

**Today's issue of BEN**

Business Events News today has three pages of news.

Reward offer

MARRIOTT International is offering meeting benefits for bookings before 31 Dec. **CLICK HERE** for details.

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EVENT CONFERENCE GROWTH

EVENT Hospitality & Entertainment has outlined plans to include and expand conference facilities in key hotels such as QT Sydney and Rydges Melbourne.

At the group's AGM last Fri, CEO Jane Hastings said the total fair value of Event's property had increased to \$2 billion, well above the book value of \$1.2 billion, and that it provided excellent future growth opportunities.

The expansion of the QT Sydney will include the addition of new rooms and conference and event facilities, as part of a wider development that will involve retail space and a commercial

tower on George Street.

The group has also progressed plans for a major expansion of Rydges Melbourne which will include new rooms and a conference centre.

Upgrades and expansions are also planned at several other properties including QT Melbourne and Rydges Townsville, as well as



refurbishments of Rydges Queenstown conference centre and conference spaces at QT Gold Coast and QT Canberra.

Pictured is the Members Lounge at QT Sydney.

Courtyard by Marriott Mel

MARRIOTT International has signed an agreement with Ousia Investments to open Courtyard by Marriott West Melbourne, marking its debut in Melbourne.

The 150-room hotel will be located near the Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre, Etihad Stadium, Queen Victoria Market and Federation Square.

The new-build hotel will feature an outdoor heated swimming pool and a fitness centre with sauna and steam rooms, along with 250m² of flexible meeting space designed to welcome groups of all sizes.

The property is slated to open in 2021.

Shop & RFP digital experience

IHG has partnered with technology company Social Tables to launch a new groups and meetings Shop & RFP digital experience which brings groups and meeting and event planners together with IHG hotels around the globe.

The new global platform contains hotel and meeting room details, including room capacities, floor plans and interactive maps, along with image galleries and nearby attractions.

Visit the Shop & RFP digital experience at ihg.com/meetings.



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AFTER any successful venture, there is often an expectation that the host will thank those who came along, but what if your thank you card consisted of a casual 270,000 signatures?

The world's longest thank you note was presented to Lord Viscount Morpeth upon his retirement as Chief Secretary of Ireland in 1841, and spans a whopping 420m.

The scroll is longer than the Empire State Building is tall - now that's taking gratitude to new heights.



AACB export opportunities

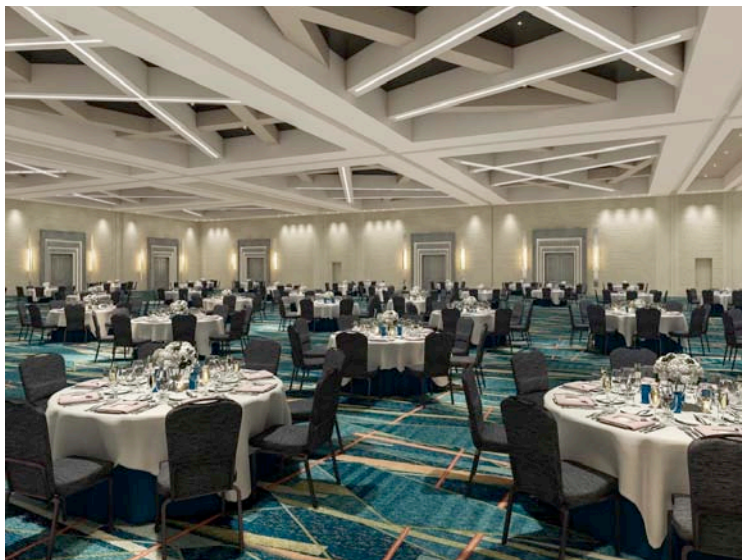
THE number of international business events secured for the future has increased by 8% since Jan 2018, according to the latest Association of Australian Convention Bureaux (AACB) analysis.

"We're expecting more than a quarter million international delegates to attend these business events," said AACB CEO Andrew Hiebl.

"To put that number into perspective, they would fill more than 530 Qantas A380s," he said.

