



To the luxe

SUNDAY – yes, as in yesterday – found **BEN** at the International Media Market Place, a meeting between media and the travel industry at an exhibition-style event in Crystal Palace.



More than 60 individual companies and 42 exhibitor companies gathered at the event, a precursor to Luxperience, which opened today.

News of who's doing what to which property included SilverNeedle Group's property in Lao, Kiridara Luang Prabang.

Masterchef's Gary Mehigan chose the resort as a base to film his new TV series, 'Far Flung.'

Lips were sealed about the release date, although I did learn Mehigan was coy about actually saying the name of Mount Phou Si on camera; suffice to say that when spoken, it sounds like the name a child would call a cat!

MEANWHILE I caught up with Brad Edman last week, gm of the newly launched Courtyard Marriott Bali Seminyak.

Edman said what would attract conferences on a budget to the resort was its price point.

"It's not just the accommodation and room hire that is competitive, we price our food and beverage not on the resorts around us but against the local bars and cafés, so it means there are real savings to be made."

See you at Luxperience. *Jill*

Vanuatu MICE room woe

THE Vanuatu Tourism Office has admitted a new resort will be needed for the country's capital city to handle an expected surge from the MICE market.

A convention centre is under construction in Port Vila (**pictured**) and is slated to open in 2016, by which time VTO gm Linda Kalpoi expected at least one of three possible new hotels would also be developed.

Speaking with **BEN** at the Tok Tok tourism exchange in Port Vila last week, Kalpoi confirmed the convention centre would be

capable of holding events for around 1,000 delegates, but it was likely to put strain on existing hoteliers in the city.

The tourism boss said under the current plan "we would practically need another big resort to come in order for us to meet the demand.

"When a convention is being held we would still have our normal daily guests coming in, so we would require additional beds to distribute delegates and visitors.

"But people coming for a convention want to stay together - we need another big resort."

Quizzed by **BEN** about the likelihood of new large scale

hotels/resorts in Port Vila, Kalpoi said three sites had already been allocated for future development.

"Three big resorts have been earmarked, but they are still in negotiation.

"Talks are ongoing for potential projects," she said, but the clear aspiration for the country is to have one up and running before the multi-purpose facility begins welcoming guests.

Construction of the National Convention Centre began in Oct last year, directly next door to Vanuatu's Parliament House.



VTO hesitant to push convention centre

WITH an actual launch date and confirmed capacity still unknown, the Vanuatu tourism bureau is reluctant at this stage to actively pursue business for the nation's new convention centre.

Vanuatu Tourism Office general manager Linda Kalpoi said the National Convention Centre would be used to entice large groups from Australia, NZ and further afield, including Europe which had previously held "huge conferences" in Vanuatu.

"But because of the uncertainty of us knowing the dates and what the facility it going to be like, we have not really promoted the new convention centre.

"As soon as we begin having meetings with the developers next year and gain greater certainty on timelines for delivery, the VTO will start to drive business for the international convention centre."

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crumbs!

SHOULD your next convention involve famous speakers or celebrities, keep a close eye on any be-costumed folk wandering around the show floor - turns out, the latest celebrity trend to avoid detection at big conventions or exhibitions is to dress up in a costume (with a mask, obviously).

Lord of the Rings director Peter Jackson dressed up as an evil jester at San Diego Comic-Con in late July with no one recognising him, even though people asked the jester to pose for photos, *stuff.co.nz* reported.

Harry Potter star Daniel Radcliffe also had the same idea, apparently, dressing up at the same convention as Spider Man and walking around the crowds fancy-free, the *Independent* reported.

They follow the example of Breaking Bad actor Bryan Cranston, who, in an act of metaphysical awesome, donned a Walter White mask and adopted a high pitched voice to wander around the 2013 Comic Con taking photos with unsuspecting fans, the publication reported.



The Christmas Venue Guide

BUSINESS Events News is launching a Christmas Events guide and this is your chance to get in on the fun.

The events guide will promote venues perfect for holding Christmas events and festivities, whether it's a decorous cocktail party to farewell the year or a karaoke sing-off of 'Jingle Bells'.

To highlight your venue's unique features to the business events industry and **BEN's** readers and social media channels, email advertising@businessesnews.com.au.

Girls' Guide to Dubai



DUBAI Tourism has launched the 'Girls' Guide to Dubai' (pictured), a publication to meet what it says is growing interest in female groups visiting the emirate.

