

NEW ZEALAND'S

JULY/AUGUST 2024

# meeting newz

● The Meeting, Incentive, Conference & Events Magazine

## Southland & Fiordland

Wellington & Wairarapa

West Coast

Brisbane

MEETINGS 24 Review

Connecting the business events industry for over 30 years

[www.meetingnewz.co.nz](http://www.meetingnewz.co.nz)

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## Note from the publishers...

# BE SECTOR HOLDS KEY TO WINTRY CHALLENGE

Recently released figures have confirmed just how critical conferences and meetings are to the health of New Zealand’s tourism eco-system and have also reiterated that the opening of the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) can’t come quick enough for the country’s largest metropolis.

Two reports released in consecutive months by Horwath HTL, in conjunction with the Hotel Council Aotearoa, have illustrated that the hospitality sector is doing things tough this winter – with a decline in domestic travel and the absence of significant international sporting or major public events being contributing factors.

The report showed that revenue per available room (RevPAR) in Auckland in June 2024 was 9% below 2019 levels for the same month. The city’s increased supply of rooms combined with delays in the NZICC’s opening is a significant cause. (See story page 16.)

Christchurch has had a small decline but this follows a robust period buoyed by Te Pae and the conference business that has generated.

It makes sense now to have a major focus on domestic business events – large or small – every bit counts.

Suppliers are telling us that they are up for it. Times may be challenging but we’ve been through tougher. Companies who focus



on team-building, catering and corporate venues say they are ready to be adaptable and provide what meeting and function planners need to make their events proceed.

“We want to ensure that successful business events occur, even if the budget is a bit tighter,” one contact told us. “We’re not about cancellations.”

In this issue we have plenty of content that will help organisers plan and stage their next event, plus news from MEETINGS 2024 in Rotorua. In all, as outlooks start to improve, the business events sector can be proud of its role in the New Zealand economy.

Put the coffee on and enjoy the read!

*Best wishes,*  
**Paul, Terry and Gary**



## Meeting Newz Magazine features 2024/2025

### September October 2024

- Rotorua, Tauranga & BOP
- Taupo
- Australia
- Eventing The Future 24 Review
- Sustainability & CSR
- PACIFIC Business Events Magazine

### November December 2024

- Christchurch & Canterbury
- Marlborough
- Nelson/Tasman
- Australia Next Review
- Business Events Expo
- Company Profiles
- PCOA 24 Preview

### January February 2025

- Auckland
- Napier/Hawke’s Bay
- Gisborne
- Australia – AIME25 Preview
- PCOA 24 Review
- Incentive travel & events 2025

### March April 2025

- Palmerston North / Manawatu
- Queenstown & Southern Lakes
- Whanganui
- Australia
- AIME 25 Review
- Technology Solutions

### May June 2025

- Queenstown & Southern Lakes
- Manawatu & Palmerston North
- Australia
- MEETINGS 2025 Preview Magazine

### July August 2025

- Central Otago
- Dunedin
- Northland & Whangarei
- Waikato & Hamilton
- Australia
- MEETINGS 2025 review

Features subject to change

For any enquiries regarding the upcoming features please contact

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# Together

we're giving kiwi a chance

**We're proud to mark one year of our partnership with Save the Kiwi, and we couldn't have done it without you.**

Thank you to all of our guests with multi-night stays who have taken part in our Save the Kiwi initiative. This has meant we have been able to contribute over 29,500 meals to kiwi across New Zealand, helping to ensure the growth and development of our national bird to reach the all important 'stoat-proof' weight of 1kg.

We look forward to welcoming you back!

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HOTELS AND RESORTS

## Business Events Expo buyer registrations open



Buyer registrations for the Business Events Expo are open. The event is being held at the Viaduct Events Centre on Tuesday 19 November from 9.30am to 5.30pm and will showcase conference, incentive and event products and services from New Zealand, Australia, Pacific, Asia and beyond.

Professional conference organisers, corporate meeting planners, incentive practitioners, association executives and others involved in business events are encouraged to sign up early.

Details of the programme, schedule and app for the show will be progressively sent to registered buyers over the coming months.

For those travelling from out of Auckland there are accommodation special offers available on the website as well as a current list of exhibitors.

**Buyers can register at**

**[www.businesseventsexpo.co.nz](http://www.businesseventsexpo.co.nz)**

## A memorable week at MEETINGS 2024 in Rotorua

More than 40 Rotorua partners came together to deliver what was described by many as “the best MEETINGS New Zealand has seen.” Held on the cusp of Matariki – a time for reflection, celebration, and looking forward – Rotorua aimed to integrate the significance of the occasion throughout the MEETINGS programme, says Vanessa Wallace, business events manager RotoruaNZ.

The week began with an immersive Rotorua famil for 33 Australian hosted buyers followed by the SITE Australia and New Zealand NITE Sip & Soak event, attended by 80 SITE ANZ members and Rotorua partners.

The host city day famil saw 145 ANZ hosted buyers experience the warm hospitality and vibrant culture of Rotorua.

Tourism New Zealand Business Events’ buyers from North America and South East Asia; and Air New Zealand’s Hong Kong famil guests, added a global perspective to the programme.

### Matariki dinner: A Night of Celebration and Reflection

The Rotorua Matariki dinner was a standout event, offering 380 guests an evening steeped in cultural significance.

It featured a VIP pre-screening of a Matariki-themed drone show – breathtaking visuals painted the night sky with symbols of renewal and connection, capturing the essence of the Māori New Year.

“Sharing this special occasion with our hosted buyers and industry peers was

an honour,” says Wallace. “The Matariki dinner showcased our local traditions and underscored the warm hospitality and innovative spirit that Rotorua brings to the business events sector.”

### The future of business events in Rotorua

Hosting MEETINGS 2024 has marked a significant milestone for Rotorua, setting the stage for an exciting future in business events, says Wallace.

“The success of this event has proven Rotorua’s ability to deliver world-class experiences, positioning it as a premier destination for conferences, conventions and

business gatherings.

“The collaborative spirit evident during MEETINGS 2024 will drive our continued efforts to attract both international and national events.

“We are committed to building on this momentum by enhancing our event offerings, strengthening partnerships and innovating to meet the evolving needs of event organisers and attendees. Our goal is to create impactful, memorable experiences that highlight Rotorua’s beauty and culture while contributing to the growth and development of New Zealand’s business events industry.”

Read more about MEETINGS on page 48.



At the Matariki dinner at Rotorua Airport, Jesse Tamm, RotoruaNZ; Jessica Ferguson, Arinex; Vanessa Wallace, RotoruaNZ

# THANKS FOR VISITING US AT MEETINGS!

## Let's make a plan to get you back to Rotorua soon...

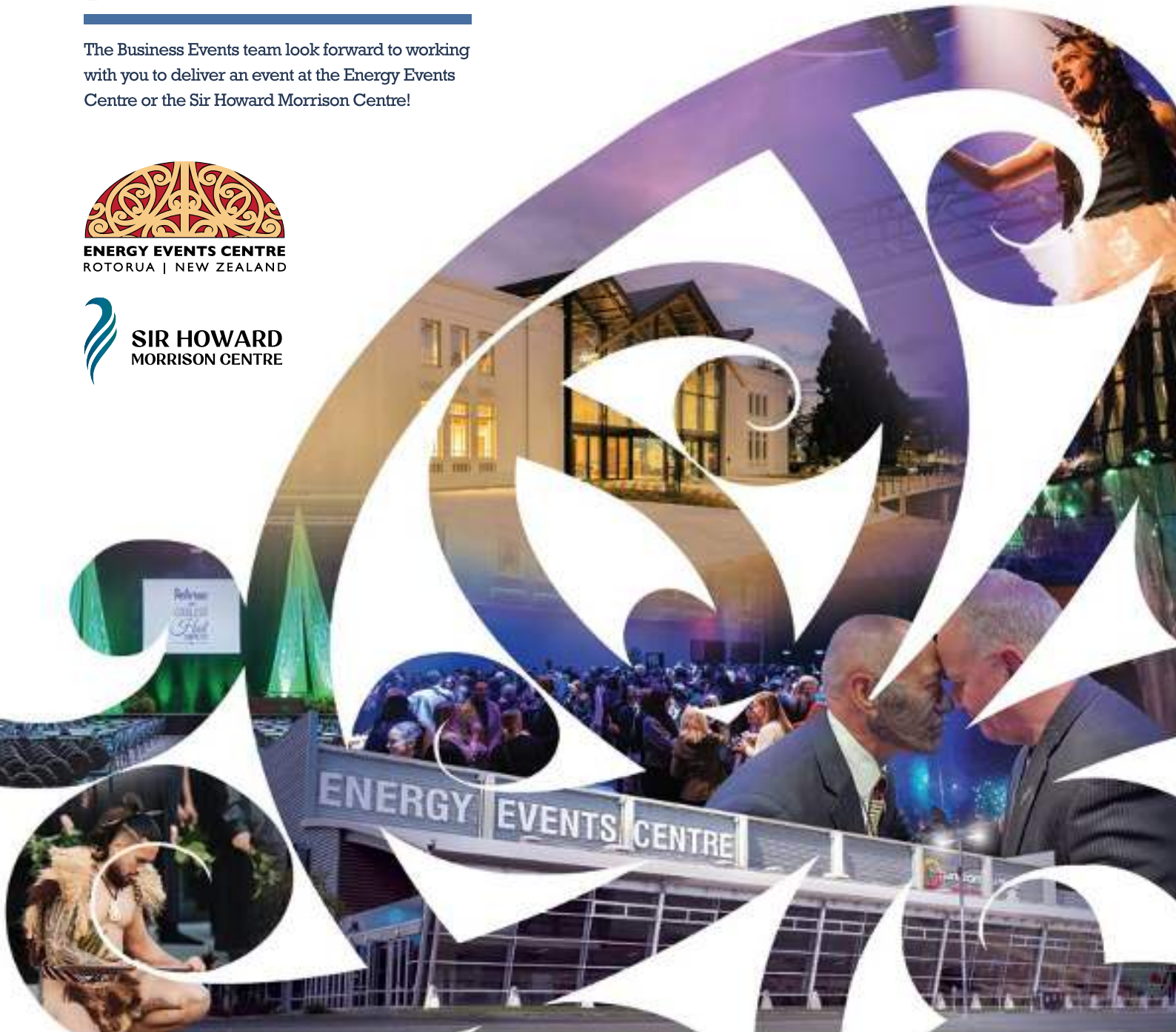
The Business Events team look forward to working with you to deliver an event at the Energy Events Centre or the Sir Howard Morrison Centre!



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 [eventsandvenues.co.nz](https://eventsandvenues.co.nz)



Cargo Collective  
Brew Hall

## New venue for Queenstown

The Brew Hall has opened in Arthurs Point, Queenstown.

Boasting an open floor plan serving as a blank canvas for creative events, The Brew Hall features high ceilings and glass panels that offer a view into the adjoining brewery. It can accommodate 170 guests seated or 240 standing, and also offers team-building activities and social responsibility projects, adding an extra layer of engagement for corporate events.

Feedback on The Brew Hall has been overwhelmingly positive since its

introduction at MEETINGS 2024 and the grand opening at the end of June.

“It is always great to be able to share an exciting new venue in Queenstown,” says Queenstown Convention Bureau manager, Sarah McDonald. “With enquires for business events in our region growing all the time, we are thrilled to see The Brew Hall open its doors and strengthen our destination's venue portfolio.

“For groups seeking a blank canvas space with versatility, a cool vibe and great service, The Brew Hall is one to check out.”



## MEETINGS Best Stand Awards

sponsored by Meeting Newz

Images courtesy  
of Smoke  
Photography

Best Regional Stand, Christchurch

The MEETINGS 2024 Best Stand Awards were celebrated on the final day of the expo in Rotorua in June. Voted for by hosted buyers, the awards were presented by Meeting Newz magazine at the Tourism New Zealand stand.

Awards criteria included initial impact, overall presentation and ambience of the stand, effectiveness of stand personnel, and the presentation of marketing collateral available on the stand.

The winners of the stand awards were:

**Best New Exhibitor Stand:** Wai Ariki Hot Springs and Spa

Amongst a record 35 new exhibitors, this one stood out. The winner of this award also played an integral part in the hosting of buyers during MEETINGS week. The

generosity shown by Wai Ariki in opening its doors so that many people could experience one of Rotorua's latest experiences was hugely appreciated.

