



Importance of IFC to Victorian Textile & Fibre Industry Acknowledged by State Government

The International Fibre Centre's (IFC) support of industry focussed training and development programs was acknowledged in November when Hon Bronwyn Pike MP Minister for Education and Minister for Skills & Workplace Participation extended its operation and activities until December 2013.

Minister Pike said in announcing the extension that IFC's activities in relation to its programs directly addressed unmet skills needs of fibre and textile companies.

The Minister also referred to IFC's encouragement of greater collaboration between TAFE institutes and specialist private providers saying that these activities were a good indication of how IFC is supporting Skills Victoria in building its Market Facilitation capacity.

IFC Chairman Mr. Peter Loney said the extension was recognition of the importance to industry of IFC's commitment to programs that facilitate the introduction and application of new technologies through workplace focussed training.

Mr Loney said that it was also important that these programs are delivered in partnership with higher education providers and RTOs.

"Victorian textile and fibre manufacturers are acknowledged for seeking to improve the skills of their workforce with programs and initiatives that improve productivity, capacity and global competitiveness.

"Our programs are assisting them to do this" Mr Loney said.

The Victorian fibre and textile industry contributes more than \$1Billion to Victoria's economy annually, and provides growing employment opportunities for the State's rapidly expanding population.

"In order to keep doing this it must not only be responsive to changing consumer demands, but also be at the forefront of the innovative application of emerging technologies." Mr Loney said.

"Through this it will create opportunities to capture new export markets for textiles in industries as diverse as medicine, healthcare, defence, mining, engineering, building, construction and agriculture."

It will require a highly skilled and trained workforce to successfully apply and utilise this new knowledge, and IFC programs will support this” Mr Loney said.

IFC was established in 1998 to support education and training for the Victorian fibre and textile industries and remains the only organisation in Australia specifically for the fibre and textile industry.

IFC CEO Mr. Joseph Merola said “The endorsement of the Victorian Government reflected the IFC partnership role, relevance, effectiveness and contribution to the long term financial viability and success of the State’s fibre and textile industry.”

“However, while the funding targets Victorian industry, the benefits flowing from IFC funded programs and initiatives are relevant to other States and nationally.” Mr Merola said

Over the past three years, IFC has expanded its activities by introducing many new initiatives to assist Victorian manufacturers' access to the latest information, and the most up-to-date information about product development, technology and innovation, and training and learning programs.

“To do this we have had to be more innovative and flexible in the way we provide funding support, and now use a variety of approaches.

“One such innovation has the creation of a network approach to funding which allows industry and training providers to work directly with each other to ensure that training content and delivery addresses specific needs.

“Another change has been that we have removed the burden of paperwork from applicants and now assist them, at our cost, in developing a full project implementation plan to maximise the prospect of a successful project.

Over the past three years IFC has invested over \$2.9 million dollars in Innovative, Sustainable, Value Chain and Network industry based programs, and we are pleased with the outcomes” Mr Merola said.

“Over the next three years IFC initiatives will continue to focus on assisting the fibre and textiles industry to remain viable and sustainable through improving the skills, knowledge and capacity of its workforce.