



RELEASE MEDIA

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Innovation Centre builds board for next stage of growth

The newly appointed Board of Directors for the Innovation Centre is focused on creating new jobs by expanding the Sunshine Coast's knowledge-based economy and supporting the growth of the Business and Technology Precinct that is developing in Sippy Downs.

Innovation Centre Chief Executive Colin Graham said he welcomed the new five-member board, all of whom had strong specialised skills that would benefit the Centre and the Sunshine Coast business community.

"The Sunshine Coast has traditionally been very reliant on tourism but for the region to become truly sustainable we must build a much more diverse economy – an economy more able to cope with an economic downturn or even just bad weather.

The newly appointed Innovation Centre board sees strong opportunities to create new jobs in new industries, using the rapidly growing University as a distinctive asset for business attraction and growth." Mr Graham said.

"This is something the University of the Sunshine Coast's Innovation Centre has been working towards since it was established in 2002 and we have achieved a great deal including supporting the start-up and growth of over 55 businesses and creating around 350 jobs.

"Now we are moving into a new stage of development, steadily expanding the services we offer - beyond the 30 plus businesses located within the Innovation Centre - and running business events to build a productive entrepreneurial network across the Sunshine Coast region.

"Our biggest priority is to continue to advance the development of the Business and Technology Precinct at Sippy Downs, working closely with the University, Sunshine Coast Regional Council, the private sector and others.

"The last two years have seen over \$100 million investment in underpinning infrastructure so our key objective is to support the establishment of a business community that employs more than 6000 knowledge-based workers and for Sippy Downs to become Australia's first true university town," Mr Graham said.

He said with such a major task ahead, the Innovation Centre had carefully selected the new board, with each member offering specific skills to advance the Centre's mission.

The new members of the University of the Sunshine Coast's Innovation Centre Board include two senior representatives of the University and three from the Sunshine Coast business community. The members are: University Vice Chancellor and President Professor Paul Thomas AM, who maintains his position as Chairman; University Pro Vice Chancellor for Regional Engagement, Professor Mike Hefferan, who has been appointed as a new director and Deputy Chairman; Dr Karen Woolley, CEO of Proscribe who has been reappointed for a new term; Westpac Regional General Manager Mike Schwartz and entrepreneur and angel investor John Nicholson.

Professor Paul Thomas AM has overseen the development of the Innovation Centre since its

inception working with CEO Colin Graham and the team to ensure its success.

Professor Mike Hefferan brings a strong background in property and business precinct development and while working for the Queensland Government was responsible for much of the 'Smart State' initiative which included the establishment of the Australian Institute for Commercialisation - where he was the interim CEO - the establishment of Aviation Australia and the i.lab Incubator at Toowong.

Dr Karen Woolley who continues to be a strong advocate for the Innovation Centre and business development on the Sunshine Coast, has more than twenty years experience in clinical research and medical writing and is the CEO of Proscribe, an international medical communication company based in Noosa. Karen is a former Sunshine Coast Business Woman of the Year and Queensland Business Owner of the Year.

John Nicholson, also based in Noosa, originates from Western Australia and has strong background in accounting – cofounding a Perth based practice that grew to 50 staff within 3 years. In more recent years, John has been an angel investor and helped to grow an online fitness education business with over 60,000 subscribers, which sold to a major player in the UK in 2007.

Michael Schwartz has extensive global experience in banking, finance, IT and communications, has valuable direct experience with IT start-up companies and is passionate about the Innovation Centre and its drive to create new jobs on the Sunshine Coast. Mike was also previously a General Manager at Telstra, VP at Goldman Sachs and a Management Consultant with the Boston Consulting Group.

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About the Innovation Centre Sunshine Coast:

Established in 2002, the Innovation Centre, a University of the Sunshine Coast company, aims to create new jobs in new industries for the Sunshine Coast region.

Located on the edge of the USC campus, the Innovation Centre is currently home to over 30 private companies in the clean-technology, digital and creative industries and offers world-class business support for entrepreneurs and growing companies. To date, the Innovation Centre has supported the start-up and growth of over 55 businesses, creating around 350 jobs.

The Innovation Centre facility includes a Business Incubator and Business Accelerator which provide serviced offices, high speed fibre connections, consulting support, investment readiness and networking for both start-up and growth businesses.

The Innovation Centre is at the hub of the Business and Technology Precinct taking shape around the University of the Sunshine Coast. Over \$100m has been invested in infrastructure in the last two years – including roads, a bus station and dark fibre optic cabling – to help advance the Precinct which has the potential to provide skilled jobs for over 6,000 people in the next 10 – 15 years.

The Innovation Centre also runs an extensive program of business events – attracting over 4,000 people to date - designed to help local entrepreneurs to connect with each other and the University and build a productive network.

For more information visit www.innovation-centre.com.au