



## Autumnal chocolatix

THE curse of everyone on a diet anywhere, Easter is nigh.



Hotels are getting in on the fun, with the likes of the Four Seasons Hotel Sydney and its Haigh's Chocolates display which will appear in the lobby from 17 Apr, created by the chocolatiers - which must surely top the 'Jobs You Shouldn't Really Have to be Paid For' awards.

The display will feature chocolate bilbys, an endangered Australian species, rather than rabbits, although both are good in terms of chocolate-to-ear ratio.



The Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore's culinary team has created new confectionery for sale at The Line Shop from 31 Mar to 20 Apr, including the Fashion Collection of six Easter eggs dressed in staff uniforms, including that of the bellman, chef and housekeeping.

Closer to home, Crown Promenade is offering an Easter Escape package, with a Lindt chocolate pack to share from \$285 per night - 'tis the chocolatey season! *Alex (filling in for Jill while she's away)*

## Port Stephens incentives



PORT Stephens is targeting the incentives market, following a tourism trade mission to Indonesia in February by Destination Port Stephens and Moonshadow Cruises, in conjunction with Tourism Australia.

This mission had revealed a "pent up demand" for new incentive destinations, Destination Port Stephens marketing manager Tars Bylhouwer said (pictured left).

This involved a lot of interest in running conferences in Australia and Port Stephens' activities for company incentives but a lack of understanding of the airport as a hub for flying on to other destinations.

Now that companies were aware of transport options, incentives business could flow into Port Stephens, Destination Port Stephens said.

"This lucrative market is one we are targeting at Port Stephens, with tourism bodies in Newcastle and the Hunter Valley joining our initiatives in the high-yield MICE

arena," Bylhouwer said.

Destination Port Stephens deputy chair David Nye said the region would be looking at ways DPS could work with regional partners to offer a diverse product for the meetings and incentives market.

This comes as Virgin Australia has begun listing Port Stephens as Newcastle-Port Stephens on its website and booking engine.

This follows Jetstar's lead, listing the region as the same last year for its direct flights from Melbourne, Brisbane and the Gold Coast.

Bylhouwer said this reflected confidence by the airlines in Port Stephens' interstate appeal.

"This is an increasingly popular itinerary for Indonesians and visitors from other countries and one we are promoting heavily, with Virgin's move to co-list the airport as Newcastle-Port Stephens providing just the boost we need."

The airport will see an \$11.1m terminal expansion this year as well as two hotels built next to it.

## Starwood rewards

MEETINGS and events planners can choose their own rewards when they book a meeting at more than 200 Starwood hotels across the Asia Pacific.

Called 'Book a Group and Choose Your Rewards' the offer means for every 10 room nights booked, meetings and events planners can get a bonus of 1,000 Starpoints, as well as choosing two of five perks of \$5 off master-billed rooms, complimentary meeting room internet, double Starpoints, double complimentary room allocation and double complimentary room upgrade allocation.

Bookings need to be made by 30 Jun and held by 30 Sep.

Members of the Starwood Preferred Planners programme earn one Starpoint for every US\$3 of group revenue on each meeting or event booked.

## Jetstar Agent Hub

JETSTAR has launched a new portal for travel agents, the Jetstar Agent Hub.

The streamlined booking and service website was designed in consultation with travel agents, giving easier access to flights and products for clients, Jetstar said.

It will replace the Tradesite and is currently available in English to agents across Jetstar's regional network, with additional languages in the next few months - you can access it at [www.agenthub.jetstar.com](http://www.agenthub.jetstar.com).

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## Take us out to the game

**MAJOR** League baseball teams the LA Dodgers and the Arizona Diamondbacks are highlighting Sydney's events and incentives activities, with players doing the Bridge Climb, visiting Bondi Beach and this weekend, facing off in the MLB Opening Series, secured by Destination NSW.

The Dodgers played the Australian All Stars yesterday, winning 4-2 in a bases-loaded scoop.

Minister for Tourism and Major Events George Souris said the games had been secured exclusively for Sydney by the NSW Government in partnership with Moore Sports and the Sydney Cricket Ground trust, with



80,000 fans watching the games live and at least 150m watching worldwide on television.

Tickets can be purchased from [www.ticketek.com](http://www.ticketek.com).

### DMCs partner up

**PACIFIC** World and **ACCESS** Destination Services have partnered up to offer access to more than 80 destinations globally.

The destination management and event production companies' partnership means clients can join both companies in planning events virtually, drawing on a combined 54 offices in 27 countries and 500 staff.

The companies will maintain separate brands but will coordinate marketing development.

**ACCESS** Destination Services ceo Chris Lee said the company had been searching for global partners and **Pacific** World was an established DMC with a strong global presence.

**Pacific** World global managing director Herve Joseph-Antoine said **ACCESS** was known for innovation, financial strength and compliance with business ethics.

### Laissez-faire on EQ

**LAISSEZ-FAIRE** Catering will join the Entertainment Quarter Catering Panel in one of three spots.

The Quarter chose Gold Licence accredited catering companies as part of its panel for bespoke venues, *Laissez-faire* said, and the number of spots had been reduced from five to three this year.

*Laissez-faire's* win followed a formal submission and an "extensive product tasting phase" which must have been torture for all involved.

General manager Sara Flaksbard said the win was a testament to the company's burgeoning industry profile.

### Aussie market for NZ

**CONVENTIONS & Incentives** New Zealand (CINZ) hosted a cocktail function this week together with Tourism New Zealand.

The function was part of a combined push to promote the country as a destination for business events and incentive travel, CINZ said.



It was also the last Australian function the ceo Alan Trotter will preside over (**pictured** left with Rotorua Events & Venues' Brett Jeffery, IHG NZ's James Pringle, TNZ's Bjoern Spreitzer and Jamie Fitzgerald), who will retire at the end of next month.

