



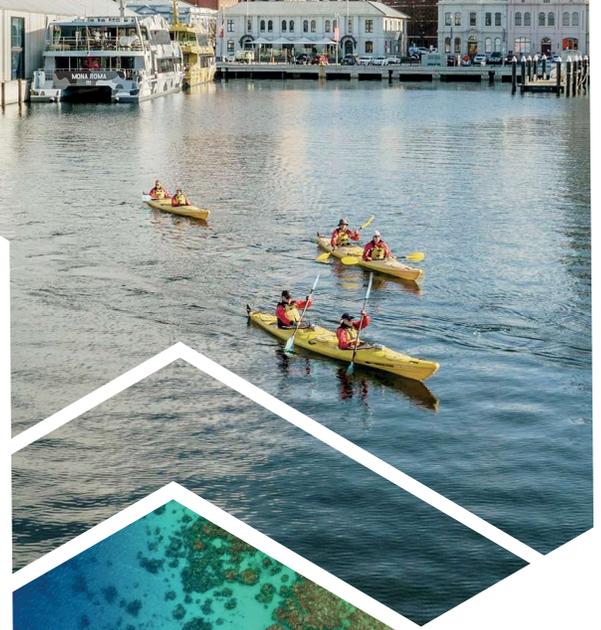
THE ASSOCIATION
MAGAZINE

BUSINESS EVENTS AUSTRALIA

**SPECIAL MICE
DESTINATION REPORT**

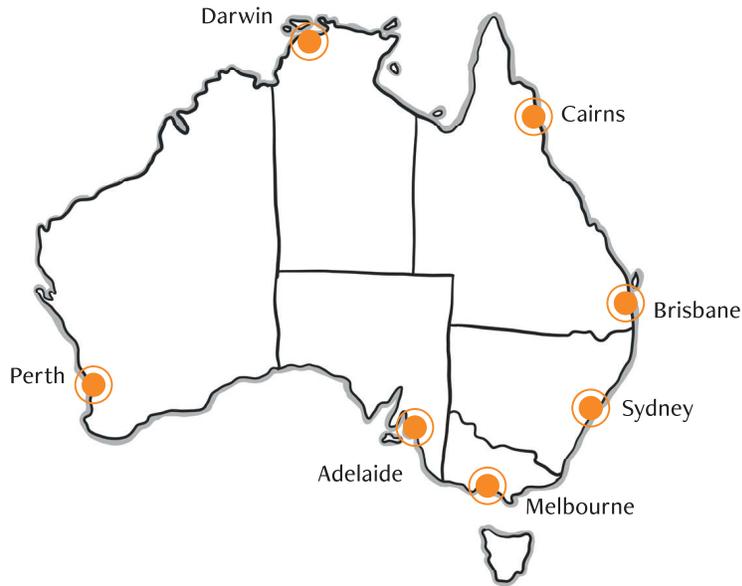


Exploring Australia



A New Era of **Sustainable** and **Culturally** **Rich** Business Events

This Destination Report is an introduction to a country undergoing a remarkable transformation. This journey through Australia's transformation promises a glimpse into the future of business events, where the timeless allure of the outback meets environmental and community engagement stewardship.



From the ancient whisper of the rainforest to the quiet solace of the desert, from rugged mountain ranges to tranquil lakes, immerse yourself in the Land Down Under, where the pulse of innovation beats in every corner and the excitement of adventure beckons from across the country's vast natural landscapes. Australia's commitment to sustainable and culturally rich business events is painting the nation's buzzing cities and breathtaking nature with new strokes of progress.

The **Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME) 2024**, a key gathering for the business events industry, took place from 20th to 22nd February in the bustling heart of Melbourne. This flagship event showcased Australia's innovative, sustainable approach to business events and celebrated the rich culture of the nation's First Nations.

Amidst the busy atmosphere of the biggest AIME in a decade, *HQ's* **Managing Director, Vivian Xu**, sat down with **Tourism Australia's Executive General Manager, Commercial & Business Events Australia, Robin Mack**. Their discussion highlighted the country's growing stature as a premier business events destination, backed by a commitment to innovation, sustainability and cultural reverence.

Robin Mack perfectly captured the essence of Australia's approach: a harmonious blend of environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and economic dynamism. He highlighted the **National Sustainability Framework for the Visitor Economy**, launched in collaboration with state and territory ministers and supported by accreditation programs through **EarthCheck** and **Ecotourism Australia's** eco-certification and their **Strive for**

Sustainability educational programmes. These initiatives not only underscore the country's commitment to sustainable practices but also offer resources for businesses embarking on or enhancing their sustainability journeys.

The conversation also touched on the deep legacy of business events in Australia. With memorable legacy stories such as the **SportAccord Summit**, held in the Gold Coast, which played a pivotal role in Brisbane's Olympic bid win or the impact of the **International Astronautical Congress**, which led to the opening of the **Australian Space Discovery Centre** in Lot Fourteen, Adelaide's world-class innovation district, positioning the city in the space sector, Mack demonstrated the transformative impact of hosting global events.

Alongside his conversation with *HQ*, Mack's opening address at AIME echoed this theme, celebrating Australia's unique blend of world-class cities, stunning natural landscapes, and the warm, professional, and welcoming attitude of its people. This unique combination not only enriches the business events experience but also encourages the innovation and partnership that are essential to the industry's growth. Australia's

investment in business events and enhanced bidding funds represent a strategic focus on the sector. Mack's call for collaboration underlines the country's willingness to support and grow business events, promising a robust future for this dynamic industry.

Within the wider context of AIME 2024, the international event was more than a platform for discussion and collaboration; it was a celebration of Australia's rich culture and innovative spirit, with a landmark agreement announced between the **Australian Business Events Alliance** and the **International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA)**, promising greater collaboration and global networking opportunities for the industry.

As *HQ* readers flip through the pages of this report on Australia, they will embark on an inspiring discovery journey through captivating Australian destinations renowned for their innovative and sustainable approach to business events. From the iconic skyline of Sydney to the rich cultural tapestry of the Northern Territory, our detailed destination report awaits. Dive into the exciting stories of Australia's states, cities and venues, and discover how the country's commitment to sustainability and respect for Indigenous culture is setting global standards. Turn the page to explore the future of business events, where tradition meets innovation in Australia's stunning landscapes.



Melbourne

In the World's Spotlight as the Capital City of Major Events

Lonely Planet described Melbourne as equal parts dynamic, cosmopolitan, sports-mad and arty. In the first two months of 2024, the city hosted the BestCities Forum, AIME, Australian Open, and Taylor Swift's biggest shows three nights in a row. Undoubtedly, Melbourne is back in the world's spotlight as a major event capital city. At AIME 2024, HQ spoke to **Julia Swanson, CEO of the Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB)**, about the city's latest developments, as well as the bureau's strategy for maintaining sustainable rapid growth in the event sector.

Vivian Xu reports

This year's BestCities Global Forum took place at your home, where you were able to highlight your strengths and potential and showcase what Melbourne really has to offer live. How did your team work to give the event a personal touch and differentiate itself from other forum chapters? What was the ever-present theme that guided the preparation of this special meeting?

BestCities Forum was a fantastic event for us. It is the opportunity for us to bring together all of our partner cities around the world, as well as leading association clients to Melbourne. The theme was Creating Connections with Purpose. We brought a large range of different educational options. Before we dive into the topic selection process, we spent time talking to our clients about the current challenges in their associations, as well as how they would

like to work with other associations to share best practices. To address these needs, we have created extensive programmes with researchers, demographers, AI exports, Tech experts, and social impact experts. The intersection between major and business events was on show throughout providing a true reflection of "only in Melbourne" experiences.

During the event, we were very proud to curate for our partners and association members an experience at the **Australian Open** like locals and showcase the city's exciting events calendar, state-of-the-art infrastructure and world-class supply chain that can enhance conference and meeting offerings.

MCB has announced strong results for the 2022/2023 financial year, reporting a 74%

increase in the economic contribution of guaranteed business events compared to the previous year. Taking the pulse of the international market, what has this rapid growth been due to, according to your data and records?

Melbourne's business events sector is thriving, having transitioned into recovery faster than anticipated. Last year we welcomed the return of the large-scale conventions that our city is renowned for, successfully secured some of the most influential global meetings, and some of the largest corporate, meeting and incentive groups ever for the state and executed a bold and innovative strategy to propel our sector forward.

This accomplishment is a testament to the unwavering dedication and enthusiasm of

“*The Victorian Government, Visit Victoria and Melbourne International Airport worked closely to rebuild aviation. Currently, we are back to 100% pre-pandemic level. The connection of new routines and new airlines will certainly help us attract new events to the city.*”

the MCB team, support from the Victorian Government and MCB partners culminating in the effective “Team Melbourne” approach to winning and delivering exceptional business events our city is renowned for.

New aviation routes opened enhancing direct connectivity out of the US and India, as well as the resumption of flights out of China which was also a contributing factor particularly across the incentive market.

Amway China has confirmed its 10,000-delegate incentive group coming to Melbourne in early 2025.

