



## A splendid mirage

IF you haven't been or not heard of Qasr Al



Sarab Desert Resort by Anantara, in Abu Dhabi then you are missing out on one of the world's first-class incentive resorts.

That it has now won the prestigious title of Middle East's Leading Desert Resort at the World Travel Awards for the fourth consecutive year, is no surprise.

The resort, which sits atop a crescent-shaped dune in one of the most astonishing landscapes of the Liwa Desert in the Empty Quarter, is a haven of comfort and pure extravagance with desert views, and interiors of warm, earthy hues, accented by locally handcrafted furnishings - all immersed in the splendid heritage of an ancient fortress.

On offer is 154 rooms of immense proportions, 42 villas and 10 royal villas that resemble majestic palaces with spacious living, meeting and dining areas, private pools & outdoor terraces.

**ON ANOTHER NOTE** Our sincere congratulations go to all the very deserving winners at the recent National MEA 2013 Awards, a highlight of which appeared in *BEN* on Friday.

Apologies for not being able to feature every winner separately, to run them all in a deservedly fashion would require a whole issue - perhaps it is something we can think about next year!

Keep reading for more industry news - Jill.

## Grab a business deal

**BIZOIDS** looking for a business class fare deal will be pleased to know that Singapore Airlines is offering exceptional value Business Class seats to over 34 destinations, with Singapore starting at just \$4052 return.

Fares are on sale until 28 May, for travel to 30 June.

## SKYCITY commits \$315m to NZICC

SKYCITY Entertainment Group will commit \$315m to build and fit out the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) following the signing of a Heads of Agreement with the New Zealand Government today.

The agreement to design, build and operate the Centre will include the development of the public convention and exhibition centre that will have a capacity to hold 3,500 delegates and up to 780 car spaces when it opens in mid to late 2017.

SKYCITY's commitment today is in addition to the Group's contribution of 14,000 square metres of space in the Auckland CBD worth over \$87 million.

The Government, in return, will offer SKYCITY the Auckland Casino Venue Licence for 35 years and has agreed to a package of regulatory reforms.

SKYCITY's ce Nigel Morrison is pleased with the agreement saying the project will create 1,000 jobs during construction and employing an additional 800 New Zealanders once the NZICC is fully operational.

"For the first time, the NZICC will provide a venue of the size and scale required to allow New Zealand to finally compete with other countries for our fair share of major international conferences.

"It will be a core piece of New Zealand tourism infrastructure that will be a step change for the industry", Morrison said.

"It will deliver growth for Auckland International Airport, Air New Zealand and other airlines flying to New Zealand, taxi drivers, restaurant and bar operators, hoteliers, Waiheke Island, Queenstown and everybody else who...provides a service to international visitors".

Meanwhile, Air New Zealand has welcomed the announcement saying business traffic is only a small volume for the NZ based carrier and the predicted 33,000 extra delegates per year will be a significant increase to the country and will help reduce seasonal variations in demand for travel to NZ, ceo Christopher Luxon said.

## Accor appointments



**ACCOR** has announced two new appointments, that of Erkin Aytekin to the role of

general manager at Sofitel Sydney Wentworth and Llewellyn Wyeth, who will take over Aytekin's previous role of general manager, Novotel Melbourne St Kilda.

Aytekin, who has worked with Accor since 1997, is no stranger to the Sofitel Luxury Hotels brand, having previously worked as acting general manager at Sofitel Sydney Wentworth in 2008.

Llewellyn Wyeth who will manage Accor's premier 4 star waterfront leisure and business events hotel, Novotel Melbourne St Kilda, is one of Accor's most experienced executives

He has held a variety of roles with Accor since 1996 including a stint as general manager at Novotel Barossa Valley Resort.



## An unforgettable Mother's Day



**ID EVENTS** Australia senior accounts manager Mary Goldsack's son Edward who lives in London, entered a Virgin Atlantic 'Don't Forget Your Mum' competition, along with thousands of others, sending Sir Richard Branson - who, incidentally Edward is a great fan - a photo of his mother, telling him how much he missed her and what an inspiration she was to him.

Moved by the entry, he awarded Ed the prize, tweeting him saying "I'd like to fly you to Oz on Virgin Atlantic to see your Mum just in time for Mother's Day, when I'm over there to meet you both."

And that he did, flying them to Adelaide where Branson took time out from the National Achievers 2013 Congress where he was guest speaker, to greet them in person.

"We were so thrilled, we had afternoon tea with him - he was utterly charming, and his minder even gave Ed \$200 in expenses for the day.

"It was truly unforgettable," Goldsack said.



