



Hidden gem

BEN is saying farewell to Ipswich, in South-East Queensland today,



considered one of the world's most livable cities.

And while it may have all the trappings of a city, it has a country heart.

Ipswich impressed the PCOs and conference organisers who attended a MICE Expo at the Metro Hotel Ipswich International on Wednesday where a blend of high end corporate facilities and activities were showcased.

The Metro also hosted **BEN** in fine style sending us hot air ballooning with Floating Images, helicoptering with Pterodactyl to Brookwater Golf Club then finishing the day in sublime relaxation at Sangs Day Spa.

Be prepared to hear more about this remarkable region.

Finally, a reminder - don't forget its Paddy's Day on Sunday - when the wearing of the green and all things Ireland and St Patrick is being celebrated - *Jill*.

Skal faces the future

PROMOTING face-to-face networking in response to the facelessness of social media, Skal International president Mok Singh arrives in Australia next week, on a multi destination tour of key Skal Clubs.

Singh will be speaking to members on how they can become more relevant to up-and-coming travel industry executives, keen to grow their business.

"Through our leadership we seek to maximise networking opportunities for our members and create a progressive tourism industry," Mok stated.

Commenting on social media, Karan Singh, president Skal Sydney North said that while social media is the current buzzword, "nothing builds better relationships than old fashion face-to-face meetings with your peers.

"At Skal networking is why we exist and so we are even more relevant today than ever before, with most business transactions now being online and remote," he said.

Business owner and senior



executives within the travel industry should consider joining Skal, he suggested, "and there is no time like the present."

President Mok kicks off his Australian tour in Sydney on 20 March, Melbourne – 21 March (Skal Melbourne's 50th Anniversary) Launceston – 22 – 24 March (Skal Australia National Assembly) and Townsville – 26 March (Skal Townsville's 30th Anniversary).

Skal is a professional organisation of tourism leaders around the world promoting global tourism and friendship.

To enquire about membership contact John Spencer on 0438 648 904.

Hawaii grows major Oz market

WITH a year over year growth in 2011 (+32%) and in 2012 (+33%) and 278,919 total visitors, Oceania, which includes Australia and New Zealand, is the one of Hawaii's fastest growing major market areas.

Anticipating a continued growth in 2013, the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) is targeting 348,650 visitors and \$794.9 million in visitor spending as a result of increased airlift from Oceania.

New routes from Brisbane (Hawaiian Airlines) and Melbourne (Jetstar) during the last quarter of 2012 has seen continued growth experienced through the first half of this year.

This month, Jetstar increased its Melbourne service to three times a week, while Hawaiian will soon launch its inaugural, thrice weekly flights from Auckland.

In addition, Hawaiian and Jetstar will also offer additional flights from Sydney during Australia's peak travel seasons in April, May, September and October, coinciding with Hawaii's traditionally slower shoulder periods.

This growth in airlift will elevate the Oceania market to a 12-year high of just over 397,000 total air seats, a 42% growth from last year.

"These increases help to support growth opportunities not only for leisure travellers but also for the MCI and group travel market, including the Golden Oldies Hockey Festival, which will welcome 1,500 competitors in September," said Mike Story, HTA brand and sports manager.

Novotel Brisbane Airport competition

NOVOTEL Brisbane Airport's weekly competition is finishing up today & the hotel is encouraging you to enter a picture of yourself looking at the hotel's website for a chance to win this Premium Conference Package.

The package would be a great way for you to get in good with the boss and give you the opportunity to check out the hotel's conference facilities.

The airport hotel has six meeting, conference and function rooms with a capacity for 120 delegates, as well as a dedicated conference centre featuring natural light, state of the art audio visual equipment, wireless broadband access, ISDN lines in all conference rooms and a dedicated conference manager.

WIN an Exclusive Meeting Package at Novotel Brisbane Airport

This week **BEN** is giving one reader the chance to win a Premium Conference Package courtesy of **Novotel Brisbane Airport**.

The prize includes full day use of the Executive Boardroom for up to 11 delegates, Premium Conference Package and audio visual equipment.

Brisbane's only airport hotel offers a dedicated conference centre, with unbeatable access and parking options. Six event rooms boast natural light, state of the art audio visual and a capacity of up to 120 delegates.



To enter email us a creative photo showing yourself looking at the Novotel Brisbane Airport website

Email comp@businessesnews.com.au
 HINT! www.novotelbrisbaneairport.com.au

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Miele Guide awards Dava



THE prestigious selection of Asia's best chefs and restaurants, the Miele Guide, has awarded Dava, the lotus-shaped fine dining restaurant at AYANA Resort and Spa Bali, a place in the 2013 Miele Guide.

