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Telstra CTO says research investment should give return

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By AAP

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Telstra chief technology officer Hugh Bradlow today said research investment should be treated as any other type of investment and provide a return.

Bradlow said Telstra's research program was firmly focused on creating wealth for Telstra and Australia in the future.

"Research investment is being driven by business imperatives and should no longer be viewed as a cost centre which needs to be supported but an investment which yields a return," Bradlow said.

He was speaking at the Technology Transfer and Innovation 2001 conference in Brisbane today.

Bradlow said attitudinal changes towards research investment in the past few years had brought more accountability to the research industry, with research and development, or R&D, providers focusing more on the value of R&D and why it should be funded.

"Despite whether funding comes from business or government, the R&D provider is today more accountable for how that funding is used," he said.

"Historically there has been a view that all research and development is good, so therefore it should all be funded. While I believe in the value of R&D, for public or private benefit, it should be treated as any other investment and provide a return," he said.

He said in the case of private funding, the return on investment should be wealth creation or risk amelioration, while the return on public funding should be measured by the public good the research has generated.

Bradlow said that Telstra's R&D has traditionally been focused on providing skilled resources to Telstra's business. "It has yielded great value to Telstra and will continue to do so," he said.

"However, we believe more value can be captured by focusing effort in the commercialisation of the intellectual property created and enabling innovation to the point at which it can be successfully commercialised through external entities," he said.

Bradlow said Telstra Research was presently negotiating a number of commercial deals for the company.

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