



Hello NZ

TODAY, many industry people attending MEETINGS

NZ 2014 will start to arrive

in Auckland for the two day expo, which begins on Wednesday at the ASB Showgrounds.

For the many hosted buyers and the media, the event starts on Tuesday with a 'big day out' update in Auckland.

The Auckland Convention Bureau will showcase its city and the newest and finest properties, event venues and activities.

Come Tuesday evening, we front up for the MEETINGS welcome function, which is being held at the five star Pullman Hotel Auckland.

Judging by the event's record in previous years, we are in for a treat.

MEANWHILE in light of the enormous change now going on and driven by globalisation, the digitisation of the economy and the "careening beast of the Internet, which is able to destroy entire industries as it can create them," MEA has said it needs to revitalise itself and synchronise its benefits with members' needs for the future.

As such, it has released a survey for members which aims to ascertain what members value most and least, and to put forward their ideas to ensure the future viability of the association.

The survey is due on 04 Jul - [CLICK HERE](#) to access it. *Jill*



Flight Centre to form DMC

THE Flight Centre Travel Group (FLT) has announced that it will create a destination management company (DMC), Buffalo Tours, in partnership with Vietnamese privately owned travel and hospitality group the Thien Minh Group (TMG).

The joint venture would be based in Singapore offering a range of tours, excursions, transfers and other services and working to operate and expand TMG's Buffalo Tours businesses in Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, with transferral of these into the joint venture expected in the first half of the 2014-15 financial year, FLT said.

The joint venture would also see the launch of new Buffalo Tours businesses in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, China and Japan, as well as TMG becoming Flight Centre's DMC partner in these new and existing markets, Flight Centre said.

Buffalo Tours Vietnam was not included in the new venture but the FLT and TMG would extend their existing relationship in the country, Flight Centre said.

"FLT will work to grow sales for Buffalo Tours in Vietnam and, in return, will receive a share of the profits generated."

Products would be available via Flight Centre's sales channels, it said.

Both companies would contribute US\$1.5m (A\$1.6m) in capital and Flight Centre would

have a 49% interest with TMG holding 51%, Flight Centre said.

Flight Centre Travel Group managing director Graham Turner said the expansion into destination management was a natural extension of its travel business and an area the company had been interested in for some time.

The venture meant Flight Centre had access to a new revenue stream by bringing previously externally transacted business in-house, as well as greater product control over the product offering for customers, Turner said.

"In the longer term, there is also the opportunity to expand the Buffalo Tours product range, and, given that the model is replicable, grow the business organically."

GC wins ICCA bid

THE Gold Coast will host the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) Asia-Pacific Client/Supplier Business Workshop in September thanks to a collaborative bid by Gold Coast Business Events and the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The workshop will see 15 ICCA members and clients in the Gold Coast for business sessions.

ICCA Asia Pacific regional director Ahmad Hamid said the Gold Coast bid was creative and that emphasis was placed on the city's participation, he said.

Bennelong back on

THE Sydney Opera House has announced that it will start a new two stage tender process for its Bennelong restaurant starting in late July.

This follows the demise of the proposed Bennelong by Stokehouse restaurant, which was due to open in May but did not proceed following the destruction of the Van Haandel family's flagship restaurant in St Kilda in January (**BEN** 12 Mar).

The new tender would begin with an expressions of interest process with a new long term operator expected to be in place by the first half of 2015, the Opera House said.

It said in the interim it had examined all options for the site including improvements to the venue and the timing and structure of the tender process.

Aria Catering would run Bennelong as a functions venue while the tender process was being conducted, it said.

Sydney Opera House Trust chairman John Symond said the operator needed to have a strong track record and a concept that embraced Bennelong's "unique qualities and magnificent setting."

The Opera House said there had been a strong response for Expressions of Interest for the tender of the Lower Concourse Bar and Restaurant and shortlisted applicants would now be invited to continue to stage two, with a new operator before the summer season this year.



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Hunter targets biz events



A NEW \$270,000 marketing campaign to attract major conferences and meetings to boost mid-week occupancy and position the Hunter region as 'Altogether Perfect' for business tourism has been announced.

Visitor Economy Hunter chairman Will Creedon said the campaign was the product of collaboration between Destination NSW and regional partners Destination Port Stephens, Newcastle Convention Bureau and the Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association and was the first dedicated business tourism campaign the region had seen in several years.

