



MEDIA RELEASE - 18 August 2009

A SEARCH FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF SCIENTISTS

Australia is engaged in a race to keep up with growing international demand for scientists and technologists, but interest at school level continues to flag.

Where will the next generation of Australian scientist come from?

Dr Alan Finkel will set out his solution in an address to the National Press Club in Canberra on Wednesday (19 August).

The address is to celebrate the success of students in the Rio Tinto 'Big Science' Competition, and was commissioned by Australian Science Innovations.

The Finkel solution draws upon his experiences in science, business, education and publishing. It calls for a vigorous national effort in three areas:

- the way science is taught in schools
- the rich but largely unknown careers offered by science and technology
- lifting the coverage of science in the media

An electrical engineer and neuroscientist by training, Alan Finkel moved to Silicon Valley in 1983 to set up biotechnology company Axon Instruments.

He took with him his first major invention, a device that measured electrical activity in heart and nerve cells. Twenty years later, Axon enjoyed a lucrative float on the Australian Stock Exchange.

Alan Finkel is on the Board of the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, a philanthropist, and publisher of Cosmos magazine.

He is also the first Australian to book a space flight on Richard Branson's trailblazing Virgin Galactic.

International reports have claimed that up to a billion new skilled jobs globally will be created in science, technology, engineering and maths over the next 20 years. Finkel is concerned that Australia lifts its game to meet this challenge.

The Big Science competition is supported by Rio Tinto and the Australian National University.

Where: National Press Club, 16 National Crct, Canberra

When: 12.30 Wednesday 19 August

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