

Transcript

Interview with Angela Walsh, Highlands Mornings, 2ST

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Angela Walsh: Once upon a time research and development was mainly about making things easier, but now it is also about making life better. And a good example of that, well, David Chuter is going to tell us all about it. Hello David.

David Chuter: Hello [Andrea], how are you?

Angela Walsh: Alright. You're from Australia's Innovative Manufacturing Cooperative Research Centre. That's a bit of a mouthful.

David Chuter: It is. So we call it IMCRC for short. We love acronyms in our industry.

Angela Walsh: I'm sure you do, it makes it easier to have a conversation, I'm sure. You're working together with the University of Technology Sydney, Boral, and Southern Highlands Concrete Constructions on a very interesting project. Tell us about it.

David Chuter: Yes, it is an interesting project. It's really important that we have projects and investments in regional areas that give hope, and can create jobs. And this one's a great one. It's to develop a form of manufacturing concrete that is much more environmentally friendly, and is potentially a business model that could be exported to concrete manufacturers all around the world. You've got Boral, who are working with Southern Highland Concrete, in partnership with the University of Technology Sydney. A great example of how collaboration can work in Australia, and provide opportunities for future jobs and growth.

Angela Walsh: They're dealing with a low carbon concrete, so this is about reducing the carbon footprint?

David Chuter: Concrete production around the world is a big industry, and it counts for more than 5%, I'm told, of all carbon dioxide emissions. And as we know that's not the best thing for the planet. This project is about looking at a new technology to change the binding material. That's the material that makes concrete stick together and set, if you like, and to change this material to increase the portion of materials that are much more friendly to the environment. It will be a world first. No one's commercialised it to this extent. Boral's exactly the type of company that can take that on. But the role that Southern Highlands Concrete are playing is they will test and prove out in the real world how well this concrete pours, how well it sets, and how well it can be utilised. And it's a great example again of how innovation can be tested in regional areas and create big opportunities.

Angela Walsh: So how do people with ideas in business like this, how do they get started?

David Chuter: There are lots of supporting programs that the federal government and the state government have. We're one example of those. We've got around 35 projects that all relate to research, development and commercialisation to help the manufacturing industry. But that's across many sectors. So we're one part of that system. But the problem is that even though you know a government fund might exist, you've still got to find the right people to have a conversation with.

And so one of the reasons our CRC exists is to provide the opportunity for companies to go and talk with universities or the CSIRO. And often what we find is just striking a conversation you'll find some common interests, and you'll be sharing ideas with people that are equally as passionate about you at creating real world opportunities. So what we try and do at the CRC is we try and give the opportunity for small businesses, medium sized companies, Australian companies, wherever they are, to connect with university labs, university researchers, and scientists to solve problems together. Conversations can lead into great projects that will ultimately lead into jobs and growth, and all help with the future of manufacturing in Australia.

Angela Walsh: Exciting times ahead.

David Chuter: Absolutely. You know, the one thing I like about this project is it is also a good example of – we're all very focused on recycling and doing the right thing by the environment. But one of the solutions that this concrete bind is looking at is to use a by-product of manufacturing of things like iron, taking the slag and the materials that don't really have a downstream use, and using those materials that are effectively a waste product to add value into something that is now new. And so while it's a great technology project, it's also a great example of how people need to look across industry, and how you can use by-product and waste as a value added into creating something new. And that's a real trend that we're going to see an awful lot of investment in going forward.

Angela Walsh: David Chuter from the Innovative Manufacturing Cooperative Research Centre, thank you.

David Chuter: Oh, you're very welcome, thank you very much