



KIWI BUSINESS EVENT FOCUS

Business Events Australia is looking to capitalise on the growing events business to Australia and is evaluating plans to create an ‘almost VIP’ event planning service for Kiwis.

The organisation is already exceeding targets to reach AUD16 billion turnover by 2020, and Business Events Australia general manager Penny Lion says New Zealand remains crucial to the mix. Overall Lion says travel and spend by business event visitors is ‘doing very well’: ‘And New Zealand leads the charge and always will do due to its proximity, but there’s so many other options for [Kiwi event planners], that we are working on new ways to stimulate the market,’ says Lion. The organisation is working hard to challenge New Zealanders’ perceptions of the lucky country—driven by its Auckland-based team, which Lion notes ‘is small, but effective’.

“We need to get the message that there’s Nothing Like Australia out loud and clear for the business events market too and challenge perceptions,” says Lion.

“We’re looking to share more product knowledge through our website which will include advocacy videos, as well as pictures, content, feasibility studies and tools to help planners put their events together.”

While Lion notes Australia’s popular MICE destinations include Sydney and Queensland—particularly Cairns and the Sunshine Coast, she says Melbourne is a strong business event market from New Zealand ‘showing consistent growth’.

PLANNER’S GUIDE

Melbourne Convention Bureau’s website features a wealth of information and resources for event and meeting planners. Offerings include a new e-book The Melbourne Planners’ Guide. The book is the MCB’s publication for the business events industry and is a one-stop-shop for those planning a conference, incentive or meeting in Melbourne and Victoria. The e-book is available for free at mcvb.com.au/plannersguide

BEACHFRONT FEASTING

Melbourne dining institution Donovans on St Kilda beach offers a beachfront private dining room for smaller events. The dining room is suitable for 10-26 people and Donovans offers a delectable range of (generous) feasting menus. Located in one of three original bathing houses on the beach the restaurant’s ever-changing interior is matched with a contemporary menu with a focus on local produce. See donovanshouse.com.au

MELBOURNE SPRING RACING CARNIVAL

A trip to the Melbourne Cup is said to be on ‘the bucket list’ for an increasing number of Kiwi travellers—and there’s a racing option to suit almost every event or incentive budget. Flemington’s Victoria Racing Club offers corporate hospitality packages from exclusive private marquees, through to shared marquees and general admission. “We have a huge range of options available for those planning events or incentives of all sizes—and we are certainly seeing more interest from New Zealand,” says VRC’s sales manager events and tourism Lisa Patroni. “The Spring Racing is so much more than the Melbourne Cup, with four key carnival events the first week of Nov.” The Spring Racing Carnival this year is 22 Sep-25 Nov. This year’s Melbourne Cup Carnival dates are: Derby Day (02 Nov), Emirates Melbourne Cup day (05 Nov), Crown Oaks Day (07 Nov) and Emirates Stakes Day (09 Nov). For more details on the races and corporate hospitality options e-mail l.patroni@vrc.net.au

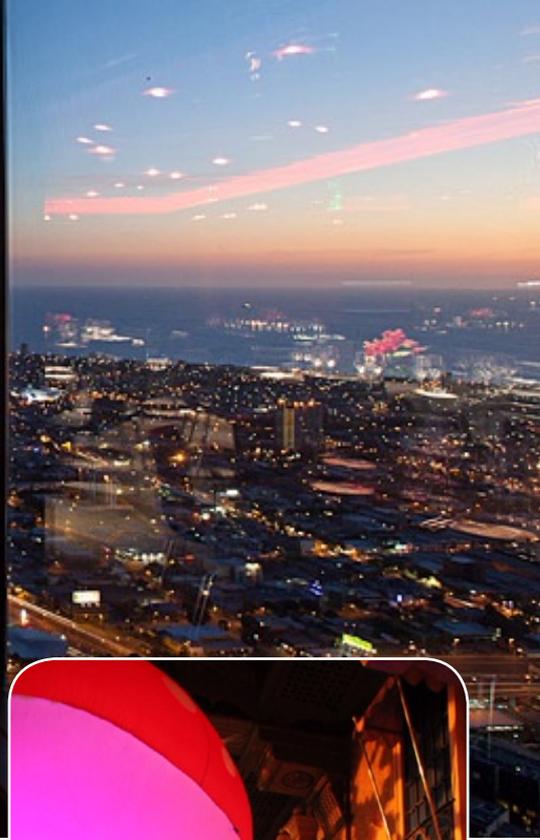
FAMILS FOR EVENT PLANNERS

A key part of the education process, adds Lion, is to get Kiwi event planners to experience the destination, and the product offering, first-hand through Business Events Australia’s regular famils. “We ensure each famil is like a VIP incentive, it’s important to showcase the new product and existing experiences—it’s such a relationship-based business and planners on the famils will go back as ambassadors for Australia”. For more details, e-mail ahall@tourism.australia.com