**Best Individual Stand:** Millennium Hotels and Resorts

This year's winner embraced the opportunity to incorporate Matariki into its offerings, specifically by encouraging buyers to cultivate, grow and harvest their own food through the distribution of seeds.

**Best Regional Stand:** Ōtautahi Christchurch

This year's regional winner overwhelmingly stood out. The inviting space was a real feast for the senses and a beautiful area to showcase an equally stunning region.

Read more about MEETINGS in Rotorua on page 48.

## Pullman Hotel announced for Hamilton

Hamilton's tallest building will be transformed into a \$100 million, 191-room premium Pullman Hotel with work already under way to retrofit the Mistry Centre at 42-48 Ward St.

Accor Pacific chief operating officer PM&E, Adrian Williams, is thrilled that Accor will be the operator of such a landmark project for the city.

“The international brand recognition of Pullman will aid in attracting tourists and conferences to the city, enhancing its profile on the global stage.

“Pullman Hamilton will cater to a wide range of travellers, including business guests, and offer a sophisticated accommodation experience. The local economy will also benefit through employment, supplier partnerships and added economic development that will come with increased visitors to the region,” says Williams.

Hamilton and Waikato Tourism chief executive Nicola Greenwell says the opening date of 2026 was “cause for celebration”.

“We have been advocating for more accommodation in the city for a long time,” Greenwell said.

“A new high-quality hotel will help attract more leisure and business travellers to the city.”



Best Individual Stand: Hayden Hamilton, Samantha Horsnell, Millennium Hotels & Resorts, Gary Covich, Meeting Newz; Kimberley Daniels, Millennium Hotel Rotorua



Best New Exhibitor Stand: Debbie Robertson, Wai Ariki Hot Springs & Spa; Gary Covich, Meeting Newz; Renee Paul, Wai Ariki Hot Springs & Spa

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## Training gets region focused on the future

Back to school for a TMS.Workshop at The Historic Village, in Tauranga, from left: Russell Christian, Wicked Wanders Ltd; Blair Anderson, Waimarino; James Millison, BOP Event and Expo Hire; Donna-Marie Alridge, Mount Classic Tours; Leah Thomas, Trinity Wharf Tauranga; Angela Heyward TCC, Venues; Kenrick Smith, Rake Healing; Sarah Hillman and Tania Adolphe, TMS; and Mason Tiesdall, Trinity Wharf Tauranga

Tourism Bay of Plenty recently hosted its third business events training day, facilitated by Tania Adolphe and Sarah Hillman from Tourism Marketing Solutions (TMS).

More than 30 operators have now been brought up to speed to understand the level of service and competency required across the many suppliers that serve the business events market.

These operators also now have a clear picture of the region's ambitious plans to develop its offerings and cement its position as a key player in the conference, meetings and incentives sector.

July's TMS.Workshop was attended by many of the new venues and bespoke experiences which are popping up in the Coastal Bay of Plenty and offering

outstanding locations and experiences for delegates. The interactive nature of the training consistently rates highly with participants, who enjoy the hands-on learning and the opportunity for valuable networking with fellow operators.

The day included a breath work session by Rake Healing – an innovative mindfulness sand art activity – enticing delegates to get out of the conference room and get some sand between their toes while creating works of art.

An additional strategy day saw Tourism Bay of Plenty meet with key BE partners Tauranga City Council Venues, Bay Venues and Trinity Wharf Tauranga to focus on growing the number of business events in the region.

## New website guide for BEIA

Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA) has a new website (beia.co.nz) for members and clients which includes a comprehensive digital planning tool.

Lisa Hopkins, BEIA chief executive says the goal has been to create the definitive guide to business events in New Zealand.

“We are incredibly proud to be launching this new resource. Everything organisers need to know about planning a business event in New Zealand is now at their fingertips in one interactive site,” she says.

Membership information, regional insights, news updates, events and programmes, industry statistics and other useful resources are all easily accessed via the new site.

BEIA's online planning tool replaces the printed Event Planners' Guide which was produced for 30 years.

Developed within the website, it has been designed to assist clients searching for their next event destination and venue. Event planners can find and select regions and suppliers based on their individual requirements.

## Corporate events growing sector of biz travel

Business meetings and corporate events have emerged as a significant and growing segment of business travel, according to CTM's 2024 Global Customer Survey which found that 90% of respondents expect to travel the same amount or more for customer meetings in the coming year. Additionally, 85% expect to travel the same or more for internal meetings, and 84% for conferences and tradeshows.

“Our survey also revealed that when it comes to business events, our Australian and New Zealand customers most valued ease of travel, competitive pricing and cutting-edge technology,” says Nicole Kolotas, general manager, CTM Meetings & Events AU/NZ.

In other news from CTM, the company has rebranded its specialist meetings and events division ETM to ‘CTM Meetings & Events’. The decision comes as CTM recognises an increased opportunity for businesses to drive savings, efficiencies and duty of care through a more strategic, integrated approach to managing corporate and event travel.

“Business travel is evolving, and we're thrilled to be evolving with it. We are passionate about delivering highly creative and strategic corporate events that deliver results for businesses of all sizes. Our rebrand is all about making the journey smoother and more rewarding for our customers,” says Kolotas.

## NZICC appoints first major supplier

The New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) has appointed NW Group as the venue's in-house audio-visual and production supplier.

NZICC, in central Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, will be Aotearoa's largest convention centre. Flexible and configurable spaces will present opportunities for a wide range of events, with capacity for 4,000 people, a 2,850-seat tiered theatre, divisible and multipurpose halls of 6,700sqm and 33 meeting rooms for breakout spaces or smaller events.

To date, NZICC has secured 17 international conferences and continues to grow the pipeline of international and domestic events ahead of the expected 2025 opening.

While NZICC will work with a range of audio-visual suppliers, NW Group will be the supplier managing the centre's in-house audio-visual equipment.





## ROTORUA AUSTRALIA ROADSHOW

### KEY DETAILS

**Dress Theme** 🌿🌿🌿  
Pounamu | Shades of Green

**Melbourne**  
Monday 2nd September  
Victoria by Farmer's Daughters

**Sydney**  
Tuesday 3rd September  
Ivy Sunroom

**Gold Coast**  
Wednesday 4th  
September  
Social Eating House

**Brisbane**  
Thursday 5th September  
Bacchus Restaurant  
South Bank

Fresh from hosting New Zealand's premier business events tradeshow, MEETINGS, Team Rotorua is heading over the ditch to the east coast of Australia in September! This is your exclusive chance to discover firsthand why Rotorua is a top business events destination in New Zealand. Spaces for these luxurious lunch events are limited, so register your interest below. Attendees will enjoy a decadent lunch, bespoke cocktails, and an enlightening cultural competency speaker who will unveil the intricacies, beauty, and excellence of New Zealand conferencing.

**Kanohi ki te kanohi | Engage face-to-face with the following suppliers:** RotoruaNZ Business Events, Aronui, Coast Group, Higher Perspectives Conferences & Events, JetPark Hotel Rotorua, Millennium Hotel Rotorua, Novotel Rotorua Lakeside, Polynesian Spa, Pullman Rotorua, Rotorua Events & Venues, Skyline Rotorua, Team Up Events, Te Puia | NZMACI, The Production Agency and Wai Ariki Hot Springs & Spa.

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Matariki Festival, Murihiku Marae  
 Photo: Great South



# SOUTHLAND

## GREATER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE

By Jane Warwick

**Living at the southern edge of New Zealand is what gives Southerners their edge, they reckon. It means they look at the world differently, and it fuels their spirit and enthusiasm for making the most of a place with more space, freedom and opportunities.**

That's why it was Invercargill's David Strang who invented instant coffee in 1890, why Burt Munro modified his motorcycle to become the world's fastest Indian on Ōreti beach, why the legend of Hokonui moonshine and the exploits of Scottish settlers to keep their illegal hooch out of the hands of the law came about, why it is a most suitable place for a nationally significant collection of Ralph Hotere's to be hung in the small town of Gore even though Hotere is from the other end of the country, why there is a significant collection of old aircraft to warrant the Mandeville Fly-In/Steam Festival, and why there is such a selection of world class street art in Invercargill, to name just a few items on an impressive list.

Waihōpai Invercargill is a thriving city, with a reborn city centre, new hotels,

and restaurants that service the Murihiku Southland region of New Zealand. It is proudly New Zealand's southernmost city - and one of the southernmost cities in the world.

It is fondly dubbed the City of Water and Light, because of its long summer daylight hours, and frequent appearances of the Aurora Australis (Southern Lights), and its position beside the Waihōpai River estuary gives it plenty of character and a friendly, laid-back atmosphere.

### Only in Southland

There's a reason Bill Richardson Transport World is always noted in articles about Southland in general, and Invercargill in particular. That's because it's worth writing about, even for those already in the know. It truly is a unique venue – there is no Transport World-type facility with a

collection this size, anywhere else on Earth. It offers more than nine different conference and meeting rooms between its two venues – the original Bill Richardson Transport World or further down the road at the more recently opened extension outpost, The Handle Bar at Classic Motorcycle Mecca. And it would be foolish to dismiss the venues as 'too masculine', 'just cars', or 'motorcycles' because the wonderful line-up of pristine vehicles are appreciated even by those who believe they have no interest in motor transport.

### Drive-in movies

After a busy day conferencing, here's a wind-down event with a difference. Transport World offers six classic drive-in movies, a throwback to the golden age of cinema, for viewers to watch from the seats

TICKING ALL THE BOXES

of a vintage vehicle. There are six iconic and timeless films, including Grease and Pirates of the Caribbean. General admission offers standard seating, otherwise it's snuggling up in a classic vehicle. Snacks include American hot dogs, buttery popcorn and creamy milkshakes.

### Celebrating Bluffys

Here's another only-found-in-Southland venue; the Bluff Distillery. Not that distilleries don't exist elsewhere, but this one, in an abandoned freezing works with wild Foveaux Strait on one side and Bluff Harbour on the other, is a hidden jewel. The outside is indicative of a building buffeted by weather from both sides, but through the doors is something special.

As well as an excellent spot for a tasting visit after a hard day's conferencing, the space also has a meeting room of its own with everything needed to run a successful seminar, says co-founder Dave Nash. "Don't be fooled by the 'traditional' appearance of the building and its original garage door; we've got what it takes," he assures.

Bluff Gin comes in a bottle that mimics the glass fishing floats that held up the nets of Japanese fishing fleets, and Nash says it is possible to have bottle labels printed to



Bluff Distillery

reflect individual conferences.

The distillery shares the site with another new Southland innovation, a puaa farm. This, too, can be toured after a distillery visit.

### True island experience

Nate Smith of Gravity Fishing is passionate about sustainable, traceable and transparent fishing, and has developed more ethical ways of doing this to give back to, not just



Bluff Distillery Gin



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Drive in movies,  
Transport World



Anderson House  
Photo: Great South

extract from, the environment. Smith is also passionate about Rakiura/Stewart Island and for a conference or incentive activity with a difference, his three-night/ four-day programme offers the best of both. Affordable and doable, the package includes a flexible day where clients can explore the island to absorb its atmosphere or just sit on a beach around a fire doing absolutely nothing.

Smith regards his vessel, Gravity, as a floating restaurant and offers a true ocean-to-plate experience. Targeting seasonal produce – scallops, hapuka/groper, Bluff oysters, tuna, kingfish and kahawai – he has a team of top chefs to prepare it, including Ryan Henley who has been with Smith from the start. Henley, who is ardent about foraged, local and sustainable food, has worked in hatted restaurants and is currently collaborating on a project with Nadia Lim. Other noted chefs on Smith’s books include Corey Campbell of The Grove (Auckland) and Craig Martin from Canterbury’s Flockhill luxury lodge.

**New cultural centre**

A sculptural canoe stempost (Taurapa) 25m tall is planned for Motupōhue/Bluff Hill as the centrepiece of a new cultural attraction called Te Taurapa o Te Waka – Motupōhue Visitor Experience.

