



AUSTRALIA'S NORTHERN TERRITORY WALKS THE TALK

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Australia's Northern Territory is leading the way in meeting a growing demand for Business Events to embrace Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) concepts as well as environmental initiatives.

Alice Springs in Central Australia is now an officially-designated Solar City in an Australian Government programme which aims to improve energy awareness and efficiency measures through solar energy technology and research. The project aims to make Alice Springs, known as Australia's sunniest town, a model for the rest of Australia and the world to follow.

The region is now home to the AUD\$3.1 million Desert Knowledge Australia Solar Centre which showcases a broad range of solar installations and is one of the key partners at the 73 hectare Desert Knowledge Precinct. The Precinct has assisted to attract a number of conference events to Alice Springs due to the cutting edge technology and expertise now readily available. The Cooperative Research Centres Association Inc (CRCA) annual conference in 2010 is a typical example. This event is expected to attract more than 300 researchers, educators and industry, with organisers indicating that the Desert Knowledge Co-operative Research Centre, another partner at the Precinct, not only played a key part in destination selection but will also have an intrinsic role in the Conference itself.

One of the region's leading conference hotels, Crowne Plaza Alice Springs, has shown that it is not just solar talk but solar action when it recently switched on the largest building-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) system in the Southern Hemisphere, setting a green benchmark for the hotel industry. The ground-breaking \$3.3 million rooftop installation is set to reduce the hotel's energy consumption by 40-80 percent, dependent upon the time of year, and it is estimated that the hotel's annual carbon footprint will be reduced by 420 tonnes of CO₂.

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Meanwhile, the Northern Territory Convention Bureau (NTCB) continues to work closely with NT communities and organisations to develop projects and initiatives which provide CSR opportunities for business events visiting Territory destinations. The Territory is home to Australia's largest indigenous population, made up of a diverse range of Aboriginal cultures, located in communities spread across the length and breadth of its 1,349,129 square kilometres.

A small incentive group of 35 participants recently set aside four hours of their own time on a visit to Alice Springs in order to visit "Purple House", a kidney dialysis clinic established for indigenous patients from the Western Desert region. The corporate visitors set about repairing storm damaged fences, produced meals, purchased cooking equipment, repaired children's bicycles and created a vegetable garden. They also donated a lump sum of money to go towards the raising of funds to purchase a mobile Dialysis Unit to service remote communities.

Lynn Fairbrass, Manager of the Northern Territory Convention Bureau commented "This instance showed how hands-on assistance as well as economic support can make all the difference to disadvantaged local and indigenous communities, whilst also providing an excellent team-building opportunity for groups and meeting corporate CSR objectives. We're delighted to have played our small part in bringing about such a great outcome and hope to be the catalyst for many more partnerships like this in the future."

For further information on conferences and incentives in Australia's Northern Territory, visit www.ntconventions.com

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For more information, please contact:
Ms Leanne Toogood
Northern Territory Convention Bureau
Phone: +61 8 8999 3871
E-mail: leanne.toogood@ntconventions.com.au
Website: www.ntconventions.com