



Strike me!

IT'S a story set in 2050, based in an Australia beset by global warming, where an evil corporation is at war with the citizens who fight back in the form of 'The Resistance'.



Suspending reality, this scenario was played out by the *Travel Daily*, *Cruise Weekly*, *travelBulletin*, *BEN* and *Pharmacy Daily* teams during the annual Christmas party at Laser Strike.

Dressed for combat in laser tag armour and guns, there was much ducking, crawling and snaking through the 'alleyways of a city' where danger lurked in unlit corridors, lights flashed and cries of "damn you" and "arrgh, I'm down," could be heard throughout this adrenaline-packed experience.

It was heaps of fun and is the perfect fodder for a team-building event.

MEANWHILE at the Shangri-La Hotel Sydney, it's nice to have back in the fold vice president and general manager Michael Cottan, previously general manager of the hotel from 2003 to 2008.

In the interim, and based in Shangri-La's regional office in Singapore, he held the position of executive vice president for Southeast Asia and Oceania, where he was responsible for the success of 27 Shangri-La hotels and resorts located in Australia, Fiji, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Myanmar.

Jill

MCEC's healthy year

THE Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) had a record year, and hosted six large international health conferences, up from two in 2013.

The conferences attracted more than 40,000 delegates and generated more than \$209m in economic impact for Victoria, MCEC said.

These health conferences included the International AIDS Conference in July (*BEN* 18 Jul) and most recently, the World Cancer Congress, held this month with more than 2,500 delegates attending.

Last year, the Centre hosted two large international health conferences, attracting more than 35,000 delegates and generating more than \$179m in economic impact, an MCEC spokesperson told *BEN*.

The 2013/14 financial year had been a record one for the Centre, with August its most successful month in history, seeing more than 100 events (*BEN* 05 Sep).

In 2015, the Centre would continue its 'Team Melbourne' partnership and major event strategy with the Melbourne Convention Bureau to deliver large international events to the city, MCEC ceo Peter King said.

MEANWHILE Victorian Labour has stayed mum when it comes to the MCEC expansion.

The Coalition government committed to the expansion (*BEN* 24 Oct) but the newly elected Labor government did not reply to *BEN's* queries about whether it would fund the expansion.



King said planning for the expansion was progressing and the Centre would be speaking with the new Minister and administration over the coming weeks.

WA Regional Events

TOURISM Western Australia has advised that its Regional Events Scheme 2015-16 round closes on 12 Jan.

The annual funding round was for smaller, developing regional events across the state, it said.

CLICK HERE for more.

Luxperience early bird offer extended

LUXURY travel exhibition Luxperience has extended its early bird deal of 10% off to 18 Dec.

CLICK HERE to register.

On the Horizon

AN \$8M refurbishment has put the wow factor into Shangri-La Hotel Sydney's new Horizon Club Lounge, which opened on Thursday.

Up for contention as Sydney's most luxurious and spacious at 335 sqm, it creates a rival for Crown Melbourne's Crystal Club with its even more spectacular Sydney Harbour views.



Also reopened are 90 refurbished rooms on the hotel's top five accommodation levels including two additional rooms, a Grand Harbour View and a Darling Harbour View.

The lounge itself has an expanded dining area able to accommodate 123 guests, a



striking giant brass and crystal light feature and a beautiful four metre long marble-topped solid timber centrepiece with a cold well from which premium Australian wines are served.

Upgraded boardroom facilities seat 10 and now take in harbour views, with full AV equipment.

The hotel's vice president and gm Michael Cottan said the Horizon Club lounge was an "extraordinary design achievement".

Pictured from left is Cottan and Shangri-La Hotel Sydney director of sales Lachlan Harris.

For more photos, **CLICK HERE**.

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MEA takes a selfie

TAKING a leaf from Max Turpin's GENERating change column (**BEN** 5 Dec) not to recreate the annual event identical to the one you've used before, NSW Meetings and Events Australia (MEA) did just that when the entertainment and dancing was provided by the talented Song Division, and The Ultimate Selfie by EventPix caused a selfie meltdown.



Trevor Connell, so many selfies were taken that the system crashed when it reached 1,000.

An innovation of EventPix's

MEA's European chic theme was used to great effect as guests sat, lolled, pouted and posed on a bright red motor scooter against a changing backdrop of famous European landscapes.



