



A SOM tragic

WITH last week's Austrian dinner front of mind (see [page three](#)) and



talk of The Sound of Music's 50th anniversary being celebrated in Austria next year, it was either serendipitous or Austria Tourism holds a lot of sway at *Channel 9*, that The Sound of Music was on again on Sunday night – the most screened movie on Australian television.

Having seen the movie at least twice, I had my eyes on the new series of Meet the Midwife, which started half an hour later.

So I watched 'SOM's first half hour, after which there was no turning back.

I was once again so enthralled by the story, the music and the Austrian scenery that I felt I was watching it for the first time.

While the film version of The Sound of Music about the Trapp Family's life is Hollywoodised, it is generally based on a book written by Maria von Trapp and published in 1949.

What is true is Maria's life in the convent, her tutoring of the Von Trapp children and the Salzburg Festival held each summer.

Co-incidentally, Maria Von Trapp, the last surviving child of the famous Trapp Family Singers, died in February this year and Eleanor Parker, who played the Baroness in The Sound of Music, passed away aged 91 in March.

The song lingers on. *Jill*

Helly helps out

SILKY Oaks Lodge reports that Cyclone Ita passed through the region without any damage to the Lodge, following a three-day closure, with only power and telecommunications affected.

As the access road to the Lodge was flooded, guests were flown in and out of the property in a new partnership with GBR Helicopters.

The service is now complimentary to all guests when the Mossman River flows over the access bridge.

Emerald hones in on groups

THE world's "newest cruise line" Emerald Waterways is keen to tap into the meetings and incentive markets and says it has the product offering to do so.

Part of the Scenic Tours Group travel firm, Emerald Waterways commenced operation in Europe earlier this month.

The river cruise company has two vessels in its fleet, the just launched *Emerald Sky* and sister-ship *Emerald Star*, which will take to the waters in mid-May.

It's sold exclusively in Australia via Scenic Tours' sister company, Evergreen

Tours, with gm Angus Crichton saying Emerald Waterways provides an opportunity for event planners to offer a unique feature that's hard to match on the rivers.

At their stern, *Sky & Star* feature a heated indoor swimming pool with retractable roof which converts to a cinema by night, **pictured above**.

Crichton told *Business Events News* the multi-function space can comfortably accommodate groups of up to 40 delegates.

That number could potentially be doubled, dependant on furniture configuration.

Crichton says the pool/cinema venue presents a "unique

opportunity" for incentive and meeting groups requiring private space for workshop sessions, with the area able to be cordoned off, limiting access to other guests.

"With other cruise brands you don't have a meeting space, so what Emerald Waterways can offer is a private area for between 30-40 delegates, and you can have a break-out session while other guests are taking an off-ship excursion," Crichton said.

He added a common argument from the meetings and incentives industry was that cruise lines

demand a full charter to be taken for large groups, so as to not disturb other ship guests.

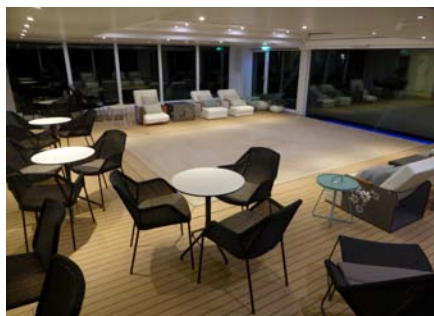
"But if you've got

60 people, we can accommodate that without requiring a complete charter and without inconveniencing the rest of the passengers on the ship."

Charters are of course still welcome on either *Sky* or *Star*, or their sister ships - *Emerald Dawn* and *Emerald Sun* - which will be delivered in 2015.

Around 10 charters have been booked this year, Crichton said.

See *BEN's* exclusive gallery of images of the pool/cinema space by **CLICKING HERE**.



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Langham waivers

SOUTHBANK'S The Langham, Melbourne has a range of offers available from June to September.

In something of a game-changer, the hotel is waiving room rental charges for bookings arriving between 01 Jun and 30 Sep.

