



At the going down

THERE we were, the sum total of the business events industry media sipping bubbles on the rather squeezey terrace balcony of Tiffany and Hamish Watts' exuberantly reviewed Surry Hills restaurant, Watts on Crown.



Guests at a luncheon hosted by Sunshine Coast Tourism, one in our number pointed out that if the balcony gave way, the entire MICE media would be wiped out and with AIME just sleeps away, the presses stilled!

That we survived and were able to hear the latest news about this popular region with its coastal and hinterland attractions meant we lived to write another day.

MEANWHILE, this weekend **BEN** was on a famil of two excellent, conference-friendly Accor properties on the Central Coast of NSW – Quay West Resort Magenta Shores and Mercure Kooindah Waters Central Coast.

News is, if I'm not jumping the gun (who, moi?) that Quay West Resort Magenta Shores is to become a Pullman by late April/early May, after a Pullman technology tweak. *Jill*

Let the Sunshine in



SUNSHINE Coast heavy weights were in Sydney on Friday, making the most of their attendance at the Australian Tourism Awards.

Sunshine Coast Destination Ltd (SCDL) ceo Simon Ambrose and SCDL deputy chair and Narrows Escape Rainforest Retreat owner Mark Skinner updated media about the expected good times ahead for the Sunshine Coast.

Ambrose said while the past three summer vacation periods had been badly affected by adverse weather and the impact of uncertain economic and political conditions, two months of fine, sunny skies had given the Sunshine Coast tourism sector a kick-start after a number of below-average seasons.

"But more encouraging is the level of investment in new and upgraded tourism enterprises, which gives us cause for longer-term optimism."

This stimulus has seen operators recording a 20 to 30% rise in business over the summer holidays and the Sunshine Coast Airport recording a 16% increase in December traffic, with early

indications pointing to January exceeding this figure.

"We have been fortunate to cement a three year contract for direct flights from Auckland, and our airport team is constantly seeking to increase the number of domestic flights direct into the Sunshine Coast."

It would be aiming to build its market-share from south-east Asia, China, Japan and India.

The Noosa International Food & Wine Festival and events such as the Tough Mudder and the Global Eco-Tourism Conference held in 2013 were described as drivers that elevated the region.

The Sunshine Coast would be the venue for the DestinationQ conference later this year, bringing 400 tourism operators to the region for a two-day conference and highlighting its reputation as one of the best destinations for business events and exhibitions, Ambrose said.

Pictured from left to right are Simon Ambrose, SCDL communications manager Liz Tuckett, communications consultant Peter Hook and Mark Skinner.

AIME for Mandurah

A **SOFT** relaunch of WA's Mandurah Convention & Exhibition Centre (MCEC) occurred in December after the acquisition of the Australian Sailing Museum.

Catering to meetings of up to 1200 (theatre) and 700 (banquet), the Centre offers a main hall, seven breakout rooms, two boardrooms, a cafe and more than 900 sqm exhibition space.

Mandurah & Peel Tourism Organisation ceo Steven Holle said the MCEC was a major asset to the destination's tourism infrastructure and would make the state more competitive in the business events arena by providing an ideal solution for small to medium conferences.

Holle will be at AIME 2014 at booth #2206.

LA targets Oz

PRELIMINARY forecasts by the LA Tourism & Convention Board indicate that visits to the destination will continue the strong growth trend experienced last year and into 2014.

As such, LA Tourism is rolling out a new integrated consumer marketing campaign in the US, UK, Australia, Canada and China, as well as a new media campaign focused on growing international meetings and conventions business in Los Angeles, and enhancing sales efforts around the world in collaboration with the convention centre and its new private operator, AEG Facilities.

DO QUIRKY DO THE NT

Been there, done that?
Explore new ideas & places.

Visit the Territory team @ AIME
18 - 19 FEBRUARY 2014 **BOOTH 1532**





Uluru strikes gold at ATA



ULURU Meeting Place has won the Australian Tourism Award for Business Tourism.

The 2013 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards were held in Sydney last week and the Ayers Rock Resort took out the top prize in the Business Tourism category for its premium conference facilities and ability to cater to a wide variety of conferences and events, as well as providing unique offerings to delegates, the Resort said.

The category was open to conference facilities and other meetings industry operators, service providers and suppliers who maximised the tourism experience for meetings and business travellers.

The resort is managed by Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia, with executive general manager Ray Stone saying the organisation was "thrilled" to

receive such recognition.

Uluru Meeting Place had gone from strength to strength in terms of the number and variety of events held since its opening in late 2012, he said.

