

Rust Report

News and views of the action in Australasia's IT sector this week

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THE RUST BUCKET

Heavy challenges

Information technology is shifting the paradigm of our economy, affecting the patterns of production, investment, and employment. To thrive in this new environment Australia must build on its strengths in conceptualising new products and services that the rest of the world desires.

Toward this end it is necessary for Australia to have well-funded and creative research institutions to develop and attract the best technical and entrepreneurial talent. We must also make our economy conducive to the formation of new ventures and the growth of small, innovative companies, and we must create an environment that ensures the deployment of the most advanced technology infrastructure.

The development of ICT over the past several decades has contributed significantly to almost every aspect of our economy and society. This development has been fuelled by the participation and co-operation of members of an ecosystem comprising academic, industry, and government research and development supporters.

In recent years the rapid globalisation of markets, labour, and capital flows has encouraged many strong national competitors, notably the growing powers of China and India. Assessing the impacts of changes in the ICT ecosystem calls for a strong recommitment to providing resources to fuel Australian ICT innovation and to removing roadblocks that reduce our effectiveness in generating innovation.

As we continue to debate the likely shape and direction of the emerging information revolution we all sense the speed, scope, and intensity of the changes that are generating and transforming our underlying expectations — not just about economic productivity but also about social solidarity, political positioning, identity, personal privacy, security, and quality of life.

We need to keep rebuilding the computing pipeline at all levels, which requires overcoming numerous obstacles that in turn portend significant challenges for the development of our future Australian ICT workforce. What constitutes fast enough has been and will continue to be a moving target. We need an effective policy regime to ensure we continue to play to our strengths.

A key element of our ecosystem is idea-generation. Game-changing ideas tend to arise out of basic research that pushes the boundaries of human knowledge. Universities and colleges are critical players here, because basic research dovetails with their educational missions.

We also need to look further into the future and to understand the need for engineers, scientists, and technologically skilled professionals and our failure to produce them. Our colleges and universities are not graduating enough students to take the place of those who are now retiring.

— Len Rust RustOz@bigpond.com

New federal agency finds Aussie Resolve

Melbourne-based developer Resolve has been selected to provide a case management system for the recently-formed Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. The system will automate work processes based on standardised business procedures to deliver the organisation's services efficiently and effectively, claimed Kate McKenzie, marketing executive of Resolve.

"It will be used to manage inquiries, merit reviews, and complaints for freedom of information and privacy matters, as well as to identify systemic issues," she explained.

McKenzie added that the proposed functions of the OAIC include providing oversight, advice, and reporting for FOI and privacy matters. Resolve is no newcomer to the public sector, having implementations in nine state and commonwealth ombudsman offices, as well as in 26 state and federal departments. www.resolvesoftware.com.au

Byte Power extends reach into China

Australian company Byte Power will extend its network of ATMs and information terminals in China after entering a second agreement with Chongqing Sanxia Books and Periodical Media, a company that is owned by Chongqing Post. The latest deal involves terminals for local and foreign financial institutions and follows just two months after the companies first agreed to co-operate (Rust Report, July 30, p2).

"The new agreement will allow Sanxia's current 300 outlets, as well as any newly installed outlets, to provide various online services, such as bill payments, hotel bookings, domestic and international airline bookings to the population of Chongqing, which is currently 32 million people," a spokeswoman explained. She added that discussions are already being held with companies wanting to use the new terminals. www.bytepowergroup.com

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