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Impact Innovation Group Pty Ltd
ACN:119 610 258

Level 12, 10 Eagle St, Brisbane Qld 4000
GPO Box 2443, Brisbane Qld 4001
P: 07 3640 4082
F: 07 3640 4001
E: info@impactinnovationgroup.com

**Submission to the
Inquiry into innovation and creativity:
workforce for the new economy**

Dear Inquiry Members

The Impact Innovation Group is a specialist innovation and technology commercialisation company that has been working as an intermediary between the university sector and industry for nearly 10 years. We also manage the Innovate Queensland program on behalf of the Queensland Government. Based on this experience we would like to comment on point 3 of the terms of reference:

‘Factors that discourage closer partnerships between industry; in particular small and medium enterprises, the research sector and education providers; including but not limited to: intellectual property; technology transfer; and rapid commercialisation.’

We provide three examples of ways to approach the industry / research partnerships challenge differently. Something that we believe is critical if changes are to be made.

- 1) We were approached by a university recently to help them improve their industry linkages. Their initial approach was to have the Impact Innovation Group run a series of workshops for their researchers to ‘train them’ about engaging with industry. Upon discussing what they have already been doing we declined to run their proposed program – instead, we proposed a different approach.

This different approach facilitates researchers actually creating linkages so that they are given the tools and experiences to identify linkage targets and foster relationships with industry. The university has agreed to implement this approach after they recognized that if they keep doing the same-old-thing that they can’t expect different outcomes.

- 2) We see a major issue impacting on closer partnerships between industry and the research sector as being the standard process that universities use to ‘sell’ technologies as outlined below:
 - Researcher or research team making a discovery.
 - The discovery is logged by the university commercialisation office as a ‘disclosure’ (a metric measured by the Australian Research Council).
 - The researcher or research team generally attempt to obtain funding (internal university proof of concept funding, grant funding and in some cases industry funding) to gather more data.
 - A commercialisation manager from the university commercialisation office attempts to determine the optimal commercialisation pathway based on his/her knowledge.
 - The technology progresses through patent review committees etc. and may enter a patenting phase incurring costs for the university (approx. \$6,000 for provisional and \$8,000 for PCT).

- If the research outcome can't be patented then in many cases no further commercialisation work occurs.
- The provisionally patented technology is marketed to known large and multinational organisations with the view to obtaining a license deal. Alternatively a start-up company pathway is chosen.
- Some of the patented technologies are put up on the university website but generally not all of them as universities don't want to tie up resources answering questions from the general public (e.g. a member of the public contacting the university to obtain an experimental arthritis treatment because it is listed on the website).

Approximately 3 years ago the Impact Innovation Group started 'stress-testing' various approaches to change this approach and to increase the visibility of not only patented technologies but also pre-patent technologies from research organisations and start-up companies. This resulted in the formation of the Enterprise Access platform which is progressively gaining traction as a way for SME's and larger organisations to gain increased visibility as to technologies that have the potential to change their businesses and industries. Support in building the platform was gained from Deakin University and technologies from more than 20 research organisations are now listed.

To date we have engaged with state government agencies and are progressively engaging with federal agencies. We are also data sharing with IPAustralia.

While the ongoing interest in improving linkages between industry and research organisations is encouraging, until industry have an opportunity to see what researchers are working on then there will continue to be a mismatch between these two sectors. To view the platform please visit www.enterpriseaccess.com.

- 3) The Impact Innovation Group was invited by industry representatives to participate in establishing an Engineering, Construction and Mining Innovation Hub. Through various discussions it was identified that there was a major disconnect between these industries and 'owners' of technologies trying to gain traction within these industries. A technology pathways approach was developed and tested with impressive results. The Queensland Department of State Development have recently agreed to fund the establishment of the Innovation Hub for a two year period.

We would encourage the Inquiry members to challenge many of the standard approaches that are used to foster increased collaboration. Having worked with or obtained technologies from most of the research organisations around Australia we see the need to think differently and provide practical tools that help both researchers and industry to connect rather than more training. We can't expect change if we keep doing the same things.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide more details regarding the above should it be required.

Yours sincerely

Brian Ruddle
Managing Director