



ICC now up to 1,500

SYDNEY'S International Convention Centre (ICC) has been granted an exemption from the NSW Department of Health which will allow it to host corporate events for up to 1,500 delegates.

All activities will be subject to the one person per four square metre rule, with a maximum of 300 people in separate areas within the ICC Sydney venue.

ICC Sydney is also now able to host uncapped exhibitions subject to the spacing rule, and 2,400 patrons within the Aware Super Theatre.

The exemption is "an acknowledgement of the thorough, best practice health and safety standards in place at ICC Sydney," according to ICC CEO Geoff Donaghy.

Kiss My Axe!

A NEW venue opening in Sydney's Alexandria combines axe-throwing with adventure-focused corporate team building events.

Kiss My Axe offers "urban axe-throwing" in which teams are taught by a coach to throw solid steel axes at wooden targets.

Popular in Canada and the USA, founders Ian Williams and Jason Macdonald said they "believed it was high time Australia got in on the axe-ion".

They're offering a range of packages including a full day leadership workshop, team-building, two-hour axe-throwing sessions, Christmas parties and more.

The new venue also features a fully equipped presentation space - for info see kissmyaxe.com.au.

GRANT EOIS SOUGHT

AUSTRADE has opened expressions of interest (EOIs) for event owners to have their event included on a Schedule of Approved Business Events, as part of the initial phase of the \$50 million Business Events Grants program (**BEN** 15 Sep).

Having an event included on the Schedule means eligible businesses will subsequently be able to apply for a grant to attend, with between \$10,000 and \$250,000 available to cover up to 50% of costs incurred in participating as buyers or sellers during the 2021 calendar year.

Eligible costs could include space hire, design and manufacture, travel or accommodation.

Event owners are encouraged to submit EOIs by midnight on 30 Nov 2020 to ensure their events can be considered for the Schedule when the program opens in mid-Dec.

"EOIs will remain open through to 26 Feb 2021 but may be closed to manage demand on the Program or if all Program funds are committed," according to Austrade.

The pre-approved events will be listed on the formal Schedule, and should an event be cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions then the non-refundable amount (as identified in the program guidelines) will be entirely met by the Government.

Key criteria have been released for inclusion, with factors including support for regional Australia, having a business-to-business component, alignment with one or more Australian Government priority sectors, having a multi-day program and demonstrating a significant economic impact for the host region.

EOIs can be submitted at beg.smartygrants.com.au/eoi.

Today's issue of BEN

Business Events News today has two pages of news.

NEW NAME FOR CINZ

CONVENTIONS and Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) will change its name to Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA) on 01 Dec, with the move among several changes ratified at its Annual General Meeting held last week.

A new board structure will see two seats of the organisation elected from the Platinum member category, and one seat from each of the Gold and Silver member categories.

Two seats will also be appointed by the Chairman and elected board members following the AGM, and these may or may not be Members of the Association.

There will also be one non-voting seat for a representative from Air NZ,

and one non-voting seat for someone nominated by Tourism New Zealand.

CINZ Chair Tony Gardner said "these changes reflect CINZ's need to meet future issues at a governance level in an agile way, while still ensuring that our members maintain the power base".

The Board this year includes CEO Lisa Hopkins along with Platinum category directors Georgina Grey from Accor NZ and Prue Daly from SkyCity.

The Gold representative is Tracey Thomas from Conference Innovators, while Jake Downing from Weta Workshop takes up the Silver seat on the Board.

Co-opted members include Blair Catton from Air NZ and Lisa Gardiner of Tourism NZ.

GC chief named

DESTINATION Gold Coast has named Patricia O'Callaghan as its new CEO.

O'Callaghan took up her new role yesterday, moving from her previous six-year tenure as CEO of Townsville Enterprise.

Sunshine brand

VISIT Sunshine Coast (VSC) has unveiled "For real" as its new tag-line, with the aim of encapsulating the region's authentic business events and tourism experiences.

VSC recently named Matt Stoeckel as its new CEO.



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JUST when you thought the year couldn't get any stranger, NSW has revealed that a footy stadium will be converted into a golf course - for a short time at least.

