



Fair to Fairmont

JUST as being

critical of something spreads like wildfire, whether it be for the poor service received on an airline, the efficiency of the hotel we stayed in, the speaker who droned on during a conference or the trade event which didn't measure up to expectations, a good deed or praise can often be overlooked.

So when Laura Richards of The Conference Business wrote about her experience at The Fairmont Blue Mountains, we felt compelled to share it, and the insider information she picked up, with our readers.

"After a small but challenging event I held at the Fairmont this past weekend, I have to applaud the staff who went over and beyond the call of duty in so many ways.

"Service levels throughout the hotel were as professional, friendly and proactive as one could wish for and the food was of a very high quality.

"What's more, it was a breeze to drive to from Sydney now the road works are almost completed.

"Sales told me the Dalai Lama and his entourage are taking over the entire property in June - imagine the extra burst of goodwill and positive vibes that [will] radiate out of the Fairmont then."

Jill



Vic launches events review

THE Victorian government has launched a review of major events in the state to keep it competitive.

The Victorian Visitor Economy Review was the first of its kind in almost 20 years and would feature a reference group as well as a review by KPMG and the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources of government bodies responsible for tourism and major events, Premier Daniel Andrews' office said.

This review would include the Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB) as well as major events and regional Victoria.

Minister for Tourism and Major Events John Eren said the review would be wide-reaching, with the reference group responsible for external engagement and to be chaired by Sir Rod Eddington.

The review would "likely" help the state map out a plan for the next 10 years to help it grow and maintain its status as the events capital of Australia, he said.

NSW had started a "major push" of its own, the Premier's office said.

Eren said the state recognised its interstate counterparts were "hot on our heels.

"The industry is competitive and we need to ensure our strategy keeps us ahead of the pack."

MCB said it was "extremely pleased" business events would be included as part of the

review, showing the government recognised the industry's contribution to the economy.

It would provide advice and feedback to the review, and looked forward to building a new plan for Victorian business events combined with major events, the Bureau said.

"Attracting business events to the city is becoming increasingly challenging for any destination, and long-term sustainability and growth cannot be achieved without a clear understanding of the constantly changing environment and a clear road map to ensure success.

"It is just good business management."

Conference Shop famils



THE Conference Shop has unveiled its program of seven famils in regional NSW and ACT for meeting organisers.

The first complimentary two day visit to the Blue Mountains will run from 27 to 28 Mar, with the next due to run in Wollongong (pictured) from 23 to 24 Apr.

The other five, of one to two days, would be held in various locations throughout the year including the Southern Highlands in June and Canberra in August.

Director Carla Offord said the company planned to make all the famils complimentary but this could vary from region to region; any cost would be minimal.

The Conference Shop was "championing" regional destinations because it was passionate about what they had to offer the corporate market, she said.

CLICK HERE to enquire.

Today's issue of BEN

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

- Novotel Wollongong Northbeach

AIME survey

AIME organisers have advised the feedback survey links are personalised for each attendee (**BEN** 09 Mar).

You can take part in the survey by clicking on the link emailed to you.

PCO Assoc webinar

THE PCO Association has a webinar on 26 Mar called 'Managing Your Personal Brand for Personal Success'.

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Spreading national happiness

ONE of the world's most remote kingdom's, Bhutan, founded on the principle that tourism must be environmentally and ecologically friendly and with a goal of Gross National Happiness (GNH), has declared 2015 'Visit Bhutan Year'.

On Monday evening at the Westin Sydney, this country no larger than Switzerland was on an Australia roadshow, not with the objective to achieve arrival targets, but to invite visitors to join in the celebrations of the 60th birth anniversary of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the fourth King.

Guest of honour was His Excellency Dasho Kesang Wangdi, Ambassador of Bhutan



to Australia, who, together with a gathering of Bhutanese performers, radiated the good looks, calm and happiness that GNH clearly brings.

With a predominance of three-star hotels, Bhutan has some outstanding five-stars well suited to the incentive market that include the Taj Tashi Thimphu, which last year saw two incentives out of Australia, the Uma by Como, with two properties, Amankora and the newly opened Le Meridien Thimphu, all of which can do events and buyouts.

