



## Summer nights

'GREASE' was the word on Wednesday evening



when David McDonald, Accor's area manager NSW, hosted a Rock 'n' Roll themed event at the Novotel Darling Harbour, followed by a performance of 'Grease' at the Lyric Theatre.

Dressed in their leathers and quiffed hairdos, 'Sandy and Danny' and a roller skating babe in red joined guests on the hotel's rooftop deck, for hamburgers, hot dogs and an assortment of other fifties goodies.

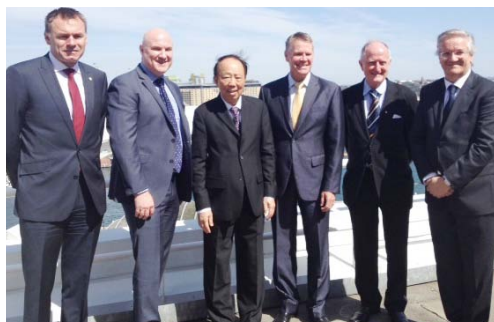
A great night out for any group, Grease had Rob Mills in the role of Danny, rising star Gretel Scarlett as Sandy, the multi-talented Todd McKenney camping it up as Teen Angel and Bert Newton playing slick veteran disc jockey Vince Fontaine.

A great idea for a staff reward - a night at the hotel and show tickets - you can't go wrong!

**MEANWHILE** Australia's first office\* show wrapped up yesterday - see **page four** for our exclusive pics of the event. *Jill*

## Four Points towering expansion

A NEW tower is set to be added to the Four Points by Sheraton hotel in Sydney, with the \$160 million project helping address the drop in event facilities in the city's CBD during the remake of the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre.



The major enhancement will add 230 rooms to what is already Australia's biggest hotel by room number, giving it a total of 900 guest rooms once completed.

It was announced yesterday by Singapore-based M&L Hospitality which owns the property.

Addressing the launch event, NSW deputy premier Andrew Stoner said, "The expansion of Four Points by Sheraton Sydney is a strong vote of confidence in the NSW visitor economy and the government's vision to transform Darling Harbour into one of the world's best areas to live, meet and be entertained."

The new tower will commence construction next year and is

expected to be finished in 2015.

The Podium, which will add 4810m<sup>2</sup> of convention, exhibition and function space, and 5000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space, will be built over the Western Distributor freeway, "an unsightly feature," that architect Philip Cox said he was "happy to bury!"

**Pictured** from left: hotel gm David Fraser; Sean Hunt, regional vp Starwood Hotels & Resorts; Michael Kum, M&L Group; Andrew Stoner; Philip Cox & Neil Maxwell, ceo M&L Hospitality.

## Lunch with Layne!

**BUSINESSES** hosting a corporate conference or event at Wyndham Hotel Group's South Pacific locations are being given the opportunity to win an inspirational guest appearance at their event by champion Aussie surfer Layne Beachley.

The winning group will receive a three hour appearance from Beachley as a presenter, lunch guest or even a surf instructor.

The obvious location for a delegate surfing lesson is the Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre at Maroolia Beach on the Sunshine Coast, with other venues in Port Douglas, Couran Cove and Golden Beach in Qld; Ballina and Diamond Beach in NSW; Torquay, Dandenong and Philip Island in Vic; Dunsborough in WA; Seven Mile Beach, Hobart; and Noumea, New Caledonia.

To enter, book a corporate event by 20 Dec 2013, to be held by the end of 2014, and then see the competition details online at [www.wyndhamAP.com/winlayne](http://www.wyndhamAP.com/winlayne).

## New for Launceston

A PREMIER new \$1.3 million function space in Launceston has been unveiled by Peppers Seaport, giving it new conference and events facilities.

Peppers Seaport owner Errol Stewart said the new space would lift the region's profile as a conference destination.

"Launceston can again become a significant destination with a substantially increased capacity to grow its share of the conference market," Stewart said.

With full AV facilities, a new kitchen and private bar, the Centre offers two spaces - the Silt Centre with a capacity for 100 people cocktail or theatre style; and the Bridge Room for a more intimate setting.