RIDING IN HARLEY STYLE

Given Melbourne’s scenery and architecture getting to a venue can be half the fun. For event planners looking to add the wow factor to their transfers, Harley Davidson rides add a twist to the commute. There is a range of operators offering Harley Tours in the city. harleyrides.com.au uses drivers who are themselves Harley enthusiasts, adding to the experience—and they’re more than happy to let clients pose for the obligatory pic. The option is suitable even in showery weather as guests wear a helmet and have the option of waterproof jackets. See harleyrides.com.au





MELBOURNE EVENT-FULL APPEAL

The Melbourne Convention Bureau has reported an almost 70% spike in business room nights from New Zealand, for the 2011/12 year, as the city's vast array of events and regional appeal capture the imagination of Kiwi business and event planners.

"New Zealand is the biggest international event market for New Zealand and as such it's really a priority market for us," says MCB chief executive Karen Bollinger.

"Groups can get outside of Melbourne and in 90 minutes there's mountains, coast and wineries, all perfect for day trips," says the MCB head. "No

two groups are the same and we can work with event organisers to deliver really different experiences."

The average size of Kiwi event groups to Melbourne ranges from 50 to 100 people, 'so it's really more of a SME focus from New Zealand,' adds Bollinger.

EUREKA SKYDECK 88 AND EUREKA 89

Eureka 89 is a premier event space atop the Eureka building, providing 360 degree views across Melbourne. The versatile area (pictured above) is used for everything from pre-race millinery workshops through to product launches and is suitable for small to medium-sized groups from 20 to 400. See eureka89.com.au

LEVEL 28 UPGRADE

Melbourne's swank Crown Metropol hotel is suitable for business event and incentive groups looking for a chic spot to lay their head. The hotel boasts a huge lobby, deluxe accommodation and a fantastic pool area—and it's connected to the Crown complex (gaming, shops and dining) through indoor walkways. For an oasis in the centre of metropolitan Melbourne, guests can buy an additional Sky lounge package which offers access to Level 28, a sky high bar and dining area, located on the 28th floor. The deal includes a dedicated check-in area; and up at Level 28, breakfast for two daily per room, free tea, coffee and soft drinks til 1900 daily, and pre-dinner drinks 1730-1930. The hotel has its own three-level meeting space and is adjacent to the vast Crown conference centre offering and close to the Melbourne Convention Centre.

THE RESIDENCE

For those looking for something a little different, Kiwi event planners on a recent Business Event Australia fam trip to Melbourne were impressed with the Grand Hyatt Melbourne's demonstration kitchen facility.

As well as two distinct ballrooms (one column-free and the other sub-dividable into three smaller meeting rooms) the hotel now offers a new event space concept—The Residence.

The unique venue offers a 200m² indoor courtyard featuring a glass atrium and trees (suitable for 120 sit-down dinner and 250 cocktail); the library, a residential style library for groups of up to 40; as well as a verandah area looking over Collins St, with a fire place for cooler days (80 sit-down dinner, 120 cocktail).

It was the area's 35m² open kitchen with floor to ceiling glass walls that caught the imagination of Kiwi event planners. The kitchen can be used for meetings, team building or cooking school events.

WOOLSHED PUB

The Woolshed Pub offers a range of options for a wide range of group sizes. Offering a bar and bistro, it's an ideal option for a pre-match meal or drink for groups heading to the nearby Etihad stadium. See www.woolshedpub.com.au

VENUE OPTIONS ABOUND

Metropolitan Melbourne has a huge range of activities from hallmark international events to a wide range of venues and operators catering to the business events and incentive markets.

The diverse line-up includes a number of quirky venues which can be staged to suit groups from two to over two hundred, as well as a plethora of five-star hotel conference facilities, each with their own point of difference.

