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Australia's first KNX certified facility opens at RMIT

RMIT University has launched a new building automation training facility, enabling all electrical engineering undergraduate and apprenticeship students to gain expertise in the world-leading KNX automation system.

KNX is an open international standard that is used to automate systems in buildings, such as energy monitoring, lighting, blinds, shutters, heating and cooling, security and AV systems. As an open protocol it is not a proprietary system, allowing different manufacturers to create devices that can connect with each other to form an integrated network.

In collaboration with power and automation engineering company ABB Australia, RMIT has established itself as a leader in automation research and education. At the Melbourne-based KNX facility, ABB is providing KNX equipment for hands-on training as well as RMIT facilitator training.

RMIT's new facility is the first KNX certified training facility in Australia, with sign-off from the International KNX Association in Brussels being achieved in October 2012. Learning how to use the KNX protocol will enable RMIT students to design and program systems encompassing a large number of manufacturers using a world standard system.

Peter Ryan, Head of School of Engineering (TAFE), believes this partnership will provide enormous benefits to RMIT.

"It is going to help expose our apprentices and industry partners to new skill sets," he says.

Professor Peter Coloe, Pro Vice-Chancellor Science, Engineering and Health and Vice President of RMIT University, told the audience at the launch how important partnerships are for the University.

"This is a very important day for RMIT because it's bringing together industry, higher education and TAFE in an integrated way to deliver outcomes not only for RMIT but for Australia," he says.

By automating building systems, energy use can be minimised by only using services as they are required. As an example, a KNX controlled system can intelligently control lights, blinds and air conditioning to manage light levels and ambient temperature in a way that reduces energy requirements.

"These sorts of integrated systems that drive rational use of energy are going to be critical for the world in the long term if we're going to reduce our carbon footprint," he says.

Keith Leung, head of low voltage products and systems for ABB in Australia, says: "KNX technology is getting high acceptance as the world's open standard for the control of all types of intelligent buildings, both commercial and residential. KNX is well established as the number one protocol in the world and we definitely see it as the future of building automation systems here in Australia."

Drawing on the experience of other countries, RMIT has made a significant step forward in building control in Australia with their decision to train undergraduate students in a number of disciplines, as well as apprentice students from TAFE, on KNX.

KNX is an open-architecture building automation system which has been widely used and trusted across the world for more than 20 years. It provides energy efficient solutions and comfort control to building applications.

Buildings are one of the most significant sources of energy consumption across the world. Building system engineering supported by intelligent and networked room and whole-building controllers, can contribute significantly to conservative and requirement-based energy use. The worldwide standard for KNX technology enables energy savings in the double-figure percentage range as well as providing enhanced flexibility with planning and implementation, along with a high level of investment protection and availability.

KNX offers true flexibility by using a genuine open architecture and has more than 300 manufacturers globally offering products to integrate into a single communication network.

Ian Richardson
Chairman
KNX National Group Australia