

**Well done!**

OUR sincere congratulations to all the MEA Award winners.

In this issue we feature three pages of news from this year's MEA National Conference and feature the award winners in words and photos on page 4.

Everyone agreed that this 25th year of MEA was the best yet, we can only imagine what is in store for 2013.

Meanwhile **BEN** recently spent four days at the Thai island resort Soneva Kiri – a most extraordinary property.

There's a report on page 3 and it is one property that is worth checking out for a high-end event - *Jill*.

**MEA recognises the individual**

IN a bid to increase membership numbers, Meetings Events Australia (MEA) will once again allow individuals to purchase membership.

The move is effective 01 July, with ceo Linda Gaunt making the announcement at the MEA National Conference this week.

Gaunt said individual memberships were taken away some years ago but now, owing to low membership growth over the last two years MEA has identified that consultants or event planners in certain companies need to be allowed to join in their own right.



"We still want the companies involved," Gaunt said, adding that there will be "vast differences" between the company and individual memberships.

Individuals will not be allowed to join committees but will be offered affordable fees to the association and have access to the standard website, while companies will be offered free benefits like networking and personal development sessions.

Members were told that the completion of the Who's Who online database will see a greater reach of businesses to prospective purchasers.

With standard members being offered access to the database, Bronze members able to upload logos, Silver membership will include photos and for Gold status, videos can be uploaded showing what you do and a list of how many web views you receive can be recorded.

Gaunt told delegates that the corporate membership was also growing with 45 new members joining in the first two nights of the four day conference.

Pictured with Linda Gaunt and Rhona Walker, AFMEA, MEA Chair are SongDivision which energised the MEA conference with their musical creativity.

Hawaiian's new airbus

MUSIC to the ears of regular Hawaii travellers is the introduction of Hawaiian Airline's newest and largest aircraft, the 294-seat Airbus A330-200, on daily flights between Honolulu and Sydney.

The inaugural wide-bodied airbus A330 flight, which flew into Sydney on Wed, has 30 more seats than the current Boeing 767-300ERs, aircraft that have served the Sydney-Honolulu route since May 2004.

The new aircraft will add nearly 11,000 seats annually.

"Travel from Australia to Hawaii is booming," said Sherilyn Robinson, gm sales and marketing for Hawaiian Airlines in Australia.

"Introducing our new A330 aircraft will help meet growing demand and will further improve the travel experience for our customers," Robinson said.

The new airbuses have more spacious cabins, and all passengers have in-seat video, games entertainment and a USB port for personal media players.

With growth through a partnership with Virgin Australia, passengers from 18 destinations around Australia can connect with Hawaiian's nightly flights ex Sydney.

**WIN A TRIP FOR TWO TO HAWAII**

During April and May, **Business Events News** is giving one lucky reader the chance to win an amazing holiday for two people to Hawaii, courtesy of **Hawaii Tourism, Hawaiian Airlines and The Kahala Hotel and Resort**.

The prize includes Hawaiian Airlines return airfares from Sydney to Honolulu, and five nights accommodation in an Ocean View Room at The Kahala Hotel and Resort.

Over 6 weeks, we will feature a different question in every **Business Events News** issue. There will be 15 questions in total, which will also be posted on our website. At the end of the month the subscriber with the most correct entries and the most creative response to the final question will win this fantastic holiday to Hawaii.



With over 9,625 sq. meters of total meeting space including a 3,251 sq. meter grand ballroom and 41 meeting rooms. What is the name of Hawaii's award winning convention centre?

Hint! Visit www.businessaloha.com

Email your answers to: hawaii@businessesnews.com.au

Click here for terms & conditions

**Mandy is The Lucky One**

CONGRATULATIONS to Mandy Chan of InterContinental Sydney who was Monday's winner of a double pass to The Lucky One courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures and Village Roadshow Pictures.

Take 50% off Soneva Kiri

Soneva Kiri Thailand has a 50% off special that includes shared round trip plane transfer from Bangkok by Soneva Kiri plane, breakfast, lunch and dinner, house brand alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, in Villa mini bar, laundry service and selected resort excursions and activities.

Prices start from USD\$1,140+++ and are valid until 31 August.

Arrival flight details must be provided at least 24 hours prior to arrival for transfer arrangement - reservations-kiri@sixsenses.com.



