

Victoria University Response to CRC Program Review

We would like to commend the Review Panel on the support of this important collaborative, applied research program with a technology transfer focus. The re-focusing and increased flexibility of the program in addition to the injection of funds is also fully supported.

Specific components we would like to address are:

1. Increased flexibility to include TAFE sector (recommendation 3): the inclusion of expertise and experience from the TAFE sector provides a significant collaborative opportunity. For dual sector institutions such as Victoria University where skill and expertise are also held within the Vocational Education sector, the existing CRC program, with its 'bent' towards Higher Education research and Publicly Funded Research Agencies (PFRAs), excludes an area of potential collaboration, knowledge and growth with potential for national benefit.

As such, there should be scope to develop a 'CRC2' type program, which would retain the knowledge transfer, research application development and other elements of the CRC program, but with relatively flexible, less costly and less onerous entry and governance requirements that would enable smaller institutions to collaborate with business and gain the benefits. The program might also enable the Vocational Education sector to engage with the program either alone or through university partnerships.

2. Program and support for SMEs and service sector (recommendation 4 and 5): the expansion and broader inclusive nature of this initiative will provide the opportunity for this important industrial sector to more actively participate in this program. The CRC program is an ideal vehicle for this relatively research-immature sector to develop research and innovation opportunities. The broader program will reduce accessibility difficulties experienced by smaller businesses and industries that are dominated by multiple smaller players.

3. Encouragement for Humanities and Social Science participation (recommendation 5): collaborative research innovation and creativity exists in many fields of endeavour including the humanities and social sciences. In addition, some of the most innovative work is interdisciplinary research that brings together humanities, social sciences, and technological/scientific research knowledge and outcomes that is then applied to addressing significant social issues. We fully support this expanded participation.

4. University contribution (recommendation 6): we strongly support the formal removal of requiring an explicit cash contribution which has often forced smaller universities to be very selective with regards to their membership (ie. currently smaller universities that wanted to be a member of more than one CRC could be financially constrained). University in-kind resource contributions are more realistic and accessible, in line with other university/end-user collaborations funding programs such as the ARC Linkage program. We support the preference for CRCs to source research and innovation from financially contributing partners.

While we note the particular mention of Victoria University (section 8.2.2, page 35) as joining a CRC to boost research in a faculty that was "strong in teaching but relatively weak in research", we do not agree that this either characterises Victoria University's tourism and hospitality research endeavour nor was a reason for joining the CRC. We in fact participated in establishing the CRC because of our strong research profile in tourism.