"Further, these business events will exceed one billion in direct delegate spend, surpassing previous forward projections."

HYATT REGENCY GRAND



HYATT Regency Grand Cypress has broken ground on a new, 23,230m² ballroom that will add 29,730m² of pre-function and event space at the Orlando resort, doubling the current ballroom space.

With its expansion, the resort will offer a total of 94,760m² of flexible meeting space comprised of two ballrooms, exhibition space, pre-function space, 45 meeting rooms and outdoor venues suitable for groups of 10 to 1,000.

"We will soon have the space to create even more spectacular events to meet the needs of

meeting planners, conference attendees and social event guests," said Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress General Manager Paul Joseph.

The adjacent pre-function space will provide panoramas of the resort's landscaping.

Additionally, a large purpose-built event lawn will be connected to the new ballroom, providing for outdoor events.

The resort's new ballroom (**pictured**) is scheduled to be completed by late 2019.

The property also offers six food and beverage options, a spa and a 45-hole golf course.

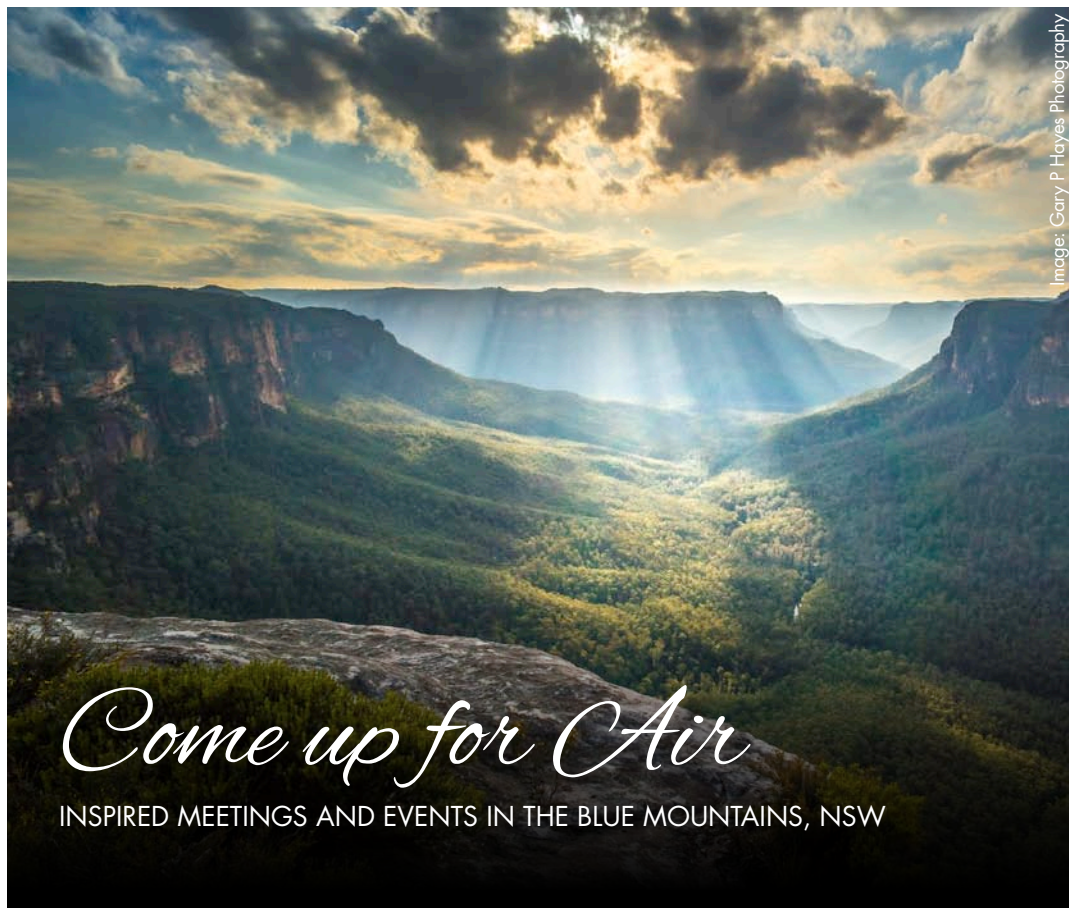


Image: Gary P Hayes Photography

FAIRMONT RESORT & SPA BLUE MOUNTAINS

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Dubai is a city of innovation and hot property for event now. Read more in the October 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.

