

MEDIA RELEASE

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InnoFest 07 celebrates Queensland innovation

Queensland innovation took centre stage at InnoFest 07 today (23 April 2007) with business, industry, science, technology and government leaders participating in a lively debate. The topic addresses a hypothetical Olympic Games for ideas (instead of sport), and where Australia would rank. In what sectors would we win the most gold medals, and what can be done to improve our performance?

Presented by the Australian Institute for Commercialisation (AIC) in partnership with the Australian Innovation Festival and Innovation Series (Qld), the event celebrated innovation in Queensland during the Year of the Idea and provided a unique launching pad for two major innovation initiatives.

Launching the 6th annual Australian Innovation Festival and 4th Innovation Series in Queensland, Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations, the Hon. John Mickel MP said that innovation is central to Queensland's strong performance and its future development.

"Good ideas are a dime a dozen. But taking that idea and holding fast against all odds to make it a commercial reality – that takes real guts and determination," Mr Mickel said.

"It's through the development of innovative products and services that we will ensure Queensland remains an economic powerhouse and develops industries of the future."

AIC Chief Executive Officer Dr Rowan Gilmore said that while the spotlight was on innovation today and the months ahead, there was a very real need to maintain this focus year in, year out.

"This is why we are driving a campaign for 2007 to be adopted as the Year of the Idea - to raise public awareness of the importance of ideas as a building block for our knowledge economy, and to demonstrate how taking ideas to market will help to grow our prosperity.

Professor Stuart Cunningham, QUT's Director ARC Centre for Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation, Dr David Wyatt Chairman of Papyrus Ltd and Dr John Cole, Executive Director of the EPA's Sustainable Industries Division formed the AIC's Knowledge Economy Forum panel which provided insights, debate and discussion around the challenges involved in growing Australia as a knowledge economy.

According to Dr Gilmore if there were such a thing as an 'Ideas' Olympics, Australian would not be in the Top 10.

"We'd probably only come in around 15th, would we be happy with that? Are we really as innovative as we think?"

"Australians have produced some great ideas over the years, yet as a nation, are we valuing our ideas as much as we ought? Today's hypothetical discussion provided some valuable insights from experts as to how we can move up the medal tally," Dr Gilmore said.

The annual Australian Innovation Festival runs for a month with more than 770 events across all States and Territories, including over 80 events in Queensland.

The aim of the Festival is to increase public awareness of the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship through a renewed emphasis on the three pillars of economic growth – excellence in research, development and commercialisation.

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Australian Innovation Festival Chair, Peter Westfield said this year's festival would again provide Queenslanders with a chance to delve into the inspiring world of innovation and entrepreneurship.

"From 26 April until 27 May there will be a range of events held across the state as part of the Festival," Mr Westfield said.

"The festival focuses on the 4Cs of Innovation – Creativity, Collaboration, Connections and Commercialisation – elements that are important to successful innovation in Australia and worldwide.

The 2007 Festival theme 'Clusters of Innovation' focuses on the varying innovative strengths across each state and territory across Australia.

"Innovation clusters across Queensland include Tourism, Education and Tropical Agriculture," Mr Westfield added.

Another significant event on the Queensland innovation calendar is the Innovation Series (Qld). Since the first event in 2003, the Series has become the most prominent innovation networking event in Queensland.

Executive Leader of the Innovation Series (Qld) Gill Laird-Portch said plans for the 2007 Innovation Series are already well underway, with some great speakers coming onboard including Mr Jari Pasanen Vice President, Strategy & Technology, Multimedia Nokia who will present at the first Innovation Series Luncheon on 24 May 2007.

"The popular Innovation Series promises to showcase innovative talent in the areas of science and technology in 2007 and we are aiming to build on the success of the past luncheon events of the past three years," Ms Laird-Portch said.

"These events will each carry the Innovation Series (Qld) - connecting ideas to people, and people to ideas."
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About the Year of the Idea

The Year of the Idea is an AIC initiative to raise public awareness of the importance of ideas and demonstrate how taking ideas to market will help to grow the knowledge economy and build prosperity.

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