



editor: Jill Varley

info@businesseventsnews.com.au

www.businesseventsnews.com.au

1300 799 220

## Sunshine greetings

**BEN** comes from Queensland's beautiful Sunshine Coast.



Please excuse me while I lick my fingers.

I have just downed a sticky date cupcake with brown sugar frosting and prior to that a pepper sirloin of locally grown Angus beef, at Yandina Station in the Sunshine Coast hinterland.

A day of surprises, including a visit to this stunning historic Brahmin cattle and event property, owned and run by all round good guy Neil Newman (Outrigger, Rumba etc) and his lovely partner Sally Schmidt, so it has been quite a catch up.

We've been to Scroo & Judith Turners' (Flight Centre) delightful Spicers retreats, Clovelly Estate and Tamarind, and enjoyed all the fun of the fair at Aussie World.....but wait there's more to come, including the Noosa Food & Wine Festival. Until then... - Jill.

## Tassie woos China

**WITH** China the fastest growing inbound market for Australia, Business Events Tasmania released a new Corporate and Incentive brochure at AIME in Feb.

Creating a great deal of interest from the Asian markets the brochure has now been translated into Chinese to coincide with the visit of an important delegation of professional business event organisers from Hong Kong.

Hosting the visit will be Business Events Tasmania in conjunction with Business Events Australia.

Later this year, Tasmania's Premier Lara Giddings will lead an export industry trade mission to China with representatives from various industries including tourism, mining and international education.

## Accor acquires Cypress Lakes

**THE** Accor Group has acquired its 23rd Grand Mercure hotel with its take-over of the largest conferencing venue in the Hunter Valley, Cypress Lakes Resort.

Building on the resort's already strong conference and leisure business, Accor has been brought in to help attract more international and domestic guests from both conference and leisure sectors, which it plans to do with the assistance of the group's global branding and distribution.

Grand Mercure Cypress Lakes boasts 200 villas with one, two and three bedrooms, an 18-hole championship golf course, restaurant, games room, three outdoor pools, floodlit tennis courts, and fitness centre, extensive facilities able to host up to 1000 delegates, plus the famous Golden Door Day Spa at Elysia.

"The conference and events market is increasingly global in nature and therefore branding and extensive distribution networks are the key to our future direction," said Denis Croke of Cypress Lakes Resort.

"Accor has built up a strong position in the hospitality sector and we believe that with the resort taking on Grand Mercure branding we will be able to tap into a wider Australian and international marketplace."

The Event Centre with a capacity for up to 620 includes 15 purpose-built conference rooms while the Convention Centre has an ability to break down into small rooms catering for up to 500 delegates.

In addition there is an outdoor marquee overlooking the lagoon



pool hosting up to 1000 people for cocktails.

Key events already in place at the resort include the Jack Newton Celebrity Classic, Cerebral Palsy Alliance CBD Golf Escape.

## Brisbane famils

**ON** the second last of Brisbane marketing's successful 'Together Brisbane' famils, seven professional conference organisers spent two days on a familiarisation in April.

Participant Anita Balint, a senior events manager at Commstrat said, "this famil provided so much more insight to the variety and options available in the scenic and relaxing Brisbane city environment.

"It was very informative and enjoyable and has definitely put Brisbane in the forefront of my mind when next formulating ideas for future conference destinations."

A final Brisbane famil is planned for 17-18 May with the 2012-13 campaign to be launched shortly.

Email: [conventionbureau@brisbanemarketing.com.au](mailto:conventionbureau@brisbanemarketing.com.au).

## WIN A TRIP FOR TWO TO VANUATU



During the months of May and June, **Business Events News** is giving one lucky reader the chance to win an amazing holiday for two people to Vanuatu, courtesy of **Air Vanuatu and the Grand Hotel and Casino**.

The prize includes Air Vanuatu return airfares from Syd/Bne/Mel to Port Vila, and five nights accommodation in a Harbour View Room including continental breakfast daily at the Grand Hotel and Casino.

