



Greetings!

TODAY's edition of **BEN** comes to you from the sunny, blue skies of Port Macquarie.



This NSW coastal destination with its surf, waterways and glorious Hastings River, deserves a second look if you haven't been here for sometime.

A surprising range of four star plus new apartment hotels have sprung up, including the spacious Macquarie Waters apartment hotel, with all the creature comforts that **BEN** is staying in (wi-fi included), a range of remarkable restaurants and their ace card, the Glasshouse Arts Conference and Entertainment Centre, an all-purpose venue, par excellence.

We've gone country and spent time in blissful repose at Amber Healing Farm, had high tea in the cosy lounge of The Edge Cafe, gorged ourselves on a dinner dine around, attended a performance in The Glasshouse's exquisitely designed theatre and cruised to dessert across the Hastings.

All this and more in next week's editions of **BEN** - Jill.

NZ tourism industry called parochial

RESPONDING to what he discovered are widespread perceptions in the New Zealand tourism industry that it is fragmented, parochial and overly demanding of government support, Martin Sneddon, the new Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIA) chief executive, said at Local Government New Zealand's annual conference in Queenstown this week, that it is time for New Zealand's multi-billion dollar visitor industry to "get its house in order" to achieve its potential.

Citing Auckland Airport chief executive Simon Moutter who said in a *New Zealand Herald* article that the tourism industry was prone to moaning about problems but slow to offer solutions or develop opportunities.

Sneddon said the visitor industry's challenge was to commit itself unconditionally to taking responsibility for its own future.

Tourism, he said contributed NZ\$63 million a day to New Zealand's economy and provided 90,000 jobs, as well as the flow on effect to service providers.

"This is money being spent and the jobs being provided not just in the big cities but in communities which are scattered, often in our most remote areas.

"Last year's Rugby World Cup is a great example of this.

"It was fantastic to watch the likes of Palmerston North, Whangarei, Hamilton and even tiny little Benneydale in the King Country galvanise their communities."

Local government is an essential part of tourism's success in New Zealand and Snedden invited councils to take their partnership with the tourism industry to a new level.

Port Stephens baits PCOs to The Mousetrap

THERE's nothing like the combination of murder and the blue water paradise of Port Stephens to excite the senses and get the juices running.

What's more that's exactly what Port Stephens Tourism aims to do when they present The Sydney Showcase of MICE Port Stephens to the professional conference market.

Designed to educate and inform, the showcase will feature 22 Port Stephens operators who will present the very best that the destination has to offer.

Following the showcase, guests will join their hosts at a gripping performance of London's longest running play, *The Mousetrap*, now in its 60th year.

The event is on at The Sydney Theatre, 22 Hickson Road, Walsh Bay, from 5pm on Wednesday 25 July.

To be part of this extraordinary evening RSVP to: sharon@portstephentourism.com.au

Opportunity knocks

THE Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE) in partnership with BCD Travel is to award a Student Fellowship (valued at USD\$26,995) to an exceptional university student who has a demonstrated interest in international business and a commitment to working in the global business travel industry.

Open to recent university graduates and graduate students in their final term, the comprehensive nine week training program will give them local market knowledge about industry best practices in Beijing, Dubai, Frankfurt, New Delhi, Sao Paulo and Sydney.

To apply you will need to review the expectations; agree to the code of conduct and guidelines; complete the application by 23 July and submit a university transcript.

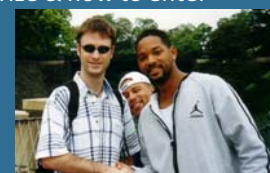
Each city includes: academic training and activities including economic, industry and cultural briefings, networking events with industry VIPs and site visits to key suppliers of business travel products and services.

For programming questions email 80hours@acte.org, or for leveraging student fellowships to recruit global talent for your firm email - lwilliamson@acte.org.

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Cargo Lounge refurb

THE functions and events team at Sydney's newly refurbished Cargo Lounge, King Street Wharf, strutted their stuff last week when they showcased the glamour venue to the events and functions market.

