



New Stretch marquee

STRETCH Marquees & Fabric Structures has expanded its range with the addition of a new inflatable marquee.

The eye-catching "Axion Flower" (pictured) is available in three sizes, and uses a patented system of high-pressure pneumatic tubes tensioned via Stretch's Bedouinflex PU fabric.

The Axion Flower is certified for use in winds of up to 100km/h and the design allows for retraction of the centre pole to decrease the overall height if required in blustery conditions.

For more info call 02 9907 6488.



Echo to become Star

ECHO Entertainment has announced plans to become The Star Entertainment Group, with shareholders to be asked to approve the change which would lead to a single identity spanning its properties in Sydney, the Gold Coast and Brisbane.

Today's issue of BEN

Business Events News today has three pages of news.

APT business events offering



THE APT Group is proactively targeting the business events sector, with the launch of new offers building on its already strong Groups travel business across the APT, Captain's Choice, Travelmarvel & Botanica brands.

APT Group Channel Strategy Manager, Damian Borg, said the new MICE offering includes a range of flexible options to suit the requirements of business events buyers, from group allocations through to part and full charters.

"Our MICE partners will be spoilt for choice with the breadth that our combined brands have to offer," he said, with products ranging from private jet journeys to exotic locations, luxury river cruising in Europe, Asia or the USA with tailored sightseeing and event schedules, small ship ocean cruising, rail journeys or even outback adventures in the Kimberley.

There are also specialist gardening and gourmet itineraries

operated by Botanica World Discoveries, while the group's fleet of three small ships, with a maximum capacity of 114, are perfectly sized to cater for a unique incentive or meeting.

The new MICE proposition offers group bookers the ability to hold an allocation of up to 20 cabins across all cruises as well as an FOC policy after ten cruise passengers are booked.

For 20 cabins or more preferred part charter pricing is available with tailored and exclusive activities, while full charters offer total exclusivity with the cruise or tour tailored with special events and highlights designed to reflect the needs of the organisation.

The new MICE offering will be headed up by Carol Henderson, APT's Groups and Charter sales Manager, while APT will also make available special "self fam" rates to event buyers, along with a MICE familiarisation program.

To register interest in APT's MICE offerings call 1800 655 440.

Carlson Rezidor's 'Experience Meetings'

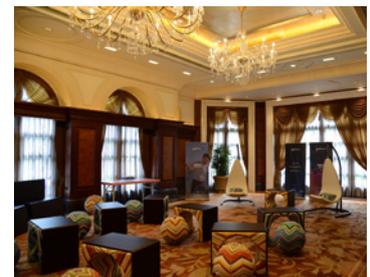
CARLSON Rezidor Hotel Group has launched the Asia-Pacific roll-out of the "Experience Meetings" program operated under its Radisson Blu brand.

Events took place last week in Shanghai, with Bangkok and New Delhi featuring this week.

The Experience Meetings concept includes a Brain Box break-out room (see Shanghai's pictured below), delectable Brain Food and free internet for delegates, with Sandy Russell, the group's vice president of commercial operations Asia Pacific saying "we all want more productive meetings. Experience Meetings provides all the elements that contribute to seamless, successful meetings in a creative and intellectually stimulating environment".

The concept also offers meeting planners environmentally sustainable options as well as enhanced rewards under the Club Carlson for Planners program.

There are 45 Radisson Blu hotels in operation in the Asia-Pacific region including in Sydney, with another 34 under development.



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business events news

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IHG ACT showcase



NATIONAL
CONVENTION
CENTRE Canberra

INTERCONTINENTAL Hotels Group recently hosted key industry partners for a whirlwind 36 hours in Canberra, highlighting its “one stop solution” for PCOs planning events in the national capital.

IHG manages the National Convention Centre, Crowne Plaza Canberra and Parliament House Catering by IHG, with the family focusing on IHG Head Chef Nikhil Jains’ “paddock to plate” menu concept which has been developed to provide organisers with a unique Canberra food and wine experience.

“Organisers like to know that their conference is contributing to our region by working with local providers and wine makers,” said NCC manager Stephen Wood.

IHG also has a partnership with OzHarvest under which food is rescued and provided to more than 50 local charities.

More info 02 6276 5200.