Air Vanuatu offers daily flights from Australia, just over 3 hours away. Complimentary inflight service and the friendliest smiles in the Pacific!

Grand Hotel and Casino offers a relaxing yet sophisticated French style setting, in a prime waterfront location in the heart of the shopping, business and entertainment district. 74 rooms with floor to ceiling windows, own private balcony, Internet access in all rooms and 24 hour room service. We also cater for conferences sizes between 10 - 80 delegates and for groups up to 130 people.

### Q.3: Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila, is situated on which Island?

Hint: vanuatu.travel

Email your answers to: [vanuatu@businesseventsnews.com.au](mailto:vanuatu@businesseventsnews.com.au)

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A SECRET trench has been discovered in the five-star hotel Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi.

Uncovered last August while laying the foundation of a bar Hotel last August, construction workers accidentally discovered an air raid shelter allegedly created during the war.

Found in the depths were an old wine bottle, still-intact light bulbs, air ducts, graffiti and eerie echoes of a war that ended almost four decades ago.

The hotel's general director Kai Speth said: "In the hotel's history, there is a story of the American folk singer, Joan Baez, who sought shelter in this bunker during the Christmas Bombings in 1972."

Stay in paradise at Paradise Palms



This week, Business Events News is giving readers the chance to win one night accommodation for two in a Resort Room courtesy of Paradise Palms Resort and Country Club.

Paradise Palms Resort & Country Club is paradise for discerning visitors; golfers looking for the perfect game, event planners searching for the ultimate venue and wedding parties wishing for a day to remember.

Recently securing its position as a world-class venue for conferences and events, Paradise Palms Resort and Country Club has invested over \$30,000 in the latest, state-of-the-art audio visual equipment.

Be the first to send the answer: comp@businesseventsnews.com.au

What are the names of the two purpose built function rooms at Paradise Palms?

Hint:paradisepalms.com.au

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Sendai's wild card at IMEX

AFTER the East Japan Earthquake of 11 March, 2011 and with a previous impressive list of international congresses in the medical and science technology fields, Japan's Sendai Tourism & Convention Bureau will make their debut at IMEX 2012 as a Wild Card.

Showing a new determination to be a role model city in terms of disaster preparedness, innovation and strength of community, Sendai is ready to welcome back international conventions and events to the "City of Trees."

Participating under IMEX's Wild Card Pavilion, Yumiko Nakao of the Sendai Tourism & Convention Bureau (STCB) thanked IMEX for the opportunity to use the show as an international platform to share a message from the city's Mayor Emiko Okuyama - "Sendai is ready and we welcome all visitors to Sendai and the Tohoku Region."

In January, International Congress & Convention

Association (ICCA) ceo Martin Sirk who visited Sendai said: "The message for any association thinking about meeting in Japan is simple: don't hesitate, visit the country and see for yourself."

"I can tell you from first-hand experience that you won't be disappointed."

Gary Grimmer, ceo of GainingEdge, was part of the visiting group from ICCA which included Board member Eduardo Chaillo (Mexico Tourism Board) and Asia Pacific Regional Director Noor Ahmad Hamid.

Grimmer agreed: "When you visit Sendai today you remember the news coverage, and the tragedy is a large part of the narrative."

"The story is willingly told out of respect for those who suffered."

"Were it not for that, you would be excused if you didn't realise anything tragic had happened there....Sendai is a normally functioning, colourful, energetic, well-organised community."

Shelley's appointment

SHELLEY Richards has been appointed to the role of general manager of Hobart's largest multipurpose dual hotel and conference development, the Mercure Hadleys Hobart Hotel and the Grand Mercure Hobart Central.



Richards who has more than 20 years of experience within the hospitality industry and a previous stint with Hadleys, will oversee the operations of both the historic 1834 Mercure Hadleys Hobart Hotel and its newly opened 21st Century apartment extension - Grand Mercure Hobart Central Apartments.

"With air capacity and domestic travel set to improve, it's an exciting time to be coming home to Hobart," Richards said.

