

Press Release

Research Program Promises Virtual-Reality World for Australian Carmakers

The newly formed AutoCRC (Cooperative Research Centre) has embarked on an ambitious research and development program promising a new generation motor vehicle and high speed virtual reality design and engineering for the Australian auto industry.

AutoCRC CEO Matthew Cuthbertson says, "The establishment of AutoCRC recognises that Australia's global competitiveness in the auto industry demands a co-operative approach to bring together the best people in industry and in public sector research organisations".

"Our relatively small resources mean that this is the optimum way forward for the Australian industry which is facing major new competitive pressures such as a global market place, reduced government protection, global supply chains and pressure from low-cost competitors in China and Eastern Europe".

AutoCRC will address these and other issues through a collaborative approach between major manufacturers, component suppliers, universities and research institutions such as CSIRO and the Victorian Partnership for Advanced Computing.

Cuthbertson says "Added value to customers and faster more efficient development of new technologies for smarter, safer, cleaner motor vehicles are a major focus of the AutoCRC effort".

"With the help of our industry Participants we have now put in place an exciting \$100 million (including \$38m in cash from the Federal Government) research program which includes development of a range of new virtual design technologies and a prototype ultra light-weight vehicle.

New intelligent vehicle safety systems will include work on collision avoidance systems including lane-departure warning and speed sign recognition systems followed by systems to recognise moving objects such as pedestrians.

The growth in virtual reality design and engineering technology to reduce concept to production times has ensured this is a major focus of AutoCRC research and development."

Cuthbertson says, "This includes projects to reduce the time required to develop new tooling and new die-making technologies".

A number of significant virtual reality projects will develop new systems to bring together engineering and design earlier in the development process and extend this to the mostly manual methods used by engineers at the production and in-service phase of motor vehicle manufacture.

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Another important focus for AutoCRC is the development of graduate and postgraduate university courses that will produce engineers aligned to the needs of the automotive industry. This is strongly supported by the eight major Australian universities who are Participants in AutoCRC.

AutoCRC projects also address the need for a more highly skilled workforce through the development of a demonstration virtual-reality based training program for general assembly workers.

Cuthbertson says, "AutoCRC will focus on the development of innovative products and processes that better meet the customer's needs to sustain Australia's position in the global automotive market".

"We have only just begun our research program, but we already have a vision for a very different future for the Australian automotive industry – based on agile research and manufacturing, and adding intellectual value to everything we do."

(The CRC Program is a Commonwealth Government initiative. For more information see www.crc.gov.au)

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