



## Pop goes AIME

THE AIME

Welcome Reception, a highly anticipated event when it comes to where it will be held and what to expect, usually comes up trumps.

Will it be at a racecourse, on St Kilda beach or perhaps in a market hall, as previously?

Held the night before AIME begins, this year the location is veiled in secrecy and will only be revealed on 14 Feb, said Melbourne Convention Bureau ceo Karen Bolinger.

What is known is that it will be the creative genius of Peter Jones and his events team and it will literally pop-up at an unexpected site.

"Melbourne is renowned for its weird and wonderful pop-up culture and that is exactly what we are replicating this year," Bolinger said.

"The ability to create this event just hours before the occasion is testament to Melbourne's versatility and what the city is synonymous for; unpredictable, innovative fun and a discovery around every corner."

Delegates would be welcomed with a celebration of all things quintessentially Melbourne, and would have the opportunity to network in an informal setting.

Here's a hint – the Reception will be held within a five-minute walk of Melbourne's iconic Flinders Street Station.

Hmmm - any ideas? Jill



## Buoyant 2014 predicted



**SPEAKING** during preparations for the upcoming DMS Annual Workshops, managing director Marissa Fernandez predicted a buoyant year ahead for business.

Fernandez said that the insistence on value and keen pricing had not eased, even at the top end of the market.

"Our DMCs will be approaching the market with a wide range of value options to suit the current conditions, as they are very aware that the Australian dollar is not as strong as it used to be.

"The good news of course is that bookings are up and creativity is still very much a key factor in winning the business – however there is increasing pressure from tendering procurement causing strong competition, in turn making lead times very tight – and the bottom line is still governing decisions."

She said the workshops were attracting senior leaders, owners and general managers of more than 20 DMCs including Pacific World (Asia) and Dragonfly Africa (Southern & Eastern Africa).

A new strategic initiative would bring together business leaders from the industry, to discuss and offer insights into creative business solutions and upcoming market trends, Fernandez said.

The findings would then be shared during the lunch session.

The Sydney workshop will be held on 13 Feb from 10am at The Sydney Opera House.

The Melbourne workshop will be held on 17 Feb from 9am at Crown Towers.

## Get the knowledge

**AIME'S** Education Program, AIME Knowledge, is bringing its strongest program yet, with world-class speakers presenting on an array of topics.

Exhibitors looking to develop their business skills or build knowledge in a particular area are encouraged to book into seminars for \$55, or purchase an Exhibitor Company Pass to be shared with your team for \$175.

Book tickets through the Exhibitor Zone.

## Q on Circular Quay

**Q DINING** at the Pullman Quay Grand Sydney Harbour is the first Pullman restaurant to open following the appointment of the hotel group's culinary ambassador, Justin North.

Offering a micro-seasonal dining approach, executive chef Daniel Simpson has created a menu that brings together the freshest local Australian produce.

A highlight of the new restaurant's design is the open plan charcuterie showcasing NSW-sourced meats such as a porcini rubbed house cured Wagyu flank and salami from Salumi Australia.



The open plan design encourages guests to engage with the chefs and learn about the origins of the foods.

Simpson said they looked locally first when putting together the menu to create a sense of regional distinctiveness.

"The transformation of the restaurant from Quadrant to Q Dining encourages a more relaxed and interactive dining experience.

"We want diners to connect to the destination through the food and feel comfortable enough to ask questions about the produce and its origins.

# DO DIFFERENT DO THE NT

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# business events news

3rd February 2014

## Starry AACTA Awards



**THE** Star Event Centre took centre stage last week when it hosted 1500 guests at the third Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts (AACTA) Awards.

The awards capped off a week of events celebrating Australian talent and innovation at The Star.

The globally broadcast awards night recognised Jacki Weaver for her service to the Australian industry and Baz Luhrmann for the multitude of opportunities that making *The Great Gatsby* provided Australians.

During the week, the team at The Star made creative use of the multitude of event spaces across the venue to suit AACTA's varied needs, including the Sky Terrace, their newest rooftop bar, which hosted guests for the after party and was followed by more entertainment in Marquee nightclub.

Damian Trehwella, ceo of AACTA, said, "The staging of the AACTA Awards over the past

two years at The Star has set ever higher benchmarks for the industry thanks to the quality of the venue, its incredible technical capability and staff that simply made everything happen."

### Indian Pacific offer

**FRASER** Hospitality and Indian Pacific are offering the chance to win a trip for two aboard the Indian Pacific.

Book a meeting, conference or event at either Fraser Suites Perth or Fraser Suites Sydney, with a range of meeting and conference spaces, before 31 Aug and you'll go into the draw for the prize, worth more than \$6000.

It includes two Gold Service tickets, accommodation at either Fraser Suites Perth or Fraser Suites Sydney and flights to your home port.

To enter, book at either of the Frasers properties between April and August, with an amount of \$5000 or more.

### Wind in their sails

**AUCKLAND** has won the bid to host the ninth Asia Pacific Conference on Wind Engineering, to be held in December 2017.

Auckland Convention Bureau (ACB) manager Anna Hayward said the event was expected to attract around 200 delegates from across the Asia Pacific region.

"The value of this conference to Auckland is approximately NZ\$255,000 in tourism spend and NZ\$266,000 in economic impact."



The University of Auckland will host the conference and won the bid with assistance from Tourism New Zealand's CAP (Conference Assistance Programme) bid fund, which in turn worked with the ACB team to put together the presentation and proposal.

Professor of Mechanical Engineering and director of the Yacht Research Unit from the University of Auckland Richard Flay said the event had never been held in New Zealand before.

"I know it will be a great success.

"We are in the process of designing a new state of the art wind tunnel for the University's Newmarket Campus and we will be proud to show the completed facility to delegates when they come in December 2017."