WE love a good app and ZUJI's Packman promises to turn your mobile device into a complete holiday management tool.

It's free from iTunes and it helps travellers organise their itinerary, create multiple packing lists, share travel schedules, set personal reminders to complete travel errands, assign trip mates packing lists and see what others are packing.

Launched last month, the app has already been downloaded more than 3,600 times.

MEA knows how to engage delegates when they have their pants down.

This sign was spotted by **BEN** on Monday on the back of the toilet door advertising the MEA conference app.



Christmas In July

FOUNTAINDALE Grand Manor in the NSW village of Robertson has the ultimate Christmas In July experience throughout the month.

Corporate groups can travel from Sydney on the historic Cockatoo Express steam train to the doorstep of the manor.

Here they will be met by a Christmas wonderland and enjoy an afternoon and night of festive fun, glorious food and wine, shopping in the department store on the first floor of the manor and experience good old fashioned traditional living.

Alternatively, should you be holding a conference in the Southern Highlands during July, this is a great idea to join the festivities for an offsite high tea, lunch or dinner, and to soak up the magical Christmas in July atmosphere - details online at fountaindalechristmasinJuly.com.

Business events in Sydney beyond '16

THE Meetings, Incentive, Conference and Events sectors are being encouraged to remind clients that Sydney is still open for business despite the three year closure of the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre planned for late next year.



The \$1 billion government investment will offer "new world class facilities" that will be "unrivalled" said Tim Parker, Infrastructure NSW at the MEA conference on Tuesday.

"It's not just about a building but about a sense of place" Parker said, adding that plans show the 40,000 sqm exhibition space will be the largest in Australia.

The 6,000 sqm meeting space will be linked to the convention and exhibition area and the project will include the creation of a main entrance, retail space, at least one hotel and a minimum carpark capacity of 1500 spaces by the Dec 2016 deadline.

The demolition of the controversial Sydney monorail means the project can be expanded - the blank canvas of the larger site means "something special can be built," he said.

Parker said the three year closure of the centre, while a challenge, was better than the alternative of doing the project in stages, which would leave the Centre under development right through to 2019.

BESydney's ceo Lyn Lewis-Smith said this option would have made Sydney less competitive, as "no one wants to come to a construction site".

Lewis-Smith said BESydney has been working on new facilities for the last 12 months and has confirmed 22 events over two years from 2014 with 20 of these events being from the international market and two nationally.

"We have done a complete audit of all facilities in Sydney...and in over 50 venues we can accommodate over 800 delegates", she said.

While the key message to stress is that Sydney is still open during the years of the SCEC closure, BESydney said first and foremost clients must be looked after.

"Certain events cannot be accommodated so we will work with other state convention bureaux" to ensure this is done.

BESydney said it will continue to make bids focusing on small and medium events during 2014-2016 and from then onwards they will also encourage large events.

Pictured above at the MEA conference this week are: Linda P Gaunt, MEA ceo; Tim Parker, Infrastructure NSW and Lyn Lewis-Smith, ceo BESydney.

Marriotts for Macau

MARRIOTT International last night announced its first two hotels in Macau - the 250-room Ritz Carlton Macau and the 1100-room JW Marriott Hotel Macau.

Both hotels are projected to open in 2015 as part of Phase 2 of Galaxy Macau's "World Class, Asian Heart" development.

The properties will offer extensive meeting and event facilities, including individual ballrooms which each have the capacity for 2000 guests.

Marriott said the hotels would be able to cater directly to the needs of groups booking at either or both properties.

MEA calls in the animals

IN an initiative to enhance their corporate social responsibility, MEA, as a not for profit (NFP) company has chosen another NFP, Sydney's Taronga Zoo as its charity.

At the MEA conference ceo Linda Gaunt asked delegates to lend their support, to get involved with the program and to raise valuable funds for the Zoo.

Banners featuring a green frog, orangutan, fish and a flamingo (below) were on display to promote the initiative.

"We plan to ask our members what we should do on a national level," she said, adding "it can be a great legacy beyond tourism and something that can be used throughout the year".



THE LUCKY ONE

In celebration of the newly released movie *The Lucky One*, Warner Bros. Pictures, Village Roadshow



Pictures and **Business Events News** are giving readers the chance to win a double pass to the movie!