The facility will include an interpretation centre, sculpture trail, walking track and use of digital, location-based storytelling. Expected to cost \$18m, the project is part of the Bluff Motupōhue 2020 Tourism Master Plan, which was facilitated by Great South in partnership with Te Rūnaka o Awarua and Invercargill City Council.

**Enhanced by fine dining**

Neo-Georgian Anderson House is set in 24 hectares of landscaped gardens, lawns

and native bush, while The Hideaway 201 sits among four hectares of gardens defined with stone walls, archways, ponds and a waterfall.

Both of these elegant venues – in Invercargill and just 20 minutes away respectively – have appointed MASH Catering as in-house caterer.

MASH is the creation of Mat Jackson, a Southland-born chef who has cooked his way around the world. After running kitchens in Wembley Stadium and Madison Square Gardens to feed some of the biggest names in the music industry, there is little that will faze him, even the hardest to wrangle conferences and events.

Jackson can cater for just five peoples to more than a thousand – via food stations, or gala dinners, ‘in the middle of a field, beside the sea, under the stars’. He offers menu design, bar services, wait service, table dressing and special touches.

**Tuatara sighting**

Not specific to Southland as a species, but perhaps living in an environment found nowhere else, are five infant tuatara. As part of Southland’s Project 1225 upgrade of the museum and art gallery, Te Moutere – Tuatara Island was recently opened, and the fivesome are now in the facilities nursery.

It takes years for tuatara to come to sexual maturity and then females only lay eggs every three-four years after an up to 15-month pregnancy.

Young tuatara Harry and his four mates offer a special sight for conference attendees – something most Kiwis will never see, let alone delegates from overseas.

**An island like no other**

On New Zealand’s third largest island, Rakiura/Stewart Island, where kiwi birds outnumber Kiwi people, is the Stewart Island



ILT Stadium, Invercargill

Community Centre. Within walking distance of central Oban (the main settlement), the ferry terminal and flight centre, as well as the South Sea Hotel which offers a range of accommodation from hotel rooms to cottages, the centre can cater for up to 250 people. Amenities include a full stage, sound system, commercial kitchen or catering, exhibition area and bar.

For after-hours activities and team building, the centre has a full-sized basketball stadium, squash court, weights and gym room, and an adjacent outside covered deck area. The Community Library is also within the building. Beyond the South Sea Hotel there are several other accommodation options on the island.

### Impressive stadium

ILT Stadium Southland can host up to 1200 guests for dinner, has oodles of trade space and interesting options for group activities, such as New Zealand's first velodrome offering group cycling challenges, a Clip & Climb wall and the Multi-Wall, an interactive and intuitive video screen. It is one of the city's most flexible events spaces and that, coupled with ease of access and ample free parking, makes it a bit of a dream venue for event organisers.

### Range of accommodation choices

Invercargill has a range of accommodation and meetings choices, with all properties being within easy, if not immediate, reach of the CBD.

The seven-storey, 4.5-star Langlands Hotel opened two years ago and offers 78 rooms right in the heart of Invercargill. Its Puaka conference room caters for up to 110 people theatre style and can also be divided into two private spaces – Waiti for up to 50 people and Waitā for up to 60. The mezzanine above Meld, the hotel's signature restaurant, can host up to 16 people for private dinners and board meetings, while 360, the top floor bar, suits cocktail functions for up to 60.

The Kelvin Hotel is an institution in Invercargill, being one of the city's most established properties. It offers five versatile function spaces that can be configured for interviews, training seminars, boardroom meetings, banquet settings, and 'almost anything in-between' for groups from three to 160 theatre-style and 140 banquet style. The open plan floor space on the sixth-floor venue has natural light and views out across the city.

In the heart of the CBD, The Quest offers studios and one and two-bedroom apartments and is close to ILT Stadium Southland and the Civic Theatre.



Brew-d, The Langlands Hotel, Invercargill

The Ascot Park Hotel is serious about sustainability and its recent upgrade has put it firmly on the path to success in that area. Its advanced biomass boiler has cut carbon emissions by 98%, while the on-site nursery offers a true pasture-to-plate experience supplying fresh, high-quality ingredients for local flavours all year round. But sustainability isn't the only focus. The Ascot Park Hotel also offers flexible conference spaces, accommodating everything from intimate boardroom meetings to grand banquets for up to 450 guests. With 116 rooms, ample free parking, and beautifully landscaped grounds, it's a venue that combines modern sustainability with unmatched flexibility.

### New beds next year

While Distinction Hotels' current development of the old Menzies Building in

Esk St does not have extensive conference facilities on-site, its seven storeys and 150 rooms (22 of which will be suites) will be a significant bonus to the Invercargill MICE market. Additionally, Distinction Hotels will offer a separate, but adjacent, development of 12 4.5-star apartments – eight two-bedroom and four three-bedroom - to cater to bigger groups.

The property plans to work alongside some of the many quality venues in Invercargill who do have great conference facilities, says Distinction Group gm, Duncan Fletcher. "We will complement these by offering quality accommodation to complement the existing hotels in town allowing larger events or multiple conferences/events to come to town at the same time and mitigating sold out dates to the benefit of the region," he says. The property is on track to open 01 July 2025.



The stunning coastline of Rakiura/Stewart Island



# SPOTLIGHT

on Te Kāhui Whaihanga  
New Zealand Institute of Architects

CASE STUDY



THE FACTS:

**Event name:**

Southern Architecture Awards 2024

**Dates:**

Friday 17 May 2024

**Destination:**

Invercargill, Southland

**Venue:**

Motorcycle Mecca

**Accommodation used:**

A variety of accommodation used

**Guest speaker:**

2023 Te Kāhui Whaihanga New Zealand Institute of Architects Gold Medal recipient

**No of delegates:**

Around 105

**Delegate origins:**

Around New Zealand

**Event dinner theme:**

Awards evening

**Suppliers:**

Motorcycle Mecca, Sarah McCarthy MC, Sono Sound System

**About you:**

I am Katie Tomlinson, the event manager, for Te Kāhui Whaihanga New Zealand Institute of Architects and started with them in April 2024. I have over a decade of experience delivering events.

**About your organisation:**

Te Kāhui Whaihanga New Zealand Institute of Architects is a membership-based professional organisation that represents registered architects and promotes architecture in Aotearoa New Zealand.

**What were the key challenges for this event?**

Limited time to review the venue.

**What you loved about the destination?**

Easy to get around, some great architecture, new buildings and the chance to experience the great southern hospitality.

**Why did you choose the venue?**

Convenience of venue for attendees, interesting space with Motorcycles and on-site catering.

**What would you do differently next time?**

Would have liked to have had more time to visit the venue before the event and would have loved more time in Invercargill. I was surprised and have learnt more about the region.

**What is your definition of a great event?**

Seeing people enjoying themselves and having fun.

**What is your best piece of advice?**

Allow more time than you think and go with your instincts.

**When is your next event?**

Aotearoa Festival of Architecture – September, NZ wide.





The Southland team were giving away Bluff Oysters and Seriously good chocolates over the two days at MEETINGS 2024.

**BLUFF OYSTER WINNERS WERE:**

Suz B, Sheryl F, Karen S, Frances N, Nicole B, Geoff Y, Jessica L, Andrew W, Eugene F, Rebecca S, Rachel K, Tegan E, Jackie A, David D, Legend J.

**SERIOUSLY GOOD CHOCOLATE WINNERS WERE:**

Shelley C, Emma K, Suz B, Caitlin A, Bishal L, Cate R, Carlee L, Penny N, Caroline S, Kate B, Tiffany S, Tannia A, Annita P, Beau P.

Business Events Southland enjoyed a successful visit to Rotorua in June when it attended MEETINGS 2024 with four partners – Ascot Park Hotel, ILT Stadium Southland, Bill Richardson Transport World and Seriously Good Chocolate Company.

“Our team loved reconnecting with buyers to share the changes that have occurred in region,” says Great South’s conference and events manager, Karen Witham. “We also enjoyed the opportunity to meet new buyers and provide them with an overview of our region and the opportunities Southland can provide.”

Increased accommodation capacity with the Langlands Hotel opening last year, and Distinction coming online in 2025, has opened up a new association sector for the city, says Witham.

“Venue hosting size for trade related events at ILT Stadium was a hot topic at MEETINGS, and the fact that we can host dinners for up to 900 delegates at both Bill Richardson Transport and ILT Stadium.

“The association market with conference and dining options were a key theme, with events sized over 350.”

Invercargill’s flight connectivity and

schedule need to be understood, including the price, says Witham. “We had good conversations relating to distance travelled once guests were in the region, and that we have ample bus supply for transportation.”

Witham says March/April and July/August/September are the months seeing most interest from conference organisers for both 2025 and 2026. With bookings for March, August and September strong for 2025, Witham advises anyone looking to conference in Southland next year and beyond, to get in touch now.

## WE’RE READY & WAITING TO WELCOME YOU



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DRIVING THE UNEXPECTED



### Troy Williams

has joined Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre as director of Building Services. Williams was previously with Dunedin Venues Management as asset and compliance manager and was responsible for asset management, sustainability and safety at Dunedin's Forsyth Barr Stadium and Dunedin Town Hall.



### Jesse Tamm

has been promoted to sales executive at RotoruaNZ Business Events. Tamm joined the team in 2022 as a sales and marketing coordinator, initially focusing on both trade and business events. Over the past year, he has dedicated his efforts solely to business events. Now, he has transitioned into his new role as sales executive within the RotoruaNZ Business Events team.



### Leanne Douglass

is business development manager – Australia for Business Events Wellington. Douglass began her career in the retail travel sector where she honed her skills in sales and customer service leading teams at Flight Centre Travel Group, before moving onto corporate travel account management in Sydney and Melbourne.



### Patrick Dault

has been appointed as general manager of Destination Great Lake Taupo from 9 September 2024. Dault has worked in the tourism industry for more than 20 years, in North America and New Zealand. For the past four years he has been destination and tourism manager for Development West Coast.



### Tara Terry

is sales and events coordinator for Huihui – Events and Functions at Parliament. She brings to the role a strong background in events planning and coordination. Terry's experience includes working as a functions coordinator with Tākina Events.



### Sebastien Delteil

has been appointed cluster director of sales for Hilton Hotels NZ. Delteil will oversee all sales operations and strategies for its three properties: Hilton Auckland, Hilton Lake Taupo and DoubleTree by Hilton Karaka. With a career spanning 16 years in the hospitality and tourism industry, Delteil brings a wealth of experience and a unique perspective to the role.



### Elena Ford

has joined Huihui – Events and Functions at Parliament as sales manager. In this newly created position, she will focus on business development, marketing and sales strategy. Ford's experience includes working as sales manager at Te Papa Venues and Tākina Events over the last 13 years.



## New Zealand hotels hit hard this winter

Decline in domestic demand hits NZ hotels hard this winter.

Revenue per available room (RevPAR) for major New Zealand hotels dropped by 11.5% in June compared to the previous year, returning to June 2019 levels, says Horwath HTL in its latest New Zealand Hotel Performance focus.

Referring to data reported by Hotel Data New Zealand (HDNZ), Horwath says occupancy fell to 58%, the lowest since July 2022 before New Zealand fully reopened its borders. The Average Daily Rate (ADR) decreased by 5.6% year-on-year.

Auckland and Wellington hotels experienced the most significant overall declines, with RevPAR dropping by 14.9% and 14.1%, respectively.

In Christchurch, RevPAR fell below 2023 levels for the first time this year, with a 5% decline in room nights sold and a 3% decline in the ADR. This includes a significant drop in conference-related business, which had been a strong contributor since the opening of Te Pae.

Hotels reported an 11% decline in rooms occupied by New Zealanders, who typically account for about three-quarters of total hotel occupancies at

this time of year.

While the lower average rate might be beneficial for consumers and economists, many hotels are cutting payroll and other costs to manage the reduced demand and avoid cash flow issues. The decline in domestic demand was too significant to be offset by international visitors, though there were some positive signs of recovery in international arrivals. Non-New Zealand resident arrivals increased by 2% year-on-year, reaching 88% of pre-Covid levels. Arrivals from China reached 86% of 2019 levels, while those from Australia reached 90%.



