

MEDIA RELEASE

7 August 2017

Event planners discover a spring in Mackay's step

Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre recently hosted a small group of Australian and New Zealand event planners in Mackay. All were on their first visit to the Mackay Region and were blown away by the very creative and action-packed itinerary which made up the two night visit.

Sharing an early morning sunrise with the wallabies and kangaroos on the beach at Cape Hillsborough National Park was a stand-out experience. Frankie Mahoney from Auckland-based event specialist *Ninety Nine Reasons* was effusive. *"The ability to get so close to nature and the wallabies was incredible - it felt like such an honour to be able to stand on that beach."*

The visit coincided with the annual *Mackay Mazda Festival of Arts*, with several of the festival events incorporated into the program. These included a literary dinner with guest speaker actor, author and raconteur, William McInnes. On another evening, a superb degustation dinner was provided at award-winning Mackay restaurant *The Dispensary* and this was followed by an amusing interlude at the Festival Comedy Club with comedian Dave Hughes.

Rebecca Henderson, from a large steel manufacturing company, summed up the group's reaction. *"Mackay has really surprised me,"* she said. *"It has a great range of accommodation, with some once in a lifetime opportunities that shouldn't be missed. It would be a wonderful location to hold a regional conference."*

The *Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre* has recently had some great conference wins, many of which reflect the Mackay Region's diverse business and industry strengths.

These include the *Australian Wagyu Association* which will bring more than 500 delegates to the MECC for its four night national conference in May 2018. The Mackay Region's strong agribusiness credentials, its dedicated convention centre and ready supply of 4 + star accommodation contributed to the win. Regional proximity to Rockhampton, where the triennial *Beef Australia* event will be held following the Mackay conference, was also a contributing factor.



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Others for 2018 include returning events the *Resource Industry Network Safety Conference* and The *Australian Society of Sugar Cane Technologists (ASSCT) Conference* – both will take place in March. Also associated with the sugar cane & biofuels sector, Mackay will host a satellite workshop for international delegates attending the *Australasian Bioenergy and Bioproducts Symposium* in Brisbane in October this year.

Mackay Regional Council has recently advised that it has extended its innovative *Invest Mackay Events and Conferences Attraction Funding Program* into 2017-2018. The program recognises the significant contribution brought to the region by conferences and events and provides financial support for eligible conferences which choose Mackay as their host destination.

Nicky Hansen, Sales & Business Development with the MECC noted that the Mackay Region continues to enjoy strong support from planners, who have identified the benefits of staging their conferences in supportive regional destinations.

“This recent famil proves the value of getting conference planners here to see the destination for themselves,” she said. *“Nothing beats face-to-face discussions and the chance to seal the deal in person. We also believe that our strong calendar for 2018 is evidence of our strategy to seek out conferences that are tailored to our local industry and business pillars.”*

ENDS



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ABOUT THE MACKAY ENTERTAINMENT AND CONVENTION CENTRE:

The MECC has multiple spaces including a 1090-seat auditorium and two plenary halls with capacity to seat 1500 delegates theatre-style or 800 guests banquet style. In addition, there are four meeting rooms, a 100-seat studio space, two foyers, and a selection of break-out rooms. The Convention Centre Precinct also includes the contemporary *Artspace* regional art gallery, expansive Civic Lawns and the Mackay City Library. All offer additional break-out meeting rooms and alternative function options.

ABOUT MACKAY:

The Mackay Region sits half way between Brisbane and Cairns in Queensland, offering a relaxed regional city, serviced by 65+ weekly flights. The 1000 seat MECC convention centre is enhanced by a portfolio of more than 1000 rooms within walking distance, along with amazing rooftop venues with panoramic views of the blue-water river and ocean.

The Mackay Region's growth is fuelled by the boom in the mining industry in the Bowen Basin, resurgence in agribusiness, growth in tourism and an emerging marine sector. It is the largest sugar-producing area in Australia and nearly a third of Queensland's export goods originate from the Mackay region.

#meetmackayregion

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