In addition there are full day conference packages from \$85 per person while a special rate of \$250 per room is available for overnight guests in the Deluxe Grand Classic room.

Event organisers can earn double Takethelead points by booking their winter event prior to 30 Jun and clients who book an event prior to 24 May will receive a complimentary stay for two guests in a Grand River room.

Contact Katherine Cross on 03 8696 8159 for more.

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23rd April 2014

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Sheraton rewards



SHERATON on the Park is offering rewards for group bookings by 30 Jun.

For arrival by 30 Sep, two of a list of rewards can be chosen, including 5% off master billed rooms, double complimentary room allocation and double complimentary room upgrade allocation.

The hotel is also offering a signing bonus of 1,000 Starpoints for every 10 room nights booked, up to 100,000 Starpoints; for more, visit <http://bit.ly/1iKYZxk>.

Hilton's Haiti hotel

HILTON Worldwide is to debut the company's first hotel in Haiti in 2016, the Hilton Garden Inn Port-au-Prince Louverture Airport, with 152 rooms.

ANZAC bookings rise

BOOKINGS for the Gallipoli centenary next year are coming thick and fast following the release of the ballot results late last month.

Boronia Travel Centre said it had received about 20 to 30 enquiries a day and was expecting this to increase over the next few weeks.

There had been a "major increase" in interest in attending Anzac Day in Gallipoli in recent years, a spokesman for the Centre said.

The Centre offers group and meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibition bookings, subject to availability.

For those not successful in the ballot, Boronia Travel had an alternative venue to view the Dawn Service and Australian service, he said.

APT said its Gallipoli 2015 cruises were selling "really well", with two cruises on offer including a 17 day cruise which landed at Gallipoli.

"We anticipate these will sell out prior to departure."

APT was offering additional cruises to cater for expected increase in demand for the centenary next year, and said there had been a gradual increase in popularity over the years.

Trafalgar Australia managing director Matthew Cameron-Smith said following the ballot, the company had been "inundated" with booking requests.

The company is offering two tours and accepting bookings from all guests including those without ballot tickets due to "unprecedented demand."

MEANWHILE this Anzac Day, Dawn Services will be held in Sydney at 4.15am at the Cenotaph, Martin Place; in Brisbane at 4.28am at the Shrine of Remembrance in Anzac Square; in Melbourne at 6am at the Shrine of Remembrance; in Perth at 6am at the State War Memorial in Kings Park.

Nisbet's new role

ANDREW Nisbet is the Hilton on the Park-Melbourne's new general manager.

Nisbet will manage the 419 room, 1974 hotel including 2,200 sqm of event space and three food and beverage outlets.

He brings 16 years of Hilton management experience to the role, most recently as general manager at Hilton Queenstown and Kowarau Hotel for three years.

Moving right along

AV and décor specialist, Stagelife, has migrated south from the Whitsundays to Melbourne.

In celebration of the move, the company is offering a 30% discount off all in-stock equipment hired in Melbourne and regional venues.

Available for any event held between now and 30 Jun, the team can be contacted on 03 9459 4741.

THE ULURU MEETING PLACE

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business events news

23rd April 2014

Gray's Say

Peter Gray, an independent Motivation Consultant, presents a regular *Business Events News* feature on current issues in the Conference and Incentive industries.



WHEN WILL THEY LEARN?

RECENTLY a new 5-star hotel opened in Melbourne. Although not as big as its namesake, which was acquired by another group several years ago, it is certainly a credit to the brand. However, in spite of all the new features it offers, it still charges for WiFi. When I asked why, I was told that this is 'group policy'. And yet the hotel boasts a lap pool and a well-equipped gymnasium - probably costing many hundreds of thousands of dollars - which will almost certainly be used only by a minority of the guests who stay there.

