



Pollie waffle

I KNEW the opening event of the Sheraton Melbourne Hotel last Wednesday was a pretty big deal but I wasn't prepared for the crowd of cameras, writers and broadcasters clamouring around a figure outside the hotel, when I stepped out of my taxi.

Impressed, I assumed it must be the gm Hal Philp and fumbled in my bag for my iPhone.

Stepping into the crush, I saw it wasn't Philp but the Victorian Premier, the Hon Dr Denis Napthine, caught on the hop as he exited the hotel after an official site inspection.

Seems he was embroiled in a controversy after backing the once disgraced bookie Robbie Waterhouse in his bid to get a plum spot on the rails at this week's high-profile Warrnambool racing carnival.

Speaking of politicians, just as NSW was getting used to having George Souris, who drove the merger of Tourism NSW and Events NSW to form Destination NSW as tourism minister, along comes a cabinet reshuffle in the NSW Parliament and Andrew Stoner takes on the Tourism and Major Events portfolio.

He is a minister who has already made a significant contribution, responsible for the International Convention Centre project. *Jill*



Denarau Centre opens



THE Denarau Island Convention Centre has been officially opened, in time for its first event, the Fijian Tourism Expo (FTE).

A traditional ceremony and blessing was conducted for the opening with the Tui Nadi, Ratu Sailosi Dawai, followed by an industry supported cocktail event, Fiji Tourism said.

The expo will be held from 05 to 08 May and Tourism Fiji said in late March that it had sold out, with more than 260 properties and 150 international buyers attending.

The new Centre, located at the

Sheraton Fiji Resort, is designed to accommodate up to 1,500 delegates or 1,200 seated guests.

It is accessed by an undercover walkway to the resort's ballroom pre-function area.



It took \$3.5m and six months to build and a key attribute was the capacity to host large conventions, meetings and events, Starwood said.

It would be a great asset to the island and Fiji in attracting large conferences and events, Tourism Fiji ceo Rick Hamilton said.

The Convention Centre has had industry interest already with six bookings locked in for this year, Starwood said.

Tassie Conf Centre?

THE Accommodation Association of Australia (AAA) welcomed the election of Will Hodgman as Tasmania's new Premier.

AAA ceo Richard Munro said the election would bring a new enthusiasm to the Tasmanian Government's approach to tourism.

Munro said this, coupled with the mandate for reform Hodgman had received, meant there was "every chance" that the Tasmanian business environment would improve.

"Once Tasmania's fiscal challenges are overcome, there may also be an opportunity for the Hodgman Government to invest in major tourism infrastructure, such as a new convention centre in Hobart."

Four pages today

BEN has three pages of editorial plus a full page from (click):

- BridgeClimb Sydney

CWT M&E in China

CARLSON Wagonlit Travel Meetings & Events (CWT M&E) has launched into China's Meetings and Events market.

The division said it had been granted a tour operating license by China's National Tourism Administration, meaning it can now provide inbound and domestic meetings and events in China.

CWT said this made it the first global travel management company to manage both its travel management and M&E operations in China, in-house.

CWT China general manager Albert Zhong said the company's rapid growth in the last decade was a reflection of the market's "tremendous" potential.

"China's business travel market has grown to become the second largest in the world according to the GBTA, and meetings and events are key drivers of this."

"With the launch of CWT Meetings & Events in China, we aim to grow our presence in this space and provide both local and multinational companies the expertise and support they need to organise creative, cost-effective and impactful meetings and events."

Jumeriah reminder

A REMINDER to Melbourne readers from Tere George of Jumeriah Hotels and Resorts that the group's invitation to enjoy a special breakfast forum is set for 30 Apr from 8.30am at Crown Towers, Garden Room 3.

A structured morning is planned with key Jumeriah staff to provide a platform to hear specific product updates and discuss partnership and promotional opportunities along with group and event enquiries; places are limited so to RSVP, email:

anzsales@jumeirah.com



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Bureaux on show



THREE business events organisations are on show at the European Associations Congress, highlighting multi-million dollar developments underway in Australia's industry.

The Adelaide Convention Centre, Business Events Sydney and the Melbourne Convention Bureau joined Business Events Australia at the congress, from Saturday to today.

The Adelaide Convention Centre (ACC) (with the finished concept **pictured** above) was undergoing a \$350m two stage redevelopment which would increase the venue's capacity and flexibility, with stage one due to open at the end of November, the Centre said.

An ACC spokesperson said the Congress provided a platform to sell the expanded platform to key decision makers in Europe, which was an associations hub.

It had had a very positive response to its re-development, the spokesperson said.

Sydney's developments include the new International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney).

Built to the tune of \$1b, it would include a convention and exhibition centre, and would be located close to a \$2b business precinct which would also contain

conference facilities, Business Events Australia said.

Business Events Sydney business development gm Kristian Nicholls said the Congress was one of the key association events in the organisation's calendar.

Europe was a core market, with over 50% of the international association market headquartered there, he said.

"We are confident that this year's congress in Paris will provide strong opportunities to engage with an increased number of relevant European associations."

The Melbourne Convention Bureau is halfway through its most successful two years on record in terms of international association conferences and attending the Congress would expose the MCB to about 250 association decision makers in Europe, ceo Karen Bolinger said.

"Approximately 80% of our role at MCB is focused on securing international association conferences, and Europe is where the majority of association headquarters are based.

