



THE ASSOCIATION
MAGAZINE

BUSINESS EVENTS

AUSTRALIA

SPECIAL MICE
DESTINATION REPORT



Green is our Gold

In Australia caring for our country is just what we do. We believe a land as precious as ours should be preserved for generations to come.

Whether we're protecting the precious ecosystems of our backyard, teaching visitors how to tread lightly, or passing on the knowledge of the world's oldest living cultures, caring for our country is engrained in what we do every day. That includes caring for our visitors too, to ensure everyone has the opportunity to experience Australia safely and sustainably.

Because when you spend every day surrounded by Australia at its best, you can't help but want to protect it - and empower visitors to do the same.

So, when we talk about being 'green', well, that's a word we take seriously. It's a standard we'll never stop striving for - because down here, **Green is Our Gold.**

Business Events
Australia



Australia Makes Meetings Matter

Australia builds its business events strategy around sectors where meetings contribute to research, policy and industry outcomes, with government, academia and professional communities directly involved in bid development and programme design.

In March 2026, the European Union and Australia concluded negotiations on a free trade agreement that removes most tariffs and expands cooperation across research, innovation, education and climate. Mobility provisions support longer professional stays and multi-country collaboration. For international organisers, these conditions strengthen links between European and Australian organisations, research teams and partner institutions, supporting meetings designed around ongoing collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Australia is a multicultural democracy shaped by First Nations cultures, the world's oldest continuous living cultures, and sustained migration, with strong links across global research and policy networks. This combination of cultural depth and institutional capability informs how international meetings are received and delivered.

Sustainability and First Nations participation are embedded in operational requirements. Certification frameworks define emissions, energy and resource benchmarks at destination and venue level. Reconciliation Action Plans guide procurement, partnerships and workforce development, while First Nations representatives sit on advisory structures, influencing naming, design and the use of sites recognised as long-standing gathering places.

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Australia's Business Events Strategy Enters a New Phase



International associations select host destinations based on measurable economic and strategic impact. In Australia, business events are positioned as part of a wider system that connects international congresses with research capability, priority industries and national policy agendas.

This positioning is now a key part of the structure of **Tourism Australia (TA)**. In January 2026, **Robin Mack** (*pictured above*) was appointed **Managing Director**, bringing long-standing business events leadership into the organisation's top role. At **AIME 2026**, TA confirmed that **Business Events Australia (BEA)** now sits within its Industry division, led by **Executive General Manager Industry and Business Events Sally Cope** (*pictured right*). Her remit spans industry relations, trade engagement and experience development, aligning the business events portfolio with national strategy.

Around 700,000 delegates travel to Australia each year for business events, contributing nearly A\$4 billion (around €2.45 billion) to the visitor economy. Their spending differs from leisure travellers, reflecting longer stays, structured conference programmes and direct engagement with Australian industries and research. "On average, every visitor we get for business events will spend 55% more per night than a leisure visitor," said Mack during the opening press conference at AIME in Melbourne.

This level of spending helps explain why governments treat international meetings as economic drivers. Congresses also connect global professional networks with universities, research institutes and industry.

Major congresses link researchers, policymakers and industry leaders with Australia's scientific and professional communities, informing research agendas, policy discussions and sector development in nationally prioritised areas.

The **76th International Astronautical Congress (IAC)**, held in Sydney in 2025, shows how this approach operates at scale. The event attracted close to 7,500 delegates from 99 countries, including more than 40 heads of space agencies and organisations such as NASA. Alongside the congress, more than 60 New South Wales companies exhibited, while public programmes such as **Space Day** and STEM initiatives led by the **Department of Education** and the University of **New South Wales** connected younger audiences with space science and engineering pathways. Mack told *HQ* that events such as the IAC bring knowledge exchange, policy influence and sector development to the host destination.

This model is underpinned by what Mack described as a 'Team Australia' approach. "Our approach is structured around three pillars," he explained. "First, creating demand, particularly within the association sector. Second, converting that demand, where the **Business Events Bid Fund Program (BFP)** is

a central tool. Third, supporting the industry through data, insights and partnerships."

A key feature is the coordination of government, research, industry and convention bureaux. Ambassador programmes link international associations with recognised experts in priority sectors, grounding bids in existing research and industry capability. Introduced in 2018, the BFP provides targeted financial support to secure meetings aligned with national priorities.

More than 211 events have been secured for delivery through 2029, representing an estimated A\$1.43 billion (approx. €866 million) in economic value. The programme focuses on sectors such as health and life sciences, advanced manufacturing, technology, resources and energy, agribusiness, defence and space. Applications remain open to support upcoming events, reinforcing the programme's commitment to long-term planning.

The range of events secured through the BFP reflects this sector alignment, from the **International Family Nursing Conference** in Perth and **MicroTAS** in Adelaide, both in 2025, to the **World Congress of Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition** in Brisbane in 2028.

In 2026, **Women Deliver** in Melbourne showed the strategy operating within global policy debates. The congress placed Melbourne and Australia in discussions on gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights. As the first edition held in Oceania, it also brought First Nations and Pacific perspectives into the international agenda.

Event Delivery, Cultural Integration and Sustainability

First Nations engagement shapes how international meetings are designed and delivered in Australia. As Mack explains, the approach is guided by TA's **Reconciliation Action Plan**, which sets out how First Nations perspectives are incorporated across the organisation and its business events.

“We are consistently working with associations, professional congress organisers and convention bureaux to integrate First Nations elements into events’ programmes,” Mack said. “That can include welcome ceremonies led by Traditional Owners, Indigenous cuisine, keynote speakers and sessions exploring Indigenous knowledge systems.”

This approach extends to event ownership and delivery. The **World Indigenous Business Forum**, held in Darwin in 2025, positioned First Nations at the centre of the programme, connecting international delegates with Aboriginal business leaders and regional economic networks. Procurement models are also evolving. In the Northern Territory, the **Indigenous Business Network** connects business events with more than 200 First Nations-owned suppliers across catering, transport and cultural services, linking delegate activity directly to local economic participation.

In Victoria, the **Nyaal Banyul Convention and Event Centre** in Geelong, a regional city southwest of Melbourne, is scheduled to open in July 2026 on Wadawurrung Country. From the outset, the venue has been co-designed with Traditional Owners, incorporating cultural protocols into its naming, design and operations.

Through TA's **Sustainability Framework** and the national **THRIVE 2030** strategy, business events are aligned with broader objectives around biodiversity protection, cultural respect and long-term community benefit.

These priorities are also reflected in the BFP, which supports events aligned with national sustainability and sector goals. In practice, this includes integrating First Nations knowledge, reducing environmental impact and linking events to local initiatives, from reef protection programmes in Queensland to community-led projects in regional destinations.

At the venue level, this approach is reinforced through operational standards. The **Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre** was the first convention centre globally to achieve a **6-star Green Star** rating, while other venues across the country operate under **EarthCheck** certification at Platinum or Master level. These standards provide measurable benchmarks for energy use, waste management and resource efficiency, helping organisers align events with their sustainability commitments. Infrastructure reflects this shift. Nyaal Banyul is a world-first venue designed without reliance on fossil fuels and **Climate Active Carbon Neutral** from day one, aligning environmental performance with cultural stewardship.

The Sustainability Framework is evolving hand in hand with industry partnerships. Collaboration between BEA and **IAPCO** has led to practical tools such as the **IAPCO Sustainability Award**, along with guidance on integrating environmental and social considerations into event design and delivery. Under this model, business events in Australia function as economic drivers with long-term environmental and cultural impacts.

Building on existing sustainability efforts, the Australian business events sector is moving toward a more cohesive future. New industry-wide sustainable tourism principles, spearheaded by TA, will provide a roadmap for international meetings, supported on the ground by a coordinated network of industry partners.



AIME 2026 and the Case for Human Expertise

The meetings industry faces ongoing challenges due to rapid advances in artificial intelligence, rising sustainability expectations and a geopolitical landscape that influences where organisations feel confident in hosting events. At the same time, the sector must navigate a generation shift while attracting professionals capable of designing, planning, and delivering high-level international events. These themes framed discussions throughout the **Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME)**, which brought the industry together in Melbourne in February 2026, from the **Knowledge Monday** programme to the wider event partnerships and the trade show itself. This year's theme, **Expertise Matters**, highlights a key fact about business events: while technology can support our work, our industry still relies on professional expertise to build human connections and trust, connect multicultural communities, and transform meetings into real-world outcomes.

The 2026 edition of AIME confirmed the show's ongoing importance in the global events calendar. The opening press conference took place inside the Formula 1 Exhibition at the **Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC)**, a reminder that Melbourne's reputation as an events capital is built on hosting global platforms, from the Australian Grand Prix to international industry gatherings such as AIME. The 2026 edition welcomed over 1,500 hosted buyers, more than 765 exhibitors, and around 5,000 participants from 36 countries and territories. During the two-day trade show, over 25,000 meetings were scheduled between buyers and exhibitors. The economic impact of AIME 2026 is estimated at A\$425 million (€260 million), building on the success of AIME 2025, which generated A\$400 million (€245 million) in confirmed business.

AIME delivered a record year. This level of participation reflects Asia-Pacific's position as a stable and reliable region for international meetings at a time when geopolitical volatility continues to influence how organisations assess destinations.

Speaking during the opening press conference, **Talk2 Media & Events CEO Matt Pearce** attributed the event's continued growth to a deliberate focus on curation and strong institutional partnerships.

