



Media Release
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Australia's ICT research powerhouse celebrates 100th PhD

NICTA, Australia's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Research Centre of Excellence, is proud to announce the graduation of the 100th PhD student who carried out their research at NICTA. This remarkable milestone, achieved in close collaboration with NICTA's member and partner universities, comes less than three years after the first NICTA-supported PhD student graduated.

"The majority of our NICTA-supported PhD graduates remain in Australia, where they make a vital contribution to the nation's ICT skills base and help build and strengthen the digital economy," said NICTA's Director of Education and Australian Technology Park (ATP) Laboratory Director Professor Aruna Seneviratne. "We are attracting extremely talented students and many of our now 107 graduates are already playing active roles in Australia's ICT industry and research communities."

More than 270 students are currently pursuing their PhD studies in NICTA laboratories, the largest concentration of ICT PhD students in Australia. "Of the graduated PhD students who reported their first destination to us, 74 percent are working in Australia," said Professor Seneviratne.

"NICTA plays an important role fostering our national ICT skills capacity and providing a launchpad for the commercialisation of ground-breaking research," said the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator the Hon. Stephen Conroy. "NICTA, the PhD graduates it has supported and current students should be congratulated for their part in the development of Australia's digital economy."

The Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Senator the Hon. Kim Carr said that the Government has provided funding for a further four years for NICTA to continue its success. "NICTA is a key asset in Australia's innovation system as it demonstrates ICT's ability to transform our economy," Senator Carr said.

NICTA's Chief Executive Officer Dr David Skellern acknowledged the importance of the Federal Government funding announced by Senator Conroy and Senator Carr in the recent Budget. "Having our funding extended has a dramatic impact on our ability to deliver a world-class education program and will help ensure a resilient ICT skills base for Australia," said Dr Skellern. "Congratulations to all of the PhD graduates and students now undertaking their PhDs in NICTA laboratories around Australia."

Dr Byron Wicks was a key member of the NICTA team that in 2008 developed world-first wireless technology operating in the 60GHz spectrum. "Doing my PhD at a NICTA laboratory gave me the unique opportunity to work with a world-class team of ICT researchers who were engaged in a project with great commercial potential," said Dr Wicks, who was recently awarded a prestigious Fulbright Postdoctoral Scholarship which he will use to take up ICT research in electronic engineering at the University of California, Berkeley. Dr Wicks is an alumnus of the University of Melbourne. His NICTA-sponsored PhD was in Engineering in the field of high-speed wireless communications.

After completing a Science degree with First Class Honours at Sydney University and undertaking a successful professional career spanning 12 years, Dr Anne Cregan commenced a PhD with the University of New South Wales at NICTA's Neville Roach Laboratory in 2003. She graduated this year, after finishing her PhD part-time while also working for NICTA.

"My studies were in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and focused on ontologies and semantic technologies," Dr Cregan explains. "I was looking at how to publish and link data on the Web, whilst also processing and reasoning with it." Dr Cregan now consults to NICTA on strategies and next generation technologies to support Australia's future digital economy. She also works as a consultant in this field with several major ICT companies.

NICTA-sponsored PhD students and graduates also play strategic roles in NICTA spin-out companies. Ka-Shu Wong completed his PhD thesis in March and now works with internationally successful NICTA spin-out Open Kernel Labs (OKL). "I develop new features for the OKL4 microkernel, and also adapt other operating systems to work with OKL4," he says.

A PhD undertaken at a NICTA laboratory aims to give students deep technical expertise along with strong commercial and entrepreneurial skills. NICTA provides a challenging, creative and supportive environment for PhD research and, through its member and partner universities, offers PhD students access to scholarship opportunities, advanced research and professional coursework, and world-class supervision.

About NICTA

National ICT Australia Ltd (NICTA), Australia's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Research Centre of Excellence, is developing technologies which will meet the current and future needs of the community in fields which will lead to large economic, social and environmental benefits for Australia. NICTA has five laboratories around the country. Since NICTA was founded in 2002, it has created four new companies, developed a substantial technology portfolio of patent applications and continues to supply new talent to the ICT industry through the NICTA-enhanced PhD program.

NICTA is funded by the Australian Government as represented by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and the Australian Research Council through the ICT Centre of Excellence program. It 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's partners include: the University of Sydney; University of Melbourne; the Victorian Government; the Queensland Government; Griffith University; Queensland University of Technology; and The University of Queensland.

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