We have also heavily invested in European and US markets. MCB has staff and representation in six countries, actively engaged with associations. Reconnecting with global members and using the city as a foothold to attract the Asian market are also trends that we look to build on. In March this year, Turkish Airlines launched direct flights between Melbourne and Istanbul. The Victorian Government, Visit Victoria and Melbourne International Airport worked closely to rebuild aviation. Currently, we are back to 100% pre-pandemic level. The connection of new routines and new airlines will certainly help us attract new events to the city.

Right now, MCB is managing AU\$3.4 billion worth of international event leads that have the potential to contribute 1.8 million room nights for the hotel and accommodation sector and support 40,000 jobs across various sectors.

MCB has secured two strategic cancer conferences, including the World Cancer Leaders’ Summit 2025, due in part to the outstanding global reputation of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC) and VCCC Alliance. Can you please tell me more about VCCC?

Melbourne is set to make significant headway in the global fight against cancer by hosting two major conferences: the **World Indigenous Cancer Conference 2024** and the **World Cancer Leaders’ Summit 2025**. These events underscore Melbourne’s blossoming influence in the health sector and highlight the global prestige of the esteemed VCCC and the Alliance. Opened in 2016 as Australia’s first purpose-built comprehensive cancer centre, the VCCC embodies the mission to save lives by bringing together world-class cancer research, education, treatment and care in a single facility. Located at the heart of the **Melbourne Biomedical Precinct**, it includes the **Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre**, a leader in cancer research, education and treatment in Australia.

The VCCC Alliance is a powerful collaboration of ten world-class research, academic and clinical institutions dedicated to revolutionising cancer care through strategic, collaborative efforts. This alliance is committed to driving systemic change and promoting the rapid translation of scientific advances into tangible benefits for cancer patients. The decision to host the World Indigenous Cancer Conference was driven by a joint initiative between the MCB and the VCCC, with support from the Victorian Government,

and reflects the shared commitment of the city and the centre to addressing this critical health challenge.

Looking ahead, Melbourne’s business agenda and contribution to the state’s prosperity to 2030 remains robust, particularly in the health and medical sector, which is expected to account for almost 40% of confirmed business over the next three years. This reflects a broader trend of Melbourne’s increasing dominance in healthcare innovation and global leadership in cancer research and treatment initiatives.

*MCB announced the launch of its **First Peoples Engagement Guide** at AIME 2024, tailored specifically to the business events industry. The valuable resource is aimed at assisting event planners in creating culturally enriched business events and fostering positive social impact. Scan the QR code below to read more about the guide.*





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Reconciliation Australia acknowledges traditional owners of country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters, and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

AIME 2024

The Biggest AIME in a Decade!

In February this year, the 31st edition of **The Asia Pacific Incentive and Meetings Events (AIME)**, a leading trade show for the international meetings industry, took place at the **Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC)**. Owned by the **Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB)** and managed by **Talk2 Media & Events** for the past six years, this year's AIME set new records for exhibitor and buyer numbers!

Vivian Xu Reports

Over 570 exhibitors from 33 countries showcased their latest innovations at AIME 2024, a significant 63% increase from last year's event, further proving the event's growing appeal across the global MICE industry. The event also attracted more than 600 hosted buyers and 4,000 visitors over three days, representing a solid 51% growth over AIME 2023. This remarkable increase not only reflects the event's expanding reach, but also highlights its effectiveness in facilitating business deals, with AU\$330 million in business conducted as a result of the event, representing a 65% increase over last year. The ongoing growth in both attendance and business activity at AIME 2024 shows its key role in driving the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions sector forward.

Pre-Event Uncovers Melbourne Programme

The international media famil programme kicked off on Sunday, 18th February, at the Royal **Botanic Garden Victoria** with a welcome smoking ceremony and an exclusive brunch hosted by Business Events Australia in partnership with the MCB. "We are all sisters and brothers. We represent our culture, and all the culture pieces

come into one. We have respect for each other and for our culture." A welcoming speech by an elder from the local Aboriginal community reflected the Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) the nation has been implementing since 2006.

After the brunch, transported by **Luxcoach** with its cocktail bar on wheels, the international media group arrived at the world's largest multi-purpose stadium – **Marvel Stadium**. Located in the heart of Melbourne, the stadium is home to Australian Football League, the stadium has also hosted some large international sports events such as UFC, Soccer World Cup Qualifiers, International Rugby Union tests, etc. **Medallion Club**, located on level 2, Overlooking the Docklands Harbour, is one of the most popular outdoor event spaces in the stadium. Other event spaces, such as the newly opened **Champagne Bar** and **Horizon Room** are sweet spots for meetings and seated dinners.

Walking down to Docklands Harbour, a water taxi took the group for a quick tour of the Yarra River before arriving at the MCEC. There, an epic experience narrated by David Attenborough, **BBC Earth Experience** awaited. What an

unforgettable journey through the natural world crossing seven unique continents on the most epic scale! MCEC proudly showcased its transformative audio-visual technology through this breathtaking immersive experience. "AIME is a flagship event for the industry and as Australia's largest and most versatile event space, MCEC is the perfect host. We were proud to welcome back so many visitors for the largest AIME in a decade and provide a dynamic space for attendees to connect and engage in meaningful discussions, fostering innovation and growth within the industry." Added **Natalie O'Brien AM, Chief Executive of MCEC**.

AIME's Knowledge Programme

AIME's Knowledge Programme led the first day of the trade show, and more than 1,000 attendees participated in the programme. The networking lunch was presented by the



future Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre, which is set to open in 2026, adding another competitive event venue to Melbourne's map.

Curated by **El Kwang** and his **BEAM team** with the support of an advisory committee consisting of eight industry leaders from the APAC region, this year's Knowledge Programme was themed "**The 4Ps of GLOCALISATION**". "We initiated a research journey to gain insights into



audience sentiments, recognising their crucial role in shaping our approach. At the outset, we discovered that the audience was grappling with a 'So What' syndrome. This indicates a desire not only for the 'whys' from speakers but also for actionable insights addressing the 'how' and the 'now' applicable across the 4Ps." said **El Kwang, Founder and Chief Engager of BEAM**. The programme drew inspiration from the AIME global community's wish to harmonise the symbiotic relationship between global insights with local nuances. "Our research further illuminated the complexities of operating within the APAC region. While leaders aim to foster unity with a shared vision, they also value celebrating the region's diversity by embracing local nuances. This dual perspective underscores the importance of a nuanced, regionally sensitive approach in our endeavours." added Kwang.

Speaking about breakout sessions on topics as diverse as the culture of courage, tackling key issues such as modern slavery, AI in events, and personal core values, Kwang shared his thoughts: "Ensuring a well-rounded AIME Knowledge Programme is our top priority, incorporating insights from both within and beyond the industry. We've received a substantial number of expressions of interest and proactively engaged speakers whose expertise can enhance the programme's depth. Throughout the selection process, we've relied on the guidance of our

2024 content advisory committee to ensure alignment with current industry themes."

Two days Trade Show

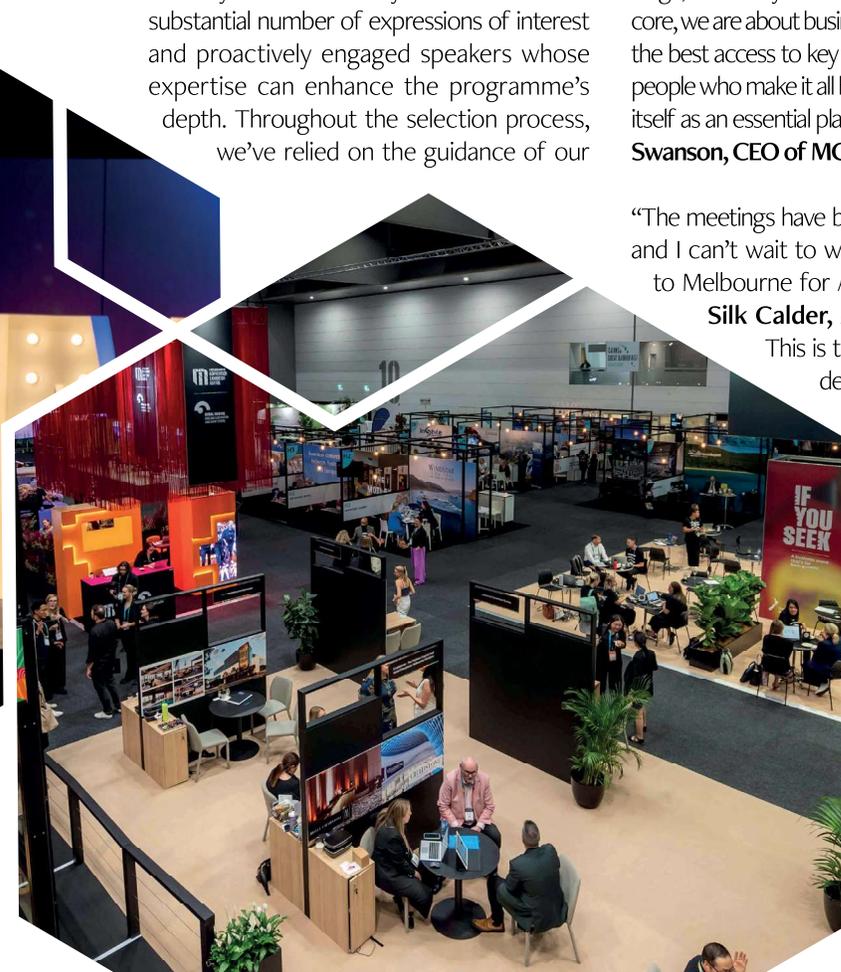
As mentioned by **Steve Dimopoulos MP, Victoria's Minister of Tourism, Sport and Major Events**, AIME is the first of the 'big four' trade shows on the international business events calendar in 2024, and he acknowledged the unneglectable economic and social impact that the meetings industry has generated in the state. "The recruitment, vetting, and management of our hosted buyers is second to none. The care and curation we take in making sure that the right buyers are meeting the right sellers will drive results that we can be proud of. This work is what sets AIME apart from so many other events," said **Matt Pearce, CEO of Talk2 Media & Events**.

