



Today's issue of BEN

Business Events News today has two pages of news.

This is the last issue of BEN for 2020, and we would like to thank our loyal readers for your ongoing support and wish you all the very best for the festive season.

See you in 2021!

IBTM online

ALMOST 8,300 business events professionals took part in the first ever IBTM World Virtual which closed last week with almost 13,000 meetings taking place during the event.

The show featured a packed live and on-demand content program with 87 sessions, four keynotes and almost 100 speakers.

MCEC \$740M IMPACT

THE Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) contributed more than \$740 million in economic impact to Vic in 2019/20, despite the business events sector being effectively shut down for the last four months of the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the 12 months to Jun MCEC generated \$79 million in operating revenue, hosting 800 events with 715,000 attendees.

A further 251 events were cancelled as coronavirus restrictions were introduced

John Brumby, Chair of the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust, said the first six months of the financial year had been among the most successful in the organisation's history, with Aug and Oct 2019 delivering the top revenue ever.

"This was an outstanding start to a year that proved to

be challenging for MCEC, our industry and all Victorians."

The \$740 million in revenue for the year was down on the \$1.1 billion for 2018/19.

The MCEC annual report indicates the Centre is operating with the support of additional grant funding of \$29.8m for the period 01 Apr-30 Sep 2020, while further funding to support operations has also been approved to 28 Feb 2021.

A further submission for a longer term recovery funding package will be lodged for the period beyond Feb next year.

MCEC CEO Peter King said the Centre would continue to be a valuable contributor to Vic's economic growth and recovery.

"We are working incredibly hard to ensure we can continue to be a cornerstone of Victoria's economy by pivoting in the new world we find ourselves in."

Get Local

THE Exhibitor Prospectus has been released for next year's Get Local face-to-face event for the business events industry (**BEN** 15 Sep), with the show set to take place 29-30 Jul 2021.

Get Local is being organised by Donna Kessler and Gary Bender, who said after a tumultuous 2020 the time was right to launch an Australasian business events exhibition designed to kick-start the industry.

Kessler said domestic meetings remain the strongest option for the foreseeable future, while Bender said as with sister show Get Global the focus will be on helping make deep connections between suppliers and end-users.

For more info **CLICK HERE**.

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HOW about taking your next Zoom videoconference to the next level?

That's exactly what the owners of a Japanese amusement park are offering, in the form of short-term rental of seats on their gigantic ferris wheel.

Described as the "ultimate office space with a view," it costs about \$25 for a one-hour rotation, which also includes free pocket wi-fi.

One of the first to take a ride on the new offering at the Yomiuriland Amusement Park near Tokyo was online events manager Seeichi Asai, who told *CBS News* he took a Zoom call while in his aerial office cubicle.

"My coworkers said it looked like I was on vacation. They were jealous," he said.

Park spokesman Yu Okutani said there were other rides available at Yomiuriland, but not many are suitable for videoconferencing.

"The roller coaster and merry-go-round are not laptop-friendly," he said, noting however that they were ideal for workers to clear their heads when they wanted to take a short break.

The options are part of a range of "workcation" packages for Japanese employees, many of whom continue to be unable to return to their offices due to the pandemic.

Vic bounce

BUSINESS Events Victoria says the further easing of restrictions in the state led to a significant feeling of positivity at its recent Regional Virtual Showcase.

More than 200 meeting planners took part, with the event facilitating 178 one-on-one meetings with regional Vic venues.

"The virtual showcase was perfectly timed, with the most recent announcements around the return to workplaces and increases for indoor and outdoor gatherings in Vic made just days later," said Business Events Victoria Executive Officer, Chris Porter.

He said there was a strong feeling of confidence that business events will be able to safely operate within the state's regions once again, with many venues having used 2020 to improve and upgrade facilities, revamp their offers and develop new experiences to appeal to a 'COVID normal' market.

Lizard opens

NORTH Queensland's Lizard Island reopened yesterday after a nine-month closure due to border restrictions.

The 40 beach-house style suites cater to high end incentives and executive retreats - lizardisland@clockwiseconsulting.com.au.

TO INFINITY, AND EVENTS!

CONSTRUCTION is set to start next year on the new Infinity Convention Centre in Sydney.

The first of its kind to open in Sydney since the International Convention Centre in 2016 (*TD* 12 Dec 2016), Infinity will form part of the \$575 million Infinity by Crown Group mixed use complex, and will have capacity for up to 425 people, "but you can connect with 3,000-4,000 people around the world," according to Crown's Head of Hotels David Bowen.

"There's going to be a huge LED screen across the back so you can do conferencing," he added, reinforcing that, following what was learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, Infinity would be designed to be "future-proof".

"It's going to be a technology hub...we want it to be a place where people come and are inspired and share ideas."

Infinity will boast direct access to Green Square railway station, which is one stop to Central and two to Sydney Domestic Airport.

The site will be able to cater for intimate or large-scale functions, with configurations including a classroom-style setup for up to 65 people, a



conference for up to 315, sit-down dinners or weddings for 385, auditorium style for 425 and cocktail events for 450.

Infinity will also include a service to coach people in presenting in the online format.

"We've noticed a lot of AGMs that are online now, but people aren't used to presenting in that format," Bowen observed.

"[Coaches will] take you up to a green room, they'll do makeup, they'll coach you how to talk to an audience, they'll help you, so we see that as a niche space.

"They're going to be hybrid events, there's going to be people and technology."

Pictured: Bowen on Infinity by Crown Group's rooftop, the property which will play host to Infinity Convention Centre.

HK set for 40% boost in space

THE Hong Kong Exhibition & Convention Industry Association (HKECIA) has welcomed an official Policy Address from the territory's administration which has reconfirmed plans to

redevelop three sites in Wan Chai North into convention and exhibition facilities.

First announced in 2017, the two projects will increase the city's convention and exhibition space by over 40%.