I recently wrote in an AutoCRC publication about the continuing importance, given the shifting circumstances in the automotive industry, of assistance with technology development and business improvement. The changes continued in the federal budget delivered on the 13 May 2014, but I am pleased to say that AutoCRC’s funding has not been impacted by the budget in either its research or business excellence division. We remain funded until 2017 and still have capacity to assist companies to develop new technologies and to find new business opportunities.

The demand for innovative technologies in the global automotive industry continues to be high and the need for Australian companies to differentiate themselves in the global market is imperative. Consequently the development of new technology continues to play a pivotal role in many of our international success stories (Futuris and SMR Automotive come to mind). Unfortunately R&D can be difficult and expensive, however these risks can be substantially reduced through AutoCRC’s collaborative project arrangements.

For companies wishing to innovate, it is crucial to be knowledgeable and up to date on new developments in the sector, and following the success of our Cars of Tomorrow conference in March we are pleased to advise you that we will be holding a Technical Conference in October to share with you the latest results from our Australian research teams. Numerous component companies are already participating in AutoCRC projects but we are keen to find opportunities for a few more to join us either into existing projects or new ones.

However, for automotive companies seeking opportunities for new business, technological innovation is just one of several options. It is worth considering that a company’s greatest strengths might lie outside the great products it makes. For instance they could lie in the way they organise production, or the management of their own supply, or in their tool development and maintenance.

When facing tumultuous change it is helpful to have a clear understanding of one’s areas of highest competence because new opportunities might lie in the provision of advice and assistance from an external party, such as that provided by AutoCRC’s Business Excellence division (ASEA), can be vital in providing insights into available opportunities.

ASEA currently delivers the Federal Government’s Business Capability Support Program in the form of tailored programs to help companies understand their competencies and identify new opportunities. This assistance is well subsidised and I urge those companies in the automotive supply chain who have not yet taken advantage of this program to contact our ASEA team for further information.

Additionally, through ASEA, and in conjunction with the Victorian Government Department of State Development, Business and Innovation and the Federation of Automotive Products Manufacturers, AutoCRC is running a series of Business Opportunity Forums for automotive component sector companies.

These events will help identify business opportunities in other sectors than automotive and guide companies through a process of familiarisation with these sectors. Follow up ‘Deep Dive’ sessions will assist companies as they continue to build a profile within their chosen industry and examine opportunities in more detail.

Again, I strongly encourage companies to take advantage of the support on offer (the forums are free) and on the way, maintain an open mind to possible future directions.

**CONTACT**

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