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Executive Appointments – Australia Innovation eXchange

Australian Innovation eXchange (AIX) has today announced two key appointments; Russell Merz as the inaugural CEO, and Dr David Skellern AO as Chair of the newly formed organisation.

Russell brings over 35 years of global business experience, leading innovative engineering and technology businesses from start-up through to exit, and working across multiple technology disciplines on five continents.

With a history of strategic roles in innovation, start-up, early stage, scale-up, and growth, Russell's appointment will focus on Australia's technology ecosystem, to support the development of sustainable and long-term commercially viable innovation.

A hallmark of Dr Skellern's career has been the commercialisation of research. He came to prominence in the IT industry through his involvement in Radiata, which developed the world's first chip-set implementation of the 54Mbit/s IEEE 802.11a high speed WLAN standard. Part of his subsequent role at Cisco involved technical and business assessments of companies for potential investment or acquisition.

As CEO of NICTA, Australia's National ICT research centre, he refocused research to both advance knowledge and find genuine solutions to societal challenges by inventing new information and communications technologies.

AIX was established by METS Ignited to support Australian technology companies translating local innovations into commercial products and services. The company was formed as part of METS Ignited's transition plan beyond Industry Growth Centre funding.

As the Chair of AIX, Dr Skellern said the hiring of Russell is a coup for the company.

"Russell's appointment from METS Ignited's executive team to lead AIX reinforces the importance of leveraging the experience in transition, while enabling our new organisation to focus on specific commercial opportunities," Dr Skellern said.

"Australia is recognised globally as a world leader in research and innovation. Commercialisation support locally struggles to keep up with the pace of innovation. Addressing this gap is where AIX, under Russell's leadership, can make a real impact."

New CEO Russell Merz confirmed the focus of AIX is to support key opportunities to commercialise local innovation.

"At AIX, our priority is commercialisation – we will partner with Australian innovators and support them to expand their commercial capability to meet the needs of customers and potential customers," Mr Merz said.

"I am focussed on leveraging the experience of METS Ignited to improve commercial outcomes for Australian innovation.

"At AIX, we connect Australian innovation to businesses with the right commercial models, supporting our research sector to maximise their impact for the benefit of all.

“I thank David for the acknowledgement and his faith in me – as a scientist and entrepreneur, David brings to the role of Chair a proven history of success in commercialising technology, including his role as part of the team who delivered and commercialised wifi to the world.”

Background

The Australian Innovation eXchange is building on the success of the Industry Growth Centre program, by providing industry access to Australia’s innovation ecosystem via commercial channels. AIX is enabling Australian technology companies, as the ‘go-to channel’, to bring local innovation to market, serving global markets from within our national economy.

Biographies

Russell Merz

CEO

Russell is a strategic industry veteran with over 35 years of global business experience scaling innovative engineering and technology organisations. With a technical background integrated science and engineering, Russell has worked across multi-disciplinary projects in over 40 countries in five continents, including multi-billion dollar resource projects.

Russell brings a strong history of innovation to AIX, from working with start-up and early stage companies, scaling into growth, Russell is focussed on transforming local innovation to deliver sustainable, viable long-term commercial outcomes.

Russell has held a number of board and advisory position, and is currently a director of not-for-profit and private organisations, as well as providing expert advice on numerous industry review panels across multiple sectors.

Dr David Skellern, AO FTSE FIEEE

Chair

Dr David Skellern began his career in radio astronomy, and taught electronics at the University of Sydney and Macquarie University for over 16 years. Dr Skellern co-founded Radiata in 1997, building on joint research by Macquarie University and CSIRO, Radiata demonstrated the world’s first chip-set implementation of the 54Mbit/s IEEE 802.11a high speed WLAN standard.

Radiata was sold in 2001 to Cisco Systems Inc, where Dr Skellern was Director, Technology of the Wireless Networking Business Unit until 2004. He was appointed to the Board of National ICT Australia in 2003 and was Chief Executive Officer 2005-2010.

Dr Skellern was formerly a Director of the Capital Markets CRC (CMCRC) 2004-2019 where he held the position of Chairman from 2013-2019, then Chair of RoZetta Institute Ltd (formerly CMCRC) from 2019-2022. He was a non-executive director of eight RoZetta group companies.

Dr Skellern is currently Chair of Quasar Satellite Technologies Pty Ltd, digi.cash Pty Ltd, and the Semiconductor Sector Service Bureau (S3B), and a Director of Trovio Pte Ltd and METS Ignited Australia Limited,.

More information about the Australia Innovation eXchange is available at www.aix.com.au

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