Trotter said the Australian market was, and always would be, the most important source market for conventions and incentives of any country for New Zealand.

The function featured Kiwi adventurer Jamie Fitzgerald, of the television series *First Crossings*.

### IT&CM knowledge

**INCENTIVE** Travel & Conventions, Meetings (IT&CM) China's Corporate Travel Forum will feature presentations from the Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE), Meeting Professionals International (MPI) and Society of Incentive & Travel Executives (Site), with content tailored to address the challenges facing Chinese corporate travel managers or those with interests in China.

Topics include 'Localising Global Travel Policies for China'.

ACTE Asia regional director Benson Tang said attendees could meet senior executives who would share their experience on how to communicate and implement global travel policy in the country.

It will be held on 17 Apr.

### Centium for Meetings

**CONVENTIONS & Incentives** New Zealand (CINZ) has signed a three year partnership deal with Centium Software, making it the technology partner of **MEETINGS**, held from 18 to 19 Jun.

**MEETINGS** event manager Jeanette Stanton said **EventsPro** had driven the appointment program well.

**Travel Daily** is Australia's leading travel trade publisher, with a portfolio of publications also including **Business Events News**, **Cruise Weekly**, **TD Cruise Update** and **Pharmacy Daily**. Two exciting opportunities have arisen to join our fun friendly team based in Epping, NSW.

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## Phillip Island expands



**THE** Victorian Government has confirmed it will inject \$1.2m into two new attractions for Phillip Island, from its \$1b Regional Growth Fund.

The funding would support the overall \$4.24m 'Nobbies and Summerland Tourism Expansion project', Minister for Tourism and Major Events Louise Asher said.

The attractions are a World Wide Fund for Nature multimedia interpretative display and a new Eco Boat Tour in Cowes, run by Wildlife Coast Cruises, she said.

"These additional tourist attractions will add value to the local economy, with a further 25,000 visitors each year

expected to book an Eco Boat Tour, which will include trained educational guides."

The new attractions increased the region's nature-based experiences, she said.

This funding enhanced a combined \$3m contributed by Wildlife Coast Cruises and Phillip Island Nature Parks, the Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) said.

The island relied heavily on the tourism industry with \$619m contributed to the economy, VTIC said.

### New gm for Centara

**CENTARA** Koh Chang Tropicana Resort has a new general manager in Pius Luechinger.

Luechinger has 20 years' experience with hotels in Thailand, Vietnam and South Korea and most recently, was the general manager of Sareeraya Villas & Suites in Koh Samui.

The appointment was announced by Centara ceo Thirayuth Chirathivat.

### AlliedPRA MICE apt

**DESTINATION** Management Company AlliedPRA Inc has appointed Margrete Chadwick to the global sales team.

Chadwick has held MICE sales positions with resorts and Convention and Visitors Bureaus, with over 20 years' experience in sales and marketing.

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## No launch butterflies

**THE** media preview performance of Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour's Madama Butterfly was a knock out affair with only a few rehearsal hiccups.

The purpose-built 1276 sqm stage is impressive, with movable projection screens and a hillock from which Cio-Cio-San, or Madama Butterfly, descends.



The production put its position on the Harbour front to good use, with Cio-Cio-San's rich suitor Yamadori arriving in a launch and fireworks over the sea - the show emphasises modernity, perhaps to counteract the 1950s setting (Butterfly is 15 when she marries, and there are lines about gossiping women) with Butterfly featuring a full body tattoo and taxis driving to the stage to deposit cast members.



But of course the main draw of the show are the singers, and they don't disappoint.

The preview featured lead Hiromi Omura as Madame Butterfly, whose clear and powerful voice is impressive, and Georgy Vasiliev as Pinkerton is mesmerising; the duet in particular is beautiful and the tumult of Butterfly's discovery, with Sharpless' voice joining those of the two lovers, moving.

Being a preview, things were still a bit rough and ready, with a repeat of one section of music, crew noticeably running across the stage and a few small technical glitches, but these minor incidences are generally washed away by Puccini's work.

The surrounding area of the Botanical Gardens are set up with Japanese-themed bars and dining options, which are very cute.

It runs until 13 Apr, with tickets on sale from [www.opera.org.au](http://www.opera.org.au).



**FROM** the vaults comes the wisdom of the ages - popular internet site *Reddit* ([www.reddit.com](http://www.reddit.com)) had a thread back in June asking hotel workers what the craziest, weirdest thing discovered in a guest room had been.

Answers included bed and breakfast owner, 'Shane McDeath', who said he'd found a worn notebook titled 'Why I Love Salad', and filled with some 60 pages on just why the leafy meal was amazing, with the "occasional suggestion that the author believed salad to be alive in some sense."

Another commenter, 'BurgleBoy', said a guest had complained that his microwave didn't work; upon arrival at the room, it turned out the guest had locked a plate of food in the safe.

'Saalsa\_shark' said a guest had informed the hotel that a mother duck had died, and so she was looking after the ducklings herself, which were found in the bathroom by hotel staff.

A *BEN* colleague met US chat show host Jerry Springer in the foyer of Planet Hollywood.

## ACTE in action

**THE** Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE) networking reception saw corporate travel and meetings events attendees come out in force last week.

The Sydney reception hosted 167 attendees representing buyers, managers, suppliers, advisors and media, networking to their hearts' content at Doltone House Hyde Park.



Regional director Andrew Kelly (**pictured** left) said ACTE in the ANZ region was on fire.

"Last year we saw over 1100 attendees to our ACTE events, a tripling of ACTE Membership, and robust industry endorsement from some 45 Sponsoring Partners.

The next reception will be held in Auckland on 08 Apr.