



Catching up on NSW

IT was nice to catch up with Destination



NSW ceo Sandra Chipchase at the launch of Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour.

Firing on all cylinders as always, she gave me a first hand account of where various buildings would stand in the transformation of this former shipping yard and explained the layout of the six-hectare Headland Park at the northern end of Barangaroo.

From all appearances the Langham Hotel seems likely to lose its Darling Harbour views, but I could be wrong.

Highlight of the Opera Australia function (see [page 5](#)) was to mingle with the show's talented production and design team and to have the opportunity to talk and have a photo taken with the star of Carmen, Rinat Shaham, who had just flown in from New York - Jill.

Evans joins CC Fiji

CAPTAIN Cook Cruises Fiji has announced the appointment of Karl Evans as general manager.

Evans appointment coincides with the company's ongoing commitment to develop their business further in Fiji and to always provide the highest quality product to passengers.

Evans will join the management team headed by Fiji md Commander Semi Koroilavesau.

The MCVB rebrands

MELBOURNE'S Convention & Visitors Bureau is no longer, following an announcement yesterday by Karen Bolinger ceo of a complete rebrand for the

organisation to the Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB).

Bolinger said the rebrand signified MCB's commitment to its values of innovation, excellence and leadership.

The launch of the new brand, including a new logo and, significantly new name, removes the word 'Visitors' to adequately reflect its core business of attracting business events to the state.

Designed to modernise MCB's brand identity; it keeps the traditional 'M' silhouette but refreshes it with a vibrant and energetic red, adding colour gradients to create a spotlight effect and using a new, more contemporary font.

Part of the bureau's Strategic Business Plan launched in May last year and the decision to undergo a complete rebrand, Bolinger said, "The process started with our name; the term 'Visitors' was taken out to disassociate ourselves with leisure tourism, as MCB's sole responsibility is for the procurement of business events that attract delegates to Victoria.



"Our new brand now clearly aligns us with our vision, mission and values, and reflects MCB's status as one of the world's premier convention bureaux."

Further details will be revealed next week during Australia's inaugural Business Events Week.

MCB's new branding across all collateral will all be revealed at the AIME media conference at 11am on Monday, 25 February in Room 103 at the MCEC.

Four Points Perth transforms

AFTER a six month, multi-million dollar refurbishment, the Four Points by Sheraton Perth guest rooms and public areas are now complete.

All 278 rooms and suites have undergone a total transformation with work desks and wireless internet access and completely renovated bathrooms.

The lobby area has been refreshed; while practical, yet stylish new uniforms showcase the simplicity of Four Points and complement the friendly approach of the brand.

The four meeting venues have been refreshed with new carpet, paint work and finished with the latest audio-visual technology.

NZ Convention

Centre to go ahead

NOW the NZ Auditor General has given the deal between the government and SkyCity the green light, the planning and construction of the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) can finally begin.

Conventions and Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) has been pushing for an international convention centre in Auckland for years and says it is key to New Zealand attracting lucrative international conferences and conventions.

"The sooner the deal is consummated the better as New Zealand desperately needs to go to the next level in terms of new infrastructure", says CINZ chief executive Alan Trotter.

A new 2500 capacity convention centre is planned for Christchurch and a scoping study is underway for a new convention centre in Queenstown.

Add a new international convention centre in Auckland into the mix and Trotter says "it will open up a world of new possibilities for the business tourism industry."

It is estimated an international convention centre will boost New Zealand's economy by more than \$90 million a year.

Today's BEN issue

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Ben Carnegie

Silversea launches Galapagos for groups

WHEN Silversea Cruises launches its luxury expedition ship, *Silver Galapagos*, in September, it will be the first of its kind in the Galapagos Islands and an ideal vessel for small group bookings or a full ship charter.

"It's especially suited to companies seeking a truly aspirational corporate and incentive experience for their staff or clients," said Karen Christensen, general manager & director sales/marketing, Australasia Silversea Cruises.

