Speaker Brief – Concurrent Sessions 2024

**The high-yield opportunity: business events and corporate travel**

ARRIVAL: 1:00pm at latest

TIME:

* First session – **2:00 to 2:45PM**
* Second session – **3:00 to 3:45PM**

**DESCRIPTION**

Business events and corporate travel attract high-yield domestic and international visitors who, on average, spend more than leisure travellers on accommodation, food, services and experiences during their trips. Hear from industry leaders on the synergy between business and travel, and the importance of business events and travelling professionals to the visitor economy. The panel will share insights on leveraging business events and their visitors beyond the conference room.

**Key messages**

* Highlight the significant economic and employment benefits the conferencing and corporate travel sector brings to the visitor economy.
* Business travellers are high-yield, often travel mid-week/off-peak, and have a higher average spend per night than leisure travellers.
* Educate the audience on why people meet and do business – to share ideas, drive innovation, foster collaboration, improve organisational performance, enhance employee wellbeing and contribute to social and environmental improvement
* Understand the needs of business events delegates and corporate travellers; offer sustainable, accessible and inclusive business products and experiences, and promote via distribution channels used by business event organisers and corporate travel agencies.
* Demonstrate how the business events sector goes beyond the typical conference environment to include immersive visitor experiences.
* Highlight the different decision-making factors and key requirements for associations, corporate meetings and incentive groups
* Gain key insights and different perspectives from buyers and sellers in the corporate event space
* Explore ‘bleisure travel’ – the combination of business and leisure travel. Professionals are adding weekends (or longer to work trips). Worldwide, more than one in three business travellers will add a leisure component to a business trip this year (either adding it to their itinerary or extending their stay to include leisure experiences).

**Key words**

* **Experience** – about the visitor’s entire experience, not just inside the conference room, pre and post-event.
* **Value** – what do business event travellers and corporate event organisers value, and what factors influence their decisions.
* **Collaboration** – strategic relationships with other operators e.g. accommodation, venues, transport, visitor experiences.
* **Personal** – tailoring an event/experience to the client requirements.

**Moderator**

* Mitchell Gunn, Associate Director Regional Conferencing, Destination NSW

**Panellists**

* Karen Sainsbury, Managing Director Cornerstone Events & NSW Councillor for Professional Conference Organisers Association (PCOA)
* Dan Heathwood, Managing Director and co-founder, EnPerSo (Corporate Travel Professional)
* Kristian Nicholls, Chief Client Officer, Business Events Sydney
* Libby Cupitt, Strategy and Partnerships Manager, Cupitts Estate

**Audience Synopsis**

The audience is a mix of tourism businesses, local government staff and officials, industry representatives, distribution partners, government agencies and tourism marketing bodies. It is a mix of regional and metro-based attendees, with many working in marketing, sales, business development and some senior executives.

**SESSION (45 minutes)**

*Business events video will run at start of session once doors are closed.*

**Moderator introduction**

* Self-introduction by moderator.

Business events and corporate travel attract high-yield domestic and international visitors who, on average, spend more than leisure travellers.

As such, there is a synergy between business and travel that provides opportunities for us to grow local visitor economies by attracting and securing corporate events, increasing incentive travel activities and converting corporate travellers to extend their stay, return in future and advocate for a destination among friends and relatives.

Let’s meet from our industry experts who live and breathe business events and corporate travel, who will tell us more about how industry can respond to the needs of this market segment.

