



MCB \$25K INCENTIVE

MELBOURNE Convention Bureau (MCB) is offering event organisers up to \$25,000 to help offset the costs of hosting activities in Victoria.

The new MCB National Business Events Program focuses on domestic association conferences, exhibitions, trade shows, workshops and seminars, as well as corporate meetings and incentive group events.

The grants can be used to fund venue hire, accommodation, transport and other event costs, with 50% payable before the event to support upfront expenses.

MCB CEO Julia Swanson said she was thrilled to announce the funding initiative, which aimed to help the state's business events sector to regain momentum and provide a vital helping hand to business event organisers wanting to host events in the Vic capital.

"Our aim is not only to boost demand across the sector, fill our hotels and support our local supply chain, but to provide planners and key decision makers the confidence to plan and book their event in Melbourne," Swanson said.

Funding will be determined by the event duration and number of delegates attending in-person travelling to Victoria from interstate, she noted.

Expressions of interest are now open - **CLICK HERE**.

MEANWHILE the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre will next month host an expected 5,000 delegates in person for the Australian Dental Exhibition (ADX).

Taking place 06-08 May, ADX includes over 9,000 sqm of exhibition space and a wide program of seminars and networking activities for oral health professionals.

ICC studio

INTERNATIONAL Convention Centre (ICC) Sydney has announced the launch of a dedicated permanent studio space offering live streaming, digital event solutions and broadcast recording solutions.

The new ICC Media Studio offering is being delivered by the venue's AV and ICT teams, who have already executed more than 200 broadcast and hybrid events over the last 12 months.

Centrepiece

CENTREPIECE at Melbourne Park, a new state-of-the-art conference and events centre in the Melbourne & Olympic Parks precinct, has announced it will officially open its doors in Sep.

The venue's first key event will be the Associations Forum National Conference scheduled for 06-07 Sep.

Today's issue of BEN

Business Events News today has two pages of news.

PARRTJIMA A GHAN WRAP



ONE of Australia's iconic rail journeys took on new colours last week when three carriages of Journey Beyond's The Ghan were adorned in some special artwork as part of the NT's Parrtjima - A Festival in Light 2021.

The initiative is a collaboration by the travel and tourism operator with Tourism NT, NT Major Events Company and AGB Events, which is organising the festival in Alice Springs.

The 09-18 Apr event "activates the desert landscape of Central Australia into a meeting place of old and new," using the latest technologies courtesy of Novatech which also set up the interior of a special carriage on the train as an immersive sound and light experience for passengers.

The 2021 Ranges Show at Parrtjima, titled Spirit Kultcha, sees massive light shows projected onto the MacDonnell Ranges behind Alice Springs, and this year

features a collaboration with Aboriginal electronic duo Electric Fields.

AGB Events CEO Anthony Bastic said the collaboration with Journey Beyond was part of ongoing efforts to expand the reach of the annual Parrtjima program.

"This is a new initiative and particularly significant given the Ghan's importance to Central Australia," he said.

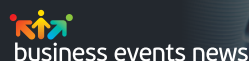
"There's also a great synergy with the artwork *Crossroads* by Chantelle Mulladad (**pictured**), which we've utilised in this installation and also the Merging Kultcha installation at the Alice Springs Desert Park," he said.

Journey Beyond Chief Commercial Officer, Peter Egglestone, said "we take great pride in supporting local communities and curating unique experiences, and without hesitation, we were thrilled at the opportunity to support Parrtjima and collaborate for the event".

Meeting space?

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EVENT planners are used to dealing with lots of highly stressful situations, but this one really takes the cake.

A hotel in Florida, USA has abruptly cancelled all current bookings and kicked out its existing guests with no notice (and no refunds) after the property was sold.

Champions World Resort in Kissimmee is described online as "perfect for small conventions, intimate weddings and small parties," and was reportedly booked to capacity when the owners decided to shut it down and sack all the staff just before Easter, according to *WESH 2*.

"Havoc just broke loose," one of the guests told the local TV station, saying hotel employees started going door-to-door telling residents they had to pack up and get off the property.

At least two major events planned for the Easter weekend, including a vow renewal and a wedding, were cancelled at the last minute.

It's understood that a condition of the sale was that the hotel be vacant, with the new owners of the property expected to convert it into apartments.

The Champions World Resort shutdown occurred on 01 Apr, with many guests initially believing it was an unfunny and ill-intentioned April Fool's prank.

Restrictions ease

LARGE, ticketed and seated gatherings will be able to operate to 100% venue capacity, under new guidelines released by National Cabinet last Fri.

Based on advice from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC), venue density restrictions are also being eased to be no stricter than the 2 square metre rule.

PM Scott Morrison said the decisions "take us further down the path of reopening Australia," and include a commitment for states and territories to prioritise local containment and aim for outbreak responses that keep borders open.

GainingEdge training

BUSINESS events advisory group GainingEdge has launched a new online training program, with a series of 90-minute courses giving industry professionals the opportunity to boost their expertise.

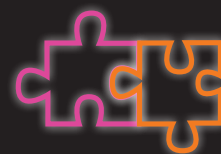
The initial instructor-led courses will feature a range of topics including branding, bid process & strategy, and local host development.

Offered in multiple time zones across the globe and geared towards convention bureaux and destination management organisations, participants will receive a certificate of completion.

The first session is scheduled for 10 May - for more details see gainingedge.eventsair.com.

NEED A DISTRACTION AMID THE DOOM AND GLOOM?

Check out our daily puzzle page.



Travel Daily

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.

We're travelling again... or are we?

THE news that New Zealand has agreed to a travel bubble with Australia hit the headlines in just about every newspaper and industry news sheet. Hotels in both countries are jubilant; airlines (well, two of them) are dusting off their fleets ready to accommodate the mass exodus and arrivals. Tourism offices have come back to life (not that, from my inbox, they have been far away).

BUT - and there has to be one - "Those undertaking travel on either side of the ditch will do so under the guidance of flyer beware," New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said when announcing the travel bubble. This basically means that if you're away from home and the country or state you're in decides to close its border you're stuck...and many, if not most, travel insurers will not cover you for costs incurred as a result of a pandemic.

If you're an incentive practitioner, conference organiser or event manager, multiply that problem by the number of participants or delegates involved in your reward program or event. Who's going to pick up the tab for a large number of people who can't get home, perhaps for several days? I'm assuming the generosity of the airlines will allow flights to be

postponed but I feel sure that the event organiser isn't going to pay; it's highly unlikely that the client is going to be happy with an extra, very substantial bill. And will the country or state provide suitable replacement accommodation at no cost? Your guess is as good as mine.

This has been the problem all along and one that the Australian federal and state governments have continually failed to address. Cheap flights to holiday destinations may keep the airlines and hotels happy for a while, but when the groups that provide a substantial source of income (up to seven times the expenditure of the average tourist) fail to materialise, what then?

Incentive programs provide a rich source of business for companies that use them but many of these programs rely on travel rewards to motivate the participants. New Zealand is a major provider of incentive travel rewards but the prospect of having your most productive dealers, suppliers or staff stuck there is not a happy one. The business events industries which have been among the hardest hit, and which our government clearly does not understand, needs a clearer pathway for the future.

Peter Gray is an independent motivation consultant, author and speaker. He can be contacted at: peter.gray@motivatingpeople.net.