The images were then transferred from the camera for a quick edit then uploaded to Facebook

or a dedicated photo gallery for immediate sharing.

Too much fun!

Pictured above from left is Frederic Brohez, gm InterContinental Double Bay, Linda Gaunt, ceo MEA and Simon Baggs, chairman MEA.

CLICK HERE for more photos.

Novotel's new-look



THE Novotel Sydney Parramatta has completed the refurbishment of its 11 conference and event spaces.

The spaces have capacity for up to 550 people with the Lennox Ballroom (**pictured**) receiving a customised lighting and colour system in the ceiling.

The hotel is offering several conferencing deals to celebrate the launch.

CLICK HERE for more.

Adelaide nabs \$9m conference - again

ADELAIDE has won the bid to host the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association Conference and Exhibition 2018 for a second time, following its win in 2012 (**BEN** 12 May 12).

Held once again at the Adelaide Convention Centre, the bid was a collaboration between the venue and a number of organisations including the Adelaide Convention Bureau, the South Australian Tourism Commission and groups in the South Australian oil and gas industry, SA Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis' office said.

About 3,000 delegates were expected to attend the four day conference, with delegate expenditure expected to be \$9.4m, Koutsantonis said.

"The trade and investment opportunities and knowledge sharing that this conference will also facilitate is significant for our local industry."

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BCEC WiFi upgrade

THE Boston Convention and Exhibition Centre (BCEC) has announced a \$2.6m WiFi upgrade to increase the number of access points from 113 to at least 580.

The Massachusetts Convention Centre Authority said phased implementation of the new system was slated for May through to September

CLICK HERE for more.

Darling Harbour flyover

SYDNEY is buzzing with new development, new infrastructure, new vessels on the harbour and hotel refurbishments.

At the vibrant hub of this is the \$1.1b Darling Harbour transformation.

In a meeting with International Convention Centre Sydney ceo Geoff Donaghy recently, **BEN** was shown an animated video of the Darling Harbour Live development.

This showed a fly over of the convention facilities, capable of hosting three fully separate, concurrent events, the 5,000 sqm external event deck, the theatre with a capacity of 8,000 sqm of meeting space, the adjacent Sofitel hotel with its 600 rooms, the sweep of prime waterfront location and the upgraded public space for up to 27,000 people.

CLICK HERE to view it.

Wyndham in Melbourne

WYNDHAM Hotel Group has opened its first hotel in Melbourne, the Wyndham Hotel Melbourne.



The development consisted of two towers with 531 apartments, which would operate as a mixed-use property, as 86 apartments would be offered through WorldMark South Pacific Club by Wyndham, the company said.

Hotel services included meeting space, Wyndham said.

Langham Sydney opens

THE Langham Sydney re-opened on Tuesday, with guests arriving from midday, after its \$30m make over (**BEN** 25 Jul).

ben Events Calendar

BEN's calendar details events at various venues across Australia.

If you have an upcoming event you'd like us to feature, email info@businesseventsnews.com.au.

8-12 DEC

Royal Australian Chemical Institute National Congress; Adelaide Convention Centre; www.racicongress.com

8-9 DEC

ACTE Global Corporate Travel & Meeting/Events Education Conference - Sydney; Sheraton on the Park; www.acte.org

6 FEB

Perth Convention Bureau's (PCB) 2015 Aspire Awards workshop luncheon; Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre; enquiries email aspire@pcb.com.au

20 FEB

DMS Workshop; Doltone House Hyde Park, Sydney; enquiries email sydneysvp@destinationmarketing.com.au

23 FEB

DMS Workshop; Crown Towers, Melbourne; enquiries email melbournersvp@destinationmarketing.com.au

16 MAR

Ni hao WA 2015; Aravina Estate, Yallingup; www.tourism.wa.gov.au

4 MAR

NT Muster; Ivy Ballroom, Sydney; enquiries email trade.tourismnt@nt.gov.au

5 MAR

NT Muster; Park Hyatt Melbourne Ballroom; enquiries email trade.tourismnt@nt.gov.au



business events news

8th December 2014



crumbs!



LOOKING for accommodation with a difference for your delegates? How about a Mate's Motel?