**Introduction of panel**

* Karen Sainsbury, Managing Director Cornerstone Events & Board Member of Professional Conference Organisers Association (PCOA)
  + Karen is a certified meeting professional with the Professional Conference Organisers Association Australia and New Zealand and is also the NSW Councillor on the PCOA Board.
  + She is Managing Director and Co-Founder of Cornerstone Events a premier event management country specialising in corporate and inventive events.
  + Karen has a unique ability to really understand what a customer needs, taking the time to get to know their business, and is extremely passionate about delivering what is promised ensuring every little detail is covered.
* Dan Heathwood, Managing Director and co-founder, EnPerSo (Corporate Travel Professional)
  + Dan’s personal mission is to make a positive impact on the future of business & leisure travel.
  + His specialities include: Business & Leadership Consultancy and Mentoring, Corporate Travel Management, and Thought Leadership within the Travel Industry.
  + The ‘EnPerSo Way’ is a unique blend of Environmental Sustainability, Personal Wellness and Social Responsibility in the places we live, work and travel.
* Kristian Nicholls, Chief Client Officer, Business Events Sydney
  + As Chief Client Officer at Business Events (BE) Sydney Kristian has over 25 years’ experience in international bidding and strategic partnerships
  + With a remit to secure global meetings of strategic, economic and social benefit to Sydney and Australia, BESydney collaborates across industry, academia and Government to secure the world's most significant global meetings across artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, aerospace, defence, health. infrastructure and beyond.
  + Kristian leads a team based in Sydney, Shanghai, Singapore, Toronto and London.
* Libby Cupitt, Strategy and Partnerships Manager, Cupitts Estate
  + Libby Cupitt is a seasoned professional with a deep passion for hospitality, tourism, and events. As the Strategy & Partnership Manager at Cupitt’s Estate, she has been instrumental in transforming the estate into a premier destination on the NSW South Coast, catering to a diverse range of visitors, including corporate travellers and business events.
  + Libby’s skill in curating exceptional visitor experiences extends to the corporate sector, positioning Cupitt’s Estate as a go-to venue for business events, team-building activities, and corporate retreats.
  + Libby serves as a Board Director for Destination Sydney Surrounds South, where she advocates for regional tourism and collaborates with stakeholders to promote the Southern region as a vibrant hub for both leisure and business travel.

**Pre-prepared questions**

**1. Let’s start by setting the scene, Libby, how have business events and corporate travel supported your businesses?**

* *Generally off-peak travel (mid-week and off-season).*
* *Pre and post event travel*
* *Spend more than leisure travellers*

**2. Karen, when people think about business events they probably imagine large-scale conferences like today’s event, with hundreds or thousands of attendees in a huge venue. However, business events is a diverse sector, and a big part of a professional conference organisers role is to match capability and assets with the unique requirements of the event. Can you tell us what are the key elements that make a destination attractive for when you are planning a business event?**

* *Focusing on the varied types and sizes*
* *Dispelling the myth that it’s not just large-scale 1000+ conference groups that sit in a room for 3 days and eat buffet meals/networking drinks in the foyer.*
* *Accessibility, facilities, activities available, sustainability*

**3. That’s great context, Karen, and it really resonates with the opportunity we see emerging in Western Sydney right now. With the opening of the new international airport in 2026, we’ll see two distinct shifts for Greater Sydney and NSW; a new gateway for domestic and international arrivals providing more connectivity, and a surge in new and existing industries tied to global trends that are established close by the airport such as advanced manufacturing.**

**We have heard the Premier talk about the Government’s commitment to supporting the growth of the business events sector, and Destination NSW has heard through the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy review consultation that stakeholders are eager to see business events, meetings and incentive activities occurring right across Greater Sydney – Karen, this seems like a great opportunity for us all to work together to develop different offerings that will meet future demand?**

* *It’s a fantastic opportunity, and will definitely benefit from collaboration to grow the supply of venues, hotel rooms and services needed to support business event activity.*
* *The best business events, and those that return to host locations, are driven by connection to local strengths and provide unique, well-matched experiences for delegates.*
* *Advanced manufacturing will be a focus of the new aerotropolis – time to start conversations with networks to understand the different scale and nature of events in the industry sector, build relationships and develop packages that suit targeted needs.*

**And your thoughts Kristian?**

* *BE Sydney’s focus is on international business events, and the new WSIA will expand the opportunity into international markets so we will be working with Destination NSW and industry to capitalise on the opportunity.*
* *In order for us all to realise the ambition, we know there will need to be investment from public and private partners – we’re excited to see what the future looks like.*

