



## The need to innovate is increasing all the time, we can help

### 15-day study visit to Australia in April 2006.

With ever increasing global competition, pressure to reduce costs, increasing numbers of jobs lost to cheaper labour-cost economies, challenges to work-life balance, mobility of labour, the need to do things differently and add value has never been greater. Whether you work in the private, agricultural, trade union or community & voluntary sectors, the need to innovate is increasing all the time. Many economic commentators say that without innovation, countries will fall behind in wealth creation.

Concordia, with extensive experience of best practice study visits in Europe and North America has joined with the Centre for Competitiveness and together they are taking a 15-day study visit to Australia : 29th March - 13th April 2006.

The tour is being funded as part of the Concordia 'Partnership for Progress' initiative under the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation – Outward and Forward Looking Region.

### Why Australia?

Experience strongly indicates Australia as being ahead in many areas of applying innovation to increase value. Situated on the Asia-Pacific rim, on the 'door-step' of Asia and China, where it has entered these markets successfully, it has a different perspective to Europe. It is this combination of different thinking and outlook that will provide us with a range of diverse and challenging stimuli. We will also stop over in Hong Kong for 2 days to get a first-hand flavour of the China experience.

The tour will focus on Innovation and examples of Best practice with themes of:

- Commercialisation – mind to market
- Social diversity – looking at aspects of a multi-cultural society
- Industrialisation – looking at best practice



## What is innovation?

Innovation means different things to different people; people use different words to describe it, expect it to do different things and attempt to 'do' innovation in different ways. Rather than argue about what it is, it's more useful to look at how other people innovate, and then reflect on how it might work back in our own organisations across NI.

There are, of course, some common threads running through all innovation activity, and they are not all technology focussed either. Indeed, innovation is found in product improvement and service design; in process improvement and in developing the potential of employees.

It's in these other areas that the 'softer' aspects of innovation may be found, how people live and work together, how they communicate and contribute, their passions and interests, goals and ambitions.

The Australian Study Visit will embrace both a technical and non-technical focus that really looks into the Australian perspective on many of these things.

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## What is Concordia?

Concordia is a coming together of four key sectors in Northern Ireland, namely; Agriculture (UFU), Business (CBI), Trade Union (ICTU) and Community and Voluntary (NICVA). Through joint working since the early 1990's, its aim is to promote social partnership and address common policy issues. Following a successful bid under the EU Peace II programme, funding was secured to deliver a specific project called 'Partnership for Progress' which focuses on strengthening social partnership structures in NI and exploring models of best practice in other places. Further details on Concordia are available at [www.concordiapartnership.org](http://www.concordiapartnership.org)

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## Who is the NI Centre for Competitiveness?

The Centre for Competitiveness (CforC) is a private sector, not for profit, membership based organisation governed by a Board of Directors and endorsed by the Department of Enterprise Trade & Investment to actively support the development of an internationally competitive economy through innovation, productivity growth and quality excellence in the private, public and voluntary sectors of the economy.

The Centre has a credible track record in management and leadership development, business improvement and cluster development. Further details on (CforC) are available at [www.cforc.org](http://www.cforc.org)

## Themes of the Tour

### Commercialisation – Mind to market

- The infrastructure and structures that have evolved to support commercialisation of new ideas.
- Securing intellectual property rights by utilising innovative ways of working between universities, research organisations and commercial bodies.

### Social Diversity – Looking at aspects of a multi-cultural society

- Initiatives looking at creating and maintaining a diverse multi-cultural society will be explored.
- Issues around neighbourhood regeneration in areas recovering from industrial reorganisation and unemployment.
- Policing and its interaction with communities.

### Industrialisation – Looking at Sectoral best practice

- Agri-food Beef sector – traceability, genetics, bio-security
- Agri-food Dairy sector – innovative product development, disease control
- Depending on the dynamics of the group other sectoral visits will also be facilitated.

## Key Information

What does the tour package include?

- Flights
- Accommodation
- Meals as detailed within the tour itinerary

What are the Key Dates?

Wed 29th March 2006  
Until  
Thurs 13th April 2006

Where are we going?

- Hong Kong
- Brisbane
- Sydney
- Melbourne

Who will we see?

- Government representatives at local, state and federal level.
- Industry
- Universities
- Voluntary & community sector

## Frequently asked Questions

### Who is eligible?

The tour is aimed at a blend of senior decision makers and potential leaders of tomorrow, who have a direct interest / knowledge of the themes above.

Ideally candidates should possess the following key attributes:

- A broad understanding and experience of the economic and social issues pertinent to Northern Ireland and a willingness to share this with our Australian counterparts.
- A potential to influence and effect change within their particular sectors/ areas of expertise.
- An ability to think analytically and to see the 'big picture' when it comes to identifying innovative practices and processes which could potentially contribute to the future prosperity of Northern Ireland.
- Ability to work collaboratively as part of a team and demonstrate excellent networking and relationship building skills (both within the tour group and with the host organisations).

### Who will make up the Tour Party?



It is envisaged that the tour party will be made up of four participants from each of the four Concordia partner sectors along with four (self-funded) representatives from the non-social partner bodies. In addition, two staff members will accompany the group from Concordia and the NI Centre for Competitiveness.

### How much does it Cost?

The tour expenses as outlined above will be fully covered by Concordia for all Social Partner participants.

Participants will be personally responsible for all non-refundable expenses and will be asked to provide a deposit of £1,500 to secure their place on the tour. This deposit is refundable once all tour commitments have been met.

Any interested parties from non-social partner bodies such as statutory agencies, government departments, local government or education etc. are welcome to apply and should contact the Concordia office for costs and application details.

### What is the commitment for a tour participant?

An initial precondition is to participate in a series of pre-visit preparation activities including team meetings, any relevant research and fact finding visits etc. in order to ensure that the group departs with a sound understanding of the Northern Ireland position on the tour themes.

All successful participants are expected to fully engage in all core aspects of the tour itinerary and post tour activities.

In order to ensure that the learning from the tour is not lost participants must contribute to the delivery of a number of post visit information seminars, which will be hosted by the tour organisers. Participants must also be willing to make themselves available for a number of promotional activities / further information sharing events within their own sectors and generally, following the tour. It is anticipated that this will involve 2-4 meetings, post-tour.

## How to Apply:

If you wish to apply please visit the Concordia website [www.concordiapartnership.org](http://www.concordiapartnership.org) and follow the link to download the specific application form relevant to you. Alternatively you can request a copy from the Concordia office on (028) 8 77 88 242 or by e-mailing [info@concordiapartnership.org](mailto:info@concordiapartnership.org)

The closing date for applications is 4pm on Friday 2nd December 2005.

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