



Today's issue of BEN

Business Events News today has two pages of news and a full page from **Amora Melbourne**.

MEA restructures

MEETINGS and Events Australia (MEA) has been forced to restructure "to ensure we remain stable, active and relevant" through the COVID-19 crisis.

An update from CEO Robyn Johnson and the MEA Board confirmed the National Events Manager Role, held by Fran Barlow for the last eight months, had been discontinued.

Barlow was instrumental in the development of MEA's Evolve 2020 conference, which has now been postponed.

The desperate times have also impacted the new Partnerships Manager role, which had seen the engagement of Christopher Lazzari to reposition MEA.

Johnson said she and the Board were "devastated to lose two of our team members," with the organisation shifting into managing the immediate needs of providing education, support, information and lobbying government for a support package.

Memphis virtual event

THE US City of Memphis, Tennessee, has launched a "virtual music festival" to help people across the globe who are self-isolating.

The free event will be streamed on Facebook Live from 26-28 Mar, and will feature a donation button to raise funds for musicians affected by COVID - to join in **CLICK HERE**.

\$2.5 BILLION MONTHLY EVENT HIT

THE massive shutdown of the Australian business events sector due to COVID-19 is taking \$2.5 billion out of the national economy each month, according to new figures released by the Business Events Council of Australia (BECA).

BECA Chair, Dr Vanessa Findlay, said the knock-on effects were huge, with the business events sector heavily reliant on the tourism supply chain including venues, accommodation, transport, event organiser, catering, audio visual, decorator and entertainment businesses - most of which are small and medium enterprises.

"We know that these businesses are at immediate risk of closing their doors, some already have, and most have



had to let go of casual staff and are processing redundancies for the majority of their full- and part-time staff now.

"It is a dire situation for the sector, for the nation, for the world," Findlay (**pictured**) said, noting that the economic impact of the shutdown over

just two months was the equivalent of the entire annual value of the cruise industry.

She said BECA was focusing on working with governments across the country to ensure as many businesses and jobs as possible can be retained.

An industry-wide survey will aim to highlight the key areas needed to shore up the productive capacity needed when the sector moves to the recovery phase.

The BECA Board met yesterday to discuss the next steps in the development of the Business Events Sector Sustainment Plan.

"There is no greater focus for BECA and its member associations right now than ensuring the survival of our sector," Findlay said.

Australian-first 'Virtual Expo'

THE organisers of a Brisbane technology conference have partnered with YouTube to stream the event live, with the high-profile QODE Brisbane event kicking off "in the cloud" today.

Previously planned as a public conference and exhibition, QODE is described as "Australia's premier technology and innovation event for the entrepreneurial, investment, business and government sectors".

As well as conference sessions being available for online viewing, attendees will be able to visit exhibitor booths using virtual technology, walking through as though they are at the convention centre "and they can even jump on a call to chat with the exhibitor as they would face-to-face," according to Chief QODE Officer, Jackie Taranto.

The free-of-charge event started this morning, with registrations still available at qode-event.com.

Pharmacy conference pivots to online

THE organisers of last weekend's Australian Pharmacy Professional (APP) conference at the Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre pulled out all stops to ensure elements of the event could proceed, despite the sudden imposition of government sanctions against large gatherings.

A monumental effort saw the program switch to an online format featuring 28 hours of content in 44 sessions, with a mixture of live-streamed and recorded sessions helping delegates meet Continuing Professional Development obligations.

The show must go on!

THE Conference Shop has noted that with people in China's Hubei province now returning to work while Australia is in the midst of a lockdown, "it's only a matter of time before things roar back to life".

The venue sourcing company has highlighted a range of exciting new options opening up in Sydney in the coming months, and is optimistically urging the industry to "look up" and consider where they will party this Christmas.

New bars include the Coogee Wine Room, Maybe Sammy and the Double Deuce Lounge, while the new W at Darling Harbour is "tipped to be the hottest Christmas party venue".

