Thank you for inviting me. I find this initiative very interesting for a range of reasons, foremost that gatherings such as Crossing the Ridges is based on an assumption that sharing knowledge across organisations is a positive thing to do. A view that I heartily support. I believe that communication is not something that Flinders does well, so Crossing the Ridges is a positive structure in the university.

I have a varied research agenda, and some unkind souls say that I seem to specialise in things that I know nothing about. All my work has an underlying theme, however, and that is that it is about how knowledge is constructed and retained in organisations. And there are two major parts to this. One is the traditional (?) view of view of knowledge in organisation, the Knowledge Management view, where organisations should be able to harness and harvest the fruits of knowledge by processes of explication and knowledge sharing. The other view has far less research, and that is to view knowledge as something that happens. It can be formally recognised, informal or downright disadvantage to the organisation. So the title of this presentation is more about understanding, than about what you do to change. I believe that if you understand, then generally, you will know what has to be done. Then it is about investment, alignment and will.
Knowledge

“To define knowledge in a non-abstract and non-sweeping way seems very difficult. Knowledge easily becomes everything and nothing”

(Alvesson, 1992, p. 1000)
Data – facts, quantities and values
Information – data placed in a structure to inform
Knowledge – cumulative stock of information and skills derived from the use of information. Psych – knowledge needs to interact with human cognitive structures.
Burton-Jones made the distinction that only data can flow among people

Problems – hierarchical model, assumption that knowledge is explicit and valuable.
### Individual knowledge retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semantic</td>
<td>'contains concepts and factual knowledge'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Schaeteler, 1996, p. 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canberra is the capital Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episodic</td>
<td>the memory of my weekend in participation in past events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I spent a wonderful in Canberra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural</td>
<td>skills and habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Riding a bicycle in Canberra or anywhere else</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Tulving’s (1985, 2001) model of memory systems

*Think of classifications as a convenience, not as a truth inspiring achievement*
Also think about ….

• Tacit and explicit knowledge
• Individual and collective knowledge

Added to this, we have dimensions of individual and collective, and tacit and explicit. Define each. – Note richness of cues in tacit, and that tacit/explicit is a duality not a dichotomy.
Think about organisations. They have more than just people ie files, IT systems, furniture, processes, procedures etc. Go to next slide and then back again.

- Individual and tacit – subject to loss from departure
- Individual and explicit – backup issues
- Tacit – difficult to manage
- Procedural – hard to change
- Episodic – emotional, subjective
- Collective and explicit requires resources
- Collective/semantic/tacit – vulnerable to retrofitment

Knowledge creation is part of transformation as individual becomes collective.

What is the best way to ensure someone has the knowledge that they need when they need it?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emphasis on Collective Endeavour</th>
<th>Emphasis on Contributions of Key Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>K+ Routinized Organizations</strong> (Embedded K+)</td>
<td><strong>Communication-Intensive Organizations</strong> (Enculturated K+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expert-Dependent Organizations</strong> (Embodied K+)</td>
<td><strong>Symbolic-Analyst Dependent Organizations</strong> (Embrained K+)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus on Familiar Problems  
Focus on Novel Problems  
(Adapted from Blackler, 1995, p. 1030)
Thoughts on change

- Knowledge retention is practice-based
- Knowledge retention is a key part of organisational learning
- Retained knowledge can impede organisational learning
- “Retention” often means “sharing”
- The perspective of knowledge challenges you to question whether your means of knowledge retention are appropriate & effective
- A perspective of knowledge gives a language and rationale to facilitate change

inspiring achievement
Questions to think about

- What knowledge is critical to your organisation’s operations?
- How is this knowledge protected?
- Do new people have trouble finding out how the organisation works?
- Do people have trouble finding out what they need to know?
- Can people remember that certain things were done in the past but can not work out how?
- What stories of success, failure, past experience are retained?
- Do people get asked to provide the same information over and over?
- Are the same solutions devised for a range of issues?
- How is innovation encouraged?
References