Published by *Luxury Travel Magazine*, the publication would be included in the magazine's January edition but was available free to buyers at Luxperience from today, Dubai Tourism said.

Dubai Tourism Australia and New Zealand office director Julie King said this was the first in a series aiming to show Dubai's diversity, highlight its activities and dispel "misconceptions".

These included that it was associated with luxury, shopping and the desert, and was a one time destination with a two to three night stay, whereas the Guide had activities requiring a four day stay, King said.

The Girls' Guide included travel tips, festivals and events, the organisation said.

Feedback from partners and dialogue with consumers had indicated growth, King said.

Accor partners up

ACCOR is again a special distinguished partner of the Sydney Festival 2015, held from 08 to 26 Jan, continuing its commitment to major events in NSW, the company said.

Special rates are on offer, including one night's accommodation in the Heritage Queen room of the Harbour Rocks Hotel from \$224 per person - **CLICK HERE** for more.

Vanuatu ripe for incentives

AN OVERNIGHT success story it is not, but Vanuatu is building its reputation as a contender for incentive groups and MICE business, says Air Vanuatu gm for Australia/NZ Malcolm Pryor.

Speaking with **Business Events News** last week in Vanuatu at the Tok Tok travel trade exchange, Pryor said the MICE industry was now providing another stream of revenue Vanuatu "wasn't well placed to serve three years ago."

"We've [Air Vanuatu] had some really niche players come up to us at Tok Tok, saying they think Vanuatu would be really good for the MICE market now."

A relatively new convention centre at the Warwick Le Lagon Resort and other venues that have the capacity for small groups mean Vanuatu is able to accommodate conventions and incentives.

"Once you get a bit of a track record where PCOs are concerned, they almost need a guarantee the product and the arrangements live up to expectations, otherwise they run the risk of losing their client, so they are not the greatest risk takers," Pryor said.

"But we have had a series of incentives now and business meetings, and they have all gone very, very well, and we have some others in the pipeline."

While "fly & flop" holidaymakers will always be the bread and butter segment for Vanuatu, the emergence of large group travel is keenly welcomed.

"Vanuatu is good for incentives particularly as we can offer soft adventure. You can come to Port Vila or you can go to Tanna or to Santo and there are plenty of opportunities to do something quite different."

Brisbane pop up

THE Brisbane Convention Bureau Pop Up event is coming up on 18 Sep at the Brisbane City Hall Auditorium.

The event allows meeting planners and event organisers to meet with more than 60 event operators, including hotels, venues, such as the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, and support services for ideas on planning, Brisbane Marketing said.

CLICK HERE for more.

"The other big advantage that Vanuatu as a destination has in general is that there is just so much in the way of activities to do and it's very accessible."



"If you are staying at one of the major or boutique hotels here, you are only 10 to 15 mins from zipling, jetskiing, scuba diving and you can come back to your hotel and have lunch if you want to."

"There are a lot of destinations in the world where those activities exist but they are a 20km bus ride there and back," Pryor told **BEN**.

Pryor is **pictured** during the Tok Tok Vanuatu 2014 show on Thu.

Fund MCEC expansion

AS PART of Victoria Tourism Week, the Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) is reiterating its call for policy makers to fund the expansion of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) (**BEN** 26 Mar).

VTIC said the Centre was turning away 17% of booking requests due to capacity constraints, which it said cost the state in lost revenue from the business events market.

The MCEC missed out on funding for its expansion in the latest round of Victorian government funding despite allocating \$25.7m over four years to develop Melbourne as a key destination for business events (**BEN** 07 May).

Other recommendations for Tourism Week, which runs from today until Saturday, included committing \$2m annually to grow the medium sized event sector in regional Victoria.



business events news

1st September 2014

TNZ team changes

TOURISM New Zealand (TNZ) today announced changes to its LA and Singapore business events teams.

North America business events manager Steven Dixon has been appointed to South and South East Asia regional manager as of November.

He replaced Mischa Mannix-Opie, whose contract was due to end in October, and who was off to Air New Zealand, TNZ said.

LA trade development manager Jacqui Lloyd would also leave in November but who had not confirmed her next moves, it said.

Recruitment for both roles would start in the next few weeks, it said.