Delegate packages start from \$60 - [seaport@peppers.com.au](mailto:seaport@peppers.com.au).

## Glebe Island taking shape



**ABOVE:** Four massive cranes swung into action earlier this week at the new Sydney Exhibition Centre @ Glebe Island, lifting the 150 tonne roof and frame for the largest of the exhibition halls into place.

The hall covers about a third of the 25,000 square metre site, with the rest of the structure to be completed over the next six weeks to allow testing and

commissioning before the new venue opens for its first event in February 2014.

Sydney Exhibition Centre @ Glebe Island will be the facility for shows and exhibitions between 2014 and 2016 during the construction of the new Darling Harbour facilities, with gm Malu Barrios saying it will be an "appropriate, high quality interim venue on our beautiful harbour".

# INVITATION

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## Get qualified at special rates

A **NEW** partnership between the Professional Conference Organisers Association (PCOA) and TAFE NSW – South Western Sydney Institute (SWSi), one of Australia's largest educational institutions, now gives members the opportunity to gain extra skills and formal qualifications, at exclusive rates.

Courses include an exclusive double Diploma of Events / Travel and Tourism; Diploma or Advanced Diploma of Events; and Diploma or Advanced Diploma of Travel and Tourism.

Creating the prospect of extra skills in leadership, project management, business relationships, proposals and bids, conference programs, business documentation, budgeting and risk management, students will have up to six months to complete their chosen course.

The program will commence in 2014, with intakes in February, April, July and October.

A maximum of 15 places will be allocated for each intake.

Jennifer Milward, a PCO

Association spokesperson, said "we encourage all members who do not currently have a formal qualification to consider this offer, particularly with the knowledge that they may gain credit for skills gained through work experience or prior study."

And SWSi Events Management head teacher, Amanda Good, said the exclusive offer to PCO Association members was a great opportunity for industry staff to gain new skills and advance their careers.

"Professional conference companies are increasingly looking for highly skilled organisers with formal qualifications," she said.

### New Sydney venue



**THE** Dedes Waterfront Group has introduced the newly opened Dedes on the Wharf, which is open for lunch and dinner Wednesday to Sunday at Pier 2 in Sydney's Walsh Bay.

Also available for events seven days a week, guests who make a dining reservation before 31 Dec will go into a draw to win a "Dining Seafari" for four people valued at \$1200.

See [dedesonthewharf.com.au](http://dedesonthewharf.com.au).

### ADMEI gets magical

**THE** Association of Destination Management Executives International (ADMEI) has announced a collaboration with Genie Connect which has seen the digital solutions provider develop a dedicated ADMEI App and web portal.

The new system, which is launching at IMEX America, will provide an ongoing platform for member engagement as well as facilitating the delivery of ADMEI news content throughout the year including an e-newsletter

## Hawaii - perfect for MICE

**EVEN** Mickey and Minnie need a holiday sometime - and **BEN** spotted them yesterday in Hawaii where Disney will officially open an extension to its Aulani Resort & Spa on Saturday 19 Oct 2013.

The family-friendly resort combines Hawaiian culture with plenty of Disney magic, and with extensive meeting facilities the property is ideal for a corporate getaway that is sure to please everyone.

Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa, is located on the main island of Oahu, about half an hour's drive from Honolulu International Airport and away from the hustle and bustle of Waikiki.

It opened just over two years ago and the new extension opening this week includes expanded facilities including a new pool area (pictured above) as well as more dining options.

Conference delegates can enjoy a wide range of facilities including waterslides, snorkelling and meeting Disney characters as well as a stunning spa featuring 15 treatment rooms and a state of the art fitness centre.

There are 351 hotel rooms including 16 suites, as well as 481 two bedroom villas.

Aulani's conference centre features more than 14,500 square feet of space with a main ballroom, four breakout rooms and generous pre-function space.

There are three distinct "event lawns" along with private patios



and terraces, and the new pool area provides a stunning private setting for dinner or drinks.

