



## Successful AIME 2012

**THE** industry can finally take a breath this weekend, after the frenetic and productive AIME activity in Melbourne.



Today's issue includes a wrap-up of a fabulous pre-AIME family did in the Yarra Valley on **page three** and we have lots of other post-AIME news too.

Thanks to all of the new subscribers who signed up for **BEN** at AIME - we look forward to bringing you all the major MICE industry news on a regular basis, and don't forget to see if you appear in some of our AIME photos which are online at [facebook.com/BusEvNews](https://www.facebook.com/BusEvNews). *Jill*

## Slick Accor gets the big tick

**ACCOR** Hotels has become the first major tourism organisation to gain accreditation under the government's T-QUAL quality assurance program - meaning that its properties now have the ability to display the T-QUAL tick.

The scheme aims to help travellers identify quality tourism businesses, and Accor is set to make the most of the visible sign to consumers that its committed to a quality promise.

Consumer awareness of the scheme is set to receive a boost shortly with the launch of a national T-QUAL Tick tour hosted by celebrity chef Matt Moran.

The announcement of Accor's accession into the scheme came in the midst of AIME, where the

hospitality giant was one of a number of major hotel groups to have a significant presence.

Accor has launched an incentive for conference organisers, with a draw for three luxury escapes to the Sails in the Desert Hotel at Ayers Rock - as well as free breakfast for in-house delegates and double A|Club points for every dollar spent.

The promotion is valid for conference bookings made by 31 May 2012 (for events up to 31 Aug) at 45 participating hotels around Australia

## Functions on thin ice

**MEDIBANK** Icehouse, a state-of-the-art, purpose built ice and speed skating facility that opened two years ago in Melbourne, is making a bid for corporate functions and small meeting.

Whether you knew it or not ice hockey, speed skating and curling have a big following in Australia, hence the development of Medibank Icehouse.

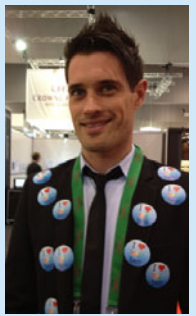
It offers two ice rinks - the Henke professional practice rink and the Bradbury recreational rink - so there's no shortage of ice-capades to get involved in.

Talks and dinners held here can have an ice skating backdrop with an 800-1000 seating capacity.

Dinners can be held on the ice with waiter-skaters in a winter wonderland theme or in the middle of the rink with skaters performing as you eat. There are a number of small function/meeting rooms while the St Moritz Bar which overlooks both skating rinks makes an elegant corporate box or cocktail party venue.



**BEN** Zaubzer from the Macau Govt Tourist Office Australia showed just how much he loves our new publication, by donning himself in



'I love BEN' stickers at AIME.

He insisted that it's nothing to do with having the same name.

## Luxury afloat

**M.V. Pearl**, an 80 feet luxury motor yacht with a capacity for 47 pax, is another newcomer on the Melbourne venue market.

Available for everything from cocktail parties to overnight charters, it's interior was designed by the people who did Sydney's Ivy - Hecker Guthrie.

It is as you would expect, exceptional and more like a smart hotel room than the nautical themes normally found on boats.

## How very sweet is BEN!

**STUART** Thompson from Territory Discoveries is set to indulge his sweet tooth - or make lots of chocolate-loving new friends - after being selected as the winner of the *Business Events News* prize from our stand at AIME.

Stuart couldn't wipe the grin off his face when we turned up with a whopping 6kg of Toblerone, and he also suddenly became very popular with the other participants on the Northern Territory stand.

Stuart will be now fully up-to-date with all the developments in the business tourism sector, after



becoming one of hundreds of AIME delegates and exhibitors who joined up as new **BEN** subscribers during AIME.



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## Stars turn out for Sydney's TropFest

**ONE** of the hottest free events in Sydney's yearly calendar, Movie Extra Tropfest, kicked-off over the weekend, showcasing the best 16 short films produced by film makers especially for the festival.

Adding star-power to the main event in Sydney's Domain were Australian Hollywood Royalty including Cate Blanchett, Nicole Kidman, Toni Collette and Geoffrey Rush, not to mention home-grown heroes including Chris Lilley, Joel Edgerton and Michael Creighton.

