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CeBIT Hannover Confirms Global Interest In Australian Innovation

They came, they saw, they conquered.

As the curtain falls on CeBIT Hannover for another year, and amidst reports of low visitor attendance figures, the National Australian Pavilion Technology Australia has been an epicentre of activity.

Eleven companies arrived in Hannover last week with swag of innovative new technologies, typical Aussie enthusiasm and varying expectations about what the world's largest trade show could do for them.

As they pack away their stands, most are leaving with several serious business opportunities and confirmation that Australian technology is relevant, timely and respected in the international ICT arena.

Funded into CeBIT Hannover by two Federal Government departments – the Department of Education, Science and Training and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources – all 11 companies are walking away with the possibility of major deals coming to fruition in the next few months.

Managed by Hannover Fairs Australia, the local subsidiary of CeBIT organisers Deutsche Messe AG, the Australian contingent has been visited by a Federal Government delegation which included the Minister for Communications, Information, Technology and the Arts, Senator Alston, and State delegations from Victoria, the Northern Territory, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia.

Senator Alston's visit marked the first time an Australian dignitary had participated in the official schedule at CeBIT Hannover with not one but two public speaking engagements. Audiences at the World ICT Forum, which included some of the world's foremost industry commentators, were told about Australia's commitment to research and development when Senator Alston closed the two-day conference, a theme further reiterated when he officially launched future parc the following day, a specific part of the CeBIT Hannover trade show dedicated to innovation.

Hannover Fairs Australia Managing Director Ms Jackie Taranto said the National Australian Pavilion had raised the profile of the country's research and development capability within the global ICT community.

"Australia's ICT research and development base is well developed and can stand alongside any country in the world.

"CeBIT has allowed the international marketplace to see for themselves what we have achieved and many key players have expressed surprise that Australia has such a competitive and innovative expertise," she said.

"There is no doubt that participation within this event has created a number of business opportunities, international recognition and opened many doors for the future."

Invest Australia's Senior ICT Investment Manager, Mr David Webb, said the new Technology Australia branding had been well received by the Australian exhibitors and international ICT audience.

"The co-ordinated national approach has proved highly successful," he said. "Representatives from Invest Australia, Austrade and the Western Australian, New South Wales, Northern Territory, South Australian and Victorian agencies have all worked together to further strengthen Australia's position in the global marketplace."

Five other Australian companies also exhibited independently at CeBIT Hannover with all companies delighted with their success.

And the increased profile of Australia at CeBIT has led to at least six companies signing up for exhibition space at CeBIT Australia, to be held at Darling Harbour from May 6 – 8.

Both the United Kingdom and Dubai will have a major presence in Sydney, with a number of companies exhibiting to the Asia Pacific visitor base.

PARTICIPATING AUSTRALIAN COMPANIES – HOW THEY FARED AT THE FAIR

McSoft Pty Ltd, a Mackay-based company producing tools for use with Microsoft Windows on portable devices, only began serious product development last August. Managing Director, Andrew McGrath, reports he is now in serious discussions with the South African Government about holding training seminars for their software developers.

Telstra New Wave, the commercialisation arm of the Telstra research laboratories, came to CeBIT Hannover with 12 developments, all of which have sparked international interest. Commercial

Manager, Robin Court, said the participation in CeBIT had exceeded expectations and his team had spoken to many companies interested in Telstra New Wave's developments.

The Australian photonics industry has been well established for more than 10 years and CeBIT has increased awareness in the broader ICT community of Australia's capabilities. According to Australian Photonics Manager of International Business, Sylvia Kim, the organisation has had several business inquiries as well as interest from venture capitalists wanting to invest in Australian photonics technologies.

Canberra-based company, Seeing Machines, whose technologies focus on Vision-based human machine interfaces, were already established internationally before participation in CeBIT. However, the event has opened up new potential customers in Europe as well as introducing company executives to a range of products that could be incorporated into Seeing Machines' products.

Knowledge management is one of the hot topics at CeBIT Hannover and Northern Territory company, Asset Management Systems, whose InfoMapper technology is extensively used in the Australian environmental arena, has had discussions with companies in India, Korea and Denmark about future deals.

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