Mandarin wins

MANDARIN Orchard Singapore, the flagship hotel of Asian hospitality group Meritus Hotels & Resorts, was the overall winner in the Best Hotel category for Singapore at the International Hotel Awards (Asia Pacific) 2012-13.

Receiving the award at the event, Michael Sengol, ceo of Meritus Hotels & Resorts comments, "we are privileged and grateful for this exciting distinction."

"To emerge as the overall champion in the Best Hotel category is yet another testament to our continued passion for service excellence in the midst of the fast-growing and highly competitive hospitality industry."



AFIG chooses CHC

THERE'S welcome news from Christchurch's business tourism industry that the city has been chosen to host the 2016 International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) Working Week - an international gathering tipped to add \$3m to the local economy.

With the theme of the conference 'Opportunity from disaster - surveying the challenges,' it is expected that the conference will bring 700 surveying and mapping experts and their partners from around the world to Christchurch, making it one of the biggest international gatherings held in the city since the February 2011 earthquake.

The New Zealand Institute of Surveyors and premium sponsor Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) bid for conference's hosting rights with the support of Tourism New Zealand and the Conference Assistance Programme (CAP), and the University of Otago's National School of Surveying and Conference Innovators.

Christchurch & Canterbury Convention Bureau manager Caroline Blanchfield was thrilled by the hard work put in by the bureau, Tourism New Zealand and venue management company Vbase in helping prepare the bid for the conference.

"We've worked hard to make this happen and are thrilled that Christchurch has been chosen."

"It's going to really lift the business tourism sector's spirits and sends a clear message to the industry that Christchurch is still in the game."

"Our plan now is to build on the momentum and actively pursue more international conferences for our city," Blanchfield says.

Right now, Christchurch's planned new convention centre is the proposed venue for the conference, however two other options - CBS Canterbury Arena and the Air Force Museum - were also presented to the organising committee.



## CONTACT US:

### Publisher

Bruce Piper

### Editor

Jill Varley

### Contributors

Bruce Piper, Chantel Long

### Advertising:

[advertising@](mailto:advertising@businessesnews.com.au)

[businessesnews.com.au](http://businessesnews.com.au)

**P:** 1300 799 220

**F:** 1300 799 221

PO Box 1010

Epping, NSW, 1710

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## Euromic welcomes Emeco to MICE travel

**EUROMIC**, an international consortium of companies specialising in MICE travel, events and destination management, has added a new World Affiliate in Dubai, Emeco DMC in the Emirates.

In welcoming Emeco, Giancarlo Carrera, president of euromic said, "It is a privilege to count them among us."

Elhamy El Zayat, chairman of Emeco DMC in the Emirates and Karim Aly, both well known and respected DMCs in Egypt and through their frequent visits to Australia, said they are honored to become a part of this organisation.

"We are excited to introduce many more visitors to the bustling souks and majestic desert of Dubai through this prestigious association."

# Melbourne takes first

## IT'S official!

According to the Victorian Minister for Tourism and Major Events

Louise Asher, Melbourne has been recognised as the number one city in Australia for conferences and congresses and has also been ranked number nine in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Country and City Ranking Report 2011, produced by The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), saw Melbourne's number one ranking ahead of any other Australian city at number 31 in the world, nine places up on the previous year.

ICCA rankings apply to international association meetings with 50 or more delegates, that occur regularly, have been held in three different countries, and have been held within the listed city during 2011.

Asher said the results were an incredible achievement for Melbourne and a true reflection



of the city's premier business events offering.

"To be recognised officially by the top congress and convention association in the world is a major coup for the city and one that we are incredibly proud of," Asher said.

"Furthermore, to be ranked ahead of Sydney and Brisbane, our biggest competition in Australia, is perhaps the most important indicator that our city's facilities and overall international appeal are outstanding."

Melbourne hosted 62 major international meetings during the qualifying period.

Over the next two years, Melbourne will host seven of the world's largest medical and scientific conferences, proving that the city "continues to be a global leader in innovation, scientific endeavour and ground-breaking research."