Chateau Elan's Portfolio

AWARD-WINNING luxury resort Chateau Elan at The Vintage in NSW's Hunter Valley, with a strong base of meeting and conference clients, has appointed Sydney-based Tourism Portfolio as its representative in the Australian market.

Gm Joe Spagnolo said many meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions guests returned year after year, and their support was invaluable.

"Working with Tourism Portfolio, I'm confident we will now expand our presence ever further, as meeting and conference guests from across Australia experience our outstanding facilities and exceptional customer service."

Dare to speak

THE opportunity to find an outstanding speaker for your next event, ODE Management is presenting its DARE Speaker Showcases in Sydney on 17 Sep at Doltone House, Jones Bay Wharf and in Melbourne on 19 Sep at Maia.

The events start with a 7am registration and a hot plated breakfast, running through to 10am.

Tickets are \$99 each or a table of 20 is \$899.

The line-up introduces two new speakers: Major Matina Jewell, who wrote 'Caught in the Crossfire' and Kieran Flanagan, described as the female Don Draper in a Mad Men world.

Other speakers with new topics to inspire include Dr Adam Fraser who will talk about GRIT and Dan Gregory, who co-wrote 'Selfish, Scared and Stupid', all MC'd by radio and TV personality James O'Loughlin.

Khiri Travel Sri Lanka

KHIRI Travel has formed a joint venture with DMC Luxe Asia to form Khiri Travel Sri Lanka, part of the Galle Face Hotel Management Group.

Set to launch on 01 Nov, Khiri Travel ceo Willem Niemeijer said a new range of Sri Lanka experiences would be offered, featuring the country's landscapes, temples, colonial heritage buildings and cuisine.

Khiri Travel Sri Lanka would be headed by gm Ruben Derksen, previously gm of Khiri Travel Laos.



FACE : FACE

Linda Gaunt Chief Executive Officer Meetings & Events Australia



Business Events News recently caught up with Linda Gaunt, ceo of Meetings & Events Australia (MEA), who has held this role for the past nine years, overseeing change in MEA and the industry. Prior to this, Gaunt was deputy ceo and director of education and training at the Australian Institute of Management.

Does the events management sector need more education opportunities/ offerings or is the market saturated?

I believe the market could be saturated with what I call 'off the shelf' courses. However, there is a huge need for industry specific education that combines key learning delivered by industry experts who have worked within the industry and understand the requirements.

Why should industry professionals choose a MEA qualification over an international offering?

Industry professionals should choose the course they believe is best suited to them. MEA's education and training courses are a combination of academic knowledge paired with the knowledge and experiences of current industry professionals. This means our participants are getting the best of both worlds and our courses stack up against if not outperform many others.

What do you think Australian event managers do well currently? What do they need to improve on?

I believe in Australia we have some very talented event managers who are particularly good at all elements of their craft. However, managing events is an all-consuming domain and at times ongoing professional development is not the priority it should be. Continuous improvement is paramount in any industry and in Australia, we do not want to be left behind by gaining one qualification and not pursuing that necessary ongoing professional development to stay on top.

Why does the events industry deserve government funding for education?

The events industry continually skirts on the path of facing a skills shortage. This is not a labour shortage, with lots of ill equipped people wishing to work

in the industry. A financial incentive toward training and education will assist us have more skilled professionals in our industry.

What are some cardinal sins when managing an event?

Hiring people that are not equipped to do the job, compromising on insurance, safety and security, unclear contracts, being thin on the ground when the event goes live, and disorganisation.

What are your top tips for dealing with clients?

Being clear and concise from the onset; providing and receiving transparency; offering superior customer service; not making promises that cannot be kept; being proactive not reactive; being prepared to negotiate; being open and honest.

What makes a great business event?

Knowing who you are trying to reach, knowing your key messages, a good brief, content and venue.

What's the most interesting/weirdest event you've ever managed/attended?

I have been to many events and there is always a story attached to each. Probably my first MEA Conference in 2006 in the Gold Coast. It was an amazing event but at the time I had absolutely no idea what to expect and it totally 'blew me away'.

Who in the world would you most like to have dinner with, alive or dead?

My Dad, there is so much I did not get to say.

How many pairs of shoes do you own? How many do you have with you at any one time?

I own around 160 pair of shoes. I usually have training shoes and flats in the car as well as the shoes I am wearing. It's an addiction, I can think of worse!

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