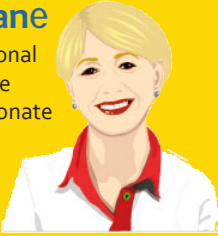




Vale Diane

ON a personal note and one that will resonate throughout the MICE industry, is the news of the tragic death of Peter Bliss's (Business is Bliss) much loved and beautiful sister, Diane. To you we send our sincere condolences. Jill



Pullman's \$3m refurb

FOLLOWING on from a huge makeover of the Pullman Reef Casino Hotel in Cairns, construction has begun on a \$3 million state-of-the-art sports entertainment venue.

Featuring a \$1 million theatre, the second floor sports arena will have the largest indoor LED screen in Queensland, tiered seating and capacity for over 180 people.

The first time the upstairs venue has received a major makeover since its 1997 opening, completion is expected in six months.

Pullman Reef Casino Hotel's general manager Wayne Reynolds said the casino complex update complements recent conference centre renovations, and will provide a huge "wow" factor for guests and sports fans alike.

"It's been a very long time since the upstairs section of the casino complex was changed, so it's a welcome revamp and will offer something fresh for our guests to experience," he said.

Within the space, the casino hotel's elaborate \$2 million reef and rainforest themed ceiling will remain, while an updated audio system will include high definition zone speakers.

Diethelm chief's departure

DAVID Barrett has said "au revoir Diethelm, hello world".

The impact of Thailand's political turmoil and the global financial crisis over the past few years has had its effect on the country's business events sector, according to the former Diethelm Thailand's events boss.

Barrett who is a 'favourite son' in the Australian and New Zealand events markets, launched and built Diethelm Events over 12 years into a leading DMC in Thailand and around Asia.

He has, as he said, when talking exclusively to BEN, "moved on."

"After Diethelm Travel closed its satellite offices in Thailand and moved towards outsourcing, they were unable to sustain the business in its previous format and change was needed.

"So it was au revoir Barrett and a few others," he said, stressing that whilst there had been radical reorganisation of the events operation in Thailand, Diethelm Events Malaysia is unaffected and continues to do very good business.

"I seized the opportunity to accept a departure package which enabled me to leave on good terms and on a high note.

"Having met all my commitments over the past six months I swanned out of Diethelm offices on 25th January.

"It has been an incredibly rewarding 12 years. I have delivered some amazing programs

and struck up many friendships with Aussies and Kiwis in the industry,

"I consider myself blessed - it has been an awesome ride.

"My thanks go to Diethelm Travel Group for giving me the opportunity to launch and build Diethelm Events and to the many Australian and New Zealand clients who entrusted me, and my team, with their business."

So, what is next for Barrett?

"In the long-term I have a desire to jump fence and move from DMC to a hotel.

"I am taking my time to explore all my options and waiting for the right hotel or chain and position that interests me," he said.

In the medium term, Barrett is handling several projects through until the end of march.

"While in the immediate-term, I am sitting on my sofa reading the first issue of BEN - way to go!"



TOGA says "hello BEN"

TOGA Hospitality is offering one lucky **Business Events News** reader the chance to win a two night stay at any Medina hotel across Australia.

To be in the running for the fabulous prize worth \$880, answer the question featured on **page 2** before 10th Feb.

Rushton regional role

MARRIOTT International has announced the appointment of Paul Rushton to the newly created role of Regional Director of MICE Sales Asia Pacific, in a bid to capitalize on the burgeoning MICE market in the region.

Reporting to Chief Sales and Marketing Officer Neelima Chopra, Rushton is responsible for the design and implementation of sales and marketing strategies for capturing a profitable share of the emerging MICE business for all Marriott branded hotels in Asia Pacific.

He is based in Singapore.

Commenting on Rushton's appointment, Neelima Chopra said: "Marriott International has set group sales as one of the key elements of its Long Range plan for the Asia Pacific region," with the group's offering including some 130 hotels.

"No matter whether our MICE customers are looking for an island resort, city hotel or country side retreat, we have a lot to offer and are able to meet their needs," added Paul Rushton.

