

## DARWIN CONVENTION CENTRE A DREAM RUN FOR AUSTRALASIAN SLEEP CONFERENCE

31 October 2012

For three days in early October the Darwin Convention Centre welcomed its fourth significant conference in three weeks when the Australasian Sleep Association (ASA) and Australasian Sleep Technologists' Association held their 24th annual meeting at the Darwin Convention Centre for the first time.

A higher than expected number of 569 sleep experts from around the world heard more than 200 presentations on the latest research and clinical updates on all aspects of sleep health and sleep disorders from Australian and international experts.

ASA President Shantha Rajaratnam announced that, for the first time, the meeting would examine sleep health and the impact of sleep disorders in Aboriginal communities as well as the impact of poor sleep on the health of the nation such as the established links between sleep disturbance, diabetes and heart disease. He added that the findings demonstrate that healthy sleep is vital to maintaining health and should be viewed as the third pillar of good health, with diet and exercise.

While the conference was titled Sleep DownUnder 2012 - Sleep Up Top, the program's 204 sessions plus networking and social functions allowed just enough shut-eye time between the busy daily programs which featured subjects including:

- Tired Shift Workers Pose Road Threat
- Indigenous Kids Sleep Badly, Wake Often
- Mobile Phones and Computers Depriving Teens of Much-needed Sleep
- Dreams and the Inner World
- Snoring Babies Slower to Learn

A group of visiting international speakers made a number of presentations including:

- Money, Stress and Bullies Keep Insomniacs Awake
- Pregnancy Shaves an Hour off Sleep
- Sleep Restriction Damages the Body's Ability to Limit Eating
- Insomniacs No Longer Popping Sleeping Tablets
- Get Physical to Sleep Better

The presentation which probably (and perversely!) attracted the most notice was Four in the Bed: Sleeping the Aussie Way which detailed the findings of a survey by Sydney University of 5,558 Australians and with whom they slept - partners, children and pets.

The survey found that sleeping alone is relatively rare with 22% regularly going to bed solo; 70% sleep with a partner; 13% with a child; a quarter "occasionally" with their pet; a further quarter slept with two others while eight hardy souls (0.14%) slept every night with all three.

### **Conference a hit for both the ASA and Darwin Convention Centre**

All conferences are a test of every aspect of a convention centre's operation; the larger and more high profile the conference, the greater the test. The Darwin Convention Centre was therefore particularly appreciative of the compliments and thanks expressed by the Conference Organisers and the ASA President at the conclusion of the event.

Conference Convenor Maree Barnes commented "the Centre was the only venue where they had not experienced any technical glitches." Ms Barnes specifically cited the space, the outlook and the "outstanding" service and "personal service" they had received including going "above and beyond" the call by assisting at the last minute with a gift by producing a quality bottle of wine. Similar comments - and words such as "exemplary", "superb" and "amazing" - featured repeatedly in the 200 surveys completed for the ASA and verbally in delegate feedback.

The ultimate accolade was received from several of the sleep doctors who indicated that, as a result of their experience at the ASA meeting, they will be attending the Conference of the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand to be held at the Darwin Convention Centre March 23 - 27 2013.

The General Manager of the Darwin Convention Centre, Malu Barrios said she was delighted to receive the compliments and congratulations of the organisers and delegates, but emphasised that the Centre recognised the performance and contribution of its entire staff.

"When the Centre opened its doors in June 2008 we made a commitment to support Darwin's evolving position as one of Australia's fastest growing economic engines by providing a facility of international quality and reputation that will attract major conferences and events and their delegates.

"That is why the response and opinions of a respected organisation of the significance of ASA are so reassuring to us in achieving our performance goals and standards.

"It was a privilege to welcome a professional group of such standing and I can only hope that it will not be 24 years before the ASA hosts a major event with us again," said Mrs Barrios.

**For further media information or comment, please contact:**

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