



Up, and away

JUST five days into the job as gm of the extraordinary Novotel



Hyderabad and Hyderabad International Convention Centre in India, Neil Paterson, who, up until a 'minute' ago was the gm of the Novotel Canberra, now finds himself in a completely different world.

"It was an opportunity that I just couldn't say no to.

"Right now my senses are going into overload - there is so much to take in."

For the record, Hyderabad is the capital city of the Indian state of Telangana in South India and the Novotel is connected to the Hyderabad International Convention Centre, the first of its kind in South East Asia.

Neil said last weekend there was a 1,000 delegate conference and this weekend, 2,500.

"It's just amazing to watch the synergies that make it happen."

A voice crying in the lanyard wilderness has found a champion in ICMS Australasia md Brian Holliday, who responded to this column (*BEN* 03 Aug).

"I thought that you might be interested to know that on Sunday we're hosting an international conference in Canberra on farm animals.

"Rather than provide a traditional name badge and lanyard, we invited the producer of the cattle tags that are affixed to animals' ears to provide them for us.

"The [delegate's] name, country of origin and name of conference are printed on both sides of the tag."

One small step for Brian!
MEANWHILE Friday finds me in Bangkok, bunkered in at Starwood's swish St Regis Bangkok. *Jill*



Starwood's new program

SO AS to gain a greater share of the global B2B market, Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide broke new ground today with the announcement of a customer loyalty and personalisation program targeting meeting and event planners and travel professionals, SPG Pro.

The \$30m SPG Pro marketing campaign, set to debut in October, would offer meeting and travel professionals SPG elite status, upgrades and Starpoints for B2B business booked at any of Starwood's properties, the company said.

Starwood president and ceo Frits van Paasschen said the program, designed to leverage the strength of SPG, continued to shift consumer business to Starwood hotels.

"The work that we have done to make SPG the richest elite program in the industry has

proven that we can create true and lasting loyalty with our most profitable guests.

"With SPG Pro, we are focusing our powerful loyalty lens on B2B to cultivate ever stronger and more personal relationships with our global customers who deliver guests to our hotels."

Beginning today, meeting and travel professionals can immediately register for SPG Pro at www.spg.com/pro.

Registered professionals, as well as SPG members who influenced group, event and corporate travel, would begin earning Starpoints for business booked starting in October, the company said.

Additionally, SPG Pro marked the first time accredited travel agents would have the opportunity to earn Starpoints and elite status with SPG, it said.

To read more, [CLICK HERE](#).

The Christmas Venue Guide is HERE!

BUSINESS Events News' Christmas Venue Guide has launched, in all its festive glory.

To check out venues perfect for hosting Christmas functions, head to **page three**.

And to get in on the fun, highlighting your venue's unique features to the business events industry and *BEN's* readers and social media channels, email advertising@businessesnews.com.au.

MCEC's stellar month

THE Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has said August was its most successful month in history.

The Centre said it hosted more than 100 events, with more than 87,600 delegates, which saw almost \$10.5m in operating revenue and generated more than \$35m in economic benefit for Victoria.

Its previous highest revenue month was August last year, which sat at \$8.5m.

The Centre said it had posted its new revenue record while turning away 19.5% of new business due to a lack of available space.

Minister for Tourism and Major Events Louise Asher said the Centre's facilities, reputation and success in hosting world class business events continued to attract and secure more of them for the state.

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust chairman Bob Annells said with revenues and customer satisfaction surveys at an "all-time high", the business was in great shape.

MCEC ceo Peter King said forward bookings and business outlook remained "incredibly healthy" for the foreseeable future.

Sell TNQ 2014

Apply now to join the Business Events Cairns & Great Barrier Reef annual famil.

Sell TNQ provides an exclusive opportunity for qualified event and incentive planners to visit the Cairns & Great Barrier Reef region and experience first-hand our ability to host successful business events.

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GENerating Change

Director of Conference Focus, Max Turpin is sharing his insights on a range of topics with a regular column in **BEN**.

Topics will include new generation events and making events effective and valuable.



Events Need Innovation Part 3

THIS is the final article in a three-part series where I've shared my thoughts on why it's hard to change the meetings industry and why I feel so many events are stale and lack innovation. To read Part 1, [CLICK HERE](#) and for Part 2, [CLICK HERE](#).

