

## Innovative contractors asked to stand up

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### **AS state governments steer towards a tougher course on construction and building industry regulation, a Queensland-based research project is taking an insular approach to improving the sector's performance.**

Innovators in the construction and building sectors were being encouraged to share their trade secrets for a series of case studies being compiled by the Queensland-based Building Research Innovation Technology and Environment (Brite) Project.

The Brite Project, a research wing of the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Construction Innovation, was seeking examples of technical and operational excellence for "dissemination in the industry", chief executive officer Keith Hampson said.

Case studies were a vital tool for the industry in improving efficiency and lifting economic report cards, particularly in small to medium-size ventures, Dr Hampson said.

"The project is proving to be a successful way of promoting innovation in the building and construction industry," he said.

The call for advanced mechanisms follows last month's release of the 2004 Brite survey, which found new innovations, ranging from technology advances to smarter business practices, were being "inhibited" by government regulation, insurance companies and lack of funding.

On the flip side, "customer needs", technical performance, quality and a desire to increase productivity were the top four drivers pushing the implementation of innovative practices, the report said. Ironically, cost savings were also identified as a major driver.

The Brite 2004 survey, which solicited the views of more than 1300 east coast contractors, tradespeople, suppliers, consultants and clients, was the first definitive assessment of innovation in the construction industry since a PriceWaterhouseCoopers and Australian Construction Industry Forum report in 2002.

Hampson said submissions could show the practical and economic benefits of an innovation, how an organisation sought an innovation and made a decision to adopt it, and the steps followed to successful implementation.

The innovation could be a technical product or a new process that provided "economic value". Examples included services, materials, products, equipment, business practices, marketing, financial systems, strategic planning, health, safety and environment.

Hampson said the innovative practice or device in question must have been used on a completed commercial building or construction project to be eligible for entry.

"The team is particularly interested in the activities of small to medium-sized businesses, especially in regional areas," he said.