Wines were tasted, fresh oysters were shucked, cocktail making classes were held and live



entertainment and tasty nibbles showed just what the venue can offer.

To register for their next industry function - email: functionsandevents@keystonegroup.com.au



business events news

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WELL hello!

Who would have thought that the country you visit on holiday may be responsible for excessive weight gain?

Duh!

It appears that a UK poll reveals the worst holiday spots to gain weight are Cyprus and Turkey.

Portugal came in third and the US a supersized fourth, while France was a chocolate croissant-filled seventh.

Belgium, the land of chocolate, waffles, chips and mayonnaise, came in a surprisingly low number 10.

But the best places for those wanting to lose weight are Ireland, Canada and Germany.

The poll explained that hotels all-you-can-eat-buffets were to blame for the weight gain, along with drinking more alcohol than travellers do while at home.

PCO's stampede to Alice Springs

THE inaugural four day Alice Stampede mega famil was deemed an outstanding success last week when a group of 20 Business Event planners visited the heart of Central Australia courtesy of Alice Springs Convention Centre (ASCC) and the Northern Territory Convention Bureau.

The famil attracted the MICE market from Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

Business Forum sessions were held on the first day featuring five local speakers who spoke about "their" Alice Springs.

Ian Solomon, manager of the ASCC said the inaugural Alice Stampede was a great opportunity to "re-introduce" the convention centre to event planners.



"We're celebrating our tenth birthday this year and yet planners around the country continue to discover something new and exciting about our state-of-the-art facility every day."

A highlight was the Lasseters Camel Cup where the group enjoyed lunch and watched the races from the Lasseters Hotel Casino marquee.

Pictured above are the group wearing some attractive beanies that they chose during a visit to the Araluen Gallery which recently held the Beanie Festival.

Andrea takes on GCCEC

THE Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre has recruited Andrea Ferguson to the role of Marketing Manager.

The former Assistant Marketing Manager for Donut King brings extensive expertise to the venue and will be expected to help move the Centre onto new marketing platforms as it rolls out a new brand marketing campaign.

Ferguson also has experience in the MICE sector having previously held a role in the major events department at RACV Royal Pines.



WIN AN ESCAPE TO EMIRATES WOLGAN VALLEY RESORT & SPA



During the months of June and July, *Business Events News* is giving one lucky reader the chance to win an amazing two-night stay at the exclusive Emirates **Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa** in the Blue Mountains.

The prize includes a two-night stay for two people in a Heritage Suite with breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Non-alcoholic beverages with all meals and selected regional wines and beer with lunch and dinner are also included, as are two outdoor activities each day.

Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa is located on a 4000-acre nature reserve adjacent to the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains and only 190kms from Sydney. The resort offers 40 stand-alone luxury suites, each with its own private verandah & swimming pool.

To enter simply email your answers to each question by 27th July 2012

Q.15: Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa is situated on the fringes of which iconic region that can easily be built into any itinerary?

Hint: wolganvalley.com

Email your answers to: wolgan@businesseventsnews.com.au

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Tuggerah comes of age

TUGGERAH, once the domain of the family tented and weekender market is to get a new hotel, Travelodge Hotel Mariners Tuggerah.

Part of an exciting new development - The Centre of Excellence - it is anticipated to open in late 2013.

Toga Hotels who have been appointed as the operator by the Central Coast Mariners, say the location is an excellent fit for the Travelodge brand and is in line with Toga Hotels' strategy to expand Travelodge Hotels into key regional markets.

Upon completion, the Centre of Excellence will provide leading sporting facilities, attracting both domestic and international groups.

It will feature the 130 room Travelodge Hotel Mariners Tuggerah,

seven full sized pitches, a 3,000-seat stadium, 10 multi-purpose courts, a licenced club with a 400 person capacity function centre, Aquatic Centre and an office block.

Allan Vidor, managing director of Toga Group, said "It is testament to Toga Hotels' excellent track record of delivering highly optimised investor returns that we continue to attract high profile partnerships.

"Along with Central Coast Mariners, 2012 has also seen Toga Hotels enter a new operating agreement with the Australian Turf Club for Adina Apartment Hotel Royal Randwick Racecourse.



