



AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF SUGAR CANE TECHNOLOGISTS CONFERENCE

NAME: 38TH ANNUAL
CONFERENCE OF THE
AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF
SUGAR CANE
TECHNOLOGISTS (ASSCT)
DESTINATION: MACKAY,
QUEENSLAND
WHEN: APRIL 27 -29, 2016
VENUE: MACKAY
ENTERTAINMENT AND
CONVENTION CENTRE (MECC)
NO. OF DELEGATES: 380
(FROM THROUGHOUT
AUSTRALIA AND A SELECT
GROUP OF INTERNATIONAL
ATTENDEES FROM FIJI,
BRAZIL, VIETNAM AND
GERMANY)

The ASSCT provides a forum for scientists, engineers, chemists, institutions, farmers, companies and individuals interested in sugar cane technology. It enjoys a global reputation as the premier repository for the various technologies associated with the Australian sugar industry. The 2016 conference theme was “Emerging Technologies in a Global Industry”, with renewable energy a key focus.

The first conference was held in Cairns in 1930 and the annual event now rotates amongst five key sugar-growing regional areas in Queensland and northern New South Wales.

WHY MACKAY: Mackay’s sugar production history spans over 145 years with the destination home to Australia’s second largest sugar milling company. The Mackay and Proserpine regions of Queensland can account for up to 30 per cent of Australia’s total sugar production, in good seasons.

CHALLENGES/TRIUMPHS: The ASSCT Honorary General Secretary, Dr Arthur Pinkney, indicated that the challenges for the conference were obtaining quality papers and also in encouraging people to attend. “Fortunately for us this year, our challenges intermingled with our triumphs,” he said. “In the case of Mackay, we had more delegates than we bargained for, some of whom registered at the last minute, which is always challenging. Overall, the size of the sugar industry and the number of people attending the conference has generally decreased, so since 2003 we’ve seen our conference numbers remain quite static. However, this year in Mackay, we’ve seen an overall 20 per cent increase in attendance. Exhibitor numbers and sponsorships have also increased.”

THE EXECUTION: The event kicked off with pre-conference workshops. These were followed by three full days of plenary and technical breakout sessions, a trade exhibition, as well as paper and poster sessions, all of which were staged at the Mackay Entertainment & Convention Centre (MECC). The trade show, comprising more than 50 exhibitors, was staged in a section of the MECC’s Plenary Hall and also in the South Foyer.

Off-site field tours were a feature, together with a comprehensive partners and social program, with a total 400 delegates, exhibitors and invited guests attending social events. Casual ‘Happy Hour’ drinks were staged in the trade exhibition area, and a formal dinner was held at the MECC. An informal exhibitors’ evening was also held at stylish bar and venue, The Dispensary, which is located in the heart of the city.

The official conference welcome function and VIP dinner were held in the newly-renovated



The ASSCT conference dinner at the MECC.



An informal exhibitors evening was held at trendy Mackay bar and venue The Dispensary.



The ASSCT conference welcome function was held at Mackay's Harrup Park Country Club.

Lancaster Rooms at the Harrup Park Country Club, located only minutes from the Mackay CBD.

On Day Two delegates toured the Wilmar Bioethanol Distillery in Sarina, 30 minutes south of Mackay, and also visited the renowned Sarina Sugar Shed Rum Distillery. The off-site excursion also included a viewing of the massive 50,000 tonne Molasses Storage Bladder which is now located at Mackay Harbour and is approximately the size of the MCG cricket ground.

SPECIAL TOUCHES: The conference partner's program was designed to showcase Mackay's country charm, its diverse cultural offerings and its spectacular river and oceanfront locations. Participants were presented with special partner program bags, created by local Mackay designer Kerry Sea, and enjoyed an afternoon at the Clarion Marquee Mackay Marina, where they were invited to model some of Kerry Sea's tropical designs.

CLIENT'S COMMENT: "Being able to host the entire program in the one venue is a real plus - a rarity in a regional location. We didn't have to organise bus transport to ferry delegates to the technical sessions, as Mackay now has enough accommodation within walking distance of the convention centre. The MECC is the perfect venue for an event of this scale. And most importantly, the catering was outstanding and very efficient." – Dr Arthur Pinkney, ASSCT [m](#)



Participants on the ASSCT conference partners program model their colourful Kerry Sea carry bags.

A new meetings destination dawns.

The 1000+ seat Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre delivers the venue, and Mother Nature does the rest. 2015 Winner Australian Performing Arts Centre Association (APACA) Drover's Award for Performing Arts Centre of the Year.

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