



## Lost in translation

**DRIVING** from the Sydney CBD to the Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley with



a group of PCOs in the plush comfort of a Rover Coach, talk turned to the driveable threshold people are prepared to go for a regional conference.

Ninety minutes to two hours was the agreed limit.

However, the collective experience was that venues tended to use poetic licence when it came to distances, often leaving out that the time quoted is actually from the start of the motorway, not the CBD.

It all started when the itinerary from our gracious hosts read: Pickup at 2:00pm Circular Quay, with a second pick-up from Chatswood at 2.30pm.

It then read: Resort check-in time at 3.00pm - effectively allowing half an hour to get to the Hunter Valley, and we had barely left the city!

However, we did acknowledge that 3pm meant the check in time, not the time we would arrive there.

Still, it brought this issue to the fore and gave us all a lively discussion. *Jill*

*Pictured: At the Centre launch (see page two), Jill gets sketched.*



## Voyages set for 20% growth



**STRONG** forward bookings for business events at Voyages Ayers Rock Resort indicate that the iconic central Australian property is likely to experience accelerated growth of 20% year on year for 2015/16, according to Voyages Indigenous Tourism sales and marketing executive gm Ray Stone.

Stone told **BEN** that would be an improvement on the 14% growth expected for 2014/15, which he said was still a "good number" considering industry conditions.

"I don't think regional Australia has had a particularly good year for conferences, so we're quite pleased with this result."

Stone said he considered 20%-plus growth for next year to be "realistic and achievable" with the market seeing greater awareness of the enhanced Uluru Meeting Place facilities.

Voyages is also continuing to invest heavily in the property, which was taken over by the Indigenous Land Corporation in May 2011 with a key aim of boosting Indigenous tourism.

Since then it has created the National Indigenous Training Academy, which has already seen 100 graduates, about half

of whom have stayed with the resort while the rest have moved onto other parts of the Accor global hospitality network.

The next stage is a "Step Up" program which provides further training for management roles.

Upgrades have seen around \$50m spent on the property including a full refurbishment of the Sails in the Desert property, which is now rolling through to the Emu Walk Apartments.

Events are also a key focus of the repositioning of the property, with a combination of annual festivals and one-offs such as a visit by the Dalai Lama planned for June this year (**BEN** 31 Jan).

Business events delegates will be able to stay connected, with free WiFi to roll out across the resort from 01 Apr and a fivefold increase in bandwidth.

Stone also foreshadowed a renewed focus on food and beverage, with a strongly positive response to the Tali Wiru outdoor gourmet dining experience, ideal for incentive groups.

Voyages will be participating in AIME, with further details of the property's extensive business events offerings available during the show.

## Today's issue of BEN

**Business Events News** today has three pages of news plus a full page from: (*click*)

• Club Med

## Heli tours of Breaksea greenlit

**SKYHOOK** Helicopters has been licensed by the Western Australia Department of Parks and Wildlife to operate public helicopter tours to Breaksea Island Nature Reserve.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob said viewing of Breaksea Island's wildlife and coastline had been limited because of the difficulty in accessing it safely by boat.

Skyhook had been licensed to meet increased demand for adventure and eco-tourism experiences on the south coast, Jacob said.

"Helicopter tours will allow visitors to get a bird's eye view of the area before landing on the island for greater appreciation and access to the heritage-listed lighthouse and keepers' cottages."

## Tourism Oz PR tender update

**TOURISM** Australia has answered further technical questions about its tender for public relations services in international markets, including for business events.

**CLICK HERE** to read more.



**YOU'RE INVITED**  
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Join the NT exhibitors for an evening of cocktails, canapés and casual conversation.

Pei Modern  
 Collins Place, 45 Collins St, Melbourne  
 Tuesday 24 February 2015  
 6:30pm- 8:30pm  
 (transfers from AIME provided)

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**ANYONE** who doubts the pulling power of a Tibetan monk will be surprised at the response to the upcoming appearance by the Dalai Lama at Voyages Ayers Rock Resort (**BEN** 31 Jan).

Voyages' Ray Stone said there's already been so much interest that the property has chartered two aircraft to bring visitors from Brisbane.