The two-day show saw more than 15,000 pre-scheduled meetings and more than 1,600 delegates gathered for the Neon Carnival-themed Welcome Event at **Grazeland** in Melbourne's inner west. The evening ramped up a notch as Mitch Tambo, followed by Discovery – Australia's Daft Punk Tribute Show, took to the stage, and everyone danced up a storm. "At the core, we are about business events and providing the best access to key decision-makers and the people who make it all happen. AIME has proven itself as an essential platform for this," said **Julia Swanson, CEO of MCB**.

"The meetings have been incredibly satisfying and I can't wait to welcome everyone back to Melbourne for AIME 2025," concluded **Silk Calder, AIME Event Director**.

This is the third AIME show Silk delivered with her amazing event team!

All photo provided by BEAMexperience.



Australia's Northern Territory

Connecting Cultures & Legacy

In the vast expanse of Australia, the **Northern Territory (NT)** is a destination rich in ancient cultures and breathtaking landscapes. Its business events industry knows how the inclusion of a meaningful legacy component in a business event program can often be as profound as the NT's iconic **Uluru**, not just a natural landmark, but an inspiring symbol of the enduring wisdom and living traditions of Australia's First Nations People. **Northern Territory Business Events (NTBE)** aims to ensure that access to these ancient learnings and positive event outcomes will be what delegates remember when they head home after attending a business event in the NT.

Uluru is one of the NT's most iconic landscape features. More than just a sight to behold, this majestic natural wonder is a profound symbol of the enduring legacy of the continent's Indigenous heritage and represents a deep spiritual connection to the land. The truly unique experiences at **Uluru** offer delegates an opportunity to engage with the ancient stories and vibrant culture that have thrived here for millennia. As the world searches for business events with lasting impact, **NTBE** is at the forefront, promoting experiences that go beyond conventional conferences and provide scope for lasting legacies that can benefit both delegates and the local communities.

Rebecca McCaig, Director of NTBE, talks about the NT's strategy which seeks to encourage planners to deliver business events that are not only 'different in every sense' but also deeply meaningful. "Our wide-open spaces, nature-based and cultural activities, and iconic landscapes consistently move, inspire, and connect delegates to people and place," says McCaig.

NTBE believes that business events should be about professional enrichment and personal transformation. They are so much more than just venues and itineraries; in the NT, they're about enabling a connection with the land and its people. "We seek to enhance the delegate experience through access to the Aboriginal culture that is more than 65,000 years old – as the world's oldest continuous-living culture, this cultural engagement often has a profound impact on delegates. We'll continue to encourage planners to make this an essential inclusion in their business events programs in the NT," explains Ms McCaig.

There are many ways in which delegates can make a strong connection with the local community. For instance, Darwin-based organisations, **The Youth Mill**, which delivers moving 'Welcome to

Country' ceremonies and cultural performances and **Remote Laundries**, which provide practical services, can also offer invaluable learnings about NT Aboriginal communities.

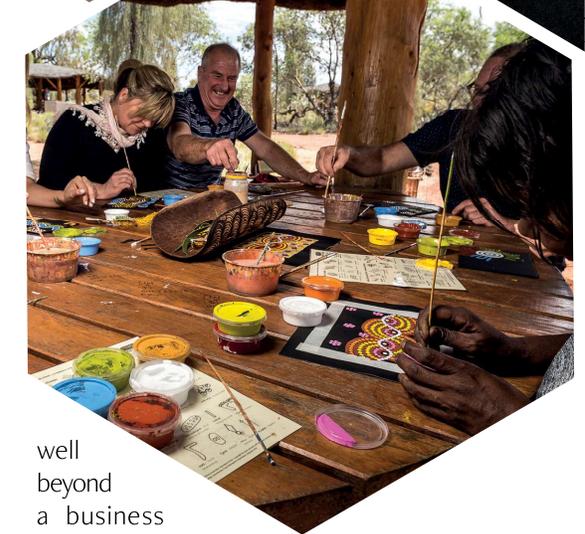
Similarly, in Alice Springs, **The Purple House**, a non-governmental organisation, invites business events groups to participate in bush balm-making workshops, creating a unique opportunity for interaction and learning.

At **Uluru**, **Maruku Arts** offers dot-painting workshops led by local artists, providing insights into the art, symbols, tools, and culture of the **Anangu**, the traditional owners of the region. These workshops showcase how business events in the NT can go beyond conference room sessions to also learn from deeply engaging and culturally rich experiences.

Commitment to Legacy and a Sustainable Future

Looking ahead, the NT is committed to ensuring that its business events sector continues to thrive in a way that's sustainable and respectful of its cultural heritage. The development of new facilities, such as the **National Aboriginal Art Gallery** in Alice Springs, is a demonstration of this commitment. Such developments are not just about expanding the NT's infrastructure; they're about enriching the cultural landscape and providing new platforms for cross-cultural engagement and learning.

As the global business events industry evolves, the Northern Territory stands ready to offer experiences that are not only 'different in every sense' but also deeply impactful. For event planners and delegates alike, the NT offers a unique opportunity to engage with an ancient culture, explore breathtaking landscapes, and create a positive legacy that can often extend



well beyond a business event, whether conference or incentive.

In a stunning showcase of its unique offerings, the Northern Territory highlighted its innovative approach to business events at **AIME 2024**. Through interactive displays and engaging stories, planner attendees were given a vivid taste of how the NT blends its ancient cultural heritage with cutting-edge event solutions, setting a new standard for meaningful and impactful business events. Proof that international conferences and congresses can indeed leave behind a legacy that is as enduring as the land itself.

Hear stories



Aboriginal weaving workshop, Darwin

Australia's Northern Territory offers a multi-sensory experience that transcends the physical and connects you to the land, the ancient culture and the people. We are a destination that empowers delegates to reconnect to what matters.

ntbusinessevents.com.au

*Different in every sense
for business events*



Supported by



SPACE TO *think*

DARWIN



Darwin is refreshingly unique as a business events destination, offering delegates space to think, opportunities to learn, with time to network and make authentic connections.

darwinconvention.com.au



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DCC Seven Seasons dining experience

Photo Credit: Tourism Australia and Tourism NT



Darwin Convention Centre

Tradition and Innovation at Australia's Top End



Darwin, the vibrant capital of the Northern Territory, is truly a dynamic gateway to the NT's wealth of experiences. Renowned for its tropical climate, waterfront dining and rich history, **Darwin Convention Centre (DCC)** adds a modern twist to the region's business events, offering delegates a unique blend of professional development opportunities set against a backdrop of spectacular natural beauty, cultural diversity and welcoming spirit of the Top End, where business and cultural narratives seamlessly converge. The state-of-the-art convention centre positions Darwin as an exceptional host for events designed to inspire and transform. **Peter Savoff, General Manager of the DCC**, tells *HQ* more about the venue and winning gold at the 2023 Australian Tourism Awards.

How does the DCC ensure international events leave a lasting legacy for the local community?

The DCC ensures international events hosted at its venue foster a lasting legacy for the Darwin community. Leveraging its 15-year-strong partnerships with local businesses and industry partners, the centre facilitates impactful connections between event organisers and local resources, bolstering the region's economic growth.

Situated in the Darwin Waterfront Precinct, on the traditional land of the Larrakia (Saltwater) people, the DCC is dedicated to preserving First Nations heritage. It partners with Indigenous organisations like Larrakia Nation and The Youth Mill, offering delegates immersive cultural experiences such as Welcome to Country ceremonies and Larrakia Saltwater Ceremonies at the Waterfront Lagoon. These engagements not only deepen delegates' understanding of Aboriginal culture but also support local Larrakia artists and youth.

Adjacent to the DCC, the upcoming **Larrakia Cultural Centre** at Stokes Hill will further enable the Larrakia to showcase their culture. This centre will become a hub for sharing Larrakia

language, culture, and knowledge, enriching the cultural experience for event attendees.

How does the DCC incorporate and celebrate local culture in international events to honour the region's Indigenous heritage?

At the DCC, celebrating and incorporating local culture, particularly that of Australia's First Nations, is integral to creating memorable and meaningful events. One standout feature is the centre's signature Seven Seasons dining experience, inspired by the Gulumoerrgin (Larrakia) seasonal calendar. This innovative culinary offering showcases the diverse flavours of the local region and provides delegates with an immersive cultural experience.