As part of the state's rejuvenated tourism offerings, Stadium Australia will become a nine-hole golf course on Fri 04 Dec, hyping the venue's versatility for hosting events.

The turf is set to be shaved to a "super-fine" level for the 2020 G9 Stadium Golf, with players of all levels invited to tee off from the grandstand onto the grass which just over a week ago was being used to host round II of the State of Origin Rugby League match.

"Versatility is something our new Venues NSW will chase to ensure all our sporting and entertainment venues are utilised as much as possible all year round," said NSW Minister for Sport Geoff Lee, who's **pictured** ready to tee off with some high profile fellow enthusiasts.

Tickets are now on sale via Ticketek for the unique event which will naturally be staged under a full range of COVID-safe practices.



Sell TNQ 2021 soon

BUSINESS Events Cairns & Great Barrier Reef has ramped up plans to hold Sell TNQ in 2021 "as soon as it is safe and practical to do so".

The last time Sell TNQ was held, in late 2019, it was oversubscribed by three to one, and the organisation's GM Rosie Douglas said it's expected similar demand will be seen for the 2021 program which will also mark its 21st birthday.

"Traditionally the event is held in Nov each year, but with industry eager to return to the region, dates for early 2021 are being considered," she said.

Sell TNQ 2021 will showcase a new business events brand platform for the destination as well as the reopening of the renewed Cairns Convention Centre.

For more details see the Sell TNQ video by **CLICKING HERE**.

InterCon refurb

SYDNEY'S iconic InterContinental Hotel is set to undergo a \$95 million makeover, which will upgrade all 500-plus guest rooms, public areas and the addition of a new public bar in the heritage central court.

Another new bar, also open to the public, will be added within the level 32 Club InterContinental lounge which is also set for an expansion.

The works are now under way and the project is currently expected to be completed by early 2022.

Confessions of a compulsive conference-goer

Andrew Klein, professional MC and presentation skills speaker and director of SPIKE Presentations, presents his front line observations on conferences in a regular feature in **BEN**.

WALL-E and ME (My 2020 online love affair)

AS WE approach the end of what has been, well, a very different year, I want to focus my attention (pun intended, stick with me, you'll learn why) around one aspect of 2020 conferencing that we've all had to manage without for most of 2020. Audiences. To be specific "live" face-to-face audiences.

As a speaker and MC, I've missed the unique energy, feedback, engagement, laughter and buzz of a real (as opposed to virtual) audience - and the ability chat, network and share experiences with people together in a conference room, over coffee, walking the Exhibition Halls, in hotel corridors, in the lifts, at the dinners etc.

Sure, we've learnt that when done well, virtual events are great in many ways. But as humans, who crave human contact and mostly enjoy gathering together with friends and colleagues, nothing can replace looking into the eyes of another person - or when on stage, looking into a sea of eyes and faces.

This year those eyes have looked a little different. Either you've found you've spent the year looking uncomfortably into your own eyes on a Zoom or Teams screen or perhaps you've learnt to look directly into your webcam, so at least your audience feels they have direct eye contact with you.

I've long known the importance of looking down the barrel of the camera when presenting from

a studio and have enjoyed that experience throughout this year.

But as someone doing a lot of my 2020 presenting from home, it took me a while to learn the importance of looking directly into my external webcam, perched above my monitor, as if my webcam were the eyes of the person(s) to whom I am talking.

Indeed, my webcam has become my 2020 audience.

My cute little Logitech webcam looks to me like the lovable animated Pixar robot character WALL-E (one of my favourite movies of all-time...do yourself a favour, it's not just for kids). So every time I jump online and start talking, I look deep into WALL-E's wide and wise eyes and imagine I am talking to a living, breathing creature.

It's really helped me engage and not look, dare I say it, too robotic. It reminds me that an audience of actual people (not virtual people) is out there in viewership land, looking into my eyes. I hope my online audience have felt that engaged, online love.

That said, while I imagine my love affair with WALL-E will endure forever in one form or another, I'm looking forward to looking into the real eyes of 100's or 1000's of humans, as soon as the world allows.



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