Impressed by the event, THAI Airways Australia marketing manager Sue Marr said it was great to see a country as small and remote as Bhutan put on a roadshow.

Pictured are two of the performers on the night.

Conf boost, increased flights 'good news'

THE \$6m boost to regional conferencing (**BEN** 06 Mar), coupled with the news that three commercial carriers will service Tamworth, was good news for the city and New England region, Inland NSW has said.

Ceo Graham Perry said the new services, operated by Virgin Australia (**BEN** 09 Mar), JETGO and Qantas Link, increased competition and highlighted the potential of increasing capacity for targeted regional routes, which was important for growing regional centres.

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Airport, flights to boost Hunter appeal

NEW direct flights between Newcastle and Canberra, and a new arrivals hall at Newcastle Airport, will boost the appeal of the Greater Hunter region to the business events industry, the Altogether Perfect marketing group has said.

The arrivals hall would feature TV screens and airport ambassadors to welcome delegates, and Pelican Airlines was set to launch direct flights between Newcastle and Canberra from 27 Apr, Altogether Perfect said.

Newcastle Convention Bureau business events and conventions developer Georgia Lazzari said the new-look airport and new flights would enhance the appeal of business events in Newcastle, the Hunter Valley and Port Stephens.

\$4m to bring events to Blue Mountains

THE NSW government has made a pre-election commitment to invest \$4m over the next four years to boost tourism in the Blue Mountains, as part of the \$123.5m commitment to attract major events to the state (**BEN** 16 Feb).

Announced today by Premier Mike Baird and Member for Blue Mountains Roza Sage, Baird said the government would host more major events such as Opera in the Blue Mountains in order to up visitor numbers.

Sage said it was in the interests of local businesses and the economy for more major events to be held in the area.

Baird said it was expected that an event such as the opera could deliver up to \$11m in increased visitor expenditure over four years.

6 - 9 SEPTEMBER 2015

ABOVE AND BEYOND - THE NEW ERA OF EVENTS

In recent years the business events market has undergone some drastic changes and both hosts and delegates have come to expect enhanced and more imaginative venue options, more cutting edge technology and innovative gourmet food. The traditional hotel conference room and lacklustre buffet don't cut it anymore with the modern MICE buyer who is looking for a more engaging experience. For the first time, Luxperience 2015 will present some of the most unique, innovative and exciting event options in Australia and around the world. The event will offer a new platform for event planners to discover the best products on the local, national and international market. Flexible registration options have been introduced this year so that buyers can attend for a half day or the full three days to make the most of their time.

Sydney is famous for its iconic harbour and it can also be the setting for a spectacular event. Luxurious motor yacht **The Boat** can take up to 45 guests on a cruise around the harbour for a cocktail party or a working lunch with a fresh, seasonal menu. For larger groups **The Island** is a floating 350 square metre pontoon styled as a European beach club that can be positioned anywhere in the harbour. In between networking, participants can swim in the netted ocean pool, listen to the DJ or relax in a private cabana. Another stunning harbour side venue option is the newly renovated **Pier One Sydney Harbour**. Around the country, the diversity of the **Luxury Lodges of Australia** portfolio allows for enormous choice and means that reward trips for high achievers are very desirable, whilst the seclusion of the properties ensures inspirational settings for corporate retreats.

Eric Lewanavanua Director of Sales and Partner Alliances at Luxperience says "We have seen a significant increase in operators who specialise in bespoke travel which lends itself well to conferencing and incentive travel offshore." **Pacific Destinationz Fiji** is a perfect example having delivered some of the most authentic and stunning offsite events in Fiji in unique locations whilst maintaining Fiji's enriched culture and heritage. Luxperience newcomers **ICS Travel Group** based in Thailand and **Condor Travel**, a South American based DMC both offer a selection of locally inspired meetings and incentive options throughout their regions that immerse participants in indigenous culture and natural landscapes. Find out more about the new options for inspiring, meaningful, engaging events at Luxperience 2015 [CLICK HERE](#).

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business events news

11th March 2015



CONFERENCING in Japan, or attending any roadshows hosted by Japanese tourism organisations?

It may be difficult to find anyone there, given the news that a group of mayors and governors from around the country is looking to highlight the ninja in tourism.

The group has set up a ninja council in the hopes of giving tourism a boost, the *Japan Times* reports.