Commenting on an upsurge in business in Australian incentives to **BEN**, Christensen said, "This sort of business has picked up in the last year, especially for group numbers from 15-120.

"We have been organising charters and incentives for a long time now, it's a big piece of Silversea's business," she said, adding that incentives are a constant "It's charters that are harder to secure."

The year-round schedule of 7-day expedition voyages aboard *Silver Galapagos* takes in the highlights of the untouched Galapagos with two round-trip Baltra Island itineraries.



Christensen went on to say that all-inclusive fares are ideal for organisers wishing to know all costs upfront.

"Once on-board groups will enjoy full-scale exploring from an enclave of luxury at sea that includes spacious, ocean-view accommodation; sumptuous gourmet cuisine; the personalised service of a butler; fascinating shore excursions; and a generous selection of all-inclusive shipboard amenities, such as complimentary beverages, wines and spirits served throughout the ship, and stocked in-suite beverage cabinet."

A range of meeting facilities include a main lounge for full ship charters while Silversea's corporate and incentive experts will work with organisers to personalise special events and experiences throughout the voyage.

Beyond the *Silver Galapagos*, Silversea has a fleet of six ultra-luxury small ships accommodating 132-540 guests that offer aspirational voyages in all seven continents, see - www.silversea.com.



crumbs!



IN China there's a full-on replica of an English town in Shanghai called Thames Town, complete with cobblestoned streets, red phone boxes and a pub.

In Longyearbyen, Norway – a remote Arctic town, dying is not allowed. Well, you can die, but no body has been buried in the local cemetery in almost a hundred years.

Why? The perpetually frigid temperatures prohibit corpses from properly decomposing.

IN Monowi, Nebraska Elsie Eiler is the sole resident. The population had been diminishing since the 1930s, when it had 150 residents, and by 2000, it was down to just Elsie and her husband, Rudy, who has since passed away. Today Elsie serves beer at the Monowi Tavern and turned her late husband's collection of 5,000 books into a one-room public library.

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Singapore's MasterMICE launch



LAST week 40 PCO's and agents were invited to the launch of the Singapore MasterMICE series on Sydney Harbour, hosted by the Singapore Tourism Board and Marina Bay Sands.

The evening provided an update for these key trade partners on Singapore's enhanced BTMICE offerings while also gaining insights from leaders within the MICE industry – MasterMICE.

Highlighted were many of Singapore's new developments around Marina Bay including Gardens by the Bay, Marina Bay Cruise Centre and Marina Bay Sands, while touching on Singapore's world class venues and experiences.

It was the first in a series of MasterMICE programs that will see more customised events, famils and assets to event planners throughout the year.

Pictured above are: Andrew Dyson and Ashleigh Crocker, 212F account directors; Keeva Lim, Singapore Tourism Board assistant director, conventions & meetings and James Croll, Sane Events business development manager.

Taking off the blinkers

BEN Carnegie, business manager for inPlace Recruitment expressed his support of the need to train more people for the industry to improve its competitiveness, as expressed by MEA's chief executive Linda Gaunt, (**BEN** 13 February).

Carnegie believes the industry also needs to take their blinkers off and to build on the depth of skilled people they have within their companies.

He reports currently 90% of companies are not prepared to broaden their search for new employees outside of events, only considering candidates with similar experience to their own company.

"This approach means people are moving from one direct competitor to another with the same old skill set and how long will it be before they move on again?" says Carnegie.

"To build a more robust and versatile work force for the future companies need to be more open, look at the inherent and transferable skills people can bring to the role along with fresh eyes.

"Recruiting people who have first-hand knowledge and experience from a different background will bring skills that you can use to grow your company, skills you may have



not even known the benefits of having before," he said.

Currently a business development manager working for a TMC is rarely considered for a role with an events agency despite their transferable skills in the areas of sales, negotiation, logistical management, customer service and hunting skills.

"They also have the same industry contacts that are required for an events agency plus additional knowledge of what the consumer wants from an end users point of view".

