



MEETINGS 2021 SECURES NZ\$74M

ATTENDEES at last month's MEETINGS 2021 conference in Auckland provisionally secured bookings worth about NZ\$74 million over the two day event, with Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA) hailing the sector's first post-COVID gathering as an "outstanding success".

The 25th anniversary of MEETINGS saw 150 exhibitors from 18 regions across NZ connect with 45 Australian and 100 Kiwi hosted buyers, as well as about 300 local day delegates.

The strong level of bookings secured reflected the strength of the NZ domestic business events market, according to BEIA CEO Lisa Hopkins, who said buyers were looking at local opportunities with events likely to stay on shore at this stage.

Participants in the 02-03 Jun event also participated in regional



familiarisation tours in the North and South Islands, with Hopkins saying the demand to meet in NZ shows "the future of travel, particularly relating to vaccines and travel passports, is just as critical to business events as it is to other visitor economy sectors".

She hailed the commitment and

dedication of the NZ business events industry, which ensured every buyer left feeling welcomed and appreciated.

"It was a...team effort," she said.

A video showcasing highlights of MEETINGS 2021 is online now at businessesnews.com.au/videos.

PCMA names new APAC MD

THE Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) has appointed Florence (Flo) Chua as its new Managing Director for Asia-Pacific, taking over from Karen Bolinger who has been leading the organisation locally on a part-time consultancy basis for just over a year (*BEN* 28 Apr 2020).

Chua's new role is part of a "new and expanded leadership structure that reflects the association's continued transformation toward the global leader in the business events industry," according to PCMA's Chicago-based CEO Sherrif Karamat.

Bolinger will "continue to support PCMA in a consultancy capacity and handle specific projects," with her tenure hailed for expanding the association's brand across the region.

Other changes have seen Lucio Vaquero appointed PCMA Regional Director for LATAM, building on the organisation's presence in Mexico City, while Jaime Bennett has been promoted to become PCMA Regional Director EMEA.

EEAA urgent poll

THE Exhibition & Event Association of Australia has issued a callout for the industry to lodge responses to a special survey, to help plan upcoming online sessions which aim to give the industry "practical and immediate assistance".

EEAA will hold Organiser and Supplier Special Interest Group (SIG) sessions via Zoom from Aug, facilitated by an expert moderator.

"The SIGs will provide a forum to air and share your concerns, learnings and solutions, to workshop common topics, which will assist in developing policy recommendations to Government and ultimately direct how the industry recovers," according to an update from EEAA CEO Claudia Sagripanti yesterday.

The survey can be completed by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Hong Kong job encouragement

THE management company for the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) has launched a Lucky Draw to encourage local residents to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

Prizes, valued at more than US\$64,000, include dining vouchers at the HKCEC's array of restaurants, with a grand prize of "year-round unlimited dinner buffets" for one person at the Congress Plus eatery.

To be eligible, participants must be Hong Kong residents who have received two vax doses on or before 31 Aug.

The organisation's MD Monica Lee-Muller said with enhanced safety measures in place HKCEC had welcomed over 830,000 visitors in just one week, from 14-20 Jul, with the promo aiming to help speed industry recovery.

Melb show off

THE pandemic has seen the Royal Melbourne Show cancelled for the second year running, with an estimated economic impact of \$244 million to the Vic economy.

The event had been planned to operate 23 Sep-03 Oct, with the 11-day run attracting about 450,000 visitors.

New Whitsundays virtual reality tours

BUSINESS events buyers can now experience the rich offerings of the Whitsundays region via a new virtual reality site inspection platform launched by Tourism Whitsundays.

Funding received from Business Events Australia has seen the organisation partner with local operators to develop the tour, with headsets allowing users to immerse themselves in the destination and experience everything it has to offer - all guided by "Siri", aka the Australian voice artist behind

Apple's famous online assistant, Karen Jacobsen.

Tourism Whitsundays CEO Tash Wheeler said the platform featured Airlie Beach, Daydream Island Resort, the Reefsuites experience with Cruise Whitsundays and much more, with more content to be added in the coming months.

The six-minute inspections are tipped to keep the region front-of-mind for event planners.

To express interest in a Whitsundays virtual site inspection headset [CLICK HERE](#).