Apparently, former Tourism Agency head Hiroshi Mizohata said ninjas are something that "always" come up whenever Japanese tourism is promoted abroad.

The publication reports that the council's plan involve local authorities teaming up with tourism agencies to highlight the ninja, and will provide information on its website about this most stealthy of martial arts practitioners, as well as host events to boost ninja popularity - like the ninja needed it.

To see a photo of the Council dressed as ninjas, [CLICK HERE](#).

UNWTO, AVIAREPS sign MoU

THE World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and AVIAREPS have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

As part of the MoU, the organisations would work together to help destinations with destination marketing, the organisations said.

The MoU was signed last week at ITB Berlin.

T'wit Tiwi



THE Tiwi Islands, 100km north of Darwin, have become more accessible to the day-tripper through a unique business agreement with SeaLink and the traditional owners of the Tiwi Islands through Tiwi Island Adventures.

Offering an exceptional component for a partner, pre or post conference program, SeaLink's Bathurst Island day tour departs Cullen Bay on Thursdays and Fridays from 01 Apr to 11 Dec.

Here, participants can experience the cultural differences between the Polynesian-influenced Tiwi people and the indigenous people of Arnhem Land.

A three-day Ultimate Island tour, limited to 12 guests and based at the remote Bathurst Island Lodge, provides a corporate retreat opportunity and is only available from 24 Jun to 11 Sep.

SeaLink NT general manager Paul Victory said at a launch cruise onboard *Captain Cook 2000* last week that the tours provided a "unique glimpse" into life on the Tiwi Islands and a rare opportunity to experience island life in the Northern Territory.

[CLICK HERE](#) to enquire about the tour.

Pictured from left is the SeaLink crew: Victory; Angela Panagopoulos; Anthea Somerville; Richard Doyle.



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Gray's Say

Peter Gray, an independent Motivation Consultant, presents a regular *Business Events News* feature on current issues in the Conference and Incentive industries.



AIME HAS SLIPPED - AGAIN

Two years ago, I promised myself that I wasn't going to write any more about AIME. But this year, the depths to which this event, which has so much potential, has fallen does not reflect well on either the MCB or Reed Exhibitions.

When I arrived at the show (without the promised barcode having been sent to my iPhone), I found that the Gala Dinner (hailed as the 'first one ever' in media releases clearly written by someone with a very short memory) had been excluded from my badge. I admit that I was pleasantly surprised when entering the exhibition to find a layout that was light and airy - a great improvement, I thought - but then realised that this was at the expense of fewer exhibitors. Both Virgin and Hilton were missing and several components of other stands weren't present either. A huge central 'Community Hub' provided somewhere for the weary attendee to sit and meet fellow visitors but was this merely an excuse to make up for a lack of exhibitors?

I have rarely heard so many complaints from exhibitors and visitors alike at one show. Nor have I read so many bad comments in the C&I media! Some stand managers openly told me that they had decided that this was their last AIME; many bemoaned the exceptionally high number of no-shows. The software that provides appointments to hosted buyers obviously wasn't working properly but, after so many years, why not? IMEX and Meetings don't seem to have this problem.

I heard tales of exhibitors being

told they couldn't take clients to lunch outside the MCEC during the show. The last minute cancellation of the Welcome Reception (because overseas visitors apparently complained that nobody spoke to them?) threw many exhibitors who had booked flights and accommodation months in advance into disarray. To attend the Gala Dinner (the venue of which was announced only at the last minute for some obscure reason) many exhibitors had to extend their stay, adding more expense to an already very expensive show.

The Gala Dinner also meant that many exhibitors could not use the Wednesday night to entertain buyers resulting in an overcrowded Tuesday evening (I had five invitations to attend various functions).

I suppose it's inevitable that with two masters - AIME is owned by the MCB and managed by Reed Exhibitions - both are going to want their pound of flesh when it comes to fees. Again and again I listened as exhibitors told me how expensive AIME is compared to other shows. If this event is to survive, MCB has to take less out of it - or take it back in-house - and make it cost-effective for exhibitors to be at what should be an international event.

Melbourne and Australia deserve better from AIME; this year they were badly let down.

Peter Gray can be contacted at peter.gray@motivatingpeople.net.



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