In its commitment to Reconciliation, the centre has recently integrated local Indigenous artwork and design elements into its decor and signage, creating a welcoming and culturally immersive environment for attendees as soon as they step into the venue. Marking a significant milestone in this journey was the renaming of the centre's four meeting rooms with traditional Larrakia names, a process conducted in consultation with Elders and accompanied by stunning Larrakia artwork for the new signage. The

names selected for the spaces were that of sea creatures to reflect the convention centre's location on the spectacular Darwin Harbour. By embracing traditional names for these spaces, we take great pride in acknowledging and honouring the rich culture and heritage of the Larrakia people and sharing it with delegates visiting the venue.

More recently, our centre partnered with **Winya**, a profit-for-purpose business that supports Indigenous training and employment growth, to refurbish its venue furniture with Larrakia designs.

After winning Gold for Best Business Event Venue at the 2023 Australian Tourism Awards, how does this success position the DCC to attract more events to both the centre and the Northern Territory, highlighting its national excellence?

Winning Gold for Best Business Events Venue at the 2023 Australian Tourism Awards positions the DCC (managed by ASM Global) as a national leader in the industry, further enhancing our reputation on the global stage. This success demonstrates the centre's commitment to excellence in hosting large-scale business events, exhibitions and corporate functions.

International Convention Centre Sydney

6 Trends Shaping the Future of Events Through Innovation

At AIME 2024, ICC Sydney took centre stage, unveiling six transformative trends that are redefining the landscape of business events. This press conference spotlighted ICC Sydney's commitment to innovation and provided a unique platform for interaction between industry leaders. **Vivian Xu**, HQ's **Managing Director**, seized the opportunity to engage in a meaningful dialogue with **Samantha Glass**, **Director of Corporate Affairs, Communication, and Sustainability at ICC Sydney**, delving into the essence and impact of these trends. This conversation underscored ICC Sydney's forward-thinking approach, showcasing how they're leading the charge in shaping the future of events through innovation.

The business events sector is undergoing a remarkable transformation spurred by societal shifts and technological advancements. ICC Sydney stands at the forefront of this evolution, embracing trends that are shaping the future of events. At the heart of ICC Sydney's strategy is the creation of experiences that are not only engaging but also deeply impactful on a social and environmental level.

These are the six trends shaping events according to the *RESPECT: Shaping Events for Success* report, released by ICC Sydney in partnership with **McCrimble** based on their joint research.

Curated Event Experiences

Today's delegates crave distinctive, personalised experiences that align with their values and engage all their senses. ICC Sydney excels at delivering unparalleled, bespoke experiences through events such as **South by Southwest Sydney** (SXSW Sydney), culinary-focused gatherings and the celebration of First Nations culture through events such as the **International Council on Monuments and Sites Indigenous Heritage Program** and various food and beverage festivals. This strategy satisfies the desire for unique experiences and encourages a sense of community and connection among attendees.

Socially Impactful Events

There has never been a greater demand for events that embrace social responsibility and inclusivity. ICC Sydney leads the way, demonstrating its commitment

to accessibility, inclusivity and engaging with the community. Incorporating First Nations cultural traditions into their legacy programme initiatives and championing local and Indigenous businesses, ICC Sydney takes a thoughtful approach to making a social difference.

"Many of our First Nations organisations are small family-run businesses, or they're sole traders. We also work with a lot of farmers and winemakers who are either family businesses or small businesses producing great organic produce, and of course, we seek to support local businesses or First Nations businesses first and foremost. We see the entrepreneurial spirit shining through in 2024, particularly with Generation Z, who want to work in a business that they created themselves, and we're seeing if they have a job, they've usually got a side hustle," shares Glass.

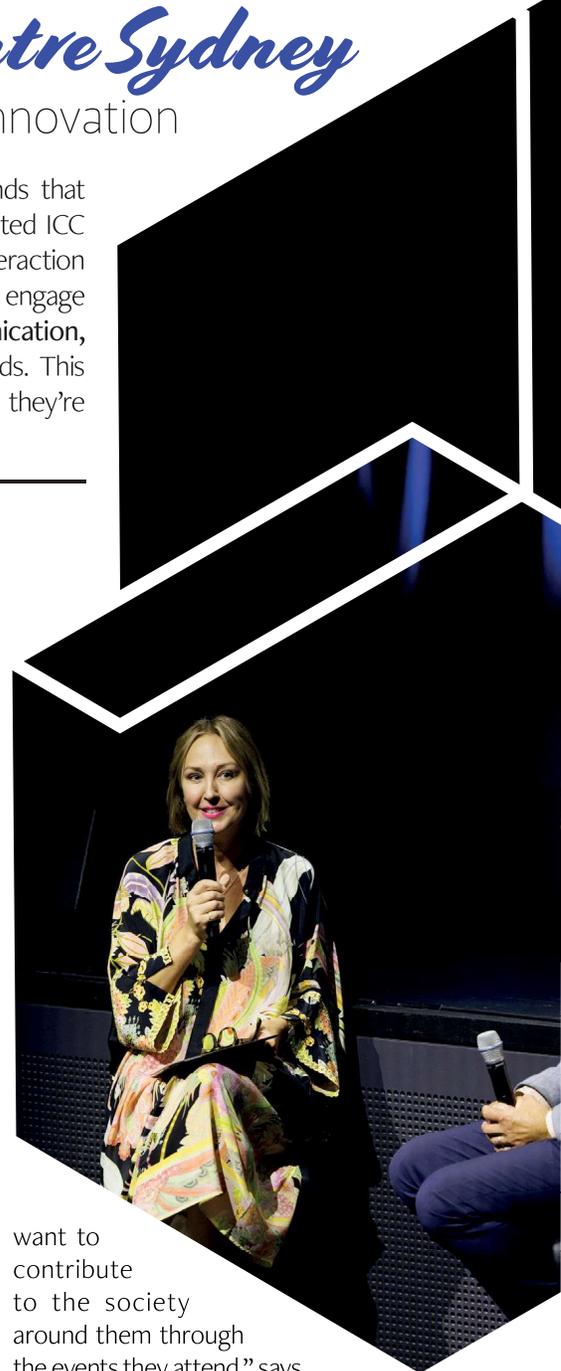
Through the legacy programme, event planners have access to a network of First Nations and cultural groups, volunteer opportunities and support initiatives for people experiencing homelessness, as well as connections with rising stars and innovators, promoting a deep sense of belonging among attendees. Recognising the importance of creating inclusive, sustainable and innovative events that have a positive impact on future generations, ICC Sydney has expanded its legacy programme to include the newly created **Inclusion and Belonging** stream.

"Two out of three Australians believe that events should be accessible and inclusive to all, and half of those surveyed believe that events should support people's growth. They

want to contribute to the society around them through the events they attend," says Glass.

A sustainable means of gathering

Sustainability is a key factor for today's international and local event organisers and attendees. ICC Sydney is setting the standard by highlighting its sustainable practices and commitment to minimising its environmental footprint. With transparent sustainability practices and a commitment to the circular economy, ICC Sydney is responding to the growing appetite for green events. Through their legacy programme and as a supporter





of the **#NetZeroCarbonEvents** initiative, ICC Sydney aims to reduce its environmental impact by reducing the carbon footprint of both its operations and the events it hosts. Tailor-made tools are provided to organisers to reduce the environmental impact of their meetings, including the in-house *Sustainable Events Guide and Plastic-Free Events Checklist*.

“According to the survey results, more than half of Australians believe sustainability at events is extremely or very important. Transparency around the sustainability aspects of events and ensuring that organisers maximise the circular economy in the planning and delivery of their events is key to Gen Z,” Glass commented.

Prioritising Health and Well-being

ICC Sydney prioritises attendees’ health and well-being. The venue offers spaces and programmes designed to support their physical and mental well-being, from mindfulness sessions to quiet zones for neurodivergent individuals. This holistic approach to health underlines the importance of creating an environment that addresses all aspects of delegates’ well-being. Creating a welcoming and safe space for delegates that meets their physical and emotional needs is critical in today’s events landscape. ICC Sydney’s sensory-friendly areas, outdoor spaces, Yarning Circle connections, first aid services, and menu collection that celebrates local, sustainable produce have all been developed with the health and well-being of delegates as a priority.

“This moving trend from sustainability to regenerative sustainability is something that First Nations people have practised for many generations, for tens of thousands of years, understanding that a healthy place is intrinsically linked to people’s health,” said Glass.

Promoting Human Connection

In an era marked by digital saturation and increasing feelings of isolation, the value of human connection cannot be overstated. ICC Sydney’s events are designed to bring people together, fostering meaningful

interactions and community building. The use of social media and technology to enhance these connections before and during events exemplifies ICC Sydney’s innovative approach to nurturing human relationships. Both business and leisure events are essential for enabling face-to-face interactions and fostering authentic connections, especially in an age dominated by digital communication. For ICC Sydney, networking is central, with business event organisers increasingly focusing on longer networking breaks to facilitate knowledge-sharing and career development opportunities.

