

MEDIA RELEASE

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MACKAY MAKES ITS MARK

A joint initiative recently undertaken by the *Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre (MECC)* and *Mackay Tourism* has proven that co-operative effort beats 'going it alone' every time.

Exhibiting for the first time at the *Convene Q* trade show held in Brisbane in late July, the two organisations undertook a very successful pre-show promotional campaign, which ensured buyers were lined up to meet them on their joint stand. The annual *Convene Q* event showcases conference, meeting, function and event facilities and services from across Queensland to buyers from Australia and New Zealand.

A considerable amount of interest came from "across the ditch", with hosted New Zealand buyers indicating they were on the lookout for a fresh, new Queensland event destination.

More than 36 qualified visitors visited the stand, with seven leads for new business and two potential return conferences forming part of the interim result. The repeat clients included the *Australian Water Association* which is tentatively considering Mackay for its 2017 State Conference. *Health Workforce Queensland*, conference managers for the *Rural Doctors Association of Queensland*, also indicated that they will now be adding Mackay to their conference bidding rotation.

Buyer feed-back indicated most were impressed with the depth, availability and affordability of venues and accommodation in Mackay. A number of planners also said that they felt that Mackay's unique Beach Horse Races event had great potential as a Business Event inclusion or add-on.

The Mackay Stand included tastings of delicious produce from local attraction, the *Sarina Sugar Shed*, plus reusable MECC thermal coffee cup giveaways. A key feature was the business card draw with prizes on offer including a trip to the *Mackay Airport Beach Horse Racing Festival*, as well as a large *Sugar Shed* hamper. Aimee Du Toit, Conference Operations Manager with *Arinex Pty Ltd* was the lucky trip winner while Lisa Hilton, Events Manager with the *Master Plumbers Association of Queensland* won the gift pack from the *Sugar Shed*.



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Mackay Tourism and the MECC distributed Fact Sheets which showcased the new Mackay Region destination branding, facilities and venues plus destination attractions. Local industry specialty sectors such as mining and resources, sugar, marine and agribusiness were also highlighted, due to their frequent role in attracting business events of relevance.

Stephen Schwer, General Manager of *Mackay Tourism*, said his organisation was pleased to support the MECC on this joint initiative. "Business events are critical to the continued growth of tourism to the Mackay region," he said. "We have a world-class venue in the MECC which is being backed up by the Mackay Regional Council's new \$1.8 million *Invest Mackay Events and Conference Attraction Programs* for 2015-2016. There can be no better time for conference and event planners to consider Mackay."

Mackay Regional Council's Economic Development Manager, Debra Howe, said council was committed to doing whatever it could to help promote business and events tourism in the region. "We're investing \$1 million to attract new events, and \$800,000 to attract conferences to our region. Council is being proactive in trying to lure these lucrative events and conferences to help boost our economy and the recent *Convene Queensland* event offered good synergies with that strategy."

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