



ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIAN
CONVENTION BUREAUX INC.

THE ASSOCIATION BEHIND THE
BUREAUX WHO MARKET AUSTRALIA
FOR BUSINESS EVENTS



2008 AACB STAFF SCHOLARSHIP FINAL REPORT

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ATTRACTING BUSINESS EVENTS AS A CRITICAL
COMPONENT OF SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE
CELEBRATIONS FOR A CITY

PROJECT OVERVIEW

On 12th March 2013 Canberra will celebrate 100 years since the naming of Canberra as the National Capital of Australia. Celebrations will occur throughout 2013 and meetings and conferences are an important component of the program of events.

During the period of July 4th to July 16th, my scholarship program was completed; this study trip was used to learn from overseas Bureaux (or equivalent marketing bodies) who have gained experience in attracting business events to a destination by leveraging a milestone anniversary celebration, occurring in a specified time period within the destination. Useful strategies and tactics have been identified through the success of the following events:

Quebec City, 400th anniversary 2008

Ottawa, 125th anniversary 2007

British Columbia, 150th anniversary 2008

Edmonton, 100th anniversary in 2004

Alberta, 100th anniversary in 2005

KEY FINDINGS

This summary report is designed to inform the Canberra Convention Bureau, the ACT Government and Australian Bureaux of insights for considerations in attracting business events as part of a milestone celebration in a city.

There were several key points that were identified in visiting representatives from each of these cities. There were also common themes regarding examples of successes and challenges faced. A selection of these, which have general application, have been included below; more detailed notes have been attached as appendix #1.

- Conferences should have the opportunity to contribute to a legacy for the city (be it something the city is offering or something the organisation chooses to offer the city)
- A strong 'base model' (program of events and structure) is required to sell the celebration to conference organisers with a strong matrix of events planned for the city. These events can then be used to create a synergy with numerous organisations
- A written material / communications package is required to assist in selling 'the dream' of holding a conference in a city during a celebration
- Bureau must have a good understanding of how conference organisers will respond to a destination with a celebration. It is suggested that research using a focus group of conference

organisers would assist in discovering their hot buttons and what is appealing to them and their delegates

- Ambassadors are critical to the success of conferences and events in a city as they are key figures in the local community, have access or involvement in many associations that would see the benefits of conferencing in a city during a milestone celebration and are strong advocates for the city in which they are living
- Websites are a very strong tool for information, they should be updated with celebration material often and provide the ability for a conference organiser to get in touch with a sales representative immediately to discuss their conference within the celebration year
- Secure conferences with a critical link to making your celebration a success, for example exposure to a major government leaders event, association executives, journalists or media conferences. Use these opportunities to promote the city celebration
- An early commitment from hotels in the city on a rate structure is very important to give clients confidence that they won't pay too much and to create certainty around the supply of rooms within the city for conference delegates
- Regular updates to industry are required to keep them informed as to what is going on in the lead up to a celebration
- An open invitation should be looked at to invite all associations to secure their event in your city for your celebration, from the head of State Government or Head of State for the Country
- Extend and leverage off existing events in the city
- Look at possibility of providing seed funding to different eligible associations to support the conference and use the funding to provide assistance in the early stages of planning. Eligibility could be linked to legacy projects or concepts
- Be repetitive with your message in the market place
- Any organisation that holds an event in your city during your milestone celebration should be recognised in some way, e.g. a personal letter from the Chief Minister, plaque etc
- Look to source any organisations celebrating a significant milestone during the same year as the city
- Planning should start at least 5-6 years ahead to secure business events and conferences for the city

Some of the common regrets identified were:

- Websites not being utilised to full capacity or updated in a timely way
- Too many things were left too late (be it events or booking conferences)

- Media was overwhelming through the celebrations, there needs to be a dedicated individual resource available to handle all the media
- Funding was an issue for all cities except Quebec and this impacted on the ability to pre-market & promote due to limited and inadequate funding
- Relationships with ambassadors and key organisations were not managed well and should have been created much earlier, 2-3 years out, this would allow for increased funding, increased promotion and additional support for conference bids within the city
- Where merchandising may have been used for conference delegates (or tourists) it was left too late

A travel summary including cities visited and organisations met with can be found in appendix 1

There were many additional findings from a leisure tourism perspective which have been attached in dot point form as appendix 2 and will be shared with the ACT Chief Ministers Department in Canberra to assist in coordinating a successful program of events for the centenary of Canberra in 2013. I would be happy to discuss any of these findings in more detail and can be contacted by email: leslie.francis@canberraconvention.com.au or phone 02 6263 5313 (direct).

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This research trip to Canada has aided in my career development by way of meeting with industry colleagues in Canada and learning from their experience with significant milestone celebrations. My meetings have allowed me to develop ideas that will contribute towards Canberra's planning for our 2013 celebrations in the area of a conference program. My travel experience has been broadened and I have been exposed to destinations and other business tourism elements I would not otherwise had the opportunity to see.

My findings will be shared with the ACT Chief Ministers Department; to assist in delivering the business event objectives of the 2013 Blueprint and in so doing will also further my professional development in dealing with government stakeholders.