

## Media Release

29 October 2014

### New Questacon partnership to foster tomorrow's big thinkers

Today, Questacon – The National Science and Technology Centre announced a new major partnership with The Ian Potter Foundation that will inspire the next generation of great Australian ideas.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott today opened The Ian Potter Foundation Technology Learning Centre in Deakin. The Foundation has provided a \$7.8 million grant to Questacon for significant new initiatives to engage young people with technology and innovation. The grant is the Foundation's largest in the areas of science and education in its 50-year history.

Questacon Advisory Council Chairman, Leon Kempler, said, "We're delighted that The Ian Potter Foundation has generously agreed to support Questacon's efforts to inspire and empower young people to get involved in design, technology and manufacturing.

Working together, we will help them to unlock their powers of innovation and creativity and perhaps motivate them to become the researchers, technologists, engineers, and entrepreneurs of tomorrow. This will help to ensure Australia has the highly-skilled and creative workforce it needs."

This grant reflects the importance of this project for Australia and the investment required to transition to the technology-focused, innovative, knowledge-based economy that is vital for our future," said Janet Hirst, CEO, The Ian Potter Foundation.

The Ian Potter Foundation Technology Learning Centre will offer a range of onsite interactive experiences for students and the public to engage with technology and innovation. The Centre's *Gallery of Australian Inventiveness* features themed exhibitions showcasing Australian creativity and innovation.

The Centre also offers school-group and holiday workshops for local and visiting interstate school groups in a dedicated Maker Space. These workshops build students' skills in creative design, innovative thinking and problem solving, and use high-tech gadgets and low-tech materials—from 3D printers to glue guns.

The Ian Potter Foundation Technology Learning Centre will also be the hub for the new national *Questacon Smart Skills Initiative*, giving students a greater appreciation of the processes and skills involved in developing ideas and solutions to problems and refining them into useful products and processes.

*Questacon Smart Skills* incorporates interactive workshops, exhibitions, tours and special events. Activities will be delivered locally and nationally through regional partnerships and digital communications technology. The funding from The Ian Potter Foundation enables this initiative to target schools in regional and remote areas of Australia, including disadvantaged communities.

The *Questacon Smart Skills* initiative will be rolled out from March 2015 with a tour of Tasmanian high schools delivering interactive, engineering-challenge workshops that encourage students to refine and test their ideas and develop creative problem-solving skills. In-school workshops culminate in an intensive *Invention Convention*, including an ideas forum where students connect with local industry and entrepreneurs.

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