Argentina on show

TWELVE Argentine destination management companies will participate, with meetings and events scheduled this week in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane involving Australian incentive operators & wholesalers.

Air NZ, which will launch Buenos Aires flights in Dec, is behind the “Empanadas and Tango” events, in partnership with the Embassy of the Argentine Republic and the Argentina National Institute of Tourism.

The Melbourne and Sydney events are both full, but there are still limited spaces available in Brisbane on Thu this week - email kristin.hellmrich@walshegroup.com

HOYTS winner

CONGRATULATIONS to Katie Boone from MCI Australia, who was the lucky winner of two HOYTS movie passes in last Thu’s **BEN** competition.

Free waterpark access

GUESTS staying at Dubai’s Jumeirah Zabeel Saray hotel and resort can now receive unlimited access to the Wild Wadi Waterpark, with a complimentary shuttle service on offer.

The 30-ride water park is located in front of the iconic Burj Al Arab “seven star” hotel.

Murray events plan

MURRAY Regional Tourism has launched an events strategy, with Victorian minister for regional development, Jaala Pulford formally announcing the program in Swan Hill last week.

Currently the region hosts more than 550 events annually, attracting around 440,000 visitors which makes up 9% of the area’s total yearly visitation.

“The Murray Region Events Strategy will ensure events in the region are better managed to maximise their growth potential,” Pulford said.

Murray Regional Tourism (MRT) chair Wendy Greiner said the strategy had been commissioned to boost arrivals and jobs and increase yield in off-peak times.

“By employing the strategy recommendations, MRT will identify and establish standardised practices to grow and improve the event sector.”

Under the program an event ranking system will classify events into three tiers, rank existing events such as the Deni Ute Muster, Henty Machinery Filed Days, Riverboats Music Festival and the Mildura Country Music Festival according to the tiering system, develop an evaluation criteria in relation to potential funding for regional events, and identify future event opportunities.

See visitthemurray.com.au.

Emirates, MCI sign MICE pact



EMIRATES has announced a new global alliance with MCI, with the aim of helping the Dubai-based airline build a “strong MICE commercial brand in the meetings industry”.

The strategic partnership will see Emirates become the official airline of MCI’s “large and international events,” and MCI will in turn be the airline’s preferred Professional Conference Organiser.

“The MICE segment is rapidly growing and we are always looking to connect our customers to what matters to them,” said Emirates chief commercial officer, Thierry Antinori.

“Our partnership with MCI will allow us to work even more effectively on the complex requirements of the meetings industry, making corporate travel more convenient and affordable for our customers,” he said.

The two year agreement will help delegates from across the

globe to connect with “one-stop connectivity between continents,” according to MCI Founder & Chairman, Roger Tondeur, who’s **pictured** above sealing the deal with Antinori at the Emirates Group headquarters.

Tondeur said the partnership will result in greater convenience for clients.

“We are responsible for over 4,500 events annually and having Emirates as our official airline partner will streamline travel arrangements for delegates to and from their meetings,” he said.

New Christchurch-China flights

THE launch of non-stop China Southern Airlines flights between Christchurch and Guangzhou is being cited as a “significant game-changer” for tourism in New Zealand’s South Island.

From Dec this year the carrier will operate three weekly non-stop flights on the route, with Chinese arrivals expected to increase by 20,000 annually.

Christchurch & Canterbury Tourism (CCT) ceo Tim Hunter said the services were the culmination of five years work by Christchurch Airport and South Island regional tourism organisations and tourism operators promoting the region in China.

CCT has produced a dedicated Chinese language visitor guide, and this year partnered with the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology on the Roadside Food Project, working with cafes across the region to develop new menus suited to Asian visitors.

Mantra Batty support

MANTRA Group has announced a new charitable partnership with Australian of the Year Rosie Batty, in support of the Luke Batty Foundation.

The relationship was formed after a presentation by Rosie Batty at the Mantra Group company conference last month.

The 4,000 staff across Mantra’s Australian hotel network will undertake fundraising activities for the foundation, with Batty saying “we need corporate Australia to get behind social issues like family violence”.



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Rydges kicks up its heels



RYDGES Melbourne Hotel last week welcomed key clients and industry partners at an event to showcase its newly refurbished conference and event spaces.