"Our success has been built on bringing qualified buyers who are ready to do business with our exhibitors," Pearce said. "Quality remains the principle that guides the event."

Owned by the **Melbourne Convention Bureau** and delivered by **Talk2 Media & Events**, AIME operates within a broader industry ecosystem. The 2026 edition brought together leading global organisations, including **ICCA**, **AIPC**, **IAPCO**, **PCMA** and **UFI**, alongside the **Australian Business Events Association (ABEA)**. The operational phase of AIME's partnership with ICCA, which includes new education programmes and bidding development initiatives for the region, further reinforces the event's role in strengthening association expertise across Asia-Pacific.

This concentration of industry organisations also shapes the role AIME plays within the global meetings calendar. Beyond its function as a marketplace, the event has become a forum where associations, destinations and organisers examine the structural challenges facing the sector.

Knowledge Monday is at the heart of these discussions. Sessions explored topics such as leadership development, artificial intelligence, sustainability governance, and the evolving demands placed on event professionals, particularly as the industry seeks to attract and retain the next generation of event leaders.

The programme was curated by **AIME Event Director Silke Calder** together with **El Kwang, Founder and Chief Engager of BEAMexperience**, supported by an industry advisory committee. Calder reminded participants that the theme **Expertise Matters** reflects the role business event professionals play in an increasingly complex environment.



"This theme speaks directly to the value that business events professionals bring," she said, noting that the sector's human expertise becomes even more relevant as the industry navigates technological disruption and changing global conditions.

The keynotes developed that idea through a sequence of perspectives on leadership, resilience and performance. Entrepreneur **Kristina Karlsson** opened the day by reflecting on the experience of building and rebuilding an international retail brand, emphasising the importance of perseverance when navigating uncertainty. Behavioural scientist **Milo Wilkinson** followed with an exploration of how cognitive patterns influence decision-making and organisational change. Performance coach **Dan Haesler** closed the keynote series by examining how professionals maintain clarity and focus in high-pressure environments.

Leadership themes extended into the wider programme as well. A session titled *Legacy, Leadership and Belonging*, delivered with **Tourism New Zealand**, examined the organisational culture behind the All Blacks rugby team. Former All Black **Ian Jones** described how shared purpose, humility and collective responsibility underpin the team's long-term success, principles that resonate with organisations managing complex international events.

Many of the discussions returned to the same question: how AI and automations are reshaping professional roles across the meetings industry. Across several sessions, speakers acknowledged the potential for AI to automate administrative



tasks, analyse large volumes of data and support event planning processes. At the same time, most emphasised that the design of meaningful event experiences remains fundamentally human.

Event professionals increasingly see AI as a tool that can support efficiency while freeing planners to focus on higher-value work such as stakeholder engagement, creative programme design and partnership development.

Sustainability formed another major focus of the programme. Discussions developed with ICCA and **EarthCheck** examined how environmental reporting and ESG expectations are increasingly shaping event procurement and destination selection.

Panellists addressed practical measures, including carbon measurement, local procurement strategies and venue infrastructure investments designed to reduce energy consumption and waste. Several destinations shared examples of how sustainability policies are now integrated into bid strategies and long-term legacy planning.

These discussions connect directly with AIME's own operational commitments. The event is now a signatory of the **Net Zero Carbon Events** initiative and has set a target to reduce emissions it directly controls by 50% by 2030.

“Our next step is to move beyond measurement into collective action across the entire events ecosystem,” Pearce explained during the press conference.

The MCEC, which hosts AIME annually, plays a significant role in that transition. The venue operates on renewable electricity and maintains a range of sustainability initiatives covering energy efficiency, waste reduction and accessibility, allowing event organisers to track environmental performance more precisely.

Educational exchanges continued during the trade show through the **Ideas Academy** held on the exhibition floor. These short-format presentations allowed planners, suppliers and destination representatives to share practical insights between scheduled meetings,

reinforcing AIME's role as both a marketplace and a professional learning environment.

Networking remained an equally important dimension of the event. Hosted buyer programmes, association gatherings and informal meetings created opportunities for industry professionals to develop partnerships throughout the event. The Welcome Event, **Aimagination**, held at **Evoqué** in Melbourne's CBD, brought together more than 2,000 participants and provided a social setting where many of those conversations continued beyond the trade show floor.

The next edition of AIME will take place from 15–17 February 2027 in Melbourne.



Melbourne Links Global Congresses to Policy Agendas



Melbourne's reputation as a global events city is evident in its ability to host major events such as the **Australian Open** and the **Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix**, handling large-scale and complex operations. This expertise translates into the meetings sector, where Melbourne consistently ranks as a top destination for international association congresses, with strong alignment across sectors such as health, science, energy, and social policy. 60 years after the foundation of the **Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB)**, that wealth of experience continues to guide the organisation's work. With a confirmed pipeline of over 100 congresses through to 2030, the Bureau is placing an increasing focus on how meetings are designed, how participation is encouraged, and how the outcomes of these events inform policy, research, and funding processes.

International buyers and organisers convene in Melbourne each year at **AIME**, the leading business events trade show in Asia-Pacific, owned by MCB and used by the city to curate demand, introduce new programme formats and influence future congress pipelines.

“Our role is to connect an association's purpose with the local ecosystem,” says **Julia Swanson, Chief Executive Officer**. Association objectives are matched with state priorities, university research and industry capability, then translated into programme design and stakeholder participation. That process determines who contributes to the programme and how outcomes are expected to circulate once the event concludes.

Uncover Melbourne, the hosted media programme organised alongside AIME, brings that approach into view. Time spent with Swanson ahead of AIME 2026 provided a clear view of it in practice, as she remained present across site visits, responding to questions and engaging directly with participants.

This leadership style, based on proximity and continuity, extends beyond individual interactions, carrying into long-term collaboration with organisers and shaping how larger congresses are structured, as seen in the **Women Deliver** conference in April 2026, which brought together Melbourne's model of governance, funding and policy alignment. Programme priorities were defined by an **Oceanic Pacific Regional Steering Committee** and a **First Nations Governance Group**. Held in the Pacific region for the first time, the conference positioned regional actors in shaping both agenda and outcomes, which informed the **Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting** and linked discussions in Melbourne with regional policy processes.

“Women Deliver is a strong example. The event includes a focus on First Nations communities and engagement with Pacific partners, supported by collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade,” says Swanson. “The programme brings together global leaders and grassroots organisations, creating space

for both high-level dialogue and community participation.”

Speaker participation reflected that structure, bringing together former heads of government, United Nations leadership, and First Nations and Pacific representatives, placing political authority, multilateral institutions and community leadership within the same decision-making space.

“That approach ensures that the event contributes to ongoing discussions around gender equality, health and social issues, rather than being limited to its duration,” Swanson adds. A global Declaration for the international development sector consolidates consultations into a framework for governments, funders and advocacy organisations, while **Australians Investing in Women** is coordinating philanthropic institutions to align long-term funding commitments across the region.

Different sectors require different event formats, depending on whether the objective is policy alignment, industry development or economic

participation. In some cases, this means creating new platforms rather than bidding for existing congresses. Victoria identified data infrastructure and artificial intelligence as priority sectors without an international event to match.

“In this case, there was no existing event that matched Victoria’s priorities,” Swanson explains. “Instead of bidding for an established congress, we worked with government and industry stakeholders to develop a new platform.”

Data Centre World Australia, scheduled for September 2026, will bring together investors, data centre operators, technology companies and policymakers, establishing a recurring meeting point for a sector linked to state economic priorities.

To complement the development of new sector platforms, the state is expanding the range of organisations involved in event delivery. The **First Peoples Tourism Growth Program**, which runs from 2025 to 2030, provides funding for First Nations-owned businesses to develop cultural venues, guided experiences, and knowledge-based products. This increases the number of local providers that can be included in congress programmes, linking event activity with First Nations economic participation.

Swanson places these approaches within a longer development cycle. “Much of the work happens over several years. It involves identifying sector opportunities, aligning with government priorities and building relationships across industry and academia.”

This observation that ‘much of the work happens over several years’ was reinforced during the 30-year milestone of the **Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC)** at AIME, where **MCEC Chair John Brumby AO** and **Victoria’s Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Steve Dimopoulos MP** pointed to future congresses already secured as evidence of that long-term approach.

The **2029 World Conference on Lung Cancer** is an example of this. Secured by the MCB in partnership with the **International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer** and **Cancer Council Victoria**, and supported by the **Victorian Government** and **Tourism Australia**, the congress is expected to attract over 6,500 delegates from more than 100 countries. Holding

the conference in Melbourne aligns with the city’s concentration of cancer research, clinical treatment and policy leadership, led by institutions such as the **Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre** and the **Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre**, where research, care and education are integrated into international networks.

MCEC connects international congresses with Melbourne’s research, clinical and policy institutions, as a central node within this network, while its activity has shaped South Wharf into a concentrated business events precinct where venues, accommodation and transport operate in close proximity.

MCB is also expanding Victoria’s regional offering within event programmes by introducing organisers to settings beyond the city. The Uncover Melbourne itinerary extended from the convention precinct to the Mornington Peninsula, combining small-group meeting formats with local production and cultural activity, from vineyards and tastings to wellness programmes and creative workshops. These formats allow organisers to separate leadership discussions, board meetings and informal exchanges from plenary environments, while integrating local industries and communities into the programme.

The opening of **Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre** in July 2026 formalises that expansion. Located within one hour of Melbourne, the venue connects events to Geelong’s university, research and industry base, allowing organisers to distribute programme components across multiple locations while maintaining alignment with sector priorities.