Seamless Integration of Technology

ICC Sydney is renowned for seamlessly integrating technology into the event experience. From simple registration processes to immersive augmented reality experiences, the venue uses technology to enhance every aspect of the event journey. This commitment to technology integration ensures a smooth and engaging experience for all attendees.

By embracing these six trends, ICC Sydney not only sets itself apart as a leading business events venue but also demonstrates its commitment to creating legacy, driving innovation and fostering a community that values sustainability, inclusivity and connection. As Glass pointed out, pursuing these trends is about more than just hosting events; it’s about enriching our society and paving the way for a future where every gathering is impactful and meaningful. The centre’s forward-thinking, agile approach and commitment to sustainability and inclusiveness will ensure that ICC Sydney continues to lead the way. Through innovative practices and a deep commitment to social and environmental responsibility, ICC Sydney is not just hosting events; it is shaping the future of our industry.

All photo provided by ICC Sydney, picture courtesy Tim Pascoe.

Yarning Circles are a space to talk, share, discuss, educate and engage in meaningful dialogue with one another; a place to foster respectful relationships and a space to enhance students’ learning experiences. These safe spaces have been used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for thousands of years.



RESPECT

ICC Sydney's Winning Philosophy!

RESPECT – An ICC Sydney (International Convention Centre Sydney) Experience took place in February. This event was designed to inform, engage, inspire, and indulge. Gathering 200 event organisers, city advocates, and community partners, ICC Sydney proudly showcased its core philosophy of creating inclusive, sustainable, and innovative events by adding a new stream, **Inclusion and Belonging**, to its expanded legacy programme.

The event was designed to invite guests to a place of RESPECT for natural and cultural history, including a Welcome to Country by Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council representative Councillor Yvonne Weldon, First Nations ballerina Reneigh Scott representing the flowing water, Bruce Shillingsworth's (Mukadda) dramatic call on the Yidaki (an Aboriginal didgeridoo wind instrument) to the Jannawi Whale Dance, and Jeffrey Samuels' artwork of Barani, the whale that once frequented those waters.

"Respect is part of ICC Sydney's DNA – it underpins our team culture, the way we deliver events for our clients, interact with our producers, suppliers, and community partners, and how we respect our environment," said **Geoff Donaghy, ICC Sydney's Chief Executive Officer and Group Director of Convention Centres at ASM Global (APAC)**.

ICC Sydney's in-house culinary experts shared the philosophy behind its green initiatives, from selecting local and sustainable food and wine producers to designing carbon-friendly menus. They prioritised attendee wellbeing by presenting sophisticated alcohol-free cocktails and beverages from First Nations-owned and operated beverage suppliers alongside delectable bite-sized indulgent dishes.

"The theme of RESPECT was core to the creative vision of the event, weaving stories of how we seek to RESPECT mother earth and all people while showcasing the amazing talent of our city and our team members." **ICC Sydney's Director of**

Corporate Affairs, Communication and Sustainability, Samantha Glass, shared.

The opening ceremony included impressive performances by indigenous young talents, supported by ICC Sydney's legacy programme (KARI, Bankstown Poetry Slam, etc). "They came together to showcase the power of the First Nations and Creative Industries streams united to fuel the fire of innovation and creativity – including a grand finale from proud First Nations woman and emerging talent Mi-Kaisha Masella, blending the traditional with the contemporary, paying RESPECT to our past and building to our future," Ms Glass said.

ICC Sydney demonstrated its core values, driven by ethics and social responsibility, which led it to deliver truly impactful and meaningful events.

ICC Sydney's RESPECT experience was generously supported by accommodation partner, **Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour**, furniture partner, **Valiant Hire**, and printing partner, **Coleman**. **Mr Greg Brady, General Manager, Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour** said, "Organisations are enriched by diversity as well as it being an essential key to the success of any business. We are proud to be associated with the RESPECT event and the fundamental societal benefits that come from this commitment".

The following pages contain more information about the ICC Sydney's report RESPECT: Shaping Events for Success.

All photo provided by ICC Sydney, picture courtesy Tim Pascoe.





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Adelaide's Global Call

A Boutique City with World-Class Opportunities



The d'Arenberg Cube

In this exclusive interview with *HQ*, **Damien Kitto**, CEO of *Business Events Adelaide*, reveals the strategies Adelaide is pursuing to become a global hub for sustainable and innovative business events. The city's vision integrates cultural depth with environmental initiatives, setting a new benchmark for the industry.

How does Adelaide leverage its unique location, culture, and resources to showcase its strengths and opportunities to a global audience?

Adelaide is perfectly placed to create a bespoke and unique Australian experience for large, medium or small groups. It has all the infrastructure and high-quality venues expected of a modern city but has retained its boutique charm.

Adelaide's compact size is a virtue. Everything is close at hand – the central business district is just 15 minutes from the airport, and luxury hotels start only metres from the **Adelaide Convention Centre (ACC)**. Cultural and sporting landmarks are within walking distance, and the innovation district, universities, and biomedical research precincts are all easily reached, either on foot or via a free tram that runs through the city.

Freed up from long travel times, delegates can enjoy Adelaide's Mediterranean climate and relaxed lifestyle. They can be at pristine beaches or see native wildlife and stunning scenery within minutes. What's more, the

world-renowned Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale and Adelaide Hills wine regions are just 45 minutes away.

How does Business Events Adelaide ensure sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity across all venues and events?

Our city is renowned for its commitment to responsible consumption and is at the forefront of inclusivity and sustainability in the business events sector. Its rich cultural diversity and welcoming atmosphere are complemented by its accessibility; the city's layout of wide, flat streets facilitates walking and is complemented by free electric public transport, ensuring easy access for all.

The South Australian Government is committed to ambitious environmental targets to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by over 50% and achieve 100% renewable energy by 2030. Adelaide's distinction as the only city in a park and its recognition as the Southern Hemisphere's first **National Park City** underscore its fundamental commitment to environmental stewardship.

Leadership in sustainability is clearly embodied by the ACC, which is celebrated as the first in the world to achieve **EarthCheck Master** status in 2023 after five consecutive years of Platinum certification. This achievement guarantees delegates a minimised carbon footprint during their events.

Business Events Adelaide works with its members and partners, including the ACC and key hotels, to ensure full accessibility. Efforts include ramps in halls and meeting rooms, accessible parking, provisions for people with sensory impairments and family-friendly facilities.

In terms of inclusivity, Adelaide's long-standing partnership with **The Equality Project**, which focuses on LGBTIQ+ communities, has led to Adelaide hosting the **Better Together conferences** in 2021 and 2023. This initiative has been instrumental in making Adelaide's hotels LGBTIQ+ friendly, demonstrating our city's commitment to inclusivity.

What about cultural awareness for delegates attending events in Adelaide?

There has been an increased demand for

recognition and respect for the traditional owners of the land in business event bids. Adelaide's response includes engaging Indigenous artists, hosting Welcome to Country ceremonies, offering cross-cultural advice, and providing cultural education and awareness training. These efforts aim to respect and celebrate the rich language, history, and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. By working with **The Circle First Nations Entrepreneur Hub**, *Business Events Adelaide* is fostering connections within the community and highlighting the city's commitment to inclusivity, sustainability, and cultural awareness in international business events.

How do you measure and evaluate the impact and outcomes of hosting international conferences in terms of economic and social value?

Business Events Adelaide reports directly to the **Department of the Premier & Cabinet** as the State Government, from the Premier downwards, recognises business events as an economic powerhouse in the short and long term.

The business events sector directly delivers \$2.5 billion to the state annually and the government has increased its funding for *Business Events Adelaide* to help it secure strategically important business events by offering financial support.

Business events also provide an economic tail of multiplier benefits, often lasting years into the future. The economic tail is aligned with the state's focus areas, such as **BioMed City** (health and medical research), **Lot 14** (space, AI and innovation), **Waite** (AgTech), **Tonsley Innovation District** (robotics and advanced manufacturing) and **Techport and Technology Park** (defence). Long-term benefits from the economic tail of business events include research collaborations, business partnerships, new start-ups in Adelaide and a contribution to population growth through the arrival of new professional and skilled workers.

Business event planners understand that Adelaide has the expertise and know-how to add value to their conference, trade show, or product launch.

What are the main benefits and challenges of hosting international conferences in Adelaide, especially in the post-pandemic era?

The main benefit is Adelaide's uniqueness. Business event and corporate incentive organisers looking for an affordable, sustainable destination that can provide a truly Australian experience will find everything they need in Adelaide.

Organisers love how close everything is, how clean and safe our city feels, and how friendly the people are. Business event delegates often comment on how everyone seems to know each other, and this 'Team Adelaide' feeling helps ensure that every touchpoint – from airport to airport – is exceptional.

What are the latest developments in the city that you would like to share with association event planners?

Adelaide continues to invest in infrastructure and services to keep the city up to date while maintaining its boutique feel.

The city's first **Marriott hotel** will open in July 2024, and a second **Crowne Plaza** will open in the north of the city later this year. Other major hotel brands are expected to follow, and Adelaide's first **Westin hotel**, part of Adelaide's tallest building, is expected to open in 2026.

Air connectivity is always a concern for smaller cities, but our city is already well served with several daily flights connecting it to Asia and Europe. Emirates will also resume its daily service in October 2024, adding further capacity.

