

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Mackay “wows” prestigious tourism conference

**26 November 2014**

The northern Queensland city of Mackay has recently hosted more than 125 event and tourism industry professionals at the sixth annual *Tourism and Events Queensland Regional Events Conference*.

Held at the *Mackay Entertainment and Convention Centre* (MECC) from 7-9 November, the conference attracted event organisers, service providers, regional tourism organisations and council delegates from throughout Queensland. Delegates heard from industry experts on topics such as emerging event trends and strategies, whilst also taking the opportunity to network with colleagues.

Conference organiser, Jayne Kidd from *e-Kiddna Event Management*, spoke glowingly about Mackay in her feed-back to *Mackay Tourism*, praising not only the destination but also the enthusiastic support provided. *“Please be assured that e-Kiddna Event Management is a keen advocate for your wonderful piece of paradise and I’ll be doing my best to spread the word amongst my fellow PCOs,”* she said. *“I honestly could not have run the conference without your support. Thank you sincerely. Nothing was too much trouble, you were prompt and professional - I thoroughly enjoyed working with you and your team.”*

The conference adopted a nature-based ‘green’ theme which reflected the Mackay region’s new branding of “Nature. Reserved”. This themeing included real sugar-cane foliage as a backdrop for the conference venue staging areas and the provision of Mackay Region green tote bags for delegate satchels. The inclusion of a t-shirt wearing plush toy platypus inside each satchel provided delegates with a bonus take-away memento.

The conference enabled the city to showcase its various attractions and Business Events capability. The informal welcome cocktail party was staged poolside at the *Blue Water Lagoon* – covering an area equivalent to three 50 metre swimming pools, it overlooks the picturesque Pioneer River in the heart of Mackay. Creative lighting enhanced the gardens and surrounds and a balmy 25° degree tropical evening provided the perfect introduction to the region.

The off-site conference dinner was held at another iconic Mackay location, *Paxton’s Warehouse*. Dating back to circa 1889, it is one of the oldest buildings in Mackay. Named after a former mayor and leading Mackay merchant and businessman, this rustic and charming building is situated in a

beautiful riverfront location. The lush green themeing provided by Mackay-based caterer and event company, *Grinders Corporate Catering*, transformed the venue into a tropical indoor garden venue, lit by chandeliers. *Grinders* provided all the conference catering, with organisers and delegates being effusive in their praise regarding the calibre and presentation of the “six star standard” cuisine.

A number of delegates took the opportunity to go for an invigorating early morning walk along the *Bluewater Trail*, escorted by a local fitness instructor. The Trail, which incorporates raised boardwalks plus pedestrian and bike pathways, is a feature of the city. It meanders along the river, through the city’s green spaces, eventually leading to the ocean-side of town. Another special touch were the Speakers Gift hampers, containing locally-distilled liqueurs, sauces and candy, which were sourced from one of the region’s leading attractions, the *Sarina Sugar Shed*.

With more than six 4.5 star hotels located within a two kilometre radius of the MECC, delegates were able to stroll to the convention centre each day. As the largest convention and banqueting facility between Cairns and Brisbane, the MECC more than capably catered for the conference. Located in the CBD, it includes a 1090 seat theatre, two plenary halls seating up to 1500 theatre-style, four meeting rooms and a range of breakout rooms. Mark Fawcett, Manager of the MECC said he was delighted to showcase both the convention centre and Mackay as a region, to colleagues and event professionals. “We’ve been overwhelmed by the enthusiastic response received from conference attendees. To be judged by our peers as providing an exemplary service is something of which we are justifiably proud.”

*Mackay Tourism’s* General Manager Stephen Schwer was equally pleased. “This conference gave our local operators first-hand access to tourism and event experts, right in their own backyard,” he said. “It also showcased our excellent convention centre, quality accommodation and the range of attractions and options available for organisers who stage Business Events.”

For more information on Mackay, visit [www.mackayregion.com](http://www.mackayregion.com)

## **ENDS**

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