



Pure gold!

PRIOR to attending AIME I was fortunate to be part of a famil to Ballarat, Victoria's third largest city.



This surprising destination, more popularly known for its first-class recreation of Ballarat during the 1850s gold rush - Sovereign Hill - has some seriously impressive colonial buildings, fountains and statues that are especially evident in the heart of Ballarat.

It struck me that there was something strangely familiar about the streetscape in Lydiard Street until I learnt that Ballarat is where the AAMI television ad of crashing cars was filmed - an event that closed parts of this thoroughfare of historic buildings for four days.

Believe me, it's worth going there just for the experience, however more will be revealed about Ballarat's outstanding meeting facilities and its incentive potential in **BEN** in the coming weeks.

MEANWHILE Julie Burton - manager, Noresearch Conference Services at the Southern Cross University, responded to my column piece (**BEN 27 Feb**) *Thank goodness for Glenys* with this: "I could not agree with you more on the efforts of Glenys and Joanne from The Conference Connection at every AIME I have been to.

"I have since used The Conference Connection for all my transfers whenever I do business in Melbourne or surrounds (at least annually). "It may only be a coach transfer for 100 guests to and from a dinner event or a field trip out of town but they have never let me down," she applauded.

Today's issue also showcases Coffs Harbour, NSW with a **Getting to know** feature and a **full page on New Caledonia**.
 Enjoy the read - *Jill*.

Conference at Watsons Bay



TWELVE kilometres from Sydney's airport, in one of the Eastern Suburbs most spectacular harbour locations, the Watsons Bay Boutique Hotel and Watsons Beach Club has opened for business.

The ambitious project of Fraser Short and Arthur Laundry follows their purchase of the 32-room hotel, bar and eatery in December last year.

Boasting unrivalled views of the harbour foreshore, the Watsons Beach Club is a new addition to the Sydney dining scene with its tongue-in-chic décor, design and inspired seaside touches.

Chef Eric Jansson (formerly of Mrs Sippy, Icebergs Group) showcases his personal passion for fresh seasonal produce and quality seafood.

The Watsons Bay Boutique Hotel with its luxurious, light

filled suites and floor to ceiling windows, offers impressive harbour views.

Suite categories range from the park view king suite (at \$190/night) through to a harbour view grand bridal suite (from \$545/night).

Also available is an impressive array of conference and event facilities for corporate functions and memorable events.

Three harbour front function spaces can hold events from 40 to 500 guests.

The sunset room, due for completion in early March, is a New York Hamptons inspired space with a capacity of 150 for seated dinner or 220 for cocktail events.

The function space, which can be booked out in its entirety, has a total capacity for more than 1000 people.



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Carnival AIMEs well

CARNIVAL Australia has had a successful first appearance at AIME according to bdm, Rebecca Mutanen.

The cruise giant representing P&O Cruises, Holland America Line and Seabourn is said to have impressed visitors with what cruise has to offer "including the value, variety and on-board state of the art facilities".

Over the two days of AIME Carnival Australia were busy with enquiries and are looking forward to a continued growth in the cruise/MICE market.

"Clients and companies are looking for new and unique experiences and because of the tremendous growth within the cruise travel sector people seem to be very interested to further explore this channel," she said.



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THOSE who travel at the pointy end of the plane may not be able to relate to this seating plan, but more simple economy class folk will be nodding their collective heads in solemn agreement.

A tongue-in-cheek airplane seating chart has been released by a website known as "Pleated Jeans", which details different types of people that we sometimes get stuck seated next to during a long flight.

Pictured in the coloured section is 'Your Seat' and describes the people you are seated next to such as a loud snoring guy, armrest hog, a crying child and unattentive mother, a coughing person, overweight person, somebody who has fully reclined their seat and another with "wicked" body odour.

Both you and the airline clearly don't know the trials and tribulations that await in the minefield that is economy travel.

So beware, take care, check out the seating plan on the internet, ring the airline and beg to be seated with the 'normal people.'



Loyalty programs – the argument continues

IN response to Martin Kelly's opinion piece 'What price loyalty' (**BEN** 20 Feb) about customer loyalty programs, Julia Furlong, a former Starwood employee now living in Hong Kong wrote the following.

"LOYALTY program points, regardless of the brand, equate to commission payments.

Meeting planners already get commission for the rooms they book, (usually 5-10%, cold hard cash). Yes, they may influence the client's decision on where to stay, but that is what the basic commission is for.

Now, there is a complaint that the extra commission, (loyalty points), is not fairly calculated.

John (for instance) books 10 rooms at Hotel XYZ for company ABC. Let's say the rate is \$250; company ABC pays for the rooms at hotel XYZ, 10 x \$250 = \$2,500.

Hotel XYZ pays commission to John, let's say 10% = \$250

Hotel XYZ gives loyalty points to company ABC employees, let's say 1:1 basis, = 2,500

Should hotel XYZ give loyalty points to John, in addition to the cold hard cash commission he earns?

Who paid hotel XYZ? company



ABC or John?