Victoria's Natural Conference Destination



## Misguided tax deduction

**THE** Business Events Council (BECA) has labelled the Federal Government's decision last week to cap tax deductions for work-related self-education expenses at \$2,000, as misguided and has called for the move to be reviewed.

BECA's executive manager Inge Garofani said the \$2,000 cap was far too low and would directly affect the business events industry by reducing travel and expenditure by domestic visitors.

"We understand the need to fund other government initiatives but believe the cap should be increased to a level which will not stifle our industry," Garofani said.

"On one hand the Federal Government has set a business events target to achieve delegate expenditure of \$16 billion by 2020, but on the other they are risking our ability to achieve that target by capping the tax deductible level on expenses."

Garofani said the total value to the Australian economy of the business events industry in 2012 was \$24 billion and based on current growth levels was forecast to reach \$31 billion by 2020.

Delegate expenditure alone

on business events in 2012 was valued at \$12.87 billion.

"Domestic business events visitors, including overnight and day visitors, contributed \$10.15 billion or almost 79% of total delegate expenditure.

"It is these domestic visitors and this expenditure which are directly targeted by the new Federal Government cap."

### AYANA does it again

**AN** impressive line-up of Disney, FOX, NBC, Sony, HBO, MNC Indonesia and BBC Worldwide gathered in Bali for the fourth annual Asia-Pacific Pay-TV Operators Summit (APOS), at AYANA Resort and Spa.

Attended by more than 620 participants and held from 22-24 April, the summit has been held at AYANA since its inception in 2010.

"With AYANA as our core strategic partner for APOS, we have the ability to be very creative, which reflects the nature of the dynamic media industry that we're in," said Rupert Wilkinson, co-owner of Media Partners Asia (MPA) which organises the summit.

"Other countries in the region have approached us, seeking to be the host-nation for APOS, however, whenever we consider the full scale of APOS, its events and the needs of our clients, speakers and participants, plus the calibre of our attendees from across the planet, in addition the significant business and economic opportunities presented by Indonesia, we keep coming back to Indonesia, and more specifically to AYANA.

"Feedback from key participants is that APOS is the best industry event in the world," Wilkinson said.

"AYANA's contributions toward this achievement – it's leisure and business facilities, catering, accommodation, and event venues – is simply that it exceeds everyone's expectations."

## Hollywood keynote

### speaker

**THE** securing of one of Hollywood's leading event producers, Cheryl Cecchetto, as Sydney's Event Showcase's



keynote speaker for their 2013 educational program - the Event Seminars - will see her present her seminar, Keeping Events Fresh, Innovative and Unique - the Hollywood Way.

The 90-minute presentation will reveal how, after years of experience, Cecchetto continues to raise the benchmark and set the standards for innovation and unrivalled production value.

She will share her tips on successful and effective event production and describe how she and her team keep their ideas fresh and unique.

The founder and president of Sequoia Productions, globally renowned in the world of event planning, Cecchetto manages and directs prestigious events including G'DAY USA Australia Week (10 years), the Emmys Governors Ball (16 years) and the Oscars Governors Ball (24 years), in addition to regularly masterminding special events throughout the United States, Canada and Europe.

Tickets to Cheryl Cecchetto's Event Seminar are strictly limited to delegates of Sydney's Event Showcase 2013 - [www.abexpo.com.au](http://www.abexpo.com.au).

### Glenn joins Spoonbill

**IRISHMAN** Aaron Glenn has joined Melbourne's Spoonbill at The Olsen as Restaurant & Events Manager.

Bringing to The Olsen, one of the hotels from the Art Series Hotels Group, which includes The Cullen, The Olsen and The Blackman, five years of industry experience and an energetic, passionate and service driven approach.

The Art Series Hotels Group continues to expand around Australia with its next development, The Watson in Adelaide, currently under construction and due to open early 2014, and The Larwill in Melbourne due to open in December 2014.



**WEDGEWOOD** USA Alliance Partner, Incentives By Design, have discovered a great activity, which is sure to excite the "boys" visiting Las Vegas, thanks to "Dig This."

The 'jive talking' heavy equipment playground sitting on five acres of a former amusement park, lets all those 'boys' who only got to play with their Tonka toys the opportunity to backhoe to their hard-hatted heart's content.

Dig This' mechanical mayhem arsenal includes a 15T Caterpillar Track 315CL hydraulic excavator, and a 10T Caterpillar D5G bulldozer.

Adults work in individual work areas, completing mock construction tasks such as digging 10ft trenches, building mounds, bulldozing rocks and boulders, and completing obstacle courses.