Delegates are certain to want to hit the shops with the Australian dollar providing such great value, and Aulani is ideally situated about ten minutes from the Waikale Outlets which offers a range of premium brands and a great retail experience.

Access to Hawaii is easy, with Qantas, Hawaiian Airlines and Jetstar all offering direct services from a variety of ports including Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne.

**MEANWHILE** Hawaii Tourism Oceania has reported significant growth for MICE business from the Australian market, which is up 108% year on year.

Destination weddings in Hawaii are also up 30%, with overall visitor numbers tracking towards an estimated 2013 annual total of 300,000 Australians and expectations of another bumper year in 2014.

### AVPartners helps out

**AVPARTNERS** will this year continue to help improve the lives of sick children and young people in WA, once again providing audio, vision and lighting support throughout the 26 hour live Telethon TV broadcast from the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre this weekend.

It's the fifth year running that AVPartners has supported the event, with the value of its sponsorship in excess of \$900,000.

Since its inception in 1968 Telethon has raised more than \$133 million for charitable organisations.

### Singapore special

**SINGAPORE'S** Marina Bay Sands is offering upgrades from as little as SG\$4 per person for conference organisers who book a Meet and Stay package before 30 Nov.

Exclusive rates start at SG\$375 per person including deluxe accom, use of meeting room, morning and afternoon coffee breaks with snacks, working lunch, parking for 20% of guests, AV equipment and more.

The \$4 upgrade offer features an international buffet lunch at RISE restaurant - for more details on the offer **CLICK HERE**.



### SHIPBOARD event, anyone?

The ultimate toy for billionaires, this dazzling new yacht, part of a new fleet of vessels designed by London architect Zaha Hadid for German shipbuilder Bloom + Voss, may well cause many to scratch their heads at its futuristic design.

The largest of the fleet, the 128-metre long 'mothership' yacht (pictured below) has a curvy mesh 'exoskeleton' of support beams that give the vessel the resemblance of Beijing's 'Bird's Nest' Olympic stadium.







# business events news

18th October 2013

## Amex warns of downturn

**AMERICAN** Express says that it expects a slight decline in meetings and events activity across Asia Pacific in 2014 after two years of increases.

According to the Amex Meetings & Events 2014 Global Meetings Forecast, "flat or slight declines in meetings spend per organisation are expected across all regions heading into 2014".

The forecast, released at IMEX America this week, says that the Asia Pacific region in particular appears to be slowing down, with a 1.2% decline in the number of meetings expected next year.

Overall meetings spend is predicted to drop 3.6% as the region shifts towards "greater spend control," with meeting planners also forecasting a 2.4% drop in the number of attendees per meeting.

"While businesses throughout Asia Pacific still recognise the importance of meetings and events, over the past year there has been a shift towards greater control and transparency within meetings programs," said Danielle

Puceta, Asia Pacific director of Amex Meetings & Events.

She said the decreases are believed to be "indicative of a maturing industry and a phase of greater scrutiny".

The forecast also revealed that for the second year running Shanghai ranks as the number one meeting destination choice among Asia Pacific planners, followed by Singapore and then Sydney in third place.

Hong Kong/Macau jumped from seventh position last year to number four, while Bangkok/Chiang Mai was in fifth spot.

Key trends highlighted included increasing engagement via social media and mobile apps, more challenging approval processes, and growing use of non-traditional properties.

## New Palazzo DOS

### PALAZZO

Versace on the Gold Coast has announced that Jenny Ramos has been named as its new director of sales.



Ramos (pictured) moves from her previous role as sales manager of Gold Coast Jupiters

## Fox catering win

**SYDNEY'S** Fox Studios Australia has granted exclusive rights to operate its in-house cafe to Laissez-faire Catering.

The hospitality company beat fifty other tender applications for the five year contract, with the new Cut Cafe opening on 01 Oct.

As well as serving the cast and crew at Fox Studios, Cut Cafe also offers corporate catering.

Laissez-faire also operates catering operations at the Australian Maritime Museum and St Vincent's Hospital.