Should hotel XYZ give John loyalty points of 2,500, or is 833 a fair amount for John who has also earned \$250 cold hard cash commission?

I think John doth protest too much," Furlong said.

Standing by what he wrote, Martin Kelly said of Furlong's response, "Not all 'meeting planners' manage events for other companies.

"There are many people like myself who own their conferences or events and run them as standalone businesses.

"I have several brands, one of which has been run annually since 1999, another since 2007, each with their own cost centre.

"There are no commissions involved, no kickbacks.

"Every dollar paid to a hotel for conference space and catering – often in excess of \$20,000 for a single event – comes straight from my business, my pocket, not someone else's.

"I don't see any reason why that spend should be treated any differently to a standard loyalty program member," Kelly said.

We value your feedback - let us know what you think on info@businessesnews.com.au.

Sign up for Whitsundays famil



FORTY corporate planners, PCOS and media are being invited to be part of a large famil planned for The Whitsundays, in June.

Announced at AIME by Whitsundays Marketing and Development Limited (WMDL) ceo Danial Rochford, it is one of several updates from the region during the press conference.

"The Queensland Government has announced a doubling of funding to Queensland Regional Tourism Organisation following the election last year, with a contestable fund of \$3.9 million for marketing," Rochford said.

"WMDL was one of only two convention bureaux in the state to successfully secure funding from this fund, and as a result we have a major marketing calendar ahead of us for 2013."

Also launched was a brand new electronic meeting planner.

"In line with the launch of the new meeting planner, we have re-launched our Whitsundays Business Events website," he said.

In addition, a comprehensive advertising campaign for the region, linked with other trade activity, was also revealed.

Expression of interest for the famil is being taken at whitsundaysbusinesses.com.au.

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business events news

4th March 2013

The wearing of green

ONCE again the Sydney Opera House will turn green on 17 March, St Patrick's Day.

The Opera House, with many other iconic world sites joins an ancient wonder of the world - the Pyramids of Giza and a modern wonder of the world - Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro whose decision to turn green for the first time is considered a major coup for Irish Tourism.

Other newcomers include the famous 'Welcome' sign in Las Vegas, the Little Mermaid in Copenhagen, HMS Belfast in London, City Hall in Houston, Texas, the Citadel in Jordan, the International School in Bonn and the Allianz Arena in Munich (home ground of FC Bayern).



Carlson's new hotels

FROM its annual business conference, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group has announced the development of five hotel properties and one opening in the Caribbean and South America.

The newest additions include: Radisson Aquatica Resort Barbados; Radisson Grenada Beach Resort, St. George; Radisson Port of Spain Trinidad; Park Hotel by Radisson Vespuccio, Santiago, Chile and the newly opened Park Inn by Radisson San Jose, Costa Rica.

These new hotels boost the group's portfolio to 50 in the Caribbean, Central and South America currently operating or under development.

"We look forward to capturing the attention of both high-end business and leisure travellers with these key destinations, while providing unmatched accommodation and customer service," said Bob Kleinschmidt, cdo, Americas.

Grimm appoints Chua to Thai property

WELL-KNOWN hotelier Wolfgang Grimm, the former GM at Sydney's InterContinental hotel has appointed Michael Chua as director of sales at Grimm's Ao Nang Cliff Beach Resort at Krabi in Thailand.

Based in Krabi to maintain a close relationship with tour operators, Chua previously spent three years at the famous Manila Hotel in The Philippines, two with Best Western and seven with Peace Laguna Resort in Krabi.

WIN a two night stay at Spicers Vineyards Estate, Hunter Valley

This week **Business Events News** and the Spicers Group is offering one reader the chance to win a two night midweek stay at **Spicers Vineyards Estate** including breakfast.

Set amongst the vineyards and natural bushland in the Hunter Valley, the estate has recently built four new luxury suites and a day spa facility, creating an exclusive retreat for Executive Meetings and small team Incentives for up to 12 guests.

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LATAM flies into Sydney

SOUTH

American airline LATAM - a merger between LAN Airlines and TAM Airlines, formed in June last year between two of the continent's largest carriers - held a lunch last



Friday at Sydney's Park Hyatt for guests to meet representatives from the South American tourism industry - many of whom attended AIME last week.

LATAM marketing manager Johanna Raeder spoke of the

70% rise in visitor numbers to Peru in 2012, with nine flights a week from Sydney and of the ease of access of getting to many of South America's aspirational destinations.

Speaking with **BEN** at the event, Raeder said she is keen to engage more fully with Australian/New Zealand meeting, incentive and event planners and of their intention to hold an event in September.

Keep reading **BEN** for further details.

Pictured above are LATAM's marketing manager Johanna Raeder with South American Tourism Industry representatives at the Park Hyatt Sydney.

Mixing it at Wolgan

EMIRATES Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa, a three-hour drive or 45-minute helicopter ride from Sydney, is inviting corporate delegates to mix business with pleasure this year.

Joost Heymeijer, Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa general manager said, "The resort delivers impeccable service to business travellers, combining utmost privacy with high-end conferences.