From an innovation perspective, Lot 14 is a global innovation district focused on accelerating South Australia's space, defence, cyber and creative industries, enabled by critical technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, quantum computing and photonics. Already supporting the employment of 1,800 people in more than 150 organisations, the community will grow



to 6,000 researchers, entrepreneurs and innovators when development is complete.

The city's skyline has also been transformed with the opening of **One Festival Tower**. This 29-storey multi-functional cultural and commercial space will be the new city home of Flinders University, and its vertical campus will be part of a revitalised **Festival Plaza**.



ELEVATE YOUR VISION

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Centrally located within Australia, Adelaide is a vibrant, inspiring and innovative destination for business events. Ranked one of the world's safest, green and most liveable cities, the South Australian capital will impress with its connected precincts, easy accessibility and celebrated food, wine and natural wonders.

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Adelaide Convention Centre

Sarah Goldfinch Charts its Sustainable Future



As the new General Manager, what are your plans for innovation at the ACC to meet the evolving needs of international associations, with a focus on legacy and social impact?

One of the many reasons I wanted to work at the Adelaide Convention Centre was that it aligns with my passion for sustainability and showcasing what Adelaide can do on a global stage.

ACC has already done a lot in the sustainability space. Sustainability is embedded in everything we do – from our food and design to our procurement and people. I plan to build upon this great work with a focus on energy and water conservation, responsible sourcing and minimising waste in landfills, while also ensuring we continue to work closely with our clients on sustainable event management solutions. Last year, ACC became the world's first convention centre to achieve **EarthCheck's coveted Master certification**, which reflects a 15-year commitment to best practices in business, environmental and social sustainability.

There's lots we have done in the space – but plenty more to do! I'll be working closely with our Environment Social Governance Manager to implement our new sustainability strategy, The Green Print, which maps our path to a more sustainable future. The Green Print outlines

HQ sits down with **Sarah Goldfinch**, the new **General Manager of the Adelaide Convention Centre (ACC)**. As the global business events landscape continues to evolve, Goldfinch lays out her ambitious blueprint for the venue. Focusing on sustainability, legacy and impactful collaboration, she is ready to redefine the way international events are conducted. Join us as we explore Adelaide's drive towards innovation and social responsibility in the business events industry.

an ambitious vision to establish ourselves as a 'force for good' for both our community and environment through operating one of Australia's most sustainable venues, and supporting the delivery of environmentally and socially responsible events.

My role also enables me to share my passion for Adelaide, and highlight the city as an inspiring and innovative destination, known for putting people and experiences at the centre of business events. We're fortunate that we have the strong support of the South Australian Government, which recognises the incredible power of business events to influence and shape policy for greater social impact – and are keen to support and facilitate association business here in South Australia.

Can you highlight some of the key initiatives the ACC has introduced to enrich international association events in South Australia and create a lasting regional legacy?

Our research and sales teams work to proactively identify and target conferences that align with South Australia's priority sectors and have potential links to Adelaide's innovation neighbourhoods – including **Adelaide BioMed City** and **Lot Fourteen** – as a way of assisting associations to enhance their conference programs. Adelaide has witnessed an investment explosion in innovation and infrastructure across a broad range of industries in recent years – we're proud to help facilitate connections for

associations to these networks to not only provide market-leading delegate experiences, but to open doors to support and leverage legacy and growth opportunities for visiting associations and their related industries.

Our team is currently developing a suite of partnerships with social and environmental impact organisations to create tangible benefits for our community, and provide clients with an opportunity to do 'more good' while visiting our city, resulting in positive, lasting legacies. By way of an example, we're working with **Backpacks for SA Kids** – a local, Adelaide-based organisation that supports children who are leaving domestic violence situations to make a new start by receiving a backpack filled with essential items. Our team facilitates direct charity links, giving delegates the opportunity to donate, fundraise or pack backpacks for children in need during their visit.

Another example is our ongoing relationship with **Trees for Life** – a South Australian-based charity committed to re-building homes, habitats and food for endangered animal species in South Australia. Our team has shown our own support by purchasing hundreds of trees to help provide a critical habitat for the endangered Regent Parrot in South Australia's Riverland region. Clients have a similar opportunity to lend their support by purchasing a tree for every delegate that attends their conference, ensuring a lasting environmental legacy here in South Australia.



Gold Coast

Meet the Imagination Capital of Australia

Great minds have converged on the Gold Coast to drive change and steer innovation found in the city’s universities, its teaching hospital, its start-ups and established industries. Experience Gold Coast works with conference organisers and event planners to attract international business events across a wide range of sectors.

Australia’s Gold Coast boasts strong credentials and a super-creative space for business events. Gold Coast, Queensland, has become a destination bursting with capacity in one of the world’s fastest-growing regions. The “*Imagination Capital of Australia*” – its bold global message – is all about combining everything that is globally known about the Gold Coast with its purpose-built infrastructure to create memorable experiences that can’t be replicated anywhere else in the world. A place that fuels creativity where a coastal lifestyle and business opportunities intersect, as **Experience Gold Coast’s (EGC) Head of Business Events, Brooke Campbell**, tells us: “Where else in the world can you have breakfast onboard a whale-watching ocean cruise and then walk straight into your conference in a state-of-the-art venue before watching the sun set on our 57 kilometres of golden beaches?”

EGC is the consolidation of Destination Gold Coast, Major Events Gold Coast, Study Gold Coast, Placemakers, and Home of the Arts.*

Among the various projects that advanced after the pandemic are: a \$500 million expansion of the airport that resulted in a new international

terminal; the opening of the AU\$5 billion **Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct (GCHKP)**, which is home to more than 1,000 researchers and 700 students, as well as internationally recognised doctors and 50 SMEs and technology companies; and the **Home of the Arts Gallery**, opened in 2021 which changed the city’s arts and culture landscape in a AU\$60 million renovation. Additionally, the Gold Coast Light Rail public transport system is delivering a 6.7-kilometre stage-3 extension to the south due for completion in 2025. This is an important piece in fully connecting the city corridor, especially as we move closer to the 2032 Olympic Games in Brisbane. “New hotel developments also include the beachfront **Langham Gold Coast**, the **Dorsett** as part of **The Star’s** renovation, Rydges Gold Coast Airport with a fabulous rooftop bar, and Australia’s first **JW Marriott**, which has undergone a AU\$35 million renovation,” adds Campbell.

The Gold Coast is also a technology-driven city, where entrepreneurship is flourishing, attracting huge investment and talent across a wide range of industries. “As a city, we are focusing on attracting business events linked to key industry sectors, including **Screen, Education,**



Engineering, Advanced Manufacturing, Sports and Health & Medical.”

The Screen industry, for example, is taking over the city with a massive investment by Village Roadshow Studios, making the city home to the largest studio in the southern hemisphere. Notably, the city committed until 2025 to **Screen Forever** – the largest conference of screen industry professionals in Australia – just hosted the **Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts Awards**, and won the bid for the **Australian International Movie Convention 2025**. The education sector also offers three world-class universities – **Bond, Griffith** and **Southern Cross** – plus more than 200 education and training providers, helping them win events in all areas of specialisation. Sport is another major pillar of high-growth businesses with adequate infrastructure to attract major



conferences and sporting events. “We’re excited to be hosting the **Women in Sport Summit** for three years until 2025, and we’ve already started preparations for the 2032 Olympic Games.”

For the EGC team, cost, CSR, safety, and sustainability are the main factors that influence association decision-makers. However, according to them, the variety of venues, proximity, connectivity and ease of travelling are what attract meetings to the city. “We help conferences capitalise on the strength of these key sectors to establish partnerships, opportunities and knowledge, as each client needs something different.” EGC runs exclusive local offers and financial support to ensure associations, companies, and creative groups arrive on the Gold Coast ready to succeed. As a link in the decision-making process, they work closely with more than 500 venues and suppliers to organise site inspections or *famil* programmes to craft a tailor-made event plan. As mentioned above, this emerging global city has established

the GCHKP, Asia Pacific’s newest health and innovation centre, where collaborators transform lives through healthcare innovation and state-of-the-art technologies. Anchored by **Gold Coast University Hospital**, one of Australia’s busiest tertiary hospitals, and the state-of-the-art **Gold Coast Private Hospital**, GCHKP co-locates the best global talent for collaboration and R&D, and contributes AU\$3.4 billion to the Queensland economy. “We work with our **BE Connected Gold Coast Ambassadors** who are linked to these institutions, and are experts in their field to open doors for conference organisers to make events richer and more immersive,” explains Campbell.

The Gold Coast is a city that values its cultural heritage, providing everything from a traditional welcome ceremony to a guided walk around the “*Dreaming Mountain*”, Jellurgal, to discover its Aboriginal culture. “We have a strong relationship with the **Jellurgal Aboriginal Cultural Centre**, which is wholly owned and run by the local Aboriginal community.” Finally, with more than 57 kilometres of beaches, and 100,000 hectares of world heritage-listed Gondwana rainforest, the Gold Coast’s wildlife and natural ecosystem are critical not only to environmental

sustainability, but also to the Gold Coast’s social and economic future. “At a local level, we are now seeing a growing movement of ecotourism operators committed to minimising their impact on the environment, using resources wisely, actively helping local communities and providing visitors with opportunities for cultural interaction. Our aim is to protect our biodiversity and deliver projects that restore our precious resources.” In this sense, the **Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Center** has seen its best practices fulfilled with the latest **EarthCheck Masters** certification in 2023, thanks to a sustainability policy that listed the verification of green events, waste and water reduction processes, and the use of compostable products.

