



Research Panel

ANSHM 2025 Conference

Moderator: Peter Runcie

Natural Hazards & Smart Places Theme Leader, NSSN

Australian Innovation

- Australian universities have significantly increased collaboration with industry, but **almost all the growth has been with international companies**, not Australian ones.
- The problem is not university capability or willingness, but that **much of Australian industry lacks the capacity to engage**
- Different factors for SMEs and large companies
- Projects frequently reach high Technology Readiness Levels (TRL 6 or 7) only for the results to **"gather dust,"** leading to millions of dollars spent without meaningful uptake

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Policy

Absorptive capacity: The key to R&D collaboration problem

Victor Pantano
Contributor
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For decades, Australian policy has been anchored on a familiar refrain: universities must do more to engage with the end-users of research.

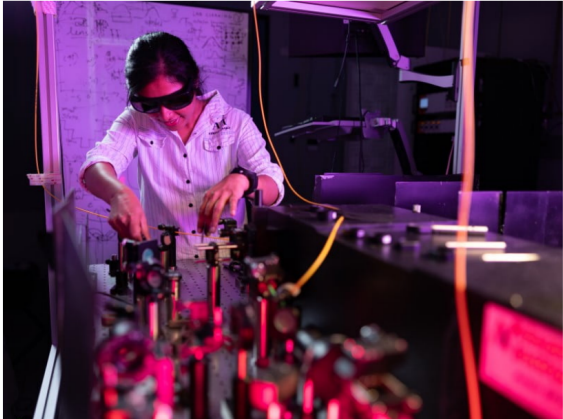
The underlying assumption has been that if universities became better at outreach, collaboration and commercialisation, the nation's innovation performance would follow.

Recent data paints a different picture. According to analysis reported in *Future Campus* (['Australian industry not playing ball on R&D collaboration'](#)), universities have significantly lifted their collaboration with industry, but almost all the growth has been with international companies, not Australian ones.

That does not bode well for increasing the nation's productivity.

One implication of the growth in R&D investment from international companies is that universities may wish to focus more deliberately on marketing their capabilities to attract inward investment from these global players.

This trend validates that our research and the technologies emerging from it is indeed world class. International companies are discerning investors; they have the resources and expertise to assess opportunities in the global research and technology market, and their willingness to invest here is a positive sign.



Sydney Quantum Academy scholarship student from Macquarie University Raji Nair. Image: Sydney Quantum Academy

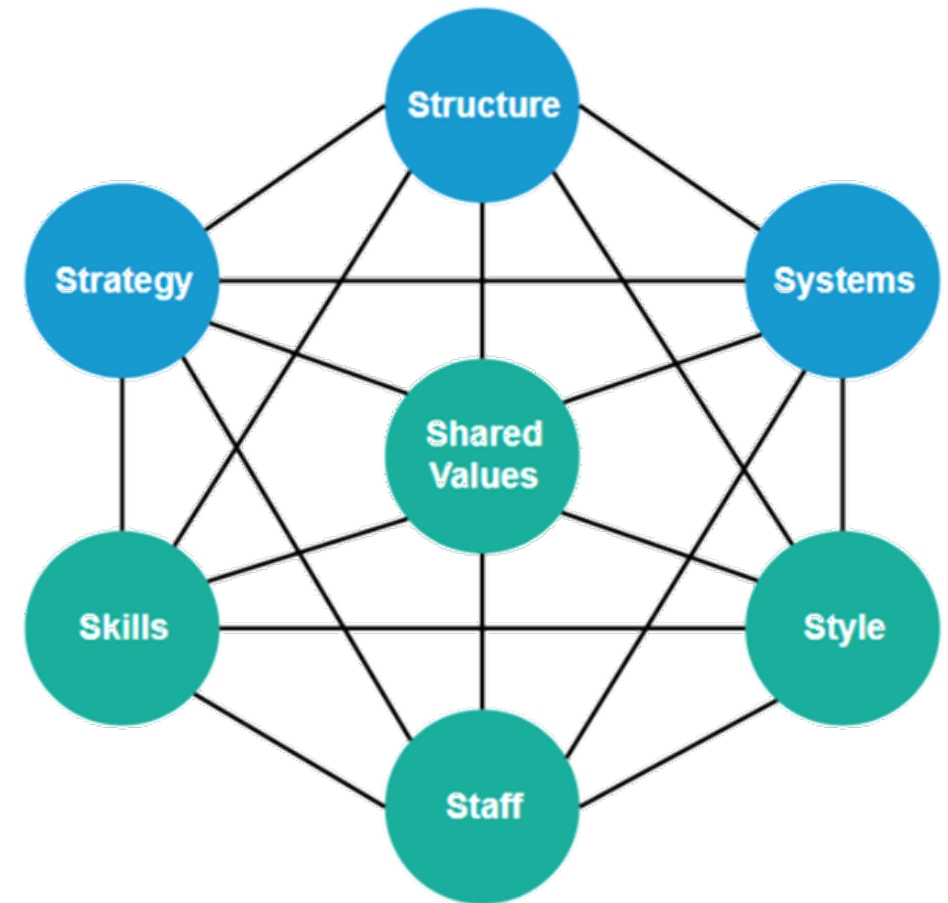
Building "Absorptive Capacity"

Industry

- **Skilled people** who can translate research into product development
- **Organisational processes** to integrate external research with internal priorities
- **Resources** to sustain the effort from idea to implementation

Universities

- Translation support skills



McKinsey "7S" model

Absorptive Capacity - Specific Actions



Industry

- **Invest in specialist skills** necessary to interpret and integrate research findings
- **Embed adoption planning** into R&D investment decisions from the outset
- **Bring end-users and implementers** into the research process early. Large international companies use dedicated "deployment" functions to take over projects once they reach TRL 6/7, and they involve this group earlier.

Universities

- **Actively help** partners absorb and apply research findings
- **Provide expertise, training, and “technology deployment” support** as part of the project
- **Embed “transfer agents”**—individuals whose role is to bridge the research and industry worlds by clarifying expectations, solving problems, and driving implementation

Panel Discussion – Absorptive Capacity

- Is the basic premise of "Absorptive Capacity" correct?
- How does "absorptive capacity" apply for your company – has it been an evolving process/journey?
- How well prepared are universities to support research translation?

Panel Discussion – Research Collaboration

- Is the absorptive capacity model an oversimplification of how research collaboration is done?
- How does research conducted inhouse by industry fit with this?
- Are there alternative research collaboration models?
- What is the role of government?

Discussion