The *Lucky One*, starring teen heart throb Zac Efron, Taylor Schilling and Blythe Danner is based on the bestselling Nicholas Sparks novel which tells the story of a man whose brush with death lead him to the love of his life.

For your chance to win, be the first to answer the question to - comp@businesseventsnews.com.au

What is the name of the character Blythe Danner plays?

Check the Classification





Raffles appointments



ABOVE: Andrea Greybanks has been appointed by one of Singapore's most iconic properties, the historic Raffles Hotel Singapore, as director of sales & marketing.

Prior to her appointment, Greybanks was the regional director of sales, Middle East, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, and she has also held other sales and marketing roles with 5-star hotels in the Middle East and the United Kingdom.

CWT - Meeting Optimizer

FINDING the best place for a meeting just got a whole lot easier with the launch of Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT) - *CWT Meeting Optimizer*.

The system is designed to help travel managers better understand what their companies are spending on meetings.

It's the first in a series of new products to be introduced this year to complement *CWT Meetings & Events*.

CWT Meeting Optimizer was developed in partnership with *Starcite*®, part of Active Network, and a leader in strategic meetings management.

To plan a meeting, meeting organisers simply enter the number of participants, their locations and the meeting dates.

CWT Meeting Optimizer then generates a list of worldwide

Sunshine Coast tees up meetings

WITH more than 20 golf courses to choose from, Queensland's Sunshine Coast Destination Ltd (SCDL) is in Kuala Lumpur this week attending the IAGTO (International Association of Golf Tour Operators)

Asia Golf Tourism Convention.

The event which brings together 150 golf tour buyers from key markets including Japan, Korea, China, South East Asia, Canada and Europe, also includes representation by one of the region's championship courses and resort, Coolool Golf and Spa.

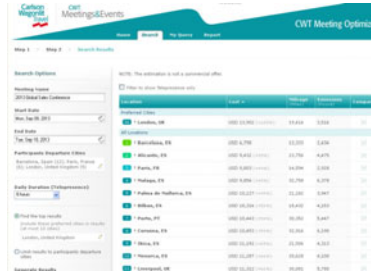
Over the four day event, SCDL trade and international manager, Gemma O'Brien has conducted one-on-one appointments, attended seminars and has met & networked with operators.

"The Sunshine Coast is positioning and marketing the golf experience, anchored by the prestige of being home to the Australian PGA Championship and boasting four other championship courses," she said.

"We are also showcasing other naturally refreshing activities in and around the golf experience, for families and partners.

"Focusing on this differentiated selling proposition is crucial to our success," says Steve Cooper, ceo.

It is estimated that IAGTO's operators control over 85% of golf holiday packages sold globally & turn over more than AU\$1.5b/yr.



destinations, including telepresence rooms, to give meeting organisers a prioritised list of places to hold their meeting.

Using CWT's extensive range of data – over 14 million hotel transactions and 34 million air transactions – *CWT Meeting Optimizer* instantly compares nearly 2000 global destinations to determine the smartest and most cost-effective meeting destination.

CWT will be present at the IMEX 2012 show in Frankfurt 22-24 May.

Soneva-Kiri by Six Senses, Thailand

GETTING TO KNOW:

Soneva-Kiri rendered our small famill group speechless in our attempts to describe this incredible resort in 25 words or less.

It started with our arrival by private plane from Bangkok and the short crossing in a snazzy speedboat to this thoughtfully styled eco resort with 42 Villas – eight of which are private residences, whose design is reminiscent of aspects of the traditional housing favoured by Koh Kood's villagers.

First we met our dedicated Mr & Ms Fridays who introduced us to the resort's 'no news, no shoes' policy, which means no TV in the Villas (although there is one for DVDs which materialises out of a suitcase) and the very liberating experience of going barefoot.

As a corporate retreat Soneva's privately owned Villas are both spacious enough to host up to 50 guests and to sleep 14 in its largest Villa.

Perfect for small meetings and private functions, all hillside and beach villas have private pools and an abundance of airy spaces to relax in.

For a meeting or retreat with the family, Soneva's manta ray-shaped kids club has to be one of the most unique and best equipped we have seen.

There's an array of places to dine and some 300 wine labels from which to choose.

