuing value they have obtained from IXC services.

I thank our Chair, Russell Kenery, and fellow Directors Bob Herbert and John Vines for their stewardship over challenging times. I acknowledge our past staff and Directors who all contributed to developing the InnovationXchange. I thank my colleagues in UK and Malaysia for the opportunity to work with them and their clients, and for the collaborative spirit we developed across time zones. In particular I wish to acknowledge Bob Herbert, Chair of IXC International, who has been the one constant through the journey since 2002. Bob's commitment to improving the success of Australian business through innovation and collaboration is remarkable and it has been a privilege to have worked with him.

My sincere thanks go to our current IXC Intermediaries Chris Vearing, Samantha Ashby, Scott McKenzie, Angela Wu and Thor Slater, and our management and administration staff Tess Julian and Kathy Tolli, for their dedication and commitment over the stressful wind-down period. Working with the team of IXC Intermediaries has been the most professionally and personally rewarding experience of my working life. It will be a travesty if the unique and specialised knowledge and know-how we gained in collaboration and innovation management, and your own skills and capabilities, are lost to Australia and the local innovation system.

Finally, thank you for subscribing to First to Know and your interest in InnovationXchange. We have appreciated your support. I look forward to working with you to find new ways to create better collaboration across companies, countries and disciplines. My contact details remain in the short term and I would welcome your feedback.

Regards,
Darren

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