

ACSA Conference 2012

Thursday 20th to Saturday 22nd September 2012

Held at The Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, Perth, West Australia

Conference Organising Committee Report

By the Western Australian Ostomy Association

Summary

The ACSA Executive met at the Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle on Tuesday 18th September and delegates were welcomed to the Conference on the evening of Wednesday 19th. The Western Australian Ostomy Association hosted a cocktail function at the hotel to welcome visitors to our state.

The Conference was officially opened by Dr. Kenneth Michael AC, the most immediate past Governor of Western Australia.

Overall the Conference was a success with an excellent venue and the agenda running to plan. The social events were deemed a success and the organising committee's objectives, other than the budget, were met.

Financially the Conference was concluded at a significant shortfall which was met by the host Association.

Organising Committee

A committee was formed from the managing committee of the Western Australian Ostomy Association and comprised of the following people:

Mrs. Robin Gill and Mrs. June Barns, jointly responsible for the organisation and co-ordination of the Conference.

Mr. Alan Drever, President
Mrs. Jess Whitehouse, Secretary
Dr. David Tennant, Treasurer
Mrs. Kym Hansen, technical computer support

The Conference theme was "Together as One".

Scheduling

The date of the Conference was mindful of the need not to clash with any major sporting events or school holidays, which would make travel more difficult or more expensive. Because of the distances involved in travelling to W.A. air travel is quite onerous on Association budgets.

Unfortunately we were unable to comply with ACSA's request that the Conference be held in October, thus allowing time for finalisation of their end of year financial report.

Conference Program

As always the host Association strives to provide good entertainment with something a little different for the welcoming function on the Thursday evening.

The host Association welcomed guests to the Conference on Wednesday evening by combining registration with an informal cocktail function. This was a meet and greet affair with old friends coming together after a year apart. It was very successful and to see everyone having a good time was very rewarding for our organising committee.

A tram tour with dinner on board in the form of fish and chips was organised for Thursday evening. This tour took in the historic buildings of Fremantle and seemed to be thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated.

The Saturday night Dinner Dance was held in the Island Suite of the Esplanade Hotel. The atmosphere created by this heritage listed section of the hotel set the scene for a most enjoyable evening. The live music was provided by a combo who provided music applicable to the age group in attendance at this function. The catering by the hotel could not be faulted.

Sunday's outing was a bus trip to the Barrack Street Jetty and then a river trip on the Swan River with lunch on board. Drinks were at the expense of attendees. No one required to be dropped off at the airport and both buses returned to the hotel in Fremantle.

On Saturday afternoon we had two very good guest speakers. The first was Prof. Barry Iocappetta, Head of Translational Cancer Research laboratory at the School of Surgery, University of Western Australia. He spoke on current research into early stage bowel cancer, its diagnosis and familial trends.

The second speaker was Dr. Kerlyn Carville, Professor of Primary Health Care and Community Nursing and Silver Chain. Dr. Carville spoke on the Global Health Alliance Western Australia (GHAWA) Project in Tanzania and how training projects are providing improved health care.

We had a lot of people attend the talks by the guest speakers.

The trade displays were well patronised. All major supplier companies were represented. We organised a special area adjacent to the Conference room. Morning and afternoon teas were also served in the same area as the trade displays, allowing people to wander around the displays whilst enjoying their refreshments. No charge was made by the host association to the supplier companies other than the cost to them for meals on any particular day.

Venue – The Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, West Australia

Location

The organising Committee visited four hotels in Perth and Fremantle. Any hotels in Perth that provide fine conference facilities are all quite costly. We found that there was not much difference in costs overall between the hotels on our list and chose the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle because it offered the best facilities. The city of Fremantle is iconic with its history and cosmopolitan atmosphere, and the transport system in Perth is such that visitors are only 30 minutes away from Perth on our rail system.

Accommodation

The hotel lobby maintains the feel of a bygone era but with all modern conveniences for guests. All the guest rooms were of an excellent standard. We put aside a block of 70 rooms and 50 were taken for the conference. Those not booked were released back to the hotel two weeks prior to the conference date.