MCEC Anchors Melbourne's Long-Term Congress Pipeline

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) marked its 30-year anniversary during AIME 2026, using the milestone to reinforce its role in sustaining Victoria's congress pipeline. Operated by the **Victorian Convention and Event Trust (VCET)**, the government authority responsible for MCEC, the **Royal Exhibition Building** and, from 2026, **Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre**, the venue delivers the operational component of bids secured by Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB), converting confirmed events into executable formats across multi-year cycles.

More than 20,000 events have been delivered through MCEC since opening in 1996. In the past financial year, the venue hosted over 700 events and welcomed 3.2 million visitors,

generating close to A\$700 million (€420 million) in economic impact for Victoria. International congresses secured through long bid cycles require delivery conditions that remain stable over several years.

That requirement shapes how MCEC operates within the state's bidding structure. MCB leads the international bid, aligning the event with government priorities, research capability and sector demand. The VCET then defines how that event can be delivered, setting parameters around space allocation, technical production, sustainability requirements and precinct use. "Thirty years on, what we celebrate is that the centre is no longer on the fringe, it is part of Melbourne," says **Natalie O'Brien AM, Chief Executive** of MCEC.



The venue's position along the Yarra River places it within a concentrated precinct where accommodation, public space and event infrastructure operate in close proximity. MCEC's role now sits in maintaining operational consistency at this scale, ensuring that events secured years in advance can be delivered under defined conditions while the state expands its capacity through additional venues.

Nyaal Banyul Opens in July 2026 with First Nations Governance Embedded

Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre opens in July 2026 as the central project of the **Geelong City Deal**, introducing a venue developed under different conditions from its inception. Operated by VCET, which also manages MCEC, the project extends the state's convention infrastructure while applying a distinct set of design and governance requirements.

The site on the Western Beach cliffs has long functioned as a gathering place for the Wadawurrung people. The **Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation** participated in naming and shaping the project, embedding cultural authority into decisions

affecting the building, public space and programme use. "This site has been a gathering place for First Nations people for 65,000 years, so the venue is a contemporary version of that gathering place," says **Rick Aylett, General Manager**. The name Nyaal Banyul, meaning 'open your eyes to the hills', establishes how the precinct is positioned and how events are expected to engage with Country.

Sustainability was defined as a core requirement at design stage, including energy systems, material use and operational requirements. The venue will operate without fossil fuels, with solar expected to supply close to 40% of demand. Waste streams, supplier conditions

and food recovery programmes are being established before opening, requiring organisers to meet those conditions as part of event delivery. "Sustainability has to move beyond construction and into day-to-day behaviour across the venue," Aylett notes.

More than 50 events are already confirmed through 2028. The venue does not replicate Melbourne's scale. It introduces a second operating condition within Victoria's network, where programme design is shaped by site, governance and resource constraints from the outset.



Canberra Connects Congresses to Policy and Defence Institutions

Canberra, as Australia's capital, concentrates federal government, defence agencies and national research institutions within a single operating environment, allowing associations to design programmes around direct engagement with policymakers and regulators. Meetings held in the capital can incorporate participation from departments, agencies and national bodies that shape legislation, funding and security frameworks.

National agencies, research institutions and industry groups operate within the same network, allowing organisers to structure programmes that include policy briefings, technical exchange and regulatory discussion within a single event cycle. "Our strength is in areas like defence and cyber, where proximity to government and research determines

whether those conversations can happen," says Michael Matthews, **Chief Executive Officer of Canberra Convention Bureau**.

The development of a dedicated cyber precinct places those actors within a defined area, allowing events to connect directly to ongoing programmes and regulatory frameworks. Programme formats shift accordingly, with working sessions involving public agencies replacing presentation-led structures.

Plans for a new convention centre follow that requirement, increasing capacity while embedding environmental performance at design stage. Canberra has operated on 100% renewable electricity since 2020, providing a defined baseline for events aligned with environmental commitments. Associations working in regulated



Kangaroo and Canberra Balloon Spectacular
© VisitCanberra

or security-focused sectors choose Canberra to structure meetings with access to decision-makers built into the programme..

Tasmania Builds Congress Demand on Antarctic and Ocean Science

Hobart, Tasmania's capital and one of the world's operational gateways to Antarctica, concentrates more than 500 scientists and technical specialists across the **Australian Antarctic Division**, the **Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)** and marine research institutions. Conferences in Tasmania draw directly on that cluster, bringing together researchers, policymakers and industry participants working on climate, fisheries and Southern Ocean governance.

Tasmania hosted around 25,000 delegates in 2025, with forward bookings indicating more than 30,000 in 2026. More than 90% travel from interstate or overseas, drawn by subject relevance rather than destination scale. Programmes extend into research facilities and institutional sites, connecting scientific work with policy and industry application during the event itself.

Hobart's main venue, the **Hotel Grand Chancellor**, accommodates around 1,100 delegates, setting the upper limit for most congresses. A new convention centre confirmed in Launceston will introduce similar capacity in the north of the

island, linked to agribusiness, manufacturing and energy sectors. Devonport continues to host state-wide events, creating a three-point network where meetings are allocated across sectors and locations within a coordinated network.

Direct air links between Launceston and Canberra, alongside upgrades supporting Antarctic logistics through Hobart, reinforce this structure. Events in Tasmania are built around access to scientific institutions and field-based research environments, allowing programmes to connect climate, marine and policy discussions within the same setting.



Turning Local Gatherings into Global Progress in Sydney

Across the global association sector, expectations of what a congress should deliver are evolving quickly. While traditional measures such as attendance, sponsorship revenue and hotel nights remain important, they now sit alongside a growing focus on the long-term value a congress creates.

Today, Boards and planners are increasingly expected to balance both delivering strong commercial outcomes while also generating lasting impact for their communities and host destinations. In response, **Business Events Sydney (BESydney)** has developed a comprehensive roadmap outlining the key levers associations can use to maximise both the immediate success and the long-term legacy of their congresses.

Associations are under growing pressure to demonstrate public benefit. Research collaboration, policy influence, sector development and societal impact are now central measures of success. This shift reflects the wider adoption of ESG thinking and the expectation that international organisations contribute meaningfully to global progress. In this context, major congresses are no longer simply knowledge-sharing forums, they are platforms capable of accelerating change. Recent events hosted in Sydney illustrate this shift clearly.

At the **5th World Conference of Women's Shelters**, delegates reported significant professional and policy impact, strengthening global solidarity among women's shelter practitioners. The vast majority (93%) left the event with new insights relevant to their field, while 90% said the congress had inspired them to rethink how their organisations operate and how far they reach. Crucially, the gathering also created space for dialogue between practitioners, advocates and policymakers around coordinated responses to gender-based violence. Through the Oceania Caucus, participants from across the Pacific explored ways to reinforce services in disaster-prone regions and expand regional cooperation.

Similarly, the **76th International Astronautical Congress** demonstrated how a scientific gathering can catalyse innovation and collaboration across an entire industry for people and science. 94% of delegates highlighted the role of the event in advancing scientific knowledge, stimulating new technologies and creating opportunities for trade and investment.

Many (91%) also noted the congress's contribution to attracting global talent to Sydney and sparking discussions around space governance and its wider social implications. Most interestingly, 57% of international delegates expressed interest in living or working in Sydney, strengthening the city's talent pool and future research capacity.

In 2030, the city will welcome the **Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology Congress**, bringing around 5,500 clinicians and researchers to the **International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney)** to explore advances in eye health and vision science. Beyond its economic contribution, the event will provide a vital platform for collaboration across the Asia-Pacific region.

Designing Events for Long-Term Impact

Working closely with international associations from the earliest stages of the bidding process, BESydney focuses on ensuring that each event is aligned with association goals, creating an environment where meaningful progress can occur.

BESydney facilitates partnerships across Sydney's extensive networks, linking organisers with government agencies, universities, research institutes, industry partners and community organisations. These relationships often lead to the integration of legacy-focused initiatives within the congress programme. Policy roundtables, research collaborations, educational outreach and sector capability-building activities can be embedded alongside the traditional conference agenda.



To ensure these outcomes are captured, BESydney works with the **University of Technology Sydney** to conduct delegate impact measurement studies, which assess outcomes such as knowledge exchange, policy dialogue, innovation and talent attraction. Through this structured approach, congresses hosted in Sydney are designed not just as events, but as catalysts for seamless integration between the city and the association.

From Strategy to Results: The Impact Pathway

To move from intent to evidence, BESydney offers a structured pathway, starting at bid stage, so associations can set congress goals early and demonstrate clear sector relevance from the outset.

During the pre-event phase, partnerships are activated. BESydney introduces organisers to local experts, institutions and community groups that can contribute to the programme. These collaborations often lead to site visits, specialised workshops and policy dialogues designed to deepen engagement. Once the congress is underway, the focus shifts to delivering impact. Delegates are encouraged to engage with local innovators, researchers and practitioners.

After the event concludes, measurement and insight become critical. Delegate surveys and data analysis help quantify the event's academic, social and economic outcomes, providing associations with evidence of the value their congress has generated. The final stage focuses on sustaining legacy. Connections formed



Sydney Harbour, Sydney © Tourism Australia



World Congress of Women's Shelters 2025



IAC2025 Space Day



ICC Sydney and Darling Harbour Precinct

during the event frequently evolve into longer-term research collaborations, policy discussions and sector partnerships, ensuring the congress continues to influence long after delegates return home.

