

## FIRST REGIONAL INDIGENOUS CONFERENCE A TRIUMPH FOR DARWIN AND THE CONVENTION CENTRE

15 April 2012

In the final week of March, the Darwin Convention Centre provided the venue for the historic, inaugural meeting of Indigenous tourism experts from around the world, the Pacific Asia Indigenous Tourism Conference (PAITC).

Hosted by the Northern Territory Government, PAITC was a joint initiative of Tourism NT, the Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC) and the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) with the support of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

The conference, with the theme "Tourism and Indigenous People - enriching our future together," was officially opened by the Federal Tourism Minister, The Hon Martin Ferguson MP, and resulted in the successful adoption of the "Larrakia Declaration" on indigenous tourism, in recognition of the tribal lands on which it was developed and resolved.

NT Tourism Minister Malarndirri McCarthy said indigenous organisations from around the world had contributed their input to the declaration. "The Larrakia Declaration will now form the guiding framework for the future development of indigenous tourism and the involvement of indigenous people in tourism throughout the Asia Pacific Region and beyond," said Ms McCarthy.

Conference Chair and Chairman of ATEC, Mr John King said that, as the first Pacific Asia Indigenous tourism conference to be held, the organisers were very encouraged by the greater-than-expected attendance of 191 delegates from 16 different countries.

Keynote speakers included Anita Mendiratta a global management consultant and noted author of one of the most celebrated books on the role of tourism in developing nations along with Ben Sherman, a member of the Sioux Nation, who was born and raised on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

The selection of Darwin as the venue for the inaugural indigenous conference was particularly appropriate, with the Northern Territory taking pride in its extensive Aboriginal history and culture which form a significant and respected element in the Territory's appeal and provided a topical and relevant case study for visiting delegates.

Ms Malu Barrios, General Manager of the Darwin Convention Centre, said the Centre and its staff were privileged to have hosted the conference. "The Centre's location on the shore of the Arafura Sea was a place of connection for the traditional owners, the Larrakia people, where for centuries they welcomed visitors while trading with other indigenous tribes and Southeast Asian neighbours.

For John King, PAITC was the third conference he had attended at the Darwin Convention Centre. He said that conference delegates had been generous in their compliments of the performance and service of the Centre. "One of the keynote speakers said that the Centre was one of the best and most flexible he had ever worked with and the high standard of the catering was widely commented on by delegates. I was delighted and proud that these comments were made about a convention centre in my home country" Mr King said.

For further media information or comment, please contact:

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