IF you haven't been to Fiji for some time, prepare yourself for a surprise. Starting with Nadi Airport, which as the country's international gateway, is really starting to look like one, while the bustling marina at Port Denarau has morphed from a boat dock to a great place to eat, drink and have a real good time, even if you're not there to catch a boat. What hasn't changed is the warm Fijian welcome which for our famil group saw us being serenaded at the airport by a Fijian group, courtesy of multi award winning DMC Rosies, prior to boarding their luxury 53-seater coach for the Radisson Blu Resort Fiji Denarau Island.

Denarau is a sophisticated, integrated area offering a range of premier resorts, an international championship golf course and an abundance of activities including those at Port Denarau.

Our first night at Radisson Blu Resort Fiji, which sprawls around five swimming lagoons, an adult's only pool and lush gardens, says Shashita Nand, Radisson's sales & marketing director, is ideal for small groups. "We are a perfect size for a group of 120 with conference facilities, or 150 without."

Next morning Pacific Destinationz took us to a tropical beachside breakfast at the Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa. This stylish resort offers the island's largest meeting space, accommodating up to 720 people. En route to visit the Ratu Ilaisa School to take flood donations and goods, we stopped off at Jack's Hill where a tented setting showcased the event possibilities of this outdoor venue. After an unforgettable experience interacting with the children and their teachers at the Ratu Ilaisa School, our next destination was the Shangri-la's Fijian Resort & Spa. Set on a 44 hectare island, this iconic property has 442 guest rooms, three reception facilities and countless bars and restaurants. We indulged in an afternoon of water sports and later a buffet dinner and Polynesian fire dancing show. Tour Managers, whose Tapa cloth covered brochure won admiration from the group, drove us into the lush Sigatoka valley for a thrilling jet boat ride with Sigatoka River Safari, followed by lunch at a most welcoming hinterland village. Our arrival at the InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa was welcomed by a local children's choir, a golf buggy transfer to cocktails on the beach, set up by Rosies and a surprise 'Avatar' style dance performance with dinner and accommodation in a Club InterContinental's Hill Villa, it is easy to understand why we were blown away by this resort and the thought that went into our visit.

Our last day in Fiji was onboard the *MV Oolala*, one that started with live Fijian music the minute we stepped aboard ATS Pacific's bus (they run some 80 C&I programs a year), and continued throughout a day of snorkelling and sailing through the Mamanuca island ds.

Sheraton Fiji Resort with its capacity to hold 1200 for cocktails, was our final destination – a night that started with themed cocktails on the beachfront, cleverly devised by ATS Pacific, dinner at the resort and site inspections of the Westin Resort & Spa and the Sheraton Denarau Villas.

Truly a memorable 'Fiji Now' experience.



GETTING TO KNOW: Fiji Now



## MCEC transforms for its clients

IT's not every day that your get to spend time in a gold themed room encrusted with glistening chandeliers enjoying a sit down dinner while listening to live performances by Katie Noonan and the Ten Tenors.

**BEN** was lucky enough to be invited to the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre's "glamorous evening of celebration at the venue's signature event for the year" where the grand banquet room was transformed to showcase the adaptability of the space.

For the second year the business events market in Melbourne was given the chance to experience what the MCEC has to offer when they book an event at the Centre. MCEC chief executive, Peter King said the night is an "example of the skills we have in this organisation" and a way of showcasing the MCEC's technology, AV, food and wine and sustainability and design, and he hopes that this event will be a must attend event in the Business Events market in Melbourne. MCEC has taken out many architecture awards for its sustainable design features and was accredited silver by EarthCheck. **Pictured** below at the event are Kendall Munns and Angelique Dingle, Melbourne Convention Centre with Rebecca Elliott, Melbourne Convention + Visitors Bureau.



**RIGHT: YUM!**  
Crystallised sugar and sweet desserts...



**ABOVE:** The Ten Tenors line up to show off their talent.

**BELOW:** Katie Noonan entertains the crowd with her amazing vocal abilities.



**ABOVE:** Bob Annells, Chairman Melbourne Convention Exhibition Trust and Peter King, MCEC ceo.

**BELOW:** The beautiful room.