Sydney's Innovation Ecosystems in Action

For associations focused on global progress, the value of place is not symbolic, it is practical. Sydney's innovation precincts offer delegates transferable models for accelerating outcomes in health, technology and sustainable cities well beyond Australia.

Beyond its conference facilities, Sydney offers associations access to a network of innovation districts that function as real-world learning laboratories. The **Westmead Health and Innovation District** is one of the largest health and research precincts in the Southern Hemisphere. Bringing together hospitals, universities and research institutes, it offers medical and health congresses opportunities to engage directly with clinicians and scientists tackling complex healthcare challenges.

In the city's technology corridor, **Tech Central** connects startups, global technology companies and leading universities in a rapidly evolving innovation ecosystem. For science and technology congresses, the precinct provides a natural setting to explore emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics and advanced data systems.

Further west, **Bradfield City Centre**, Australia's newest city in over a century, will be a hub for

advanced manufacturing and sustainable urban development. The city will be the centre for future innovations, offering delegates into next-generation infrastructure and industry.

For international associations, these precinct connections turn a congress into a launchpad for cross-border collaboration, helping ideas, pilots and partnerships scale from local demonstration to global application.

The Eora Nation

Another distinctive element, particularly relevant to global progress agendas, is the integration of First Nations heritage and community-led sessions. Through its *First Nations Engagement Guide*, BESydney supports associations in developing respectful and meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These collaborations allow congress programmes to include Indigenous voices, knowledge and cultural experiences in ways that enrich the delegate journey.

Events may feature Welcome to Country ceremonies, First Nations keynote speakers, storytelling sessions or workshops led by Indigenous cultural custodians from the Gadigal and Cammeraygal peoples. Partnerships with Aboriginal-owned businesses and suppliers also ensure that international events contribute to local economic participation. For delegates, these encounters provide valuable cultural context while opening discussions around sustainability, stewardship of land and the importance of knowledge-based systems.

Events with Impact: Inside ICC Sydney's Cultural and Creative Edge

Across sectors from space and health to mining and social impact, associations and meeting planners increasingly seek more than a venue, they want partners who deliver impact. At ICC Sydney, that means flexible spaces, top-tier audiovisual and culinary capabilities, and a strong focus on accessibility, inclusion, and sustainability. Last year, the centre hosted 546 events and activated 423 **Legacy Program** initiatives, showcasing First Nations culture through ceremonies, performances, and immersive experiences. We spoke with **ICC Sydney's CEO, Adam Mather-Brown**, about how the centre is redefining what it means to be 'more than a venue'.



You stepped into your role at the end of 2024. Looking back, what has shaped your view of convention centres' roles today?

Taking the helm, it quickly became clear that convention centres are evolving beyond their traditional role of hosts, they are partners in creating meaningful impact. At ICC Sydney, we measure success not just by delegate numbers, but by the value we create for associations, their members, and communities. This is why we position ourselves as *More Than a Venue*.

Sustainability, social impact, and cultural connection are now central for us. By celebrating our First Nations culture, we recognise our responsibility in connecting visitors to the Country. Associations seeking to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion into their delegate experience, appreciate this connection. Our CSR strategy, committed to the **JMIC's Net Zero Carbon Events** pledge, guides work across environmental stewardship, social inclusion, and responsible procurement. Planners' appetite for

transparent reporting, sustainable choices, and responsible operations has grown stronger.

Over the past year, we focused on three priorities: driving change through data-led innovation; converting thought into action with people at the core; and driving efficiencies backed by technology. By integrating data-driven decision-making, investing in our people, and embracing technology, we have strengthened our ability to deliver well-run, strategically aligned, and impactful events. This approach ensures we meet association demands in a market defined by operational fluidity, seamless delegate journeys, and creative ways to connect communities

Your RESPECT report highlighted trends from sustainability to technology. How are these shaping events today?

Events must now be purposeful, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and deeply engaging. Sustainability and social impact have moved from 'nice-to-have' to essential. Organisers leverage our Legacy Program to embed community

engagement, First Nations participation, responsible procurement, and environmental outcomes, often with transparent sustainability reporting. Inclusion and accessibility are also reshaping event design, from diverse speaker line-ups, live captioning, hearing loop upgrades, and sensory support through **Aspect Autism Australia**. Planners want every delegate to feel welcome through thoughtful planning and venue expertise.





We also see a rise in wellness elements and breakout moments. Pickleball courts on the Event Deck support delegate health, while cultural initiatives like Dancers' Alley and human connections to the Gadigal People resonate. Interactive experiences such as our Dance Canvas reflect the desire for immersive layers too. Associations also want data insights and platforms to extend the reach of their content. Our partnership with TikTok, for example, explores how organisers can amplify their messaging globally in ways previously unattainable.

Sustainability has been core to ICC Sydney. How are organisers now defining success and impact?

Aligning with the **UN Sustainable Development Goals** has been part of our operational model from the start, but the depth of conversations has grown. Organisers now ask far more sophisticated questions: measurable carbon reductions, accessibility outcomes, cultural inclusion, and community legacy.

A clear example is the **76th International Astronautical Congress (IAC)**, one of the world's largest space events. For IAC organisers, environmental and social impact were as important as the technical programme. They embedded responsible sourcing, waste minimisation, First Nations participation, accessible design, and local engagement into

every aspect of the Congress all backed by transparent reporting. Success was defined not just by attendance or global visibility, but by the positive footprint left on Sydney's cultural, social, and environmental landscape.

How does the Legacy Program create value for associations and delegates?

The Legacy Program delivers great value by enabling associations to build meaningful connections with community, culture, and local enterprise. Practically, this manifests in several ways. Associations integrate First Nations culture authentically, helping delegates understand the significance of gathering on Gadigal land.

Collaboration with local suppliers, social enterprises, and creative talent enrich programmes while supporting the local economy. For associations, this fosters deeper engagement and stronger event resonance; for delegates, it provides cultural learning and memorable experiences; for the community, it ensures major events generate lasting social, cultural, and economic benefits.

How do First Nations partnerships translate into economic participation and cultural visibility?

First Nations partnerships are embedded in our operations well before the event starts. Through our Legacy Program, organisers engage First

Nations-owned suppliers, artists, and knowledge holders authentically. This may include speakers, and cultural protocols such as 'Welcome to Country,' Smoking Ceremonies, performances or culinary experiences.

Cultural visibility is maintained throughout the event, from signage to curated experiences, helping guests understand the significance of the Gadigal land. Associations look to us for guidance on respectful engagement, drawing on longstanding partnerships.

For associations, this deepens resonance and connection to place. For delegates, it provides meaningful cultural learning. For First Nations partners, it generates real opportunities in employment, enterprise, and creative expression, supporting autonomy and economic self-determination. Every event contributes to a more representative, culturally rich visitor economy.

How do you see ICC Sydney evolving as a strategic partner in Australia's business events ecosystem?

ICC Sydney is moving beyond core venue operations to deeper collaboration, insight, and value across the event life-cycle. We see three emerging roles: First, as a destination partner, working with organisations like **Business Events Sydney (BESydney)** to attract global events and position Sydney as a leading knowledge and innovation hub; second, as an innovation catalyst, helping associations leverage data, technology, and creative solutions to design impactful, inclusive, and sustainable events; third, as a community connector, ensuring every event contributes positively to Sydney's cultural, social, and economic landscape.

Innovation is central to ICC Sydney's culture. **Connect Create**, our in-house content service, helps clients tell stories through 3D animation and motion graphics to capture event content, amplifying brand presence and audience experiences. Our Legacy Program, First Nations partnerships, TikTok collaboration and Dancers' Alley demonstrate how ICC Sydney delivers value beyond our walls. As expectations rise, we will continue championing industry leadership, driving destination impact, and helping clients create events that inspire, influence, and deliver lasting positive outcomes.



Brisbane Integrates People, Place and Events into Its Working Core

Brisbane's involvement in international association meetings is underpinned through its universities, research institutions and a network of advocates contributing directly to bids and programme design. The city is no stranger to international associations, nor to *HQ* readers. Following **AIME 2026**, we visited Brisbane at the invitation of the **Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA)** and the **Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC)**, which is marking its 30th anniversary through 2026. During our visit, we met destination leaders, venue representatives, and academic and industry figures involved in supporting and delivering events. What emerges is a model that connects research and industry capability with congress delivery, supported by close collaboration between venue and destination partners.

Brisbane Across Land, Water and Air

Having written about Brisbane numerous times for *HQ* without having visited the city, the first realisation came on arrival at **Rydges Hotel South Bank**. On paper, Brisbane's reputation is well established. Universities, research institutions and sector leadership position the city in global conversations in fields such as biotechnology, resources and clean energy. What is less visible until arrival is how closely these places are located.

Rydges, directly connected to the BCEC, sits within a district that brings together **Griffith University's South Bank campus**, the **Queensland Conservatorium**, the **Australian Broadcasting Corporation** and major cultural institutions, including the **Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA)**, the **Queensland Museum**, **Queensland Performing Arts Centre** and the recently opened **Glasshouse Theatre**. A short walk reveals the concentration and range of off-site options within minutes of the convention centre.

Our programme opened with a walk through South Bank, led by representatives from BEDA and the BCEC, introducing how both organisations operate. Movement between the convention centre, surrounding institutions and riverfront required no coordination, allowing programme elements to combine.