And if you haven't already booked, you're too late - the direct flights for the 'Brisbane Express Spiritual Package' are already sold out to devotees.

However, event packages for the visit go on sale to the general public from tomorrow.

**OUTDOOR** event organisers should take the lead of a London based company which is using aircraft to guarantee good weather for weddings.

Oliver's Travels charges £100,000 for the service which involves a fleet of so-called "cloud-bursting planes".

The aircraft fly above the clouds every day for a week before the big event, sprinkling them with silver iodide particles which causes rain - meaning the clouds disperse before the crucial deadline.

"We pride ourselves on our quirky approach and are thrilled to be able to offer such an unusual, unique service to our customers to ensure their wedding is the talk of the town," said founder Oliver Bell.

Currently the service was only available for events in France, but could easily be rolled out into other locations, Bell said.

## Jewel in the Crowne Plaza

"IT'S been a long journey to get here," said a relieved Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley gm Robert Coates at the soft opening of the \$4m Conference and Events Centre on Friday evening.

"Don't lean too heavily on the walls and take care when walking on the toilet floor tiles," he joked to the gathered guests, alluding to how close to the wire the finish went.

The new Crowne Plaza facility now provides the Hunter Valley with the largest and most comprehensive conference and exhibition facilities, with a combined 2,000 sqm of meeting and exhibition space, and accommodation for up to 1,675 delegates, theatre-style, and 830 for a sit down event.

Rooms open onto a light filled gallery connecting the conference and exhibition spaces and can be used as one ballroom or a mix of rooms with flexible acoustic folding walls.



A unique design feature of the building, which overlooks garden spaces and golf course greens, is the four 14 metre pylons rescued from the now defunct Sydney Conference and Exhibition Centre.

Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley first opened in October 2006 and was



purchased by Dr Jerry Schwartz in 2012.

That is when the action started, Coates said.

"We are the largest regional resort in NSW and with acres and acres of grass, we have the space to host big events.

"Dr Schwartz really believes in regional NSW and it's our mission to make the Hunter Valley one of the key destinations.

"Everywhere I see opportunities, opportunities, opportunities and particularly the opportunity to work closely with others in the Hunter Valley.

"Our only challenge is you have to bring your events up here!"

Together with the new events centre and an extension to the Tea Tree Spa, Coates predicts a big year ahead.

The official opening of the Conference and Events Centre is on 17 Feb.

Pictured **above** is a view of Crowne Plaza's

new signature event space, Harvest Hunter, while **left** is Dee Pendergast and Dean Jones, IHG, Lyn Meharg, ShortleadEvents/ConferenceDeals, Vickie Scobie, Conferences in Style, and Kylie Vernooy, IHG.

**CLICK HERE** to view more photos.



## 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](mailto:info@businesseventsnews.com.au).

### 6 FEB

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

### 12-13 FEB

CEO & Chair Symposium; Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart; for any enquiries please email [kristine@associations.net.au](mailto:kristine@associations.net.au)

### 18-20 FEB

Fundraising Institute Australia Conference 2015; Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre; visit [www.fiaconference.org.au](http://www.fiaconference.org.au)

### 20 FEB

DMS Workshop; Doltone House Hyde Park, Sydney; enquiries email [sydneyrsvp@destinationmarketing.com.au](mailto:sydneyrsvp@destinationmarketing.com.au)

### 23 FEB

DMS Workshop; Crown Towers, Melbourne; enquiries email [melbournersvp@destinationmarketing.com.au](mailto:melbournersvp@destinationmarketing.com.au)

### 23 FEB

Women in Leadership Event; Crown Towers, Melbourne; enquiries email [melbournersvp@destinationmarketing.com.au](mailto:melbournersvp@destinationmarketing.com.au)

### 24 - 25 FEB

AIME 2015 Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre; for more visit [www.aime.com.au](http://www.aime.com.au)

### 16 MAR

Ni hao WA 2015; Aravina Estate, Yallingup; for more visit [www.tourism.wa.gov.au](http://www.tourism.wa.gov.au)

# COME VISIT US AT







# business events news

2nd February 2015

## New name for ICCA AIME seminar

**THE** International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) seminar at AIME this year will feature a new name to highlight a new format and revamped content.

