



Welcome back!

WELCOME to 2014 and to **BEN's** first issue for this brand new year.



I know that some of you have been working over the break with little time to reflect on what lies ahead so we had a look at some of the predictions the pundits out there feel lie ahead.

According to CNN, passengers will get more opportunities to connect with the internet while in-flight, but at a cost, as airlines continue to seek more profits from ancillary fees.

There's the likelihood that a number of airline fees will rise in 2014: ticket change fees, on-board purchases and baggage fees being the biggies.

Mark Kirby, founder of the Runway Girl Network website that tracks passenger experience says, "Airlines will continue to reconfigure their aircraft with slim seats in super-snug seating configurations, in a bid to squeeze in more passengers and generate additional revenue."

Cheapflights say that with the Olympics on the horizon and the World Cup (12 June to 13 July), Brazil is building infrastructure for its major upcoming events.

Even so, capacity is tight, and it's advisable to book four months in advance.

While in Europe - 2014 is the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I so this may be a year for history buffs and family members to visit the battlefields to reconnect with and remember loved ones who sacrificed across Europe in the "war to end all wars."

If you have any predictions for the industry in 2014, send us a note to info@businesseventsnews.com.au

HAPPY NEW YEAR! Jill



Barmy times in Sydney

DESPITE rough treatment at the hands of Australia the last time the Barmy Army came to Sydney (we're talking about a five nil defeat seven years ago), around 11,000 English supporters arrived in the city for the Sydney Cricket Test, giving the city's hotels a flying start to the year.

The luxurious Park Hyatt charged over \$1000 on Wotif for their last rooms as space filled up for the first two nights of the test, following a sold out night across the CBD for New Year's Eve, Tourism Accommodation Australia (TAA) said.

One of the closest hotels to the SCG, the Mercure Sydney Central, recorded a revenue increase of 42.3% for the first four nights of the month compared to the same period last year, thanks largely to 359 rooms booked through an Ashes travel organiser.

And the good times are set to continue for Sydney's CBD hoteliers with the English supporters expected to stay in Sydney for about a week, TAA said. Most Sydney CBD hoteliers experienced occupancy growth of over 10% for the first week in January compared to 2013.

TAA NSW director Carol Giuseppi said that while the New Year holiday period was traditionally strong for Sydney, this year was even stronger thanks to the Ashes and improved consumer sentiment.

"When Australian cricket and tourism are both winners, you can't really ask for anything more," Giuseppi said.

"Even the shoulder period

leading into and out of New Year was strong right across the CBD area.

"The only period in the past few years that has come close to rivalling this New Year period was the 2013 October long weekend when Sydney had the naval review, One Direction and the NRL Grand Final all on the same weekend.

"What this shows is the power of events to attract tourists and business to the city. Whether it be sporting, food or cultural, having highly visible and strongly marketed events can draw tourists in from around Australia and even further afield. With airfares still relatively low, there are incredible opportunities to build tourism from centres such as Singapore, Malaysia, Jakarta and, of course, China.

"Sydney enjoyed a record level of inbound tourism from China in 2013, and with hotels providing enhanced services for Chinese guests, and with the prospect of increased air capacity, we have excellent prospects for growing the market even further in 2014."

Giuseppi said that a strong events calendar would help offset the impact of the closure of the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The replacement venue not expected to be ready till the end of 2016.

"The NSW Government deserves great praise for the way they have actively pursued events in the past few years, and the success of this program will benefit the whole economy."

Tour Operator sought

THE Australian Catholic Bishops Conference is seeking an Official Tour Operator for World Youth Day 2016.

Check out **page three** for more.

Copthorne's new GM

COPTHORNE Hotel & Resort Bay of Islands, New Zealand, has a new general manager in Paul Stancliffe-White.

Starting January 13, Mr Stancliffe-White said he was looking forward to expanding the hotel's role within the local community and working closely with partners, including local iwi and the Department of Conservation.

Mr Stancliffe-White started in the industry in the United Kingdom, moving on to manage hotels in Australasia, including several Millennium Hotels & Resort properties in New Zealand.

Mr Stancliffe-White comes from a position as general manager visitor industry for Venture Taranaki for the past seven years.

Fijian flair

INTERCONTINENTAL Fiji Golf Resort & Spa heralded the New Year with their 2013 New Years Eve Purple Party, by special edition Taittinger Nocturne Champagne.

The elaborate event featured torch lighting and tribal drummers, adding a traditional Fijian flare to the evening.

Choreographed entertainment from the vibrant VOU dance group, Fire Dancers and the beautiful voices of the Batiri Village Choir left over 650 guests in awe as a kaleidoscope of fireworks lit up Natadola's skies.

MEA regs open

EARLYBIRD registrations for the 2014 Meetings & Events Australia Conference are open.

This year the conference will be held in Kuala Lumpur, the first time the conference has been held overseas since 2000.



I NO LONGER KIRK HERE

Council quarrels took a sci fi turn in North Carolina recently when a town councilman quit via a resignation letter written in Klingon.

Indian Trail councilman David Waddell wrote his letter in the fictional alien language from Star Trek because the characters valued integrity, honour and duty, Reuters reported.

Waddell planned to run for Congress and so would finish at the end of this month rather than the full four year term in December 2015, Reuters said.

Mayor Michael Alvarez told Reuters he was a Trekkie also but did not immediately understand the letter. Although he said he was disappointed by Waddell's early departure and his method of leaving, he wished Waddell well.

"Live long and prosper!"