Rushton has 25 years of hospitality industry experience and his footsteps have covered leading hotels in Jakarta, Dubai, Bangkok, Sydney and Singapore.

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business events news

3rd February 2012

Embracing BEN!

More industry feedback about the launch of *Business Events News* - thanks so much...

"Great news hope all goes well with BEN." - Les Alford, Incentive House

Congratulations on your new role. BEN should be a winner. - Mike Smith, GM - PR & Marketing, World Trade Travel

"Best of luck with the launch of your exciting new publication. We look forward to a long and prosperous association." - Kim McKay, Klick Communications

"It's terrific that BEN is up and running and we at Bhutan & Beyond look forward to working with you in the future." - James Irving, director, Bhutan & Beyond

"Delighted to have Business Events News (BEN) in the industry fold. Congratulations to Travel Daily publishing, we know it's going to fly." - John & Lyn Parche, Byron at Byron Resort & Spa.

Australian incentives at sea

CARNIVAL Australia - the cruise giant which operates several local ships under the P&O, Princess and Carnival Cruise Lines brands, as well as representing others such as Holland America, Cunard, Seabourn and more - has signalled a major push into the meetings and incentive market.

Vice President Market Planning, Mark Barnes, said the move had been fuelled by a big jump in corporate enquiries, along with a "record-sized fleet" meaning there's plenty of capacity for the company to offer a huge array of ships and itineraries worldwide.

"As the cruise industry grows, more and more people are seeing it as a great environment for meetings, as it allows organisers and delegates to blend productive meetings with an inspiring and relaxing holiday.

"What's more, the all-inclusive nature of a cruise also means it is very price competitive compared

Hayman is so sweet

HAYMAN Island will host a 'Celebration of Chocolate' in April, with special guest chocolatier Kirsten Tibballs, who will host Master Classes and Appreciation Sessions for everyone's favourite treat - more info 1800 075 175.



IF you're thinking of offering something unique to your next incentive group to South America, it's probably best to steer clear of anything involving "special" ice cubes.

A man has been arrested in Chile on suspicion of stealing ice from Patagonia's Jorge Montt Glacier - a natural treasure located in a national park.

Police say the thief had five tonnes of ice in the back of his truck, with suspicions it was destined for Santiago to make gourmet ice cubes.

Tourists visiting Chile - soon to be connected conveniently to Australia by new Qantas non-stop flights - are often offered cocktails chilled with glacial ice, but prosecutors say they plan to charge the ice-man under legislation covering destruction of national monuments.

STARWOOD Hotels is claiming an industry first which solves the problem of hanging around in foreign parts waiting for your room to be ready.

Under a revamped Starwood Preferred Guest loyalty scheme, top level members - those who stay more than 75 nights a year - can check in and check out any time they like, with guaranteed 24 hour a day room availability.

That means elite clients arriving from a long-haul flight could go straight to bed at 9am - and be fresh as a daisy for a welcome function that night.

The SPG makeover also allows frequent guests to earn lifetime top tier status, with the hotel group saying the moves make it "impossible for mega travellers not to choose Starwood".

to events on land, with the one cruise fare including accommodation, food and entertainment," said Mr Barnes.

Such is the commitment to the MICE market that the company's trade umbrella, Complete Cruise Solution, has created a specific brochure promoting onboard meetings and incentives in North America, Europe, Asia and the Pacific Islands.

With seven locally-based ships there are also many options for groups to "cruise from their doorstep," Mr Barnes added.

Recent events hosted on local vessels include medical, health and beauty and genealogy conferences, with groups from 20 to 1200 catered for - more info at mice@carnivalaustralia.com.

New Sydney Star md

ECHO Entertainment, the publicly listed owner of Sydney's The Star complex has announced the sudden departure of The Star's managing director, Sid Vaikunta, due to his "behaviour in a social work setting."

Vaikunta, who was appointed to the role in 2010, had an extensive career in hospitality and casino operations in the USA, and oversaw The Star's recent refurbishment which has seen a big expansion of its conferencing facilities.

