



Bring it on!

WELCOME to 2013 and the year's first edition of **BEN**.

In fact we are celebrating our 1st birthday, so happy birthday to us and to anyone else sharing our day.

I hope you are all rested and ready to take on the year ahead.

We are looking forward to AIME in February and to catching up with all our industry friends and readers.

Don't forget it's not too late to enter the 2012 MEA Industry Awards.

There is still two weeks remaining to submit an entry.

All you need to do is visit the MEA website to view the categories most relevant to your business and answer the set questions highlighting your performance between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2012.

The MEA Awards are easy to enter via the MEA website, strict word limits apply and there are no requirements to produce elaborate documentation - *Jill*.



MEETINGS ups the ante

BE prepared, organisers of New Zealand's biggest business tourism trade exhibition, MEETINGS to be held in Auckland on 26-27 June, say they are upping the ante and adding more value to the event for hosted buyers.

Being held at the SKYCITY Auckland Convention Centre, hosted buyers from Australia will be offered the opportunity to visit Auckland, Taupo, Rotorua, Wellington, Christchurch or Queenstown after MEETINGS so they can learn more about what is on offer.

They will also be offered a networking day in Auckland before MEETINGS gets underway.

Event manager, Jeanette Stanton says MEETINGS 2013 buyers can also look forward to a dinner in one of Auckland's new premier spots, as well as other networking events that will allow them to mix business with pleasure.

Showcasing New Zealand's diverse range of destinations,

venues, products and services, "It has become a not-to-be-missed event for conference and incentive organisers as it provides the opportunity for them to see all of New Zealand under one roof and to make connections with key people who can help them with the planning and execution of their next event," Stanton says.

Conventions and Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) ce Alan Trotter said, "It is hoped that a decision on Auckland's much needed international convention centre will be made soon.

"Proposals have been shortlisted for building a new 2000-2500 capacity convention centre in Christchurch and there's a scoping study underway for a convention centre in Queenstown.

"Potentially we could have three major new facilities up and operating within a matter of years, which would really catapult us into the big league," Trotter said.

"MEETINGS is a chance for us to really cement our position as a top-class destination capable of hosting conferences of all sizes."

Last year MEETINGS generated in excess of \$32 million worth of business.

An independent survey conducted by the Reserve Group, after the event, showed three-quarters of exhibitors left MEETINGS with new business leads and more than two-thirds of hosted buyers walked away with the intention of booking with exhibitors they had met.

Hoping to attract contingents from the United States, China and South East Asia, MEETINGS is also making it easy for small business tourism operators and venue providers to participate, with more of the popular pod-style stands being offered, creating a cost-effective solution for exhibitors nationally.

For details on the hosted buyer program and to secure exhibition space visit - www.meetings.co.nz.

Win a place at MEA



EIGHT Young Professional Scholarships are to be awarded a MEA/Ungerboeck Software International Young Professional Scholarship should their employer have one of these future superstars on their staff.

Candidates for these awards, currently working in the meeting and events industry across Australia, are offered complimentary registration to the MEA national conference being held in Darwin 5-7 May, three nights' accommodation at the conference and return air travel from the nearest capital city.

The MEA National Conference "Ignite the Conversation" is set to reflect a program that will invigorate people's minds, spark debate, open conversation and produce meaningful outcomes.

Darwin will be beating to a different tune in delivering a conference that doesn't follow the norm.

To enter candidates simply complete an online application form by 31 January and follow the instructions.

To be eligible, candidates must be under 30 years of age with less than three years full time experience in the Meetings and Events industry, hold a position in the company that would not necessarily entitle them to attend the conference, have demonstrated commitment to their job and a keen interest in the Meetings industry, are employed by a MEA member, must be available for interview week of 11 February and if successful, must be able to attend the 2013 Conference in Darwin.

For full details and nomination process log onto meetingsevents.com.au/training/youth.

Colour me blue at BLUE



THE Forum Group Events (FGE), continued their annual Corporate End of Year Party by bringing together small companies and teams from a myriad of industries to celebrate the end of year with a 'Splash of Blue' themed party.

Held at Water Bar at BLUE, the event was a hit with guests who enjoyed entertainment by Carmen Smith and Barry Southgate as well as the quantity

and quality of prizes.

"Each year's event is bigger and better than the last so we will definitely have fun figuring out how to top this in 2013," said Divya Hemnani, FGE bdm.

Pictured above are the Forum Group Events team from left: Ashleigh Dann, Marya Eid, Lauren Hayward, Leanne Constantino, Cathy Hammond and Divya Hemnani.



Melbourne wins nuclear medicine congress

VICTORIAN Minister for Health David Davis has announced Melbourne's win of the 2018 World Congress of the World Federation of Nuclear Medicine and Biology (WFNMB).