## Confessions of a compulsive conference-goer

Andrew Klein, director of SPIKE Presentations, presents his front line observations on conferences in a regular feature in **BEN**.

## Angry Birds is the New Doodling

**LET** me confess. I am writing this article on my iPad whilst sitting up the back of a conference room.

Yes, it's mid conference, mid presentation and I'm not listening to the speaker. He probably thinks I am, because every minute or so I look up at him politely and feign interest. But after the 38th identical looking bullet-point heavy PowerPoint slide, coupled with the presenter's half-hearted mono-tonic style, I simply lost interest.

And I can see I'm not alone.

The woman next to me is on Facebook. And I can see the guy in front of me is scrolling through Instagram. Nice picture of a chocolate cake mate.

What's more, I don't feel guilty about it. It's the speaker's fault. If he spent a little more time designing a more engaging presentation and looking a bit more excited to be giving it, we wouldn't have switched off.

Here lies the irony of technology and social media in the conference world in 2013. Whereas just a few years ago it was the height of rudeness to be on your phone or device during a session, these days it is actually encouraged as a way to make delegates more engaged.

Conference Apps, conference Twitter hash tags and forwarding Q & A questions via your devices are all becoming standard practice.

The irony is that if the speaker isn't engaging us, it takes just one tiny finger flick to move from taking notes on your iPad to checking your emails or to move from tweeting key points from



a great presentation to playing Angry Birds during a boring one. And let's be honest. We've all done it.

Back in the day we doodled on a note-pad if the speaker was dull. Now we can run our entire business and social life from the conference room.

So conference speakers, it's up to you. Ditch the endless bullet-points, throw in a few good photos and short video clips, keep your audience engaged, occupied, interested and participating or else you will lose us.

And if you are currently reading this article whilst sitting in a conference room, don't forget to look up at the speaker now so you look like you're focused on their presentation, even though you're not.

For more information about Andrew and what he can do for you at your next conference email [andrew@lunch.com.au](mailto:andrew@lunch.com.au) or visit his website at [www.andrewklein.com.au](http://www.andrewklein.com.au).



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# Welcome to the office\*

**WITH** our first taste of office\* - Australia's first trade show and professional development for those who manage offices – now over after its two day run at the Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, there will be much discussion now as to how well it succeeded.

A world-beating event in its field in the United Kingdom, this fledgling exhibition may not have attracted the biggest crowds, but in fairness it's just a baby finding its feet.

And, if the seminar programs are any indication it has a bright future, with high profile speakers such as Ita Buttrose, Donna Coulling and Susie Barron-Stubley - the latter two being celebrity presenters flown in from the UK by British Airways - drawing capacity crowds.

As the photos show – its not AIME and it's the not previously named ABEE (now inspireEX) but it bears the hallmarks of bigger things to come and we at **BEN** had a surprisingly busy stand.

Well ok, in all humility, we weren't surprised.



## business events news

18th October 2013



**LEFT:** "Celebrity PA" and office\* presenter Donna Coulling - personal assistant to Helena Bonham-Carter and Rachel Weisz - checks out the latest industry news via Wed's issue of **BEN** as she alights from a limo provided by Corporate Cars Australia.

**BELOW:** Some of the on-site muscle was provided by Dylan Skelly and Vita Hemmings on the Virgin Active stand at the show.



**LEFT:** **BEN** editor Jill Varley catches up with Ita Buttrose, Australian of the Year and office\* keynote speaker.



**LEFT:** Tanami Kaye from Edible Blooms.



**BELOW:** Tania Holmes and Stephanie Lynch from the Australian College of Commerce and Management.



**LEFT:** Paul Hinderer from Sydney Props and Specialists.

**RIGHT:** Linda Gaunt from Meetings and Events Australia.

Lots more pics on the **BEN** website at [www.businesseventsnews.com.au](http://www.businesseventsnews.com.au) as well as at [facebook.com/BusEvNews](https://www.facebook.com/BusEvNews).

**LEFT:** Alan Topalak and Matthew Cross from Order-In.

