

Enterprise Connect Manufacturing Centre

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Minister for Innovation, Industry,
Science and Research**

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It was in April last year that Kevin Rudd and I confirmed Labor would establish a network of innovation centres around Australia to connect businesses with new ideas and technologies.

In May this year I formally launched the \$251 million Enterprise Connect initiative.

Enterprise Connect is already offering a range of business improvement services across Australia.

These services are designed to help firms become more innovative, productive, competitive and resilient.

At last count, 887 companies had applied for Enterprise Connect business reviews, four-fifths of them manufacturers.

Tailored advisory, client management and linkage services will all follow.

So far, 104 applications have been received from South Australian firms, of which 101 have been approved.

Seventy firms have completed their business review, and twenty-six – mainly in manufacturing – have gone on to receive a tailored advisory services grant.

These are dollar-for-dollar grants of up to \$20,000.

Combined with matching funds from the successful firms, the \$434,000 granted to date will generate nearly \$900,000 worth of new investment in innovation and enterprise improvement.

The grants are being used to fund strategic planning, operational changes, marketing plans, and measures to boost productivity.

While the services Enterprise Connect provides are critical, so are the centres themselves.

This was always conceived as a physical network and a virtual network combined.

There is still no substitute for actually bringing people together and working face-to-face.

This is the best way to break down barriers, spark creativity, nurture collaboration, and transfer skills and knowledge.

That's why I'm so happy to be opening the first Enterprise Connect manufacturing centre here today.

It's no accident that the centre is located at Mawson Lakes.

Manufacturing accounts for 25 per cent of Salisbury's gross regional product of \$3.7 billion (2006).

That's two and a half times the national average.

If Australian manufacturing has a heartland, this must surely be it.

It is also an incredibly vibrant region. Over the past five years, Salisbury's economic and employment growth have been running at twice the South Australian average.

That gross regional product of \$3.7 billion I mentioned is forecast to reach between \$5 billion and \$6.6 billion by 2015.

The workforce is projected to grow anywhere from 10 to 48 per cent over the same period.

As well as a rich manufacturing base, this region is also blessed with significant innovation infrastructure, including the South Australian Centre for Innovation and the University of South Australia.

The university's multidisciplinary teams at the Mawson Institute for Advanced Manufacturing and the Ian Wark Research Institute are already working closely with industry.

This is exactly the kind of collaboration I want to see happening, and it's the kind of collaboration Enterprise Connect is designed to promote.

The Mawson Lakes Manufacturing Centre will:

- provide a range of expert services, including international benchmarking
- shorten the path from idea to application by linking companies to prototyping and testing facilities
- help companies cut through red-tape to access other government programs
- and act as a gateway to Australia's innovation infrastructure in universities, public research organisations, cooperative research centres and the rest of the private sector.

What we are creating is a network with local roots and global reach.

My ambition is that firms will be able to come here, get professional advice, and tap whatever resources they need – whether they are in South Australia, interstate or on the other side of the world.

That's the virtual network I mentioned a moment ago, and this centre is its front door.

Small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of the economy and they face mounting challenges – from globalisation to climate change.

The way to answer those challenges is by creating new and better products and services, and by delivering them in new and better ways.

Innovation is the key.

That's why the Government is reviewing the national innovation system and why we are working with industry to expand innovation capacity and lift innovation performance across the economy.

Enterprise Connect is just the beginning.

I believe in Australian manufacturing.

I believe it can compete on quality and originality with anyone in the world.

I believe it can go on providing high-skill, high-wage jobs for generations to come.

The potential is there – we just have to unlock it.

For firms in this part of the world, the Mawson Lakes Enterprise Connect Manufacturing Centre could well be key. It is a pleasure to declare it open.