The congress considered to be an important achievement for Melbourne, is to be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC).

"The aim of this Congress is to promote and encourage the advancement of nuclear medicine worldwide and it will provide the perfect platform to showcase the outstanding research and diagnostic and therapeutic services undertaken in Australia and most importantly, in our state," Davis said.

Victorian Minister for Tourism and Major Events Louise Asher said the World Congress of the WFNMB would attract more than 2,500 delegates and generate an estimated AU\$14.3 million for the state economy.

"This event has not been held in Australia for 24

years so it is the perfect opportunity to promote Melbourne and regional Victoria from both a knowledge perspective and a tourism perspective to the world."

The win also brings the leadership of the World Federation to Australia from 2014 to 2018, with Professor Andrew Scott, Director of Positron Emission Tomography at Austin Health, and Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research in Melbourne, now president-elect of the WFNMB.

Karen Bolinger MCVB ceo said winning this Congress was yet another nod to the city's intellectual capabilities.

"The strength of the science and medical sectors in Victoria is a major drawcard for international associations looking for a destination to host their next major conference, which is evident from the calibre of events we have coming to our city over the next eight years," Bolinger said.

Hello New York



A farewell dinner with the theme 'The Kuching City Tour' was held recently for the outgoing Tourism Malaysia state director, En Ahmad Johanif bin Mohd Ali by the Sarawak Convention Bureau (SCB).

En Ahmad Johanif who commenced his new position this month as vice president, Tourism Malaysia New York was an advocate and great supporter of business events and tourism through his years in Tourism Malaysia Sarawak.

He also sat on the board of directors of SCB for the past four years and was appointed an alternate member to the director-general of Tourism Malaysia in the Sarawak Tourism Board (STB).

Present at the Sarakraf Pavillion dinner, held in the Absolute Tribal

restaurant were Datuk Abang Haji Karim Bin Tun Abang Haji Openg, president, Sarawak Chamber of Commerce and Industry - SCCI; Datu Haji Ismawi Haji Ismuni, director, State Planning Unit; Paul D'Arcy, ceo, Borneo Convention Centre Kuching; Mike Cannon, managing director, SCB and representatives of Tourism Malaysia Sarawak and SCB team members.

"Having served four years in Sarawak, the mini city tour was a fitting end to the best experience I've had", En Ahmad Johanif said.

"Sarawak is home to bountiful resources and I hope that the State will continue to develop its image as a much sought after destination for business events through its rich culture, adventure and nature".

Getting the edge

GAININGEDGE, a specialist firm with five offices around the world offering various business and knowledge opportunities and consulting services for the meetings industry, celebrated its 9th anniversary on 7 Jan with the launch of its GainingConnections service, which is designed for convention bureaux.

Intended to keep its bureau subscribers connected through a small and intimate network, these include convention profiles, industry intelligence, an online library, discussion forums and advice clinics.

"This new service is in line with our corporate mission to help the international meetings industry to be even more successful", Gary Grimmer, ceo of GainingEdge said.

"Through GainingConnections, bureaux – both young and established– can build up their own global peer networks and form mutually beneficial business relationships."

The subscription based service launched for its first clients - Tourism Vancouver, Wonderful Copenhagen, Yokohama Convention & Visitors Bureau, VisitBerlin Convention Office, Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau and Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau.



TO vamp or not to vamp

The Serbian town Zarozeje is probably worth leaving off the meeting planner this year, since garlic and wooden cross sales went up. And in this part of the woods it can only mean one thing, a vampire is on the loose!

Not part of a movie script or book, the local council's public health warning cautions that the resident vampire, Sava Savanovic, may be on the prowl.

The vampire scare was sparked by reports that an old mill where the vampire allegedly lived has collapsed.

According to ABC News, the town's mayor, Miodrag Vujetic, said: "People are worried, everybody knows the legend of this vampire and the thought that he is now homeless and looking for somewhere else [to live] and possibly other victims is terrifying ..."

Approaching the story very warily, forensic archeologist and anthropologist Matteo Borrini said, "Vampire belief might be deeply rooted in the Balkans, but I doubt you'll find any "ancient superstition" even there that hasn't been thoroughly tainted by modern vampire lore."

Radisson Blu Sydney offers triple points

MEETING and event organisers can gather rewards three times faster since the Radisson Blu Hotel Sydney, along with participating hotels in the Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group in Asia Pacific, launched their Triple Points for Planners promotion.

By registering and booking an eligible meeting or event by 31 March, to take place before 31 July with the Club Carlson loyalty program, members can earn up to 1,050,000 Gold Points for every eligible event.

One small event of \$5000 can earn up to 45,000 Gold points by simply registering online at www.clubcarlson.com/planners3x.



