



Rain on the parade

IT MAY have rained in a good many parts of the country on Australia Day



but nothing appeared to dampen the spirits of the crowds lining the foreshores of Sydney Harbour when **BEN**, as a guest of The Star, took the gun at 11 am at the start of the annual Ferrython.

Four ferries, each sponsored individually by China Southern Airlines, NRMA, The Sydney Festival and The Star, then took off head-to-head in this race that goes from Circular Quay to Shark Island and back to the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Okay, we didn't win - that was China Southern Airlines - we came in second, but as far as fun was concerned, we certainly hollered, sang and danced our way to the finish line with great gusto.

Remarkable, the Ferrython has been run every year of the Sydney Festival since the very first race in 1979.

Now in its 37th year, it's not only about speed but about competing for the best-dressed award. *Jill*



Pictured is Jill with The Star's Megan Parker, left, and guests.

Industry hails China air deal

INDUSTRY groups have hailed the air services agreement with China, saying the business events sector is set to benefit.

The deal (**BEN** 23 Jan) allows Australian and Chinese airlines to increase capacity by 18% to 26,500 seats each way per week between major gateway cities.

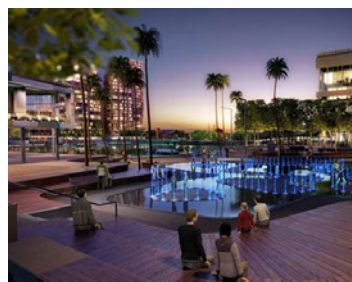
Association of Australian Convention Bureaux (AACB) executive director Andrew Hiebl said aviation capacity out of China had been challenging for Australian convention bureaux and the deal would help efforts to attract large groups from China.

Business Events Council of Australia chairman Matthew Hingerty said the agreement would remove an impediment to continued growth from the

Chinese market, with members previously "increasingly alarmed" over their ability to bid for visits by large Chinese groups, as available seats were running out.

The deal would ease this pressure and allow members to bid for events with confidence, he said, with attendance from China at international conferences on the rise.

Elizabeth Quay water park and event space



BHP Billiton has said it will provide \$10m to develop the interactive water park at Elizabeth Quay, which, when drained in a matter of minutes, will create a public event space for up to 800 people, the WA state government has said.

Expected to open in spring 2015, Elizabeth Quay will have capacity to host events for up to 15,000 people at one time (**BEN** 12 Dec 14).

Planning Minister John Day said the government was calling for expressions of interest in bringing events to the Quay.

To read more, [CLICK HERE](#).

\$20m Rottnest Lodge

THE WA state government has signed an agreement with the Karma Royal Group to redevelop Rottnest Lodge into a luxury resort complex, complete with new conference facilities for up to 150 delegates.

The agreement will see the existing lease extended, with construction of the \$20m resort to begin in April 2016.

It was slated to open in the summer of 2017-18, the government said.

Acting Tourism Minister John Day said concepts presented allowed for an "intelligent mix" of leisure and business activities.

P&O Cruises confirms conference push

P&O Cruises is expected to unveil the full details of its move into the MICE market (**BEN** 01 Oct 2014) next when, for the first time ever, it takes part in the AIME business events trade show in Melbourne next month.

The cruise line will expand its local fleet at the end of the year, and the two additions will feature dedicated spaces for groups as part of the strategy.

Pacific Eden and *Pacific Aria* will see P&O Australia operate a total of five vessels, and part of the transformation from their existing deployment as Holland America's 1500-passenger *Statendam* and *Ryndam* will include the onboard meeting facilities.

P&O wasn't able to provide specifics at this stage, but it's understood the company is targeting 20,000 conference passengers in the first year - which would equate to 100 groups at a designated maximum size of 200 passengers each.

A dedicated team has been recruited to manage the group and event business (**BEN** 23 Jan), which will focus on sailings of between two and five days.

The expanded local fleet will enable more variety in P&O's itinerary offerings, including the addition of the shorter cruises which suit incentives and groups.