"This is a testament to Jusman So's leadership and ability to inspire his team to new heights in modern European cuisine, with the highest level of service to ensure a unique experience for every guest," said executive chef Giordano Faggioli.

So is one of Singapore's most critically acclaimed chefs, most notably voted as Rising Chef of the Year at the 2008 World Gourmet Summit and as founder-chef of the city-state's much-lauded Sage restaurant in the Miele Guide 2011.

Sofitel creates a new sheet

A new level of luxury accommodation is being offered in Brisbane at the recently refurbished Sofitel Brisbane Central.

The minimalistic interior design has been replicated throughout each of the 433 rooms of the multi million-dollar rooms refurbishment and includes all the 81 club rooms, and 21 luxurious suites.

"We're the largest luxury hotel in the city and our clients demand a high level of service and surroundings.

"When I arrived at the property in 2012 the owners and I identified that our rooms provided an opportunity to enhance our offerings and create a unique product for the business and leisure market", says Marcus Hanna general manager for Sofitel Brisbane Central.

"Our design concept focused on infusing French elegance with elements of our local heritage, and has resulted in a fresh and sophisticated décor, whilst still reflecting traditional French design influences throughout all room types", added Hanna.

Your invite to Clubg

CLUBG, an already successful program providing government organisations with a range of support services for better conferences, have added associations and not-for-profits to their program.

In addition they have announced that the Clubg program has become an Accor partner, thus enabling organisations or organisers to be eligible for LE CLUB reward points along with individual residential delegates.

Interested parties are invited to attend an informal launch of the expansion, to learn more about the program and to celebrate our new partnership with Accor.

The event is being held at the Pullman Sydney Hyde Park, 21 March, 4.30pm for 5pm.

For every person attending the celebration, Clubg will donate \$10 to the McGrath Foundation

To find out more contact Alicia on (02) 9526 1221.

AIBTM's partnership with IAEE

A partnership has been formed by the Americas Incentive, Business Travel & Meetings Exhibition (AIBTM) with the International Association of Exhibitions and Events (IAEE) to co-produce the education content for AIBTM in Chicago 11-13 June.

IAEE, who represents more than 8,500 individuals who conduct and support exhibitions around the world, will host education sessions in the show's Learning Theatre at McCormick Place, highlighting its lengthy expertise and best practices for the meetings, exhibitions and events industry (more details on the education sessions to follow).

"We are very excited to partner with AIBTM on this key, strategic initiative," says David DuBois, president and ceo.

"This collaboration emphasises IAEE's priority to help enrich and engage global meeting planners who are looking to extend their reach internationally."

O'Reilly's conference deal in March/April

O'REILLY'S Rainforest Retreat, Villas and Lost World Spa & Conference Centre in Nerang, Queensland has released a bonus offering for event organisers who book 30 room nights or more before 31 March.

The Rainforest Retreat is giving you the chance to choose between a free team building activity - 4WD, Glow Worm tour or Flying Fox Activity - or complimentary room hire.

Accommodation is also being offered for the special rate of \$180 per night in a mountain view room (single or twin share) for stays from Sunday to Thursday during March and April.

O'Reillys has five meeting rooms and can accommodate between eight to delegates.

To get a quote for your next event contact Ella Jones on 07 5502 4903 or via email at conferencesales@oreillys.com.au.



CLEARLY not everyone is in agreement when it comes to PowerPoint presentations, especially since four members of the Australian cricket team were stood down for failing to submit PowerPoint reports.

Standing his ground with the four suspended cricketers, MEA's Conference chair Scott Lovett said there will be no such penalty at MEA's 2013 National Conference in Darwin, where PowerPoint will be banned for the second year.

"Nobody wants to see bullet points, clip art or similar cheesy PowerPoint material.

"If we catch presenters using these out-dated methods, I can assure you they'll be on the next plane home," said Lovett.

Presenters will be encouraged to use pictures, video, demonstrations and good old fashioned storytelling to bring a suitably Territorian feel to their presentation.

Confex marks their leaders

UK meetings and events industry tradeshow International Confex, has engaged The Mark of a Leader – experiential and leadership development experts - to up the experience levels for both visitors and exhibitors.

The Mark of a Leader's involvement will include the running of daily workshops specifically for exhibitors, with a two fold purpose to get exhibitors motivated and focused for the day ahead; and to give them new ways to engage prospects at a deeper and more emotional level.

Commenting on The Mark of a Leader's role, the UK's md and Master Storyteller, Tom Griffin, said "I believe this is the first time a show of this nature in the UK has employed exhibitor focused sessions like this and we really look forward to helping to raise engagement levels across the show floor."