Putting on the Ritz in Chengdu

WHEN the Ritz-Carlton, Chengdu opens in the northern summer of 2013, it will become the luxury hotel operator's first flagship property in Southwest China.

Located in the heart of the capital of Sichuan province, renowned globally as the home of the giant panda, the city of Chengdu enjoys a rich history dating back over 2,000 years as a cultural and trading hub.

The hotel in Tianfu Square, will have 353 rooms, including 55 suites, three restaurants, an indoor swimming pool as well as luxury fitness and spa facilities.

The Ritz-Carlton's meeting spaces will include a grand ballroom, junior ballroom and seven additional meeting rooms, totaling 1,716 sqms of space.



"China is already one of our most significant international markets," said Herve Humler, president and chief operations officer, The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company.

"The opening of the Ritz-Carlton, Chengdu sees the company continue on a path that will double its China footprint in the next three years," he said.

Destination SA wins

DURING the South Australia Tourism Awards in November, the Adelaide Convention Bureau won the "Best Tourism Marketing" category for its annual Destination SA fam and tradeshow event.

The award is the Bureau's third consecutive win (2011 - Conventions Adelaide Program and 2010 - re-brand campaign), which automatically elevated them into the SA Tourism Industry Council's Hall of Fame.

Now in its 9th year, Destination SA brings together some 50 convention and incentive buyers and media from interstate, NZ and SE Asia to Adelaide each July to enjoy some of the State's best experiences and locations and to network with local businesses and organisations at a full day business expo.

During the four day program social networking events include cocktail parties and dinners held at such venues as the Adelaide Oval, Adelaide Town Hall, Mortlock Library and Queens Theatre.

Highlights of the Bureau's fams include getting up close and

personal at the Adelaide Central Market, lunch at the National Wine Centre, hot air ballooning, Harley rides through the Barossa, through to experiencing the magic of Kangaroo Island on a quad bike, enjoying a cruise through the Hills in vintage cars to partaking in a cooking and wine blending experience at Chapel Hill winery.

Adelaide Convention Bureau ceo Damien Kitto said "It is a pleasure to showcase our magnificent State to these interstate and international visitors and we never tire of hearing the hosted buyer accolades afterwards for South Australia and for Destination SA itself."

Since its inception, Destination SA now delivers around \$30 million of business each year into South Australia and continues to be the biggest local event on the Adelaide Convention Bureau's calendar.

With a small annual budget Destination SA certainly offers a massive 300:1 return on investment for Bureau members and ultimately South Australia's economy.



Face to Face with...

Gary Berman,
GM, GraysEscape.com



Business Events News recently caught up with GrayEscape.com's general manager, Gary Berman. Finding a gap in the industry after working for 20 years in the hospitality industry, Berman came up with the idea for Ubid4rooms.com in 2007 - a website that allowed hotels to sell rooms online at one-off confidential rates. In

May 2012 Ubid4rooms was purchased by GraysOnline and has since been rebranded as GraysEscape.com. The new site, which allows consumers to haggle with hotels directly for a better rate attracts over 1 million visitors a month.

What does your role entail?

Building and growing our newly rebranded accommodation website, GraysEscape.com, including increasing the supplier base, sourcing new product and ensuring strong conversion levels.

What's the first thing you do when you get in the office?

I work out of two offices (the joys of technology) so have different routines for both but every day would start with me turning a computer on and following up on the previous evening's emails.

What is the most challenging aspect of your job?

Having sold my former website, Ubid4rooms.com, to GraysOnline and now working for them on the new site, the challenge is to take GraysEscape.com to the next level and see it become a major player in the accommodation market under the GraysOnline banner.

Dealing with new technology - bonus or headache?

A bit of both. One tip - stick with the brands you know. I recently moved from one major smartphone to another as I wanted to try something new but to cut a long story short, the new phone is now in a drawer and I am back in my comfort zone.

What would you be doing if you weren't GM of GraysEscape?

Following my other passion of photography.

Who has inspired you?

People who have gone out on a limb and done something for themselves, whether it be Richard Branson, Bill Gates or anyone who puts everything on the line to see an idea come to fruition.

How do you relax?

Photography and music. I've dabbled with some African drums and I find that after a tough day at the office beating the crap out of the drum is very relaxing!

What makes a great conference?

A good variety of interesting speakers, pleasant location, efficient service and some free time to do your own thing.

What is the most inspiring conference you have been involved in?

A hotel group conference in Alice Springs where not only was the conference interesting but the outdoor venues for dinners were amazing. I have vivid memories of three tenors singing opera in the middle of the desert with a didgeridoo backing them up.

How many conferences have you attended in the last 12 months?

Two.

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