BE Connected Gold Coast includes leaders from the valuable academic and scientific world, in addition to a new generation of industry leaders, thought leaders and game changers who are driving change, growing their industries and helping to move the city forward.

Science and Legacy

Cairns Set to Host Pioneering Physics Conference



Cairns Convention Centre, a Queensland Government initiative managed by ASM Global, is gearing up to host a major event in the world of physics – the XVth Quark Confinement and the Hadron Spectrum Conference. Set for 19th-24th August 2024, this prestigious event promises to be a confluence of minds dedicated to unravelling the mysteries of powerful interactions.

Cairns will be at the epicentre of scientific discourse as more than 500 specialists converge at the Cairns Convention Centre for the conference. Rooted in the exploration of particle physics, this event represents a critical nexus for the global physics community, offering a platform for the exchange of ideas across the experimental and theoretical domains.

The choice of Cairns as the venue speaks volumes about the city's growing reputation in the scientific and academic community; following an expansion investment of AUD\$176 million, the convention centre now boasts an additional 10,500 square metres of space, providing the perfect setting for an event of this magnitude. More than just a meeting place, Cairns offers delegates a rich blend of cultural richness and natural beauty, fostering creativity and scientific curiosity amidst its lush landscapes.

Janet Hamilton, General Manager of the

Cairns Convention Centre, expressed her excitement at the venue's role in hosting such a landmark event. "Hosting such a high-profile scientific conference less than a year after our new expansion opened demonstrates our appeal as a venue dedicated to knowledge sharing, community engagement and education," she said, "We are excited to be welcoming the event as it celebrates its 30th anniversary."

One of the leading organisers, **Dr Ayse Kizilersu from the University of Adelaide**, highlighted the appeal of both the venue and Cairns itself, anticipating that the scale and impact of the meeting would surpass all previous editions. "We are delighted to be heading to Cairns in August. Both the venue and destination offer incredible appeal to our delegates, ensuring a high level of attendance from around the world. This year's event promises to be our best yet, and I look forward to welcoming our community when they arrive in Cairns," she added.

As Cairns prepares to welcome the world's physics community, it does so with the promise of contributing to a legacy that goes beyond scientific discovery. This conference is much more than an academic gathering; it is a sign of Cairns' growing influence as a destination for international events. The city has a rich history of hosting international meetings in different fields, demonstrating its ability to combine scientific rigour with the unparalleled beauty of its surroundings. The XVth Quark Confinement and the Hadron Spectrum Conference will have a lasting impact on Cairns and Queensland, reinforcing the region's status as a hub for scientific and cultural exchange, aligned with broader goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), further cementing Cairns' commitment to sustainability and global collaboration, and honouring Australia's First Nations, the Traditional Owners of the land, by embedding respect and recognition into the fabric of each event.



Tropical North Queensland

Triumph in the Face of Adversity

Tropical North Queensland is emerging as more than a business events destination. It's a beacon of resilience and renewal for the global MICE industry, located in the lush heart of Australia, where ancient rainforests meet the cerulean embrace of the Great Barrier Reef.

Surrounded by verdant canopies and vast azure horizons, Tropical North Queensland has long been regarded as a jewel in Australia's crown. It offers a unique blend of natural beauty and vibrant culture. But the region's indefatigable spirit and rapid recovery from December's unprecedented floods have recently put it in the spotlight as the epitome of resilience and an ideal location for international business events.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland's General Manager of Partnerships and Events, Tara Bennett, echoes this sentiment, highlighting the region's rapid return to business as a key factor in attracting interest from companies seeking destinations that not only offer stunning scenery but also embody values of strength and perseverance. This unique blend of natural allure and tenacious spirit is driving a remarkable shift in the MICE industry, with many choosing Cairns, the largest city in the northernmost part of Australia's Queensland state, for its sustainability benefits

and cost-effectiveness, as well as its compelling narrative of recovery and support.

Ms Bennett highlighted the destination's proven track record in hosting major events, such as the **Queensland Parliament** in 2023, and expressed excitement at hosting Tourism Australia's incentive showcase, **Australia Next**, in September. This event will showcase the region's business events capabilities to buyers from around the world. "Our professional industry is held in high esteem by meeting planners thanks to the success of the events we host and the natural beauty of a destination where two World Heritage areas meet," she concluded.

Nick Mills, MCI's Managing Director of Corporate, says several companies have chosen tropical North Queensland. This highlights a growing trend in the business events sector. Companies are increasingly drawn to destinations that reflect their own values of resilience, agility and positivity, especially in challenging times. The region's ability to inspire,

rejuvenate and encourage team collaboration against a backdrop of stunning scenery and community spirit is setting a new benchmark for business events.

"Beyond supporting the local community and businesses, it has been the messages of resilience, agility, and positivity being demonstrated from the region during this challenging time that many of our corporate clients are connecting with within their own organisations. The destination and its community are an inspiration, and our business events clients want to travel to the region and experience this passion for themselves," Mills added.

As the MICE industry continues to evolve, Tropical North Queensland's story stands as a testament to the power of destination resilience. It attracts business events in search of exceptional experiences and leaves a lasting legacy of strength, unity, and commitment to environmental stewardship and community support.

Brisbane

Strategy for a Sustainable Olympic Legacy

During the vibrant AIME 2024 in Melbourne, **HQ Magazine’s Managing Director, Vivian Xu**, sat down with two leading figures from Brisbane’s events scene. **Kym Guesdon** (*right above*), **General Manager of the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC)**, and **Alison Gardiner** (*right below*), who is **Director of Sales, Strategy & Partnerships**, shared insights into the transformative journey Brisbane is on in the lead-up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Their discussion highlighted Brisbane’s strategic initiatives, its deep commitment to sustainability and the innovative partnerships that are shaping the city’s future.



Vivian Xu: Kym, at HQ, we read the BCEC’s 2023 result, and Brisbane’s achievements last year were remarkable, delivering the best results in your 30-year history and setting the stage for an exciting 2024. As a significant venue and stakeholder in the city, what strategies are in place for the Olympics?

Kym Guesdon: The BCEC, in collaboration with the **Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA)**, has spent over 18 months crafting a comprehensive growth strategy with both a local and international focus. As a venue, we’re exploring automation and strategic positioning to ensure we can successfully

implement and benefit from this strategy, laying the groundwork for the forthcoming growth, particularly as we approach the Olympics.

VX: Sustainability is a key focus for the BCEC. Can you elaborate on your approach to green and zero-carbon policies that align with the SDGs?

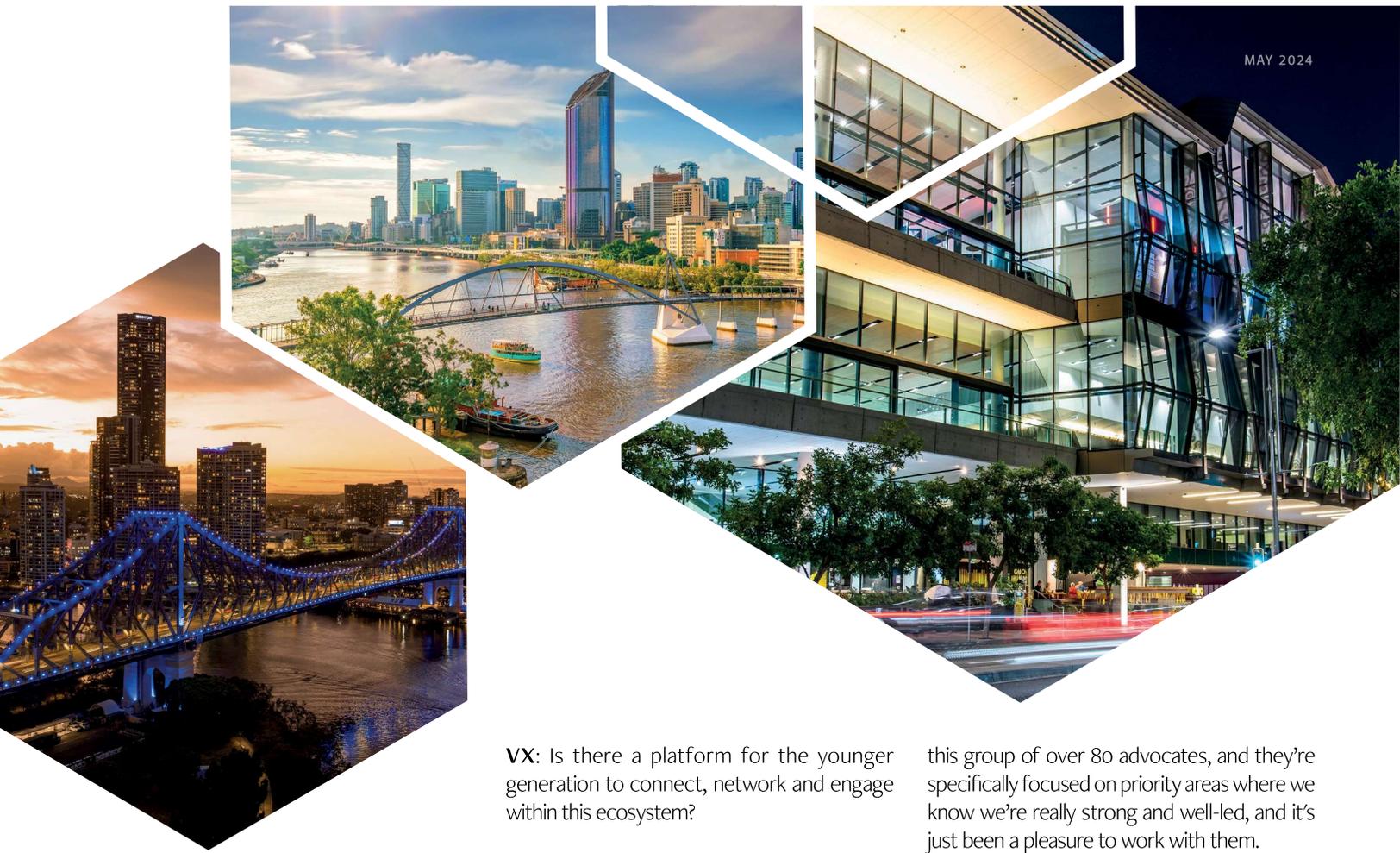
KG: Absolutely. We’ve recently appointed our first **Sustainability and Community Engagement Advisor**, tasked with aligning our strategy and operations with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This move builds on our existing **EarthCheck**