**4. Absolutely. Destination NSW and Business Events Sydney will continue working together, in partnership with industry, to facilitate best-fit opportunities for Western Sydney in line with growing the state’s business event capability overall.**

**Kristian, we know that business events have a very positive impact on local visitor economies, making them highly desirable for cities and regions to secure.** **Can you give us an overview of the steps involved in bidding for events and the stakeholders involved in that process? Are pre- and post-event itineraries or breakout activities that immerse visitors in local experiences part of the sell of a destination?**

* + *Understand the requirements*
  + *Create a unique selling position*
  + *Encourage extended stays*
  + *Incorporate local culture into event*

**5. We know that is true of the leisure sector too – many visitors are looking for authentic experiences when they travel. Libby, how does local culture and unique experiences play a role in targeting corporate travellers?**

* + *Authentic experiences*
  + *Differentiation – competitive edge*
  + *Enhanced event programming – activities and educational opportunities*
  + *Building connection among teams*
  + *Positive stakeholder engagement – memories and satisfaction*

**6. There are a lot of factors that influence how we travel for work and where we stay. Dan, what are you noticing about the ‘bleisure’ sector – who is travelling, what are common behaviours and can you outline how businesses and destinations can promote their offering to increase consideration among business travellers?**

* + *Needs of a working traveller – location, accommodation style and facilities, technology connection*
  + *Bleisure traveller – demographics, inspiration and booking, duration / location trends*
  + *Balance of needs versus desires – rest and retreat*
  + *Responsible corporate citizens; thinking about ESG (environmental, social and governance) factors including how important they are for most organisations and often part of their key decision making/procurement guidelines for choosing venues, hotels and suppliers.*

**7. With virtual and hybrid events and meetings here to stay, Karen, do you think the traditional model of in-person business events and travelling for work meetings becoming obsolete?**

* + *How should businesses and destinations adapt?*
  + *Embrace hybrid models, utilise technology*
  + *Offer flexible options*
  + *Enhance in-person experiences*

**8. That’s good to hear that business events and travel are here to stay – so, Kristian and Dan, with that in mind, what advice can we share with the audience about working with the business events sector, and how to attract business event and corporate travellers?**

* ***Kristian****: Think about partnerships – linking accommodation, event venues, transfers, hospitality, travel management companies and experience operators together to build itineraries that events can leverage to promote to their delegates.*
* ***Kristian****: Place activation is also very powerful, making for a welcoming, exciting environment for visitors to conferences and business events.*
* ***Dan****: Understand specific markets and clients – are you targeting execs, creatives, international or domestic corporate travellers?*
* ***Dan****: Build relationships with travel management companies to be part of the distribution network. Corporate travellers, in particular execs, are usually looking for ease.*

**FOR BACKGROUND AND NOTING**

**Key data and statistics**

Australian data YE June 2024

* Visitors travelling for business events spent $19.8 billion in Australia during their trip.
* Of this total, $2.5 billion was spent in Australia by international visitors.
* The remaining $17.3 billion of spend included:
  + $16.1 billion from domestic overnight travel
  + $1.3 billion through domestic daytrips to attend business events.

Conference Visitors to NSW, Year Ending June 2024 (Source: National Visitor Survey & International Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia)

Tourism Research Australia data YE June 2024

* Total overnight conference visitors NSW
  + 364,900 visitors
  + 1,131,000 nights
  + $660.6 million expenditure
  + 3.1 nights average length of stay (-34% less than leisure visitors)
  + $584 per night average spend (220.9% more than leisure visitors)
* Domestic overnight conference visitors NSW
  + 300,700 visitors (-10.6%YoY)
  + 791,700 nights (+0.7% YoY)
  + $545.3m expenditure (+16.1% YoY)
  + 2.6 nights average stay length (+0.3 nights)
  + $689 per night average spend
* International conference visitors NSW
  + 64,100 visitors
  + 339,300 nights
  + $115.3m expenditure
  + 5.3 nights average stay length
  + $340 per night average spend
  + 37% of international conference visitors were making their first visit to Australia
* Total overnight conference visitors to Sydney
  + 248,200 visitors (68% Sydney share of NSW)
  + 835,600 nights (74% Sydney share of NSW)
  + $533.4m expenditure (81% Sydney share of NSW)
  + 3.4 nights average stay length
  + $638 per night average spend
* Total domestic overnight conference visitors to Regional NSW
  + 116,100 visitors
  + 269,400 nights
  + $100.7m expenditure
  + 2.3 nights average stay length
  + $374 per night average spend

