

MEDIA RELEASE

Sydney Boosts Events Drive Under Increased Funding Partnership

Business Events Sydney (BESydney) is on track to achieve a 50 per cent increase in bid wins by 2011 as the city intensifies its campaign to join the world's top 10 international conference destinations.

BESydney today outlined the next phase of its growth strategy before a gathering of 170 members and industry leaders, inviting them to enter a "new era" of progress.

Timed with the organisation's Annual General Meeting, the former Sydney Convention and Visitors Bureau launched its new identity as BESydney and put its support behind a city-wide Brand Sydney Project that would further capitalise on the "world's best city brand".

BESydney CEO Jon Hutchison detailed A\$145 million worth of new events secured in the past financial year and revealed plans to further increase its bidding success in the year ahead under its new partnership with Events New South Wales.

Mr Hutchison said State Government funding via Events New South Wales had been significantly increased for the 2008-09 financial year, allowing a further increase in bidding activities.

"Having won 37 international events during the past financial year, we've now increased our target for the year ahead to 49 bid wins," Mr Hutchison said. "We're already well on our way to achieving this, having secured 12 events since July 1, and we're on track to achieve a 50 per cent increase in bid wins by 2011."

Mr Hutchison said Sydney was also on track to achieve its ambition to join the world's top 10 international conference destinations within five years.

"In 2009 Business Events Sydney has at least 20 major international events worth A\$90 million already confirmed, with further scope to boost this significantly with increasing levels of short lead-time bookings and incentive conferences," Mr Hutchison said.

"Then in 2010 we expect to have one of our busiest years on record, with 28 events worth A\$216 million already secured for that year, including the giant Lions Club International Convention for 25,000 delegates."

After expanding its teams in Sydney, London and Hong Kong last financial year, BESydney announced new initiatives for 2008-09 including a new direct marketing campaign targeting national associations, international associations and Asian corporate incentive groups.

Devised in conjunction with creative agency Hulsbosch, the campaign would be the largest undertaken by BESydney and would promote both the organisation's services and the advantages of staging events in Sydney.

BESydney also launched a new partnership program as part of a whole-of-city approach to winning business events for Sydney. The program involves organisations like Sydney Airport, the City of Sydney Council, Qantas Airways and the Sydney Chamber of Commerce, among others.

"Each partner organisation will support BESydney in different ways, both financially and logistically, allowing us to tap into their expertise and resources to better support events and win further business for Sydney," Mr Hutchison said.

BESydney's online services will also be expanded and improved, offering more information, new event-planning features, better visual presentations of Sydney, easier navigation and new interactive features.

A second stage of web developments will introduce video technology, multi-media and social networking features, plus Korean and Chinese translations.

Mr Hutchison said BESydney's new resourcing and support had been made possible by the partnership it had forged with Events New South Wales during the past year. After the ground-breaking O'Neill report into events in New South Wales, the State Government last year created Events New South Wales with an A\$85 million budget over three years, allowing BESydney to become a specialist partner pursuing business events for the city.

"We have created a pioneering new model for fostering business events, entering a new era by combining government and industry in a united approach," Mr Hutchison said. "Together we have strengths that ordinary destination marketers don't have, and the ambitious targets we've set for ourselves reflect that."

Today's event comes less than a week after Sydney was again named "world's best city" in the prestigious Conde Nast Traveler Awards in New York. Sydney was also named the UK's favourite overseas city in the Guardian newspaper travel awards earlier this month and "world's best city" in the latest Anholt City Brands Index.

Mr Hutchison said the strength of Sydney's identity would be developed further by a Brand Sydney Project announced in August by the State Government. To be chaired by respected events industry leader John O'Neill and supported by BESydney, the project would create a united brand for Sydney and a cohesive strategy for boosting the city's pursuit of business growth, investment, innovation, arts, lifestyle, events, education and tourism.

Mr Hutchison said the strength of Sydney's appeal as a conference destination was not likely to suffer substantially from the current international economic downturn.

"As we've seen with economic storms in the past, the market for association events remains quite resilient to short-term upheavals," Mr Hutchison said. "Large international conferences are planned many years in advance and we expect continuing success in attracting events that will be staged well after current issues have subsided. However, we will all need to work hard to attract high delegate attendance numbers."

Business Events Sydney (formerly the Sydney Convention and Visitors Bureau) is a not-for-profit organisation funded by industry members and the New South Wales Government through Events New South Wales. The organisation is responsible for promoting Sydney as a business events destination and for bidding for conferences, meetings, exhibitions, incentives and other business events.

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