

## EVENT CASE STUDY – DARWIN, AUSTRALIA'S NORTHERN TERRITORY

**EVENT NAME:** Darwin international Rodeo

**DATE:** 25 -26 June 2010

**TOTAL ATTENDANCE:** 2,500 over two days  
1,263 fixed auditorium seats and 450 temporary floor seating

**COMPETITORS:** An invitational event featuring Australia's Top 10 Bull and Bronco Riders plus international competitors from the USA, Canada, Brazil, Mexico and New Zealand.

**ORGANISERS:** Doug Vickers + Russell Green, Darwin International Rodeo

### BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVE OF THE EVENT:

Professional rodeo is a unique and spectacular form of entertainment, and also provides one of the social and sporting highlights of the year for many rural and regional communities.

Doug Vickers organised the first indoor bull-riding event in Townsville in the 1990's. The aim was to take all the elements of an 'outdoor Rodeo' indoors to showcase the talents world-class bull and bronco riders in a 'international spectacular' to entertain adults and children of all ages.

An invitational event, the Darwin International Rodeo is affiliated with the Australia Professional Rodeo Associations. In alignment with the International Professional Rodeo Association, Darwin was Round Two qualifier for acceptance to the World Cup finals to be held in Brazil. Round One was held at the Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne and Round Three will be held in Wodonga, Victoria.

The origins of Australian rodeo are firmly linked to the outback and our early settlers, with the stockmen and drovers who pioneered the overland stock routes and the huge sheep and cattle stations of the north. No other Australian sport can claim such an authentic connection to the day-to-day skills practiced by stockmen and drovers in the early days of Australia's settlement. To this day, breaking in a wild horse or working with cattle remains an essential part of everyday life for many; essential skills which are celebrated in rodeo.

### DESTINATION SELECTION RATIONALE:

When seeking a new location to attract some of the world's top 'rough stock' bull and bronco riders, Darwin was a perfect match.

"Darwin is a great tourist destination, it is the gateway to Australia's outback, it has sensational fishing, intriguing indigenous heritage, incredible World War history and awesome weather. It has all the elements to begin a new venture," stated Vickers.

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However, it was the overwhelming support from the local Darwin business community and the professionalism of the Darwin Convention Centre that clinched the deal.

Doug Vickers expanded by saying the concept to create a national event could only be successful if we surrounded ourselves with competent people to make the idea work.

“That is part of the beauty of doing business in Darwin. There is a freshness and eagerness to try something new, to embrace different ideas and run with it to make it a success.

The horses were transported from Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria. Local Stock Contractor, Dallis Wilschefski supplied the bulls, steelworks, fencing and barricades for the indoor Arena with 120 tonnes of sand was trucked in from Palmerston Soil Supply. Ticketing and provision of ushers was handled by the Darwin Entertainment Centre.

“A lot of people did not think it could happen, holding an indoor rodeo, in a convention centre. That is understandable because they have not seen it before,” added Vickers.

“Darwin and the Darwin Convention Centre was very lucky to have the likes of Malu Barrios at the helm as General Manager. Although they had never run an event like ours before, Malu and her team were more than willing to work together to make the event a success. They wanted it to happen and that is what made the difference,” quoted Vickers.

It takes about 4-5 years to build on the success of the event. The goal is to add an exhibition style component, similar to ‘Equitana’ that is held in Melbourne. Due to the scale, this would be held every second year, showcasing the Equine industry.

A full-scale exhibition is in the planning stages to display ‘everything horse related’ such as saddlery, veterinary supplies and products plus presentations, seminars and workshops on all the latest industry trends. The Expo would be held during the day and the Rodeo as entertainment in the evenings.

“In fact, Malu Barrios and I are catching up to discuss how we can improve and make the event even bigger in Darwin next year,” added Vickers.

### DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE EXPERIENCE:

Planning was the secret to the success of this event. Doug Vickers had great praise for the whole team at the Darwin Convention Centre, however it was the Centre’s Building Services Manager, Michael Connor, a qualified engineer, that stood out from the crowd.

Doug Vickers said, “Our event is a unique one. Being an engineer myself, I understand the nuances involved with floor load factors. In this case the floor of the convention centre is suspended over the underground carpark. Michael was down to earth, excellent to work with and very knowledgeable.

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"I admired his initiative to contact other Convention Centres - where similar events had been held - to see what challenges may lie ahead."

Distribution of weight factors of the soil and animal had to be taken into account, with each bull tipping the scales at 600 kilograms and the horses at around 350 kilograms each.

Behind the scenes, DCC's Event Coordinator, Teresa Hall was involved in many areas outside the organisation of a typical event. Teresa liaised closely with a variety of local bodies including Department of Primary Industries - Bio Security for Animal Welfare, organised an on-site Veterinarian, developed an evacuation plan for removal of injured and/or dead animals and handled traffic management with the Darwin Waterfront Corporation.

### CHALLENGES:

The size of the arena was changed the day before to accommodate an additional amount of animals than was originally agreed. To adhere to floor loading limits, the length of the arena was shortened to ensure smooth flow of the animals between rides, allowing for housing of animals in pens on the external loading dock.

In the evening, the Darwin Convention Centre also held a gala dinner for 440 guests for another client. DCC's Event Department added additional staff throughout the foyers to direct guests and worked with their Food and Beverage Department to ensure all elements of food safety, preparation and service were adhered to, and timings were planned around both schedules to avoid any conflict.

### CLIENT QUOTES:

*"Darwin is a great tourist destination, it is the gateway to Australia's outback, its has sensational fishing, intriguing indigenous heritage, incredible World War history and awesome weather. It has all the elements to begin a new venture."*

**Doug Vickers, Organiser, Darwin International Rodeo**

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### CLIENT QUOTES continued:

*"The Darwin Convention Centre's team were excellent to work with. Professional, yet so down to earth and extremely knowledgeable, I look forward to working with them all again next year."*

**Doug Vickers, Organiser, Darwin International Rodeo**

*"Darwin and the Darwin Convention Centre is very lucky to have the likes of Malu Barrios at the helm as General Manager. Although they had no idea how to run an indoor rodeo, they wanted it to happen and that is what made the difference."* **Doug Vickers, Organiser, Darwin International Rodeo**

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