

EVENT NAME: 13th Annual Congress of the Perinatal Society of Australia & New Zealand

DATE: 19 - 22 April 2009

TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 690 participants including 44 exhibitors

ORGANISING COMMITTEE:

This was the joint chapter of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory's turn to host the annual conference. The organising committee consisted of Zsuzoka Kecskes, Congress Co-Chair, Jane Thompson, Congress Co -Chair and David Ellwood, Scientific Program Chair.

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE ORGANISER:

Ms Sarah Smith, Associate Project Manager - Events, Event Planners Australia (EPA)

OBJECTIVE OF CONFERENCE & OUTCOME:

The fundamental objective of PSANZ is to foster communication between health professionals, to advance the practice and understanding of Perinatology and our Annual Congress is the primary forum for this communication.

The Congress theme was "A Top End Experience: Better birthing, better babies" with particular focus on matters relevant to the delivery of perinatal care in remote regions.

Dr Jane Thompson, PSANZ Co-Chair Organising Committee said the Society last met in the Northern Territory, Alice Springs in 1998. It was ACT's turn to hold the congress, however given the small membership base in NT, Darwin was chosen for 2009 Congress.

"The attraction of Darwin was not only its location but also the new Convention Centre which was sufficiently large to accommodate the expected delegate numbers.

"Darwin was a great success attracting more delegates than expected. Thus holding the event in Darwin was probably a drawcard despite our initial concerns about the costs of travel and accommodation," Dr Thompson mentioned.

DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE EXPERIENCE:

Event Planners Australia (EPA) Associate Project Manager Events, Sarah Smith said the Darwin Convention Centre's team is outstanding and that it was their attitude and friendly disposition that make the difference, "absolutely nothing was too much trouble".

It is the DCC's General Manager Malu Barrios is the driving force behind their success and her mission is to ensure every single person that walks through the Centre's doors is made to feel like a guest. The venue has been specifically designed for scientific conventions such as PSANZ, with all the latest audio visual technology and wireless connectivity with the added bonus of sweeping views across the harbour, waterfront and parklands showcasing Darwin's tropical charm.

DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE EXPERIENCE continued:

“With every event it is the little things that make the difference”, said EPA's, Sarah Smith.

“The conference dinner was held at the Centre, the menu chosen and food presentation was exceptional but what surprised the delegates was the personal interaction from the Centre's Food & Beverage Manager Aaron Roussos and Executive Chef, Jock Mitchell.

“Aaron and Jock's passion and enthusiasm rubbed off on the crowd. The delegates literally hung on every word and were genuinely interested in how the emu and crocodile were prepared and taking notes on the ingredients included in the dishes. The audience roaring with laughter with their jovial banter, “ Smith quoted.

The exquisite menu combined with the local cover band 'The Seeds' the delegates keep saying it was the best conference dinner ever.



THE NORTHERN TERRITORY EXPERIENCE:

Holding the event in the capital of Australia's Northern Territory signified the importance of the Indigenous Health and medicine in remote locations.

PSANZ09 addressed issues of concern in indigenous populations including perinatal infections, as well as broader issues of risk and choice in maternity care, early origins of disease, and neonatal resuscitation.

The Congress attracted delegates from Australia, New Zealand and overseas, including midwives, neonatal nurses, neonatologists, obstetricians, scientists, pathologists, allied health professionals and epidemiologists.

EPA's Sarah Smith said “This was the first time our Congress has been held in the Top End and the members and sponsors were extremely supportive. They all took advantage of the opportunity to enjoy Darwin's tropical climate and alfresco lifestyle.

“Darwin is such a great destination. It has this wonderful relaxed, care-free lifestyle, however the professionalism and service levels are not comprised in any way. That is what makes it so special,” added Smith.

The Northern Territory Convention Bureau (NTCB) and the NT Government Department of Health and Families were extremely supportive of our event. The NTCB were a wealth of information from the initial enquiry stage to promotional support of the event. NTCB provided an advance site inspection, destination guides & imagery for the delegate satchels and assistance with various options for offsite events and touring.

TRIUMPHS:

This was the second event that EPA's Sara Smith has organised at the Darwin Convention Centre since its opening, the other being International Alumina Quality Workshop in September 2008.

"It was so refreshing to work with the Darwin suppliers again. As conference organisers, we travel to all areas of Australia and expect the same level of service whether we are holding an event in Sydney, Melbourne or Darwin.

"From our first event six months ago, we noticed a huge improvement on the response times and the understanding of our needs for PSANZ. It was also very rewarding to know that the operators had really listened and learnt from our constructive feedback, it certainly showed!" said Smith.

Another special highlight of this year's conference was the inclusion of a new concept 'Sunset Soiree' farewell drinks on the last day.

It was such a relaxing finale to a successful conference. Delegates chatted to new found colleagues and reminisced with old friends, a guitar player serenading delegates as the sun set over Mindil Beach. Due to this success it will be included in all future PSANZ Conference programs.



CHALLENGES:

Planning an event of this size with over 400 abstracts, 300 speaker presentations, 30 key note speakers, 44 exhibitors and a total of 690 attendees in a remote destination such as Darwin meant the planning timelines needed to be brought forward by at least two weeks earlier than in usual events to allow for the extra travelling time for equipment to arrive in the destination.

Many members had not been to Darwin before, so marketing the event well in advance was crucial to the success. The conference program had to be stronger than ever, with a sound relevance to the region combined with a good mix of networking opportunities and touring options.

"For our exhibitors and major sponsors, it was essential the sponsorship prospectus was prepared well in advance and communication optimised in the lead up to the event. The Darwin Convention Centre assisted this process by allowing advance freight receipt and storage free of charge," commented EPA's Smith.

The advance promotion and planning paid off with attendance and sponsorship above projections.

CLIENT QUOTES:

"The Society has not met in the Northern Territory since 1998 in Alice Springs, it was ACT's turn to hold the congress, however given the small membership base in NT it was decided that both Territories would host the 2009 Congress in Darwin.

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Dr Jane Thompson, PSANZ Co-Chair Organising Committee

"The Northern Territory's capital city is a new and exciting destination for conventions. A lot of members have not been to Darwin and it adds new flavour and interest to annual congress programs.

The waterfront location of the Darwin Convention Centre is superb and all suppliers are willing to assist in so many ways. We will be recommending other clients to consider Darwin for future events."

Sarah Smith, Associate Project Manager -Events, Event Planners Australia



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