



Over 140 adults and 100 children from across the central west participated in the inaugural RAPAD Westtech Innovation Space and Technology Precinct held at the Westtech Field Days on September 12 and 13 2017 in Barcaldine. The event could not have been held without the financial support of the Queensland Department of State Development.

The precinct, a first for the event and the central west, saw a coming together of leading business and technology minds and entrepreneurs all in the one place, all at the one time and all with the same purpose, to help ideas flourish through connectivity. 15 people pre-registered for the free *Entrepreneur Matching Program* with over 30 more participating in one on one mentor moment's as part of the break out sessions.

The precinct:

- created an environment where regional businesses, communities and councils could be inspired, mentored and connected;
- Grew an encouraged an entrepreneurial culture;
- Supported local entrepreneurial and technical talent to stay local;
- Enabled access to mentors so those creative, positive and determined people across the region could collaborate with others and grow their ideas; and
- Branded the RAPAD region as having an innovative and entrepreneurial culture and as a place of vitality where business can thrive.

When attendees were asked *“What would you say you got out of the session for your business?”* they replied:

- We made some great contacts with the people we spoke to and they offered great advice to getting out business out there;
- Motivation & inspiration to keep developing our ideas;
- Greater awareness of possibilities; and
- Inspiration. Courage to have a go. They were phenomenal business people with interesting and inspiring stories.

When attendees were asked *“Would you recommend the Innovation Space and Technology Precinct to others? If yes why?”* they responded:

- For anyone who need some inspiration to chase there dreams! This event truely was fantastic!;
- Amazing event! So motivating!;
- It was a fabulous spot to meet/network with like minded people and businesses. A great opportunity to meet with very successful people whom you wouldn't normally get to meet;
- It was an effective meeting of several resources in an appropriate context, and had a great format through which to engage; and
- A great place to learn and be inspired.

The precinct was not just for adults with RAPAD partnering with the Queensland Department of Education and Training, who brought their Creative Roadshow to the

event as well as Tim Gentle's Think Digital Bus. Both gave kids from across the west the opportunity to film dynamic content, broadcast technology as well as design and build robots.

Significant media coverage was received pre, during and post event including:

- ABC Radio Western Queensland – series of interviews with speakers in the weeks prior, outside broadcast from the event;
- Queensland Country Life – coverage of the event with a feature on the speakers;
- Westech & RAPAD Social Media – prior to the event and utilised to capture feedback post event

The Westech Innovation Space and Technology Precinct is part of the broader RAPAD Entrepreneurs Program which seeks to partner with mentors to expand regional connections and networks, and boost grassroots activities and partnerships. It aims to help overcome some of the significant challenges facing the region including poor digital infrastructure, difficulty attracting and retaining talent, a lack of networking and collaboration opportunities, and a lack of coordinated regional networks, educational activities and events.

