The ninth UnIChe Winter Field Trip was held on the 5-6 July 2005 in the Hunter valley. The theme was again predominantly "Ammonium nitrate in Industry”.

Numbers were restricted to 20 students because of strict safety regulations on industrial sites. Competition to attend was more severe than previously because the event was well publicized by the UnIChe funded staff members in each of ANU, UQ and Newcastle. There were seven students each from the Universities of Newcastle and Queensland and six from ANU.

The main body of the trip consisted of four half day visits to

- Orica Ltd. At Kooragang Island where ammonium nitrate is produced from natural gas and air via intermediate ammonia and nitric acid stages.
- Orica Explosives Kurri Kurri Laboratories where emulsion explosives containing ammonium nitrate are developed at laboratory and at pilot plant scales.
- The BHP Billiton New Technology Centre Stratford mine where coal is produced at an open cut by use of explosives, and then further upgraded in a coal washery.
Each visit was hosted by scientists employed at the facility, and the pattern was a one hour presentation of the processes and activities, followed by 1-2 hours inspection with on-site discussions. A formal dinner enabled students to further quiz the staff, which was attended by University of Newcastle and BHP Billiton staff. Full board accommodation was provided in Newcastle at a motel.

The students’ anonymous ratings were highly favourable. The coal mine visit rated highly – perhaps due to the visit including escort around the washery by a very keen and knowledgeable mine manager. The visit to BHP Billiton was also well received. The students particularly appreciated an informal Q & A session with the five recently appointed graduate scientists who were our hosts.

P. A. Reynolds, 19 July 2005