

Five years on – business as usual at Construction Innovation

By Dr Keith Hampson
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Construction Innovation is five years old. A significant milestone, yes, but not one we marked with any particular celebration. It might sound cliché but, like much of the construction industry at the moment, we're busy.

We've been given a seven year life by the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centres Programme and, with less than two years to run, we've reached a crescendo of sorts. Working in collaboration with our private and public industry partners, our researchers are working on more than 30 projects at the moment.

Several projects have recently concluded and the results are currently being disseminated to industry. Others will conclude soon. And, in addition, we've recently commissioned some new projects based on industry needs.

One of the new projects the Queensland Government and the Building Commission (Victoria) wanted us to research is the business drivers for industry to take-up or move to 3D CAD business information models. Australia is lagging behind in this vital area. There are significant productivity gains to be made, so understanding why industry is not embracing this new technology is important.

Another new project will research OH&S practices at the design, procurement, construction and commissioning stages of construction in order to develop a voluntary code of practice for the industry. Our project partners John Holland and Bovis Lend Lease invited us do this vital work for an Engineers Australia-initiated taskforce that involves all the key industry groups and is led by Leighton Holdings COO, Bill Wild.

At the Australian Construction Industry Forum (ACIF) conference in July we launched a new step-by-step guide to stimulating innovation in the construction industry. Entitled *Innovate Now*, the booklet is the culmination of three years' research by the BRITE Project involving 400 businesses, 14 government organisations, eight industry associations and four universities.

Another of our projects has created a two-day workshop about relationship management in project delivery based on its research. Several of our partners, including John Holland, are interested in providing the course for staff. We're also talking to several industry groups about offering it to members.

In Melbourne on 22 September, another of our project teams, led by Dean Cipolla from John Holland, will detail the findings of a two-year study into construction site safety culture at a symposium for industry leaders. The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Kevin Andrews, and the Federal Safety Commissioner, Tom Fisher, will be guest speakers.

The Sydney Opera House Facility Management Exemplar project is also nearing completion. Led by Facility Management Association (FMA) of Australia chairman and Rider Hunt Terotech managing director, Stephen Ballesty, the project team are conducting workshops to detail the project results in October in Brisbane (23rd), Sydney (24th) and Melbourne (25th).

That's just a small sampling of *Construction Innovation's* work. We think it is important for the future growth and productivity of the industry that our work continues, but, more importantly, industry sees it as important.

Our partners continue to support our work and clearly see benefits for themselves.

Further to this, I was heartened recently to receive emphatic support from many industry groups. ACIF president, Neil Marshall, has been particularly supportive, as has the Australian Institute of Building (AIB), Association of Consulting Engineers Australia (ACEA), Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (AIQS), FMA Australia, Master Builders Association of Australia (MBA), Property Council of Australia (PCA) and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA).

While five years is an important milestone for us, we're looking to continue supporting the industry for at least another five years.

Keith

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The CRC for *Construction Innovation* brings together 21 industry, government and research partners in a collaboration to find innovative solutions to improve the economic, environmental and social benefit of the design, property, construction and facility management sectors as well as the Australian community. Website: <http://www.constructioninnovation.info>