



Strictly floored

GRUMLINGS

from the floor about the format of AIME 2015, from exhibitors and Hosted Buyers, ranged from the change of the gala event from the first evening to the last, to the erratic and inappropriate appointment schedules.



However, on Wednesday evening, all this was swept aside as more than 800 guests partied on Central Pier in the Docklands.

The weather, which had been typically Melbourne throughout the past few days, turned remarkably balmy for the frocked-up revellers, who entered the fray decked-out in riotously coloured feather boas.

Highlight of the evening was the marvellous Ms B – Karen Bolinger, resplendent in sparkling floor-length black tulle, who danced an energetic rumba (or something of that ilk) in the arms of a handsome gent.



Hoots, wild cheering and perhaps the passing of money saw the duo come equal first in the Strictly Melbourne dance competition.

They threw away the mould when they created this MCB ceo.

MEANWHILE BEN can be found on a post AIME fam of the Great Ocean Road in the company of a group of meetings organisers, taking high tea at Mansion Hotel and Spa, Werribee, dining, seafront, on the lawn at Mantra Lorne and overnighting at Cumberland Lorne Resort. *Jill*

Inspire EX cancelled

EXHIBITIONS and Trade Fairs (ETF) has confirmed Inspire EX will cease, effective immediately (**BEN** Breaking News yesterday).

The company confirmed to **Business Events News** that the show would no longer form part of the ETF portfolio, with the company instead reassigning resources and focusing on further developing the other exhibitions and conferences it ran throughout the year.

The decision to cancel Inspire EX was due to a restructure of ETF's schedule of shows and to enable it to focus on markets demonstrating the greatest potential for growth, the company said.

It followed "considerable and exhaustive" consultation with the market and an internal review, the company said.

Managing director Gary Daly there was "no doubt" the decision was disappointing for



the industry.

The company's priority was to move forward with a focus on existing shows and development of new events in emerging markets, he said.

Yarra Valley's new retreat

THE Eastern Golf Club in the Yarra Valley will launch a new four bedroom corporate executive retreat.

Gm Ben Telley said the club had spent about \$200,000 on technological improvements for the existing building.

The facility would be self-contained, with a private boardroom, and was set to open on 01 Jul, he said.

Telley said the Club's \$70m, 27-hole golf course would have a soft launch in July as well.

Major events assess 'overstate' benefits

ASSESSMENTS of government international destination marketing and support for major events often overstate the economic benefits of these activities, and consequently the basis for government support, the Productivity Commission has said.

In its reports on international tourism, the Commission said such assessments were often based on "inappropriate analytical techniques, a poor application of the appropriate technique or analysis or metrics that do not equate to net benefits to the community".

This highlighted the need for rigorous and transparent economic analysis to determine whether government expenditure was warranted, it said.

CLICK HERE to read more.

AIME booking: 'We didn't get it all right'

IBTM global events portfolio director Sallie Coventry has said the organisation "didn't get it all right" when it came to reported issues with the appointment booking system at AIME.

Coventry said Reed Exhibitions would be "the first to put our hands up" to say the organisation had not got it all right.

The entire ibtm portfolio had moved onto a new platform over the last two years, with the system trialled in Barcelona for EIBTM, however there were idiosyncrasies to the way AIME diaries were managed that made it "more challenging", Coventry said.

"We've always looking at what we can do next year.

"The great thing is actually we've got eight shows across the portfolio that all have very similar programs in terms of pre-scheduled appointments so we get to iteratively improve the process and apply new technology throughout the course of the year."

There were 617 exhibitors at AIME this year from 37 different countries, while there were more than 160 hosted buyers attending the post-touring program, organisers said.



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business events news

27th February 2015

AIME photos galore and more

YEARNING for the good ol' days of AIME, held this week?

Look no further than **BEN's** Facebook page, which is full of photos from the show, by **CLICKING HERE** and check out the YouTube channel for interviews with movers and shakers by **CLICKING HERE**.

CINZ: NZ ICC needs to be int class

CONFERENCES and Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) ceo Sue Sullivan said the redesigned NZ International Convention Centre (NZ ICC) (**BEN** 18 Feb) needed to be an international class centre.

It was in SkyCity's best interests to produce such a centre, she said.

CORPORATE GROUP SALES MANAGER, P&O CRUISES

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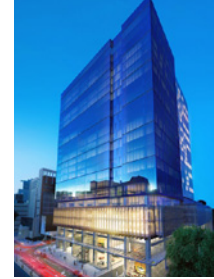
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Westin Perth greenlit

THE City of Perth has approved the development application for a Westin Hotel in Hay Street.

To be developed by BGC Australia and operated by Starwood, the 362-room hotel would feature nearly 1,200 sqm of function space, with a ballroom and function rooms,



Starwood's website said.

It is slated to be open by the end of 2017.

Demolition work at the site was almost complete, and WA Tourism Minister Kim Hames said the development would

add much needed hotel rooms to the Perth CBD, with a target of 1,900 hotel rooms by 2020.

Hames said demand in Perth was traditionally driven by the corporate market but the city's popularity as a leisure tourism destination would also increase.

"These new hotel rooms will cater for that increased demand, create new jobs and help increase the value of tourism to the state's economy through increased visitor spend."

New hotel development was critical to reaching the state government's goal of \$12b in contribution from tourism to the WA economy by 2020, Hames said.