Events are organised by management from the inside out. Many executives, department heads, product managers and 'event owners' in general organise events from the inside out. They tend to design events to their liking and develop all the content with their own interests in mind. The problem with this approach is that attendees view and experience events from the outside in. They turn up hoping for a unique event experience, designed and created for them, and containing content that will address their current issues. However, too often they simply get last year's event dressed up in new colours, given a different name and content that doesn't address their needs.

Many corporate executives view events as a cost, not an investment. That's because very few event planners measure the success of their events and report on ROO/ROI. If this is the thinking of most senior executives, they would be hardly willing to invest additional time or resources into an area of business they consider to be a cost centre.

Event management courses don't teach innovation. Since the event planner's primary role is to plan and execute not create and innovate, the teaching and education provided by event management courses is focused

on project management, logistics and hospitality. Whilst they may introduce students to new event technologies, this is certainly not a focus, nor is innovation. Which brings me finally to this....

So whose job is it to innovate?

Because the fear of change is built into all of us, since many people are risk averse and there's security in the past and what's been done before; because the role of event planner is not regarded a skill; because the responsibility of most event planners is to plan and execute, not create; because everyone's time poor and it's easier to copy than design something new; because many events are organised from the inside out; since many senior executives view events as a cost, not an investment and there's no-one out there teaching event innovation...whose job is it to innovate? Surely events won't stay the same for another 30 years? Don't tell me my children, like McBride, won't need to jump into their DeLorean and travel 'Back to the Future' to attend the events I'm currently attending....they'll simply be able to walk down the road to do so!

If you'd like to learn more about how to make your events fresh, innovative and effective, please contact Max

Turpin at Conference Focus on 02 9700 7740 or visit the website at conferencefocus.com.au.



Toasting the Joost with the most



LAST night the pioneering creator of the Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort Joost Heymeijer was farewelled at a function at Sydney's Botanic Gardens.

Heymeijer, who is moving to Dubai to become senior vice president inflight catering with Emirates, has been involved with Wolgan since its inception almost nine years ago.

After developing the property, he has been its general manager since it opened five years ago, and told **BEN** he is "unbelievably proud" of Wolgan, which had shown that it was possible to combine luxury with sustainability.

He is **pictured** above at last night's event with Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia general manager Joyce DiMascio.

W Brisbane to debut

STARWOOD Hotels and Resorts has signed an agreement with Shayher Leisure Holdings Pty Ltd to build the W Brisbane, in a move that brings the brand back to the Asia Pacific region.

Due to open in early 2018 as part of a \$1b mixed-use development, the hotel would have more than 960 sqm of meeting and event space, including a ballroom, three junior ballrooms and a meeting room, Starwood said.

The 305 room hotel would sit in one tower of the three tower development, which was a joint venture between Shayher and the Pau Jar Group, Starwood said.

It was part of a pipeline of 15 W Hotels set to open in the Asia Pacific region by 2019, with Beijing, KL and Mumbai slated to see hotels in the next four years, the company said.

Brisbane was emerging as a mature and progressive city and Starwood said it felt the brand's passion for cutting edge design, fashion and music was well-suited to the city.



FURTHER to the Canadian Tourism Commission challenging Tourism Australia to take part in the ALS ice bucket challenge (**BEN** 29 Aug), the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (Management) Ltd management team got in on the icy donation drive currently sweeping social media.

Md Monica Lee-Müller, deputy md Bill DiCarlo and other senior managers (**pictured**) took the ALS ice bucket challenge on 29 Aug, the Centre said, having been nominated by theme park Ocean Park Hong Kong.

Cameras attached to the buckets give a dunking perspective of the challenge.

The Centre said it had "mobilised" all staff to make donations to the Hong Kong Neuro-Muscular Disease Association.

You can watch the team taking the challenge on the roof of the Centre by [CLICKING HERE](#).

BCEC onwards and up

THE Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre (BCEC) says it has secured 25 new conferences in the first two months of the financial year, July and August.

This follows its announcement that it would host 11 conferences in August, worth \$21m (**BEN** 11 Aug); the Centre said it had won 135 conferences in 14 months.

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Christmas Venue Guide

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Business Events News guide to 2014/15 Christmas venues is the place to showcase!
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