



Today's issue of BEN

Business Events News today has two pages of news.

Hiebl shows his chops



ANDREW Hiebl, CEO of the Association of Australian Conference Bureaux (AACB) has launched a fundraising drive which we're hoping the industry will be thrilled to support.

Hiebl (pictured) is seeking donations to encourage him to remove his somewhat shaggy and disgusting COVID-19 beard.

He's hoping for a total of \$4,810 which equates to 0.01% of the funding allocated by Health Minister Greg Hunt to a National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan, with moneys raised by Hiebl going to Beyond Blue.

Hiebl has been growing the facial fuzz since 13 Mar "as a daily reminder of the mental health impacts COVID-19 is placing on our sector," he said.

The beard will continue to grow until he either reaches his donation goal or all restrictions on the business events sector are lifted - and it looks like it's getting pretty itchy under there so dig deep by **CLICKING HERE**.

When it happens the shave will be a live event.

EXTEND JOBKEEPER - BECA

THE Business Events Council of Australia (BECA) has warned that if the Federal Government's JobKeeper program is not extended the business events industry will face financial ruin.

The support scheme has been a lifeline for many industry staff but is scheduled to end in late Sep, with BECA Chair Vanessa Findlay saying the sector will not be in full recovery mode by that stage because of the long lead times required to plan and promote events.

"Without Government support the business events industry is not just facing a hiatus; it is facing a total dislocation and complete loss," she said.

"We would be facing a total rebuild of an industry from the ground up...we are uncertain whether we will ever get back to being able to compete globally if this situation transpires," Findlay added.

The Government-mandated cancellation of events has seen a near 100% loss of revenue for the industry, with a total

loss over the next 12 months estimated at \$35.7 billion.

Staff losses within the business events sector are estimated at over 92,000 by the end of this month, with the industry largely unable to maintain its large workforce when unsupported.

"The situation is dire for an industry that has seen year-on-year growth of more than 6% and was, just months ago, successfully showcasing Australia's credentials to major business event decision-makers and planners from across the globe," the BECA chair said.

The Council is calling for targeted government support for the business events workforce and operators.

"As an industry we want to emerge from the crisis in a position to help build business confidence across the Australian economy, and when the time is right, grow Australia's share of global events in what will be a highly competitive and disrupted market," she said.

Encore hybrid

ENCORE Event Technologies has launched a new suite of services for the delivery of professional and engaging virtual and hybrid events.

There are nine new packages available, with Encore Director of Innovation, Andrew MacColl, saying the options include the Australian launch of technical solutions Chime Live (a live streamlining app) and Content1 Virtual (a hosted content repository), both exclusive to Encore.

Event partners benefit because those who can attend in person are able to use a venue's facilities and hospitality, while those unable to travel can access an experiences "as close as being part of the live event as possible".

The new Encore suite includes live streaming, video conferencing, event microsites and more.

GCCEC gets set

THE Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre (GCCEC) is poised to reopen after receiving approval from the Gold Coast Public Health Unit to operate under its COVID Safe Plan.

The venue can host up to 4,500 visitors per day based on capacity restrictions, with the safety plan covering all aspects of operation with new floor plans, food & beverage service, training and record keeping.

"Meetings and business events that can no longer take place in smaller venues can now look to the Centre," said GCCEC General Manager Adrienne Readings.



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Travel Daily



EVENT venues across the globe are eagerly anticipating being able to reopen, including in the UK where COVID-19 lockdowns have forced several months of closures.

However a hotel and restaurant in Acton Trussell near Stafford had some unexpected pre-opening guests this week while staff were preparing for a restart.

Motat House said workers getting the place ready looked outside and saw about a dozen cows wandering through an external seating area.

“We had spaced out the tables and chairs to ensure social distancing, but they showed no respect for that,” said the hotel’s owner.

“At one stage they looked like guests at a wedding... even the cows can’t wait for us to reopen”.

One wit suggested the bovine visitors may have thought they had herd immunity.

Showtime appointed

SHOWTIME Event Group has been appointed as the exclusive caterer to Rippon Lea Estate in Melbourne’s Elsternwick.

The venue is set to reopen shortly, with Showtime to offer some special launch initiatives including experiential dining concepts targeted at the incentive market.

TCEB to spend up big

THE Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has flagged spending of one billion baht (A\$47 million) to revitalise the country’s MICE market, with a range of initiatives including “heavily bidding for international business events”.

TCEB is also increasing its support fund for domestic meetings and relaxing eligibility requirements, as well as working closely with venues to ensure the adoption of MICE Venue Hygiene Guidelines.

A total of 207 venues across the country have already participated in the TCEB’s COVID-19 Free Meeting project.

Key sectors for international business event support include infrastructure and transport, aiming to help drive the Thai government’s current heavy investment in the sector.

ETF show off

EXHIBITIONS and Trade Fairs (ETF) has taken the difficult decision not to hold its The Business of Events industry showcase in 2020.

Originally scheduled to take place at Luna Park Sydney on 19 Mar this year just as COVID-19 restrictions were being imposed, the show was initially deferred until later in 2020.

However now the organisers plan to operate The Business of Events in 2021 “with a new theme and program that will ensure a strong comeback”.

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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.

Just what is normal?

I have heard a lot of people during the COVID-19 pandemic saying “when things return to normal...” however I believe that anyone who thinks that ‘normal’ will be how life was, how business was before the spread of the virus is kidding themselves!

Quite apart from the devastation wreaked in the tourism industry, the business events industries have also suffered enormously. While incentive rewards, for example, are not exclusively travel-related (in fact statistics suggest that less than 50% of incentive rewards feature travel) for those programs where travel has already been chosen as the reward, replacement by high-quality merchandise is one alternative. But if the participants can no longer function to the degree required by the programs then cancellation or postponement are probably the only options.

Hotels, airlines and many other suppliers to the business events industries have refunded (or credited) monies held and been willing to waive their contract terms to allow for cancellations. Incentive companies, event managers and PCOs are in a slightly different situation because some - possibly much - of the work in designing an incentive or loyalty program or

the reward, planning an event or organising a conference has been done. Staff or associates have been paid and can’t be ‘unpaid’. As a result, some business events’ companies have closed their doors permanently.

For those who have been able to take advantage of the government’s employment subsidy the big question is not only how long it will last, but how many of those laid off will be required once the business reopens. There is always the tendency, when times are good, to employ more than are needed for everyday operations or the smooth running of a project ‘just in case’. When trading conditions are bad companies survive by pairing back to absolute necessities and this could mean less staff.

The other added complication is that times have moved on and not merely during the pandemic. Over the past few years software, too, has moved on and can now be used to perform many of the functions of planning or operations.

Customer and staff loyalty programs and business-to-business incentives will be needed more than ever to motivate staff and dealers to reach and exceed previous levels whether they be efficiency, sales or operations.

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