



## Today's issue of BEN

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

## MEA findings

**THE** events industry is experiencing a skills shortage, according to a three-year study conducted by Meetings & Events Australia (MEA).

Over half of respondents say the lack of skilled event professionals is already affecting their organisation's ability to recruit, with mid-level management roles most affected - see the full report **HERE**.

**MEANWHILE**, MEA has received a record number of submissions for the 2019 MEA Awards, scheduled for 05 May, and has reported an 18% year-on-year increase in the number of entries.

## HotelPlanner acquires

**US-BASED** group hotel bookings platform HotelPlanner has continued its expansion into the Asia Pacific region, acquiring Australia-based online venue marketplace EventConnect.com for an undisclosed seven-figure amount.

"Our acquisition of EventConnect.com helps further our position as a leader in the global group bookings space and accelerates the company's growth, particularly in the Oceania and APAC region," HotelPlanner Co-founder and CEO Tim Hentschel.

## MELBOURNE ON SHOW AT AIME 2020

**ASIA** Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME) officially kicked off yesterday with the Knowledge Exchange, which saw Emergent CEO Holly Ransom and The Mathem Group CEO Christopher Kai leading the discussion on the power of human connections.

The first day of the program wrapped up at the Port Melbourne Yacht Club, where hosted buyers, exhibitors, media partners and associates gathered for a night of dancing and dining.

Meanwhile, there's plenty of exciting updates from the showroom floor, including one from Tourism Australia's Business Events Australia (BEA), which has increased its presence at this year's AIME.

BEA is inviting attendees to visit its stand to learn about the recently launched Event Here This Year campaign (**BEN** 11 Feb), which urges domestic event planners to stay in Australia for their events, conferences, incentives and exhibitions.

"While it remains to be seen what the full impact of the current challenges affecting our sector will be, the timing of AIME provides an ideal opportunity...to ensure Australia is front of mind for international business event decision makers," said Tourism Australia Managing



Director Phillipa Harrison.

The Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB), which boasts the biggest presence on the show floor with 18 partners spread across its stand, showcases the best of the city and promises to be a hub of activity, with free coffee, give-aways, raffles, activations and more.

Attendees can also enjoy a "wellness break" at the Melbourne Stand, which uses the latest virtual reality to pair 360 views of the state's oceans, waterfalls and mountain views with calming music.

"Offering a holistic wellness culture for business events has become a 'must-have' for every meeting as wellness and mindfulness has become a priority in the industry," said MCB Chief Executive Officer

Julia Swanson.

MCB, in partnership with Showtime Event Group, also hosted buyers and media at the newly renovated State Library Victoria on Sunday night for the Uncover Melbourne program.

The program included a gala experience in The Ian Potter Queen's Hall (**pictured**), which up until now had been closed to the public for the past 16 years.

"It really is Melbourne newest events hub with 11 spaces able to cater for a very wide range of events from small meetings through to gala receptions," said Showtime Event Group General Manager Brad Dabbs of the State Library, which last year completed its \$88.1m Vision 2020 redevelopment.

Stay tuned for more on AIME 2020 in next week's **BEN**.

## PCOA webinar

**THE** Professional Conference Organisers Association (PCOA) will host a webinar on Thu 27 Feb at 1.30pm AEDT on "maximising event revenue through hybrid events".

The session will focus on the live-streaming and online events experience - **CLICK HERE** to register.

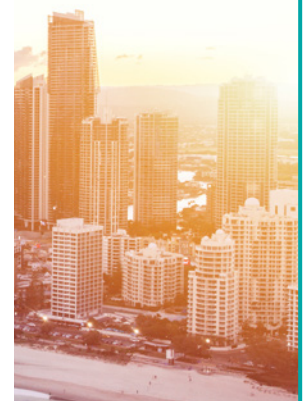
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## LA GRAMMYS FAMIL



**A GROUP** of Australian incentive and corporate buyers were recently hosted by Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board on a famil to the city of angels, where they attended the 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual GRAMMY Awards.

The buyers were flown to LA in Air New Zealand's Premium

Economy class, and enjoyed a private suite at Staples Center for the awards, a custom-designed walking tour of Sunset Strip, lunch at the Grand Central Market, and cocktails at the new West Hollywood Edition Hotel.

**Pictured:** Looking glam at Staples Centre LA.



**THE** Noosa Eat & Drink Festival, on 14-17 May, will pretty much be foodie heaven, with no less than 15 unique food and drink-themed events to enjoy.

Create your very own gin at Noosa's Fortune Distiller, indulge in a four-course French menu at Periwinkle Restaurant, embark on a beer-hop through local breweries, tuck into a Middle Eastern feast at Pitchfork Restaurant - and that's just some of what's on offer.

**CLICK HERE** to see the entire festival program.

### QT's The Green

**QT GOLD** Coast has opened its new events space, The Green, a 185m<sup>2</sup> lawn and terrace that can host up to 150 people.

The Palm Springs-inspired venue is located next to the resort's new pool, and features a bar, a 3.5m LED screen, festoon lighting and state-of-the-art audio visual.

Delegates can enjoy an exclusive cocktail package for \$125 per person, for a minimum of 60 guests, which includes a three-hour stand-up food menu and beverage package - contact [sales\\_qtgoldcoast@evt.com](mailto:sales_qtgoldcoast@evt.com) for more info.

## 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**.

### A Welcome Acknowledgement

**I'VE** been conferencing for 25 years and throughout that time, many events have begun with a Welcome to or Acknowledgment of Country. These are sometimes delivered by a leader of the hosting organisation, the MC or opening speaker - and often by a local Aboriginal elder or a local indigenous community representative.

It has saddened me how often the inclusion of a Welcome / Acknowledgment has either been forgotten, or if included it often feels 'procedural' or that the conference is either 'ticking the box' because we are 'meant' to have one. Or despite huge efforts and all good intentions, the genuinely well-intentioned conference organisers have been unable to make it something 'special'. And unfortunately, many delegates are not really sure why we have these in the program or the real significance of them.

Having worked on countless conferences in New Zealand, I've always marvelled at how well their traditional Maori welcomes seem to be performed and received. Yet here, across the ditch, the impact never seems to be as powerful.

Until now. Maybe I've been unlucky until now and have been missing some amazing renditions in Australia. But for the first time in my memory, in December I was privileged to have been co-MCing the Professional Conference

Organisers Association (PCOA) Conference at the ICC, Sydney.

The conference set themselves the challenging theme of "Anything Is Possible" and absolutely nailed it with many innovative, creative and different ideas explored thematically, technically, visually etc. The conference commenced with a dynamic Acknowledgment to Country performed by "The KARI Singers," a multi-talented group of young Indigenous performers, who sang beautifully, danced spectacularly, Acknowledged Country poignantly and most importantly, delicately explained what and why this was being done.

It was so powerful, joyous, visually spectacular and moving that it became one of the genuine talking points and standouts at the conference, a conference that was not short on standout presentations and moments. When was the last time you attended a conference when the Welcome and/or Acknowledgment was truly memorable, let alone a highlight?

While I am 100% sure that there have been other wonderful examples of this at other conferences and events, for me, it was a first and I'm hoping the first of many. Well done to the PCOA and to the incredible Kari Singer team.

<http://www.kari.org.au/>

If you are looking for an MC for your next conference or a speaker/trainer on presentation skills or pitching skills, email [andrew@lunch.com.au](mailto:andrew@lunch.com.au) or visit his website at [www.andrewklein.com.au](http://www.andrewklein.com.au).