South Bank, the riverside precinct hosting the BCEC, provides the clearest operational reference point, where accommodation, convention space and cultural institutions are seamlessly connected.

BEDA's General Manager Events Lorelle Chittick said Brisbane's defining advantage was the ease with which delegates can move across the city. "Within minutes, delegates can experience the full breadth of Brisbane, from riverfront precincts like South Bank, Howard Smith Wharves and Fish Lane to our cultural institutions and natural surroundings," Ms Chittick said. "That level of proximity enhances the delegate experience while creating more opportunities for meaningful connection, blending business with lifestyle in a way that is uniquely Brisbane."

Travel across the river clarifies how this structure extends across the city. Brisbane's CityCat ferry service connects South Bank with the CBD and surrounding precincts, expanding usable venues. 100 metres above the river, the Sky Deck at **The Star Brisbane** makes this relationship clearer. The Star forms part of the Queen's Wharf development, a A\$3.6 billion (€2.2 billion approx.) precinct introducing accommodation, hospitality and event capacity, including large-scale venues and riverfront and rooftop settings, within walking distance of South Bank and the BCEC via a direct pedestrian bridge.

At Howard Smith Wharves, beneath the Story Bridge, dinner at **Stanley's** positioned the precinct within Brisbane's offsite offering, from large-format venues such as **Felons Brewing Co.**, which can accommodate up to 800 guests, to smaller riverfront settings. Together with South Bank and Queen's Wharf, these spaces form a continuous vibrant riverfront corridor.

Brisbane's surrounding environments introduce a wider range of programme formats. **Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary**, the world's oldest and largest of its kind, combines visitor access with

research and conservation, hosting the **Brisbane Koala Science Institute** and collaborating with universities on genetics and disease management. **Sirromet Winery** presents Queensland's wine production while providing event space for group programmes. From the air, Moreton Bay and its islands form the same accessible landscape. North Stradbroke Island and Moreton Island, home to **Tangalooma Island Resort** and suited to delegate day programmes, are the second and third largest sand islands in the world.

Brisbane Connects Research, Industry and Events Delivery

Our time in Brisbane showed how BEDA and the BCEC jointly attract and deliver international congresses. A site inspection of the convention centre was followed by a strategic session and working lunch at the Plaza Gallery, bringing together senior representatives from both organisations, including a member of BCEC's **Convention Advocates Partnership**.



Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary

This setting reflects the level at which the venue operates. The BCEC hosted the 2014 **G20 Leaders' Summit**, bringing heads of state, including Barack Obama and David Cameron, for high-security meetings, bilateral discussions and global media engagement, establishing a precedent for complex international meetings beyond standard congress requirements.

At that lunch, **Professor Trent Munro, Immediate Past Chair of Life Sciences Queensland** and a leading voice in Queensland's bio-innovation sector, contributed to discussions on life sciences capability and the BCEC's recently launched Bio-Innovation Bursary, a partnership initiative supporting mid-career researchers to strengthen industry engagement and research impact. His involvement reflects the advisory role of sector leaders within BCEC's **Convention Advocate Partnership**.

Discussions continued over dinner with **Dr Neville Plint, Chief Executive Officer of Mining3 and Adjunct Professor at the Sustainable Minerals Institute at UQ** drawing on his experience as part of the Advocate Partnership and perspective across industry and research.

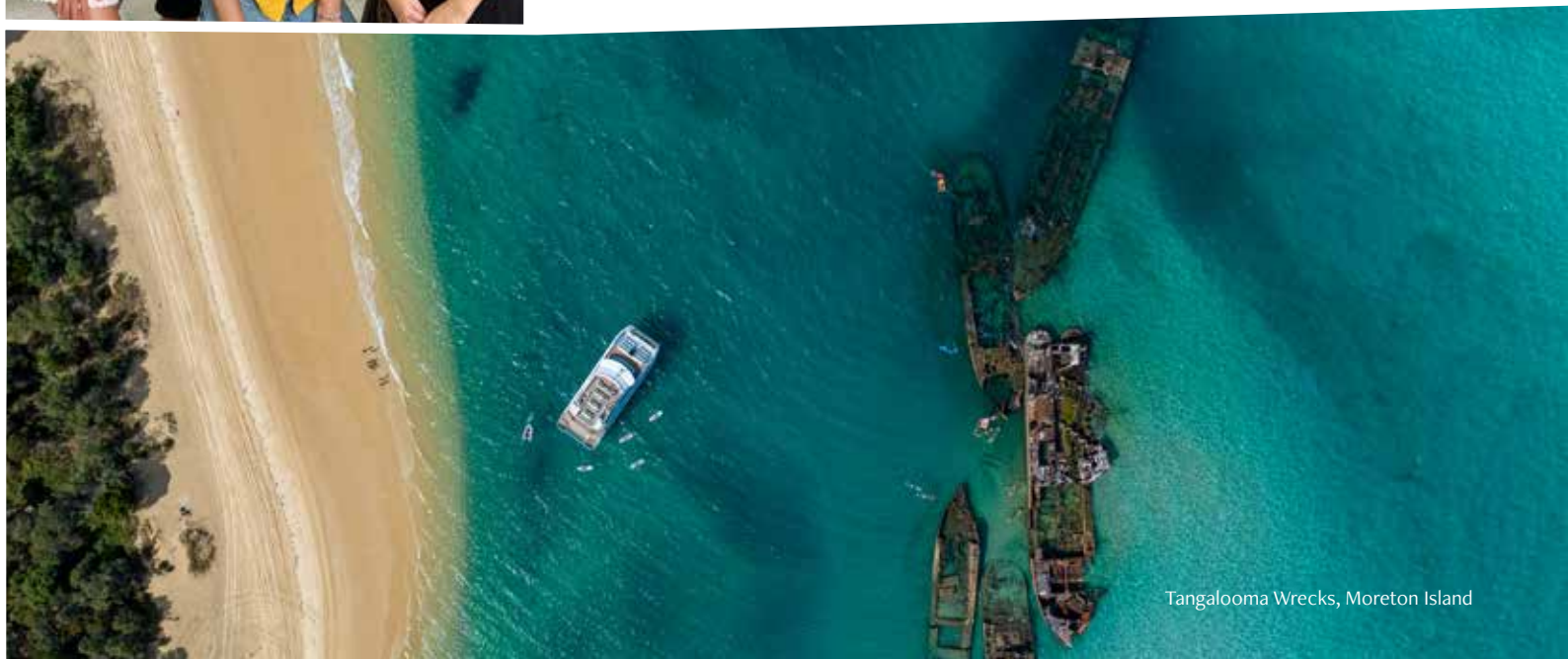
"Brisbane's advantage is how closely research, industry and events are connected. The expertise is already here, and through the Advocates Partnership it's brought into play early, shaping both how conferences are secured and how they're experienced," Plint said.

Conference content, research capability and industry participation align geographically. Brisbane's inner-city **Knowledge Corridor** spans

a five-kilometre arc minutes from the BCEC, concentrating universities, hospitals and research institutes. The corridor anchors a A\$22 billion (€13.2 billion approx.) health and life sciences economy, supported by R&D investment and transport infrastructure reducing travel between institutions. BCEC and the Convention Bureau within BEDA provide conference bidding support, working collaboratively to attract national and international events across Brisbane's venues. BCEC leads national and international conference bids for large-scale conferences and clients who only wish to use the Centre, while BEDA leads national and international conference bids where multiple conference venue types are being considered, including hotels, universities, or multi-venue solutions.

New airline route development is led by Brisbane Airport Corporation, with BEDA supporting in-market representation in North America, South East Asia and India in partnership with Experience Gold Coast, targeting outbound demand and positioning South East Queensland within one of the fastest-growing international markets for tourism and business events. This positioning is reinforced by the city's event pipeline. Over 100 events across 2026 contribute to a A\$13.7 billion (€8.2 billion approx.) visitor economy and year-round activity.

The **Olympic and Paralympic Games** in 2032 provide a longer-term horizon. Through the **Elevate 2042 Legacy Strategy** and **Destination 2045** plan, Brisbane and Queensland align sport, health, inclusion and economic development within a 20-year framework linking major events with broader societal outcomes.



