

DELEGATES PROVE DARWIN IS A POPULAR CHOICE

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Since opening in June 2008, Australia's tropical harbour city continues to be a popular choice for conventions with 28 national and international conventions already confirmed for 2009.

Estimated to attract more than 14,000 delegates, General Manager of the Darwin Convention Centre, Ms Malu Barrios and her professional team are looking forward to another successful year ahead.

Ms Barrios stated that in their first six months of opening, the Centre hosted 135 events including national and international conventions, exhibitions, concerts and gala events with over 44,000 participants.

One of these was the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) Forum. Deputy CEO, Ms Liesel Wett, said the beauty of holding their event in the Northern Territory lay with the local NT division members, who really came up with a conference which included an interesting and varied social networking program.

"Our original target was 600 delegates, but the flexibility of the Convention Centre allowed us to accommodate larger numbers and we had almost 1,000 attendees and 56 exhibitors, more than the previous year," remarked Ms Wett.

Due to the joint initiatives of the Northern Territory Convention Bureau and the Centre's team, the year ahead looks positive in terms of confirmed events, however Darwin is not resting on its laurels, just yet.

"We are mindful of the challenging year ahead from an economic stand point. We have been in close contact with our convention organisers about the events to be held in the coming months.

“The feedback is that exhibitor and sponsorship numbers are on track, however it is too early to forecast any affect on delegate numbers. Most are being cautious about over-zealous projections and any unnecessary expenditure.

“Decisions for future association conventions do not seem to be affected with confirmations for major conventions in 2010, 2013 and even as far ahead as 2022, received in recent weeks,” added Barrios.

Opening a new convention centre always presents operational challenges and the feedback the Darwin Convention Centre has received from its clients on the professionalism and attitude of their team during this time has been very encouraging indeed.

International Alumina Quality Workshop (AQW) Chair and General Manager of Rio Tinto Research and Development, Bauxite and Alumina, Mr Steve Healy said, “the staff at the Darwin Convention Centre have the right attitude and make everyone feel so welcome. The catering was top class, as good as any conference I can remember attending and participants commented on the quality of the food.”

These results are now being validated with the strength in forward bookings. The track record of the last six months has given the confidence in the Centre’s capabilities and its ability to successfully host the highest demands of prestigious national and international conference organisers and their delegates.

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Darwin Convention Centre is a project of Darwin Cove Consortium and the Northern Territory Government and is proudly operated by international venue management specialist, AEG Ogden. www.aegogden.com