IA weighs in on hotel loyalty

THE Incentive Association's general secretary, Peter Gray has weighed in on Martin Kelly's hotel loyalty programmes column (**BEN** 20 Feb).

Hotel loyalty programmes are, generally speaking, of two types: those to attract FITs (individually or a group, purchased directly by the customer) and those to encourage Travel Agents, PCOs and Incentive Practitioners.

The latter group will also earn a commission - usually 10% - based on the cost of each room.

The ultimate purchaser - the end-user, whether an FIT or a corporate client - can, in most instances, earn loyalty points on the negotiated price of the rooms.

Should a hotel or hotel group also wish to encourage PCOs and Incentive Practitioners to use their brand or property they may offer loyalty points to them but rarely if ever do these two schemes coincide.

I would point out that PCOs and Incentive Practitioners don't generally earn commission on food and beverages, meeting space, AV or theming unless this is a private arrangement with the supplier which may not be the hotel.

This is not an arrangement my own organisation would countenance but nevertheless it does happen.

If Martin Kelly is acting as a meeting planner for his own events on the basis that there are a number of them and not just one-offs then he should negotiate commissionable rates for the accommodation he buys and presumably sells even if it is to his own customers.

If he is a Licensed Travel Agent, a member of the PCO Association or the Incentive Association any one of these should give him credibility in the eyes of the hotel.

The sponsors and managers of loyalty programmes set their own parameters for the



way loyalty 'points' are earned; there is no universal standard (compare, say, Coles' FlyBuys and Qantas' Frequent Flyer schemes) and this is often based on the value of each reward unit and other factors when it comes to the redemption value or even the redemption ability - some hotel groups have blackout days when accommodation cannot be booked with loyalty points; others treat points as cash at any time.

The Incentive Association was formed to enhance the awareness, effectiveness and quality in the industry within Australia and New Zealand.

Membership to the not-for-profit Association for personal practitioners is free and comes with many benefits including the latest industry knowledge and research, incentive marketing promotion, business support and a free and updated directory of practitioner services.

To find out more or to become a member visit - www.incentiveassociation.com.



Famil-iar with Akl

AUCKLAND Convention Bureau's (ACB) new 2013 Conference, Incentive & Event Planner is out now - uniquely designed to create the feeling of being on a famil.

This year the publication has been designed to allow readers to get a more in-depth understanding of the Auckland experience.

Inside is a comprehensive guide to venues, transport, activities, services and dining, along with a look at the different regions within Auckland that make it such a diverse and exciting place to hold a business event.

ACB's manager Anna Hayward says, "It is crucial that conference and incentive organisers are kept up to date with the huge array of products and experiences available in Auckland.

The bureau aims to grow the lucrative conventions sector in line with the overall targets in the Auckland Visitor Plan - to grow the visitor economy from \$3.33 billion in 2010 to \$8 billion in 2021.

See the planner online at - www.aucklandnz.com/planner.

TAA chairman honour

TOURISM Accommodation Australia's (TAA) chairman, Tony South has picked up the Trailblazer Award at the Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific in Singapore this week in recognition of this international accommodation industry career.



TAA's md Rodger Powell said South deserved the Award adding "The Trailblazer Award is a prestigious industry honour and this announcement highlights how fortunate TAA is to have secured Tony's services as chairman in this critical time for the industry in Australia."



NEWCASTLE has transformed itself into a vibrant, unique and culturally rich city moving away from the one dimensional industrial city that it was many years ago made evident by the robust events calendar for 2013.

The city centre features 18 function venues, 10 with onsite accommodation and the largest able to host up to 6,500 delegates.

Newcastle is the perfect destination for any conference offering easy accessibility by road, air and rail, ample accommodation and conference venues, and numerous touring options available in the region.

Its close proximity to Port Stephens; a blue water paradise and the Hunter Valley; a wine lovers haven, ensures delegates visiting Newcastle can experience all three regions.

The first point of contact for planners organising conferences, meetings, functions and events in the region is the Newcastle Convention Bureau with staff able to assist with sourcing the perfect venue, pre and post touring options, offer a comprehensive bid document and provide invaluable local knowledge and advice.

Newcastle Convention Bureau continues to offer a free service to all conference organisers after a successful 20 years of hosting many state, interstate, national and international conferences.

Activities and attractions available in Newcastle include the Inner City Winemakers Centre, Fort Scratchley, Blackbutt Reserve, private boat charters and harbour cruises.

There are also a number of companies who specialise in corporate & group experiences. www.newcastleconventionbureau.com.au.

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