He'll be replaced by Frederic Luvisutto, who will move from his current position as md of Jupiters Gold Coast, which is also owned by Echo Entertainment.

WIN A WEEKEND AWAY AT MEDINA



To celebrate the launch of Australia's newest business tourism publication, **Business Events News**, as well as **Medina Apartment Hotels'** 30th birthday, we are giving one lucky reader the chance to win a weekend away for two adults in a one bedroom apartment at a Medina Apartment Hotel of choice across Australia!

A premier Australian brand, Medina is known and loved for its commitment to classic and sleek apartment hotel accommodation.



APARTMENT HOTELS

and each has been designed with elegance and style.

For more information about Medina Apartment Hotels or to book, visit: www.medina.com.au

All you need to do to be in the running to win this great prize, is to email your answer to the below question by COB next Friday 10th Feb to: medinacomp@businesseventsnews.com.au.

The most creative answer will win!

In 50 words or less tell us your best travel memory?



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Starwood woos MICE planners

WITH meeting deals across 13 properties in Thailand and a 10% discount off the master bill, Starwood Asia Pacific Hotels & Resorts has launched "The Unbeatable Spirit of Thailand" campaign in an effort to woo MICE planners back to Thailand post-floods.

The meeting deals, valid until 31 March 2012 at selected hotels in Thailand's central, northern and southern regions, include conference package upgrades, double room upgrade allocation, double complimentary room allocation and complimentary WiFi in the meeting room.

To step up its efforts for Bangkok, Starwood will be organising Starwood Expos in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok on March 7, 12 and 15 respectively.

The one-day Expos will feature 19 participating Starwood hotels across Thailand.

Bookings can be made at starwoodmeetings.com/unbeatablethailand.

OzHarvest Cook-Off

CHEEKY Food Group ceo Leona Watson, who throws more than 500 cooking and team building parties each year and regularly cooks for The Salvation Oasis Youth Centre, will this Monday night be joining 30 celebrity chefs and 200 ceo's to cook for 1,000 homeless people and raise funds for OzHarvest.

She'll be competing with the likes of Qantas ceo Alan Joyce and the AHA's Rodger Powell - to show your support, visit - ceocookoff.com.au/profile/1629

Here's to Hong Kong!



At a *Year of the Dragon* celebration held at Hong Kong House in Sydney this week, the Hong Kong Tourism Board's regional director Andrew Clark revealed that the important MICE market remained strong, with a 5.8% year-on-year growth in 2011.

The Australian length of stay in Hong Kong had "significantly increased" to 3.9 nights - with a big 20% jump in the Australian per capita spend - meaning Aussies are now Hong Kong's

second biggest spenders after visitors from Russia.

Hong Kong will be represented by 35 operators at AIME in Melbourne later this month, with the largest stand at the show at 270 square metres.

Pictured above at the Sydney event are, from left: Hardy Kilimann and Avril Northridge, Marriott Hotels; Ganessan Suppiah, Worldhotels; and Brooke Tabberer, Black Communications.

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NYC & COMPANY has released its Official Meeting and Event Planner for 2012, featuring a comprehensive guide to meetings and events venues, convention facilities, accommodation, restaurants, services and happenings.

Other features include an annual events calendar, ideas on experiences, and a fold out map on all five Big Apple boroughs.

Brochures are available by calling 02 9922 2086; for more information visit nycgo.com.

Shoal Bay wins gold

SHOAL BAY RESORT & SPA was the Gold Award winner for the second year running for the Best Tourist Pub in New South Wales, at the annual NSW Tourism Awards, on Thursday night at The Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre in Darling Harbour.

The resort was also a Gold Award Winner in the categories of Meetings & Business Tourism and Bronze Award winner for Deluxe Accommodation.

Gary Bourke, hotel manager said he was delighted with the recognition, saying "we have a unique offering which has proven itself over the years and are focused on continually improving our guest experience.

"Their repeat patronage and strong word of mouth promotion of the hotel is the secret to our success," he said.