An unregulated industry

OF ALL the professions in the world, being an Incentive Practitioner or a Professional Conference Organiser (PCO) are two that have escaped regulation by most governments or regulatory authorities.

Many professions require achievement of minimum qualifications and guaranteed adherence to appropriate regulations. This is not the case if you claim to be an Incentive Practitioner or PCO.

Several associations that represent professionals in these fields do offer accreditation programs with the purpose of testing skills and offering some guarantee that a client's requirements will be met to the highest standards. However, none of them are compulsory and many clients lack the knowledge for such accreditation to be part of any proposal they request.

Although I have been an Incentive Practitioner for many years and have achieved accreditation standards set by appropriate industry bodies, I have never been asked by any client whether I am so qualified. This in itself devalues the whole purpose of accreditation. However, when my company appoints a new supplier we insist that they should be appropriately accredited.

The Incentives and Meetings Industries are guilty of creating our own competitors. Many individuals

employed by incentives or events companies are tempted to set up business using the experience they have gained. However, since there are no standards mandated in these industries it is difficult to know precisely when an individual has the required skills, knowledge and experience.

The results achieved by many new-start companies often fall far below the standards required. Sometimes this is because of a lack of skills or knowledge; more often it is because of a lack of experience.

The Internet, the Web have proved a boon to many who already had the necessary skills previously without them. All too often individuals outside the industry ask themselves the question "How difficult can it be to organise an event, a meeting, a conference or design an incentive program?" but the answer they refuse to acknowledge is "far harder than you would think".

The number of apps available to the meetings industry is legion. Many of these suggest that everything that needs to be done can be done at the touch of a button. I am thankful to some degree that the number of apps of which I am currently aware for the Incentive Industry are substantially less.

Several organisations are now 'getting in on the act' which were previously the reserve of meeting and events professionals. Airbnb

has announced on its website that it has started offering online tools to find meetings spaces and team-building activities. Cvent has long been offering an almost start-to-finish service through its software. And yet what happens when something goes wrong? Is one of their executives on hand to resolve these difficulties?

The answer, of course, is No.

Even the CEO's or Marketing Director's PA or EA - frequently tasked to organise meetings, conferences and even incentives when the company - mistakenly - wants to save a dollar or two, won't necessarily have the skills or resources to cope with the sort of things that can - and frequently do - go wrong when vital elements of an event are delegated to third parties.

A properly qualified and accredited industry professional is an investment not an expense.

Their knowledge of a destination or a venue, of having previously worked with a particular Destination Management Company; local knowledge and any professional relationship with hotel managements can all reduce the overall cost of an event. It is important to remember that an industry professional represents their client and therefore should always make recommendations to their advantage.

Accredited industry professionals have the distinct advantage of

being required to have professional indemnity insurance and are expected to abide by standards set by the association that accredited them. They know that a complaint upheld by the accreditation body could be disastrous for their future business.

So, before investing in a software package that promises the earth; that suggests it can do just about everything anyone has ever thought of, ask the developer what they will do and what liability they have in the event that there are failures of the suppliers they have recommended (and who will be paying them a commission to do so).

Industry professionals must fully justify their actions as well as being wholly responsible for a project's overall budget. Checklists abound. Whether they're downloaded from LinkedIn, Facebook or one of the proprietary event management companies they all need to be interpreted in the light of requirements. If you're a box-ticker then maybe this is the way forward for you but I would not recommend it.

The Incentives and Meetings industries deserve to be recognised for the professional services their practitioners provide. Clearly the message is not getting across to clients who largely know nothing about the accreditation processes already in place.



Peter Gray is an independent, Accredited Incentive Practitioner and motivation consultant. He can be contacted at peter.gray@motivatingpeople.net