



Michele Bender retires

SHE'S been a part of our industry for



so long that the news of Michele Bender's retirement will come as a surprise to many.

A well known and highly respected industry identity, she is stepping down from the day-to-day activities of her business, Conference Connection, due to ill health.

To take effect on 13 Jun, Bender said she now wanted to focus on relaxing and getting better.

"I decided some time ago to relinquish the conference and secretariat responsibilities held with AGES (the premier gynaecological surgical association in Australia and New Zealand) and to appoint a new company to take on this role."

This appointment has since been taken up by Mary Sparksman and YRD Event Management.

Michele said she wants to acknowledge the wonderful work of her team at Conference Connection, in particular Rhonda and Eleanor Talbot.

Certainly the team at **BEN** and undoubtedly the rest of the business events industry acknowledge her contribution and dedication.

We extend our heartfelt good wishes for a speedy recovery and a very happy retirement.

Jill

Mantra set to float

MANTRA Group Limited is set to float on the Australian Stock Exchange with an initial public offering of \$1.80 per share.

The Group said its share market capitalisation would be \$449m, equivalent to an enterprise value of \$538m.

The shares would represent about 53% of those available at listing, with current shareholders EV Hospitality and UBSAHL retaining current investments, the Group said.

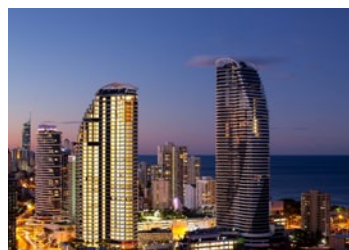
The timeline for the offering includes the retail offer opening on 10 Jun, closure on 17 Jun, trading on an unconditional and deferred settlement basis on the ASX on 20 Jun with code MTR, and normal settlement basis on 27 Jun.

Mantra said the purpose of the float was to provide it access to capital markets, give it flexibility to pursue growth opportunities and to allow others to invest in the Group, with proceeds used to reduce debt.

Mantra Group chairman Peter Bush said the segments to which the Group was exposed through its three brands, Peppers, Mantra and BreakFree, had grown at an average rate of 6% per annum since 2004 with future growth anticipated.

"We are confident this will provide investors with a stable, resilient investment with opportunities for further growth."

Ceo Bob East said the Group



had worked hard to develop a "significant" pipeline of growth opportunities in Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia, and the listing would allow it greater flexibility to deliver on this pipeline.

For more, **CLICK HERE**.

18,000 Rotarians

PRIME Minister Tony Abbott and NSW Premier Mike Baird welcomed more than 18,000 Rotary club members from around 150 countries to Sydney, when Rotary International's 105th annual convention opened on Tuesday.

The Olympic cauldron was lit for the event, held at Sydney Olympic Park from 01 to 04 Jun.

Adding to the excitement, 340 Rotary delegates beat a world record held by Oprah Winfrey for the most number of people ever on the Sydney Harbour BridgeClimb at the same time, raising funds for polio eradication.

Baird said in a note to the delegates that the venue was a destination in its own right as the site of the 2000 Olympic Games.

Four pages today

BEN has three pages of editorial plus a full page from (**click**):

- Accor Hotels

Digital king for Gen X

THE International Association of Conference Centres (IACC) and Development Counsellors International presented survey results at IMEX 2014 looking at the generational preferences of meeting planners, which found digital materials were king for selling to 'Baby Boomers' (47 to 65 year olds), 'Generation X' (33 to 46 year olds) and 'Millennials' (18 to 32 year olds) but that 'Matures' (66 years and above) preferred in-person selling during tradeshow appointments.

The survey looked at 101 European meeting planners and found 55% of respondents considered the age of conference attendees when selecting a venue, with off-site activity options and the "cool factor" of the venue and location important factors for programs with Gen X and Millennial attendees, the IACC said.

Baby Boomers and Matures said technology and connectivity via WiFi was the most important factor when it came to venue selection, while Millennials chose cost as their top consideration.

All groups thought accessibility/location, appropriate meeting space and value were important.

For more, **CLICK HERE**.

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business events news

4th June 2014

Heritage adds Cromwell



HERITAGE Hotel Management has added the Lake Resort Cromwell to its Heritage Boutique Collection, with new conference facilities, slated to open before Christmas at a build cost of more than \$1m.

The resort, on the shores of Lake Dunstan in NZ's South Island, is a five star property.

Its new conference facilities would hold up to 120 people banquet-style, Heritage said, with lake views and the ability to be divided into two smaller spaces.

The new facilities positioned the resort "strongly" for conference

segments, Heritage Hotel Management group development manager Ronnie Ronalde said.

The meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions market had performed "extremely well" for Heritage Hotels, particularly the Australian market, and it was an area the group was continuing to focus on going forward, he said.

The addition of the resort to the Collection built on the company's objective to have the most comprehensive group of luxury boutique properties across the country "and beyond", he said.

Shang's one stop shop

SHANGRI-LA Hotels & Resorts will welcome 18 hotels from nine regions around Asia Pacific, Dubai and Oman for its annual sales mission in June.

Combining with industry partners for each region to create a 'one stop shop', the event provides an opportunity for business events related personnel to enhance product knowledge of the group's hotels and the destination.