Carnegie advocates initiatives such as the new Australian Events Academy coupled with a non-blinkered recruitment approach is the way forward to building a quality and versatile workforce for the future.

inPlace Recruitment are at AIME this year on stand 1906.

Novotel's new client incentive



BRISBANE'S only airport hotel to offer a dedicated conference centre, the Novotel Brisbane Airport, is so delighted with the success of its first three years of operation, they have launched a special offer designed to welcome new clients to the hotel.

New clients will save 10% off the total event bill when they book a conference, meeting, or event during 2013.

General manager, Alex Penklis said, "We're located just minutes from the airport which makes us perfectly situated to pick up regional business and corporate meetings and events.

"We've catered for a whole range of industries including retail, pharmaceutical, transport, confectionary/food processing, manufacturing, government, finance, transport and more," he said.

The hotel's state of the art conference centre has six event rooms and holds up to 120 delegates.

The promotion is valid for new clients only, while the total event bill/value excludes accommodation and audiovisual.

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Tourism Australia supports Luxperience

TOURISM
Australia (TA) has entered into a wide-ranging agreement with Luxperience, the annual flagship travel trade event for luxury and experiential travel in Australasia.



Within the agreement, TA will use Luxperience to promote unique travel experiences to a global market of buyers from the Americas, Asia, Middle East and Europe.

They will also work with Luxperience to implement an international media familiarisation program, which showcases Australia's destination experiences for discerning travellers of means, in addition to supplying social and digital e-marketing support.

Tourism Australia general manager destination development, Craig Davidson said "We took a close look at Luxperience last year, to see how it went in its first year and, to be honest, were impressed, particularly at the profile of the international buyers who attended.

"With the event now bedded down and gaining some real

momentum, we are looking forward to getting more involved," he said.

Helen Logas, ceo of Luxperience said, "We greatly appreciate Tourism Australia's involvement.

"We will work closely with them on many aspects of Luxperience 2013."

The 2nd annual Luxperience takes place 2-4 September at the Overseas Passenger Terminal.

More details on Luxperience visit - www.luxperience.com.au.



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What Price Loyalty?

An opinion piece from
Martin Kelly.

STARWOOD, IHG and Accor, three of the world's largest hotel groups, have decided all customers are not equal, running loyalty programs that actually devalue some of their biggest clients, thereby inverting the way these schemes are supposed to work: that is, to give those who spend the most money the greatest rewards.

They've created double-standard loyalty schemes under which the points-earning power of meeting planners, who often book multiple guest rooms and meeting space, is a fraction (as low as 16%) of standard customers.

Let me explain using Starwood as an example.

Under Starwood Preferred Planner meetings organisers earn 1 Starpoint for every US\$3 spent with a maximum of 20,000 Starpoints per event.

Starwood Preferred Guests get 2 Starpoints for every dollar they spend, no cap.

That is six times more, or less, points earning power than an events organiser for the same money.

It means an event organiser has to spend US\$48,000 at a Starwood property such as Sheraton On The Park in Sydney to receive a single "reward" room at the same hotel which, according to the Starwood website, would cost from 16,000 Starpoints on a random day (in this case 11 March).

A Starwood Preferred Guest, however, would spend US\$8000 to receive the same room.

That's a huge difference and one that's unlikely to engender loyalty from the meeting planner, who is certainly not going to make a decision to book an event at a Starwood property based on its loyalty scheme.

Other hotel groups have similar schemes though not so skewed.

"IHG's PriorityClub gives meeting planners 3 points for every \$US spent compared with



10 points for standard member bookings, while Le Club AccorHotels gives meetings bookers 1 point for every €2, half the standard reward.

Online Travel Agent Hotels.com has undertaken extensive research into what consumers want from such programs.

Simplicity was absolutely paramount and not only that, being rewarded quickly," says Katherine Birch, Marketing Director of Hotels.com in Australia and New Zealand.

Under its scheme, customers get a free night for every 10 they book with the type of room calculated by averaging out the 10 night spend.