"Delegates can expect to experience unparalleled luxury accommodation, fine dining, conference facilities, business workspaces and nature-based activities all within our secluded 4,000 acre conservation property," he said.

During their stay, delegates can feast on regional, seasonal and organic produce and in-between conference sessions and meetings guests can recharge whilst exploring the resort's extensive property filled with native wildlife.

More adventurous activities, such as four-wheel drive safaris, mountain biking and horse-riding expeditions also provide ideal team-bonding opportunities.

The resort's state-of-the-art facilities include a fully equipped business centre, complimentary wireless and hardwire internet access through fast fibre-optic network and a private boardroom, the Creekside Room, for up to 12 guests.

Several workspaces are also available in the suites.

For more information email reservations@wolganvalley.com.

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Register for the Cook Islands roadshow

COOK Islands Tourism is hitting
the road during the week of
29 April with evening trade
presentations themed, 'It takes
a village' to highlight the best of
South Pacific travel.

Dates include: Brisbane,
Monday 29 April, Qld Gallery of
Modern Art 6-9pm; Melbourne,
Tuesday 30 April, Melbourne
Museum 6-9pm; Newcastle,
Wednesday 1 May, Harbourview
6-9pm; and Sydney Thursday 2
May at the National Maritime
Museum 6-9pm.

Featured is an exhilarating
cultural showcase, speed training
from 12 visiting suppliers,
wholesaler networking, a
destination update, cooking
demonstrations and a dancing
and drumming performance - see
cookislands.travel/AUSroadshow.

New Hilton ballroom

HILTON Phuket Arcadia

Resort & Spa has completed
a renovation to their Grand
Ballroom, the conclusion of which
bolsters the resort as one of the
most competitive MICE venues in
Phuket and Asia Pacific.

"The newly upgraded ballroom
now offers the latest technology
to meet the demands of clients
who wish to hold conferences in
Phuket," said the resort's general
manager, Andre A. Gomez.

The 850 square-metre Grand
Ballroom has an event space
capacity for up to 800 people
theatre style, while in-house
services include an on-site
professional audio-visual outfit
offering easily adjustable fibre
optic lighting, sustainable
architectural style, secretariat
room, and a large pre-function
foyer.



Gardens by the Bay - what's next?

SINGAPORE is about to take a
paradigm shift from its moniker of
'Garden City' to 'City in a Garden,'
as it enters the next phase of
development of its ambitious
'Gardens by the Bay.'

The Gardens are an integral part
of Singapore's vision and the gem
on the "necklace of attractions" at
Marina Bay, with its cutting-edge
innovations in environmentally
friendly technology, sustainable
natural resource management.

Part of a much more holistic and
all-encompassing program, the
project aims to enhance greenery
and flora, and to raise the quality
of life in Singapore significantly.

Started as a project by the
National Parks Board, the
Gardens have since grown
to become an independent
organisation, seen to boost
Singapore's international
attractiveness as a place to live,
work and play.

As part of Marina Bay, the
Gardens will eventually occupy
101 hectares of prime land.

For more information go to the
Gardens website at -
www.gardensbythebay.com.sg.



Getting to Know: Coffs Harbour

by: *Jill Varley*

TIGER Airways' inaugural service from Sydney to Coffs Harbour last month provided a timely update to this region woven between the mountains and the sea and blessed with one of the best annual holiday climates in Australia. The position of Coffs halfway between Sydney and Brisbane makes it ideal for organisers looking to bring in delegates from either of these two cities.

With 101 things to do, and counting, Coffs Harbour is a city with everything to keep the group happy when the meeting is over, from snorkelling or skydiving to kissing seals and dolphins – you can even do an airport arrival pickup in a funky Beach Buggy.

Sprawling across 40 hectares of lushly maintained gardens and the greens of a nine-hole resort golf course is the Novotel Coffs Harbour Pacific Bay Resort. A major attraction for meeting groups of five to 500, as it is for the Australian Wallabies and other football teams who train at the resort's Elite Training Centre, the Novotel's new and impressive Pacific Conference Centre is no slouch either with a capacity to seat up to 600 delegates. Additional to this is the resort's Bay Marquee, a semi permanent structure for exhibitions and events of every configuration.

Set on Charlesworth Bay, the beach provides the perfect setting for companies like Liquid Assets Adventure Tours to put the team through sea kayaking, surf rafting and surf lessons. Then back at the resort Time Out Xperiences will have them riding Segways, enjoying Inflatable Rock Climbing and Bungy and revelling in the spills and thrills of Walk on Water balls. Within its grounds the Novotel is also home to the Zip Circus Flying Trapeze School and trapeze lessons, a challenging means to engage the team and for team building exercises.

Away from the Novotel, Coffs has more than 140 other places to stay including Breakfree Aanuka Beach Resort, Opal Cove Resort and Aqualuna Beach Resort, as well as an array of excellent restaurants and cafes. Especially popular are those found on the jetty foreshore, while sea life encounters from kissable creatures are to be had at Dolphin Marine Magic.

Just a 45-minute direct flight from Sydney or a six and a half hour drive, Coffs and the surrounding region has everything an event organiser could dream of.



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