The snappily named concept is actually a push by the Queensland government to encourage young people not to drink and drive in the Christmas holidays, by urging them to stay at a mate's house rather than drive after drinking.

The campaign encourages hosts to invite guests to stay the night after a party, and there's even a website where users can create their own personalised motel sign for their house - **BEN** of course gave it a go, but considering our motel looks awfully like an office, we're not sure it deserves the five star rating we gave it (which apparently includes services such as pizza warmed on request).



NZ had its own (hilarious) Mate's Motel campaign a while back, fondly known as 'Ghost Chips' - [CLICK HERE](#) to view.

AE, TripAdvisor give \$50 back

AMERICAN Express (AE) and TripAdvisor have partnered on a deal for Australian travelers.

By logging onto TripAdvisor, connecting an American Express Card and spending more than \$150 on an American Express Travel Offer, users will receive \$50 back until 31 Jan.

For more, [CLICK HERE](#).

TNZ new regional manager

TOURISM New Zealand (TNZ) has a new South and South East Asia regional manager in Steven Dixon.

Previously North America business events manager, Dixon would lead the organisation's activities in markets including India, Indonesia and Thailand, TNZ said.

Dixon had worked with TNZ since 2011, it said.

Getting the etouch

OLIVER Kinross, an internationally operating business research organisation headquartered in the United Kingdom, has chosen etouches, provider of cloud-based event management software, as the 2015 registration partner for MICE Asia Pacific Exhibition (MICE Asia) in Singapore.

etouches Asia Pacific region gm Alan Ivory said for the first time, buyers and exhibitors would experience a "seamless" real-time event registration process.

The MICE Asia event brings together Asia's leading meetings, conference, exhibition and event organisers and takes place from 10 to 11 Sep in the Suntec Exhibition Centre.

Oliver Kinross European sales director James Scott McKenzie said etouches had impressed the company with its commitment along with its strong presence in the business events sector to deliver a registration tool unique to anything the industry had seen to date.

Registrations for MICE Asia officially opened on 24 Nov.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information about the show.



FACE : FACE

Gillian Taylor

Director of business development
Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre



Business Events News recently caught up with Gillian Taylor, director of business development at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC). Previously, Gillian worked for the Abu Dhabi Convention Bureau and Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority.

What's it like waiting for the OCEC to be complete ?

It is rather like standing on the top of the Jabal Akhdar mountain, one of the Sultanate of Oman's most spectacular regions, perched 2,000 metres above sea level, overlooking a dramatic gorge and waiting for the sun to rise, with a day ahead full of opportunities, promises and excitement.

What analogy best describes being director of business development at the OCEC and why?

A team player - being part of an enthusiastic and passionate team working together to make the OCEC the leading venue of choice in the Arabian Gulf.

How important is the Australian business events sector to Oman? How much business has the Centre seen even before its opening?

Australia is very close to our hearts; the OCEC is managed by AEG Ogden, one of the largest venue management companies in the Asia Pacific, and our sister venues are located in Sydney, Brisbane, Cairns and Darwin. The feedback and interest we have received from this market is exciting and we look forward to exhibiting at AIME in February.

What is the biggest point of difference when it comes to working in Oman versus working in Australia?

In Australia it is all about instant results and to-do lists, and in Oman too, but doing business

revolves much more around personal relationships - a meeting always starts with engaging in conversation and trying to get to know the person first; asking about the health and well being of their family for instance, whilst sharing Arabic coffee and Omani Halwa, a delicious sweet local delicacy, considered a symbol of Omani hospitality.

What one thing makes Oman stand out as a business events destination? What could the sector do better?

The destination itself. Oman has so much to offer conference and corporate meeting organisers - there is so much to see and do with the history and culture. Could do better - well, large conventions have wanted to come to Oman but there has not been the right venue. Now there is with the opening of the OCEC.

What one Arabic phrase should Australian visitors learn to make instant friends in Oman?

'Masha'Allah'. It means 'you are blessed' and is my favourite phrase in Arabic, typically said in soft warm tones and always in response to wonderful things, and the Sultanate of Oman is most certainly blessed.

What one thing should delegates conferencing in Oman make sure to pack?

A book called "101 Things to See & Do in Oman - top tips to make your stay memorable".

Business Events News is Australia's newest online publication dedicated to the vibrant meetings, incentives, conferences and events sector.

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