MEA bans bad powerpoint

IN a landmark decision, Meetings & Events Australia (MEA), who has long questioned the effectiveness of speakers who read out bullet points when communicating to meeting delegates, is the first organisation to ban the traditional use of PowerPoint-style presentations at a major conference.

"The bullet point model was created in the pre-digital era, when there was a shortage of expert information.

"It was worth flying somewhere to hear that kind of speech.

"Now the web is full of expert presentations you can watch in your own time and location, so meetings need to provide something beyond that," said Linda Gaunt, chief executive officer of MEA.

Citing endless studies that show stories are far more memorable and inspiring than the standard style of business presentation, Gaunt said they have drawn up a banned list of classic PowerPoint techniques for MEA's annual conference being held in Sydney on 21-24 April 2012.

Presenters have been briefed to present with simpler, more involving material: photos, videos, demonstrations and old-fashioned storytelling, with no image allowed to have more than ten words.

MEA early bird registration is open until 05 Feb - register at meetingevents.com.au/sydney.

CONTACT US:

Publisher

Bruce Piper

Editor

Jill Varley

Contributors

Bruce Piper, Chantel Long

Advertising:

[advertising@](mailto:advertising@businessesnews.com.au)

businessesnews.com.au

P: 1300 799 220

F: 1300 799 221

PO Box 1010
Epping, NSW, 1710

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GETTING TO KNOW: Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort

When Jill Varley flew to Abu Dhabi on an Etihad famil, nothing quite prepared her for the Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort.

THE storm that had raged throughout the night and sent sand howling sideways across the road on our drive from Abu Dhabi to the Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort, had by morning left a kaleidoscope of freshly carved patterns on the dunes outside our deluxe balcony rooms.

Nearby a Berber tent, which had flapped with furious intent and was now half buried in the sand, was in a cock-eyed way at peace in the soft morning light.

When we arrived at the magnificent fort-like structure of the Qasr Al Sarab, which appeared to stretch for kilometres across the Jiwa Desert, it screamed high-end executive retreat.

Tailor-made for the ultimate indulgence, here every room, villa and suite has some of the finest in luxury décor while their opulent meeting rooms have the latest in audio and visual equipment.

A kilometre from the main building is the Royal Pavilion, far removed from any distractions and providing complete privacy, it comes with ten Royal Villas in addition to a traditional Majalis seating area, a meeting room, a dining room for corporate events and an outdoor courtyard.

Executive gatherings can be brought to life in an array of outdoor settings for up to 300 guests including by the starlit pool, in a decadent tented camp, on a terrace or even at an ancient watering hole.

All this and an endless array of resort facilities that include a fitness centre, three floodlit tennis courts, swimming pool, kids club, business centre and library, while leisure and team building pursuits run to biking, archery, desert walks, dune bashing, falconry and camel trekking.

Of these, most potent are the sunset, camelback excursions that tread the timeless trails of the Empty Quarter.





WE'RE CELEBRATING TWO DECADES OF SUCCESS!

In 2012 Destination Marketing Services (DMS) is celebrating a very special anniversary – 20 years as a leader in the Australian/ New Zealand business events industry.

We are proud of our achievements and would like to thank our destination management partners in over 60 countries and our clients in Australia and New Zealand for their support over the last two decades.

Our aim: to connect our Australian and New Zealand clients with the world's most rewarding and exotic destinations.

Our Services:

- **Comprehensive website** - featuring destination profiles and information, sample itineraries and contacts for quality destination management companies in over 60 countries worldwide
- **Regular visits and updates** - our account managers can provide you with latest news on destinations, products and services
- **Liaison and follow up** - between our Australian/New Zealand clients and DMCs to ensure delivery of highly creative and customised programs - our guarantee of quality.
- **Familiarisation visits** - to key international destinations, new places are coming online all the time.
- **Participation in DMS Annual Workshops** - a one-stop opportunity for clients to connect with many of the best DMC companies from around the world
- **Access to latest market intelligence** - what's new, what's hot, what's not - in the international business events market.
- **Specialist advisory service** - we'll help you to win the business!



So when preparing your next business pitch contact the team at DMS – it's our anniversary year and together, we would like to celebrate our joint success.

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