

MEDIA RELEASE

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES IN A GLOBAL INDUSTRY

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The North Queensland city of Mackay recently hosted a significant national conference which not only highlighted the destination's impressive capacity as a conference destination but also emphasised local Mackay industry strengths and future developments in renewable energy enterprise.

The Australian Society of Sugar Cane Technologists Limited (ASSCT), which was held at the Mackay Convention and Entertainment Centre, attracted 380 scientists, engineers, chemists, institutions, farmers, companies and individuals interested in sugar cane technology. Visitors from Fiji, Brazil, Vietnam and Germany, benefitted from the ASSCT's global reputation as the premier repository for the various technologies associated with the Australian sugar industry.

The conference theme was "Emerging technologies in a global industry", with renewable energy a key focus, and provided an opportunity for sugar producers, farmers, millers and researchers to explore and discuss the latest developments and innovations in sugar technology.

Conference organisers were pleased to include a workshop run by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA). Presentations on ARENA-sponsored renewable energy projects in the sugar industry informed delegates on emerging technologies that will help transform the current sugar industry into a diversified biocommodities industry. In the Mackay region, sugarcane is grown on more than 100,000 ha hectares of land and this high yielding crop efficiently converts solar energy into stored biomass.

The Mackay region already hosts two of Australia's largest renewable energy businesses - the 60ML bioethanol plant at Sarina and the 38MW baseload cogeneration plant at Racecourse Mill. The cogeneration plant supplies about 30% of the district's electricity year-round, while a 30-year plan for the regional sugar industry includes 280 MW of renewable generation capacity. Racecourse Mill also hosts the QUT Renewable Biocommodities Pilot Plant, where research is being undertaken on second generation ethanol and other bio-products.

Keynote speakers at the event conference included Pramod Chaudhari, the founder and executive chair of Indian bio-energy company Praj Industries Ltd, whose presentation centred on the variety of products that can be produced when processing transitions from refinery to bio-refinery. Another speaker was Simon Usher, Chief Executive of Bonsucro, based in Brazil and the UK, who talked about increasing efficiency in an environmentally-friendly way.

As part of the three day programme, delegates toured the Wilmar Bioethanol Distillery in Sarina, approximately 30 minutes south of Mackay, and also visited the renowned attraction, the 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.



The experience of Mackay practitioners in cane growing, sugar milling, cogeneration and bioethanol, together with strong local supporting industries in agriculture, engineering and construction, makes Mackay an ideal regional centre to attract new bio-industries, as well as conferences and events relating to these sectors.

For more information on the MECC and Mackay, visit www.mackayecc.com.au

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About the Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre:

The MECC has multiple spaces including a 1090-seat auditorium and two plenary halls with capacity to seat 1500 delegates theatre-style or 800 guests banquet style. In addition, there are four meeting rooms, a 100-seat studio space, two foyers, and a selection of break-out rooms. The Convention Centre Precinct also includes the contemporary Artspace regional art gallery, expansive Civic Lawns and the Mackay City Library. All offer additional break-out meeting rooms and alternative function options.

For further information, contact:

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