



MEDIA RELEASE
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NICTA's Victorian Research Laboratory Solving Problems For All Australians

The Hon. Marsha Thomson MP, Victorian Minister for Information and Communication Technology, today officially opened National ICT Australia's (NICTA) new Victoria Research Laboratory (VRL), announcing additional funding of \$20 million to support its world-leading research in information and communications technology (ICT).

The laboratory's particular focus is on investigating ICT as an enabling technology, with an eye to end-use commercialisation in telecommunications, information technology and life sciences.

The Government's additional funding will bring the total investment in the Victoria Laboratory from its partners – NICTA, the Victorian Government and the University of Melbourne to almost \$117 Million since it was established in 2004. According to NICTA, with today's funding announcement, the facility is set to grow to more than 160 researchers by 2009.

"The Victorian Government was instrumental to the establishment of the NICTA Victoria Research Laboratory, in 2004, and with the latest \$20 million in funding, we have more than doubled our commitment to this cutting-edge research facility," said the Victorian Minister for Information and Communication Technology, Marsha Thomson.

"As a result, the VRL will double the number of researchers and expand its research program to include world-leading ICT research in life sciences, such as investigations into developing a bionic eye," she said.

"With its amazing achievements to date, including the wireless sensor water management system, NICTOR, we are confident that this new funding will see the VRL continue to develop world-leading ICT innovations."

Commenting on today's opening, Senator Helen Coonan, Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts said, "The Australian Government is committed to supporting excellence in research, science and technology.

"We have extended the ICT Centre of Excellence (NICTA) program's funding for five years to ensure it becomes an enduring, world-scale, leading edge, strategic ICT research institution.

"Funding of \$251 million is being provided by the Australian Government, to support the ongoing growth and operation of the ICT Centre of Excellence (NICTA)," concluded Senator Coonan.

University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor, Professor Glyn Davis, says the University is delighted to join with the Victorian Government and NICTA in playing a key role in building Australia's ICT research and research training capabilities as well as commercialisation in the ICT sector.

"The University's contribution has been in not only providing the premises for the Victorian NICTA Laboratory on our Parkville campus, but also world-class research talent through our staff and students," he said. "We are already seeing the results of this through collaborations which are making significant contributions to the major challenges that the country is facing. And none

more so, at this time, is water management where our Water Research Centre is working with NICTA, in conjunction with Goulburn Murray Water, on a State Government-funded project examining methods of smarter irrigation."

NICTA's imaginative and groundbreaking research is placing Australia at the forefront of global ICT research. NICTA's researchers are developing technologies that meet the current and future needs of society. At the opening today, NICTA demonstrated its work in areas such as water management and broadband access.

"We're not interested in research for research's sake," said Prof. Rob Evans, Director of the NICTA Victoria Research Laboratory. "Our research is use-inspired; we look for a problem in the community and set out to use the latest technology to solve that problem."

One such example is the Water Information Networks (WIN) project which was demonstrated at the opening. The project is developing technologies to improve water efficiency in the Australian dairy, horticulture and viticulture industries. It could revolutionise water resource management in Australia.

The project is based on NICTOR, a highly integrated wireless sensor network system. This unique, locally-developed technology has the potential to boost the quality and yield of Australia's farming produce while maintaining water efficiency.

Other demonstrations included the Automatically Switched Optical Network, BigNET, Interactive Information Discovery and Delivery and Peer-to-Peer Technology for Massively Multi-Player Online Games. These showcased the breadth of NICTA's research and its commitment to developing leading technologies that benefit all Australians.

"The opening of NICTA's new Victorian research facilities is a significant milestone in establishing NICTA as a globally recognised ICT research centre and further cements our partnership with the Victorian Government and the University of Melbourne," said NICTA Chairman, Mr Neville Stevens AO.

About NICTA

National ICT Australia (NICTA) is a national research institute with a charter to build Australia's pre-eminent Centre of Excellence for information and communications technology (ICT). NICTA is building capabilities in ICT research, research training and commercialisation in the ICT sector for the generation of national benefit.

National ICT Australia is funded by the Australian Government as represented by the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and the Australian Research Council through *Backing Australia's Ability* and the ICT Centre of Excellence program

NICTA was established and is supported by its members: The Australian Capital Territory Government; The Australian National University; NSW Department of State and Regional Development; and The University of New South Wales. NICTA is also supported by its partners: the University of Sydney; University of Melbourne; the Victorian Government; the Queensland Government; Griffith University; Queensland University of Technology; and Queensland University.

For further information

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