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*Venue allocation is based on your advised numbers and setup preferences. A larger or specifically requested venue may incur an additional hire fee.*

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- **Lunch**
- **Afternoon Tea:** one food item with tea and coffee

*Morning and Afternoon Tea items are Chef's Choice. Select sweet or savoury; upgrades & specific items may incur an additional fee..*

*Lunch is a Chef's Choice buffet, served outside your conference room or in Wellingtons Restaurant based on event size and availability. Specific restaurant requests may incur an additional charge.*

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# WHEN IN WELLINGTON

By Shannon Williams

**IT'S WHERE THE CITY IS THE VENUE. BETWEEN HILLS AND A SPARKLING HARBOUR, THE COMPACT CAPITAL FEATURES A MULTITUDE OF WORLD-CLASS VENUES.**

From Parliament Buildings to the national museum or a purpose-built convention centre, organisers will find venues and accommodation for events of any type, size and budget.

Wellington has long been recognised as an epicentre for change in Aotearoa New Zealand, where research, policy and industry combine.

It's also where vibrant hospitality mixes with nature and culture to create the backdrop for inspiring events.

Wellington is a hub for scientists, researchers, policy makers, business leaders and entrepreneurs. Being home to the New Zealand Government and headquarters for many central government agencies and industry associations means it's a collaborative and connected city with strong advocacy of progress, change, improvement and reform.

## **Business events eye Te Whanganui a Tara Wellington**

Wellington's new conference and exhibition centre has hosted more than 140 conferences and events in its first year of operation, and

there's an exciting line-up of high-profile events in the pipeline.

Since Tākina opened its doors in June 2023, it has levelled up Wellington's capacity to host national and international events.

More than 44,000 delegates have walked through the doors, with many attending from outside New Zealand for the first time.

The National Rural Health Network Conference at Tākina in April attracted a record number of delegates. Hauora Taiwhenua Rural Health Network attributes that success to consulting with a committee on key rural health issues to create an engaging programme and a great working relationship with its conference organiser, Conference Innovators, to pull off the record-breaking event.

Described as strongly advocacy focused, the organisation chose Wellington because "there is no better place if you want ministers and changemakers to attend."

"For any advocacy organisation, conferencing in Wellington is the place to do it," says the network's communications and business development general manager

Jane Booth.

The capital itself was a hit with the organisers and delegates.

"It's an easy city to get around and a short trip from the airport. We had a big focus on bringing family along – there were babies and toddlers at the conference," Booth says.

"Local operators made it super easy for our families to get discounts for activities and there was lots of good family-friendly accommodation nearby."

Aotearoa's biotech thought leaders also recently converged on the capital for the Life Sciences Summit 2024.

Bringing together more than 300 of New Zealand's science community, the summit showcased just how well-connected Wellington is – more than a quarter of delegates represented Government, Crown entities and research institutes.

Meanwhile, easy access to high-profile talent in Wellington's research, policy and industry ecosystem is the reason why New Zealand Women in Medicine (NZWIM) has hosted two back-to-back conferences in the capital.

"Our intention is to keep it in Wellington,

given how compact it is, its central location and how easy it is to tap into quality speakers,” says NZWIM chair Orna McGinn.

### Coming up

Looking ahead, there are numerous conferences and events of all sizes locked in as far in advance as 2028.

Later this year more than 500 delegates are expected at the Asia Pacific Network Information Centre Conference (APNIC).

The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (RANZCOG) has 900-plus delegates attending its four-day Annual Scientific Meeting in October.

“We’re delighted to be bringing our Australian and New Zealand members together in New Zealand for the first time in seven years,” says event manager Anna Smaragdi.

“Wellington is centrally located with easy access for all our members, as well as home to New Zealand’s Government and a strong women’s health community,” she says.

“The capital provides great opportunities for international networking and collaboration. Plus, it has a cool vibe and is a fantastic place to visit.”

With 10,000sqm of flexible space available in the heart of the city, Tākina adds to



Wellington’s existing array of venues and creates new opportunities to deliver events on a scale the city hasn’t seen before.

### Sustainability a priority

As conference and event organisers increasingly look to make their events more sustainable, Wellington’s event industry is playing its part to reduce the carbon footprint of events in the capital.

Sustainability is top of mind. Wellington is already the lowest carbon city per capita in Australasia and ranks first in the world for environmental security.

From the nation’s leading Antarctic and

climate change scientists at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington, to the world’s first fully-fenced urban ecosanctuary Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne, and innovative clean-tech companies, Wellington is a hub for all sorts of climate conversations.

The capital also boasts a variety of sustainable venues, ideal for eco-conscious conferences.

Tākina was the first venue in New Zealand to achieve a 5-Star Green Star rating, thanks to initiatives reducing energy by 60 percent and a reduction of 66 percent carbon emissions compared to similar size buildings.

Venues Wellington is another good

For an event your guests will never forget,

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# Huihui

PARLIAMENT EVENTS AND FUNCTIONS

example. Four of its venues – Michael Fowler Centre, Opera House, TSB Arena and Shed 6 – have been awarded EarthCheck's Bronze Benchmark accreditation. The team's commitment to reducing environmental impacts in waste, water and energy has seen it implement changes that target both environmental sustainability and create a positive impact for the Wellington community.

#### Accommodation

James Cook Hotel Grand Chancellor is promoting its First Time Grand Experience Offer, which includes several special perks from complimentary arrival tea and coffee to a free night's accommodation. Event organisers can take advantage of the hotel's newly refurbished spaces, and as the second largest hotel in Wellington, there is a variety of dining options with two restaurants and a bar on-site. Its central location makes it easy to access all that Wellington has to offer.

Mövenpick Hotel Wellington is a destination-inspired hotel balancing life's little pleasures with a healthy attitude. Overlooking the vibrant village of Te Aro, Wellington's urban community of artisan producers, brewery and coffee craftsmanship, Mövenpick is where food culture brings human connections, celebrating both Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington's and the brand's 75-year culinary heritage. Mövenpick Hotel Wellington's



Parliament Buildings.  
Photo: WellingtonNZ

current offer is a complimentary "Choctail" half hour post event. All meeting planners receive 2x rewards, a designated car park and a suite upgrade subject to availability.

#### Gold certification and excellence award

The Lower Hutt Events centre was recently awarded the Qualmark Gold certification. A Gold business is a best-in-class sustainable tourism business in New Zealand, delivering exceptional customer experiences, an integral part of everything it does. A Gold Sustainable Tourism Accreditation identifies those businesses leading the way in making the New Zealand tourism industry a world-class sustainable visitor destination.

The Sebel Wellington Lower Hutt showcases upscale design along with modern day amenities throughout the hotel. Located right in the heart of the Hutt, The Sebel is

the perfect choice for any purpose of visit and caters to both a business and leisure traveller's needs. The Sebel Wellington Lower Hutt was a catalyst in facilitating the Lower Hutt Events Centre to attract national conferences to Hutt Valley.

This conference and events precinct, made possible by the two entities joining hands, helped the Sarin Group win the 'Excellence in Hospitality, Tourism and Retail' award at the Wellington Regional Business Excellence Awards 2023.

#### Discover the charms of the Wairarapa

Just an hour's drive or train from Wellington, Wairarapa is a region full of character, where country warmth meets world-class food and wine.

Wairarapa is a place of big skies and warm, intimate experiences. Business events

## MEET AT PARLIAMENT

Huihui is the Parliamentary food, function and events specialist for New Zealand's Parliament. When considering venues, clients should look towards the landmark of democracy and history in Wellington – Parliament. Choosing a venue at Parliament in Wellington offers a blend of benefits that can elevate any gathering. Here's why clients should consider Parliament as their go-to venue:

**Historical significance:** Parliament Buildings are steeped in New Zealand's history, offering a prestigious and inspiring setting. The rich heritage of the location can add a sense of gravitas and importance to any event.

**Central location:** Situated in the heart of Wellington, Parliament is easily accessible for attendees. Its central location is convenient for guests who may be travelling from different parts of the city or country, with ample public

and private transportation options available.

**Architecture:** The stunning architecture of Parliament Buildings provides a remarkable backdrop for events. The iconic Beehive is not only an architectural feat but also a conversation starter and a memorable landmark for any event.

**Versatile spaces:** Parliament offers a variety of spaces that can accommodate events of all sizes, from intimate committee rooms to grand halls. This versatility ensures that whether it's a small seminar or a large gala, there is a space that can be tailored to meet specific requirements.

**Facilities:** Modern audio-visual technology and facilities are available to ensure that presentations and communications are delivered seamlessly. The internal AV team contributes to a professional and smooth-running event.

**Catering:** With on-site catering available, clients can expect high-quality culinary

offerings that can be customised to suit the event's theme or dietary requirements. The standard of hospitality at Parliament is in keeping with its prestigious environment.

**A unique experience:** Hosting an event at a working centre of government is not an everyday occurrence for most attendees. The chance to walk the corridors of power and perhaps even glimpse the political process in action can be a thrilling and educational experience.

**Expert support staff:** Parliament's event staff are experienced in handling all types of events, ensuring that from planning to execution, every detail is managed with expertise and care.

**Security:** Given its status, security at Parliament is top-notch, ensuring that guests feel safe throughout the duration of the event.



# Two Venues One Team



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delegates can reconnect in a cosy retreat or go a little bit wild in wide-open spaces. They can explore the pristine night skies in the region’s Dark Sky Reserve – all at the heart of the Classic New Zealand Wine Trail.

“Wairarapa is home to passionate producers, growing and making beautiful food and wine on a boutique scale,” says Destination Wairarapa product development manager Chrissy Cummings.

“Three experiences I love are the guided tasting at Nga Waka Vineyard in Martinborough, the extraordinary platters packed with local goodies and served right by the vines at Three Little Words, and the London Gin award-winning gins at Greytown Distilling Company,” she says.

Cummings says Wairarapa caters well to smaller bespoke incentive groups, executive retreats, corporate events, partner programmes and conferences up to 150 people. There’s a variety of accommodation, including Wharekauhau Country Estate, Martinborough Hotel, Parehua Resort, Brackenridge Country Retreat, Copthorne Solway Park and the White Swan.

For groups, Cummings says there are a range of experiences on offer in Wairarapa.

“The Runholder in Martinborough combines a restaurant, tasting room, cellar



Wharekauhau Country Estate

door and gin distillery, while Greytown Honey’s mānuka honey experience is a foodie adventure. At Star Safari, delegates can discover the universe through powerful telescopes and the planetarium, enjoy a night sky tour at their own venue or at Star Safari’s observatory, a 15-minute drive from Martinborough. Nestled within the world’s 21st Dark Sky Reserve, the tour will reveal a dazzling array of celestial wonders.”

Wharekauhau Country Estate offers personalised incentives and corporate

retreats. Groups can work in tranquil, private settings, and then enjoy team building activities such as clay target shooting or ATV quad biking. Or, a full horseback “muster” around the coast to the furthest valley with a fire pit picnic lunch can be arranged. So too can a private concert on the front lawn for 200 including a full ‘glamping village’.

**Sofitel celebrates**

Joie de vivre has immersed itself through Sofitel Wellington with much to celebrate.



The Strategic proximity between Lower Hutt Events Centre and The Sebel Wellington Lower Hutt has led to the co-branding “One Destination, Endless Possibilities”

LOWER HUTT EVENTS CENTRE



THE SEBEL WELLINGTON LOWER HUTT

**LOWER HUTT EVENTS CENTRE**

The Qualmark Gold rated Lower Hutt Events Centre has hosted events from meetings for 10, workshops for 50, dinners for 500 and cocktail parties for 1,200 as well as theatre performances since opening in 2018.

The venue offers two large, interconnected event spaces, an airy atrium plus an adjoining town hall. Each of the three spaces can be configured for large conferences up to 1000 delegates, trade shows, exhibitions and banquet dinners for up to 560 delegates. The Town Hall can be booked for conferences, meetings, seminars, gala dinners and more. The venue also offers three smaller function spaces which can host up to 150 delegates and onsite café.

Just twenty-five minutes from Wellington airport, the events centre is one of the most functional and modern event spaces of its size in NZ.

**THE SEBEL WELLINGTON**

Located a few minutes’ walk across the road from the LHEC is the new 60-room apartment hotel. Part of the Accor brand, the hotel has views of the Hutt River and offers 24-hour front desk assistance, daily housekeeping, and car parking. The hotels Italian inspired, Grazie restaurant and Pasticceria serves an array of home made fresh pastas, pizzas and breads daily.