Tourism NZ international business events manager Bjoern Spreitzer said it was an example of the NZ industry coming together to secure another international conference.

### Farewell & hello

**THE** SilverNeedle Hospitality Network has said farewell to two of its properties – Chifley Eastern Creek, NSW and Country Comfort Greenway, ACT, which will be rebranded by Alpha Hotels & Resorts.

SilverNeedle continues to maintain a presence in Western Sydney with Chifley Hotel Penrith conveniently located next to Penrith Panthers World of Entertainment.

Meanwhile, it is adding a new hotel, the Country Comfort Newcastle Airport Motor Inn, NSW.



**WHEN** Argentinian artist Leandro Erlich's Sydney Festival installation, the Merchant's Store, was erected in Darling Harbour, it was Staging Rentals & Construction Services who project managed and constructed the building's façade.

Described as a "feat of impossible architecture," the Merchants Store looked like an ordinary 19th century Sydney building from afar, except people were dangling from the windows, climbing up the building's façade and crawling over the roof.

The trick was a precisely positioned mirror and a building facade that's actually a floor, a juxtaposition that allowed anyone to defy the power of gravity, such as *BEN* and friends, testing out the installation below.



### Out of this world

**LOOKING** for an incentive with a difference?

You can always imitate the Damn Good team who were in Florida in January and saw a rocket launch as well as the Space Shuttle Atlantis Experience at Cape Canaveral.

One of the team members, Ben Alcott, also got the chance to fly on G Force One, a specially modified Boeing 727 aircraft, which allows you to experience weightlessness through a parabolic flight, giving zero G experiences of about 60 seconds, which is apparently long enough to try things like drinking balls of water from the air.

At US\$5000 per person it's expensive, but what an incentive experience to remember!

For more information, visit [www.gozerog.com](http://www.gozerog.com).

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Business Events News is  
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Daily, Cruise Weekly and  
Pharmacy Daily.

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### AEG manages HCC

AEG Facilities has taken over the management of the Hawai'i Convention Center (HCC).

In addition, AEG will be taking responsibility for its operation and will work collaboratively with Hawaii Tourism Authority's (HTA) 'Meet Hawaii' team in marketing the centre and the Hawaiian Islands.

The HTA's board of directors will continue efforts to study enhanced uses for the convention centre.

Holly Ballard, representative for Hawaii Tourism Oceania's MICE market, has welcomed the announcement, saying AEG offered more than 20 years experience, managing a network of worldwide centres.

Buyers are invited to visit The Hawaiian Islands Stand (2832) at AIME 2014 to find out more.

# Ultimate bed challenge



**THE** importance of a good bed should never be underestimated, and those who 'sleep around' in a variety of hotel beds, whether for work or leisure, appreciate that a good night's rest is paramount.

It's a necessary characteristic not lost on hoteliers either, who not only promote their beds but also sell them to satisfied customers.

Taking the whole 'comfort is king' to another level and as a way of demonstrating the bed's comfort, Accor's ibis brand put their Sweet Bed ibis to the ultimate test: sleeping where no man has dared to sleep before.

This ultimate sleep recently saw adventurer Aaron Chervenak

accept the extraordinary challenge of sleeping at the top of Mont Roraima (Devil's Mountain), in the heart of the Amazonian jungle for the greatest 'torture test' a bed has ever known.

It took Aaron and Sweet Bed to the highest point of the mountain, reputedly one of the most hostile places on the planet, together with a fully equipped expedition team.

The challenge? To show that that the new Sweet Bed concept guarantees ultimate comfort and a peerless night's sleep even in this very isolated and particularly incongruous setting.

Find out if they succeeded at [www.ibis-expedition.com](http://www.ibis-expedition.com).



## Getting to Know: The Ghan

by: Jill Varley

**THERE** are many ways of getting to Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin and it doesn't have to be on a camel - one of the easiest is The Ghan. Capturing all that is romantic about train travel, The Ghan's two-day journey begins in Adelaide or vice-versa in Darwin and takes in Alice Springs and Katherine, on its way to the Top End. Organisers can also opt for a one-day journey, hopping on or off the train in Alice Springs.

From Adelaide to Darwin there's 54 hours of riding through an ever-changing landscape, with a four-hour stopover in Alice Springs and another in Katherine (Nitmiluk), with time to take a tour through Alice Springs Desert Park and a cruise through Katherine's ancient sandstone Gorge.

Back in the day, the train was steam hauled; today, less romantically, yet no doubt more efficiently, it has an electric diesel engine.

With an average length of 800m, our train in the off-season is hauling 33 carriages and for the first time, two private carriages - one of which is ours! The two Platinum carriages have five cabins per carriage.

"The potential for the business events industry is phenomenal," said Great Southern Rail's Damien Wolff, who describes the train's all inclusive Gold and Platinum Class experience as a 'cruise on wheels.'

Gold Class has single berth sleeper cabins and en-suite twin-berth, sleeper cabins. The latter converts to a three-seater lounge by day. Platinum comes with twin or a double bed and windows on both sides of the cabin, plus other extras. Food in the classically styled Queen Adelaide Restaurant Car is remarkable and even more so given that it is created in a very confined kitchen space.

Riding the rails, eyes are mesmerised by the passing landscape from your private cabin or within the camaraderie of the Outback Explorer Lounge as the train sweeps through the Adelaide Plains and the majestic Flinders Ranges of South Australia, into the ochre heart of the Red Centre and on to the tropical north of Darwin.

Great Southern Rail has a dedicated groups department that is able to tailor-make itineraries on The Ghan, Indian Pacific and The Overland trains for small groups (minimum of ten) up to large groups and charters. Their expertise includes the planning, co-ordination of group itineraries and hotels, transport and activities and tours. All aboard!

