

Skill Build-Nation Build – an Industry Connected Support Programme for Australia’s PhD Students

Background

Innovation and better economic and social outcomes for Australia can only be achieved by building our national intellectual capacity.

Providing better support for today’s postgraduate students is an essential element if they are to contribute to all sectors of the economy. Such broad capacity building is essential if Australia is to remain competitive on the global research and innovation stage and will also require that the goal of having the world’s best higher education system is achieved.

Industry has a major role to play in fuelling that education and research agenda and we support the view that Australia can improve its economic performance and secure its future prosperity by skilling a more creative workforce and facilitating more innovation in the Australian economy.

In a recently released position paper, the ATN called for 500 extra postgraduate scholarships over two years and an increase in the postgraduate stipend from \$19,616 to a minimum of \$25,000 per year to renew an ageing academic and research workforce.

Postgraduate students are not only active participants in today’s research, but they also constitute the next generation of researchers necessary to build Australia’s research and innovation capacity both inside and outside the higher education system.

Industry has a major role to play in fuelling our education, research and innovation agenda. We support the view that Australia can improve its economic performance and secure its future prosperity by skilling a more creative workforce and facilitating more innovation in the Australian economy.

To that end the ATN is proposing an industry-supported PhD Placement programme to ensure that, by working in partnership with industry, we can enhance Australian research capability in areas of national priority and enhance the 'connectivity' between industry and university research via research students.

The key elements of such a proposal are outlined below:

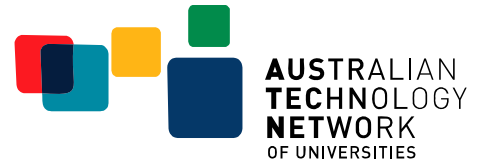
Purpose:

- To enhance industry R&D by boosting the number of PhD educated personnel in the Australian economy employed by industry.
- To enhance the 'connectivity' between industry/enterprises and university research by employment of recently graduated PhDs

Program principle:

- 50:50 coinvestment between government and enterprise for employment of recently graduated PhD candidates as 'innovation catalysts'
- The government component is linked to the award of a postgraduate scholarship but must be expended for the purpose of facilitating the transfer of the PhD graduates into enterprises as 'innovation catalysts'
- Evaluation of whether enterprises gain value from employment of innovation catalysts and hence will commit to longer term employment of graduates with a view to enhance innovative capacity and expenditure on R&D in the long term

In 2007 the number of PhD/Doctorate enrolments across the ATN was 5546. The majority of these (almost half) are in the field of Engineering, Science and Computing. A significant proportion is also in the area of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences.



A PhD Placement programme such as the one outlined will enhance employment of PhDs in business and lead to increased innovative capacity and R&D investment in Australian firms. In turn Australian firms will become more competitive through the delivery of advanced and competitive products while more students will be attracted to PhD studies because of better career prospects.

**BUILDING
PARTNERSHIPS
FINDING
SOLUTIONS**