



Feed me!

FEAST at Sheraton on the Park is celebrating Christmas in July until the 31st of the month, especially for those who love the festive season and can't wait until 25 Dec to enjoy Christmas with all the trimmings.



Much more than a slice or two of ham or turkey, **BEN** was invited to enjoy Feast restaurant's groaning buffet and with the best will in the world, I attempted to eat my way through the offerings.

Eyes wide open, you survey all that is set before you, including prawns, crab and oysters, Japanese sashimi for starters and the traditional Christmas fare.

But then there are the dips – fresh hommus, tabbouli and tzatziki with flatbread and a range of mouth-watering salads.

You need to keep room for the hot dishes beyond the Christmas offerings and I defy you not to try the sublime beef cheeks.

It's then you spy a stand-alone Asian buffet and you wish you had left room for that.

Too late: the puddings, cakes and ice creams beckon and after an accompanying glass or two of wine you totter replete out into Elizabeth Street, vowing not to eat again for a week! *Jill*



ICC update

THE construction of Sydney's new convention, exhibition and theatre venues is reportedly progressing well with the first tower cranes now in operation.

Sydney Live said infrastructure work was being carried out on Darling Drive's western side with preparations underway to shift work to the eastern side.

It's all on for Melbourne



MELBOURNE hotels have seen record winter occupancy levels and higher room rates in the lead up to the 20th International AIDS Conference.

The conference, held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, is expected to see 12,000 delegates attend and pump about \$80m into Victoria's economy, the Melbourne Convention Bureau said.

An Accor spokesperson told **BEN** the hotel group did not give out statistics as it was in a "quiet period" but confirmed that its conference allotments were full, as reported by the *Australian Financial Review*, which said more than half of the 52 hotels offering group bookings had exhausted their group bookings.

Accor Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia regional general manager Adrian Williams said the conference had had a "really good impact" on demand for the company's hotel rooms and that rates and occupancy levels were up across the board.

A spokesperson for InterContinental Hotel Group said occupancy levels were high in

both Sydney and Melbourne.

Tourism Accommodation Australia Victoria executive officer Michelle King said traditionally, the Melbourne CBD could struggle over the winter period, so the conference was "wonderful" as international conferences had flow on effects in things like pre/post-touring.

MEANWHILE the Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia is targeting Melbourne for its Young Stars events next week.

To be held at Melbourne Showgrounds, WALDRONSMITH Management md Kate Smith and Clayton Utz partner Chris McLeod and senior lawyer James Neil will present at the events.

MICE market recovering - IHG

INTERCONTINENTAL Hotels Group (IHG) is seeing growth in the MICE market after 18 months or so of weakness.

Speaking to **BEN** in Sydney earlier this week, the group's newly appointed local head of development Matt Tripolone said business was definitely on the up. "We've seen it turn the corner

SEC@GI on show

THE Sydney Exhibition Centre @ Glebe Island (SEC@GI) held its first public event, the Craft & Quilt Fair, last week.

With up to 30,000 attendees during the five day show, the show posted a higher attendance record at the new location than its previous Darling Harbour location, the SEC@GI said.

Expertise Events md Gary Fitz-Roy said the company received the most compliments about the show it had had in some time.

\$50m hotel 4 Palmerston

APPROVAL has been given to build the \$50m Palmerston Hotel, stage one of the Maluka Views development in the NT.

Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment Peter Chandler said with the fast-tracking of local land release, the development was exactly what Palmerston needed.

The hotel will have 161 rooms and be located in the CBD.

Enjoy stunning Brisbane city views and a truly amazing two course lunch or dinner for \$55pp.

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Conditions apply.

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business events news

18th July 2014



crumbs!

THE heartbeat of any hotel is the front desk, the main go-to point for every single issue.

In the spirit of making their lives easier, *Hotel Chatter* has outlined some dos and don'ts for effective complaining to the front desk.

Dos include: be specific about your complaint; try to remember names or faces; follow up - yes, this is done by the hotel most the time, however, it helps if on the way out of the hotel at anytime, you stop by the front desk.

The don'ts include: not talking down to or looking down upon front desk staff; don't immediately ask for a manager just because you don't think the front desk agent can 'handle' your issue; don't mock the staff's level of English (surely just common courtesy and not being racist?!); don't talk about how rich you are, how important you are or how big a loyalty member you are - for a reason why, [CLICK HERE](#).