And, a cooking class with Kun Benz in her waterfront restaurant is a must on any program.

"Food and wine is a special part of Soneva Kiri's culinary experience," said resort manager Panus (Alex) Jureeratana.

For starters where else can you dine hauled up high in a tree canopy, the waiter zip-lining to the kitchen, eat 60 flavours in the ice cream parlour or choc-out in the Chocolate Room, watch a movie beneath the stars, take a speedboat to a private white sand beach for a picnic, dine on a budlit beach or on a platform overlooking the Gulf of Thailand?

In four days we barely touched on the things you could do, although a meditative massage in Soneva Spa was a must and part of Soneva's SLOW LIFE philosophy (Sustainable, Local, Organic, Wholesome, Learning, Inspiring, Fun, Experiences) as was a morning yoga class and an invigorating jungle hike.

This is one resort that needs to be seen to be believed and if you want to wow your clients, you'd be hard pressed to find a finer place.





MEA's Industry Award Winners

MEETINGS & Events Australia's (MEA) 2012 National Conference ended with the 2011 National Industry Awards gala dinner on Tuesday, with more than 650 meetings and events professionals gathering at the Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre in black-tie to honour their colleagues and celebrate the conference.

Linda P Gaunt, ceo MEA said she is proud to be part of this group of professionals and she congratulated and thanked the winners for their outstanding work and commitment to the industry. The winners were:

Business Development Person of the Year - Beverley Williamson, Melbourne Convention + Visitors Bureau - *pictured below with MEA Chair Rhona Walker.*



Event Manager of the Year - Holly Bennett, Federation Square

Meetings Manager of the Year - Susan Harris, Absolute Events and Marketing

Operations Person of the Year - Trevor Powick, Exhibition Park in Canberra

Y MEA Future Leader - Hannah Watkins, AV1 Pty Ltd

Metropolitan Destination Marketing Organisation - Business Events Sydney

Regional Destination Marketing Organisation - Business Events Geelong, HALL OF FAME.

Meeting Venue under 500 delegates - Mercure Kooindah Waters Central Coast

Meeting Venue 500 delegates or more - Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Specialty Meeting Venue - Doltone House

Specialty Event Venue - Victoria Park Function Venue

Banqueting & Catering - Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre

Meetings and Events Management Organisation – less than 8 employees - Verve Creative Group Pty Ltd - *below is South African Tourism's Eric Lewanavanua with Verve Creative ceo Rob Frank.*



Meetings and Events Management Organisation – 8 or more employees - MCI Australia, HALL OF FAME.

Corporate Social Responsibility Category A (1-5 full-time employees) - Song Division



ABOVE: Meetings & Event Australia on the red carpet at the industry's night of nights this week.

Corporate Social Responsibility Category B (6-30 full-time employees) - EPICURE at ZINC



Corporate Social Responsibility Category C (over 30 full-time employees) - JOINT WINNERS

Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre and Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre. *Pictured above are Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre's Ross Horlyck, Peter King ceo from category sponsor Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, and Shaun Mitchell, Brisbane Convention & Exhibiton Centre.*

In-House Meetings Management Department - AIST

Exhibition Services - ExpoNet Group Travel, HALL OF FAME. *Pictured below are Amanda Foo and Flight Centre's Carly Adler.*



Technical & Creative Production – turnover less than \$5 million - Scene Change Tasmania

Technical & Creative Production – turnover more than \$5million - Staging Connections – QLD

Event Management Organisation - The Forum Group

Education - Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre – NSW; RACV City Club- VIC; Crunch Events and Catering - NSW; This Space Events Studio - NSW; MCI Australia - QLD and Staging Connections – QLD

In-House AV services - Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre

Association or Government Meeting of the Year - arinex for The International Society for Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity Conference

Cause Related Event of the Year - Doltone House for Biaggio Signorelli Foundation

Public Event of the Year (including Festivals) - Fed Square Pty Ltd for the Light in Winter at Federation Square

Exhibition of the Year - Strahan Consultants for Garden Week

Incentive of the Year - Cievents for FCL Global Gathering

Meetings or Events Professional of the Year - Beverley Williamson, MCVB.

Platinum Award - Exponet

Outstanding Contribution Award - Ian Stuart, Business Events Sydney.



ABOVE: MEA really takes the cake, according to ceo Linda Gaunt.

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