"Through the hard work and dedication of our core team we have proven it is possible to have a facility of the highest standard in the middle of the Australian Desert."

The Uluru Meeting Place's ballroom can seat up to 420 people and can be divided into smaller spaces, with a second ballroom seating more than 300.

Other winners at the Awards included ACT's The Human Brochure winning the Destination Marketing category.

Queensland's Narrows Escape Rainforest Retreat picked up gold in the Hosted Accommodation section.

PC Tours at AIME

FOLLOWING growing business from Australia, PC Tours Sydney marketing representative Randall Lui announced that a team of three senior executives from destination management company PC Tours would arrive in Australia this week, on a national marketing exercise and to attend AIME in Melbourne.

Led by the company director S. N. Chui, the team includes general manager Cary Chui and MICE director Nicole Frack.

In addition, Chiu will also visit Sydney, Adelaide and Perth.

With offices in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing, the company specialises in FIT leisure touring, MICE activities and sporting events such as horse racing and dragon boat racing.

WIN a tropical holiday

Visit the Cairns & Great Barrier Reef stand #2414 to enter.

BUSINESS EVENTS
CAIRNS & GREAT BARRIER REEF
The natural place to meet



YOU may have ticked Egypt off the bucket list of having been there and done that.

However, there's always something new being dug up in this land of antiquities that warrants another look-see.

Recently, archaeologists working near the ancient settlement of Edfu in southern Egypt uncovered a step pyramid that dates back about 4600 years, predating the Great Pyramid of Giza by at least a few decades.



The pyramid, which once stood as high as 13m, was built either by the pharaoh Huni (reign ca. 2635-2610 B.C.) or Snefru (reign ca. 2610-2590 B.C.).

The sands of time and the pillaging of its stone blocks have reduced it to five metres.

Said to be one of seven step pyramid's scattered throughout central and southern Egypt, they have no internal chambers and were not intended for burial.

Six of the seven have almost identical dimensions.

The team also found hieroglyphic graffiti on the outer faces of the pyramid and located beside the remains of babies and children, buried at the foot of the pyramid, dated to long after the pyramid was built.

LNP at O'Reilly's

THE iconic family owned O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat in the Gold Coast Hinterland was the venue for the three day Queensland LNP conference.

Attended by Queensland Premier Campbell Newman and 74 MPs, delegates were welcomed to a function at Moonlight Crag Lookout and treated to a Scenic Rim sunset.

The two-day program was held at Reilly's gated Villas precinct, with a purpose built conference centre, which offered privacy from other guests, located 700m from the main hotel, Shane O'Reilly said.

The Retreat recently upgraded internet services to include free WiFi for delegates across the entire property.

"It was a coup to have the opportunity to welcome the LNP to O'Reilly's."

Shangri-La in London

THE Shangri-La Hotel at The Shard, London will open 06 May and follows the debut of the hotel group's properties in Paris in 2010 and Istanbul in 2013.

The tallest hotel in Western Europe, the first high-rise hotel in London and Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts' third property in Europe, it occupies levels 34 to 52 of the 72 storey Shard and offers breathtaking views of landmarks such as St. Paul's Cathedral, Tower Bridge and the Houses of Parliament.

The hotel's 202 guestrooms with floor-to-ceiling windows are among the largest in London.

Three river-facing event spaces on level 34 offer stunning views and state-of-the-art conferencing technology.

The largest of the venues, Ren, accommodates up to 140 guests; the other two, Yi and Li, can hold up to 10 and 35 guests.

The hotel will be open for advance rooms, events, restaurant and lounge bookings from 17 Mar, with opening room rates starting at £450 per room per night, including VAT.

Enquire and win

ELLERSLIE Event Centre director Craig Fenwick said after experiencing a record December, and with the NZ economy showing signs of growth, they were looking forward to a great 2014.

With this in mind Ellerslie is starting off the year with an incentive.

Organisers who enquire in February about an event to be held before 31 Jul, will receive two Ascot Members Stand tickets to experience TV3 Derby Day - just mention that you saw this offer in **BEN** - it's that simple.

The event facility, with racecourse views, can accommodate conferences of all sizes, from 30 to 1200 delegates.



business events news

10th February 2014

CONTACT US:

Editor
Jill Varley

Contributor/Coordinator
Alex Walls

Advertising:
advertising@businesseventsnews.com.au

P: 1300 799 220

F: 1300 799 221

PO Box 1010 Epping, NSW,
1710

Business Events News is part of the Travel Daily group of publications which also include: Travel Daily, Cruise Weekly and Pharmacy Daily.