Find out more by emailing [info@nemonomic.com.au](mailto:info@nemonomic.com.au).



### Jaclyn Weinstein strengthens MCB

**JACLYN** Weinstein with a background in association management has been appointed to the new position of director of business development, North America by the Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB).

Chief executive officer Karen Bolinger said Weinstein would be invaluable in promoting Melbourne to the all-important North American market as they increase their efforts in this region and follows the engagement of Myriad Marketing as the organisation's new representation agency for North America.

"Jaclyn is starting with us at a crucial time as we head into the new financial year armed with our 2013/14 Strategic Business Plan, which will see a focus on business development activity in the association and incentive sectors in the US," Bolinger said.





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## South African cities unite for events

**DURBAN**, Johannesburg and Cape Town have agreed on a deal to cooperate on joint marketing initiatives to lure events to South Africa's biggest cities.

Speaking at the annual INDABA tourism showcase in Durban on Sat night, the Mayor of Durban, James Nxumalo (pictured) said working in hand with Johannesburg and Cape Town would benefit the nation.

Nxumalo said Durban desired to be recognised as a year round events destination of choice for businesses abroad.

Last year's INDABA generated ZAR250m (AU\$27.5m) into Durban's economy, while the Top Gear Festival pumped in another ZAR300 million (AU\$32.8m).

Durban also hosted the Africa Cup of Nations tournament, the TAFI International Travel Convention, the MTV Africa All Stars and other major events.

"Recognition of Durban as Africa's sport & events hub shows we are reaping the benefits of investing

in infrastructure and venues," Nxumalo added.

The benefits of hosting major events outweigh funds invested to bring them to Durban, he said.

Nxumalo said the list of events "gives us enough

ammunition to substantiate the argument that indeed Durban is a suitable home for the tourism industry."

"We believe that events tourism has a huge potential of unlocking the unemployment rate in our country and an economic spin-off for our economy," he said.

But, continued growth from the events sector cannot be realised working alone as one city, the Minister said, acknowledging that partnering with SA's two other major SA cities would provide significantly more leverage in attracting other events.

South African Tourism's Evelyn

Mahlaba, regional director for Asia & Australasia explained to *BEN* the alliance involved the promotion of pre/post activities in the partnering cities, keeping visitors in South Africa for longer.



## Bula Fiji 2013



**WHEN** 2013 Bula Fiji Tourism Exchange (BFTE) begins this week 15-17 May it will be hosted by InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa.

Featuring a recreated 'village' layout and an unprecedented entertainment program, the InterContinental Fiji say they will expose key industry partners to Fiji's exciting tourism offerings, unrivalled networking opportunities, whilst showcasing the best of tourism in Fiji.

David Pearson, InterContinental's conference & events manager said this year's BFTE program is going to be impressive.

"Without revealing too much we are particularly excited about the new layout of the 'village', as well as a program of locally and internationally inspired shows - that will be presented in famous InterContinental style," he said.

## No wonder these guys are smiling!



**COMO** Hotels & Resorts and British Airways hosted this group to a six night itinerary which included stays at COMO'S two Bhutan hotels - Uma by COMO and UMA Punakha - in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan.

As well there were excursions to the country's monasteries and museums, privately guided walks amongst the finest Himalayan scenery, and time to enjoy Uma's in-house daily yoga classes and the therapies of each hotel's COMO Shambhala Retreat.

The group flew to and from

Singapore, a Druk Air gateway to Bhutan, on British Airways' new Boeing 777-300ER daily service, featuring the airline's newest cabins.

**Pictured** in front of the massive architectural edifice of the 17th-century Punakha Dzong, from left are: Elliott Miller, COMO Hotels & Resorts; Alan Waite, British Airways; Michael Walker, Directions; Amy Wyatt, Travelcall; Yvonne Verstandig, Executive Edge; Barbara Bates, Spencer Travel and Bryan Wye, Wye & James Travel Associates.

## BESydney shines at MEA Awards

**BUSINESS** Events Sydney (BESydney), took out the national Metropolitan Destination Marketing Organisation Award for the second time at last week's Meetings and Events Australia (MEA) Awards.

It is a category that celebrates innovative and sound marketing practices within organisations that are charged with showcasing and profiling destinations, both nationally and globally.

Accepting the award on behalf of BESydney, chief executive officer Lyn Lewis-Smith said, "I'm proud that BESydney has built valuable and strong relationships with the NSW Government, our strategic partners and our members, and the wider business community.

"Coordination and collaboration are the keys to BESydney's success and ensure Sydney delivers a world-class event experience every time."