Why haven't Australian hotels yet got the message that WiFi is now considered a necessity for most potential guests and they will lose out if compared to another equivalent establishment that does offer complimentary WiFi? Certainly, while my company recommends the hotel group to which this new if shortsighted addition to the group belongs, it will not be recommending this particular hotel unless it changes its policy. Yes, the hotel would agree to 'negotiate away' the WiFi charges but why is this necessary? WiFi has become the cash-cow for hotels these days with charges for 24 hour access usually higher than most people will pay for a month in their own homes. As usual, it's considered that 'business

customers' will pay because, ultimately, it's their company that's picking up the tab. Well, I have news for them: corporate Australia is becoming far more cautious about what it spends. There doesn't even seem to be any consistency within hotel groups or even brands. There are hotels within the same group as this new establishment that do offer complimentary WiFi. Another hotel brand in Melbourne also charges for WiFi although its sister hotel in Auckland and other hotels of the same brand in Asia do not. In fact, most hotels in Asia now offer complimentary WiFi to guests and this isn't restricted to high-end properties.

In the USA, 57 cities now offer free WiFi, twenty or so cities in Asia do so and at least as many in Europe too. To date, Perth is the only Australian city to join this expanding club. With the controversy over the NBN still raging it looks as though Australia may be consigned to the third world when it comes to the internet.

Peter Gray can be contacted at peter.gray@motivatingpeople.net.



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Sound of meetings

IF you are looking for a restaurant in Sydney where they are able to recreate the food of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then DeVine in Clarence Street is the place to go.

DeVine was the restaurant of choice when Austria Tourism hosted a special dinner last week to launch its 2014 'Moment of Bliss' campaign, which focuses on Austria as 'Europe's Meeting Place'.



Attended by key travel agent partners, suppliers, media and the Austrian Consul-General, Guido Stock, it was hosted by ANTO director Australia Astrid Mulholland-Licht.

In early June the ANTO are to host travel industry partners in Vienna as part of the upcoming Avalon Waterways Illumination launch, while other upcoming initiatives include a concert series with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, which will see the Sydney Opera House with Austrian branding.

Then in 2015, ANTO are taking 20 top agents to Salzburg, on a trip that Mulholland-Licht described as "more than a famil.

"It's about engaging with our industry.

"There will be a day of conferencing and the reason we chose Salzburg is because 2015 marks the 50th anniversary of 'The Sound of Music.'

"There's still a lot of interest out there so we are also taking the agents to some of the breathtaking landscapes and locations where it was filmed."

Pictured from left are ANTO's Nicole Becker, Mulholland-Licht and Manuela Moedlhammer, who is returning to Europe shortly after three years in ANTO's Australian office.



We've all experienced nightmares at 38,000 feet - crappy meals, rude crew members and air pockets but when it comes to surviving flights in adversity, a 16 year old boy who apparently survived freezing temperatures and a lack of oxygen after a five hour flight from California to Hawaii on Monday surely takes the cake.

The boy, who had run away from home after a row with his parents, supposedly stowed away in the wheel well of a 767.

While medical and aviation experts scratch their heads as to how he survived, Peter Forman, leading airline analyst, was similarly perplexed, reports US newspaper, *The Telegraph*.

"The odds of a person surviving that long of a flight at that altitude are very remote, actually.

"I mean, you are talking about altitudes that are well above the altitude of Mount Everest," he told Hawaii's *KHON* radio.

Believe it or not!

A Star industry turn

FRESH lobster and oysters, tender Peking duck pancakes and sizzling pulled pork tacos were just part of the offerings that wowed a 600-strong throng of industry movers and shakers at an Open House event in The Star's Event Centre last week.

The Star chief financial officer Brett Houldin said there was strong demand for world-class facilities under one roof.

"We believe the flexibility of the spaces at The Star coupled with the quality of the food, the AV, the service and the team makes for a very strong offering."

The Event Centre was decked out by Decorative Events and Exhibitions, while entertainment came via an inspirational presentation by Sebastian Terry of the 100Things.com.au blog, before the group were treated to a surprise performance from X Factor winner Dami Im.

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