To enquire and to attend in Sydney on 17 Jun and in Melbourne on 19 Jun, register your interest by emailing: julie.alderson@shangri-la.com.

Chef takes GM role

SPICERS Retreats executive chef Cameron Matthews has been appointed general manager of Spicers Clovelly Estate, retaining his existing role as executive chef.

Having worked at Clovelly Estate since its opening in 2009, Matthews has been the driving force behind its two-hatted restaurant the Long Apron.

In his new role he will continue to oversee the direction of the Long Apron and also oversee the day to day running and growth of the Clovelly Estate business.

Incumbent gm Sam Giles is stepping in as gm at Spicers Balfour.



HOTELCHATTER (www.hotelchatter.com) reports that it has the inside run on what to expect when Virgin Hotels, who has long talked about it, opens its first property in Chicago this autumn.

Here are six things told to HotelChatter by Raul Leal, ceo of Virgin Hotels.

1. 60% of the Virgin Hotels team are women and they've been giving their input on the room experience from a female business traveller perspective.
2. Virgin Hotels expects to work with cool partners, linking its existing loyalty programs at Virgin America, Virgin Atlantic and Virgin Australia.
3. Old or new, Virgin wants its hotels to feel "as if they've been there all along."
4. Virgin Hotels will bring its musical legacy full circle, with special spaces for live music.
5. Virgin Hotels wants to stay in touch with its guests before they even get there and so will offer free WiFi and have a fantastic app to allow the customer to interact with the team and the property.
6. Guests will have as many options as Virgin can offer without them having to leave the property.

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MCEC lands \$11.2m congress



MELBOURNE will host the 15th World Congress on Public Health (WCPH) in 2017, expected to pump \$11.2m into the Victorian economy and set to be held in the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC).

Hosted by the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA), Melbourne's bid was chosen from a final three of Liverpool, Barcelona and itself.

Chair of the selection committee Professor Mika Gissler said all the bids were of a very high standard but that Australia's proposal was professionally made and well written and structured.

Other strengths included that good infrastructure was to be provided, there was a strong public health association behind the bid, with committed partners in local government and national public health actors and that fund raising had already been successfully started, he said.

This was the first time the Congress would be held in Australia, Gissler said.

Local bidding partner Public Health Association of Australia ceo Michael Moore said it would be a coordinated effort between

several health organisations including the New Zealand Public Health Association.

The win was announced by Minister for Tourism and Major Events Louise Asher, as well as Minister for Health and Ageing David Davis, with Asher saying the event was expected to see more than 2,000 attendees in the city over five days.

MCEC ceo Peter King said the win reiterated Melbourne's status as a hub for health events.

Melbourne Convention Bureau ceo Karen Bolinger said it was proof of Melbourne's reputation as a centre of excellence in science and medicine.

Gerrard for Outrigger

OUTRIGGER Enterprises Group has appointed John Gerrard as area general manager Australia and as general manager of Outrigger Surfers Paradise.

Most recently, Gerrard was operational consultant for Temple Tree and Bon Ton Resorts in Malaysia.

He will oversee the operational and strategic direction of four Outrigger properties.

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Sitting Pretty

Vietnam Airlines Business Class

Welcome to Sitting Pretty, our regular review of experiences up the front of the plane.

BEN recently flew with Vietnam Airlines aboard its Airbus A330-200 on its Sydney to Ho Chi Minh City route. Officially established as the country's national flag carrier in 1995, today it boasts one of the youngest and more modern fleets in the region.

BUSINESS EVENTS

The airline codeshares with Qantas, meaning Business Class passengers have Qantas lounge access in Australia. For the business events market, a dedicated support service is offered that includes special airfares to Vietnam, free tickets for event planners or guest speakers and group check-in and seating on the plane.

THE SEAT

Business Class has 24 recliner-type seats with a pitch of 62 inches and a reclining angle of 153 degrees in a 2-2-2 configuration. Seated in 2D, *BEN* was comfortable and found the cabin roomy, but when it comes to sleeping, the reclining angle tends to make you feel you are slipping down your seat. Still, Business Class is the nicest way to fly. Overall there are 266 seats on the aircraft, 242 in Economy.

ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

Noise cancelling headphones were provided, which allowed easy access to the in-flight entertainment system, as did the in-seat handsets. Multi-purpose power sockets are offered on the Airbus 330 with jacks for headphones and a USB port, which at first were a little hard to find, positioned above and behind the armrest.

SERVICE

BEN was greeted with welcoming smiles and a glass of Monopole Heidsieck champagne by the women of the flight crew, elegantly dressed in Vietnam's traditional burgundy and cream coloured Ao Dai – an outfit described as "showing everything while revealing nothing." More drinks and canapés followed after take-off and lunch started with an amuse bouche and hors-d'oeuvres of smoked salmon, honey chicken and roasted lamb and was followed by a plentiful supply of traditional and European dishes. Two meals were served during the roughly nine hour flight and the real mango ice cream proved a particular hit with passengers. Amenities, including an eye mask and socks, were handed out although full amenity kits were not.

SAFETY

Perhaps it's because we are used to the safety procedures on Australian airlines that the more casual approach to alerting passengers to watch the safety video wasn't adhered to or that there was no physical demonstration of the safety equipment. When we landed, I realised that my seat belt was undone and my bag on my lap.





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