Featuring new designer carpet and state of the art AV systems,

the launch event was held together with Shoes of Prey, the venue's current Conference & Events promotional partner.

Flowing French Champagne and cocktails were topped off with gourmet canapes, a fabulous dessert bar and even an interactive shoe workshop.

Rydges Melbourne gm Troy Cuthbertson welcomed guests to the Broadway Room, which had been transformed with the help of Microhire, the styling team from The Three Piece Suit and the newest range from Complete Function Hire.

Attendees took home a swag including Shoes of Prey vouchers, dessert boxes and personalised flowers, while one lucky attendee won the major prize of a "fashion forward getaway" to QT Sydney including flights and \$1,000 in spending money.

Meeting organisers can book a time to view the new spaces by contacting Rydges Melbourne director of sales, conference & events Wendy Blain by email on wendy_blain@rydges.com or by calling (03) 9635 1244.



BIG brother certainly appears to have arrived, in the form of a new gadget being touted as the ideal way to track your baggage.

"Trackimo" is a compact, lightweight device which uses state-of-the-art GPS and cellular technology to pinpoint any object (or person) anywhere in the world.

You can pop the device inside your bag before boarding a flight, with the manufacturer saying it will remove the uncertainty of whether you will be "left needing to buy a whole new wardrobe upon arrival" - because you will be absolutely certain your luggage has ended up in the wrong place.

Previously the realm of spy movies, Trackimo also promises to help users keep track of just about anything - including "children, pets and relatives".

See www.trackimo.com.au.

Business Events News is Australia's newest online publication dedicated to the vibrant meetings, incentives, conferences and events sector.

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Postal address: PO Box 1010, Epping, NSW 1710 Australia

Street address: 4/41 Rawson St, Epping NSW 2121 Australia

P: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760) F: 1300 799 221 (+61 2 8007 6769)

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FACE : FACE

Brendon Biffin

AVPartners, Sofitel Brisbane Central



Business Events News recently caught up with Brendon Biffin, who is the on-site audiovisual manager for Sofitel Brisbane Central's technical partner AVPartners.

What is the first thing you do when you get to the office?
Review the day's schedule.

What analogy best describes being being a partner of an event AV services company and why?
Flight Captain. I steer the plane, but without our highly skilled and dedicated staff, our guests (clients) would not be happy when they arrived at their destination.

Where is the Australian events industry lagging when it comes to AV services?

We are lacking a recognised live events training institution. It is not easy for young people interested in a live events career to break into the industry. There are reputable educators but their training is more studio based rather than live events specific.

What's the worst AV stuff-up you've seen in your time in the industry?

A restaurant opening that had a choreographed release of balloons spelling their name. They got stuck in a tree above the stage.

What one sure-fire tip can you give to event organisers when it comes to making sure the AV services run smoothly on the day?

Provide a detailed and accurate runsheet and make it a priority to stick to it.

Should PowerPoint presentations at conferences and conventions die a painful death?

No. Death by Powerpoint can be painful but content is extremely

powerful and can engage an audience far more than words when used correctly. Powerpoint, Prezi, Keynote - They all have their place.

What's the future of business events apps? What do you expect to see in 10 years' time?
The future of event apps is huge, we are only just scratching the surface. Technology advancements will determine where we take them. Print is dead. Event apps give back to the delegates in terms of relevant and up to minute information, give back to the facilitators in terms of data collection and also give back to the environment.

How many devices do you own (ie iPods, smartphones, tablets etc) and what's your guilty pleasure game (ie Angry Birds, Monkey Island, etc)?

I own four devices. No games for me - Searching for information via YouTube and Google is my thing

What plans do you have in store for Sofitel Brisbane Central?

In the next year we will become the most technologically advanced events venue in Brisbane.

What's the most memorable business event you've ever attended in your time with AVPartners?

The AVPartners Bali Conference in 2012. We have a great team of people within AVPartners and our conferences are awesome. I look forward to them every year.

Editor: Bruce Piper info@businesseventsnews.com.au

Contributors: Guy Dundas, Jasmine O'Donoghue, Matt Lennon, Jenny Piper

Advertising and Marketing: Sean Harrigan and Magda Herdzik advertising@businesseventsnews.com.au

Business Manager: Jenny Piper accounts@businesseventsnews.com.au