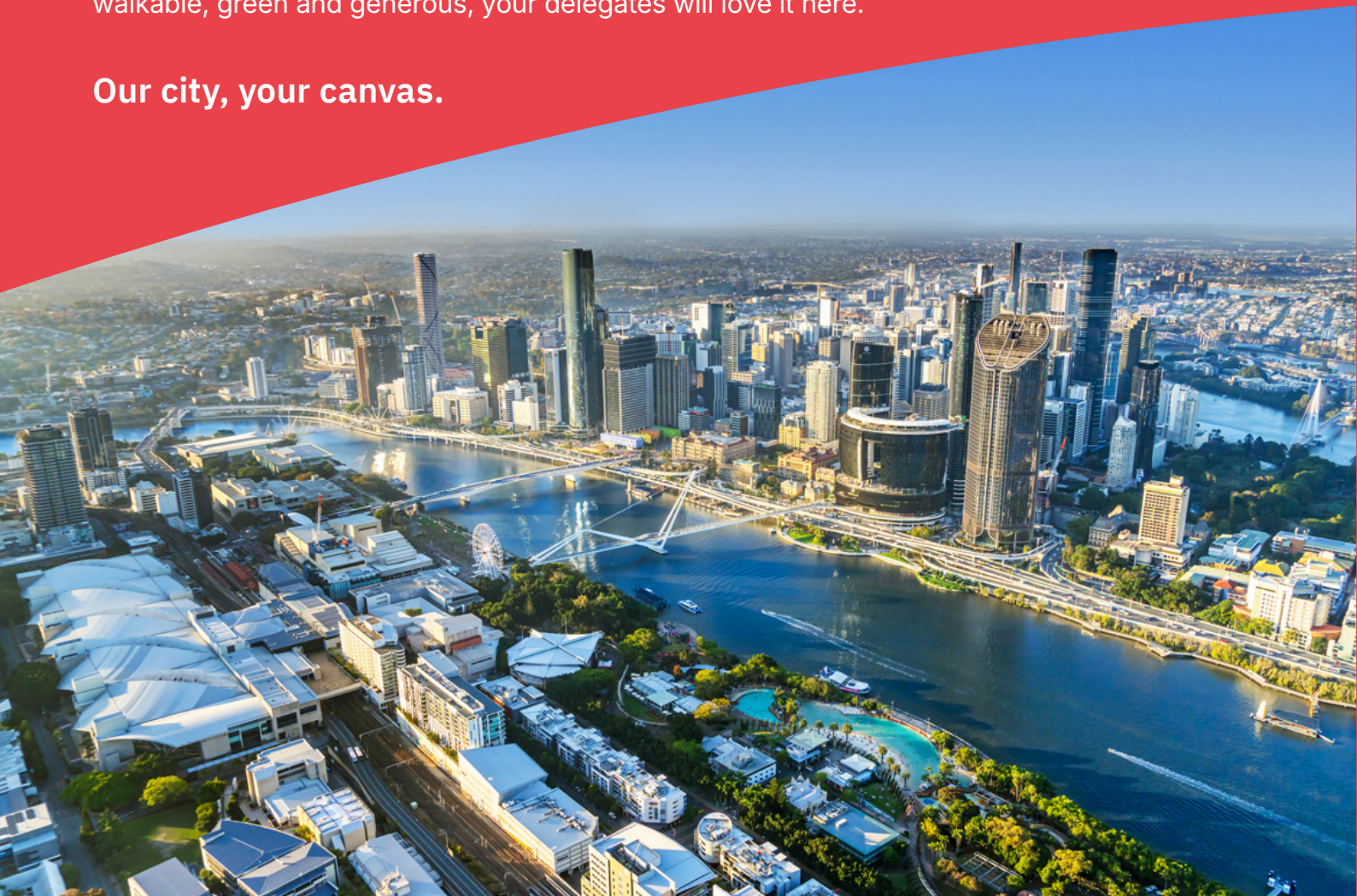
Tangalooma Wrecks, Moreton Island

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BCEC at 30: Redefining the Role of the Convention Centre

For most organisations, an anniversary is an opportunity to look back. At the **Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC)**, the 30-year mark is used to examine how the role of convention centres is evolving, and how venues align more closely with the sectors behind their events. Over three decades, BCEC has hosted a wide range of international meetings, exhibitions and congresses. That activity continues to grow, but the centre's current focus reflects a broader industry shift towards how events contribute to research, industry development and long-term sector growth.

At **AIME 2026**, BCEC announced a new bio-innovation bursary developed with Life Sciences Queensland, marking a key initiative within its extended anniversary programme.

Days later, at the BCEC, *HQ* joined discussions with **Professor Trent Munro, Immediate Past Chair of Life Sciences Queensland**, who outlined how conferences link research with commercial application. Life sciences represent a significant share of conferences at the venue, reflecting the strength of Brisbane's research ecosystem across biomedical, health and agritech fields.

The **BCEC Bio-Innovation Bursary** is a three-year initiative providing A\$25,000 (approx. €15,000) annually to a mid-career researcher. The bursary supports industry collaboration and research impact within the life sciences sector.

The bursary was developed through BCEC's **Convention Advocates Partnership**, a network of local experts who support the attraction of international conferences to Brisbane. Working alongside BCEC, advocates are actively involved in the bidding process for major conferences, helping identify opportunities, shape bid strategy

and engage international peak bodies. These advocates operate within their fields, using research and industry connections to support bids and programme development.

"Mid-career is a critical stage where researchers have the depth, but the international networks that shape their next decade are still forming. This bursary invests in that moment and ensures the next generation of researchers are part of that global conversation. Associations that choose Brisbane aren't just choosing a venue, they're choosing an ecosystem," said Munro.

His role reflects the expertise underpinning Brisbane's event portfolio. His work in bioengineering and therapeutics, combined with industry partnerships, positions local research internationally. The bursary supports researchers at a stage where deeper industry collaboration can influence the direction and impact of their work. The Partnership has contributed to securing more than 160 events for the city, generating an estimated A\$358 million (approx. €215 million) in economic impact. The bursary introduces a more targeted mechanism, focusing on how researchers engage internationally.

"While conferences deliver clear economic benefits, they also shape careers, collaborations and future pipelines. The bursary introduces a more targeted way to support that impact at an individual and sector level," adds **Kym Guesdon, BCEC's General Manager**.

Brisbane's life sciences strength is anchored in the concentration of research institutes, hospitals and universities near the city centre, where conferences, research activity and industry partnerships operate in parallel. At the BCEC, that relationship extends into the delegate experience through an extensive art collection displayed across public and event spaces. The venue houses a significant collection of contemporary Australian art, including one of the largest collections of First Nations works in any convention centre in the country, presented in the dedicated Plaza Gallery.

The Bio-Innovation Bursary, the Convention Advocates Partnership and the integration of cultural context point to a broader shift in venue function. BCEC aligns with the sectors and communities behind its events, positioning the centre within the ecosystems its events represent.



Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef

Impactful Meetings at Cairns Convention Centre

Scientific meetings in Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef take place alongside active research and fieldwork, while event outcomes are defined well before programme design begins. Marine science and tropical diseases are studied and treated through regional healthcare networks, and rainforest environments are managed through conservation programmes and biodiversity research. At the same time, environmental factors, procurement pathways and local partnerships are established by **Cairns Convention Centre (Centre)**, shaping delivery from the outset. Destination strategy and venue operations are closely aligned with the region's science, health and environmental systems.

Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef: Scientific Meetings in Real-World Environments

Research capability supports disciplines aligned with global association priorities. Marine biology, infectious disease research, agriculture and environmental management are advanced by institutions including **James Cook University** and the **Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine**. Work carried out across reef sites, rainforest environments and regional communities provides a foundation for programmes that connect scientific enquiry with application in real conditions.

The **International Society for Viruses of Microorganisms brought its Viruses of Microbes Conference 2024 (VoM 2024)** to Cairns, marking the first time the congress moved beyond Europe. More than 500 delegates from 46 countries attended, with 73% travelling internationally. The programme included 13 symposia covering areas such as phage therapy, microbial ecology and bioinformatics, reflecting both established and emerging directions within virology.

Moving the congress' location shifted its scientific centre of gravity. Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef are recognised for infectious disease research and environmental

microbiology, placing delegates in a region where these fields are actively studied and applied. Early-career researchers delivered 41% of presentations, strengthening participation in global scientific exchange while expanding the next generation of researchers in the field.

Programme activity incorporated reef and rainforest environments, where discussions on microbial ecosystems, climate pressure and biodiversity management were grounded in observable conditions. Exposure to these environments introduced a level of immediacy not available in laboratory-only settings. Indigenous knowledge contributed perspectives on land and sea stewardship, broadening how environmental research is interpreted and applied.

Cairns supports this model through proximity. Airport, accommodation, venues and waterfront sit within a ten-minute radius. Delegates move between sessions, site visits and informal discussions without additional transport layers. Programme formats extend across the city without increasing logistical complexity, allowing closer interaction between formal content and field-based context. Destination-level governance supports this approach. **Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ)** maintains

a **Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)**, a framework for embedding First Nations engagement across governance, employment and procurement, alongside a **First Nations Tourism Action Plan** guided by its Indigenous Steering Committee. TTNQ also facilitates a monthly Indigenous Tourism Cluster, positioning the region as a leader in Indigenous tourism experiences.

Cairns Convention Centre Structures Event Impact at Venue Level

Environmental performance at the Centre is managed through procurement and operations. Catering draws from regional producers, with supply chains linked to local agriculture and fisheries standards. The building's façade is calibrated to solar exposure, reducing heat gain and energy demand before events begin. Waste is processed on site, with kitchen outputs converted into compost. Water use is reduced through capture and reuse systems supporting irrigation, while energy consumption is regulated through integrated controls for lighting, cooling and ventilation. These decisions are embedded in daily operations and apply consistently across events.

Recognition at the **Qantas Australian Tourism Awards**, where the Centre received Silver for



Cairns Convention Centre

Business Events Venue, reflects this operating model. The assessment covers venue capability, business innovations, delivery performance and sustainability integration, positioning the Centre within a competitive national framework rather than as a standalone facility, features that define the operating conditions under which events are delivered.

The **Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists Annual Scientific Meeting (ANZCA ASM)** placed a major medical congress in a regional setting for only the third time. More than 1,900 delegates and over 260 contributors delivered a programme shaped in part by local clinicians and Cairns Hospital. The event extended access to medical research and training beyond metropolitan centres, while positioning regional healthcare systems within national and international exchange. Environmental performance followed the Centre’s operational model, including the removal of single-use serviceware, eliminating more than 21,000 items. Waste audits tracked materials across all phases, reducing output to 0.84 kilograms per delegate per day. Surplus catering was redirected to a local organisation, linking event delivery with community use.

