

EVENT NAME: Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) Annual Conference 2009

DATE: 17 - 22 May 2009

TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 980 participants including 200 exhibitors

ORGANISING COMMITTEE: Natalie Walker, Events Manager, 2009 AVA Annual Conference

OBJECTIVE OF CONFERENCE:

This annual conference, which brings together veterinarians from across Australia, was held in the Northern Territory for the first time in more than 28 years. The conference included programs from 16 specialist interest groups from across the industry including equine, small animals and cattle.

The theme for the conference was "One Medicine, One Health". It contained joint sessions and discussions between veterinary and medical scientists, collaborating on issues of common interest, with the theme weaving through most of the session streams.

PROGRAM/EVENT OVERVIEW:

Branded as the Ultimate Top End Conference Experience, the conference brought together sessions relevant to delegates from a wide range of areas and incorporated field trips, workshops, conference sessions, a members' forum and special interest group events.

DESTINATION SELECTION RATIONALE:

The conference provided an opportunity to learn and network in a remarkable setting. Darwin offered interesting venues for social events and particularly a chance to get outdoors in the tropical climate, which was a warm and welcome change for delegates from southern regions of Australia.

The Northern Territory, as a destination, was particularly relevant to the One Medicine, One Health Forum which places veterinary science in the broader context of medicine and the environment, including a session on animal management in rural and remote indigenous communities. The location also gave delegates the opportunity to enjoy a holiday prior to or after the conference.



MEET DARWIN

CONVENTION CASE STUDY – DARWIN, AUSTRALIA'S NORTHERN TERRITORY

THE DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE EXPERIENCE:

The Darwin Convention Centre provided a good size venue for the conference. All breakout rooms were used as well as all four exhibition halls, plus additional rooms for business meetings were utilised at the neighbouring Vibe Hotel. The newly finished wave lagoon and surrounding parkland of the Darwin Waterfront Precinct created a pleasant outlook from the centre.

12 accommodation properties were used as the official conference hotels with shuttle buses providing daily transfers between these and the Darwin Convention Centre.



ISSUES, CHALLENGES and TRIUMPHS:

Initially, the AVA Board had reservations about selecting Darwin due to the Darwin Convention Centre still being under construction at decision-making time and also due to the conference being held close to the Arafura Games, a significant Asia-Pacific international sporting competition in Darwin that attracts in excess of 5,000 participants, which could potentially impact upon flight availability.

The Northern Territory Convention Bureau & Darwin Convention Centre played a key role in gaining Board support, including liaising on their behalf with hotels and Qantas, supplying promotional material and providing assistance with site inspections for a number of Board members. The AVA Board were converted from being potentially negative and uncertain about the conference and destination to being overly impressed by the eventual conference outcome.

THE EXECUTION:

Field trips took in the unique wildlife of the Territory at Darwin's renowned Crocodylus Park, with a private guided tour by crocodile expert, Professor Grahame Webb, who is regarded as one of the world's leading authorities on crocodylian research and management. The field trips also included the Territory Wildlife Park for an exclusive back-of-house tour of the endangered species unit.

A varied social program included a historical tour of Darwin as well as a casual dinner at Darwin's newest attraction, Crocosaurus Cove, where delegates were able to get up close and personal with crocodiles, snakes and reptiles. A masked gala dinner, with a tropical backdrop and star-filled night sky, was held on the extensive beachside lawns of SKYCITY Darwin, a resort hotel, casino and conference centre located only a short distance from the Darwin CBD.

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY EXPERIENCE:

Darwin's tropical climate was deemed a winner, particularly for delegates who came from other cities that were cold at that time of year. The small town environment worked to bring delegates together and they advised of receiving a friendly and hospitable welcome from locals.

Organisers advised that another benefit of such a unique destination lay in the excellent and easily accessible pre and post touring opportunities available, ranging from national parks to fishing trips.

MOST MEMORABLE ASPECT OF THE EVENT:

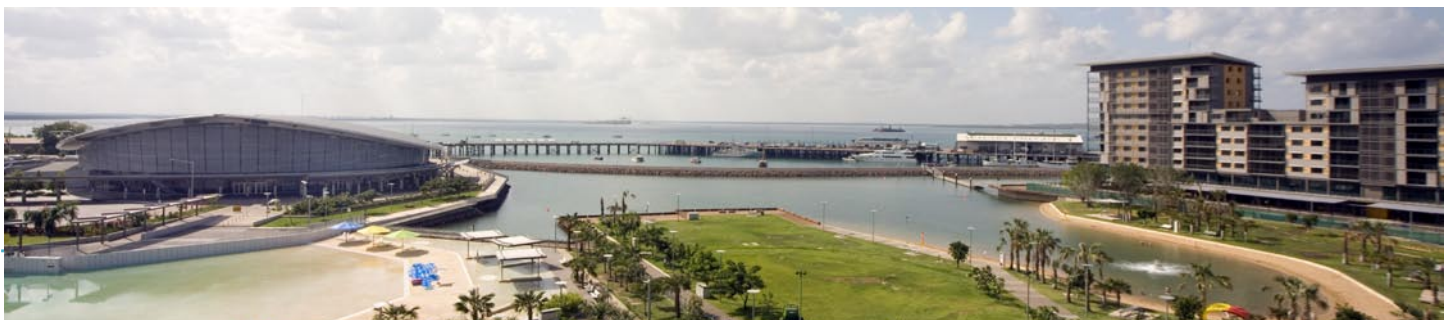
Organisers advised that the whole conference was an immensely memorable experience but identified the Gala Dinner on the lawns of SKYCITY Darwin as the highlight. A lovely warm evening, excellent food, great band and delegates in high spirits were among the many aspects that made the event a stand-out. They advised that it will be a tough one to beat at their conference next year.

CLIENT QUOTES:

"Delegates loved it! We have had an immense amount of positive feedback from delegates and exhibitors alike. Many people commented on the great location, the scientific program and excellent venue. The staff at the Darwin Convention Centre were excellent, they are so easy to work with and go above and beyond the call of duty."

"It was great that there were so many other venues and activities that we were able to utilise, such as Crocosaurus Cove, the Darwin Sailing Club and SKYCITY Darwin. A highlight of the program was to be able to take delegates out of their meeting space and immerse them in the sights of Darwin."

Natalie Walker, Events Manager, 2009 AVA Annual Conference



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