The venue also provided accommodation booking forms with RSVP dates and payment details. These were sent out by the organising committee along with the Conference Registration form.

All accommodation enquiries, the completed accommodation booking forms and all related payments were directed to the venue.

A very few attendees chose not to stay at the hotel and organised alternative accommodation.

Conference Facilities

The conference venue was the Orion Room in the hotel. As previously mentioned, morning and afternoon teas were served in the same area as the trade displays in an adjoining room. Buffet lunch was served in the Atrium Garden Restaurant.

The audio-visual equipment was provided by the hotel and was effective with one very large screen visible from all points of the conference room. One roving microphone was provided and this was found to be adequate.

The size of the conference room was more than adequate with sufficient room for delegates seated on the traditional U-shaped tables with the Executive at the head. Observers were seated at either side of the room plus in rows at the rear of the conference room.

Financials

Based on the previous year as a guide, the registration and other charges were set in advance of finalising the actual costs. We endeavoured to keep charges as low as possible to make attending a remote conference affordable.

Income from sponsorship, etc. was lower than at previous conferences. There seems to be a downward trend with each successive conference. The organising committee found it very difficult to get firm commitments from supplier companies and it was very late in the proceedings before definite amounts were decided on. This area of the organising proved to be the most difficult part to cope with.

1. **Three-day Registration at \$270 and One-day Registration of \$90**
 - a. Total registrations received = \$16,200
 - b.
 - c.

DAVID HAS AGREED TO SUPPLY FIGURES FOR THE COCKTAIL RECEPTION, TRAM TOUR, DINNER DANCE & BOAT TRIP.

Deficit Analysis

1. WAOA was reluctant to increase registration fees significantly on previous years, being aware of the impost of smaller associations. It was found that the registration fee needed to be higher in view of the rising costs charged by venues.
2. As a matter of course, each year costs are rising and Perth is an expensive city in which to host a conference. It comes down to the point that if you want quality, it has to be paid for.
3. Excluding the cost of the satchels provided by Liberty Medical, donations by supplier companies were moderately low and therefore did not go far to covering the costs of the functions, etc.

Recommendations for Future Conferences

As stated in the Sydney report, organisation of each annual conference is becoming increasingly difficult with cost pressures. WAOA was lucky in that most members of the organising committee had prior experience in organising conferences.

The 2012 Conference Organising Committee proposes the following to assist with future conferences.

The 2011 Sydney report recommended that ACSA Executive take greater responsibility for their annual conference including the financial outcomes. To a degree the 2012 organising committee does agree with this, however we feel that distance does come into the argument. The host state is more equipped to choose venues and entertainment facilities.

A back up by ACSA to more inexperienced conference committees would be very helpful.

It was suggested that in the event that the host state lacks the resources to organise the conference, a professional event organiser should be considered. To employ this service would not be financially viable.

WAOA definitely recommends that ACSA negotiate directly with supplier companies for conference sponsorship / donations.

Sponsorship uncertainty and delays made it very difficult to budget for the different aspects of the conference. There must be more certainty regarding available monies so that the host Association may budget efficiently. We do feel that ACSA would be in a better position to negotiate with the companies.

It was recommended by the 2011 organising committee that ACSA investigate the imposing of a small levy on all associations to assist delegates from smaller associations to attend annual ACSA conferences.

This perhaps would allow the smaller associations to send a delegate to conferences. However as some associations are absent from each successive conference, we are not sure that the financial aspect is an issue. The larger associations are generally well attended by delegates and observers which is a costly exercise for these associations. To apply a levy on top of these costs could be onerous.

The 2012 organising committee backs the suggestion that ACSA adopt a standard template for monitoring conference preparations and subsequent comparison and reporting prior to planning for the following year's conference.

With future conferences being shortened to a more abbreviated program, this will help with cost impositions on attendees.