

CASE STUDY



- Event:** 52nd Australia - Japan Joint Business Conference
- Date:** 12 - 14 October 2014
- Attendance:** 304 delegates
- Organiser:** Paul Gallagher, Executive Director, Australia Japan Business Co-operation Committee (AJBCC)

Background

The Australia Japan Business Co-operation Committee (AJBCC) is a private organisation representing an active group of top Australian businesses. It is recognised as an effective medium for promoting increased bilateral trade and close economic liaison, supplementing the efforts of Government. Membership of both the AJBCC and its counterpart in Japan, the Japan Australia Business Committee (JABCC) is corporate and includes the highest ranking executives such as the CEO or Chairman as the company representative. The 62 Australian members account for an estimated 85 - 90% of Australia's exports to Japan across a wide range of industries.

Event Objective

The annual joint business conference, which alternates between Australia and Japan, is the major AJBCC event of the year.

The main aim of the Executive Committee for the 2014 conference was to provide a program rich in information that would be relevant to the delegate's working lives or of value to their organisations. Of the highest priority for the Executive Committee was the program content to be achieved by the calibre of speakers they would engage. Against the backdrop created by the Japan Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (JAEPA) signed in July 2014, the theme of "Australia and Japan – A new era in the relationship" set a focus of exploring fresh opportunities in the bilateral commerce.

Choosing a destination to complement the organisation's objectives and event theme led the AJBCC to consider northern Australia, and its appeal as Australia's next frontier with many developing opportunities in a range of sectors including energy, resources, agriculture and tourism. A range of locations was considered within the region.

Event format

The conference program held over 3 days included:

- Briefings of the two Official Delegations
- Opening Ceremony
- Nine plenary sessions with 28 speakers, and a special parallel program: “Preparing the Future Generation of Leaders for their Asian Engagement”
- Signing of the MOU between the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) and the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO)
- The Closing Session included the Joint Chairs’ Statement and a Conference Statement - both endorsed by acclamation - and was followed by a media conference
- A formal welcome reception, conference dinner and an accompany persons’ program

Outcomes

The Northern Territory Government led a strong case in persuading the final choice of Darwin as the host city. The invitation supporting infrastructure such as the world class Darwin Convention Centre among the advantages offered. Following location, venue, accommodation, and event supplier appraisals, the Executive Director of AJBCC, Paul Gallagher, was satisfied that Darwin had the appeal and resources that would provide an experience of northern Australia’s vitality. Although frequent global travellers, Darwin is a destination where 95 percent of the delegates would not have previously visited.

The record attendance of 304 delegates, representing an increase of nearly 30% on average attendance, signified the appeal of program content strongly relevant to the daily working life of delegates. Of the 177 persons in the Japanese delegation, 120 delegates came from Japan. Presentations by authoritative speakers covered topics including the expanded range of business opportunities for Australia and Japan – bilaterally and in third countries – arising from the signing of the JAEPA, exploration of increased collaboration and cooperation in third countries, investment, energy and food security, sustainable logistics, and mitigating disaster recovery.

“We are delighted that our delegates had the opportunity to access such valuable information from the 28 presentations, and in such a dynamic part of Australia”, shared Paul Gallagher. “The record attendance reflected the current health and quality of the bilateral relationship over its various dimensions – particularly economic and political.” Mr. Gallagher believes the conference “will encourage corporate exploration of opportunities established by the dynamism and vitality of the region’s economy - Darwin, the Northern Territory and northern Australia. Japanese investment in regional projects such as the INPEX operated Ichthys LNG Project will continue in a Northern Territory Government established favourable investment environment.”

INPEX Australia, a leading local explorer and producer of oil and natural gas, along with the Northern Territory Government were the ‘Principal’ sponsors of the conference which also had eight ‘General’ sponsors. Their participation financed a well-managed event. Amongst the memorable moments was an “extraordinary welcome reception” hosted by the Hon Adam Giles MLA, the Northern Territory’s Chief Minister in an exhibition hall themed in ‘outback’ mode and featuring native flora and fauna. The conference dinner, held in another exhibition hall of the convention centre, included an excellent menu of local product as well as entertainment by a quintet from the Darwin Symphony Orchestra.

The Darwin Convention Centre Experience

Paul Gallagher was delighted to work with the team at the Darwin Convention Centre. *“Before, during and after the conference, the experience was good,”* he said. *“We developed good communications with our Event Coordinator, the ICT team, Event Production, and the Chef to develop and finesse our event. When we had last minute changes, the ‘team’ was very accommodating, and always very friendly and solicitous of whether one needed anything. This reflects a mixture of good training and leadership and the staff’s pleasure at working in the Darwin Convention Centre environment”*, observed Mr Gallagher.

Summary

Darwin is considered the hub of northern Australia, and has the strongest investment and growth forecasts in Australia. The delegates to the 52nd Australia-Japan Joint Business Conference enjoyed the warmth of Darwin’s community and had the opportunity to see for themselves the vitality and energy of the region. Supported by professional conference services, a world class convention centre and generous sponsors, the AJBCC produced a successful event where delegates could deepen their knowledge and develop relationships to pursue fresh business opportunities and agreements, thus satisfying this major event’s goals.

For further information or comment, please contact:

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