It would involve collaborative marketing and cross promotion between different markets and areas as well as pre and post touring opportunities, campaign material said.

The joint marketing group will attend trade fairs, sales missions and host visits by conference organisers and media.

Creedon said the industry had invested \$135,000 and Destination NSW had matched it.

The campaign also received funding from the Regional Visitor Economy Fund from the NSW government.

"Our region has the capacity to service niche markets within specific destinations such as the association market into Newcastle, the corporate market into the Hunter Valley and the incentive market into Port Stephens."

Creedon said a comprehensive calendar of business events had been included in the marketing strategy.

Lassig for Daydream

GRACE Lassig is the new director of sales at Daydream Island Resort and Spa.

Lassig comes to Daydream Island from the Novotel Cairns Oasis Resort and has more than 10 years' experience in sales and business development roles within the hospitality industry in Australia and New Zealand.

Karen Maher remains as Daydream's business development manager for the MICE market.

PTC buys UGT

PLATINUM Travel Corporation (PTC) has bought conference and events company Unique Group Travel (UGT).

The new business would trade under the name of Platinum Events Solutions and would effectively double the presence that each business had in the conference and events market, PTC said.

PTC managing director Greg McCarthy said the conference and events division within PTC was a rapidly growing part of its business and the acquisition of UGT was a perfect fit.

Headed by UGT general manager Sharon Levingston, Craig Walter, owner of UGT with Robyn Walter, would work closely alongside Greg and Rachel McCarthy as sales director, PTC said.

Good for NT business

WITH the Northern Territory Government committed to delivering \$2.2b in visitor expenditure by 2020, Darwin's newest hotel, the \$150m élan Soho Suites, is nearing completion and will officially open next month.

Tourism Minister Matt Conlan said the hotel in the CBD was one of a number of new properties opening this year which would help ease Darwin's hotel accommodation shortage.

The 4.5 star élan Soho Suites hotel would greatly enhance the range of quality accommodation available in Darwin, he said.

"It's no secret that accommodation for the holiday market in the Top End has been tight, but this hotel will help boost capacity which in turn will help bring more tourists to the Territory.

"The 301 room hotel will offer one and two bedroom apartments.

"At least a quarter of the rooms will be quarantined for the holiday, leisure and business events market – which is great news."

By the end of this year, more than 700 new hotel rooms and serviced apartments are expected to be completed.

These include the élan Soho Suites, 238 rooms at Lee Point Village and 101 rooms at Argus on Shepherd.

For more, [CLICK HERE](#).



NOW you can conference and afterwards have a hospital procedure such as a face-lift or health check - if the event is held in Bali.

It's even more convenient if your hotel is within the enclave of Nusa Dua, home to the Bali Golf and Country Club and the Nusa Dua Convention Centre, because this is also where the 5-star BIMC Hospital is within walking distance.

Right now they have a hospital corporate promotion for a doctor consultation at only Rp.60,000 with a room charge at Rp.950,000 per night, as well as offering local prices for radiology and medications.

They also offer an affordable surgery package.

Valid until 31 Dec, payment by cash or credit card and not valid for insurance holders - that's what the blurb says.

KLCC wows MEA



WHEN MEA held its annual National Conference 2014 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) in May, it staged a 'truly Malaysian experience' for the more than 500 industry professionals attending.

As part of the Centre's Culinary campaign, a site inspection included a showcase of the facilities and the chance to learn skills such as cooking a local dish.

The delegates were treated to an interactive Cultural Showcase, which had everyone trying their hand at such things as batik painting, basket pewter smithing, henna painting, and the gamelan (traditional Malay orchestra).

For the grand finale, the award-winning culinary team served a multicultural seven course banquet including fusion dishes.

National Convention Centre Canberra director of sales and marketing Jenifer Dwyer Slee said Malaysia had delivered an important message to the Australian MICE market: that it was easy with great value for money to do business in KL.

CONTACT US:

Publisher Editor Contributor/Coordinator
Bruce Piper Jill Varley Alex Walls

For advertising enquiries email Sean Harrigan & Katrina Ford:
advertising@businesseventsnews.com.au

P: 1300 799 220 F: 1300 799 221

PO Box 1010 Epping, NSW, 1710

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