Productivity is an elusive concept. While there is general agreement that productivity is a key factor in growth and competitiveness, there is less agreement on what it is, how it should be measured and whether it can be influenced by public policy. This presentation may not provide conclusive answers to these essentially macroeconomic questions, but it will contribute to them by exploring the relationship between management practice and productivity at the micro level of the workplace. Drawing on a recent global study of manufacturing management, we find that the relationship is statistically significant, that the quality of Australian management lags world best practice in critical areas, and that concerted efforts to improve the quality of management in these areas, particularly through systemic engagement with workforce talent and creativity, would have a disproportionately large impact on firm-level productivity performance, compared with other approaches. This finding is relevant to the current emphasis by policy-makers on activating new sources of growth through productivity enhancing reform in the aftermath of the commodity price boom and associated terms of trade boost to Australia’s national income.

Presenter: Roy Green is Dean of the UTS Business School at the University of Technology Sydney. His doctorate is from the University of Cambridge and he has worked in universities, business and government in Australia and overseas. Roy has published widely in the areas of innovation policy and management and has undertaken multi-country projects with the OECD and European Commission. Roy has served as chair of the Australian Government’s Innovative Regions Centre, CSIRO Manufacturing Sector Advisory Council and NSW Manufacturing Council, and was a member of the Enterprise Connect Advisory Committee. He conducted the Review of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Industries in 2008 and led Australian participation in a global study of management and productivity in 2009. Last year, Roy convened the Australian Design Integration Network with CSIRO and was appointed to the Manufacturing Leaders Group. He is currently working on a project on the auto components sector with the AutoCRC.