Attracting whopping crowds of around 150,000 at free public events across Australia and NZ, and broadcasting live to a television audience in excess of 200,000, Tropfest is the largest short film festival in the world.

Hosted in Sydney's Domain in the Royal Botanic Gardens (with live satellite links to outdoor locations in Melbourne,



Canberra, Perth, Brisbane, Hobart, Adelaide and Surfers Paradise), attendees enjoyed a day full of entertainment before the evening's screening and awards ceremony including live music and entertainment, public catering and bars, red carpet arrivals, rides, competitions and much more.

"Tropfest is part of a line-up of world class summer events on the NSW Events Calendar where our harbour, city streets, beaches and parks become the stage for free major outdoor events," said the NSW Minister for Tourism, Major Events and the Arts, George Souris.

"Destination NSW is proud to support Movie Extra Tropfest in its 20th anniversary year," he added.

**Pictured** above arriving on the Tropfest "Black Carpet" is a radiant Nicole Kidman, while at left is the one and only Cate Blanchett.



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## Medina comp winner

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Kylie Duggan, Pinpoint Travel Group as the major winner of a weekend away at a Medina Apartment Hotel of choice across Australia.

The competition asked **BEN** readers to 'tell us your best travel memory' in 50 words or less.

Duggan's winning answer was:  
*I met the love of my life on the worst holiday of a lifetime with my family where there was storms and no power at the hotel in Canberra and now we go to Canberra every year to celebrate our anniversary & remember what found us in the middle of nowhere.*

## Bhutan links up

**BHUTAN**, one of the worlds more remote and exotic destinations is being opened up with new Bhutan Airlines flights linking Paro (western Bhutan) with Bumthang (central Bhutan) and Trashigang (eastern Bhutan).

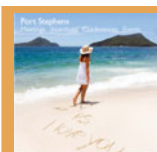
Operating once or twice a week with services until 27 May 2012, it is hoped an extended and more reliable timetable will soon be released for the second half of 2012 and well into 2013.

More at [www.bhutan.com.au](http://www.bhutan.com.au).



**Melbourne Convention + Visitors Bureau** has launched a new Business Event Planners Guide 2012/13 for the Geelong and Great Ocean Road region.

The Guide offers QR code technology that allows readers to taste the regions's venues, professional services and experiences as they scan the code to access YouTube footage and an extensive image gallery.



**Port Stephens Tourism** has unveiled a new 12 page MICE e-brochure that

highlights the major event venues such as Shoal Bay Resort and Spa, Peppers Anchorage Port Stephens and Samurai Beach Resort. Soft adventure activities are also featured as ideas for team building exercises. The region can now also host larger events, up to 500 delegates.

## WIN A 2-NIGHT ULURU ENCOUNTER



To celebrate the \$10million redevelopment of Ayers Rock Resort's Uluru Meeting Place conference centre **Voyages** is offering a great prize to **Business Events News** readers.

The Uluru Meeting Place will feature striking contemporary interiors that reflect the Indigenous heritage of the location. Facilities include a new ballroom that can comfortably seat 420 people as well as a second ballroom that seats over 300. These two rooms combined can create a large area that is ideal for events and trade shows.

The prize includes two return economy airfares to Ayers Rock Resort from the winners nearest Australian capital city, return airport transfers, two nights accommodation in a newly refurbished room at the Sails in the Desert Hotel, dinner at the intimate Tali Wiru fine dining experience and a Desert Awakenings Small Group Sunrise tour.

All you need to do to be in the running to win this great prize, is to email your answer to the below question by COB on Friday 30th March to: [voyagescomp@businesseventsnews.com.au](mailto:voyagescomp@businesseventsnews.com.au)

The most creative answer will win this fantastic prize.

**In 25 words or less tell us what Uluru means to you**



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## Yarra Valley & the Dandenongs show off their business assets

WITH Yarra Valley & the Dandenongs making an industry led effort to promote business events in the region, and the launch of the initiative at AIME on Tuesday, it was timely for *BEN* to join the MCVBs pre AIME hosted buyers and media fam trip for an update.