For a proposal email a brief to enquiry@theconferenceshop.com.au.



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Dealing with the now and preparing for the future

OPINION

ICC Sydney CEO Geoff Donaghy provided this update on the industry's response to the coronavirus.



THE outbreak of COVID-19 is having a catastrophic impact on businesses, people and livelihoods here in Australia and globally. Colleagues and friends in the events industry are all feeling the impact, and in many countries the situation is already much bleaker.

With the progressive measures taken over the last few weeks by the Australian Federal Government to protect our nation, we now find ourselves in a situation where all indoor events for over 100 people have been shut down. For venues such as ICC Sydney, this means we are no longer able to deliver nearly all events. This is quite simply an unprecedented situation.

However, amid the uncertainty there is one certainty; at some point this will end. When it does, we have a responsibility to our clients, visitors, employees and communities to be ready and emerge once again as a healthy and thriving industry. So, while we deal with the situation at hand we also have one foot in the future.

Taking care of our team

The team at ICC Sydney is our number one asset. Without their hard work and professionalism, we could not put on the world class events that have earned

us our reputation over the last three years and they will be critical to our recovery. Our top priority from the first day this crisis broke has been to retain team members.

It is with great sadness that this has not been possible for our casual team. Rostering casual team members requires events to be taking place. At this point in time we do not know when this will resume as normal. In lieu of this we are doing what we can to ensure these casual team members have access support, providing counselling services and communicating updates on the situation whenever we can.

To protect our full-time team members, we have reasonably redeployed these people to essential administrative tasks including cleaning, stocktaking and updating our databases with the objective of trying to ensure everyone has a job here at ICC Sydney. We've also implemented measures to ensure we are practicing the social distancing such as working from home, setting up new desk spaces across the venue and opening up our halls as a free staff car park so teams feel comfortable getting to and from work.

A voice for the industry

ICC Sydney is working closely with industry representative bodies, particularly our peak national body the Business Events Council of Australia, to ensure our industry survives today and thrives tomorrow. By providing input on lobbying

and submissions to the Federal Government, we are ensuring there is ongoing support for our industry and that there is the appropriate focus in place on the recovery period.

Going digital

While events under 100 people are still allowed, with the correct social distancing, I am realistic that it very unlikely any events of scale will go ahead in the immediate future. In response, ICC Sydney has set up audio visual services to enable clients to continue running events and connecting with their audiences through online technologies. This offering includes live or recorded web streaming, remote presentation, video conferencing and a broadcast studio. These tools have already been used by one of our key city associations, the Committee for Sydney, and we'll continue to offer this to our industry and client base during this challenging global climate.

Not losing sight of the future

We can't underestimate the impact that this most serious combination of a pandemic and economic downturn that we have seen will have on our industry. But what is as equally as serious during this time is ensuring we keep a strong focus on the future, undertaking planning and ensuring our recovery readiness. Our industry, and ICC Sydney's role within it, will be at the forefront of our national economic recovery – and we'll ensure we are ready from the moment it begins.



COVID-19 self-isolation may be on the cards for all of us soon, and there are plenty of tips around for how to cope.

None are more relevant, however, than advice from a Frenchman who spent 127 days at sea last year floating around in the Atlantic Ocean inside a barrel (pictured).

Jean-Jacques Savin, aged 73, was carried by currents between the Canary Islands in Spain and the Caribbean, taking four months to cover over 4,500km.

His advice for those in lockdown? "Everyone needs to embrace their passion."

"This time of isolation can be an opportunity for discovery - start drawing, learn to play the harmonica - if it doesn't bother the neighbours," he told AFP.

He said the confinement being imposed on the world to deal with coronavirus was probably easier to deal with than his complete solitude because "we all have phones".

During his seagoing sojourn he said he "read a lot, I exercised, I adapted to the solitude...I emptied my head and accepted that it would be long, but I also knew that it was just for a while".





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