**In case asked about recent media articles re: decline in business event travel**

[Figures show fall in number and spend of business events travellers in Australia - micenet](https://mice.net.au/figures-show-fall-in-number-and-spend-of-business-events-travellers-in-australia/)

* Most of the decline is domestic related, while international business event travel remains strong and continues to grow in Australia
* International business events visitors to Australia rose from 742,000 in the year to March to 770,000 in the year to June 2024.
* The figures reported on are national totals, for Australia.
* Sydney and NSW continues to lead other states in total number of visitors, nights and expenditure for business event related travel
* Despite these recent nationa declines, the business event market for Australia still represents a $19.8 billion opportunity and its essential that we remain focused on capturing these events vs our interstate competitors

**Background information**

* The conferencing sector brings significant economic and employment benefits to NSW. Business visitors are a high-yield sector and distributing their economic benefits across the state is key to growing the NSW visitor economy.
* The business events sector is high yielding, generating more than $7.5 billion annually in direct visitor expenditure for NSW.
* Domestic overnight conference visitors spend much more on average per night in NSW than domestic leisure visitors do per night. They also often travel during the week and in off-peak seasons and return to a destination for multiple events, or at later dates, as a leisure traveller.
* Business events include a wide range of activities can include business meetings, corporate events, conventions or conferences, seminars, exhibitions and trade fairs, as well as associated immersive experiences and activities.
* Top factors influencing decision making for overseas events – global uncertainty, ground costs, costs of airfares and global economic situation.
* Why Australia makes a good events destination:
* A safe and secure destination
* A range of quality accommodation options
* An appealing climate
* Good food, wine, local cuisine and produce
* Excellent business events facilities
* Key things to understand and action to benefit from business events:
* Understand the needs of business events clients
* Offer sustainable, accessible and inclusive business events
* Promote via distribution channels used by business event organisers
* Four key client segments within the business event sector (and the type of products and experiences they typically include in their event program):
* **Corporate companies** generally pay all the costs associated with the event within one budget and are often looking for an attractive destination, with unique ideas for team-building activities.
* **Government departments and agency** events are usually very business-focused with a tight budget and minimal extra spend. The destination is usually determined by policy or strategy items that relate to that particular location or a local industry/stakeholder group.
* **Professional Conference Organisers (PCO)**, are companies or individuals that specialise in organising and managing professional events such as conferences, seminars and workshops.
* **Association** events rely on the overall appeal of the conference program, quality of the speakers, networking functions and desirability of the location for leisure activities to drive registrations.

Bleisure

* New tourism segment combining business and leisure, blurring the line between business and personal travel – professionals adding weekends or longer to work trips.
* Worldwide, more than one in three business travellers will add a leisure component to at least one of their business trips this year.
* Australians, who typically work longer hours and face higher travel costs and longer journey times than their peers in Europe, are becoming increasingly receptive to bleisure.
* initial purpose is business, but people incorporate leisure into their travel, either adding it to their itinerary or extending their stay to include leisure experiences.

Destination NSW regional conferencing work

* February 2024 – Destination NSW launched a fresh approach to growing the business events sector in regional NSW. Regional conferencing program name from ‘Meet in Regional NSW’ to ‘Business Events NSW’.
* Showcasing immersive visitor experiences in regional NSW, the new ‘Corporate events that feel anything but’ positioning aimed to present an engaging alternative to the traditional business event experience.