"Our focus is for everyone to work together in a cooperative manner, to create the perfect package," said Troy Hughes, business development manager, Yarra Ranges Regional Marketing.

"Our websites offer a free venue finding service which will direct enquiries to a particular business and to individual properties - [yrrml.com.au](http://yrrml.com.au) and a dedicated conference and meetings and corporate events website, [conf.com.au](http://conf.com.au).

The two day fam began at the newly acquired **Parkroyal** airport hotel, with a large proportion of its sizeable rooms already refurbished.

The 27 participants began their discovery of a region well equipped to cater for small to large events & corporate meetings.

Our adventure started in the Dandenongs with some of the group choosing to glide through the surrounds of Glen Harrow Gardens on a flying fox zip line and attempt various ropes obstacle courses with Trees Adventures, while others choose to ride the historic **Puffing Billy** train through quite extraordinary mountain forests, fern gullies and farmlands.

Groups can choose to dine in a fully enclosed heritage dining carriage, charter a dining train for a special event, or do as we did, enjoy a lunch in the train carriage shed amid a superb collection of heritage steam engines, one of which steamed away and tooted as we ate!

Next, the **Rochford Winery** surrounded by vineyards, in the heart of the Yarra Valley offered a blank, yet picturesque canvas to create a memorable event.

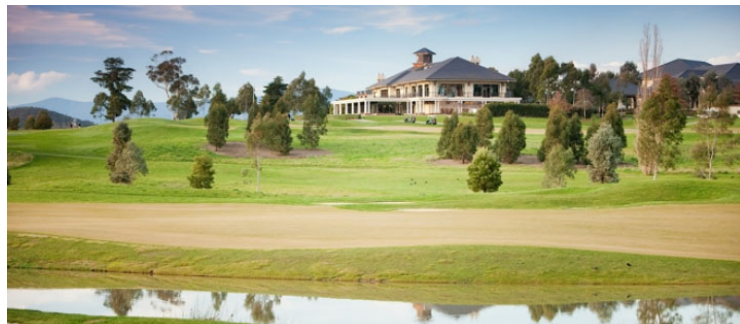
Here we found ourselves on a vast lawn involved in team building events and attempting to put grapes and then water in bottles, in team races, riding Segways through slalom courses and tasting splendid wine vintages in a spacious function marquee.

Our luxury accommodation at the **Sebel Heritage Yarra Valley**, which sprawls in magnificent splendour across 1000 acres and two championship golf courses, impressed the group with its ability to be a true city escape yet just 45 min from the CBD.

Dorina Martelli, Bankwest conference & events manager said, "Words don't do this property justice.

"The fact that it has such a strong sustainability strategy and is in such an accessible location, are the sort of things that would influence my decision to use it."

Next morning, we emerged into sunshine at **Chateau Yering Historic**



**Country House Hotel** at Yarra Glen.

With all the sophistication associated with a 'Relais and Chateau' hotel and just 32 rooms, this seriously elegant property is ideal for a small top end meetings or as a corporate retreat.

Superbly decorated, it has two helipads and guests staying here have access to the nearby Sebel Heritage's private golf course.

However, be warned, you've got to love cats because at the Chateau Yering they can be found in all the guest rooms, in the halls and in all the places where cats are likely to recline.

Not real ones mind you, but as good as.

They act as 'Do not disturb' signs when placed outside guest room doors and are, "often purchased by guests who can't bear to part with them," said gm Sue O'Brien, adding that groups can do a buy-out of the whole or part of the property.

"There is no shortage of activities and learning to cook a Aussie BBQ is particularly popular with international groups," she said.

At the internationally renowned **Healesville Sanctuary** which houses the largest collection of animals and reptiles in the world, we encountered Superman, a favourite with the kids and the Sanctuary's sustainability icon. The Z equals Zoo.

At **Balgownie Estate Vineyard Resort & Spa**, with its contemporary, luxury accommodation, the majority with one bedroom spa suites, we took part in a site tour and a final lunch overlooking the resort's picturesque vineyards.

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