

## NORTHERN TERRITORY [NT] NEWS - BUSINESS REVIEW

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Darwin is gearing up to become Australia's newest convention city when the Darwin Convention Centre welcomes its guests in June 2008.

This world-class venue is the centrepiece of the Darwin City Waterfront, a 25-hectare lifestyle precinct which will have waterfront promenades, a wave lagoon, wharf apartments, hotels, al fresco restaurants, retail outlets, wide open parklands, a cruise terminal and beach.

"The opening of the Centre means meeting planners will have an exciting new venue option in Australia's Northern Territory," said Ms Malu Barrios, General Manager of Darwin Convention Centre. "Conference organisers are continually impressed by its waterfront location and the scope of the entire Darwin Waterfront development. The Centre will put Darwin City firmly on the local and global map as a top destination for meetings and conferences," she continued.

Barrios and her business development team are very pleased with the progress of bookings at the Centre. To date, 29 major conventions and two exhibitions have been secured as well as numerous banquets, gala events and regional meetings. The international and national conventions alone will bring over 20,000 conference delegates and their families to Darwin City.

Darwin Convention Centre is the missing piece of the city's business and leisure infrastructure jigsaw. Having a world-class convention facility recognises both Darwin's long-standing reputation as a unique destination as well as its emerging status as a dynamic business hub.

And now access to Australia's most northern capital city is even more accessible with Qantas recently announcing an increase of 1,540 seats per week. Qantas offers 68 return services per week to over seven major cities within Australia. Darwin International Airport also has direct flight access to Asia.

Clients are totally enchanted with the Darwin as Australia's newest convention location with the the Chief Executive Officer, Mr Noel Pettersen of the National Insurance Brokers Association [NIBA] sharing his experience stating that Darwin is Australia's best kept secret.

"It's an exciting city in a unique part of the country, the choice of Darwin for our 26th convention recognises the need for a new and very different destination and provide easy encouragement for delegates to extend their stay and explore the wonders of the Top End. There's already a lot of interest and we can't wait to get there!" said Mr Pettersen.

NIBA is holding its 26<sup>th</sup> annual convention at the Darwin Convention Centre in September 2008 and expect to attract over 600 of their members to attend.

The Darwin Convention Centre is also attracting many local academics and corporate companies to encourage their national meetings to be held in Australia's newest convention destination.

Two local spatial scientists are extremely excited about the opportunity to showcase the innovation and research being undertaken in the Northern Territory to build stronger links with development of space technology in South East Asia.

With the support of the Northern Territory Convention Bureau and a strong conference program, local conference co-convenors, Dr Renee Bartolo, who is also President of the Spatial Sciences Institute, and Mr Andrew Edwards won the bid to host the 14th Australasian Remote Sensing and Photogrammetry Conference (ARSPC) in Darwin.

This is the first time in the ARSPC biennial conference's 29 year history that the event will be held in Australia's Northern Capital. Expecting around 500 delegates in September 2008, Mr Edwards said, 'the response has been electric, attracting interest from as far afield as Canada, USA, Mexico and Africa. This is the ideal opportunity for our members and their families to experience the magical areas of Kakadu and the tropical savannah.'

Dr Bartolo said the event would embrace the local Darwin flavour. The conference dinner theme will be 'sarong and thongs' complete with innovative menus from the Centre's chefs, native Australian wildlife and a celebrity whip cracker. The latest in digital technology will be utilised, producing live podcasts via the conference website and without the new Darwin Convention Centre hosting this event would not have been possible.

Darwin City is the gateway to Australia's natural and cultural treasures. The World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park, Katherine Gorge and Litchfield are all within driving distance from the city.

"That is what makes Darwin such a unique conference destination and is exactly the point of difference our clients are searching for to enhance the overall delegate experience," added Ms Barrios.

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