*This conference & events precinct made possible by the two entities joining hands helped the Sarin Group win the ‘Excellence in Hospitality, Tourism and Retail’ award at the Wellington Regional Business Excellence Awards 2023.*

**For The Sebel and DoubleTree by Hilton**

Name: Pradeep Kapai  
 Mobile: 027 275 5654  
 Email: sales@sarinhotels.co.nz  
 www.thesebel.com/new-zealand/sebel-wellington-lower-hutt/

**For Lower Hutt Events Centre**

Name: Sarah Mataira  
 Mobile: 021 835 925  
 Email: sarah.mataira@lhec.co.nz  
 www.lowerhutteventscentre.co.nz



The hotel celebrated with its sister hotels from around the world last month in acknowledging the 60th Diamond Jubilee of the Sofitel brand. A lavish cocktail celebration event treated local clients, guests, and industry partners to a French themed gastronomic journey of delights. The event also supported its community partner Cure Kids with the event raising over \$4,000 on the night.

This celebration also doubled in welcoming a new general manager to the hotel, Liam Craughwell. Liam has called Wellington home for many years and says, "I am delighted to join Wellington's premium luxury hotel and I'm excited to elevate the indulgent brand promises of Sofitel for our guests in the coming months.

"We are delighted to have also launched new menus inspired by the colours of the French flag - 'Bleu' paying homage to our kai moana from the sea, 'Blanc' celebrating succulent poultry, and 'Rouge' tributes all things beef," he says.

The celebrations continue with corporate Christmas function packages just launched. This year, Sofitel Wellington is offering complimentary inclusions such as amuse bouche, hand-crafted canapés, and accommodation vouchers.

## BUSINESS EVENTS WELLINGTON ON HAND

Business Events Wellington (BEW) is at the helm of impactful business events in Wellington.

As the convention bureau for the Wellington region, BEW has years of event planning experience and insider industry connections to help make hosting a successful event as straightforward as possible.

BEW helps conference organisers understand and connect with Wellington-based industry and political leaders to use their specialised knowledge to elevate the event. BEW's in-house convention services advisor is a single point of contact with the aim to maximise success at every stage of the event planning and promotion process.

BEW also provides support for planners to transform intention into action through its legacy programme.

From the initial planning process or bidding for an international event, through to selecting venues, finding accommodation, and even accessing delegate discounts, the team can provide free and impartial advice.

"We are a one-stop-shop for everything an event organiser needs to host a successful event with ease in the capital, and we

encourage planners to use the free support available," says Business Events Wellington manager Irette Ferreira.

"Our friendly team of seven helps event planners from the moment they start looking for a destination before the event, to during and after the event takes place.

"Our deep local knowledge and full-picture view of Wellington's business events landscape mean we can help wherever you are in your planning journey."



Dirty Little Secret, rooftop bar  
Photo: Wellington NZ, Celeste Fontein

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# WELLINGTON WINS HOME ECONOMICS WORLD CONGRESS



World Congress IFHE, Takina

Wellington will host the World Congress of the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) in 2028, the first time the event has been held in New Zealand.

The congress will take place at Takina Wellington Convention & Exhibition Centre. It is expected to attract more than 700

world experts to the city across academia, community services, agricultural extension, businesses, government and health services.

The winning bid was led by Sarah Wirth, HoD Technology Samuel Marsden Collegiate School, vice president IFHE Pacific, and

executive member of the Home Economics and Technology Teachers' Association of New Zealand (HETTANZ). Business Events Wellington and Tourism New Zealand Business Events supported the bid.

The IFHE has had consultative status at the United Nations for more than 70 years, with its work supporting UN Sustainable Development Goals. Wirth says hosting the federation's world congress will be a great showcase of the New Zealanders who educate individuals and communities on critical issues including sustainable living, health, nutrition, family well-being and economic empowerment.

Wirth says Wellington was chosen as host city for its amazing food and innovation in textiles and sustainable practices, as well as being a safe, walkable city, with great facilities at Takina.

"We are excited to present New Zealand as a hub for visionary approaches in Home Economics. This congress will not only showcase our nation's entrepreneurial spirit and talent but also reaffirm our commitment to global sustainability and inclusive development."

Hosting the congress in New Zealand also provides a opportunity to bring together delegates from Pacific nations, providing



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diverse perspectives and shared expertise. The event was last held in the Oceania region in 2012, when it took place in Melbourne.

“It’s fantastic to be able to host a world congress of this scale and nature in Wellington, at our new convention centre, Takina,” adds Business Events Wellington’s Irette Ferreira.

“We look forward to welcoming home economists from around the world to share their knowledge and showcase Aotearoa New Zealand’s expertise in 2028.”

Cable Car Photo: WellingtonNZ



Since 1995, GOVIS (Government Information Systems Incorporated) has been holding its annual conference, which serves to connect and inspire public servants across Aotearoa, allowing them to share and learn about all aspects of information, technology, data and business process. Since then, the conference has evolved into a cornerstone event attracting delegates from across government and a host of generous sponsors.

The theme for the conference this year is “Trust to Innovate” and will feature a diverse lineup of speakers covering

various topics including:

- Governing information, data, and AI
- Using open-source technology
- Using administrative data to make better decisions
- Improving the transparency and effectiveness of IT projects
- Supporting equity in data and data-driven technology

To support the conference’s trajectory of growth and meet its complex needs, which include live transcription and streaming, GOVIS selected an event destination woven into the fabric of New Zealand’s culture and heritage, the Tiakiwai Conference Centre situated within the National Library of New Zealand.

Located in the knowledge hub of the capital, the Tiakiwai Conference Centre offers cutting-edge technology and versatile spaces including an award-winning auditorium, spacious foyer and configurable meeting rooms.

SOFITEL  
WELLINGTON

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View menus and more at [www.sofitel-wellington.com/special-offers](http://www.sofitel-wellington.com/special-offers)



# Strong turnout for Beautiful Samoa NZ Roadshow

Samoa suppliers proved the importance they place on the New Zealand market, with a four city roadshow of New Zealand in June. Sonny Rivers, NZ sales and marketing representative for Samoa Tourism says 24 suppliers took part in the event with 280 plus attendees across the four cities.



On the Hamilton leg of the four city Beautiful Samoa NZ roadshow Sonny Rivers, Samoa Tourism, with Kelsey MacKay and Alison Jenkins, both House of Travel Calder and Lawson



Monita Krishna, Tanoa Tusitala; Brooke Thompson, Helloworld Rototuna; Roneeta Devi, Tanoa Tusitala; Edie Swney, The Travel Brokers, Morrinsville

# This is Gold Coast welcome event

Event professionals from Australia and New Zealand were treated to food, drinks and entertainment at Kirra Beach House for the 'This is Gold Coast' welcome event in late July hosted by Experience Gold Coast.



Colin Ennor, I Want Orange; Jo Meredith, Fortis Events



Bianca Olsen, Only Plans Event Management; Brooke Campbell, Experience Gold Coast, Cindy Paterson, W Events Group



Karen Yue, TTG Asia Media; Katrina Daniel, Plumbing Plus

# Skål CHC celebrates past and present

Skål Christchurch held its bi-annual Past Presidents Lunch with 10 Past Presidents joining over 70 members and guests at the Novotel Christchurch Airport. Stories were told, fines from the sheriff were dished out, and the vision of Skål International for 2024 and beyond was shared.



Christchurch club treasurer, Gareth Williamson with Robert Skewes of Turama Pacific who won a dinner voucher at Novotel Christchurch Airport in the lunch raffle



Past Christchurch presidents Basil Taylor, left, and Bruce Garret with current president, Nikki Rogers



New Zealand president, Vic Wales and Chris Foubister of Hotel Elms, Christchurch

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## Exciting times for events



By Elaine Linnell

general manager  
New Zealand Events  
Association (NZEA)

It's an exciting time for NZEA as we gear up for Eventing the Future 2024, set to take place later this month in Palmerston North. This year's conference has over 20 industry experts lined up to share their insights and experiences. We're thrilled to announce that Minister Lee will be joining us to provide an update on the latest developments impacting

our industry. We will also be using conference for some big announcements around professional development and sustainability that we're sure you'll love.

If you haven't secured your tickets yet, now's the time! Trust me, you won't want to miss out on what we've got in store.

And let's not forget the highlight of the event—the NZEA New Zealand

Event Awards gala dinner, where we'll celebrate the outstanding achievements of our peers. It's going to be a night to remember.

Looking forward to seeing you all there and making this the best Eventing the Future yet!

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# WEST COAST:

WILD AND ACCESSIBLE By Anabel Darby

**Getting there:**

- Catch direct daily flights from Christchurch to Hokitika with Air New Zealand (40 minutes) or from Wellington to Westport with Sounds Air (50 minutes).
- Take one of the world's most scenic rail journeys between Christchurch and Greymouth on the TranzAlpine train.
- By road the West Coast is three hours from Christchurch.

**For international conference visitors to Christchurch, a trip to the West Coast is not only a spectacular option for ticking off their bucket-list New Zealand experience, it is also incredibly easy.**

“For the perfect way to see uniquely New Zealand, the Coast is an absolute must,” says Ali Smith, head of product and innovation at Mitchell Corp.

The West Coast is the only place in New Zealand where national parks and marine reserves meet. It is a microcosm of all the South Island's untamed grandeur – one of the world's most spectacular natural environments, with five national parks and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

“The mountains pitch down into the roaring waves of the Tasman Sea, and then you hit the Great Coastal Road and the dense subtropical rainforest unique to this part of the world. The first thing that strikes you is the vibrant green. It's the home of pounamu greenstone, an ancient land – three hours from Christchurch but a world away.”

In just a day, delegates can be out of their conference rooms in Christchurch and immersed in New Zealand's most

dramatic and inspirational landscapes – snowcapped mountains, glaciers, sprawling rivers, dramatic coastline and deep green rainforest. And then there's the wildlife – the weka, white heron, kiwi, fur seals and Hector's dolphins.

The journey from Christchurch through the Southern Alps on the TranzAlpine is a gold-class experience in itself. Travelling from coast to coast through the 'Great Divide' the view is all encompassing through the oversized panoramic windows. The all-inclusive Scenic Plus dining experience serves up seasonal menus inspired by the mountains and rivers.

“Get on a magnificent train, eat salmon going over the river where it spawned, take a photo at Lake Brunner and Arthur's Pass – this is all about memories that give our guests the chance to experience New Zealand's true identity and our superb manaakitanga,” Smith says.

Two West Coast properties in the Scenic Hotel Group's collection stand out, both jewels in the crown, one set in pristine glacial forest, the other where the ocean meets subtropical rainforest.



## LEGACY TE WAONU HOTEL, FRANZ JOSEF

The ultimate in eco-conscious luxury, the five-star Legacy Te Waonui Hotel, Franz Josef wilderness retreat is easily accessible by air, rail or road.

In the heart of 'Glacier Country' in the village of Franz Josef/Waiau on the edge of Franz Josef Glacier/Kā Roimata o Hine Hukatere, Legacy Te Waonui Hotel is a destination designed with sustainability to the fore. It is the only luxury property of its kind in the area and an exemplar for eco-luxury accommodation in New Zealand.

Incredibly secluded, the 97 guest rooms plus the Canopy Restaurant and Bar, and the Amaia Luxury Spa are nestled in native forest. Te Waonui's four wings join together to enclose an area of native rainforest, carefully preserved during construction, and so dense that guests can't see the opposite wing, ensuring a sense of privacy. Natural lighting is abundant, building materials have been chosen to minimise environmental impact, and the retreat's carbon footprint is reduced with energy efficient design.

Outside are mountains, glaciers, rivers, lakes, coastline and the native forests of the South West Coast World Heritage Area.

With capacity for 40 guests theatre style or 10 guests for a boardroom meeting, the hotel is set up for high end, boutique incentives or executive retreats. Canopy Restaurant and Bar is an oasis of quiet luxury and Te Waonui's chef is inspired by the region's

bounty, fresh locally sourced produce.

