



SOFITEL BEGINS COUNTDOWN

SOFITEL Sydney Darling Harbour has revealed details of its events facilities as the hotel prepares for its opening in less than 10 months.

The \$350 million project under construction at Darling Harbour will be the latest five-star hotel to emerge from Sydney's current hotel boom and is situated alongside the newly opened International Convention Centre (ICC Sydney).

Sofitel says the property will combine French elegance with local culture, housed in a tower designed by Sydney architect Richard Francis-Jones.

It will offer nine flexible meeting spaces, including the Magnifique Ballroom with 5m high ceilings and capacity for up to 450 guests.

Other spaces range from 20m² to 98m² in area and include multi-purpose rooms, meeting spaces and boardrooms.



All of the meeting and conference spaces will be fitted with the latest audio visual technology, the hotel says, and will be served by an in-house conference and events team.

For more exclusive meetings, the hotel will offer its Club Millesime Lounge at the very top of the tower on level 35, with views over Darling Harbour and the city and its own private meeting room.

Other highlights at the property will include the Atelier by Sofitel restaurant, inspired by a French rotisserie and grill, and a champagne bar with views of the city skyline.

A fourth-floor Le Rivage Bar will include an outdoor event space for pool-side networking and cocktails.

Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour will offer 590 guest rooms and is due to open in Nov.

Today's issue of BEN

Business Events News today has three pages of news.

DMS Connect

DMS Destination Marketing Services begins its annual roadshow event next week, visiting Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland.

The DMS Connect showcase is the largest privately run business event roadshow in Australia and New Zealand, offering dozens of DMS partners from around the world including destination management companies specialising in conferences, incentives and high-end leisure groups.

The event will offer prizes from industry sponsors and will be held in Sydney on Mon, Melbourne on Tue and Auckland on Thu.

For details **CLICK HERE**.

Aust Events Symposium launched

THE Australian Event Symposium has been launched under the theme "Events, Technology and the Art of the Unexpected."

The two-day conference will be held at The Events Centre on the Sunshine Coast on 14 and 15 Sep, with speakers including choreographer and artistic director David Atkins, Tourism Australia md John O'Sullivan and the head of Adelaide's Botanic Gardens Restaurant Paul Baker.

The first 20 people to secure a full Symposium package, which includes a ticket to the Australian Event Awards, can register for \$750 plus GST - see eventsymposium.com.au



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Brisbane kitchen a dietary first



BRISBANE Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC) has created a dedicated kitchen to manage special dietary requirements in a first for a major Australian venue.

To be headed by new executive sous chef David Pugh, the new Special Dietary Kitchen will focus on the 20-30% of meals required to conform to medical, cultural or lifestyle needs.

Pugh is best known for his Restaurant Two and is a former Queensland Ambassador Chef, and will be backed by BCEC's consultant nutritionist Kerry Leech.

ICC'S MEDICAL DEBUT

SYDNEY'S new International Convention Centre (ICC Sydney) has welcomed its first major medical conference since its opening late last year.

The Pathology Update 2017 event last week attracted 1,300 leading medical specialists and scientists from around the world, hosted by the Royal College of Pathologists Australasia (RCPA).

College chief executive officer Dr Debra Graves said the ICC Sydney team had been central to the event's planning.

"Creating Pathology Update 2017 was a huge undertaking

that included hard hat tours and visits to test events before ICC Sydney's opening, plus ongoing management and counsel," Dr Graves said.

"Our experience with the committed and innovative ICC Sydney team has been world class from day one."

Delegates dined on a specially created no-added-sugar menu as part of ICC Sydney's "feeding your performance" philosophy.

The Centre said more than 3,000 meals had been created from locally sourced, seasonal ingredients, "combined to drive physical and mental ability".

Prague celebrates events surge

PRAGUE has recorded its best year for conferences in a decade, boosted by a string of events from the pharmacy, IT and telecommunication industries.

The thriving Czech capital hosted 4,426 conferences during 2016, representing a 5.7% increase over the previous year.

The result is the biggest number of events since 2006 and involved a total of 541,412 delegates.