The **CAPA Airline Leader Summit** convened 360 aviation executives from 26 airlines in Cairns, shifting a global industry forum beyond its usual capital city context. Cairns Airport led a year-long engagement with airline stakeholders, using the Summit to examine route viability, aircraft range and regional connectivity in situ. Discussions were grounded in operating conditions, linking the region directly to network planning across Asia-Pacific markets. Environmental initiatives, including the **Reforest** programme, restored 540 square metres of rainforest and removed 23.4 tonnes of carbon, connecting the event to local ecological systems without defining its primary impact.

Sustainability at the Centre extends beyond environmental performance to governance frameworks that shape long-term social and economic impact. The Centre’s new **Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026–2028**, the second phase in the reconciliation process, introduces a governance layer at organisational level. Developed in consultation with **Gimuy Walubarra Yidinji Elder Professor Henrietta Marrie** and endorsed by **Reconciliation Australia**, the framework defines 17 actions and 82 deliverables across employment, procurement and operational practice, supported by oversight structures that track implementation. First Nations businesses enter supply chains through targeted procurement. Employment pathways and cultural training inform workforce development. Programme design draws on co-developed content, including First Nations-led food concepts and storytelling within delegate programmes. Likewise, Tropical North Queensland also shows a strong commitment to First Nations engagement through a structured framework that includes a **Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan**, the **Deeper into Dreaming** handbook, and a dedicated Indigenous Experiences Cluster Group supported by a Steering Committee. Together, these initiatives guide the development of a region-wide **First Nations Tourism Action Plan**, shaped through extensive consultation with over 300 stakeholders and Indigenous voices to ensure cultural integrity and sustainable tourism practices.

The forward calendar includes meetings in marine science, soil ecology and bioelectromagnetics, each aligned with research activity taking place in the region. Selection is driven by disciplinary relevance and access to field conditions, reinforcing Cairns as a location where subject matter and setting are closely aligned. Within this context, the role of venue infrastructure becomes critical in translating research proximity into measurable outcomes for associations.



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Northern Territory Defines Business Events Through Culture and Place

Australia's Northern Territory (NT) is a destination that reshapes perspectives and transforms the delegate experience. From the tropical energy of **Darwin** to the spiritual heart of Uluru and the vast desert landscapes of **Alice Springs**, the NT offers business events a rare combination of human scale, cultural authenticity and emotional impact.

In the heart of the world's oldest living culture, the NT delivers ancestral landscapes, vibrant cultures and lasting memories. At the core of this positioning, **Northern Territory Business Events (NTBE)** supports planners at every stage of their event. Its strength lies in local expertise, industry partnerships and the backing of the **Northern Territory Business Events Support Fund**, a competitive financial programme offering from A\$100 (approx. €61) per delegate which encourages the year-round selection of the destination.

Combined with direct air links into **Darwin International Airport** from key Asian hubs and a strong domestic network, the NT offers straightforward, multi-entry access for both international and national delegates. As **Rebecca McCaig, NTBE Director**, says: "As a competitive destination for both domestic and international business events, NT's unique nature-based experiences, globally-renowned landscapes and diverse industry strengths are all complemented by the meaningful cultural connections that can be made by delegates Territory-wide."

Set to open in August 2026, the **Larrakia Cultural Centre** in Darwin will serve as a meeting point where business events intersect with living culture. The centre will host immersive gatherings, including ceremonies, language sessions and art workshops, alongside flexible event spaces and an outdoor amphitheatre. Complementing this, the newly opened **Outstation Gallery** at Darwin Waterfront is a light-filled exhibition space showcasing Aboriginal and contemporary works in partnership with Indigenous art centres, suitable for curated cultural programmes and private events.

For nature-led adventures, **Coinda Lodge** in **Kakadu National Park** introduces safari-style retreats that blend comfort with raw wilderness, placing delegates within one of the world's most

significant UNESCO-listed landscapes. Darwin's hotel offering continues to grow. The upcoming **voco Darwin Suites** and the recently opened **Courtyard by Marriott Darwin** add meeting capacity and proximity to key venues such as the **AANT Centre** and **Darwin Convention Centre**.

The NT's greatest asset lies in its cultural depth, woven into the land, stories and community. Experiences led by Aboriginal-owned operators, such as the **Dalabon Aboriginal Cultural Experience** in Katherine, invite groups into authentic encounters. From bush tucker cook-ups to hands-on weaving, these activities are grounded in Country, tradition and lived knowledge. At Uluru, **SEIT's Aboriginal Art Experience** offers an introduction to Anangu culture and artisans, where participants translate ancient storytelling into their own creative expression.

Events like **Parrtjima – A Festival in Light** deepen this connection with the Traditional Owners of the land. Set against the MacDonnell Ranges, the festival transforms the landscape into a canvas of light, sound and language. For incentive groups, the NT offers a series of memorable moments, from dining under desert skies at the **Alice Springs Desert Park** to immersive light installations with **Sunrise Journeys**, scenic flights with **Gooney Bird Adventures**, and the experience of catching a barramundi at Hooked on Barra.

Momentum is building globally, with publications such as *The New York Times*, *Condé Nast Traveller* and *BBC Travel* naming the NT among the world's must-visit destinations for 2026. This visibility is reflected in a strong pipeline of international business events, including the **2026 International Symposium on Fish Nutrition and Feeding**, the **Council of International Neonatal Nurses Conference 2026** and the **25th Commonwealth Law Conference 2027**.



Northern Territory
Aboriginal Cultural Experience



Larrakia Cultural Centre



Parrtjima 2025 - A Festival in Light, Alice Springs

Image 1 © Tourism and Events NT & Tourism Australia
Images 2 & 3 © Provided by Tourism and Events NT



Great things happen when there's space to think – as well as time to learn, network and make authentic connections. Being closer to the rest of the world, Darwin offers an ideal meeting point for Australian and international delegates. Find your space to think – in a strategic location.

SPACE TO *think* AND A STRATEGIC *location*



Denpasar	2hrs 45m
Singapore	4hrs 45m
Brisbane	3hrs 45m
Sydney	4hrs 20m
Melbourne	4hrs 10m

Approximate average flight times

darwinconvention.com.au



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Darwin Convention Centre at the Top End Australia's Northern Gateway for Global Business Events

Darwin Convention Centre (DCC) is located on the land of the Larrakia people, the Traditional Custodians of the Darwin region in Australia's Northern Territory. The tropical city, known for its First Nations cultures, natural beauty and warm hospitality, provides a world-class destination to develop meaningful connections. The Centre hosts business events working closely through established cultural partnerships, which is reflected across its programme design, supplier networks and delegate experiences.

As a modern venue attracting national and international conferences, the Centre draws on local expertise and embeds social and environmental considerations into every event to leave a positive, lasting impact beyond the economic value for the region.

Cultural engagement at the Darwin Convention Centre is guided by its **Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan**, endorsed by **Reconciliation Australia**, setting the framework for consultation with Larrakia organisations and Elders. Welcome to Country ceremonies and delegate experiences follow agreed processes, ensuring participation is developed through collaboration with First Nations organisations contributing directly to delivery.

The Darwin Waterfront Precinct expands its cultural offerings for delegates with the opening of the **Larrakia Cultural Centre** in 2026, led by the Larrakia Development Corporation. Located next to the Darwin Convention Centre, it provides exhibition and performance spaces for cultural programming. Larrakia-led storytelling, workshops and ceremonies can be integrated within the same precinct, allowing movement between sessions and on-Country engagement.

Rural Medicine Australia 2024 demonstrates how programme design and location align. More than 859 delegates attended Australia's leading medical education event for rural and remote doctors, with over 100 sessions held throughout the Centre. A Cultural Safety course by the **Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association** formed part of the programme, alongside a Saltwater Ceremony facilitated by **Larrakia**

Traditional Owner Trent Bundirrik Lee. Clinical training and cultural competence were addressed within the same structure, linking medical practice with healthcare delivery across rural and First Nations communities.

The **2025 National Conference of the Association of School Business Administrators** demonstrates large-scale delivery. The four-day conference hosted 1,160 delegates and 120 exhibition booths across a 4,000-square-metre space designed for continuous interaction. Plenary sessions, masterclasses and activations ran with Welcome to Country protocols and local storytelling. The outdoor opening programme, held along the Darwin Waterfront boardwalk adjacent to the convention centre, included a drone light show instead of traditional fireworks. This approach reflects a lower-impact alternative, reducing noise, disturbance for nearby residents and wildlife, and avoiding pyrotechnic materials.

Environmental performance is managed alongside cultural and social priorities. A **Corporate Social Responsibility Committee** monitors energy, water use and waste diversion. Coffee grounds are repurposed within the waterfront precinct, plastic redirected into local recycling programmes, and container collection supports community fundraising, including an

A\$4,000 (approx. €2,400) donation to the **Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)** in 2025.

As **General Manager Peter Savoff** states, "the impact of our events go beyond the economic contributions. We also place a strong emphasis on the social legacy that conferences can leave behind. Our team encourages conferences teams to engage with the destination in meaningful ways. We do this by connecting conference organisers with local organisations and industry partners who deliver uniquely Darwin experiences, because we know delegates value cultural connections, seek nature-based experiences, and appreciate leaving with a strong sense of community."

The venue continues to work with **Northern Territory Business Events** to secure international conferences following the **2025 Ecosystem Services Partnership World Conference** and the **World Federation of Neuroscience Nurses Congress**. Upcoming meetings include the **International Symposium on Fish Nutrition and Feeding** in 2026, the **Commonwealth Law Conference** in 2027 and the **International Radiation Protection Association Congress** in 2032.