The ICCA International Meetings Foundation Seminar, formerly the Forum for Young Professionals, is set to be held for the 15th year at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The new name and format had been designed using feedback from ICCA members, ICCA ceo Martin Sirk said.

Applicants must work full time in a position related to the business events and meetings industry, with less than five years' experience.

**CLICK HERE** for the application.

## Breakfast with WA Tourism Minister

**TOURISM** Council WA is set to host Minister for Tourism Dr Kim Hames for a breakfast forum on 25 Feb at the Novotel Perth Langley, who will provide an update on his tourism plans.

**CLICK HERE** to register.

## IT&CM China 2015

**MORE** than 600 international and domestic buyers are expected at IT&CM China, which takes place from 14 to 16 Apr at the Shanghai Exhibition and Convention Center.

Organisers said the show was expected to draw 3,000 business events delegates with about 400 hosted delegates, more than 10,000 business appointments and more than 60 business and networking sessions.

## Official Conference Shop launch



**THE** Conference Shop has officially launched.

Active since last year, the website providing information on venues and planning events in regional areas is run by Carla Offord, previously of Southern Highlands Corporate Events.

Areas covered include the Blue Mountains and Wollongong.

The organisation has previously announced it will host several famils in regional NSW and ACT this year (**BEN** 14 Jan).

The company said there were plans to span all regional NSW by the end of this year

**CLICK HERE** to read more.

## MEETINGS' \$50m in biz

**FOLLOWING** on from NZ\$50m in business booked at last year's MEETINGS, the New Zealand business events trade exhibition will return for its 19th year from 10 to 11 Jun.

The show will again be held in Auckland across two pavilions at the ASB Showgrounds, with Nelson and Dunedin for the first time joining other regions to host weekend experiences for Australians from 06 to 08 Jun.

More than 35 international buyers and media will attend the show, Conferences and Incentives New Zealand said.



# Face to Face

## Sean Buttrose Key account manager Restaurant Associates



*Business Events News* recently caught up with Sean Buttrose, key account manager for Restaurant Associates, whose role is to provide catering and events within the heritage-listed Old Parliament House.

If you could create any animal hybrid, what would it be and why? I think a bear, fox, and cheetah, (Befoxtah) known for its power, strength, smarts and agility. FYI, Befoxtah, it's now a thing.

**What are some must-haves on any business event menu and why?**

A difference: we all go to so many events where the same drab ideas are repeated in a nonplussed way. How great is it when you attend an event and think "that's clever"? There's certainly no better tool when you are looking to stand out.

**How do business events attendees differ from other event attendees?** BEA's are clear on what they want, what they need and quite frankly, how to get it. This audience is organised and looking for excellence. This mentality is then reflected within their needs as a client. No rose coloured glasses in this audience view.

**What one thing must food and service groups do to make a business event go off?**

Successful events are truly a perfect balancing act, you cannot excel in one area and not another and expect to be noticed or even get away with it. That said, it's always the detail that makes a good event stand out.

**What tips would you give food and service groups when it comes to securing a business event/client?**

Be proactive and do your research, most companies expect that you know a thing or two about them.

I know when I was in sales I would be forever Googling a company or client, as they talked to me during first contact.

**How important is a beautiful venue to the success of an event?**

A beautiful venue is not a lever to success. It's handy, it helps sell (I know I am blessed with one), but I have attended the most amazing events in not very memorable venues - including alleyways - and have been just as impressed as if I was in an exquisite venue.

**How do you recover from spilling drinks on someone?**

Technically, well.... Step One: apology, Step Two: immediate solution (the old soda water and hairdryer trick), Step Three: offer to pay for that dry cleaning. We at Restaurant Associates however, focus on the prevention-is-better-than-cure approach, with extensive role playing and service training for all our staff.

**What would you say is the number one rule for serving staff when it comes to attendees? And vice versa?**

Staff - realise that you are here for these guests, not the other way round. Attendees - well I personally would hope guests would not need to have a rule when it comes to service staff.

Service should be discrete, unassuming and effortlessly helpful. If guests need a rule to react to service staff, the staff are doing it all wrong.

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

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