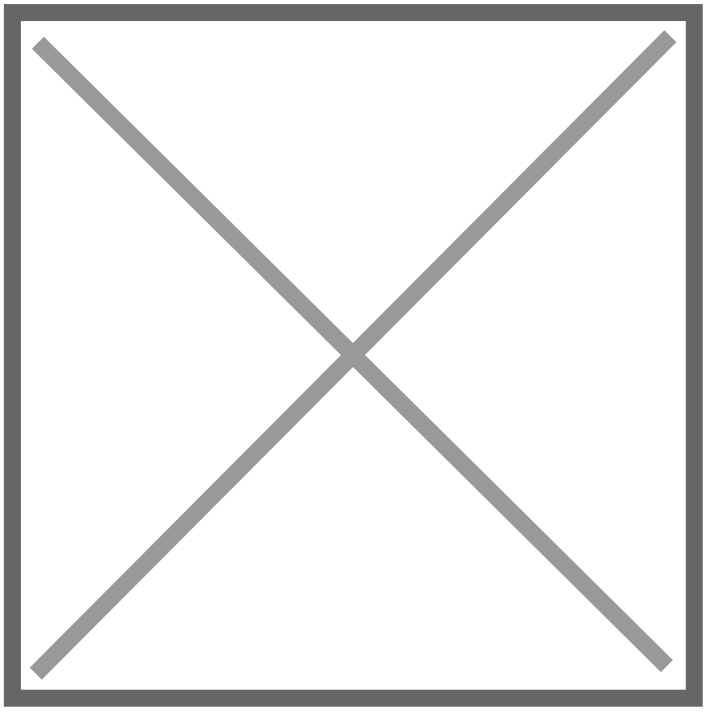
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The Down-Under Leverage

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Biotech has arrived at a theatre close to you, at least in Australia. The latest film The Hunter from the Australian film industry is a thriller-story of a clinical mercenary on a mission to capture the last Tasmanian tiger for a biotech company with questionable motives.

The Tasmanian tiger has been officially extinct since 1936 and in the last 10 years, there have been efforts to clone the tiger from preserved DNA samples in Australia. The project was ultimately given up due to degraded samples. However, latest research in the biological field, it is said, could well re-open the possibility of a clone.

The country is at the forefront of cutting edge R&D in the Asia Pacific region. To capitalize further on its clever-talent pool, earlier in September, this year, the Australian government announced an R&D tax incentive that almost doubles the support for small firms to 15 cents in a dollar. It starts retrospectively from July 1, 2011 and is not limited to life sciences but cuts across sectors. In fact, these incentives are directed at innovation with clean technology in view.

This apart, the 2011 Australian of the Year, Mr Simon McKeon, is chairing an independent review of health and medical research in Australia and will recommend a 10-year strategic health and medical research plan for the nation. In this initiative, he will be joined by Prof Ian Frazer, Mr Bill Ferris AC, Ms Elizabeth Alexander, Prof Henry Brodaty, and Prof Melissa Little among others.

As far as Australia goes, the good news is not limited to just research and development or policy direction. It is a great market, given its good access to medicine and the growing aging population. The pharma companies can certainly leverage on this market need. For example, India-based pharma company Ind-Swift Laboratories has recently closed on this opportunity. Positioned as a provider of APIs to generic players for regulated markets, Ind-Swift has received approval from Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to manufacture seven APIs, including Clarithromycin and Letrozole at its facilities located in India. The company is looking at doubling its turnover by 2015 to cross $500 million in revenue. Australia and Japan form a big part of its strategy. And this is just one example. Australia as a country is still under-leveraged by the rest of Asia and therein lies another opportunity.

Just like in the film, The Hunter, which is a tale of an individual with a tough objective in the wilderness - a metaphor for globalization - challenges and opportunities abound. The key is in adapting.

By the way, this movie is based on a novel by the same title The Hunter authored by Australian Julia Leigh. It was published in 1999.