A P&O spokesperson told **BEN** that details were still being finalised, with the new program set to formally launch at AIME.



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business events news

28th January 2015



crumbs!



IF YOU'VE ever questioned the fortitude of the Adelaide Convention Centre's cake abilities, prepare to have your quibbles quashed, as the Centre mounts a bid for the world record for the longest line of cakes, using, of course, Australian favourite, the Lamington.

The current world record is held by *BBC Gloucestershire* for Children in Need, with 885.6 m of 14,396 cupcakes laid out on the runway at Gloucestershire Airport in November last year (**pictured**, courtesy of the *BBC Gloucestershire* Facebook [page](#)).



The Australian attempt on 12 Mar would aim to stretch to one kilometre at 20,000 pieces, snaking through the Panorama Ballroom, City Meeting Rooms and more, the Centre said.

It would be the centrepiece for the Longest Lamington Lunch, created to help local charities raise funds, it said.

CLICK HERE to read more.

Queensland roadshow in SE Asia

TWENTY Queensland tourism businesses are in South East Asia this week in a delegation led by Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ).

The roadshow would see the companies meet with about 200 travel trade representatives in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta, providing the opportunity to negotiate future business deals, TEQ marketing group executive Steve McRoberts said.

The South East Asian international visitor market had "strong growth potential" for the state, forming the basis for the trade mission, McRoberts said.

Participating businesses include Sunshine Coast Destination Ltd and Dreamtime Resorts.

Encouraging productivity

SHOULD a healthy lifestyle, exercise and nutritious food be part of your corporate event focus, then InterContinental Hotels Group collaboration with Teresa Cutter, a leading authority on healthy cooking, makes an ideal starting point.

Being rolled out across Crowne Plaza Hotels and Resorts Asia, Middle East and Africa properties, the range of fresh and healthy menu options has been created exclusively for the business events market.

Galloping to a snail's place

A COMPREHENSIVE

range of nature and event based attractions and the return of the great Aussie road trip is the focus of the Sunshine Coast's 2015 visitation campaign.

The campaign is expected to build on the Coast's double digit visitor growth last year, which saw a 1.9% increase in domestic visitors and a 9.4% growth in international visitors.

Sunshine Coast Destination Ltd (SCDL) ceo Simon Ambrose said the organisation would build on this trend with the launch of Australia's Nature Coast's Great Australian Beach Drive and a new Food Trail app later in the year.

"Complementing the growth in general tourism has been the dramatic growth in event-related tourism – both public events and business events.

"Then, as we lead into the 50th anniversary of naming of the Sunshine Coast in 2016, the region will host the most extensive range of events in its history."

The Sunshine Coast was set to host major surfing, ironman, triathlon and outrigger championships, he told media in Sydney last week.

New products of interest to the business events market include swimming with whales, yoga surfing, trekking to the Andy Goldsworthy Strangler Cairn or even milking a cow.

What's more, artisan cheese makers, using high quality local produce, are reviving the Sunshine Coast's former reputation as a leading dairy producing region, an area that is also gaining



a strong reputation for its fruits, herbs and exotic delicacies such as snails.

Pictured from left getting into the Sunshine Spirit at The Winery launch are Liz Tuckett, Mark Skinner (Narrows Escape Rainforest Retreat) and Ambrose.

Melb, BE Sydney ambassador honours

BUSINESS Events Sydney (BE Sydney) ambassador and Westmead Hospital Medicine and Cancer director Dr Jeremy Chapman has been appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia for his work in organ donations and transplants.

Chairman of the host organising committee for the 105th Rotary International Convention, Barry Thompson, was made a member in the General Division of the Order of Australia for service to the community, BE Sydney said.

The Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre said six Club Melbourne ambassadors were recognised in the honours list.

Professor John Funder and Professor Brendan Crabb were appointed to the Companion of the Order of Australia, the Centre said, among only five in the country.

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