At the Langham Melbourne clients can utilise a sky high outdoor terrace for a break out room or function space with a difference. The lakeside Carousel function space offers plenty of natural light and room size can be tailored to fit; while the recently restored (and heritage listed) Plaza ballroom can be transformed for larger events, such as the Alice in Wonderland-inspired theme, pictured above. The Atlantic Group offers a range of event space options in the Docklands precinct; as well as the ocean to plate, fine dining restaurant Atlantic Restaurant at Crown which offers personalised degustation meals and private dining rooms for smaller groups.





VICTORIA: EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

When a day begins with an hour-long helicopter ride to Australia's southern coast, it was always going to be an unforgettable experience.

But what I wasn't prepared for was the rugged beauty of the coastline along the Great Ocean Road, or the wide range of business event and incentive options open to event planners. Granted not all client budgets extend to a helicopter ride, but Business Events Geelong's Terry Hickey says land-based touring to the region, such as car rallies, add a little adventure to the journey. Seeing the 12 Apostles up close is an awe-inspiring experience—even for the well travelled, and lesser

known landmarks such as nearby (and breath taking) Loch Ard Gorge add to the region's appeal. For clients looking to get up close and personal with the area, operators including Big Stick Adventures have perfected the art of creating the unexpected. Even seasoned Kiwi event planners on a recent famil were awe-stuck as they kayaked around a bend in the Gellibrand River to find an isolated riverside oasis (pictured above). "It really is stun-



ning, it's such a remote location and the meal and the execution was flawless," says Laurie Matthews from Indigo Direct Communications. "I really would consider this area for an upcoming group."

BIG STICK ADVENTURES

Torquay-based Big Stick Adventures has staged events across the globe, and was the first company to shut the Sydney Harbour Bridge for a private corporate event.

Run by banker turned event specialist Brett Hollis, the company has organised events of up to 9000 around the globe, but Hollis says he's just as proud of executing one-off intimate events for groups as small as two in his home town.

"The big issue with Kiwis is that we need to challenge their perceptions," says Hollis. "We need to show them how different Australia can be—and we don't try to match New Zealand in terms of adventure. People are still excited by the natural elements and we deliver that in a relaxed, Australian style." See bigstickadventures.com

DID YOU KNOW?

The Great Ocean Road is the 243km stretch of road from Torquay to Warrnambool. It's home to the Twelve Apostles and was built by returned soldiers post-WW1 and is the world's largest War Memorial. Conde Naste has ranked it in the world's 10 'must do' drives. See visitgreatoceanroad.org.au

REGIONAL TOURING OPTIONS

Easy access to regional Victoria is said to be one of the reasons an increasing number of Kiwis are staging their business events in the state, and Melbourne Convention Bureau can assist with itinerary planning, and put planners in touch with specialist operators. See mcvb.com.au

PEPPERS TORQUAY'S KIWI FOCUS

Peppers The Sands Resort in Torquay, Victoria has been open for five years and features its own private golf course. "We are looking to target the New Zealand meetings and events market as more groups visiting the Great Ocean road opt to overnight in Torquay rather than head back to Melbourne," says hotel general manager Nicole Hill. The property has a conference delegate package from AUD265pp per night for travel 01 Mar-30 Jun. It includes studio accommodation, hot breakfast, room upgrades, full-day delegate package, working lunch, free room hire, on-site parking, AV equipment and more, with a dedicated event coordinator for organising. The property offers five meeting rooms, a health club with indoor lap pool and tennis courts. See peppers.com.au

AT YOUR SERVICE

The Melbourne Convention Bureau has staff and resources on hand to help event planners through every part of the process from initial concepts, venues and hotels to entertainment and gifts. The Melbourne Meetings + Events Service is offered free and allows event planners access to new meetings product and services and saves time. The MGB promises to respond to enquiries within 24 business hours. E-mail mmes@melbournecb.com.au

THE CROWN-ING GLORY

Melbourne's extensive Crown entertainment complex features a range of hotels to suit most budgets, the Crown Conference Centre, restaurants, dining and shows—as well as the well-known casino. One of its lesser known charms, however maybe the decadent Crown Spa. Hailed as one of the best day spas in Australia, it offers a relaxing and indulgent retreat from the outside world, and smaller groups can be accommodated in private pre- and post-treatment areas to add to the experience.