Disclaimer: While every care has been taken in the preparation of *Business Events News* no liability can be accepted for errors or omissions. *BEN* takes no responsibility for the opinions of its contributors/columnists. Information is published in good faith to stimulate independent investigation of the matters canvassed.

Danish giants merge

A JOINT management agreement between Scandinavia's largest convention centre, the Bella Center, and Crowne Plaza Copenhagen Towers has been announced, thus creating a giant in the Danish hotel, meeting and conference industry.

The merger of the two creates a powerful unit with an impressive 1,178 hotel rooms, 150 meeting and conference rooms, and more than 200,000 sqm of congress, exhibition and conference facilities with a capacity for more than 30,000 guests and delegates.

The Bella Center is integrated with the Bella Sky Hotel with its 814 rooms and meetings facilities, while Copenhagen Towers, considered one of the world's most sustainable hotels, is the only hotel in Copenhagen to be ISO 14001-certified.

Burma cruise charter

AN increased demand for Scenic Tours' luxury private chartered cruises on Burma's Irrawaddy River has created an additional departure date of 5 Nov.

The *Irrawaddy Navigator* with its indulgent staterooms and elegantly appointed public and dining areas will sail between Mandalay and Yangon, delivering pure floating luxury to compliment this mystical land.

The additional departure date in November, commonly known as the cool season, is a time when the country experiences wonderful warm weather with very little rainfall.

The 10-day cruise has prices that start from \$4,185 per person twin share.

Bookings made by 31 March receive a \$700 airfare credit per couple.

India, Visa on arrival

TOURISTS travelling to India from 180 countries no longer have to queue at their local consulates to obtain visas after New Delhi announced a "very significant" overhaul of its border controls.

Visa-on-arrival and electronic travel authorisation (ETA) will be available for all countries barring eight "prior reference" countries including Pakistan, Iran, Sri Lanka and China.

The ETA will allow travellers to apply for a visa from home and receive an online confirmation in five working days.

The extension of visa-on-arrival and ETA to citizens of 180 countries will be implemented initially at nine airports including Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Kolkata.

Both facilities are likely to be implemented by year's end.

Going to the 2014 MEA conference?



Sabah's premier resort and MICE venue, Suter Harbour, is offering fantastic pre and post conference packages. 3 free tours for first 30 guests!

Visit us at the Sabah stand at AIME or see our packages on the [MEAConference site](http://MEAConference.com).

For more information call (03) 9818 1858 or visit suteraharbour.com



Getting to Know: Yellowstone National Park

by: Bruce Piper

YELLOWSTONE National Park in northern Wyoming, USA is a unique venue for a small or large group event, where delegates can mix business with stunning wildlife and scenery viewing. It's the world's first ever National Park, having been established in 1872. While you may not see Yogi Bear in person there are plenty of other creatures to spot such as bison, elk, grizzly bears, coyotes, foxes and wild wolves - not to mention an array of stunning geothermal features such as geysers, hot springs and bubbling mud pools.

Yellowstone's lodging and conference facilities are managed by Xanterra, which operates programs in both winter and summer. While it can be very cold in winter, the experience can be enhanced with day-long snowmobile transfers, viewing the amazing scenery and wildlife while travelling between the various in-park properties which offer excellent dining and a range of accommodation standards.

Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel is the northern gateway to the park, providing accommodation ranging from en-suite hotel rooms through to rustic cabins. It has excellent bar and dining facilities and a range of meeting rooms plus lots of activities such as hiking, Nordic skiing, tours and more.

Old Faithful Lodge is located inside the park at an elevation of about 7,300 feet, and has been built right on the doorstep of the famous Old Faithful geyser - a natural phenomenon from which superheated water and steam erupts spectacularly every 91 minutes. This modern hotel offers full-service restaurants which can operate on a prepaid voucher system, while private buffet-style meals for groups can also be arranged.

Pitched as an "authentic American experience," there are no TVs or telephones in rooms or cabins, but internet access is available for those who need to keep in touch while at the resorts.

Group rates are offered at all of the Yellowstone properties, including one complimentary room for every 20 paid rooms, and group transportation can also be arranged along with expert interpretive guides for activities such as the "Old West Cookout" and "Stagecoach Adventures".

Although large numbers can be catered for, a Yellowstone experience is also a great idea for smaller groups such as incentives.

Despite its northern USA location, Yellowstone is surprisingly accessible for Australian groups, with transfers easily available from Bozeman Airport which is linked to a number of gateways such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas and Seattle.