Las Vegas Unlocked

WITH more than US\$8b planned product investment underway, Las Vegas is set to strut its stuff downunder in August.

Leading the push, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, together with 12 partners, will host two Las Vegas Unlocked trade events in Sydney on 07 Aug from 5.30pm at Doltone House and Melbourne on 05 Aug at Bobby McGee's.

[CLICK HERE](#) to register - you must be in by 29 Jul.

Freshly Mint-ed



ONCE upon a time it was Governor Macquarie's notorious Rum Hospital and later a branch of London's Royal Mint.

Yesterday, the French-inspired Bistro Mint officially opened at The Mint in Sydney.

An Historic House Trust building, chairman Michael Rose said having a restaurant, and a good one at that, was the best way to ensure that the building would be looked after.

It was officially opened by Minister for the Environment and Heritage Robert Stokes who said it was a fantastic opportunity to celebrate and protect the building's heritage while also supporting new business opportunities.

Bistro Mint, in partnership with the Compass Group's Restaurant Associates, also offers private dining, function and corporate event space.

For more photos, [CLICK HERE](#).

Employee of the Year

NOVOTEL Sydney Central employee Sutari Vongkeneta won the Meetings and Events Employee of the Year award at the Tourism Accommodation Association 2014 Awards for Excellence - congrats, Sutari!

People power

"THIS business is about hospitality, about talking to people and interacting with people," said WorldHotels ceo Kristin Intress, speaking at a cocktail function in honour of her first WorldHotel's trip to Australia.



Joined by WorldHotels Asia Pacific executive vice president Roland Jegge, director of sales Australia and New Zealand Ganessan Suppiah and WorldHotels Australian hoteliers fresh from their regional meeting, together with members of the industry, Intress said the only difference was technology, but "it's only technology."

"We know when we have a good conversation and have spent time with someone, it's what we remember."

"It's about the memories. "Even so, we have to engage with what's new because that's where it's going but ultimately it's the people that make the difference."

The event, held at Peter Gilmore's Quay, was highlighted by his food and a raffle of prizes.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more photos.

Pictured from left is Renita Collins, Axis Events Group, Karen Mathieson & Mary Goldsack, id events, Gary Bender, WCT, Joyce Weir, Joyce Weir Consulting.



SHEER INSPIRATION

Oliver Sheer, managing director of BeChallenged Team Building, gives insight into the team building industry in a regular feature in BEN.

The Experience

OVER the last 10 years you would most likely have been inundated with corporate lunches and dinners, each time faced with a similar format of F&B, speakers, and, let's be honest, the usual three to four topics discussed at a banquet table in the attempt to build rapport and avoid any awkward silences. The feeling and emotions that develop in preparation for these events have transformed over the years from a childlike excitement of trying something for the first time to a frame of mind that has programmed itself to just go through the phases in order to ensure minimal disappointment.

Recently you were invited to the John Smith Corporation's Gala Dinner at a five star hotel in the city. As you arrived at the venue there was music coming from the function room, stimulating a buzz in the pre-function area as everyone tried to guess what was on the other side of the doors.

Suddenly the doors opened and you could see inside - the room looked amazing: white linen tablecloths, candles, no detail was missed. As you moved to your seats you couldn't help but notice the hundreds of violins and violas lying on the tables.

A maestro appeared on stage and said, "In 30 minutes we will come together and play an orchestrated piece of music."

Conversation erupted across the room: "I used to play an instrument", "I was in the junior band but never made it any further", "I hated learning the piano when I was a kid." People were instantly bonding at their tables as they shared stories and memories.

You didn't believe the maestro's bold statement but believe it or not... you did it, 30 minutes later, 300 individuals played together in unison! What a wonderful shared achievement, proving that anything is possible.

Ensuring events have participants not just audiences is what makes an event memorable and allows people to experience, absorb and retain information. When you are a participant, your retention and engagement levels are 50% higher compared with being a passive audience member just listening to the content.

A professional team building session or team event run with purpose and focus builds real relationships and allows us to have genuine conversations. Events are all about the people. Make them participants not just an audience. Let them feel achievement, belonging and value.

Let them experience something new and something they will remember.

You'll never forget the night you played in an orchestra!

For more information about Oliver and BeChallenged's team building offerings, see www.bechallenged.com.au.



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