"We welcome the opportunity to manage hotels for potential investors," Vidor said.



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MSC's great cruise sale

IF you are considering taking the team on a cruise this year, MSC Cruises are offering big savings of up to 64% on their 2012 September to November Mediterranean itineraries.

The sale which runs from Tuesday 24 July, has fares beginning at \$300pp twin share for a seven-night cruise aboard such luxury ships as *MSC Splendida*, *MSC Musica* and *MSC Sinfonia*.

"That's truly great value," said Lynne Clarke, md, MSC Cruises Australia and New Zealand.

"When you consider the deal includes accommodation, entertainment, five meals a day and port charges, where else could you enjoy a holiday at that price?" she asked.

To cash in on the heavily discounted deal, customers must book and pay in full at the same time - see msccruises.com.au

Taiwan takes to the Gold Coast

TAIWANESE Airline, Eva Air recently brought eight of its top corporate clients to the Gold Coast for a three day incentive familiarisation.

The group were hosted by the Gold Coast Convention Bureau, who devised an itinerary of outright excitement and luxury to showcase the destination's offerings.

The action-packed adventure incorporated once-in-a-lifetime experiences and allowed plenty of opportunities for networking, team-building and relaxation.

The group ate breakfast with Seaworld's dolphins and were waited on by Surf Lifesaving Champion Cory Hill at a beachside lunch.

For dinner they retreated to the private island, McLaren's Landing and enjoyed live entertainment and coconut cocktails.

A helicopter transfer provided breathtaking aerial views of the Gold Coast Hinterland, landing at

Canungra Valley Vineyards for wine tasting and some unconventional team-building in the form of grape stomping and rubber duck races in the creek.

Other activities included theme park thrill rides, a factory outlet shopping escape, hinterland picnic, stage show, koala cuddles and kangaroo feeding, site tours, Harley Davidson transfers, jet boating and more.

The response to the famil was overwhelmingly positive - and



one client is already booked to return to the Gold Coast for further site inspections.

Pictured on the Gold Coast for the first time are the famil attendees and four media reps from Taiwan.

GETTING TO KNOW: Mackay, Queensland

THIS North Queensland region, part of the Sunshine State is one of Australia's fastest growing areas offering tourists and corporates a great destination to "meet, work and play". Anyone who has not been to Mackay in the last two years will find it unrecognisable.

The three key venues most suitable to events of all kinds are the Mackay Entertainment & Convention Centre which opened in 2009; the Mackay Showgrounds which is in the process of a major upgrade and Virgin Australia Stadium, opened just last year, it has already hosted an NRL championship game. Currently, there are a number of hotel developments underway or in the pipeline, which will see the accommodation offerings transformed over the next one to three years.

Mackay, which is in close proximity to the reef, islands, rainforest and golden hinterland, has a lifestyle best described as laid back. While its infrastructure continues to grow at an expedient rate due to the mining boom of the Bowen Basin, Mackay's population has created a movement that includes new and upgraded roads and utilities, more housing, shopping and entertainment and expanded accommodation.

The convention centre can cater for both big and small events through the option of plenary seating, break-out meetings and trade show spaces and features state of the art technology.

Accommodation in the area includes a range of luxury, affordable and smaller boutique properties.

The Mackay Convention Bureau can help event planners plan their function by providing 'unbiased and practical advice' as well as free services such as venue and accommodation selection, itinerary planning, delegate boosting, bid assistance, industry introductions and site visits.

Tours and attractions within the region include fishing charters, a unique 4WD Eungella tour, forest itineraries for small groups, sugar farm, bus and boat tours, miniature sugar mill tours, trail rides and farm stays as well as cultural experiences, art galleries, horse riding, golfing, botanic tours, and scuba diving.

Located 971km north of Brisbane or an eight hour drive from Cairns, Mackay can be accessed by plane through Mackay Airport which is serviced by Jetstar, QantasLink, Virgin Australia, REX and Tiger Airways.

Two rail services to Mackay from Brisbane and Cairns on the Tilt Train are available whilst The Sunlander offers business style seating for all of its passengers.