On the doorstep, nature-based pursuits include everything from glacier and bush walking, cycling, scenic flights and glacier landings to heli-hiking and eco-rafting. Electric bikes are also on hand for anyone who wants to explore the area at leisure on two wheels. There are wildlife tours including visiting the wildlife and kiwi conservation centre, and beach walking on nearby Okarito beach. Kayak, cruise and fishing experiences are available at nearby Lake Mapourika. Thrill seekers can also capture memories of a lifetime and tick off one of Red Bull's nine 'Most Insane Places to Skydive in the World' with Skydive Franz. Legacy Te Waonui's expert local staff

can arrange and manage both on-site and off-site experiences.

Alison Smith, head of product and innovation at Scenic Group says Legacy Te Waonui Hotel is designed to expand the senses and create a feeling of peace and well-being with world class service and natural, eco-conscious luxury.

"All our guests tell us, that being so deeply immersed in nature – the glacier, the forest walks, the birds – renews and energises them."

Franz Josef is a two-hour drive from Hokitika (which has the nearest regional airport), three hours' drive from Greymouth (and the TranzAlpine railway station), and a six-hour drive from Christchurch.



# A MOUNTAIN TOP IS A TERRIBLE PLACE FOR A MEETING



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**Scenic Hotel Punakaiki is at the centre of the Great Coast Road, rated as one of the world's most spectacular coastal drives. The lush subtropical rainforest surrounds create a temperate climate all year round. This is the Wild West Coast at its very best.**

With private ocean and rainforest aspects, the executive lounge and dining areas and 63 spacious and private rooms at Scenic Hotel Punakaiki all have uninterrupted views of the Tasman Sea, Punakaiki Beach or the surrounding forest.

This stunning retreat is located right on the beach with spectacular views surrounded by geological formations, coastal forest, rich birdlife and marine mammals – and arguably the best sunsets in New Zealand.

Walking through the resort is an experience in itself, and it is easy to wander on to the beach or in the forest without seeing another soul, except a curious weka (native flightless bird). Birdsong and breaking waves are the only sounds.

Punakaiki's famous Pancake Rocks at Dolomite Point were formed over 30 million years ago, and these ancient limestone stacks are an absolute must-see on the West Coast, just a few minutes from the hotel. The 20-minute all-weather walk winds around the unique limestone formations of pancake rocks and blowholes. The best view is at high tide to witness the blowholes in action, when the ocean surges into underground caverns below, and water is forced up. As high tide

approaches huge geysers of spray burst skywards. The hotel posts daily tide details at reception, and it's worth making a note on arrival. The Punakaiki Marine Reserve surrounds the Pancake Rocks and blowholes and covers much of the coastline at the edge of the Paparoa National Park.

An exciting new development – Punangairi – the \$26 million Experience Centre is now open at Dolomite Point opposite the Pancake Rocks and Blowholes. Made of timber with a living green roof, the building merges into its surroundings. Its anchor-shaped spaces house the



Punakaiki Hotel and Garden Bar

Paparoa National Park Visitor Centre and other facilities for the Department of Conservation. The second stage of development includes a new meeting and exhibition space.

Up the road a little further is the Punakaiki Rocks Hotel and Garden Bar, known for its warm friendly atmosphere, hearty local food and brews, and a welcoming outdoor garden. Scenic Punakaiki Hotel can work with the team here to create fantastic dining experiences.

Not far from the hotel, the Truman Track is a walk through unspoiled subtropical forest where podocarp and rātā trees tower above thickets of vine and nīkau palms. The track emerges on a spectacular coastline with cliffs, caverns, a blowhole and a waterfall that plummets straight onto a rock-strewn beach.

Punakaiki is also home to an array of birds and marine life including New Zealand fur seals (kekeno) or southern fur seals, and Hector's dolphins.

\*Scenic Hotel Group has partnered with Toitū Envirocare to certify and measure emissions and reductions and has achieved Toitū Certified Carbon Reduce Certification for all its New Zealand properties.





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## MAKING BUCKET-LIST EASY

One of the main drivers of conference delegates to New Zealand is the country's reputation as a bucket-list destination. Mitchell Corp's launch of Delegates Discover New Zealand (DDNZ) is tapping into this market and giving PCOs and delegates easy options for extending their stay.

The Delegates Discover New Zealand programme is set to enrich delegates' experiences, contributing to the success of conferences hosted in the region.

DDNZ's range of short stay itineraries are designed as small group tours, ideal for pre and post conferencing or incentive and corporate retreats. Most of the itineraries are three days/two nights, but delegates can also opt for longer itineraries if they have more time.

Ali Smith, head of product and innovation for Mitchell Corp says since the launch of DDNZ at MEETINGS 2024, the bookings have been flowing.

"Our seamless itineraries are giving PCOs everything they need at their fingertips to help boost the delegate experience and they are loving the way they are packaged in perfect capsules.

"Our first programmes focus on the West



Punakaiki coast road

Coast and are a true asset to conferencing at Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre," Smith says.

Partnering with iconic New Zealand brands like the TranzAlpine Train, and Scenic Hotel Group, delegates can experience the beauty of New Zealand while enjoying world-class hospitality.

"DDNZ encourages the time-poor delegate, flying across the world to New Zealand for a conference, to stay on and explore the country while saving them valuable research time.

"DDNZ is part of the conference package so it's easy to book, and itineraries are specifically designed for these professionals," Smith says.

PCOs can also tailor the itineraries to the topic of the conference or association meeting. "For example, for a geology conference, PCOs can build itineraries around visiting sites of geological significance on the West Coast."

One of DDNZ's partners is Development West Coast, the regional economic development agency for the West Coast region on South Island.

Development West Coast's destination and tourism manager, Patrick Dault says conference visitors are providing a huge boost for the region.

"DDNZ allows event organisers to focus on delivering the content of the conference, and



finding the right speakers, accommodation and venues. DDNZ takes care of all the recommendations for delegates on what to do pre or post-event."

Professional conference organiser Arna Wahl-Davis from Composition, says the West Coast has so much to offer as a pre or post-conference destination.

"Our recent four-day adventure there was action-packed, delivering more experiences than we typically enjoy in a year. Every encounter was brimming with enthusiasm and passion, with each person sharing their business story and offerings.

"The service and food everywhere we went was exceptional from five-course degustation meals to whitebait fritters at the local pub. Smiles and friendly conversations awaited too.

"Our outlook of the West Coast has completely changed now, and we can't wait to take a group back there," she says.

# WĒTĀ WORKSHOP TEAMS WITH LOCAL IWI TO CREATE THE POUNAMU PATHWAY EXPERIENCE

The West Coast has recently opened two world-class experiences, with two more to come next year. These must-see attractions convey the rich stories of the area in a compelling cultural immersion.

Pounamu Pathway Centre,  
Māwhera, Greymouth  
Photo: Clint Trahan

Developed by the Poutini Ngāi Tahu iwi and Wētā Workshop, with award-winning architectural designs featuring tribal patterns and master carving, the Pounamu Pathway tells West Coast stories with



Pounamu Pathway Centre,  
Māwhera, Greymouth

spectacular audio visuals.

Pounamu (greenstone) is found in many places on the West Coast and is prized for its strength, durability and beauty. Used by the Māori for generations, it denotes great status.

The first of four Pounamu Pathway experience centres in Māwhera Greymouth – Life at the Māwhera Pā – opened in December 2023. The one-of-a-kind self-guided journey delves into the rich history of Poutini Ngāi Tahu and the Māwhera Pā settlement.

Visitors are led through a 90-minute experience encountering striking large-scale masterpieces crafted by Wētā Workshop and a sensory feast of visuals and sound, culminating in an unforgettable and inspiring cultural encounter. Daily life in the Pā and the region's past come to life through stories of pounamu, industry, and

cultural change.

The second centre to open, Kawatiri (Westport) Experience Centre is an immersive experience that celebrates the heritage and endeavour of the people of the Buller District. Learn, unearth and discover the incredible story of Kawatiri, and the past, present and future of this place. Explore themes of Triumph and Treasure – the taonga (treasures) of the earth (pounamu, coal, gold) and the bravery and innovation of human endeavour that inspired from the earliest Polynesian settlers to today.

Two more Pounamu Pathway centres are due to open next year at Hokitika and Awarua-Haast.

The Māwhera Greymouth Experience Centre is quick four-minute walk from the TranzAlpine, Greymouth Railway Station.

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Group benefits include the option of 1 complimentary drink voucher, \$10 off all F&B outlets and in-room dining as well as 1000 Bonus Points. Catering benefits include the options of additional morning and afternoon tea item, giveaway activation, with accommodation or bar tab voucher or a complimentary drinks package.

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Tangalooma Island Resort on  
Moreton Island / Mulgumpin

# BRISBANE

## NU SKIN CASE STUDY

Brisbane recently hosted over 1,500 high achievers from cosmetics company Nu Skin China on its annual incentive trip, generating an estimated A\$7.5 million for the local economy. Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA) partnered with Tourism Australia and Tourism and Events Queensland to secure the Nu Skin China incentive to Brisbane.

From welcome activations at the airport to opportunities to experience some of the region’s most popular attractions and natural wonders, and even an exclusive Brisbane City Hall reception, the city rolled out the red carpet for Nu Skin China’s delegates – demonstrating exactly why global businesses are turning to Brisbane to reward their high achievers.

### Why Brisbane?

Brisbane, Australia’s fastest growing major capital city, is the perfect stage for an incentive programme. With its world-class accommodation, vibrant outdoor lifestyle, diverse and thriving dining scene, and close proximity to iconic Australian attractions and experiences, it’s no surprise that TIME Magazine, Frommer’s and the New York Times have all named Brisbane one of the world’s best places to visit.

Christine Kong, Nu Skin China’s vice president, executive partnership, says Nu Skin has traditionally been “very selective” in choosing its destinations, and this year was no exception.

“We always hope to create a wonderful experience for our delegates with these incentive trips, so they come back with some unforgettable memories and a desire to achieve even more next year,” Kong says.

### City experience

Brisbane’s famously beautiful weather and flourishing lifestyle precincts, as well

as the walkability and connectivity of the city, were all factors that contributed to the company’s decision to award the incentive trip to Brisbane, in addition to the variety of delegate experiences that the city offers.

From sophisticated urban experiences, including the opportunity to dine at award-winning restaurants and indulge in boutique and designer shopping, to the sun and sand of the beaches and tropical islands on the city’s doorstep, Brisbane offers delegates the best of both worlds.

### Good choice of hotels

The city is also home to a range of luxury five-star hotels and affordable accommodation. Nu Skin China’s delegates stayed at Sofitel Brisbane Central, Hilton Brisbane, Hyatt Regency Brisbane, Brisbane Marriott Hotel, and The Westin Brisbane.

“All of our hotels were within walking distance of the CBD,” Kong says, “and it was very pleasant to walk around and admire Brisbane’s historic buildings.”

### Tangalooma Island

For many delegates, the highlight of the trip was a day tour to Tangalooma Island Resort on pristine Moreton Island/ Mulgumpin. Easily accessible from the city, the resort provides delegates with a chance to hand-feed wild dolphins that visit at sunset – a truly unforgettable experience.

It was a full resort takeover, with Nu Skin branding – on everything from flags and



Gala dinner at the Brisbane City Hall

### The Facts:

- 1,500 delegates from mainland China
- 200 staff
- 6 hotels
- 60 tour guides
- 5-day programme
- A\$7.5 million economic impact

banners to coconuts filled with refreshing coconut water – displayed throughout the resort. Making their day even more memorable, delegates experienced a scenic helicopter flight over the beautiful waters, giving them a glimpse of the area’s incredible marine wildlife from above, and ended the night with a spectacular fireworks display.

### Gala dinner

Finally, delegates were treated to a gala dinner at the heritage-listed Brisbane City Hall, with local government representatives in attendance.

Kiro Yin, key account director, mandarin OZ International Travel Services, says it’s the sheer variety of iconic Australian experiences that Brisbane has to offer visitors that makes it an unbeatable destination. “In five days, these delegates experienced dolphins, koalas, beaches, wineries, theme parks, and world-class shopping and dining,” Yin says. “They got all the flavour you want from a trip to Australia, and it’s all within a short drive of Brisbane.”

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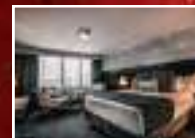
Our three-day program, "Accelerate," designed by meeting managers for meeting managers, will lead participants on a dynamic journey through three core pillars: People, Technology, and Experience. Gain invaluable insights and actionable knowledge to propel your professional growth and drive the future.

