



## Today's issue of BEN

Business Events News today has three pages of news.

## Tasmania bets on new ceo

**BUSINESS** Events Tasmania (BET) has appointed Marnie Craig to be its new chief executive in May, replacing Stuart Nettlefold in the role.

She will arrive from the Housing Industry Association where she is the group's national marketing & comms project manager.

Craig will be charged with driving growth in Tasmania's business events space.



## INT'L EVENTS IN DECLINE: AACB

**THE** number of international business events being lured to Australia is shrinking, according to a report tabled by the Association of Australian Convention Bureaux (AACB).

The latest edition of the AACB's *Forward Calendar of International Business Events* shows the number of international events secured for the future has fallen over the last six months from 396 to 361.

The AACB also has concerns about the number of bids lost.

"A total of 304 international business events were lost, translating to \$1 billion in delegate expenditure that will now be spent in other countries," said AACB chief executive officer Andrew Hiebl.

"Only a decade ago, Australia was consistently among the top 10 most popular countries to host major international association conventions...In 2016, our ranking dropped to 16th in the world," he added.

Tempering the unfavorable numbers however, was the Australian Government's recent



announcement of a \$12 million Boosting Business Events Bid Fund program (**BEN 21 Mar**), a move the AACB believes will help arrest the slide in successful bids.

"We are confident that the decline in our international positioning can be reversed," Hiebl said.

"There are currently 236 international business events in the pipeline, with potentially half a billion dollars in expenditure to be won".

The industries that have managed to land the most international events since Jan

this year have been healthcare (33%), professional, scientific and technical services (18.3%), and financial and insurance services (6.9%).

Healthcare will also attract the most delegates to Australia with those wins, with 125,927 expected to travel down under to attend events.

The report also outlines the primary reasons Australia loses out on global events, with 30.6% of responders claiming Australia's remote location as the biggest deterrent.

Another adverse factor listed was a lack of key execs (14.5%).

## PCO webinar

**THE** Professional Conference Organisers Association is holding a free webinar tomorrow for members on how planners can take better advantage of new technologies.

AFK founder James Sugrue will touch on virtual reality, mobile gaming, and real-time ratings.

Session runs 12-12:30pm AEST with members to register **HERE**.

Non-members can pay \$25.

## EEAA marks Global Exhibitions Day

**THE** Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia (EEAA) has announced it will be celebrating Global Exhibitions Day 2018 by holding a series of events on 06-07 Jun to help "shine a big light" on the business events sector.

The industry body will be inviting industry members to a Leaders Forum Dinner and its 2018 Annual General Meeting.

The announcement represents a major change for the EEAA which normally holds its conference towards the end of the year.

With the AGM brought forward, the industry group will now hold a standalone gala dinner in the first week of Dec instead.

## MCEC eco buy

**MELBOURNE** Convention and Exhibition Centre has bolstered its green cred by becoming an investor in a wind farm project in Victoria.

The move means the venue can buy renewable energy certificates equivalent to the energy output of its planned 20,000m<sup>2</sup> expansion.

## EARN DOUBLE REWARDS POINTS

At over **2,000 PARTICIPATING ACCORHOTELS PROPERTIES** worldwide\*

VISIT [accorhotels.com/doublerewards](http://accorhotels.com/doublerewards)

\*CONDITIONS APPLY





## ACB POSTS RECORD EVENT WINS

**THE** Adelaide Convention Bureau has revealed 2017 to be the “biggest year ever” in reference to the value of new events secured for the city.

A record \$247 million of business was won during 2017 and means Adelaide will now play host to a number of high profile science conferences over the next two years.

Reflecting on the success of the ACB last year, the organisation’s chief executive Damien Kitto believes the numbers represent a turning point for Adelaide.

“It’s an exciting time to be in a relatively undiscovered destination that seems to be on a lot of planners’ ‘must see’ lists,” Kitto said.



“Adelaide truly came of age (in 2017),” he added.

Some of the major events to be held in Adelaide this year include the 2018 Australian Diabetes Society Annual Scientific Meeting which is expected to attract 2,000 delegates, and the

Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists 50th Scientific Congress bringing in 1,700 attendees.

Last year also saw Adelaide host its largest incentive visit from China and hold its biggest conference - the International Astronautical Congress.

## AVPartners can Hackett

**ANDREW** Hackett has been promoted to managing partner at AVPartners following a stint as business development manager.

Hackett says he will prioritise tech investment and HR in his new position.

**MEANWHILE** AVPartners has secured a major contract win with The Westin Perth following a tender process.

The new business will require the company to lead audiovisual support at the hotel’s new five-star 2,300m<sup>2</sup> meeting space scheduled to open 27 Apr.

## ICC Sydney makes tech charge

**INTERNATIONAL** Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney) has injected a further \$1 million into its technology infrastructure as the venue takes steps to “future-proof” itself against competitors.

The funds have been channelled into acquiring cutting-edge audio visual equipment such as high definition screens, projectors, wireless microphone kits, cameras and processors.

“We take pride in delivering customised, seamless technical solutions for clients... this ensures we can meet the needs of every event type today and into the future,” said ICC Sydney’s chief

executive Geoff Donaghy.

In addition to the recent tech splurge, ICC Sydney has also developed a new AV and Technology guide in a bid to help clients take full advantage of its improved digital capabilities.

**MEANWHILE** ICC Sydney recently hosted a collaboration event with professional conference organisers (PCOs) to discuss the major issues and challenges facing the business events industry.

