

Media release

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Australia competes for gold in an Ideas Olympics

In an Ideas Olympics, who takes gold? This is a question the Australian Institute for Commercialisation (AIC) will be asking at this year's Knowledge Economy Forum held in Melbourne.

On the 31st of May 2007 the AIC will close the Innovation Festival with a controversial and entertaining debate held at Zinc at Federation square.

In this, the Year of the Idea, the AIC will host the hypothetical debate of The Ideas Olympics – who takes gold? What categories would we excel in? Where would Australia rank overall on the medals tally? What do Australians need to do to increase their performance?

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 basic building block for our knowledge economy, and to demonstrate how taking ideas to market will help to grow our prosperity.”

Dr Robin Batterham, the Global Practice Leader – Innovation, Operational & Technical Excellence, Rio Tinto, Dr Annabelle Duncan, the Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer of the Bio21 Molecular Science and Biotechnology Institute at the University of Melbourne, and Professor John Freebairn professor of Economics at the University of Melbourne and immediate past director of the Melbourne Institute will form the AIC's Knowledge Economy Forum panel. The panel will provide 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, Australia 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? This hypothetical discussion will provide some valuable insights from experts as to how we can move up the medals tally,” Dr Gilmore said.

The first AIC Knowledge Economy Seminar Series was held in Brisbane last year. Over two hundred people heard a diversity of views regarding different models for the commercialisation of research and whether commercialisation was in the public interest.

Throughout the year the AIC is encouraging Australians to adopt 2007 as the Year of the Idea. Through events such as the Knowledge Economy Forum the AIC hopes to stimulate change in Australia's ideas culture.

Are you ready to debate Australia's ranking in the Ideas Olympics with specialist speakers from Melbourne's leading universities? If so register online at www.usicom.com or call 1300 364 739.

Event details

When: Thursday 31 May 2007
Where: Zinc at Federation Square, Melbourne
Time: 4:30 pm for a 5:00 pm start. Drinks from 6:30 pm
Cost: \$55 pp + gst
Register online now: www.ausicom.com

Ends

About the AIC

The Australian Institute for Commercialisation (AIC) is a leading service organisation helping innovators achieve commercial success. Around Australia the AIC helps business, research organisations and governments convert their ideas into successful outcomes to increase the success rate of commercialising Australian innovation. For more information www.ausicom.com

About the Year of the Idea

On Australia Day this year, the AIC called on Australians to adopt 2007 as the Year of the Idea to help the nation grow and remain globally competitive. This call has been heard by governments and industry who are supporting the initiative. For more information www.yearoftheidea.com

About the speakers

Dr Robin Batterham is the Global Practice Leader – Innovation, Operational & Technical Excellence, Rio Tinto Limited and a Professorial Fellow in the Department of Chemical and Biochemical Engineering at the University of Melbourne. Dr Batterham was also Chief Scientist to the Australian Federal Government from 1999 to 2005 on a part-time basis.

Professor John Freebairn is a Professor of Economics at the University of Melbourne and immediate past director of the Melbourne Institute. His current research interests are in taxation policy, labour markets, and water policy. John has published in international and Australian journals, and is a regular contributor to media discussions of economic policy

Dr Annabelle Duncan is the Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer of the Bio21 Molecular Science and Biotechnology Institute at the University of Melbourne. Dr Duncan acts as an adviser to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on biological weapons control, and in this capacity represents Australia, at international arms control meetings.