Of course, you can't book conferences through Hotels.com so any comparison falls down but it is hard to argue with their findings – simplicity and immediacy.

I'm not sure if the question was asked, but I am sure that fairness would also rank highly.

That is, everybody's money being treated with the same respect because loyalty cuts both ways."

Kelly produces the TRAVELtech and No Vacancy conferences and writes a weekly tourism business 'Checking In' for the Weekend Australian.

MEANWHILE Business Events News welcomes your response or any feedback on today's subject matter, so email us at - info@businesseventsnews.com.au.



business events news

20th February 2013

Grays' Say

Peter Gray, managing partner of Motivating People, presents a regular *Business Events News* feature on current issues in the MICE industry.



MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION

As we embark upon another AIME the conference and incentive communities have been plunged into uncertainty by Julia Gillard's decision to give eight months notice of her intention to call an election.

I'm not a Political animal and the thought of eight months of party political broadcasts, in whatever guise they're delivered is not one I'm looking forward to.

But what concerns me more is the effect on conference and incentive clients.

Whichever party you support their divergent policies mean that it's more difficult to predict how the economy will react to the outcome of the election.

Will the Aussie dollar nosedive (which would be good for inbound groups but not those travelling outbound)?

Will the new government's policies maintain confidence within the various industries for which our communities manage events?

I have spoken to a number of people in both the conference and incentive communities and the message is the same: client companies are unwilling to commit to expenditure they can't guarantee they will have thereby canceling or postponing events until there is more certainty.

The incentive message remains the same: to correct the effect of market shrinkage it's necessary to increase market share and incentive programmes are probably the most effective way of doing this.

From the next few months of economic confusion there could still be some good outcomes.

Peter

Gray is an independent Incentive Practitioner, he can be contacted on peter.gray@motivatingpeople.net.



Carmen to seduce Sydney



ONCE again, Sydney and indeed Australia is in for another eventful treat when Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour presents Carmen, next month.

Launched on Monday night, guests were entertained on a glass sided boat as it drifted by the Carmen site on Mrs Macquarie's Point.

Lyndon Terracini, artistic director of Opera Australia said at the launch, "There is no stage in the world as spectacular as this one."

"Sitting on top of Sydney Harbour with the city skyline as the backdrop, this is opera like you'll see in no other place in the world."

"Add to this world-class singers, unforgettable music and set/costume designs to rival a Hollywood movie set, and you've got a truly unique reason to visit Sydney."

With eighteen performances over a three-week period from 22 March to 12 April, Carmen is described as the "cultural highlight of the city in 2013".

Israeli superstar Rinat Shaham, described as the world's best Carmen, a guest at the event,

sang a spirited Habenera for the delighted guests.

Speaking at the launch, Destination NSW, ceo Sandra Chipchase expressed her delight to be a partner in the event.

"We heard comments from people after last year's La Traviata that there hadn't been such an exciting event in Sydney since the Olympics.

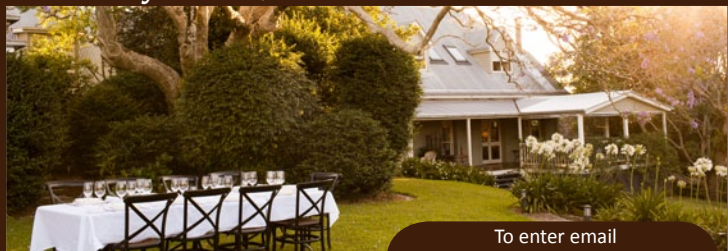
"Not only is the opera's location fascinating, last year 41,000 people attended the event, 5,000 of them from interstate and overseas.

"I think we are going to deliver a Carmen that is a fresh look at an old favourite, - it's the most popular opera in the world," she said.

Pictured above are the producers & directors of Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour: Kylie McOmish, Louisa Robertson and Gail Edwards, together with Anna McLnerney and Sandra Chipchase ceo Destination NSW.



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