SYD plan’s event possibilities

THE final Sydney Metropolitan Strategy has been released, with several initiatives that could boost the city’s events hosting capabilities.

‘A Plan for Growing Sydney’ includes a goal of growing a more internationally competitive Sydney CBD.

The plan said the city’s diversity, culture and appeal as a place to live contributed to its ability to attract international events and exhibitions, as well as tourists and skilled workers.

To achieve this, one of the actions identified was diversifying the CBD by enhancing the cultural ribbon connecting new precincts including Barangaroo and Darling Harbour Live.

The government would establish “strong connections” between the various locations, including the to-be-revitalised Bays Precinct, the plan said.

The development of a hub for arts, culture and entertainment in Parramatta was also planned, with a first stage being consideration of options for a revamped Riverside Precinct, which would make Western Sydney more attractive to international conferences and music acts, the plan said.

Other actions included developing a business case for new sports facilities in Western Sydney, including an outer stadium with capacity and facilities to host high profile events, and the possibility of a major new exhibition facility such as a new museum in the Parramatta Cultural Precinct.

The Tourism and Transport Forum said the strategy charted a course for new precincts and major centres that, if delivered well, could make Sydney even more attractive to visitors.

The NSW government now needed to update its Transport Master Plan so infrastructure matched planning, CEO Margy Osmond said.

CLICK HERE to read the strategy.

Accor, Huazhu partner up

ACCORD and Huazhu Hotels Group have signed a long-term alliance to create a hotel company in China, with ibis, ibis Styles, Mercure, Novotel and Grand Mercure hotels in China to become part of Huazhu as Accor’s master-franchisee in China, Mongolia and Taiwan.

Accor would take a 10% stake in the company, and would continue to own and develop its luxury and upscale brands in China.

Accor said 350 to 400 new Accor branded hotels were planned in the midterm.

Domestic spend figures up

FIGURES for overnight trip expenditure for domestic visitors to NSW, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australian and the Northern Territory were all up for the year to September.

The NT saw a 20% increase on the year to September 2013 to $1.1b, while Victoria saw a 14% increase to $9.6b and WA saw an increase of 12% to $4.6b, according to the latest Tourism Research Australia figures from the National Visitors Survey.

Spend for Queensland, Tasmania and the ACT was down, while NSW saw a 1% increase to $13b.

Overall visitor spend was up 4% to $53.7b for the year to September, the figures showed.

CLICK HERE to access the domestic figures.
Cairns events surge

BUSINESS Events Cairns and Great Barrier Reef says hosting business events has resulted in a 63% increase in business event leads.

Business events director Rosie Douglas said leads worth $18.4m and corporate and associate meetings worth $4m had been confirmed for the region since 01 Jul, up 50% on the same period last year.

The G20 and ATE15 had placed Cairns on the business events map, she said.

There had been strong interest from New Zealand, with five leads for incentive groups worth $500,000 picked up at the Pacific Area Incentives and Conferences Expo, the best result at the event in several years, Douglas said.

Ballarat Lodge deal

BENTLEY Property Group has bought the four star Ballarat Lodge from Austpac Hotels & Resorts, with the acquisition including the 71-room hotel, conference centre, restaurant and bar, pool and day spa facilities

Eco Domes in Alice

THE Earth Sanctuary in Alice Springs is set to erect two new ‘Eco Domes’ which will target groups and the “lucrative niche market of education tourism”. Earth Sanctuary is a carbon neutral venue offering day and evening tours focusing on ecology, astronomy and culture, with a signature ‘Spirit of the Outback’ dinner and show.

The centre will receive $40,000 from the NT and Federal govt to support the project.

Damn it - learn to vid

DAMN Good Productions has said one of the biggest trends it has seen this year is corporate clients producing their own media, whether podcasts, staff updates, or “on the road” videos.

“Sadly,” says Damn Good director Ben Alcott, “not every client who ‘stars’ in their own video is a star.

“We have worked in the media training business for many years and have trained hundreds of organisations in the art of working with the media, presenting to camera, and just generally making themselves look good on screen.”

The company is offering special packages for media training booked before 31 Jan.

To find out more, CLICK HERE.

$1m Barossa grant

THE SA state government has announced a new cellar door in Barossa supported by a $1m regional development fund grant to draw tourists and investors to the region.

CLICK HERE to read about the initiative.
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