"It is therefore essential that we partake in business development activity, such as this Congress, in the region."

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Letter to the Editor

PETER Gray's column about hotels that charge for WiFi (**BEN** 23 Apr) prompted this response from a reader:

"Just to advise that I fully agree with Peter Gray's comments about WiFi and internet.

"When organising conferences or meetings, I will not sign a contract with a hotel that charges for WiFi and internet.

"I travel extensively for pleasure and have not paid for the last few years for either of these very day to day requirements."

We welcome any comments.

If you would like to weigh in on this or any other subject, email us at

info@businessesnews.com.au.

MEANWHILE the Sheraton Melbourne, who do charge for WiFi access, admitted that globally charging for WiFi is a "big issue."

"At the moment, across Starwood in the Asia/Pacific, which includes the Sheraton brand, we have a flat rate of \$5 per hour or a daily rate of \$20, which is more competitive than most Australian five star hotels," said director of sales and marketing Andre Jacques.

"In the end, with free WiFi becoming available in public areas, it will be up to tourism boards and local governments to push the issue."

Weighing into the debate, Starwood Hotels & Resorts regional vice president Sean Hunt said, "Sure there are cheaper hotels who offer free WiFi but it's very slow and we find that corporates would rather pay for quick access as do leisure guests, especially those with children who are constantly on the internet downloading.

"They want their access instantly and are more than willing to pay \$20 a day."

Finally, throwing some light on the subject, Andre Jacques conceded, "If it comes to an event 'deal breaker' we would look at it being included."



SOMETIMES corporate speak can be a little hard to decipher; what are verticals and can you really optimise your core values through gamification?

So, in the spirit of helpfulness, **BEN** has compiled a list of some 'corporate' words and their actual meanings, using [Oxford Dictionaries](#).

Synergise, n - The interaction or cooperation of two or more organisations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects.

Dynamic, adj - (Of a process or system) characterised by constant change, activity, or progress.

Solution, n - A means of solving a problem or dealing with a difficult situation.

Heart starter



WHEN the 2014 Grand Prix roars into Victoria's Albert Park in March, spectators will see the results of brand experience company Carrspace's year long Renault campaign.

Previously a quiet achiever at the event, as the engine supplier to four of the 11 teams on the Formula One grid, Renault are using the concept of the engine being the 'heart' of the car in several brand experiences, designed to reach race fans, customers and everyday drivers.

It will include a live experience in the general admission area of the event, pop-up activations in both Melbourne and Sydney, an interactive app and online component as well as in-dealership elements.

For more, [CLICK HERE](#).

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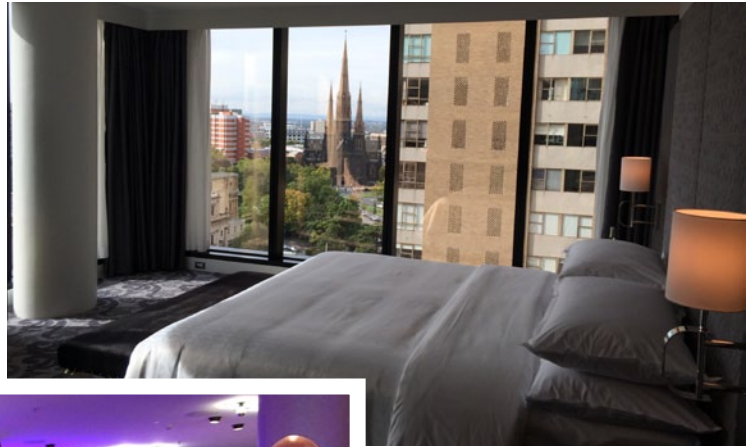
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Sheraton Melbourne's grand debut

THE red carpet was laid, the Golden Age Development Group flew in for the occasion, the Moët flowed and the Victorian Premier, the Hon Dr Denis Naphthine, joined the Sheraton Melbourne Hotel's general manager Hal Philp, his staff and key Starwood representatives, when Melbourne's newest five star hotel officially opened last Wednesday evening, the first of five in the Pacific region in 2014.

Attended by 200 VIPs, dignitaries, celebrities and corporate guests, Naphthine said it was good to see the Sheraton name return to Melbourne after a nine year absence and that the hotel would be a major drawcard for tourists and business, with the facility featuring a floor for convention facilities capable of hosting over 200 people.

Media commentator and MC Melissa Hoyer welcomed the guests who mingled in the Sheraton Ballroom among deluxe food stations, one of six function rooms in the 174 room boutique hotel.



TOP RIGHT: The view from Treasury Garden Terrace Suite at the Sheraton Melbourne Hotel.

BELOW: From left are Zone2f general manager Joe Wojcik and Starwood Hotels and Resorts global sales account director Nick Berry.



LEFT: From left, Incentive Conference & Event Society inaugural president Nigel Gaunt, Starwood Hotels and Resorts regional vice president Sean Hunt, Sheraton Melbourne Hotel general manager Hal Philp, Sheraton Melbourne Hotel director of sales and marketing Andre Jacques and Nick Berry.



ABOVE RIGHT: Event producers Alexandra Nhill and Melinda Merson of Peter Jones Special Events.

LEFT: From left are Golden Age Development Group principal and owner Jeff Xu, Premier of Victoria Hon Dr Denis Naphthine and Hal Philp.



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