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# BRIGHT TIMES AHEAD FOR BRISBANE

A group of business event planners from around Australia got to experience the latest business event offerings whilst in Brisbane recently. They joined hosts from Brisbane Economic Development Agency to check out some of the latest offerings first-hand.

By Terry Holt

Queensland's capital city is attracting significant attention and it's not all about the 2032 Olympics. The Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA), the city's key driver of investment, tourism and events, has delivered A\$1 billion in economic benefit for Brisbane's residents and businesses. The organisation launched its inaugural State of the City Report in May to showcase Brisbane's competitive advantage on the global stage and attract investment into the city's \$275 billion economic future, rolled out successful destination marketing campaigns to support the city's record-breaking \$10.6 billion visitor spend and supported major events that injected \$253 million into the city's economy.



Cruising the river in style on board YOT Club.



At Felons Brewing, one of many venues at Howard Smith Wharves





Aerosol Masterclass Activity - Vast Yonder at Superordinary



A visit to EatStreet Northshore Precinct



Wine blending at the City Winery

**Business events**

Professional conference, event and meeting planners have plenty of choice when it comes to accommodation, venues and activities as well as partner and pre and post programmes.

Experienced event manager, Kate McCarron enjoyed the opportunity to update her knowledge on Brisbane. “The experience was incredibly informative, exciting, and eye-opening. I gained valuable insights into what Brisbane has to offer, and I was particularly impressed with the organisation and hospitality provided by BEDA team.”

She also highlighted the impressive pipeline of citywide developments and incentive experiences discovered on

the famil such as Vertigo Brisbane, SuperOrdinary Gallery, Kiff & Culture, City Winery Brisbane and an insight into the soon to open Star Brisbane.

Daniella Repole from Funktionalität was pleased to be visiting the city for the first time. “Brisbane exceeded my expectations. I was impressed by its diverse venues, and range of activities. This experience has opened my eyes to Brisbane's potential as a top-tier destination for future events.”

Attendees were also thrilled by experiences such as the Vertigo Brunch and Story Bridge climb. Leonard Tang, OzTravel commented that he was impressed with the variety of experiences that Brisbane has to offer and Vertigo was “an eye opener”.

**Group details:**

The group was accommodated at W Brisbane and experienced River to Bay cruises, Kiff & Culture Tours, Vertigo, YOT CLUB, Howard Smith Wharves, Story Bridge Adventure Climb, City Winery, Vast Yonder at Superordinary and Eatstreet. Transportation was provided by YourSTA and Aries Queensland.

**Attendees:**

- Kate McCarron, director of business development, Unicorn Group
- Annette Gaborit, Destination Australia specialist, Goway
- Katie Shaw, national project manager, Arinex
- Leonard Tang, general manager, Oztravel
- Daniella Repole, event manager, Funktionalität Events And Experiences



At the W Brisbane enjoying pre dinner drinks outside



The Story Bridge and Howard Smith Wharves

# BIGGER IS BETTER AT BRUCE PULMAN PARK



New Zealand Sikh Games at Bruce Pulman Park



and scale of its facilities, combined with exceptional customer service and operational excellence.

“We can accommodate a wide range of events, from small corporate meetings to large gala dinners to international sports tournaments. Our team is dedicated to providing personalised service to ensure each event is a success, tailored to meet the specific needs and preferences of our clients.”

While the first class, dormitory-style accommodation is different from traditional accommodation setups, Howlett says it offers a unique advantage for certain groups, especially for conferences with large delegations, educational institutions and sports teams. It fosters, she believes, a sense of community and networking among attendees.

“We’ve found that by highlighting these benefits and offering competitive pricing, we can effectively market this option. It is particularly popular for multi-day events where attendees benefit from staying on-site.”

To prove the versatility of the site, Howlett points out that upcoming events include an awards gala dinner for a national sport organisation, a Government agency multi-day conference utilising accommodation and full catering, a tertiary educational institute graduation dinner, and a youth forum luncheon and job expo. Those events, along with the park’s variety of well-equipped meeting rooms regularly used by the local business community, point to an impressive facility that would be hard to compare with anything else in New Zealand.



Sarah Howlett

There are not many people in New Zealand who can say they’ve overseen an event with more than 35,000 attendees, but Sarah Howlett, sales and marketing manager for Bruce Pulman Park at Takanini (Auckland), can put her hand up for just that.

The New Zealand Sikh Games is a sporting and cultural event with a focus on bringing communities together with food, games, dancing, sports and fairground rides for the kids. It draws attendees from around the country as well as from overseas.

“Managing this annual event requires extensive coordination and planning,” says Howlett, who has held her position at the park for nearly 18 months. “But it has been a tremendous success and is growing year on year, showcasing our capability to handle large-scale events. Planning for the 2024 Games in December is now well underway and will be a highlight of the year.”

Bruce Pulman Park is an enormous complex geared mainly towards the local community. It’s used mostly as a sporting (but open to anything) resource for allcomers, with an emphasis on helping regional groups who have the team but not necessarily the clubrooms. However, it also has the capacity to host corporate events in a large conference room, meeting spaces and Pulman Lodge. Accommodation includes studio rooms, apartments with kitchens and kitchenettes, as well as large dormitory and bunk style rooms. It is ten minutes from the southern motorway on-ramp, 25 minutes from Auckland Airport, and close to local restaurants, bars, and cafes.

Howlett’s previous experience was predominantly focused on corporate conferencing and events. “While corporate events are still a significant part of what we offer at Bruce Pulman Park, the range and

scope of events here is much more diverse. From hosting major international sporting events to organising multi-day corporate conferences, I enjoy working closely with our range of clients and partners to ensure each event is a success,” she says. “This shift from a primarily corporate focus to a broader, sports-centric portfolio has been both challenging and rewarding.”

She says managing such a large and diverse complex requires strategic planning and a strong team. “It’s all about the team really, and the team we have here at the park is one of the best I’ve ever worked with. We rely on advanced booking and management systems to keep track of all events and facilities. Regular and clear communication channels ensure everyone is on the same page. Additionally, we have dedicated teams for different sections of the complex, each specialised in their areas, which helps in efficiently managing the distinct needs of our clients.”

Although it might seem daunting, Howlett says having an enormous space is definitely advantageous. “It allows us to host multiple events simultaneously, cater to larger groups, and offer a wide variety of setups and services. While it can be challenging to manage, the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks. The key is efficient space utilisation and meticulous planning to ensure that all events run smoothly without any overlap or logistical issues.”

Howlett says Bruce Pulman Park’s strongest selling point is the versatility



# chat with IMPACT

## STRENGTH THROUGH COMMON PURPOSE

**Ōtautahi Christchurch recently hosted the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) 2024 Conference.**

As one of the world’s biggest communication conferences, it’s focus was on putting Indigenous knowledge at the centre of communication research.

The conference welcomed 1,400 delegates from 65 countries who participated in 320 sessions over the five days of the conference. The city was buzzing, with the attendees moving between 28 different rooms across five venues, soaking up over 530 hours of content.

### COLLABORATION FOSTERS SUCCESS

Everyone embraced the conference theme: Whiria te tāngata | Weaving people together - the strength that comes through common purpose.

University of Canterbury Professor Donald Matheson, Chair of the Local Organising Committee said a diverse range of collaborators worked together from day one to create a strong and successful conference. “From identification, bidding, securing the win, to planning and implementation we worked in unison throughout every stage of the process.”

***“It takes the sum of all doing their parts well to get the results like IAMCR.”***

PROFESSOR DONALD MATHESON,  
CHAIR OF LOCAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha | University of Canterbury (UC) hosted the conference in collaboration with local iwi, Ngāi Tūāhuriri, and senior academics from seven New Zealand universities.

The University of Canterbury, as the only tertiary institution in Aotearoa to have a formal Te Tiriti partnership with local iwi Ngāi Tūāhuriri, helped contribute to the successful bid.

Professor Matheson says the legacy of the event included economic, environmental, diversity and inclusivity impacts. “Christchurch will feel the positive effects of hosting these international guests for years to come.”

### LITTLE THINGS COUNT

Conference Innovators (CI) managed the project locally using multiple venues and hotels.

The key to delivering such a successful combination of communication and manaakitanga, according to Tracey Thomas, Managing Director of Conference Innovators.

“Establishing clear objectives and roles from the outset was pivotal in streamlining the management of the event. Clearly defining the role of IAMCR, the local organising committee and CI as the PCO enabled us to communicate efficiently and effectively with the myriad of conference suppliers and attendees through every step of the process.

“Ensuring every delegate is welcomed and hosted in a friendly environment by knowledgeable and professional people is not only best practice, but is crucial to an elevated guest experience and successful event.”

### DETAILS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

- Assisting delegates to get quick visa decisions
- Helping people navigate the city
- Meeting people’s accessibility needs
- Developing a conference app that was clear and easy to use
- Having the wifi for the multiple venues printed together on the back of participants’ lanyards
- Organising a large number of well-briefed student volunteers who made sure delegates’ needs were met - so they could focus on the research and enjoying the city.

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# IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR

Getting together as a team at the end of the year is part of the New Zealand corporate tradition – a time to celebrate success or reflect on the past year in a casual, relaxed environment.

BNZ Theatre banquet set up,  
Due Drop Event Centre

Suppliers in the industry note that following what has been a demanding year for some and at least 'interesting' for most, recognising effort and commitment is more important than ever.

They also point out there are many innovative ways to do this, either concentrating on networking and socialising to end the year – and bring in a new one – or using the occasion to build on an organisation's ethos through team building activities and a follow up celebration.

## Banding together

Having three entertainment related brands under one umbrella company means that Better Band, DJ4You and Crown Events can offer a full range of solutions for end of year functions and other events.

Managing director of Better Band Co, Jan Holland points out that collectively the company can now offer anything from photo booths, dance floors, special effects and DJs through to jazz bands, acoustic artists, cover bands and more. Full stage, sound system and other audio-visual equipment is available for hire.

While DJ4You started in 2010 and Crown Events five years ago, Better Band was launched during Covid and has since added a new dimension to the company's offering.

"It was a natural progression for us as we have moved more into private work," says Holland.

The company has increased its profile within the business event sector this year, with a successful appearance at MEETINGS in June plus plans to exhibit at both the PA & Office Show and the Business Events Expo.

"Historically a lot of our work has been with weddings but we've also been really

busy with corporates and we're having a strong year in 2024. So it makes sense to be at the major business events expos and get our messages through to the market."

## Cooking up a storm

Preparing and cooking food is the recipe for successful, fun team-building events at Social Cooking in Parnell, Auckland.

Corporates booking events with Social Cooking will first have their group split into teams, they hear an introduction from Social Cooking's chefs, choose ingredients and compete to cook up a delicious meal for themselves and their teammates.

When their meal is plated up, they sit and enjoy the food, while their creations are judged – with honours going to the most successful team.

Sales manager and key contact for business events, Alina Bista points out that the activity is ideal for team building.

"Teams need to brainstorm ideas, plan out their strategy and tasks, overcome issues and work together to complete the challenge in the time given. Just like a well

functioning workplace, but with a meal shared at the end."

The activity can also get people out of their comfort zone at times.

"Every now and then we have people who doubt their cooking skills, so they're nervous that they'll let their teammates down. But these events have a role for everyone – no one gets left out, or feels bad at the conclusion."

Social Cooking has just launched its 2024 Christmas options to the market and is seeing strong interest for the season. The company will also be exhibiting at the Business Events Expo in Auckland in November.

## Getting innovative

Stu Robertson, director of Team Up Events, says businesses are looking for fresh and innovative ideas when it comes to end of year team-building events and corporate get-togethers.

"It is more important than ever to look after and motivate staff during challenging times," says Robertson. "Our job is to support customers and deliver solutions to within their budgets. It is important to understand what their objectives are and design an event to meet these."

Team Up Events has a full range of programmes on offer, but Robertson emphasises that (just like the customers themselves) each event is different.

"We ensure that a tailored approach is taken when we design team-building programmes for our clients. That ensures that the activities foster interpersonal bonds which in turn develops an environment that will enable people to build trust and grow together – as a team."



DJ Jarom Hall (DJ4You)



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Team Up now has operations in both New Zealand and Fiji.