Prague Convention Bureau managing director Roman Muska said there had been a positive trend in delegates staying longer.

"While in 2015, delegates stayed here for 1.99 days on average, in 2016 it was 2.22 days," Muska said.

"We believe the trend, which has a very significant economic impact on Prague, will continue in the following years."

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GROUND'S' BIG SHOW

THE Brisbane Showgrounds and Royal International Convention Centre are heading into a bumper month, with 32 events booked over 31 days in Mar.

More than 45,000 people are expected to visit the Showgrounds during the month, joining events including the Your Friends music festival and the QUT Toga Party, said to be the world's largest.

The biggest event will be the National 4x4 Outdoors Show, Fishing and Boating Expo on 31

Mar, which is expected to attract about 25,000 people.

"We're currently on track to record an increase in events on last year," said Brisbane Showgrounds general manager of venue sales and marketing Jago Coyle.

"In 2016, more than 260 events were staged at the Showgrounds and we're expecting that number to be higher this year," he said.

The Showgrounds recently launched online bookings.

McEvoy quits Fairfax

FORMER Tourism Australia managing director Andrew McEvoy has resigned from his role as head of events at Fairfax Media, *Mumbrella* reports today.

McEvoy was md of the events division, which he had previously said was second only to Reed Exhibitions in Australia's events industry.

Staging in Auckland

SKYCITY Auckland Convention Centre has reappointed Staging Connections as its dedicated in-house AV partner, extending a 15-year relationship.

"We are very proud of our longstanding relationship with SKYCITY Auckland Convention Centre and are enthusiastic about our continued partnership with a number of major events at the venue already booked for 2017-2018," said Staging Connections gm strategic partnerships Tim Morgan.



IF YOU thought there was already a little too much stupid in the world, prepare yourself for the confronting theories of Swedish speaker Professor Mats Alvesson.

At an event in Sydney today Professor Alvesson will put forward his view that a little stupidity in the workplace can be a good thing.

He calls it "the stupidity paradox" and will explain it to guests of the University of Sydney Business School.

"You'll discover what makes a workplace mindless, why being stupid might be a good thing in the short term but sometimes very problematic in the longer term, and how to make your workplace a little less stupid by challenging the thoughtless conformity that most organisations cultivate," Professor Alvesson said.

Director of Conference Focus, Max Turpin is sharing his insights on a range of topics with a regular column in *BEN*. Topics include new generation events and making events effective and valuable.

The signs your meeting is from the past (Part 1)

TO PUT my thoughts on this subject into perspective, they relate in particular to an annual corporate or B2B meeting for up to 150 pax. What are the signs this type of event is from the past and will never reach its maximum potential in terms of engagement, inspiration, impact and ROI?

Registration: To start with, to register, an email is sent to you asking for your personal details and particulars which you are required to provide via return email. No basic online registration site has been set up. Very old school which also opens the door to emails going astray and data entry mistakes being made.

No co-creation of topics or content: No attendee is asked for their thoughts or input on topics or content. Topics and related content for the entire meeting are decided upon and formulated by senior management only. Furthermore, before you arrive at the event, no agenda is distributed – so you turn up having no idea about the focus of the meeting or topics of discussion. And if you do receive an agenda and meeting program...

Same old program: The program (schedule) is identical to last's years meeting...which, in turn, was identical to the

meeting before that. Indeed, the template for the program might go as far back as 2009. Now there's freshness for you!...and something that's bound to generate pre-event inspiration and excitement.

Choice of venue: The choice of venue has no relevance whatsoever to the meeting theme or topics. It was most likely chosen and booked even before a theme for the meeting was decided. And it was most likely chosen based on cost first, location second and nothing else. Of course, the location had to suit senior management! Worst of all, it's the same venue as last year.

‘How long do we have to endure this?’

Venue set-up: The set-up of the main meeting space is the same as it's always been. Bar a new entry holding slide and a different colour, nothing's new. The meeting is being held in a stock-standard, darkened, four-walled room with the chairs and tables set as they always are – in either theatre, classroom or cabaret style. Your attendees enter, see the set-up and sigh. How long do we have to endure this?

More next time in part 2.

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



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