Platinum accreditation, credentials held by an elite group of venues from around the world that operate to the highest level of international environmental standards. BCEC’s aim is to integrate SDG alignment across all operational practices, making it a foundational focus for our journey towards the Olympics.

VX: Alison, could you share more about the conventions you’re attracting to Brisbane, particularly with a focus on sustainability?

Alison Gardiner: Brisbane’s journey to 2032 is not just about enhancing our profile; it’s about comprehensively embracing sustainable





development goals. Through BCEC's **Convention Advocates Partnership**, we're collaborating closely with universities and partners to attract conferences that resonate with the technologies and solutions pivotal for sustainable global change. From AI to energy transitions, we're aligning our event portfolio with innovations that propel us, Brisbane, Queensland and Australia into a new industrial era.

VX: How does the partnership with the universities enrich Brisbane's events ecosystem, especially for the new generation of university professionals?

AG: Our decade-long Convention Advocates Partnership is entering a new phase, bringing in the next generation of leading academics to Brisbane, as well as fantastic conferences and priority sectors such as biomedical. This initiative ensures a continuous infusion of fresh ideas and perspectives, which is particularly crucial given the rapid technological advancements. We're also hosting sector dinners to facilitate dialogue among university leaders, government, and industry to chart the future course of key sectors.

VX: Is there a platform for the younger generation to connect, network and engage within this ecosystem?

AG: Absolutely. As part of the Convention Advocates Partnership, we've started hosting salon evenings where we find really interesting speakers and invite advocates who are interested in the event. They can bring another colleague, it could be a junior colleague, a postdoctoral fellow, a junior associate or fellow professor. The speaker could be the Lord Mayor talking about Brisbane's journey or the Brisbane Olympic Organising Committee discussing how the city will grow and change. It's a way of harnessing their love for Brisbane. They get interesting information, they bring their colleagues along so we get to know them better, and they see that we're all pulling in the same direction for where our city is going. This initiative is part of our legacy programme for the Olympic journey.

Networking is a key factor. Take the example of the very first cancer vaccine, developed by **Professor Ian Frazer** from the University of Queensland in Brisbane, who met his co-developer, Dr. Jian Zhou, at a conference. That's how the Gardasil vaccine against HPV (human papillomavirus) has been saving lives from cervical cancer for many years. It's about connecting people, the importance of conferences and the value they bring. For us in Brisbane, it's wonderful that we now have

this group of over 80 advocates, and they're specifically focused on priority areas where we know we're really strong and well-led, and it's just been a pleasure to work with them.

This insightful conversation with Guesdon and Gardiner highlights Brisbane's forward-thinking strategies to build for the 2032 Olympic Games and the legacy that will follow. The city is not only investing in infrastructure and events but is also deeply committed to sustainability and fostering a vibrant, interconnected scientific and industrial community that values innovation, collaboration and the profound legacy of international events.

BCEC's signature Convention Advocates Partnership is a select group of influencers, including some of Australia's top scientists, researchers, business leaders and innovators, who collaborate with the BCEC to put Brisbane's science and innovation leadership on the global agenda.



Leading Perth into Tomorrow

An Exclusive Chat with the Lord Mayor of The City of Perth



Perth and Western Australia are on a journey of change, on a journey of inclusion, on a journey of promoting diversity.



Business Events Perth (BE Perth), formerly known as the Convention Bureau, is a collaboration between the city, the state and a variety of stakeholders, including hotels, convention venues, meeting spaces and other event suppliers. During HQ’s visit to Australia earlier this year, **Vivian Xu, Managing Director** of HQ, was invited by **Councillor David de Alves Goncalves** to meet with **Basil Zempilas, Lord Mayor of the City of Perth**, to learn more about the city’s position in supporting BE Perth’s growth in the meetings industry.

How is the City Council collaborating closely with BE Perth to promote Perth as an international events destination?

We support BE Perth in several ways, as well as being significant by the city standards and financial supporters. One of my mottos is promoting Perth as a destination at any level, whether it’s for business conferences or tourism of any form. Promoting Perth is a team game, and we’re all on the same team. BE Perth, **Tourism Western Australia**, and the City of Perth are all on the same team when it comes to promoting Perth. So getting in and pitching in together are important parts of what we do. For example, there might be a large-scale event coming to Perth. It might be an event in which BE Perth has done most of the heavy lifting. But as a city, we will do an

activation through, or that incorporates a part of our city, to further wrap our arms around it and to demonstrate an all-of-city, all-of-state approach to the warm welcome.

The **World Wrestling Entertainment Group (WWE)** was in town in February this year. They were hosted at **Optus Stadium**, which is just outside of the City of Perth. But there was a superstore located in our main town square. And then up and down our main streets, the banners that flew down the main drive. This is one of the many small details we do to support an event and make it more impactful and involving.

An event’s economic contribution to the city is one of the most immediate impacts, but beyond that, there’s the event’s legacy.

That means driving the contribution to sustainability growth. We talk about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and also about creating more jobs in the city.

Could you please tell us more about how you are working with BE Perth to drive sustainable event growth? And what is your strategy from a legacy perspective for the city’s growth?

I think it’s very important for event organisers to have this social conscience and also to be aware of the ability of their events to impact where they go and the sustainability message they might bring to the destinations. I know these events promote diversity and inclusion or have those at their core; they are the sorts of events that BE Perth is leaning towards.

Perth and Western Australia are on a journey of change, on a journey of inclusion, on a journey of promoting diversity. So, we don't want to bring events to Australia that aren't in line with community expectations. And I don't think there's any doubt that there are some events that might be popular or successful in terms of the numbers that they bring and potentially the spending. But ideologically, they're not in line with our community. I'm proud to be able to say that the city, BE Perth, the state government, we don't go to the top of the list just because of the numbers. We want events that fit with the psychology of our city and our state.

An exciting project coming up in the city is grabbing the industry's attention – the expansion of the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre (PCEC). Could you please give us some insight into this project?

So there is a proposal in conjunction with the State Government to move the facility forward. As we are promoting Perth as a modern international destination, we are

required to be able to bring big conferences and big events to Perth. Infrastructure-wise, indeed, the city's convention centre is one of the key support to the wings for the conference. And we've got lots of good venues. There are lots of parts of our city that lend themselves to hosting big events, but a modern and highly equipped convention centre will strengthen Perth's position in competing at the international level.

That is why the expansion of the PCEC is necessary. We're very fortunate that the private owners are in the process of forming a consortium with the State Government to expand the PCEC's footprint. Fortunately, this will significantly increase the capacity, which is important. What's more, it'll also have a very positive effect on our city overall. Although it's in a great location, the centre is not so well connected to our river, but it will be! Soon, we'll be able to host all the guests and delegates right on the doorstep of the river. There are also plans for additional

hotel facilities on the site, which are currently under construction. So all these possibilities are being discussed at the highest level right now. So I'm very confident and happy that there is a huge opportunity for Perth, and we will be competitive in many ways.

Events in the pipeline

- *International Congress on Neuromuscular Diseases 2024*
- *Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals 2024*
- *17th IFEH World Congress on Environmental Health International*
- *Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA) Congress*



“ As Perth grows – our unique position within this corner of the globe means we thrive by relying on our innovation, industry and inclusivity. We embrace international diversity by seeking events that celebrate our vibrant community and amplify our aspirations for a welcoming, world-class city where its people can forever share their warm smiles and sunny views to all those who visit.
 – Councillor David de Alves Goncalves



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