The open forum style gathering was also used to update attendees on developments with the venue’s Legacy Program implemented late last year.

## Mouthful of cash landed

**AUSSIE** video production startup Biteable has raised \$2.8 million as part of a Series A funding round.

The cash will be used to drive further growth of its platform which has seen user numbers increase from 1.1 million to 3 million over the last 12 months.

Biteable creates explainer videos, infographics and animations for businesses.

## Biz trips boost

**THE** latest figures released by Tourism Research Australia show that overnight domestic business trips in Australia increased by 12% to 21 million for the year ending 2017, albeit for a slightly shorter average duration than 2016.

Business spend during the same period was \$15.9 billion, a 2% bump on the previous year.

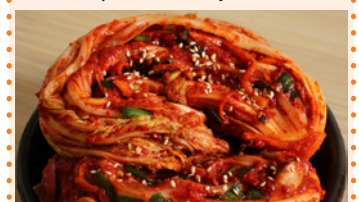


**THE** Korea MICE Bureau is calling on all event planners to start eating fermented vegetable dishes en masse in order to improve their professional output.

Kimchi is a traditional side dish served in South Korea most commonly made from napa cabbage with a variety of seasonings including chili powder, scallions and garlic.

With the South Korean lifespan said to be improving year-on-year and recently busting through the 90 year barrier, perhaps Kimchi is just what our events industry needs to keep growing?

Mind you, 90 years just seems way too long for any event, quite frankly.







Discover how New Zealand is forging ahead with their business events in the March issue of *travelBulletin*.

CLICK to read **travelBulletin**



## Gray's Say



Peter Gray, an independent Motivation Consultant, presents a regular *Business Events News* feature on current issues in the Conference and Incentive industries.

### Ageism is alive and well

I RECENTLY came across an article on LinkedIn entitled "I'm not 54. I'm 22 with 32 years' experience." It was posted by Louis Loizou, a freelance creative director for whom I thank for the inspiration for this month's column.

Louis works in design and advertising but the parallel with the conference and incentives industries is very real. He goes on... "Let's put things into perspective here. With the recent and very welcome push for sexual equality, the time is also right to address the inequality of blatant ageism. If you're 18 to 30 years old, you may want to look away now. Ideas and creativity are not exclusive for the twenty somethings. You forget, we've been there and done that. In fact, don't look at the wisps of grey hair and think we're not still doing it. We are."

In spite of rumours to the contrary I was 'young' once. In 'my day' we did things that many older members of our industry thought were different, even outrageous, but providing we could justify the reasons (and the probable outcomes) of what we wanted to do they were generally prepared to listen, even acquiesce.

A lot of 'senior' members of the incentive industry who I first met at the 1991 AIA Conference

in Melbourne are still, like me, in business and as up-to-date with, even ahead of current thinking as any twenty-something. Not that there is anything wrong with twenty-somethings entering the industry, but there is definitely a right balance between hiring young and senior talent. That's where senior talent is essential - guiding, mentoring, coaching and inspiring.

There's not much I look up to in the USA particularly when it comes to incentives, but the average age of marketing managers is considerably older than in Australia. And what do they bring to their roles? The experience of many years of relevant creativity, intimate knowledge of their brands and behaviour of distribution channels. They bring passion, pragmatism and discipline to any project. These are essential to any effective business-to-business incentive program.

Stories abound about clients who substitute seasoned and experienced incentive operators with 'young and dynamic' alternatives only to find that quality, personal service is quickly replaced with very ordinary levels of interaction and creativity. Clients lose their identity and become mere numbers. Business changes hands for many reasons, price is

often the *raison d'être* and the larger the incentive operator the more likely that they work on an SPQR (smaller profits quicker returns) basis, acquiring new business with low profit margins.

Those operators working with low profit margins are more inclined to accept (or demand) commissions or the less desirable 'kick-backs', often not revealing these to their clients (which is illegal in Australia). There is a tendency to force down prices from suppliers in order to make greater margins but then have to pay for favours - staff rooms and other extras - which might otherwise have been given on an FOC basis.

It could be argued that an agency/incentive operator works on behalf of its clients and so forcing down prices should be a good thing. But not if this is at the risk of creating a difficult or resentful working environment. I would suggest that a good principle on which to work is "always leave something for someone else".

There is, of course, software that can make running an incentive program or an in-house recognition program reasonably simple. But to create a unique program that reflects a client's brand and achieves just what is required, there is no substitute for experience.

For many years now the incentive industry has been trying to get its clients to pay for proposals (as they do in other professions) and particularly to respect an operator's intellectual property. It's been an uphill struggle and the larger operators are the fly in the ointment. They acquire business through their low margins so they're not going to add what they regard as unnecessary costs to the equation. Smaller operators therefore have to convince their clients that their services are of better quality and value and that, overall, their level of personal service and attention to detail is worth the greater investment.

This strategy is made easier if it can be demonstrated that the people working on a project are fully experienced in all aspects of incentive and reward practice (often lacking in the larger operators who tend to employ less experienced staff).

Ageism is illegal in all States and Territories in Australia. Remember that it takes 20 years to acquire 20 years' experience but that experience can be shared and is particularly valuable when it's used to mentor new entrants to our industry.



**Peter Gray** is an independent, Accredited Incentive Practitioner and motivation consultant. He can be contacted at [peter.gray@motivatingpeople.net](mailto:peter.gray@motivatingpeople.net)