“We have been in Fiji for just over a year and we are seeing good traction out of New Zealand as well as from the local market and Australia. We recently ran an extremely successful event for Latitude Homes and we’ve got keen interest for other corporates for 2025.”

**Your choice in Auckland**

Auckland Conventions, Venues & Events is adding even more to its choice of venues in the near future, which in turn provides more flexibility for customers when considering an end of year function.

Richard Dodds, head of convention sales, points out that Grey Gallery at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki and Upper Mezzanine at The Cloud are all coming back under the organisation’s umbrella.

“While we are seeing some reduction in large bookings, we are seeing an increased number of bookings for smaller and more intimate functions. People are also looking for venues that offer something special or unique – venues like the Wintergarden at The Civic, Auckland Zoo and Auckland Art Gallery can all cater for that trend.

“At the other end of the spectrum we



can still cater for large events and we are seeing some business segments thriving – the Viaduct Events Centre, for example, is able to take 1,000 people plus in a premier waterfront location.

“We are all about enabling business and achieving business outcomes,” Dodds adds. “If corporates are looking for cost effective options this year we can certainly assist with ideas and solutions around that, no matter what the size of their event is.”

**Glamour and games**

Waka Pacific Trust owns and operates Due Drop Events Centre and Vector Wero

Whitewater Park in Manukau, Auckland. These offer team building opportunities with a difference and a variety of dining options with a built-in corporate responsibility of supporting the students and Youth of South Auckland.

“We can arrange a Christmas function for groups interested in everything from an elegant banquet at Due Drop Events Centre to a relaxed barbecue or woodfire pizzas at Vector Wero Whitewater Park,” says Tania Wakefield, general manager of sales at the Waka Pacific Trust. “At the park, teams can even build and test their own rafts, adding an adventurous element to their day with

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Weta Workshop gala dinner

activities like whitewater rafting, tubing, kayaking, and stand-up paddleboarding available for those not rafting enthusiasts.

“With this level of flexibility, we position ourselves as a venue that offers both glamour and games, catering to everyone's preferences.”

As a Community Good Entity, profits from bookings at DDEC and VWWP contribute directly to the community through the venues' Schools Programme.

For end-of-year banquets, options range from buffet or plated dinners at the BNZ Theatre (up to 300 guests) to larger gatherings at the Sir Woolf Fisher Arena (up

to 1,000 guests).

For a more casual setting with a touch of adventure, the Sunset Bar offers indoor-outdoor dining for up to 100 guests.

Looking ahead, Waka Pacific Climb is set to open in mid-2025, offering another team-building activity that will appeal to corporate groups seeking a different type of Christmas celebration starting next year.

**All themed and ready to go**

Team building and function organisers can avoid the need to dress up a venue (or bring in outside suppliers) when they host an event at Wētā Workshop Unleashed.

The venue at SkyCity in central Auckland is fully themed and set for a totally immersive experience.

Wētā Workshop Unleashed has capacity for 240 banquet guests or 700 cocktail, with catering from the venue's SkyCity events partners.

Sam Holdich, head of tourism at Unleashed, points out that the workshop's expert crew can offer bespoke and completely tailor-made add-ons – guided tours, characters, blood-making activities, galactic robot servers.

“Our business event guests can start their meal with an immersive and interactive tour, a drink in hand, before entering the fully themed events space for their gala dinner. Taking a tour before a sit-down meal or event is a fun and easy team building activity.

“Our characters can interact with guests during their event and range from Fauna the Guardian of Nature to Middle-earth Orcs and many more. We've got 30 years of movie special effects under our belt, so nobody does characters like we do.

“In addition, our breakout activities offer a creative and practical outlet for team members – guests love getting hands-on at our Special FX, leatherwork, sculpting or prosthetic ear application stations.”

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# MEETINGS IN ROTORUA

## SHOWCASES CULTURE AND MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Skyline Rotorua venue for the MEETINGS gala evening

**An elevated level of traditional and contemporary Māori culture was woven into the 28th iteration of MEETINGS in Rotorua in June, entrancing both international and national buyers, and exhibitors alike.**

The welcome function at Sir Howard Morrison Centre saw manahuri (guests) welcomed in a ceremony guided by local Māori iwi, Ngāti Whakaue.

BEIA chief executive, Lisa Hopkins says the traditional pōhiri (welcoming ceremony) is part of tikanga and kawa – customs and etiquette – that ensured visitors were warmly welcomed and made to feel at home in Rotorua.

“The dramatic representation of Te Ao Māori – the Māori World, created by a group of talented young performers from Te Whare Tapere o Te Arawa, fused visual art, theatre, contemporary dance and kapa haka

and ensured a powerful start to MEETINGS 2024,” says Lisa Hopkins, chief executive Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA).

Guests witnessed a transformation, from daylight to darkness, with nine suspended and elevated performers wearing impressive, large scale costumes. The nine stars of Matariki came alive weaving tales of their connection with Te Taiao (The Natural World).

Matariki, the Māori New Year was also celebrated at a spectacular dinner event for invited buyers at Rotorua Airport.

The evening featured a stunning 12-minute light and sound show with 160 drones depicting the story of Matariki lighting up

the night sky above Rotorua Airport.

Star studded entertainment included Aotearoa’s own Hollie Smith.

The evening was presented by RotoruaNZ Business Events and Coast Group with supporting partners Rotorua Airport, Terrace Catering, Event Impressions and The Production Agency,

### Show floor

More than 300 hosted and day buyers met with 200 exhibiting companies across 18 regions of New Zealand, including 35 new exhibitors.

New exhibitors this year included



Drone show celebrating Matariki over Rotorua Airport



Guests are welcomed into Sir Howard Morrison Centre





Rio comes to Rotorua at Skyline Rotorua



Matariki came alive with tales of connection at Sir Howard Morrison Centre

Rotorua’s award-winning Wai Ariki Hot Springs and Spa; Arrowtown’s new Ayrburn – a cluster of newly restored heritage event spaces celebrating Queenstown’s food and wine; and Tauranga’s Historic Village. New activity operators included Auckland’s Social Nature Movement, outdoor guided immersive nature experiences. Newly opened hotels, Auckland Hotel Indigo and InterContinental Auckland were also introduced to buyers.

**Rio comes to Rotorua**

After two days of business, the finale was a celebration of colour, themed 'Rio comes to Rotorua'.

More than 700 guests, clad in their most colourful attire, rode high above the city by Skyline Gondola to Stratosfare restaurant.

A bespoke Brazilian-inspired menu was served across seven different food stations, and guests had the chance, under floodlights, to experience the longest luge tracks in the world before enjoying a line-up of first class entertainment.

Partners for the evening were Skyline Rotorua, RotoruaNZ, Activities and Events Unlimited, The Production Agency and Johnston's Coachlines.

**Net carbon zero**

MEETINGS continued its journey as a certified net carbon zero event in 2024. To achieve this certification all emissions associated with the planning and operations were measured and audited in alignment with strict world-leading criteria.

**National business events awards**

New Zealand will celebrate its first national business events awards in 2025. The National Business Events Awards will recognise and reward outstanding achievements in the industry and promote excellence and innovation, collaboration and congeniality across the sector.

The new awards will sit within the BEIA framework, with accountability to the executive and board, while managed by an independent industry committee and trust.

The awards are open to anyone in the business events sector.

**PCOA and BEIA collaboration**

The Professional Conference Organisers Association Inc (PCOA) and Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that aims to enhance the business events industry

across Australia and New Zealand.

The MOU sets the stage for a range of collaborative initiatives, including advocacy efforts, and educational programmes designed to address the evolving needs of the business events industry. By working together, PCOA and BEIA aim to create a unified voice that can effectively support the business events communities. The strategic partnership underscores the importance of collaboration and the shared vision of both organisations to elevate the sector's global competitiveness and sustainability.



Photo: Stu Freeman

First timers at MEETINGS Luxor McGowan, Jai Patel, Conferences & Events Wellington; Anita Patel, IAG



Matariki gala dinner at Rotorua Airport



Silent conferencing sessions on the show floor at MEETINGS

## By Lisa Hopkins

chief executive  
Business Events Industry  
Aotearoa (BEIA)



### Cultural richness and collaborative spirit driving growth

At MEETINGS 24 in Rotorua, we witnessed the business events industry come together and make significant strides in leveraging New Zealand's cultural richness and collaborative spirit to drive economic growth. There is no doubt this MEETINGS will be remembered for how people felt, and that is a testament not only to RotoruaNZ, but to every single person who attended - buyer or exhibitor.

Not only did we see business exchanged, but also ideas, knowledge and innovation. Coupled with extraordinary manaakitanga, which touched the hearts of many, I can't help but feel this event will be long remembered for its experiences.

But there is plenty happening in our sector at the moment. As I write this, we are still waiting for the June 2024 international

arrivals data to be uploaded to the Stats NZ website. We track this monthly, and there are a couple of interesting observations.

May 2024 is the first month to record more international arrivals for business events, with a 6% increase compared to the same month in 2019. Arrivals from China and India show significant growth, with Australia at around 85% of pre-Covid levels for the same period.

We are also hearing about the softness in the accommodation sector, especially in the corporate and government space. There are hints of light in the centres with large conference spaces as conferences continue to be held, although we are keeping a close eye on this. Speaking with a Minister recently, I reminded him of the government's important role in our sector – not only hosting events but also contributing speakers, delegates and sponsorship. With government budgets tightening, our sector is feeling this decline acutely.

#### Tourism New Zealand's off-peak push

As you would have read, Tourism New Zealand has set an ambitious goal to increase international tourism revenue by \$5 billion over the next four years, with a substantial portion expected from off-peak visitors. Business events are central to this strategy. In 2023, 83% of international delegate arrivals occurred between March and November, compared to 62% of holidaymakers.

This falls well within the business events' wheelhouse, and as an industry, we are delighted to play a strategic role in supporting TNZ in achieving its goals.

However, we also can't forget that approximately 75% of New Zealand's business events base is driven from the domestic market. Unfortunately, when there is an economic crisis, this sector is often seen as discretionary.

Hopefully, the economic indicators appear to be pointing in the right direction and this is just a moment in time which will begin to right itself towards the end of the year.

#### Strengthening industry collaboration

During MEETINGS 24, an agreement was signed between BEIA and the Professional Conference Organisers

Association (PCOA). This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) aims to enhance the business events industry across Australia and New Zealand through collaboration and knowledge-sharing. By combining resources and expertise, BEIA and PCOA will provide both PCOs and corporate and association event professionals tools, learning opportunities and the development of professional standards.

This is an exciting opportunity for New Zealand event organisers to upskill via a series of online webinars and in-person development. You don't need to be a member of BEIA to take advantage of these webinars.

#### A united industry speaks out on the International Visitor Levy

Leaders from the tourism, hospitality, and event industries have been collaborating on industry-wide issues, with the latest focus on the International Visitor Levy (IVL). Currently, the IVL is a \$35 levy charged to most international visitors to New Zealand. Australia and most Pacific Islands are the exceptions. It was introduced in 2019 to address current challenges in the tourism and conservation systems. The current government is keen to have this reviewed, including the size of the levy.

The public was invited to make submissions, and the associations collectively urged the government to adopt the smallest possible increase. There is growing concern that the cost of travelling to New Zealand, beyond airfare, is becoming a barrier for visitors and international business event attendees. We stressed the importance of making New Zealand an accessible and welcoming destination for all visitors.

We now wait for the outcome from the government.

While there might be some highs and lows ahead, the one thing we should all agree on is that New Zealand's business events sector is poised for continued growth. Strategic initiatives, collaborative partnerships, and a deep commitment to cultural authenticity and sustainability will drive it.

*Nga mihi nui,  
Lisa Hopkins*



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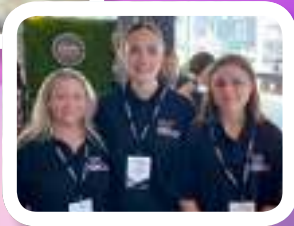
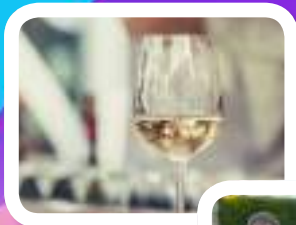
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