Accor adds four

ACCOR has added four properties in the Pacific.

With 24 meeting and conference rooms, the 71-room Ballarat Lodge and Convention Centre would become the Mercure Ballarat Hotel and Convention Centre in March, Accor said.

The Hotel Launceston would be rebranded to Mercure Launceston in April, with a newly refurbished conference room.

The 74-room Best Western Goulburn, with two conference rooms, would become the Mercure Goulburn in March.

And in New Zealand, the Abel Tasman hotel would rebrand to the Mercure Wellington Abel Tasman next month, with four function rooms for up to 120 people.

\$6m Anchorage Port Stephens revamp



ANCHORAGE Port Stephens has undergone a \$6m refurbishment, with a new outdoor dining area and a transformed pool area.

Gm Lisa Knowlson said the revamp included an events platform with a marquee.

The final stage of the upgrade will be completed this year.

SEC@GI welcomes 216k visitors

THE Sydney Exhibition Centre at Glebe Island (SEC@GI) saw more than 216,000 visitors, 3,100 exhibitors and 19 events during its first 12 months of event activity.

Marking its first anniversary, NSW Deputy Premier Troy Grant said SEC@GI had provided the continuity the exhibition industry needed, keeping trade activity and jobs in Sydney while the International Convention Centre Sydney was being built.

General manager Malu Barrios said the Centre looked forward to a "bigger and better year" in 2015.

AEG Ogden director of convention centres Geoff Donaghy said the organisation was confident numbers for events held at SEC@GI in its second year would be "okay" (**BEN** 25 Feb).



business events news

27th February 2015

Lorem Ipsum wows

THE official launch of Lorem Ipsum (**BEN** 11 Feb), an interactive, 3D, pop up gala space within the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) was held during AIME on Wednesday.

MCEC ceo Peter King said the Centre was aware of the amount of space it had and the need to use it more innovatively, and had worked closely with people such as Peter Jack at ENG, who created and captured the "hidden characteristics" of Melbourne's laneways, bars and restaurants.

Designed for events of 500 to more than 1,500 people taking place from 03 Dec to 22 Dec, Jack



said the company spoke to a lot of clients across many industry sectors, "and one of the key things everybody wanted was to have a great time.

"Today we have just signed off for an event for 1,600 people, they walked into the space, went 'Wow' and said, 'It's done!'"

Plenary of branding

THE Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has unveiled branding for its Plenary (pictured).



This would allow the space to become a venue in its own right, attracting more concerts and performances, the Centre said.

The new brand was revealed at the Open Space event yesterday with ceo Peter King saying the 5,500 seat Plenary was the "centrepiece" of the MCEC.

"It's good to be open – open to change, to possibility, to new experiences and that's why we've created a whole a new identity for Plenary, because it deserves its own unique personality."

CLICK HERE to read more about the new brand.

Four Points update



FOUR Points by Sheraton Sydney has said its \$200m redevelopment is slated for completion in May 2016 (**BEN** 18 Oct 13).

The expansion will see a third tower adding 222 rooms, bringing the total to 905, plus 4,800 sqm of new convention and meeting space.

This would include two pillarless ballrooms, the largest seating up to 1,100 theatre-style, it said.

Gm David Fraser said the ICC Sydney, set to open in December 2016, would handle larger business than that which the hotel specialised in.

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RACV's Centre of attention

A PROPOSED \$135m expansion by the RACV to the Cape Schanck tourist resort, which includes a conference centre for up to 300 people, is causing angst among local residents, according to a report in *The Age*.

Arguing the height and size of the project was inappropriate for the area, one local resident said, "This is a very pristine area and once they introduce one high rise development, it will pave the way for others.

"We just want it to reflect the style of development in the area and take into account the impact on current residents."

The RACV's Sue Blake said since 2012, both the council and the community had been extensively consulted about the plan, and the development was "sensitive to the coastal landscape, rolling dunes and the site's undulating topography," *The Age* reported.

A mediation is being sought.

AIDC heads back to Melbourne

THE Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC) has confirmed it will hold its annual conference, NET-WORK-PLAY, in Melbourne next year after eight years in Adelaide.

The conference would see about 500 delegates attend, with the AIDC partnering with the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) and Film Victoria, ACMI said.

It would be held at the ACMI with dates to be announced, the organisation said.

Minister for Creative Industries Martin Foley said it was a win for Victoria's creative industries.



WE HOPE you're all recovered from AIME and in a position to share your funniest exhibition floor or touring stories, like exhibition director Jacqui Timmins' story shared with **BEN** on Wednesday.

Apparently, Timmins had to lend her shoes to an exhibitor who had arrived with open toed footwear.

Luckily, she had some spare, being a veteran of such affairs.

BEN also heard of another such story where a male organiser had to lend a female exhibitor his (closed) dress shoes - surely a new fashion trend waiting to happen.

You can check out a video with Timmins relating the story, as well as what to expect from AIME 2016, by **CLICKING HERE**.

Oz centres ahead of the tech game

Australian convention centres were generally ahead of the curve when it came to investing in technology, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) ceo Peter King said.

Europe and US centres were "dragging a long way behind" when it came to servicing the technical needs of customers, King said.

Technology was the future in many industries including the business events sector, he said, with the MCEC investing \$15m in technology improvements over the next five years .

CLICK HERE to view a video of King's plans to party after an MCEC expansion confirmation.

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