



## Catching up

I caught up with Michelle Papas, Luxperience's director of marketing and buyer relations



during the week – a collaboration dedicated to matching the needs of high-end experiential travel buyers with inspiring suppliers.

Michelle told me that plans for this year's luxury trade show are gaining real momentum following last year's inaugural Luxperience and especially since Tourism Australia announced a partnership with them.

"Luxperience," she said is a Sydney based event, "but we don't aspire to be an AIME, we want to be seen as a global event."

"We want the industry to know there are other things out there," she maintained, revealing that Luxperience's boss Helen Logas is currently on an overseas mission speaking with interested parties - Jill.

## The GC's Ambassador Program

**HEADING** the drive to promote the Gold Coast as a leading business events destination, ten new Ambassadors have been appointed to the Gold Coast Business Events Ambassador Program.

Making the announcement was Her Excellency Penelope Wensley AC, Governor of Queensland, who is also the Patron of the program.

An initiative of Gold Coast Tourism, the Ambassador Program aims to unite a group of influential leaders from key local industries who are passionate about promoting the Gold Coast to the rest of the world and committed to bringing congresses, conferences and corporate meetings to the City.

"I congratulate everyone involved with this timely initiative," the Governor said.

"Business tourism is a key part of the Gold Coast tourism industry, contributing significantly to its success in terms of yield and influence.

"Last year business events contributed over \$270m to the Gold Coast economy," she said.

Gold Coast Tourism director of business events, Anna Case said, "Over the last 18 months the inaugural Gold Coast Business Events Ambassadors have secured ten international business events for the Gold Coast.

"These events are estimated to deliver over \$9 million to the local economy.

"Through bringing these events to the Gold Coast, our Business Events Ambassadors play a crucial role in the consolidation of the Gold Coast's reputation as a world-class business events destination," she explained.

## Sofitel Fiji appoints Ridgway

**SOFITEL** Luxury Hotels group has appointed experienced accommodation industry specialist Alexandra



Ridgway as director of sales & marketing for the brand's flagship property in Fiji, Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa.

Ridgway who commenced her management career with Sofitel's parent company Accor in 1999, was most recently with the Fraser Suites in Sydney where she was director of sales & marketing and later acting general manager.

## Booth's starring role

**BRAD** Booth from Moreton Hire has been appointed as the EEAA Young Stars inaugural chairperson by the EEAA Young Stars steering committee.

The Committee also announced the first event in Brisbane will be a Young Stars and Leaders Table to be held at the RNA Showgrounds on 23 April.

The event will provide an opportunity for face-to-face mentoring over dinner with an industry leader.

Launched in July 2012, the program aims to give younger members a platform to share their views, ideas and experiences as well the opportunity to have a bigger voice in the work of the

Association.

EEAA general manager, Joyce DiMascio welcomed the selection of Brad to lead the Young Stars and to provide an interface with the association.

"He will be an excellent ambassador for the Program as he is passionate about the industry and works around Australia presenting the value of exhibitions to clients," she said.



## WIN a two night stay at O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat



This week **BEN** is giving one reader the chance to win two night's accommodation in a luxurious self contained villa for up to four people, a wine tasting at Canungra Valley Vineyards and early morning bird walk valued at over \$1,000 courtesy of **O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat, Villas, Lost World Spa and Conference Centre.**

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## Dressed to thrill

**THERE'S** nothing like getting involved in a good idea to enhance an event or experience.

Top marks then go to Austrian Tourist Office who hosted an ASTW (Australian Society of Travel Writers) lunch at The Commons in Darlinghurst this week.

Prior to the day and to get into the spirit of Austria, guests were asked if they would like to wear a Dirndl or Lederhosen.

The Dirndls, especially flown in from Austria, were not, as Australian director Austrian Tourist Office Astrid Mulholland-Licht made clear, "run-up in a back room, in Bankstown!"

A tie in with Austria's 'Dirndl Temptation - Dare to flirt back' promotion, its once humble origins as the work-garb of farmers, today has a modern twist, making it fun, feminine and flirty.

Tie the apron bow of your Dirndl to the left and it signals you are available, to the right and you're not.

Travel through Salzburg, the Salzburg Lake District, or other rural parts of Austria and you'll find the Dirndl is part of the local lifestyle.

What's more, in rural Austria you can hire a Dirndl to wear for the day.



Now wouldn't that be fun for an incentive group?

**Pictured** above are Quinton Long; Peter Needham, Jill Varley and Michael Gigl, regional manager USA and Australia Austrian Tourist Office.

And below is Astrid Mulholland-Licht, Austrian Tourist Office.



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## Australia/India alliance formed

**WITH** the primary goal to enhance and influence bilateral tourism between India and Australia, the newly formed Australian India Travel & Tourism Council was officially

launched in on Wednesday night, at Sydney's Grace Hotel.

Envisaging strong growth for the organisation, AITTC chairman Sandip Hor said, "Our next major task is to formulate a strategic plan for the Council, to outline our future direction, and specifically identify initiatives to implement, to add value to both the industry and members."

Making apologies for his inability to attend the event, Philip Pratley, general manager of the Grace Hotel and an AITTC member, read a statement from the Minister for Tourism,



Martin Ferguson welcoming the formation of the organisation.

"As India is one of the world's fastest growing tourism markets, and the Australian government is committed to growing visitor numbers from India, organisations such as the AITTC, which aims to promote travel and tourism between Australia and India, will play an important role in increasing the number of visitors."

The function also acted as a driving force for potential new AITTC members.

For further info visit [www.aittc.net](http://www.aittc.net) or call 02 8252 8777.

## JW's Hong Kong offer

**THE** JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong, a venue that plays host to a variety of business events and caters up to 1,400 guests for large incentive and conference groups, is offering attractive accommodation meeting group packages from now to 31 July as well as special meeting deals for events held in April and between June and August.

Their accommodation meeting group package for 20 rooms or less, allows one free guest room upgrade to the next category.

It is priced from HK\$2,300 per room per night for a deluxe room plus added benefits.

In addition, special half-day meeting packages are available for April to August from HK\$680 per person.

## A LIST

**THE** A LIST Guide, the A-Z Guide for organising events in Australia, has just released the 2013/2014



edition and if you get in quick, you can get it for free.

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# business events news

22nd March 2013

## Ipswich shows its style

AN invitation to **BEN** to attend Metro Hotel Ipswich International's second MICE Expo attracted conference and events planners from as far afield as the Gold Coast.

It was an experience that included a Brisbane Airport pickup in a white stretch limo, the fine hospitality of the Metro Hotel, hot air ballooning over Ipswich and the Lockyer Valley, a stroll through historic Queens Park, a helicopter tour of the city and a touch down at beautiful Brookwater Golf & Country Club with lunch overlooking the fairway at Drift Restaurant and a luxuriating spa treatment at Sang Day Spa.

Pictured **left** is an aerial view of Ipswich and **below** Gary Long & Div Grover, Metro Hospitality Group, enjoying Ipswich's Queen's Park.



**Left:** Graeme Day of Floating Images who kindly showed **BEN** the sights of Ipswich from the sky



**Pictured at the Mice Expo on left** are: Sally Porteous, Red Lanyard with Ted Matthews, general manager Metro Hotel Ipswich International



**Right:** Katherine Wyman and Ashton Cooper, Ipswich Hospital Foundation

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**Right** are:  
Nathan Telfer, Sofitel Gold Coast Broadbeach,  
Jackie Klus Sofitel Brisbane Central and Div Grover, Metro Hospitality Group

