



## CLUB MEL BRINGS \$62M TO VIC

**SIXTEEN** Club Melbourne Ambassadors were awarded this week for securing 12 major international conferences for the city in 2016 – worth an estimated \$62.5 million to the State of Victoria.

The conferences will attract almost 12,000 international delegates, who will spend a combined 46,000 days in Melbourne, benefiting local hotels, restaurants, retail outlets and tourist attractions.

Led by the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre since 2005, the program has 119 Ambassadors.

MCEC chief executive Peter King said the ambassadors made a significant contribution by volunteering their time and expertise to the program to lure events to Melbourne.

“Not only are they helping us to secure existing events, but they are also working with us to foster and curate some remarkable inaugural events



across all industries, which we believe will not only create lasting legacies for Melbourne but for the wider world,” he said.

Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB) ceo, Karen Bolinger said the Ambassadors played an important role in contributing to the Team Melbourne focus.

“Our Team Melbourne approach is a genuine, collaborative effort between MCB, MCEC, local and State government, strengthened

by the intellectual capacity of our world-renowned Ambassadors.

Prof Alan Cowman and Prof Brendan Crabb AC are among those to have secured events for the city, having helped secure the 1st Malaria World Congress in 2018.

Since the program’s inception, Club Melbourne Ambassadors have delivered 120 conferences, worth more than \$685 million to the state of Victoria.

Today's issue of BEN

*Business Events News* today has three pages of news.

### Funding for NSW regional events

**NEW** South Wales is offering one-off grants of up to \$20,000 to event organisers who are staging an event for the first or second time.

Minister for Tourism and Major Events Adam Marshall said The Incubator Event Fund provided seed funding to innovative new events and assisted with the cost of their staging.

“This fund is part of our expanded Regional Flagship Events Program, which is focused on getting more events into rural and regional NSW, and increasing overnight visitation and expenditure.”

Applications for round two are open until 02 Apr.

**CLICK HERE** for details.

## TA hails value of business events

**TOURISM** Australia managing director John O’Sullivan this morning highlighted the importance of business events to Australia’s visitor economy.

Speaking at TA’s 2017 Destination Australia conference, O’Sullivan cited the example of the Amway China incentive in Jan which had an estimated economic impact of \$39 million.

And that’s just in spending related to the event, with O’Sullivan noting Business Events Sydney figures showing 72% of travellers who come to Australia for a conference will then be more inclined to pick Australia for their next leisure trip.

“These events are big business... they are really good advertisements for the country,” O’Sullivan said.

“They are just a great opportunity to capitalise on some great infrastructure, some great know-how within the sector and some great smarts in the country,” the TA md enthused.



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## MEA SKILLS REVIEW

**MEETING** & Events Australia (MEA) is coordinating a survey to identify skills shortages.

The association has invited the Exhibition & Events Association of Australasia (EEAA) and the Australian Association of Convention Bureaux (AACB) to support the survey by distributing the questionnaire to their members to ensure all sectors of the events industry are represented.

Robyn Johnson, ceo of MEA, said maintaining the highest service levels was critical to ensuring the continued growth of the Australian events industry.

"MEA has taken a collaborative approach by working across the industry to explore what gap there is in the industry so that we can develop programs and work with government and other agencies to fill this gap," she said.

The survey will highlight perceived gaps in experience

and skills so that training packages can be developed to help the industry appropriately, address shortfalls.

AACB ceo Andrew Heibl said Australia would forever be on an uneven playing field when attracting international business events because of its geographic location in the world.

However he said Australia could still remain on everyone's bucket list and have a reputation for delivering world class events.

"To maintain this competitive advantage, we must continue to lead with the professionalism."

He said this required experienced and qualified professionals in all areas of the business events industry to come together.

The report on the outcomes of the survey will be announced at MEA's National Conference, which will be held 30 Apr-02 May, 2017.

## Four Points Docklands debut



**THE** latest addition to Victoria's meetings infrastructure is set to open on 28 Mar with the debut of Four Points by Sheraton Melbourne Docklands.

The hotel has 273 rooms, including 16 suites, and offers 588m<sup>2</sup> of events space aimed at small- to medium-sized meetings and gatherings of up to 130 delegates, including an outdoor deck for hosting cocktail events.

The largest of the seven meeting spaces is 157m<sup>2</sup>.

## 'Eventing the Future' line-up

**NEW** Zealand's National Conference for Event Professionals has announced Peter Kageyama as the first international keynote speaker at its 2017 gathering, 'Eventing the Future'.

The popular TED Talk speaker will describe how to engage and grow partnerships with events.

To be held 02-03 Aug, the event is the official conference of the NZ Association of Event Professionals.

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**DELEGATES** at Tourism Australia's Destination Australia 2017 conference in Sydney today certainly had no problem keeping their caffeine levels up.

In a fabulous innovation, each table at the Doltone House Hyde Park venue was equipped with special coffee flyers (pictured below).

Participants needing a fix during the series of presentations were able to simply hold up the appropriate sign to have a freshly made coffee delivered right to their table.



## AWE hall of fame

**THE** Association for Women in Events (AWE) has announced a Hall of Fame Recognition Program.

It will acknowledge the advancement of women in events by honouring women and men with the following categories: Disruptor, Coach, Woman of Influence, Emerging Leader and Organisational Leadership.

Nominations are open until 05 May and the winners will be announced in Jul.

## AVD wins Sofitel deal

**AUDIO** Visual Dynamics (AVD) has won the contract to be the AV provider for the soon to be completed Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour.

The company is Melbourne's largest venue AV support provider and this is its first Sydney contract.

Located next to the new International Convention Centre Sydney, the Sofitel is the city's first new-build five-star hotel in nearly two decades.

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## Partner Up

The low down on tech in the events world

## How to hold an engaging panel discussion at your next event

**A PANEL** discussion is a great way to bring together influential speakers at an event to offer their advice, stories, and expertise to the event attendees. The audience is given a chance to ask thought provoking questions and get different perspectives in real time. Panel discussions are a great inclusion to many events, however they do require a bit of planning to ensure success.

Here's what you need to know:

### Mix up your panelists

To ensure you have adequate diversity in your panel, make sure to include people with various opinions, backgrounds, industries, specialisations, ages, and experiences. This will mean your audience can benefit from a range of knowledge, and it also means your panelists won't be competing with one another.

### Choose an engaging moderator

A moderator is an important part of a panel discussion. They will introduce each speaker, ask questions and direct attention to certain people or topics. The moderator keeps the discussion on track and flowing, so it's best to

choose wisely. Ideally you want someone who can get the most out of the panellists while having a little fun with the audience.

### Get prepared

It's a good idea to prepare early and choose panel questions well ahead of schedule, giving each panelist time to prepare their answers. Make sure the moderator and panelists have input, this will make them feel valued during the process.

### Set the stage

Generally speaking, panel discussions are on a stage with panelists seated on a lounge or chairs facing the audience. It's best practice to not have them sit behind a desk as it can cut off the open flow of communication. It's a good idea to check with your AV provider about what AV is required, such as spotlighting, lapel microphones or a shared dynamic microphone that can be passed along to each speaker. Using a reputable AV provider will ensure the panellists are successfully seen and heard, and that their messages are conveyed effectively to the audience.

**Brendon Biffin** is the partner at Sofitel Brisbane Central with AVPartners, which creates integrated event experiences through combining state of the art audiovisual technology, unrivalled expertise and a highly-tailored approach. [www.avpartners.com](http://www.avpartners.com)



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