



Today's issue of BEN

Business Events News today has two pages of news.

Let's meet again!

DESTINATION Gold Coast Business Events has released the latest episode of its Let's Meet Again Soon video series.

The third instalment highlights the power of human connection and the value of meeting in person, showcasing some of the things conference planners and delegates have missed most and what they are looking forward to when they return to the Gold Coast for their next business event.

See the video online at businessesnews.com.au.

AuSAE influencers

THE Australian Society of Association Executives (AuSAE) has announced 13 "Association Influencers of 2020," highlighting the outstanding contributions of individuals in the associations sector across Australia and NZ.

Noteworthy members of the list include Association of Australian Convention Bureaux CEO Andrew Hiebl and Jessica Keogh, National Committee and Events Manager from Auscontact Association - see the rest at www.ausae.org.au.

KNOWLEDGE GAP - ICC CHIEF

THE so-called "knowledge economy" facilitating informal information exchange during events is one of the silent sufferers of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Geoff Donaghy, CEO of Sydney's International Convention Centre.

Speaking to *BEN* last week, Donaghy said while there were clearly tangible impacts on jobs and economic downturn pulverising the industry, also of concern was the lack of incidental encounters which come with in-person gatherings.

"It's not all about what happens in the main lecture halls - many innovations and connections happen through face-to-face networking and casual conversations which have in the past led to long-term partnerships and real breakthroughs," he said.

ICC Sydney had been heavily hit by the pandemic, Donaghy confirmed, with the venue's revenue for 2020/21 expected to be down as much as 90%.

And while recovery is on the horizon, that will improve to about 50% of 2019 income "at best" in the 2021/22 fiscal year.

Donaghy said he was confident the industry would recover, with ICC Sydney having a very strong pipeline of events.

He said he expected the corporate market would recover more quickly than associations, which are slower-moving and in

some cases have simply missed their "slots" in 2020 and 2021 and will resume their normal schedule in other destinations as travel reopens post COVID.

The ICC chief said the Venueshield program implemented right across the portfolio of parent group ASM Global had put the Centre in good stead to ensure ongoing COVID-19 safety, noting that ICC Sydney had not closed at all during the last 12 months.

"We have hosted more than 200 events over that period - of course most have been virtual, or pro bono, but we quickly established infrastructure and procedures which would allow us to continue to operate."

MEANWHILE asked about the Government's \$50 million Business Events Grants Program, Donaghy expressed concern that only a small proportion of the funding had been accessed at this stage.

He said the lobbying efforts of the Business Events Council of Australia (BECA) had achieved a great top-line outcome, but details of the implementation and the criteria for applications "didn't match the reality of how the industry works".

Donaghy said BECA was continuing to work with officials to address the "disconnects" of the program, to ensure it can be "cleaned up and simplified" so it has the desired impact.

SUNSHINE COMES TO SYDNEY



VISIT Sunshine Coast today hosted key industry partners at a rare event at Sydney's Four Seasons Hotel, where the destination's burgeoning array of attractions, accommodation and activities for the business events sector were showcased.

Maureen Brennan, the organisation's Manager, Business Events, also highlighted Visit Sunshine Coast's newly developed website for incentive planners which features an itinerary builder and a wide variety of bespoke opportunities for high-end groups - see sunshinecoastincentivetravel.com for more details.

The Sunshine Coast is heavily focused on events to help fill the void created by COVID-19, and the destination is also set to benefit from increased domestic air capacity including new direct flights from Cairns, Newcastle and Canberra.

Table decorations creatively featured pineapple vases and some of the region's lush flora, as demonstrated by the group **pictured**, from left: Kelly Maynard, Business Events Australia; Maureen Brennan, Visit Sunshine Coast; Pamela Wickham, EVT Incentive Marketing; and Jessica Pritchard, International Productions.



LET'S Meet AGAIN SOON

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TA gathers industry

TOURISM Australia last Thu provided a hopeful taste of the future, with the seventh annual Destination Australia conference at ICC Sydney welcoming more than 450 in-person delegates plus hundreds more online.



CONFERENCE delegates are always eager to sample the local cuisine, but perhaps this is taking things a little too far.

US fast food chain Fongs Pizza has unveiled a new Froot Loops pizza, with the breakfast cereal served along with sour cream and a cream cheese sauce (pictured).

The innovation was showcased on Des Moines-Iowa based TV station WCCB, displaying the delicacy topped with mozzarella cheese, Kelloggs Froot Loops and a drizzle of condensed milk and yoghurt.

The new product has provoked a range of reactions, with some keen to give it a go while others have described it as a "crime against humanity".



Te Pae pop-up

TE PAE Christchurch Convention Centre will next week debut an "activation hub" to showcase the venue to prospective clients.

With the venue expected to open later this year, the new "Taste of Te Pae" pop-up will be located next to the convention centre site on Oxford Terrace, Christchurch.

"The events of the past year have obviously had an effect on construction timelines for the Centre," said Te Pae Christchurch GM Ross Steele.

"While we expect to be open in the latter half of this year, we still want to be able to showcase the venue to current and prospective clients, as well as the local community," he said.

The pop-up will include a food truck as well as a range of interactive displays, a virtual reality dome and information about the Centre's design, cultural narrative and the role that business events play in the community.

Culinary collaborations with local suppliers are being planned to highlight the Canterbury region's incredible cuisine, with the eight-week activation zone having been designed using equipment that will feature in the Centre once it opens - including outdoor furniture and the food truck.

The pop-up will be in place from Wed 17 Mar 2021.

BE IMMERSED IN FNQ

BUSINESS Events Cairns & Great Barrier Reef has confirmed the evolution of the long-running Sell TNQ educational program for meeting planners into the new look "BE Immersed: Cairns & Great Barrier Reef".

The organisation's GM, Rosie Douglas, said "with meeting planners eager to start work on reactivating the business events industry, it is timely to evolve our key educational program to meet the needs and expectations of our business events clients".

BE Immersed will take place 06-09 May this year, giving participants the opportunity to experience the World Heritage-listed regions after their rejuvenation by summer rain.

"Stepping into a delegate's shoes will give Australian meeting planners the opportunity to understand why Cairns & Great Barrier Reef is the natural place to meet," Douglas said.

She noted that the Far North Queensland (FNQ) area was one of the few regional destinations with the business events infrastructure and industry capability to successfully compete with capital cities as a global meeting destination.

Registrations to attend BE Immerse: Cairns & Great Barrier Reef are now open, with interested meeting planners invited to submit their applications to attend at businesseventscairns.org.au.

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In the lead up to Easter, submit your chocolate recipes from around the world for our weekly feature.

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