SPEAKING of aliens, for those held up at the airport here's food for thought: it could be the work of aliens.

An airline pilot reported a near miss with an unidentified flying object at Heathrow Airport.

The pilot said the object passed within a few feet of the A320 Airbus he was flying, which was cruising at 34,000ft, around 20 miles west of Heathrow, the *Telegraph* reported.

A report into the incident, which has been investigated by the UK Airprox Board, said the pilot believed the object would collide with the plane.

The captain said the object was cigar/rugby ball like, bright silver and looked metallic, the publication said.

The Board ruled out other aircraft once it had checked data recordings, as well as meteorological balloons. The event occurred in July but the report was released recently.

Melbourne's new Star

THE Melbourne Star Observation Wheel is now open.

The Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) said it was delighted to see the Star opening just before Christmas, giving its first passengers a new perspective of the city.

The wheel was a drawcard for business events, with the 1500 person capacity Star Piazza at its base, VTIC said.

The wheel has 21 cabins and views of up to 40km from the Docklands site.

VTIC chief executive Dianne Smith said the views showcased Melbourne and the Star promoted the city's history and culture, which would have a flow-on effect for the rest of the tourism industry.

Rainforest Recitals

SCENIC World is offering a summer program involving Rainforest Recitals.

Cello, violin and guitar performances will be staged on the Jamison Valley rainforest floor including a sonata composed specially for the area, the *Rainforest Cello Sonata*.

The Rainforest Room hosts 100 guests for the hour long recitals and attendees can meet the musicians afterwards at the Terrace Cafe.

The first program is presented by arranger, composer and musician Georg Mertens on an Italian cello crafted around 1740. Mertens will perform a range of pieces on 23 January and 22 February, from Bach's *Prelude in G* to pieces such as *Didgeridoo* for solo cello, and includes the *Rainforest Cello Sonata*.

The second performance on 8 February is by Paganini Duo, violinist Gustaw Szelski and Mertens on guitar and includes pieces such as *El Condor Pasa*. This performance will explore the interplay of Romantic Gypsy music from Russia, Romania and Hungary. Tickets are \$58 and include a return trip on the Scenic Cableway.

KLCC's dynamic new team

WELL known and respected industry identity, Peter Brokenshire, who spearheaded the setting-up and opening of the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (the Centre) in 2005, is to retire at the end of March after 11 years with the venue.

In the role Alan Pryor has been announced as general manager designate of the technologically advanced, purpose-built facility.

He joined the Centre in 2011 as deputy general manager.

He will oversee the day-to-day operation of the Centre including managing the audio-visual and technical services, and exhibition services as well as international, and local promotional activities.



Pryor (**above**) was responsible for the day-to-day operation including management of the audio-visual and technical services, catering, event co-ordination and exhibition services as well as international, regional and local promotional activities.

Pryor's experience before the Centre was as director of operations at the Durban International Convention Centre (Durban ICC) where he worked from pre-opening in 1997 for ten and a half years.

MEANWHILE, taking over from Pryor, in an announcement that will delight and surprise **BEN** readers, is Simon Lomas as the Centre's deputy general manager.

Lomas (**above right**) was with the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre for four years, attaining the post of director of operations and managing a team of 135 employees and accountable for a budget of more than \$60 million.

The Star's big 2014

NEW Year's Eve in Sydney was a big one for the city and for The Star it was one of its biggest New Year's Eve celebrations on record with more than 30,000 international and local guests visiting the property over the course of 31 December.

Heading their list of events, 1000 VIP guests attended a masquerade ball at The Star Event Centre where they dined on crayfish, salmon, prawns and wagyu beef rolls, while the Star's Sky Terrace rooftop bar offered a birds-eye view of the world-renowned Sydney Harbour fireworks display.

Filled to capacity were other venues within the Star complex including signature dining restaurants BLACK by Ezard, Balla and Soky. Momofuku and The Century rained with guests while Luke Nguyen's Fat Noodle was reportedly unstoppable and still serving steaming noodle pots almost until sunrise.

Rock Lily, The Star's purpose-built live music venue rocked until late. Cherry, The Star's cocktail bar, entertained guests with canapés and live sets.

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Calling for Expressions of Interest

World Youth Day 2016 Official Tour Operator

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) is seeking to appoint an Official Tour Operator to coordinate travel and accommodation logistics for World Youth Day 2016.

The Official Tour Operator will enhance and support the Australian World Youth Day Committee's co-ordination of pilgrims to WYD, to be held in Krakow, Poland, from 25 to 31 July 2016.

The Australian World Youth Day pilgrimage will provide pilgrims with opportunities to experience WYD, visit the attractions and sights of Poland and greater Europe as well as share the spiritual experience with other pilgrims.

It is anticipated that Australia's Pilgrims, Leaders, Clergy and Bishops will total approximately 2000.

The ability to effectively manage the varying requirements of a range of key stakeholders is essential.

IMPORTANT

Interested parties should attend a Briefing Session in early 2014.

Date: Monday 13 January 2014.

Time: 10am to noon.

Address: Catholic Diocese of Parramatta Diocesan Office,
12 Victoria Road, North Parramatta.

To register for the Briefing Session and to request an Application Pack send an email to Mr Malcolm C Hart, Senior Youth Ministry Projects Officer: youthministry@catholic.org.au

Expressions of Interest close at 4pm on Friday 28 February 2014.

Send Expressions of Interest on email to:
Mr Malcolm C Hart, Senior Youth Ministry Projects Officer
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Secretariat for Pastoral Life
Email: youthministry@catholic.org.au