Perth and Western Australia

Linking Conferences to Sector and Regional Impact

Associations seeking destinations that deliver meaningful outcomes and memorable experiences for delegates find Perth and Western Australia irresistible. The state's business events sector is increasingly focusing on sustainability, knowledge exchange, and long-term impact. This commitment ensures that conferences contribute to professional collaboration and deliver lasting benefits for industries and communities.

Perth sits on the banks of the Swan River and provides a conference environment that brings modern infrastructure into direct proximity with natural assets. As Australia's sunniest capital city, the destination combines an urban centre with access to beaches, wine regions and surrounding landscapes. Programme design can therefore move between formal sessions and off-site activities, giving delegates structured opportunities to engage with the destination during the event.

For organisers, Perth's compact layout is a significant advantage. Major hotels, venues and hospitality precincts are located within easy walking distance of one another, allowing delegates to move smoothly between sessions, networking events and social functions.

The **Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre** sits within this footprint, positioned on the waterfront just steps from Elizabeth Quay, a vibrant precinct with a concentration of bars and restaurants that can be incorporated into event programmes.

Across the river, **Crown Perth** also plays an important role in the city's business events landscape. The integrated resort brings together

conference facilities, three hotels, and a range of dining and entertainment venues, allowing organisers to host plenary sessions, gala dinners and networking events within a single precinct.

Beyond the central business district, Perth offers a variety of experiences that enhance conference itineraries. Delegates can explore the historic port city of Fremantle, known for its maritime heritage, markets and growing hospitality scene, or travel just 30 minutes to the Swan Valley to discover Western Australia's oldest wine region.

Rottneet Island is another highlight for visitors. Located a short ferry ride from the mainland, the island offers turquoise bays, cycling trails and relaxed coastal experiences that are easily incorporated into partner programmes, incentive activities or post conference tours.

These experiences play an increasingly important role in the success of association events. Delegates today are looking for destinations that offer more than meeting facilities. They want opportunities to connect with local culture, landscapes and communities, and Perth's accessibility makes it easy to incorporate these elements into a conference programme.

A Destination Supporting Knowledge Exchange

Western Australia has also developed a strong reputation for supporting conferences that contribute to global knowledge exchange across sectors such as health, science, technology and social research.

Supporting these connections is **Business Events Perth's Aspire Awards Program**, which recognises emerging academics and professionals from across Western Australia and supports them to attend leading international conferences.

Through travel funding and recognition, Aspire recipients are able to present their work on global conference platforms, build international networks and bring new knowledge back to their institutions and industries. Over more than two decades, the programme has helped strengthen Western Australia's research profile and global connections while identifying emerging leaders who may play a role in future conference development.

The programme also highlights the breadth of expertise across the state. Recent recipients

represent sectors including health and medical research, marine science, workforce development, rural health and community services. By supporting these professionals to engage with global peers, Aspire contributes to knowledge sharing that benefits both local industries and international collaboration.

BE Perth's Aspire Program demonstrate how conferences can generate lasting value beyond the event itself, strengthening professional networks while positioning Western Australia as a destination connected to global research and innovation.

Expanding Opportunities Across The State

While Perth remains the centre of the state's business events activity, Western Australia is also expanding its capacity to host conferences in regional destinations.

A major new development is the **Saltwater Convention and Performing Arts Centre** in Busselton, located in Western Australia's South West. The venue will accommodate conferences and events of varying sizes, featuring a 640-seat tiered theatre and flexible event spaces overlooking Geographe Bay.

Situated close to the Margaret River wine region, the venue allows organisers to combine professional programmes with regional experiences that highlight Western Australia's food, wine and natural landscapes. Developments such as Saltwater reflect a growing interest in dispersing business events into regional communities while offering delegates distinctive destination experiences.

For associations, regional venues can provide opportunities to design conferences that connect participants with local industries and environments while contributing to economic activity beyond capital cities.

Encouraging Delegates To Explore More

To support visitors in experiencing more of the state, the Western Australia has introduced the **Dream Pass**, a digital platform providing access to exclusive offers from more than 70 tourism and hospitality businesses.

Conference delegates can use the pass to discover attractions, dining venues and experiences across

Western Australia. The initiative encourages visitors to extend their stay and explore the state's diverse regions, from coastal landscapes to wine country and national parks.

A Destination Evolving With The Needs Of Conferences


Destinations that support sustainability, knowledge exchange and measurable outcomes are increasingly being sought by associations. Perth and Western Australia boast an environment in which conferences can deliver more than just strong attendance numbers.

Western Australia is the perfect destination for conferences that want to leave a meaningful legacy, as well as foster collaboration, generate new knowledge and create lasting impact.



Saltwater Convention and Performing Arts Centre



An aerial photograph of the Perth city skyline at sunset. The sky is a warm, golden-orange color. In the foreground, there's a lush green park area with trees and a flagpole. A body of water, likely the Swan River, is visible in the middle ground with a few boats. The city skyline is dominated by several tall skyscrapers, including the prominent One11 tower. A large, circular stadium is visible in the background. The text "YOUR DREAM BUSINESS EVENT DESTINATION" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

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We invite you to Be Surprised with what South Australia has to offer.

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Adelaide – Australia's Most Environmentally Sustainable Destination

Adelaide has been recognised on the world stage for its commitment to sustainability, being named **Most Improved Destination for 2025** by the **Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Movement**.



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Positioned at the heart of Adelaide, Australia, the best of what our city has to offer is at your fingertips, along with an events space that is truly world class.

From our culinary creations and sustainable practices, to our extraordinary productions and world-leading innovation precincts right on our doorstep, there's plenty to discover and enjoy in Australia's convention city.

Bring your event to life in a venue where people, place and experiences all come together – **Adelaide Convention Centre**.



Scan the QR code or visit
adelaidecc.com.au to
discover where it all comes together.



Adelaide Convention Centre Turns Event Performance into Audited Data



Independent audit defines how **Adelaide Convention Centre (ACC)** positions sustainability within event delivery. **EarthCheck Master certification**, maintained through continuous assessment, requires performance to be measured against international benchmarks across energy, water, waste and social outcomes. Those results sit within a state context where renewable electricity already represents a dominant share of supply and is targeted to reach 100% by 2027. Together, they provide organisers with data that can be used directly in environmental reporting without reconstruction or estimation.

Event organisers working with the ACC are introduced to local organisations during the planning stage through the venue's **Community Impact Program**, a structured offer designed to help events incorporate social and environmental contribution without adding operational complexity. The programme links conferences with partners such as **OzHarvest**, **Trees for Life** and **Operation Flinders**, allowing activities such as food redistribution, environmental projects and youth engagement to be integrated into delivery.

Sarah Goldfinch, ACC's General Manager, explains how this is applied in practice. "The programme connects organisers with local partners so that impact can be built into the event design."

Inside the venue, procurement and waste are managed under *The Green Print*, a four-year ESG strategy guiding how ACC reduces resource use, manages materials and tracks performance across operations. Catering is sourced predominantly from South Australian producers, linking menu design with local supply chains. Examples include exhibition carpet being returned to suppliers for recycling, accounting for approximately 1,700 kilograms of carbon.

Organic waste generated during events is processed on site and converted into rich organic compost used in local council environments, while surplus meals are redistributed through OzHarvest. These outputs are measured and shared with organisers for post-event reporting.

Goldfinch describes external verification as a requirement for organisers working under reporting obligations. "EarthCheck provides independent verification of our sustainability practices. The Master status reflects 17 years in the programme, with sustainability embedded across operations rather than treated as an add-on." The certification requires performance across energy, water, waste and social outcomes to be benchmarked and audited annually, with results made available to organisers.

Events hosted at ACC are also positioned within the city's sector networks. The venue sits within walking distance of the **BioMed City** precinct, allowing medical delegates to move between conference sessions and hospital or research facilities without additional transport.

This proximity between events and industry leads to longer-term outcomes. The **International Astronautical Congress**, hosted in Adelaide in

2017, is one of the clearest examples. Following the congress, the **Australian Government** selected the city as the location for the **Australian Space Agency**, contributing to the development of a local space industry cluster.

Recent and upcoming conferences continue to align with these sectors. **MetPlant 2026**, held in March, focused on mineral processing and plant design, with emphasis on energy efficiency, carbon reduction, water management and ESG performance. Organisers cited ACC's environmental sustainability policy and corporate responsibility standards in the selection process. **CleanUp 2026**, scheduled for September, will bring specialists in contaminated land assessment and remediation. The **Asia Pacific Autism Conference** in 2027 introduces a policy and inclusion dimension.

Economic contribution linked to activity at ACC is estimated at A\$300 million (approx. €180 million) annually, distributed across accommodation, transport, local procurement and regional travel. More than 660 events each year, including over 120 national and international conferences, extend activity into surrounding regions such as the Barossa Valley and Adelaide Hills.



In Australia caring for our country is just what we do. We believe a land as precious as ours should be preserved for generations to come.

As a visitor, we ask that you do the same. That's why we've set some unwritten rules that have kept our backyard beautiful for thousands of years. Consider these principles as a bit of local knowledge. A few fundamentals to help you respect this place and have an unforgettable stay in the process.



**Celebrate
Community**



**Embrace
Culture**



**Preserve
Place**



**Respect
Wildlife**



**Take
Care**

**Business Events
Australia**

